



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDNR and ICF award 24 youth habitat enhancement projects through the Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Grant Program

SPRINGFIELD – Nearly \$40,000 in grants for 24 schoolyard habitat projects throughout Illinois have been awarded by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Conservation Foundation for the 2026 application period.

The [Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant Program](#) supports the development or enhancement of wildlife habitat on school grounds and other public spaces. Funding is provided through donations to the Illinois Conservation Foundation and program sponsor the Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Foundation.

“This award is a great way for students to engage in creating native habitat spaces in their local area,” said **Natalie Phelps Finnie, director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources**. “By participating in these projects, students learn that their efforts can make a positive difference in the world, and they gain experience in problem-based learning by planning, developing and maintaining the habitat.”

Since the program’s inception, nearly \$473,000 in Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant funding has been distributed statewide.

“We want schoolchildren to learn about nature through hands-on experiences,” Finnie said. “Our goal is to have Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant projects developed in every county and eventually at every school. So far, we have supported projects in 88 Illinois counties.”

Applications for the next grant cycle will be accepted later this spring through Nov. 30. Application materials and additional information are available on the IDNR education grants [website](#). For additional information, call 217-524-4126 or email dnr.teachkids@illinois.gov.

The 2026 Illinois Schoolyard Habitat Action Grant recipients are:

Clinton County

- Bartelso Elementary School, Bartelso – \$2,000. Kindergarten through eighth grades, native garden.

Cook County

- Amundsen High School, Chicago – \$1,815. Grades 9-12, woodland habitat.
- Betsy Ross Primary School, Forest Park – \$1,992.30. Kindergarten through second grades, pollinator garden.
- Brownell Elementary School, Chicago – \$1,148.96. Third through sixth grades, pollinator garden.

- Cub Scout Pack 3936 at St. Elizabeth of the Trinity School, Chicago – \$2,000. Kindergarten through fourth grades, pollinator garden.
- Forest Road School, La Grange Park – \$2,000. Fourth through sixth grades, pollinator garden.
- Lindblom Math and Science Academy, Chicago – \$967.50. Seventh and eighth grades, butterfly garden.
- Oak Lawn Community High School, Oak Lawn – \$2,000. Grades 9-12, woodland and wetland habitat.
- Ogden Avenue School, La Grange – \$1,700. Third through sixth grades, butterfly and pollinator garden.
- Sunset Ridge School, Northfield – \$858.42. Fourth and fifth grades, rain garden.

DuPage County

- St. Petronille Catholic School, Glen Ellyn – \$1,200. Third and sixth grades, pollinator garden.

Franklin County

- Christopher Elementary School, Christopher – \$1,858. Preschool through kindergarten, pollinator garden.

Jackson County

- DeSoto Grade School, DeSoto – \$1,684. Sixth through eighth grades, pollinator garden.
- Murphysboro Middle School, Murphysboro – \$1,237.32. Sixth through eighth grades, pollinator garden.

Kendall County

- Oswego East High School, Oswego – \$1,989. Grades 9-12, prairie wetland habitat.

Lake County

- Cherokee Elementary School, Lake Forest – \$2,000. Third and fourth grades, pollinator garden.

McLean County

- Normal Community High School, Normal – \$1,820. Grades 9-12, native trees.
- Normal Community High School, Normal – \$1,972. Grades 9-12, native plants.
- Normal Community West High School, Normal – \$779.70. Grades 9-12, pollinator garden.

Pope County

- Pope County High School, Golconda – \$1,860.03. Grades 9-12, butterfly garden.

Sangamon County

- Rochester High School, Rochester – \$543.42. Grades 9-12, pollinator garden.

Shelby County

- Friends of Lake Shelbyville, Shelbyville – \$2,000. Grades 9-12, native habitat.

Warren County

- Monmouth-Roseville Junior High School, Roseville – \$2,000. Seventh and eighth grades, prairie habitat.

Winnebago County

- Galapagos Rockford Charter School, Rockford – \$1,904. Fifth through eighth grades, pollinator garden.

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About IDNR

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources was established in 1925 as the Illinois Department of Conservation, bringing under one umbrella oversight of fish and game, forestry, public works, and lakes. Today, IDNR's work encompasses management of about 400 sites across Illinois, including state parks and historic sites; wildlife, fisheries, forestry, and natural heritage; Lake Michigan water allocation and coastal management; conservation police; mines and minerals; oil and gas; issuance of licenses, permits, and numerous grants; the World Shooting and Recreational Complex in Sparta; and the Illinois State Museum. Visit <https://dnr.illinois.gov> and follow us on [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#).