



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDNR and NOAA award nearly \$1 million in grants for Illinois' Lake Michigan shoreline protection and management

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Coastal Management Program has awarded \$970,770 in grants to Illinois organizations for coastal education, recreation, water quality monitoring, planning, design and engineering projects along the Lake Michigan shoreline.

The [Coastal Management Program](#) is a federal-state partnership between IDNR and the [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) that provides federal funding directly to communities in the Illinois coastal region. This round of grants will support local organizations working on habitat restoration, environmental education and stewardship, and coastal resiliency.

The eight grant-funded projects span the entirety of Illinois' Lake Michigan coastline. They will empower communities, educational institutions, non-profits, park districts and forest preserve districts to improve the state's coastal resources and engage local youth and adults in stewardship and enjoyment of Lake Michigan and surrounding natural resources.

"Coastal Management Program grants represent a continued investment in the protection, preservation and restoration of the Lake Michigan shoreline," said **IDNR Director Natalie Phelps Finnie**. "IDNR invests in this incredible resource at the doorstep of Illinois so it can be enjoyed by all for generations to come."

The 2026 Coastal Grants Program emphasized projects focused on natural solutions such as green infrastructure, environmental workforce development, and recreational and cultural resources. Recipients and project titles are:

- **American Indian Center** – Native Heritage Water Trail, \$105,428.55
- **Chicago Park District** – Expanding RiverLab Programming to Engage Chicago's South and West Side Communities, \$30,079
- **Current Innovation Inc.** – H2NOW: Learn, \$173,376
- **Friends of the Forest Preserves** – Outdoors for All: Building Pathways to Conservation Careers in the Calumet Region, \$155,769.32
- **Lake County Forest Preserve District** – Lake Plain Partnership, \$84,037.92
- **Lake Forest Open Lands Association** – Coastal Network Initiative, \$134,626.98
- **Navy Pier** – Preserving Infrastructure with Environmentally Informed Resilience (PIER) Improvements Planning Project: Phase 1, \$165,000
- **OAI Inc.** – Maintaining Green Infrastructure, \$122,452.54

The IDNR Coastal Management Program works to protect and enhance the environmental, economic, and social value of Illinois' Lake Michigan coast. The program fosters healthy ecosystems and resilient communities by

providing expertise, funding, and other resources that engage and connect communities within the Lake Michigan coastal region; enhance coastal stewardship; promote balanced use of coastal resources; and improve coordination between agencies, communities, and other partners.

To learn more about the program and future grant opportunities, [go online](#) or subscribe to the program's newsletter [newsletter](#).

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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](#).