

1 AN ACT concerning government.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**  
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the  
5 Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Act.

6 Section 5. Legislative findings and statement of public  
7 policy.

8 (a) The General Assembly finds that:

9 (1) The Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act  
10 defines natural areas and creates the Illinois Nature  
11 Preserves Commission to preserve the highest quality  
12 natural areas in perpetuity to sustain for the people of  
13 present and future generations the benefits of an enduring  
14 resource of natural areas, including the elements of  
15 natural diversity present.

16 (2) The Natural Areas Acquisition Fund, established in  
17 the Open Lands Acquisition and Development Act, shall be  
18 used by the Department of Natural Resources for the  
19 acquisition, preservation, and stewardship of natural  
20 areas, including habitats for endangered and threatened  
21 species, high quality natural communities, wetlands, and  
22 other areas with unique or unusual natural heritage  
23 qualities.

1           (3) The condition of dedicated and registered sites  
2 tends to degrade over time without stewardship actions.  
3 Once degraded, the public's significant investment is  
4 devalued and these natural areas provide reduced benefit to  
5 the people of present and future generations.

6           (4) Conservation land trusts have experience managing  
7 natural areas in order to counter the constant and  
8 increasing pressures exerted on conservation lands by  
9 ecological succession, habitat fragmentation, hydrological  
10 alteration, pollution, encroachment by invasive and exotic  
11 species, and criminal trespass.

12           (5) This Act and the powers afforded to the Illinois  
13 Nature Preserves Commission are desirable to guide and  
14 preserve the highest quality natural areas in perpetuity.

15           (b) It is the purpose of this Act to:

16           (1) increase stewardship by providing stewardship  
17 grants to conservation land trusts to help perform  
18 stewardship actions on eligible lands; and

19           (2) to enhance stewardship capacity within  
20 conservation land trusts in local areas.

21           Section 10. Definitions. As used in this Act:

22           "Administrative decision" has the same meaning ascribed to  
23 the term in Section 3-101 of the Administrative Review Law of  
24 the Code of Civil Procedure.

25           "Commission" means the Illinois Nature Preserves

1 Commission.

2 "Conservation land trust" means an entity exempt from  
3 taxation under Section 501(c)(3) of the federal Internal  
4 Revenue Code whose purposes include the restoration,  
5 stewardship, or conservation of land, natural areas, open  
6 space, or water areas for the preservation of native plants or  
7 animals, biotic communities, geologic formations, or  
8 archeological sites of significance.

9 "Department" means the Department of Natural Resources.

10 "Eligible land" means a site that has been dedicated by the  
11 Commission as an Illinois Nature Preserve or dedicated buffer  
12 or registered as a Land and Water Reserve, and has a current,  
13 approved management schedule.

14 "Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Grant Program" means a  
15 program established under Section 20 of this Act.

16 "Land" means real property and ownership rights applying to  
17 it and includes the real property, structures, and  
18 improvements.

19 "Management schedule" means an approved document  
20 consistent with rules for Management of Nature Preserves or  
21 rules for Register of Land and Water Reserves under the  
22 Illinois Administrative Code developed for the preservation,  
23 protection, management, and use of lands.

24 "Stewardship actions" means actions identified in an  
25 approved management schedule which are designed to maintain,  
26 preserve, or improve the condition of native natural

1 communities, diversity of species, and ecological processes on  
2 eligible lands, such as, but not limited to, prescribed burns,  
3 control of exotic and invasive species, fencing, and other  
4 restorative practices.

5 "Stewardship grant" means a grant from the Department to a  
6 conservation land trust for the purpose of providing  
7 stewardship actions under Section 20 of this Act.

8 Section 15. Powers, duties, and authorizations. The  
9 Department may:

10 (1) make stewardship grants under Section 20 of this  
11 Act under an appropriation made from the Natural Areas  
12 Acquisition Fund to conservation land trusts to conduct  
13 stewardship actions on eligible lands;

14 (2) establish the total amount of funds available for  
15 annual stewardship grants, except the amount of  
16 stewardship grants made for any fiscal year may not exceed  
17 the amount set by administrative rule and shall not result  
18 in adverse impacts on the operations funded by the Natural  
19 Areas Acquisition Fund;

20 (3) accept and receive any funds including by  
21 agreement, grant, contract, donation, gift, or bequest  
22 from any corporation, foundation, non-governmental agency,  
23 individual, or instrumentality of any of those for the  
24 purposes of executing stewardship grants under this Act and  
25 these funds are to be deposited into the Natural Areas

1 Acquisition Fund;

2 (4) develop and administer the Illinois Natural Areas  
3 Stewardship Grant Program within the Department;

4 (5) adopt rules to effectuate the purposes of this Act;  
5 or

6 (6) from an appropriation made to the Department for  
7 this purpose, use funds received under this Act to pay for  
8 the cost of departmental personnel; contractual,  
9 professional or technical services; and equipment,  
10 materials, and supplies necessary or appropriate to  
11 perform the functions under this Act.

12 Section 20. Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Grant  
13 Program.

14 (a) The Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Grant Program is  
15 established to make grants to conservation land trusts for the  
16 purpose of promoting stewardship actions on eligible lands.

17 (b) A conservation land trust in good standing with the  
18 federal Internal Revenue Service may apply for a grant.

19 (c) An agency, organization, or entity that has taxing  
20 powers, collects taxes, or has eminent domain powers is not  
21 eligible to apply for the grant program under this Act.

22 (d) Eligible land held by agencies, organizations, or other  
23 entities may be the recipient of stewardship actions conducted  
24 under the grant as long as there is a properly executed  
25 agreement between the agency, organization, or entity and the

1 conservation land trust that has been awarded the grant.

2 (e) The Department shall adopt administrative rules in  
3 consultation with the Commission for grant writing, the  
4 selection of grant recipients, amount of grant awards, and  
5 eligibility requirements to implement the purposes of this Act.  
6 However, the rules shall include the following requirements:

7 (1) amounts for match and caps for any stewardship  
8 grant under this Act; and

9 (2) the Commission shall be notified of any agreement  
10 between a conservation land trust and an owner of eligible  
11 lands for stewardship actions to be conducted under the  
12 grant agreement.

13 Section 25. Priorities. In considering applications for  
14 grants under this Act, the Department shall establish  
15 priorities that:

16 (1) provide the greatest benefit to implementing the needs  
17 and priorities identified in the Illinois Natural Area Plan,  
18 the Illinois Sustainable Natural Areas Vision, and the Illinois  
19 Wildlife Action Plan;

20 (2) provide the greatest benefit to other stewardship needs  
21 identified by the Department, in consultation with the  
22 Commission, in administrative rule; and

23 (3) consider, but not be limited to, the rarity and  
24 condition of resources, severity of stewardship need,  
25 timeliness of actions, proposed stewardship actions, and

1 availability of other resources.

2 Section 30. Administrative Review Law. All final  
3 administrative decisions under this Act are subject to judicial  
4 review under the Administrative Review Law of the Code of Civil  
5 Procedure.

6 Section 35. Fund depository. All funds, assessments,  
7 fines, settlements, compensations, transfers, appropriations,  
8 penalties, and donations made under this Act shall be deposited  
9 into the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund subject to the  
10 limitations described in subsection (2) of Section 15 of this  
11 Act.

12 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon  
13 becoming law.