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HOUSE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, In 1963, the State of Illinois was the first State in the nation to create a program for protecting rare natural areas, known as the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission; and

WHEREAS, The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission works to preserve, protect, and defend natural areas and endangered species habitat for the benefit of the public; and

WHEREAS, In the last 40 years, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission has dedicated and had oversight for 321 nature preserves in 79 counties totaling 43,382 acres and 108 land and water reserves in 50 counties totaling 33,789 acres; and

WHEREAS, The General Assembly recognized the importance of creating a perpetual funding source for conservation efforts in 1989 by dedicating portions of the real estate transfer tax to the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Fund and the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund; and

WHEREAS, The Real Estate Transfer Tax Law requires 35% of the real estate transfer tax revenue be deposited into the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Fund; and

WHEREAS, The Real Estate Transfer Tax Law also requires 15% of the real estate transfer tax revenue be deposited into the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund; and

WHEREAS, The Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development Program is a grant program run by the Department of Natural Resources that provides a primary source of funding for local governments, forest preserve and conservation districts, and park districts for local land acquisition and facilities management and maintenance; and

1           WHEREAS, The Natural Areas Acquisition Fund directly funds  
2 the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and the Natural  
3 Heritage Program, which employ biologists, environmental  
4 professionals, and support staff directly involved in the  
5 protection, management, and restoration of natural areas,  
6 endangered species, and critical wildlife habitat on public and  
7 private lands across Illinois; and

8           WHEREAS, Illinois ranks 47th in the nation in public open  
9 space per capita; and

10          WHEREAS, Governor Blagojevich's proposed FY05 budget  
11 eliminates new funding for both the Open Space Lands  
12 Acquisition and Development Program and the Natural Areas  
13 Acquisition Fund; and

14          WHEREAS, Eliminating funding for the Open Space Lands  
15 Acquisition and Development Program will eliminate grant funds  
16 for local land acquisition and maintenance; and

17          WHEREAS, Eliminating funding for the Natural Areas  
18 Acquisition Fund will reduce the level of protection,  
19 maintenance, and restoration of open land and endangered  
20 species habitat in Illinois, which may result in a  
21 corresponding loss of biodiversity and habitat and a  
22 degradation of natural areas; therefore, be it

23          RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
24 NINETY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY, that the members of the House of  
25 Representatives urge the Governor to continue funding the Open  
26 Space Lands Acquisition and Development and Natural Areas  
27 Acquisition programs for the 2005 fiscal year; and be it  
28 further

29          RESOLVED, That we urge the Governor to reconsider the idea

1 of redirecting dedicated funding for the Open Space Lands  
2 Acquisition and Development Program and the Natural Areas  
3 Acquisition Fund to the General Revenue Fund; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That a suitable copy of this resolution be  
5 delivered to the Governor of the State of Illinois and the  
6 Director of Natural Resources.