

1 AN ACT concerning conservation.

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

4 Section 5. The Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Act
5 is amended by changing Section 20 as follows:

6 (525 ILCS 22/20)

7 Sec. 20. Establishment of the Healthy Forests, Wetlands,
8 and Prairies Grant Program.

9 (a) The Department of Natural Resources, subject to
10 appropriation, shall establish and administer a Healthy
11 Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program to restore
12 degraded forest lands and native prairies and to promote the
13 growth of native vegetation that removes carbon dioxide from
14 the atmosphere and helps mitigate the impact of climate
15 change.

16 (b) Entities that may apply to participate in the Healthy
17 Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program include:

18 (1) State agencies and units of local government,
19 including, but not limited to, municipalities, townships,
20 counties, forest preserves, and park districts;

21 (2) conservation land trusts;

22 (3) not-for-profit entities with conservation
23 missions, including, but not limited to, climate change

1 mitigation, preservation of natural lands, and
2 conservation of the State's natural resources; and

3 (4) other entities that, because of their missions,
4 are determined by the Department to be eligible recipients
5 of the grants under this Act.

6 (c) At least 75% of the moneys appropriated for the
7 Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program shall be
8 awarded to ~~the~~ State agencies, units of local government, land
9 trusts, and other entities that the Department determines are
10 eligible for a grant under this Section. The Department may
11 use an amount not to exceed 23% of the moneys appropriated for
12 the Program for the purposes of restoring degraded forest
13 lands, ~~and~~ and native prairies, and wetlands with the goal of
14 promoting ~~and to promote~~ the growth of native vegetation that
15 remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and help mitigate
16 the impact of climate change. The Department may use an amount
17 not to exceed 2% of the moneys appropriated for the Healthy
18 Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program for
19 administrative costs associated with the Program. All grants
20 issued under this Act shall be cost-share grants. The
21 cost-share approved by the Department may include in-kind
22 contributions of the applicant. The grants issued under this
23 Act may be used as matching funds for federal grant awards
24 whose purpose is in line with this Act.

25 (d) The Department shall adopt any rules necessary for the
26 implementation of this Act, including rules establishing

1 requirements and timeframes for the submission of grant
2 applications by entities that are authorized to apply to
3 participate in the Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies
4 Grant Program as well as cost-share amounts or in-kind
5 contributions for the activities authorized under any grant
6 issued pursuant to this Act.

7 (e) Grants provided under this Act may be used by eligible
8 entities for the purpose of purchasing and: ~~(1) matching funds~~
9 ~~for federal or private dollars for projects that forward the~~
10 ~~goal of climate change mitigation through promotion of the~~
11 ~~management, planting, maintaining, and preserving of native~~
12 ~~grasses, plants, and trees.~~ †

13 (f) The Department shall set by administrative rule, the
14 prioritization and criteria used for awarding grants under
15 this Act. Those priorities shall include, but not be limited
16 to:

17 (1) projects for the purchasing and planting of native
18 grasses, plants, and trees ~~(2) financing projects along~~
19 ~~roadways, and in parks, in and forest preserves, or on~~
20 ~~public or private lands and where native grasses, plants,~~
21 ~~or trees are not currently planted to plant native trees~~
22 ~~and prairie grasses demonstrated to absorb carbon;~~

23 (2) ~~(3) financing~~ projects that promote the
24 stewardship of existing ~~public and private~~ urban forests,
25 prairies, and wetlands that include ~~and natural lands,~~
26 ~~including~~ the removal of invasive or nonnative plant

1 species in addition to the planting of native grasses,
2 plants, and trees where such native species are not
3 currently growing; or

4 (3) projects for the purchase and planting of native
5 grasses, plants, and trees for the purpose of shoreline
6 restoration and protection projects on behalf of counties,
7 municipalities, and park districts. ~~(4) funding regional~~
8 ~~teams tasked with planting native prairie grasses and~~
9 ~~trees, prescribed burning for the maintenance of natural~~
10 ~~lands, removing invasive plant species, and educational~~
11 ~~outreach;~~

12 Additionally, the Department may issue additional funds in
13 an awarded grant for ~~(5)~~ promoting, education, and marketing
14 regarding local projects that will be funded by a grant issued
15 pursuant to this Act. Those public outreach efforts must
16 include projects ~~or~~ steps community members may take to
17 promote the growth of native vegetation that removes carbon
18 dioxide from the atmosphere. ~~;~~ ~~and~~

19 ~~(6) financing shoreline restoration and protection~~
20 ~~projects on behalf of counties and park districts.~~

21 (Source: P.A. 103-923, eff. 1-1-25; 104-143, eff. 1-1-26.)