

HB 3458: Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Act

1.0 Purpose:

Gives IDNR the authority to provide grants from the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund to Conservation Land Trusts to provide management practices to Illinois Nature Preserves and Registered Land and Water Reserves.

- **No new tax** dollars are needed to administer this program within IDNR.
- It does leverage private dollars with state funds to do much needed stewardship.
- It does engage local nonprofit community to help accomplish the State's natural resource goals.
- IDNR supports the bill.

2.0 Natural Areas Acquisition Fund (NAAF).

- No new state money is required – funds are from the Real Estate Transfer Tax which already provides for stewardship actions but IDNR requires statutory authority to make grants.

3.0 Eligible Lands:

- Eligible lands are those included in the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission System: Nature Preserves, Nature Preserve Buffers, and Land and Water Reserves, which are permanently protected by deed restrictions held by IDNR. There are +/- 110,000 acres of designated land in 94 counties owned by IDNR (50%), local governments (30%), nonprofits (10%), and private landowners (10%).

4.0 Grant Recipients: Conservation Land Trusts.

- **Conservation Land Trusts** are 501 (C)3, tax exempt organizations. There are 41 Conservation Land Trusts in Illinois and they own thousands of acres of Nature Preserves and Land and Water Reserves. They are experienced managers protecting over 200,000-acres of open space at the local level. Recipients cannot be taxing bodies or private land owners but local governments and private landowners can benefit if they own eligible lands.

5.0 Examples of Stewardship Projects: Examples of much needed practices include:

- Prescribed burning.
- Invasive and exotic species control
- Fencing
- Herbicide and prescribed fire training.

6.0 What H.B. 3458 Does not.

- Create a new or special fund,
- Take money from the Open Space Land Acquisition & Development (OSLAD) fund,
- Provide funds to acquire new land,
- Dedicate new state money for conservation purposes.