



Governor Pritzker Signed Illegal Logging Legislation

Rockford, IL – The Illinois Environmental Council announced today that **Governor J.B. Pritzker** signed legislation on Friday, July 19, 2019 that amends the Wrongful Tree Cutting Act. **HB3105**, which will increase penalties and provide compensation for damages and remediation costs as a result of illegal logging on protected land, passed in both the House and Senate with overwhelming support.

The IEC said that “HB3105, sponsored by **State Rep. Mary Edly-Allen (D- Libertyville)** and **State Sen. Steve Stadelman (D- Rockford)**, resolves shortcomings in current law that restrict conservation and preservation property owners from being adequately compensated for extensive damages incurred when someone illegally logs natural areas.”

“Trees are fundamental to natural areas throughout Illinois because they provide wildlife habitat, prevent soil erosion and filter water,” **said Rep. Edly-Allen**. “Despite all of these essential benefits, perpetrators of illegal logging in conservation areas throughout the state have gotten away without facing substantial consequences. My bill gets us a step closer to resolving that problem and I’m proud to send it to the governor’s desk.”

“Our preservation areas need to be protected so that generations to come can enjoy them. This legislation will make sure that when people take what isn’t theirs, they can be held responsible,” **said Sen. Stadelman**.

“The **Natural Land Institute**, a 501(c)3 conservation land trust suffered trespass and illegal logging on one of our protected preserves. We have an obligation to our donors and the general public to protect the habitats we say we are going to protect,” **said Kerry Leigh, executive director, Natural Land Institute**. “We are hopeful that this revision to the Wrongful Tree Cutting Act will serve as a real deterrent to illegal logging activities occurring across the state, as the true costs of remediation will be prescribed through this legislation. Thank you to our Legislators for their support of this bill.”

From the IEC:

Illegal logging is a problem in Illinois. Cutting trees improperly can lead to soil erosion, the spread of invasive species, damage to other flora and fauna - including endangered species - and other impacts to surrounding natural areas.

*“We thank Governor Pritzker for taking action and demonstrating support for these conservation efforts. HB 3105 will put more tools in the toolbox for our partners who manage conservation lands so they can better preserve habitats and wildlife in Illinois,” **said Jen Walling, executive director of the Illinois Environmental Council.***

*** MORE ***



Current law falls short of adequately compensating wronged landowners for the damages sustained from instances of illegal logging because it only considers the stumpage value of trees lost when wrongfully cut down. That is frequently not close to the additional costs associated with clean up, loss of ecosystem integrity, or the time it will take for restored vegetation to reestablish in the damaged area.

Gerald W. Adelman, president & CEO of Openlands said, “Openlands thanks Governor Pritzker and the General Assembly for supporting our state’s protected lands. These common sense changes to the Wrongful Tree Cutting Act uphold the integrity of protected areas by allowing stewards of Illinois’ natural resources to more fully recoup the value of damages done by illegal loggers and trespassers. The local governments, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and private landowners who care for Illinois’ natural legacy are stronger today because of this bill.”

HB 3105 closes the gap towards properly compensating the land trusts, conservation easement owners, forest preserves, park districts and others who oversee natural areas by ensuring compensation for the cost of the full damage incurred.

About the Illinois Environmental Council

Founded in 1975, IEC seeks to protect our environment by creating and advocating for sound environmental laws and policies. IEC represents over 90 environmental and community organizations and more than 300 individuals from throughout Illinois.

About the Natural Land Institute

The Natural Land Institute, an accredited conservation land trust, is a 501(c)3, non-profit organization based in Rockford, Illinois, which has protected more than 17,300 acres of natural land in Illinois since 1958. The current service area covers twelve counties in northern Illinois. NLI’s mission is to create an enduring legacy of natural land in northern Illinois for people, plants and animals. For more information and to donate: www.NaturalLand.org.

###

