**Section 1523.10 Program Objective**

The Ecosystems Program of Conservation 2000 ("Ecosystems Program") was developed by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to establish and protect a system of representative, functioning ecosystems in both public and private ownership. The Ecosystems Program provides technical, policy, administrative and financial assistance to Ecosystem Partnerships that are watershed or ecosystem based coalitions of individuals and organizations that are cooperating to improve the natural resource base of the watersheds where they live, work, and play, while promoting compatible and sustainable economic activity. It is the objective of the Ecosystems Program to promote the formation of these Ecosystem Partnerships. Adoption of bylaws is the most important foundation upon which each Ecosystem Partnership is built. It is the intent of the Department that each Ecosystem Partnership execute the responsibilities contained in this Part through an open and democratic process that provides an opportunity for broad participation of interested groups and individuals representing a cross section of geographic areas. Ecosystem Partnerships are encouraged to seek and gain non-profit status to be legally recognized. The Ecosystem Program promotes habitat preservation, restoration and enhancement of natural ecosystems within the context of the human environment. The mission of the Ecosystems Program is to monitor, maintain, enhance and restore the biodiversity and ecological conditions of Illinois' landscapes through local partnerships.

(Source: Amended at 27 Ill. Reg. 1144, effective January 9, 2003)