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SENATE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The protection and restoration of wildlife habitat is widely supported by the public, and the most recent Illinois Outdoor Recreation Survey found that 84% of Illinoisans agree that more wildlife habitat should be protected and restored; and

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WHEREAS, Investments in natural infrastructure provide multiple economic, environmental, and social benefits to communities that need functioning infrastructure and a healthy environment; and

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WHEREAS, Illinois has lost more than 95% of its original wetlands and 99% of its original open prairie, making it critical to protect the remaining natural habitat; and

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WHEREAS, Illinoisans' overwhelming support the role of parks and recreation facilities in their communities, especially for preserving open space and improving fitness and mental health; and

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WHEREAS, Outdoor recreation contributes to a healthy lifestyle for the State's youth and adults alike, and young people need more access to safe, outdoor experiences to counteract sedentary lifestyles and to offer alternatives to

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1 digital entertainment; and

2 WHEREAS, Economically disadvantaged communities are
3 disproportionately at risk from flooding due to loss of
4 permeable surfaces and are in the greatest need of open space
5 projects that can absorb floodwater that would otherwise damage
6 homes, businesses, and critical infrastructure; and

7 WHEREAS, The quantity of water supplied by aquifers, inland
8 streams, and Lake Michigan is limited, and land conservation
9 and restoration provides for the protection of drinking water
10 resources through water recharge and stream buffering; and

11 WHEREAS, Natural habitats have been shown to improve air
12 quality, and significant populations in Illinois live in areas
13 failing to meet federal air quality standards; and

14 WHEREAS, The Illinois State Wildlife Action Plan has won
15 national recognition but remains underfunded; and

16 WHEREAS, Hunting, fishing, and wildlife-associated
17 recreation currently support nearly 200,000 direct jobs and
18 generate \$7.8 billion in wages and salaries in Illinois; and

19 WHEREAS, Protection and restoration of natural areas is an
20 important component of state action on climate change, as

1 natural habitats sequester carbon through natural processes,
2 and open spaces make our communities and ecosystems more
3 resilient to the impacts of climate change; and

4 WHEREAS, Illinois park and forest preserve districts, land
5 trusts, and other organizations and units of governments are
6 challenged to fund habitat restoration, public access, trail,
7 and safety improvements at public open space holdings,
8 inhibiting natural resource value and public enjoyment at many
9 sites; and

10 WHEREAS, Land acquisition, restoration, and management are
11 capital-intensive investments; therefore, be it

12 RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL
13 ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that we recognize that
14 current funding for open space acquisition and management is
15 severely lacking, that capital budgets have traditionally
16 provided resources for land acquisition, stewardship, and
17 public recreational opportunities, and that the value of parks
18 and natural areas in improving public health, protecting
19 communities from flooding, improving air and water quality, and
20 generating economic activity is without question; and be it
21 further

22 RESOLVED, That we urge a significant new initiative be

1 included in any new capital spending plan to fund the
2 acquisition, restoration, and management of natural areas and
3 open spaces, which would include:

4 (1) A new statewide land acquisition program to protect
5 the State's most precious natural resources and provide
6 safe, quality outdoor non-motorized recreational
7 opportunities, including matching grants to local
8 governments and nonprofit land trusts and conservation
9 organizations;

10 (2) Implementation of the Hunting Heritage Protection
11 Act by increasing the amount of land acreage available for
12 hunting opportunities in Illinois; and

13 (3) Funding for capital improvements to state parks and
14 conservation lands that are consistent with natural
15 heritage protection and non-motorized recreation; and be
16 it further

17 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
18 delivered to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the
19 Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, the President
20 of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Director
21 of Natural Resources, and the Governor.