

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 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the
5 Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Act.

6 Section 5. Findings. The General Assembly finds it is in
7 the interest of the State to encourage natural solutions as
8 one component of the State's efforts to reduce and remediate
9 the impacts of climate change. Natural solutions must include
10 planting native trees and other vegetation demonstrated to
11 reduce carbon dioxide. To accomplish this purpose, the State
12 must offer assistance to other units of local government that
13 are taking steps to fight climate change by restoring forests,
14 wetlands, prairies, and other landscapes that are native to
15 Illinois and that are demonstrated to have a positive
16 environmental impact.

17 Section 10. State goal. It is the goal of the State that
18 there be no overall net loss of the State's existing forest,
19 prairie, or wetland acres or their functional value due to
20 State-supported activities. Further, the State and units of
21 local government shall preserve, enhance, and create forests,
22 prairies, and wetlands where practical in order to mitigate

1 the impact of climate change and reduce carbon dioxide from
2 the atmosphere.

3 Section 15. Receipt of federal moneys. The Department of
4 Natural Resources may receive federal moneys to administer a
5 Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program.

6 Section 20. Establishment of the Healthy Forests,
7 Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program.

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

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

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

20 (2) conservation land trusts;

21 (3) not-for-profit entities with conservation
22 missions, including, but not limited to, climate change
23 mitigation, preservation of natural lands, and
24 conservation of the State's natural resources; and

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

4 (c) At least 75% of the moneys appropriated for the
5 Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program shall be
6 awarded to the State agencies, units of local government, land
7 trusts, and other entities that the Department determines are
8 eligible for a grant under this Section. The Department may
9 use an amount not to exceed 23% of the moneys appropriated for
10 the Program for the purposes of restoring degraded forest
11 lands and native prairies and to promote the growth of native
12 vegetation that remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and
13 help mitigate the impact of climate change. The Department may
14 use an amount not to exceed 2% of the moneys appropriated for
15 the Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program for
16 administrative costs associated with the Program.

17 (d) The Department shall adopt any rules necessary for the
18 implementation of this Act, including rules establishing
19 requirements and timeframes for the submission of grant
20 applications by entities that are authorized to apply to
21 participate in the Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies
22 Grant Program.

23 (e) Grants provided under this Act may be used by eligible
24 entities for the purpose of:

25 (1) matching funds for federal or private dollars for
26 projects that forward the goal of climate change

1 mitigation through promotion of the management, planting,
2 maintaining, and preserving of native grasses, plants, and
3 trees;

4 (2) financing projects along roadways and in parks and
5 forest preserves on public or private lands to plant
6 native trees and prairie grasses demonstrated to absorb
7 carbon;

8 (3) financing projects that promote the stewardship of
9 existing public and private urban forests and natural
10 lands, including the removal of invasive or nonnative
11 plant species;

12 (4) funding regional teams tasked with planting native
13 prairie grasses and trees, prescribed burning for the
14 maintenance of natural lands, removing invasive plant
15 species, and educational outreach; and

16 (5) promoting education and marketing regarding local
17 projects or steps community members may take to promote
18 the growth of native vegetation that removes carbon
19 dioxide from the atmosphere.

20 Section 25. Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant
21 Fund. The Healthy Forest, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Fund
22 shall be administered by the Department of Natural Resources.
23 The Fund may receive moneys appropriated by the General
24 Assembly or from the federal government, private donations, or
25 any other legal source. Subject to the limitations in

1 subsection (c) of Section 20 of this Act, moneys in the Fund
2 shall be used by the Department for the purpose of providing
3 grant assistance in accordance with this Act and for the
4 purpose of administering the grant program established under
5 this Act.

6 Section 90. The Department of Natural Resources Act is
7 amended by changing Section 1-15 as follows:

8 (20 ILCS 801/1-15)

9 Sec. 1-15. General powers and duties.

10 (a) It shall be the duty of the Department to investigate
11 practical problems, implement studies, conduct research and
12 provide assistance, information and data relating to the
13 technology and administration of the natural history,
14 entomology, zoology, and botany of this State; the geology and
15 natural resources of this State; the water and atmospheric
16 resources of this State; and the archeological and cultural
17 history of this State.

18 (b) The Department (i) shall obtain, store, and process
19 relevant data; recommend technological, administrative, and
20 legislative changes and developments; cooperate with other
21 federal, state, and local governmental research agencies,
22 facilities, or institutes in the selection of projects for
23 study; cooperate with the Board of Higher Education and with
24 the public and private colleges and universities in this State

1 in developing relevant interdisciplinary approaches to
2 problems; and evaluate curricula at all levels of education
3 and provide assistance to instructors and (ii) may sponsor an
4 annual conference of leaders in government, industry, health,
5 and education to evaluate the state of this State's
6 environment and natural resources.

7 (c) The Director, in accordance with the Personnel Code,
8 shall employ such personnel, provide such facilities, and
9 contract for such outside services as may be necessary to
10 carry out the purposes of the Department. Maximum use shall be
11 made of existing federal and state agencies, facilities, and
12 personnel in conducting research under this Act.

13 (c-5) The Department may use the services of, and enter
14 into necessary agreements with, outside entities for the
15 purpose of evaluating grant applications and for the purpose
16 of administering or monitoring compliance with grant
17 agreements. Contracts under this subsection shall not exceed 5
18 2 years, without an executed extension in length.

19 (d) In addition to its other powers, the Department has
20 the following powers:

21 (1) To obtain, store, process, and provide data and
22 information related to the powers and duties of the
23 Department under this Act. This subdivision (d)(1) does
24 ~~not~~ give authority to the Department to require reports
25 from nongovernmental sources or entities.

26 (2) To cooperate with and support the Illinois Science

1 and Technology Advisory Committee and the Illinois
2 Coalition for the purpose of facilitating the effective
3 operations and activities of such entities. Support may
4 include, but need not be limited to, providing space for
5 the operations of the Committee and the Illinois
6 Coalition.

7 (e) The Department is authorized to make grants to local
8 not-for-profit organizations for the purposes of development,
9 management, maintenance, and study of wetland areas, forests,
10 prairies, and other landscapes demonstrated to reduce the
11 impact of climate change.

12 (f) The Department has the authority to accept, receive
13 and administer on behalf of the State any gifts, bequests,
14 donations, income from property rental and endowments. Any
15 such funds received by the Department shall be deposited into
16 the DNR Special Projects Fund, a trust fund in the State
17 treasury, and used for the purposes of this Act or, when
18 appropriate, for such purposes and under such restrictions,
19 terms and conditions as are predetermined by the donor or
20 grantor of such funds or property. Any accrued interest from
21 money deposited into the DNR Special Projects Fund shall be
22 reinvested into the Fund and used in the same manner as the
23 principal. The Director shall maintain records which account
24 for and assure that restricted funds or property are disbursed
25 or used pursuant to the restrictions, terms or conditions of
26 the donor.

1 (g) The Department shall recognize, preserve, and promote
2 our special heritage of recreational hunting and trapping by
3 providing opportunities to hunt and trap in accordance with
4 the Wildlife Code.

5 (h) Within 5 years after the effective date of this
6 amendatory Act of the 102nd General Assembly, the Department
7 shall fly a United States Flag, an Illinois flag, and a POW/MIA
8 flag at all State parks. Donations may be made by groups and
9 individuals to the DNR Special Projects Fund for costs related
10 to the implementation of this subsection.

11 (Source: P.A. 102-388, eff. 1-1-22; 102-699, eff. 4-19-22;
12 103-363, eff. 7-28-23.)

13 Section 95. The State Finance Act is amended by adding
14 Section 5.1015 as follows:

15 (30 ILCS 105/5.1015 new)

16 Sec. 5.1015. The Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies
17 Grant Fund.