

**Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
Report to the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission  
May 6, 2008**

Natural Areas Evaluation Committee

The Natural Areas Evaluation Committee met in Springfield on April 16, 2008. A summary of actions taken at the meeting follows:

**Site Issues**

**District 3 - Lee County**

Lowell Park - INAI #1622 (Cat. I) - **Approved**

Category III added for Nature Preserve and Boundary expanded to include Hazelwood Forest & Lowell Forest Nature Preserves dedicated at the 197<sup>th</sup> INPC Meeting.

**District 9 - Cook County**

Gensburg-Markham Prairie - INAI #0400 (Cat. I, II & III) - **Approved**

Proposed boundary expansion to include additions to the Gensburg-Markham Prairie Nature Preserve added at the 196<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting.

**District 12 - Iroquois County**

Hooper Branch Savanna - INAI#0577 (Cat. II, III & IV) - **Approved**

Proposed boundary expansion to include additions to the Iroquois Sands Land and Water Reserve approved at the 197<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting.

**District 23 - Jackson County**

Lake Kinkaid Area North and South - INAI#1170 (Category II)- **Approved**

This proposed boundary change is based upon NAEC guidelines adopted in 2002 for snake denning/birthing areas. This site has been without a boundary since 2001 when a proposed boundary expansion was denied. The boundary for the geologic area will revert to pre 2001 boundaries.

**After discussions, the following actions were taken. The boundary of the SW Kinkaid Rt 3 site was expanded to include the immediately adjacent proposed site. The site proposed north of Kinkaid lake will be called North Kinkaid. The geological area will revert back to the previous name and boundary, Crain Geological Area INAI#0465.**

Post Oak Glade - INAI#1599 (Category II & VI)- **Approved**

This proposed boundary change is based upon NAEC guidelines adopted in 2002 for snake denning/birthing areas. The previous area was based upon a smaller radius.

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**After some discussion, it was proposed to come up with a list of INAI sites that have timber rattlesnakes associated with them, and occurrences of the species not associated with INAI sites to ensure that the 2002 standards & guidelines are being consistently applied to denning/birthing areas.**

### **District 24 - Pope County**

#### Big Grand Pierre Site - INAI #0369 (Cat. I & II) - **Approved**

Proposed boundary expansion to include additions to the Big Grand Pierre Land and Water Reserve approved at the 197<sup>th</sup> INPC meeting.

There was some discussion about vegetation sampling procedure for shrubs and small saplings to be able to directly comparable with the original INAI data. Approval was given to coordinate with the INAI Update team to come up with a data collection standard for this stratum and to inform the NAEC of the agreed upon changes at the next meeting.

### Land Acquisition

A 12 acre tract was acquired as an addition to South Shore State Park in Clinton County on January 25. The tract provides habitat for a population of massasauga rattlesnakes, an endangered species.

### Personnel Changes

Cindi Jablonski has left her position as a graduate student worker in Region II to accept employment as a regional ecologist on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Update. Cindi will be working in northern Illinois.

### Wildlife Preservation Fund

Donations to the Wildlife Preservation Fund totaled \$103,310 as of April 4.

Staff review of FY09 project proposals has been completed. Staff recommendations for funding will be reviewed by a citizens' advisory committee before the final recommendations are presented to the Director of DNR for approval. It is anticipated that approximately \$43,000 will be awarded for small projects (<\$2,000 each) and \$160,000

### Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Update

Work on the update contract continues to progress and the contractor is on target for completion of most of the deliverables, as outlined within the scope of work. The major accomplishment of the last quarter is that the regional ecologists have been hired and have been receiving fairly intense training in photo interpretation and site evaluation (see attached regional ecologist map and bios) over the past few months. The one issue of particular importance with the contract is that with the imminent departure of Dr. Brian Anderson to the Illinois Natural History Survey, Lincoln Land Community College has

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expressed an interest in having the INAI Update contract assigned to the U of I and/or the Illinois Natural History Survey. While this assignment is allowed, the process is in the early stages and many of the details remain to be worked out. It is anticipated that we could have an assignment agreement in place between all of the interested parties and an effective assignment date of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008.

### The Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Update Regional Ecologists



Cindi Jablonski will be working in 15 counties in far northern Illinois, Region 1. Cindi Jablonski has a Bachelor's degree in biology from Northeastern Illinois University and is a 2008 Masters Candidate at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Prior to accepting this position, she worked as a field-based Resident with the Illinois

Department of Natural Resources. Cindi has also held several research positions with the Illinois Natural History Survey including researching the bioaccumulation of ecological contaminants by zebra mussels and their effects on the State endangered Common Terns, working with endangered wetland birds in Northeastern Illinois, and monitoring nutrient pollution in McHenry County streams. She also currently serves as Vice President for The McHenry County Conservation Foundation.



Connie Carroll-Cunningham will be working in Region 2, comprising 28 counties in east central Illinois. Connie graduated from the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana with a Bachelor's in Animal Science and a Master's in Forestry, focusing on forest ecology. Connie has worked for the past 10 ½ years as a full-time

botanist for the Critical Trends Assessment Program at the Illinois Natural History Survey. She also serves as the volunteer regional ecologist for the former Prairie Grove Volunteers and currently serves as the Secretary for the State board of the Illinois Native Plant.



Megan Timpe will be working in Region 3, which includes 19 counties in west central Illinois. Megan Timpe is from St. Louis, but moved to Decatur, Illinois to attend Millikin University where she earned a Bachelor's degree in 2004. Megan studied under Dr. Roger

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Anderson at Illinois State University where she researched the reproductive success of garlic mustard, an invasive species. Upon graduation, Meg worked for the Missouri Department of Conservation where she surveyed vegetation to study the effects of timber harvest on Ozark woodland ground flora.



Emily Stork will be stationed in Region 4, which includes 25 counties in south-central Illinois. Emily Stork, formerly Emily Marten of rural Raymond, earned a BS in Environmental Science from the University of St. Francis in Joliet, IL in 2005. She worked as a teaching and summer research assistant in the Department of Plant Biology at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale where she is working on finishing her Master's research, focusing on invasive species in dolomite prairie plant communities. Since the completion of her coursework, she worked in the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Residency Program with the Illinois Nature Preserves.



Christopher Benda will be responsible for Region 5, which includes the 15 southernmost Illinois counties. Christopher D. Benda, a native of Minnesota, attended Winona State University in Winona, MN where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science in 2002. Chris Benda attended graduate school at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign where he used radio-telemetry for use in recovery efforts for the Blanding's Turtle in Lake County. Since completing his Master's degree in Biology in 2007, he has worked for the Missouri Department of Conservation, assessing the caves and woodlands of the Ozarks as an Assistant Natural History Biologist.

A process for nominating a site for the regional ecologist to evaluate will be developed and posted on the INAI web site. Visit <http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/inai/> for this and other information about the INAI Update.