

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

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PROTECTION GUIDELINES

DEDICATION OF LAND AS AN ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVE

What is “Dedication”?

Dedication is a legal process whereby the owner voluntarily restricts future uses of the land in perpetuity for the purpose of preserving the land in its natural state and to perpetuate natural conditions. The owner retains custody but gives up the right to develop the land or make any changes that negatively affect the natural qualities on the property. Dedication is the strongest protection that can be given to land and protects an area even from the threat of condemnation. The permanent protection provided by dedication continues through future conveyances of the land. Dedication does not require the owner to take any measures to protect the dedicated property against the action of nature or of third parties. Only very high quality natural lands qualify for dedication as Illinois Nature Preserves. Qualifying lands in private, corporate, or government ownership can be dedicated as Illinois Nature Preserves.

How is Dedication Accomplished?

After the land is dedicated, it becomes part of a statewide system of nature preserves, which is overseen by a nine-person citizen body appointed by the Governor, called the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. Legislation enacted in 1963 established the nature preserves system to permanently preserve ecologically significant natural land in Illinois.

What are the Objectives of the Nature Preserve System?

- * to provide habitat for native plants and animals
- * to preserve adequate examples of all significant types of natural communities and features occurring in the State

- * to allow and facilitate, dependent upon the landowners' permission, the visitation of the nature preserves for nature observation, study, education, and aesthetic appreciation, in such manner and to such degree as will not modify natural conditions
- * to provide perpetual protection for the preserve against intrusions

How are Dedicated Areas Managed and Used?

Nature preserves are managed to preserve and enhance natural communities and populations of native plants and animals typical of presettlement conditions, using a variety of management techniques, including prescribed fire, brush removal, exotic species control, and exclusion of incompatible uses. The Rules for Management for Illinois Nature Preserves govern the management of nature preserves. Specific management needs are identified by Nature Preserves Commission staff, and a master management plan for the long-term management of the preserve is prepared cooperatively by the Commission and owner.

Allowable use of the preserve is limited to nonconsumptive, nondestructive activities such as hiking, botanizing, bird watching, etc. Uses which may damage the area's natural features, such as camping, horseback riding, snowmobiling, all-terrain vehicle use, hunting, plant removal, introduction of plant species, and wood collection are not permitted.

What are the Advantages to the Landowner?

Dedication provides assurance to the landowner that future generations of a family, future personnel in an agency, or future boards in a corporation, will by virtue of the dedication, also protect the natural features for which the area was recognized. To many landowners, the knowledge that their decision to protect this land for future generations, in and of itself, provides great satisfaction. In addition, for land that is dedicated as an Illinois Nature Preserve, the property taxes are reduced to the assessed value of \$1.00/acre/year, in perpetuity.

Dedication may also provide an income tax deduction in that the value of the dedication can be appraised and treated as a charitable deduction. All of the advantages of an easement are probably applicable to dedication as well.