

ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

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PROTECTION GUIDELINES

REGISTER OF LAND AND WATER RESERVES

A JOINT PROGRAM OF THE ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION
AND THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

What is the Register of Land and Water Reserves?

The Register of Land and Water Reserves is a voluntary land and water protection program that provides protection and management for lands and waters supporting significant natural heritage or archaeological resources. Registered Reserves may be in public or private ownership. The agreement to register an area as a Registered Reserve is similar to a conservation easement and is between the landowner and the Department of Natural Resources and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission jointly. The agreement may be for a term of years or permanent. The landowner continues to own the registered property, except certain rights as specified in the registration agreement are given up. The property can be sold or passed on to heirs subject to the agreement.

Eligibility

Lands and waters eligible for registration include the following:

- * Lands and waters included on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory.
- * Habitats of State listed threatened species of animals or plants.
- * Forests at least 100 acres in size that support breeding populations of area sensitive forest wildlife species.
- * Grasslands at least 80 acres in size that support breeding populations of area sensitive grassland wildlife species.
- * Wetlands at least 50 acres in size or an area that includes several wetlands totaling 50 acres in size.
- * Degraded but restorable prairies at least 20 acres in size.

- * Segments of degraded but restorable railroad prairie at least 1 mile in length.
- * Areas supporting unusual concentrations of wildlife such as nesting colonies; hibernating colonies; and migration stopover, feeding and rest sites.
- * Restorations of natural communities of plants and animals that existed in Illinois at the time of settlement by immigrants from Europe for which no high quality examples are known within the region.
- * Areas supporting significant archaeological resources.

How are Registered Reserves Managed and Used?

The registration agreement determines the allowable use and management of a Registered Land and Water Reserve. A management program is developed for each Registered Reserve which states the preservation, restoration, and management goals and objectives specific to the reserve. Management activities allowed on Nature Preserves under the Rules for Management for Illinois Nature Preserves are allowed on Registered Land and Water Reserves. Plowing, cultivating, paving, or grading are prohibited, as is the altering of natural water levels. Hiking, bird watching, nature observation and study, scientific research, canoeing, hunting, trapping, fishing, and photography are allowed on a Registered Reserve. Picnicking and primitive camping may be allowed in designated areas. Cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and bicycling are allowed on Registered Reserves only on designated trails. Operation of off-road vehicles and snowmobiles is allowed only on pre-existing designated surfaced thoroughfares. No living or dead plant or animal material, or inorganic material including soils, minerals, or water, may be removed from a Registered Reserve unless the removal is part of a management program, an approved wildlife management plan or forest management plan, or for purposes of scientific research. Livestock grazing is not allowed unless provided for in the management program. All management activities and uses on Registered Reserves are subject to landowner approval. The landowner may close the Registered Reserve to public use.

What are the Advantages to the Landowner?

Registration of an area provides some assurance to the landowner that the natural features or archaeological significance for which the area was recognized will be protected. Before any agency or entity of State or local government may undertake an action that will disrupt natural vegetation or natural communities on a Registered Reserve, there must be a finding by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources that the action is in the public interest. Lands and waters permanently registered are assessed for property tax purposes at a rate which is equal to 1/4 of that percentage of its fair market value otherwise established by law (counties other than Cook = 8 1/3% of the property's fair market value; Cook County = 25% of the percentage of fair market value established by county ordinance).