

PRIVATE LAND ACCESS INFORMATION

Prepared for the Public Access Committee
Conservation Congress

August 27, 2009

1. Gunkel, N. 1988. Place to Hunt Committee: A cooperative Illinois program. Trans. North American Wildlife and Natural Resource Conference 53: 350-360. This article provides a summary of recommendations made by the Place to Hunt Committee formed back in 1985.
2. Access Illinois Outdoor web site information. This program had its beginning with the Department of Natural Resources and is now solely administered by Two Rivers Resource Conservation and Development, Inc.
3. Public Access Proposal developed by the Adhoc Deer Committee under the direction of Jim Reimer.
4. Private Land Access Program Work Group: Proposed hunting and access programs resulting from meetings facilitated by John Buhnerkempe. The Work Group was organized at the request of Representative Jim Watson.
5. Access Program recommendation prepared for the Joint Task Force for Deer Population Control by Jerry Beverlin.

ITEM #1

Place To Hunt Committee: A Cooperative Illinois Program

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The Committee and Its Recommendations

The Place To Hunt Committee is a cooperative effort between the Illinois Departments of Conservation and Agriculture. The committee began in December 1985, as an informal body seeking to improve landowner/sportsman relations and thereby open more private property to public access. In March 1987, the Governor of Illinois endorsed a formal, cooperative agreement between these two departments to continue the Place To Hunt Committee as an established advisory body. Eighteen committee members represent the two aforementioned departments and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs, farm organizations, individual farmers and sportsmen.

Several factors motivated the Department of Agriculture to become involved in public access issues. The acreage reduction and conservation programs of the 1985 Food Security Act has increased habitat and upland game in Illinois. The continually expanding white-tailed deer herd and dramatic success of wild turkey restoration have brought greater opportunities for sportsmen. The same expansion has resulted in more complaints by the farm community of crop damage and hunter trespass. The Department of Agriculture is also interested in economic opportunities afforded farmers who wish to utilize their land for recreation.

The state's 36 million acres are 95 percent privately owned. Approximately 29 million acres are utilized for farming practices; 22 million acres are used to produce intensively cultivated and managed crops such as corn, soybeans and wheat. The 1985 Food Security Act chartered a new direction for land use in Illinois. More than 344,000 acres were enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program through 1987. The 1988 total should approach 0.5 million acres. More than 3.3 million acres are also enrolled in the annual acreage set-aside program.

There are approximately 12 million people in Illinois, including approximately 325,000 farmers and their families farming about 80,000 farms. The farm population has decreased substantially to the point where half as many farmers are managing half as many farms, which are twice the size as those in production 30 years ago. During this 30-year span, the population of Illinois has grown from 7.2 million to 11.9 million. These trends indicate a changing environment for recreation on private property.

The Place To Hunt survey (discussed later) revealed that most sportsmen allowed access to property already are known to the farmer. The vastly decreased number of farmers in Illinois and a substantially higher urban population set the stage for difficulty in finding land on which urban residents—most of whom do not have acquaintance with rural landowners—are allowed to pursue their sport. Sportsmen who are strangers to farmers are much higher profile than neighbors or other known parties who used to frequent the larger acreages of naturally occurring wildlife habitat.

Sales of general hunting licenses in Illinois have decreased from 476,471 in 1960 to 321,000 in 1987. The impact on Illinois lands has remained high in the eyes of the farm sector because, while fewer sportsmen pursue upland game, the natural habitat and general upland game populations have decreased substantially. High-profile recreation, such as the six-day firearm deer-hunting season, cannot be overlooked by any rural resident. Approximately 100,000 hunters are licensed to pursue white-tailed deer with firearms in Illinois and spend more than 400,000 man-days afield. Current estimates indicate that hunting for all species accounts for 6.7 million days afield annually in open seasons in Illinois.

A key element in hunting and other recreations in Illinois is the use of private land. Public lands alone cannot sufficiently provide the variety of recreational opportunities required by the public or even begin to provide adequate wildlife habitat for the diversity of species existing throughout the state. The sale of hunting licenses franchises and legalizes hundreds of thousands of people and millions of man-days of field recreation annually. This recreation is primarily conducted on private property.

Committee Recommendations

The Place To Hunt Committee has reviewed landowner/sportsman relations programs from a number of other states. These programs have assisted in the formulation of recommendations for Illinois. The committee has also considered the results of the conservation/recreation survey, partially reproduced here, in making recommendations. This survey of farmers revealed that three primary barriers exist to access to private property: fear of liability; unauthorized access or trespass; and property damage/unethical behavior. The state can employ several methods to reduce the impact of these problems and improve the climate for outdoor recreation in Illinois.

Liability

For some time, the Illinois Department of Conservation has been attempting to strengthen the Recreational Use of Land and Water Areas Act. This law affords protection to landowners allowing recreational use without charge. In 1986 and 1987, the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the committee took an active role in promoting the passage of this legislation. The new law, Public Act 85-959, signed December 8, 1987, provides greater protection from liability for landowners allowing recreational use of their property. The law also provides greater flexibility for incentives received by property owners allowing access.

The law will assist in abating liability fears in the State of Illinois. In order to make the improved statute known to landowners, an educational and promotional program needs to be undertaken. This effort can be enhanced with the assistance of the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service and other university resources. A layman's explanation of the current recreational/trespass statutes can be prepared under the banner of a new law for Illinois. The explanation should clearly inform landowners as to the laws' features and what protection they will and will not receive. Accompanying this layman's explanation should be a copy of the Recreational Use of Land and Water Areas Act. This information can be printed at the Illinois Department of Agriculture's print shop. Distribution should be through Extension Offices, Farm Bureaus, USDA Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation

Service offices, and any other appropriate government interfaces with Illinois landowners.

Accompanying this information could be a copy of the model Waiver of Liability, as drafted by the Illinois Department of Agriculture, Illinois Department of Conservation and the Attorney General's Office of the State of Illinois. Inclusion of a smaller landowner permission card, with a much abbreviated version of an ethical pledge to respect property and exhibit safety and a brief "hold harmless" statement should be considered. The State of Illinois can give credit to legitimate sportsmen by allowing them to participate in programs that identify those individuals as responsible outdoor resource users. This concept adds a new dimension to the potential for improved relations between sportsmen and landowners.

Trespass

Illinois has undertaken noble but mostly passive measures to reduce trespass. State law requires that permission be acquired prior to anyone entering another's land for recreational purposes. This concept, however, is conveyed to the sportsmen of Illinois in a less than aggressive manner, as it is not part of any major advertising or promotion campaign. Hunter education regarding this law is one area that can be improved. Based on a review of the landowner survey statistics, discussions in the committee meetings, ag sector complaints, and a review of the 1986 trespass violations (as written by the Illinois Department of Conservation police officers), a strengthening of programs in Illinois to abate trespass is necessary. Unauthorized trespass was a concern of 77 percent of the statewide sample of farmers surveyed. "Ask Before Entering" efforts are already underway in the Illinois Department of Conservation. The number of instances of trespass, where citations were issued by the Illinois Department of Conservation, is insignificant compared with the magnitude of the problem in Illinois.

Trespass abatement requires education on the part of the landowner, law enforcement officials and, most importantly, the Illinois sportsmen. Signs, media advertising, additional enforcement, law changes and information dissemination could all be employed to reduce this perpetual and unwanted problem.

Hunter safety programs for youngsters and adults are methods to improve ethical behavior and reduce trespass. The expansion of hunter safety, snowmobile safety and boating safety programs to educate adults in ethical behavior and its importance for the continuance of their outdoor sports should be strongly considered.

The committee recommends that the Illinois Department of Conservation and Illinois Department of Agriculture cooperate in strengthening penalties for recreational trespass. A new section of Chapter 61 of the Illinois Revised Statutes can be added to define recreational trespass. The abatement of trespass should be reinforced as a priority issue with conservation police officers and county law enforcement officials. The specific penalty for trespass under the wildlife code is the posting of \$50 in cash bail. This bail effectively represents a fine as it is normally forfeited when the violator does not appear in court. The published implementation of a higher bail or fine can be used as a psychological deterrent and part of a new initiative even if actual prosecutions are not increased greatly.

The committee further recommends that the Illinois Department of Conservation utilize its administrative powers to revoke license privileges for repeat trespass vi-

olators. For instance, a second-offense trespasser would not only be fined but lose hunting privileges for one year; third-offense violators lose privileges for five years. The committee believes there is an undefined, negative, landowner reaction to perpetual abuse of access privileges. Over time, this results in increased no trespassing signs, unavailable land for any recreational use and greatly diminished images of outdoor recreationists.

Education/Promotion Efforts

The Illinois Department of Conservation should undertake an aggressive education and promotion program to improve outdoor sportsmanship and ethics in this state. This program could be linked to the safety programs already in existence. Methods to strengthen the behavioral portions of these programs can be studied and hopefully implemented. The St. Louis School District and the State of Maryland are already including ethical behavior training in their high school and grade school systems. Information on ethical behavior training should be collected by the Illinois Department of Conservation and utilized to strengthen this portion of its existing training program and incorporated in any future public relations program.

Staff Support

To coordinate the implementation of these recommendations, a full-time employee and the addition of funds to support necessary programs are recommended. The Illinois Department of Conservation, Illinois Department of Agriculture, and Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs should share the cost of this full-time employee. A Memorandum of Understanding could be developed between the three departments, outlining their roles and the role of the employee. It is recommended that participation on the part of the Illinois Department of Agriculture and Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs diminish in subsequent years, with the Illinois Department of Conservation eventually fully supporting the program. The new employee's title could be "Coordinator of Landowner/Sportsman Relations." The employee would work closely with the Division of Law Enforcement's Hunter Safety Education Program, the Division of Information and Education, and the Division of Wildlife Resources' Private Lands Wildlife Habitat Management Program, all within the Department of Conservation. The employee would also be required to coordinate activities with other agencies, such as the Tourism Division of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs and USDA's Land Management Programs.

It should be stated here that it is not the committee's intent to recommend programs or methods that will expand greatly the cost of recreation in Illinois or embody huge administrative costs or other large budget commitments to implement. It is our belief that substantial progress can be made through minor legal changes, redirecting of some advertising resources and refocusing of some administrative priorities to increase attention on the important issues herein addressed. Infrastructures are already in place to reach all sportsmen and landowners in our state without building new delivery systems.

Additional Concepts

An additional step could be taken to protect landowners relative to liability and damage to property—the first and third most important barriers in allowing public

access. That step is one of establishment of a state insurance pool or indemnification program to protect the property owner. Committee research has not revealed a sufficient number of lawsuits to cause the state legal, administrative or financial damage. However, a law to set up an insurance pool to protect farmers and their insurance companies from litigation brought by licensed and legal sportsmen engaged in recreational activities would be a strong step in improving the perception of liability in Illinois.

The indemnification of livestock is used in the State of Montana; however, claims against the indemnification fund have been minor. Such a fund in Illinois could not only provide purchased insurance or an insurance pool maintained by the State of Illinois to protect landowners from lawsuits stemming from recreational use, but could also provide property damage protection. Time and again, farmers have used the tired but sometimes true argument that livestock were shot on their property. Damage to livestock, fences or other personal property by licensed sportsmen could easily be paid for by the State of Illinois without any significant financial burden. The ability to implement a program where *proven* damage to such livestock and property is reimbursed by the state could greatly allay fears of landowners. In 1987, the State of Montana indemnified landowners against livestock damage in approximately one-third of the state. It spent less than \$800 to do this. In 1988, Montana plans to expand the program statewide and does not expect to spend more than \$5,000 Rich Clough (Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks) personal communications: 1987). This is excellent public relations at a very reasonable rate.

While the Illinois Department of Agriculture does not intend to promote fee hunting actively, we believe some fee hunting will inevitably exist. This will give direct economic importance to proper wildlife management techniques on private property. It will reduce pressure on public lands now managed for wildlife and reduce pressure on private lands where free hunting exists. Regardless of the state of fee hunting, it will require continued vigilance on the part of the Illinois Department of Conservation and Illinois Department of Agriculture to ensure that the state is encouraging and directing trends in recreational land use rather than reacting to land-use changes. In order to ensure that this kind of foresight exists in our programs, we should maintain an advisory structure comprised of the agriculture, recreation and tourism segment of our state to identify emerging trends and prepare to direct these trends for the greatest benefit.

To accomplish this, the committee recommends that a permanent advisory body continue, which will include representatives from the Illinois Farm Bureau, Farmers' Union and any other organizations representing a substantial segment of the farm population. Nonaffiliated farmer representation is also important. Since we are using resources found on property owned by private, rural landowners, their opinions are essential and should be incorporated into recreation and tourism plans in this state. Rural landowners should become advisors to our programs and partners in recreation and tourism in the State of Illinois.

Inclusion of the Committee's Report

The President's Commission on the American Outdoors issued its report and recommendations to the President in December 1986. That report clearly identifies tremendous importance of outdoor recreation to our country. The Commission recommended "... a 'prairie fire' of local action to sweep the nation, encouraging

investment in outdoor recreation opportunities and rededication to the protection of our great natural heritage. . . . We believe that we must enter a new age of partnership, among private businesses, nonprofit organizations, local associations, and all levels of government. The private sector holds immeasurable potential for the delivery of outdoor recreation." The Commission's report also noted that linking private and public recreation is essential.

The programs and concepts the Place To Hunt Committee recommends, speak directly to the issue of engaging the private sector, through cooperation, encouragement, incentives, and common sense. If monetary or other benefits accrue to landowners, they should come naturally through the evolution of hunting and recreational use in the United States. Human nature and private property rights dictate that public use of private property is a somewhat unnatural condition. Our challenge and charge should be to set a climate in Illinois in which sportsmen and landowners work together for mutual benefit.

We believe the implementation of programs outlined herein will carry Illinois far toward the goal of better landowner/sportsman relations and better recreation and tourism for the state. We believe these programs can be implemented without great cost to government. This is certainly an important part of this recommendation, given current and possibly long-term future conditions. In our work with these programs, it has become abundantly clear that many reports are generated by different branches of government. Many good recommendations could be better implemented with oversight and cooperation among all federal, state and local entities working in these related fields. For that cooperation to exist, strong top-down leadership must be in place and willing to exert the necessary pressure to ensure cooperation and optimization of resource use. It is our sincere hope that this environment will be established and maintained as programs are developed and initiated, and as budgets are formulated for recreation and tourism in Illinois.

Illinois' private land base is used for one of its highest purposes in the production of agricultural commodities. Recreation can, in many cases, be a compatible use of the land base and certainly is a requisite of a healthy society. Illinois has been a leader in many disciplines in our nation. It should now step up to the role of a leader in recreation and tourism, and in developing acceptable and mutually productive methods for public recreation on private property.

The Conservation/Recreation Survey

The Place To Hunt Committee unanimously agreed on a need for basic data regarding the condition of private property access in the State of Illinois. A subcommittee was formed representing both state departments, wildlife biologists and farmers. The subcommittee worked with the Illinois Agricultural Statistics Service to create a special survey soliciting information from farmers on conservation and recreation issues. This survey was conducted by the Service using its normal methodologies and a random sample from the Illinois Farm Operator Lists. The total cost of the survey was \$4,600, shared equally by the Illinois Departments of Agriculture, Conservation, and Commerce and Community Affairs. The committee has used this information in formulating recommendations to improve landowner/sportsman relations. It is also considered an appropriate benchmark to assess the success of future programs. The data were collected before passage of the revised Recreational Use

of Land and Water Areas Act, and prior to any significant release of information about committee actions and recommendations. If actions proposed by the committee are implemented, this survey can be repeated any number of years to help evaluate their effectiveness. It is important to emphasize the benchmark qualities of the survey data because of the nature of the programs and actions we are supporting.

A four-page questionnaire was mailed on September 4, 1987, to a random sample of 1,197 farm operators. Those not returning the questionnaires by mail were contacted by telephone. A total of 622 reports was tabulated. Twenty percent of the original sample were no longer farming; 11 percent refused to participate in the survey; and 17 percent were inaccessible. Basic information questions about each farm were asked in order to summarize results by type of farm, type of land-operating arrangement and size of farm, in addition to geographic-breakdowns. Operators were asked to report the number and kind of game species present on their farms, if these animals had caused any significant crop damage, and if they would like more, fewer or no change in the species populations. They were then asked a series of 19 questions concerning their attitudes, opinions and experience about hunting and other recreational activities on their farms. Table 1 shows, by Crop Reporting District, the percentage of reporting farms with crop-only operations, crop and livestock operations, average farm size and type of land arrangement. Also shown is the percentage of reporting land in the 10-year Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the 1-year Feed Grain Set-aside Program (ACP). Other survey results are shown by District or by type of farm only when there was a significant difference from the state average or percentage.

Highlights of Survey Results

The average size of farm in the survey was 450 acres. Slightly more than half of the farms reported livestock as part of their farm operation. Thirty-four percent of those reporting owned all the land in their farming operation; 14 percent rented all the land; and 52 percent had a combination of owned and rented land (Table 1).

Table 1. Selected characteristics of Illinois farms.

Crop reporting district	Average acreage	Farm operator ^a		Ownership ^b		Land in ^c	
		Crops only	Crops and livestock	Own all	Rent all	Rent and own	CRP ^d ACP ^e
Northwest	408	36.2	63.8	47.8	11.6	40.6	1.5 66.5
Northcentral	402	51.4	48.6	29.2	26.4	44.4	1.4 62.5
Central	518	39.7	60.3	29.4	11.8	58.8	7.4 80.9
Southcentral	528	52.0	48.0	24.0	21.3	54.7	1.3 80.0
East	423	65.4	34.6	25.6	18.0	56.4	5.1 87.2
West	490	38.1	61.9	41.3	9.5	49.2	9.5 74.6
Northwest	371	47.1	52.9	38.6	12.8	48.6	4.3 68.6
Northcentral	390	32.8	67.2	34.4	4.9	60.7	4.9 59.0
Central	520	43.9	56.1	42.4	3.0	54.6	9.1 65.2
Average	450	45.8	54.2	34.4	13.7	51.9	4.8 72.0

^aPercentage.
^bCRP = Conservation Reserve Program.
^cACP = Feed Grain Set-aside Program.

If there were sufficient wildlife, do you view hunting as very desirable, somewhat desirable, undesirable or no opinion? (Table 2). Twenty-three percent of those surveyed viewed hunting as very desirable, 42 percent as somewhat desirable and 25 percent viewed it as undesirable. Forty percent of those surveyed in the Northeast Crop Reporting District viewed hunting as undesirable, as did 32 percent in both the Northwest and the East Crop Reporting districts. Farm operators with livestock viewed hunting more favorably than did those with crop-only operations. Seventy-one percent of farm operators with livestock viewed hunting as desirable, compared with 59 percent of the crop-only operations. Twenty-nine percent of farms with 500 or more acres viewed hunting as undesirable, compared with 23 percent of those farms with less than 500 acres.

Seventy-nine percent reported that someone hunted on their land in the past three years. The Northeast District had the lowest percentage reported in this category, with 65 percent; the Southeast was highest, with 97 percent reporting someone hunting. Eighty-four percent of farm operators with livestock allowed hunting on their land, compared with 74 percent for crop-only operations. The game animals most often hunted were deer and rabbit. Acquaintances of the farm operators were those who hunted the operators' land most often, followed by the farm operator himself and his immediate family. Twenty-three percent allowed recreational access other than hunting.

Have you charged a fee for hunting on this farm during the past year? Almost no farm operators surveyed currently charge a fee for hunting or are leasing any land for any recreational purpose. Nine percent reported that they were considering charging a fee, although 28 percent in the Northwest Crop Reporting District were considering such a fee. Eighteen percent of tenant-only operators were considering charging a fee.

How many times have you been asked permission to hunt on your land over the past three years? How often have you observed hunters on your farm who did not ask permission? Farmers were asked for permission to hunt an average of 10 times during the past three years. They observed hunters on their farm who did not ask permission an average of six times during that period. Slightly more than half of

Table 2. Illinois farm owner/operator perception of the desirability of recreational hunting.

Crop reporting district	Owner/operator perception of hunting (in percentage)	
	Desirable or somewhat desirable	Undesirable
Northwest	58	32
Northcentral	53	40
Central	69	24
West	68	24
East	58	32
West southwest	73	17
East southeast	69	16
Southwest	72	18
Southeast	74	18
Average	66	25

those surveyed said they did not post their land, though larger farms tended to post their land more than did smaller farms.

Eighty-three percent of the respondents indicated concern about allowing others to hunt on their land (Table 3). Of those with concerns, liability, unauthorized trespass and risk of property damage were most often flagged as sources of reservation.

Respondents felt that public agencies should be involved in reducing liability risks and increasing wildlife and wildlife habitat (Table 4). Roughly two-thirds indicated dealing with hunters should not be involved in reducing wildlife damage to crops or with hunters concerning access to private land.

When asked about crop damage of economic importance by wildlife, 21 percent reported that deer were a problem (Table 5). Seventeen percent indicated they wanted fewer deer on their farms. Damage by deer was noted by more than 25 percent of those reporting in the West, West Southwest and the East Southeast Crop Reporting Districts. Damage by other game species was reported by 3 percent or less of the respondents.

Sixty-two percent of those surveyed thought a published list of farms permitting hunting would be a good idea, but only 5 percent said they wanted their name on the list. An additional 13 percent said they would "maybe", put their name on the list.

Table 3. Illinois farm owner/operator reservations about allowing others to hunt their land.

Reservation	Percentage indicating concern
Unauthorized trespass	77
Liability	91
Interruption of farming activities	37
Vandalism	60
Littering	54
Privacy violation	46
Inconvenience	38
Risk of property damage	71

Table 4. Illinois farm owner/operator opinion on public agency involvement efforts to improve conditions for hunting.

Agency involvements	Owner/operator opinion (in percentage)	
	No	Yes
More abundant wildlife	43	57
Less inconvenience in dealing with farmers	62	38
Freedom from liability	27	73
Less wildlife damage to crops	70	30
Help improve wildlife habitat	39	61
Increased availability of conservation police	54	46
Stricter control of access to your land by hunters	66	34
Less property damage by hunters	49	51

Table 5. Crop damage by deer on Illinois farms and farm owner/operator view of deer populations.

Crop reporting district	Percentage reporting deer damage	Percentage wanting fewer deer
Northwest	17	14
Northeast	18	21
West	29	21
Central	16	8
East	17	14
West southwest	27	21
East southwest	26	19
Southwest	25	18
Southeast	20	17
Average	21	17

Thirty-five percent said they would and 26 percent said they might be more inclined to allow hunting on their land if hunters presented a pledge card or some evidence of safety and ethics training. Tenant farm operators (71 percent) were more likely to be influenced by a pledge card than were owners only (54 percent) or owners and tenants (63 percent).

Slightly more than half of those surveyed felt improved conditions for hunting would improve the rural economy, and 20 percent felt that their own economic well-being would be enhanced as a result.

Two-thirds of the farm operators said they maintain habitat for wildlife, but almost half (47 percent) did so without a formal plan (Table 6).

For More Information

Excerpts from and explanations of the Place To Hunt Committee's first annual report have been included to provide an overview of Illinois' cooperative efforts. A portion of the conservation/recreation survey summary has also been provided to highlight the information gathered. The Illinois Department of Agriculture believes efforts to date have been successful in identifying existing problems and recom-

Table 6. Practices or management plans of Illinois farm owners/operators to improve conditions for wildlife.

Practice or plan source	Farm owner/operator percentage
None	33
USDA Soil Conservation Service Conservation Plan	17
Illinois Department of Conservation Private Lands Biologist	2
Quail Unlimited	2
Pheasants Forever	1
Ducks Unlimited	4
No formal plan, but do maintain habitat	47
Other	2

mending reasonable solutions. This is especially true in light of the current farm situation, the large amount of resources dedicated to tourism in the State of Illinois and the general condition of the resource. Copies of additional information may be acquired by contacting Neal Gunkel, Illinois Department of Agriculture, State Fairgrounds, P.O. Box 19281, Springfield, IL 62794-9281.

Author's Note. Any or all of these additional pieces may be requested by writing the above address:

- Complete Conservation/Recreation Survey questionnaire and results
- Model Waiver of Liability
- Text of modified "Recreational Use of Land and Water Areas Act," PA 85-959, Illinois Revised Statute
- Interagency Agreement, Illinois Department of Agriculture/Illinois Department of Conservation
- National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, 1988 Resolution Proposal, Agriculture/Conservation Cooperative Efforts

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Natural Area Assessment in the Chicago Region

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Introduction

For years we have been asked to make evaluations and assessments of natural quality or environmental integrity of various local open land areas. It has always been frustrating to designate an area as, for example, "high quality" and then attempt to explain, in definitive terms, why such a designation is neither arbitrary nor whimsical. This frustration is exacerbated in several ways. There is a natural tendency for assessments such as "significant," "exceptional," "high quality," etc., to be vague or sound trite, losing both impact and meaning. Second, the differences between "significant" and "exceptional" are concepts that are at best difficult to describe in words. Importantly, definitions that clarify meanings for such words over the course of time and with changes in assessment personnel have been difficult to standardize. One person's "significant" may well be another's "exceptional," depending on differing philosophical alignment or technical experience in the field of natural area assessment, both of which influence evaluations that already are often viewed as subjective. Repeatable application of such an assessment system is problematic, so the ability to evaluate consistently the success or failure of a management protocol, decade after decade, does not yet exist.

For these reasons, we have developed a method by which natural area assessment can be expressed in numerical terms. This method permits anyone with a reasonable knowledge of field botany to arrive at an evaluation that reflects a consistent philosophy of assessment. This method assesses a fundamental character of the site, irrespective of community type(s). It avoids the use of such parameters as frequency, dominance, physiognomy, or productivity, because positive or negative connotations with respect to natural quality are only ambiguously related to these factors. This method has encouraged local uniformity in natural area evaluation, enabling planners, land custodians, ecologists and other practitioners to make standardized comparisons among various open land areas.

Natural Area

This assessment system is based on the following definition of natural area. Natural area is land on which the existing vegetational assemblage approximates the condition that prevailed just prior to the settlement of the Chicago region in the early 1800s. Implicit in this botanical approach to a definition for natural area is the ecological health of the system as a whole. This conceptualization of natural areas avoids emphasizing ancillary factors, such as cover values or wildlife habitat potential. Rather, it seeks to define natural area in terms of fundamental components, such that its integrity would be irrecoverably compromised in the event of trauma or neglect. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 asks us to assess the degree

ITEM #2

People wanting to hunt, hike, camp, bird watch, take pictures, fish, or pursue other outdoor activities complete an application and send it with a membership fee to the **Access Illinois Outdoors** office. Landowners wishing to enroll their land complete a similar application and send it to the **Access Illinois Outdoors** office.

- Purpose
- Location
- Process
- Activities
- Guidelines
- Members
- Landowners

The **Access** program members rank the counties on their application in which they wish to pursue the various outdoor activities. These applications, upon receipt in the **Access Illinois Outdoors / Two Rivers** office, are given to an Access employee who will assist the **Access** member with making arrangements with a land owner for both hunting and or non-hunting activities.



Schuyler County Landowners

Access Illinois Outdoors members should keep in mind that the landowners ask a trespass fee or access fee to access their property. This fee is in addition to the program administrative fee paid to Access Illinois Outdoors/Two Rivers.

Also, the **Access Illinois Outdoors** staff can direct **Access** members to individuals that can provide services such as bed and breakfast, guiding, processing of game, motels, restaurants, and other needs.

Landowner applications are available on-line plus, you may request an application through the Access office. Applications are accepted from any county within Illinois.

Access Illinois Outdoors
1256 C West Washington
PO Box 87
Pittsfield IL 62363
(217) 285-2464
fax (217)285-5121
accessil@2riversrco.org



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GUIDELINES

Purpose

Location

Process

Activities

Guidelines

Members

Landowners

- Access Illinois Outdoors/Two Rivers was developed to provide assistance to those seeking access to private property for outdoor recreational activities. An annual membership fee is required to participate in the program.
- The \$25 annual membership fee is for one individual to pursue all outdoor activities.
- The \$50 annual family membership fee is for a family living in same household (all activities).
- All memberships will be annual from the date the application is received.
- Checks or money orders only. Payable to: Access Illinois Outdoors/Two Rivers.
- Access Illinois Outdoors/Two Rivers requires everyone requesting access to private property to complete an application.
- Only those completing an application will be provided assistance in obtaining access to private property.
- Please specify in the application if you wish to participate with other Access Illinois Outdoors/Two Rivers applicants.
- Everyone must complete and file an application with the membership fee at the Access office, 1256 C West Washington, PO Box 87, Pittsfield, IL 62363. Permission granted to you to access private property cannot be given to anyone else.
- It is strongly suggested that members discuss with the landowner the location of livestock, machinery, possible natural or artificial hazards and location of property lines.
- The members must comply with all wildlife and fish laws and possess the required license, stamps and permits. These are available from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources at 217-782-7305.
- Access Illinois Outdoors/Two Rivers staff is not responsible for obtaining or issuing licenses, stamps, permits, etc.
- When a landowner has granted you permission to access private property, you will be issued an "Access Card" by the landowner, which should be on your person while accessing this private property.
- Refer to the Access Illinois Outdoors/Two Rivers program for participating counties.

PO Box 87
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NEW CORPORATE SPONSOR!!! Farm & Home Supply is the new exclusive corporate sponsor of Access Illinois Outdoors. In this capacity, they are offering a **\$25 gift card** to every new Access Illinois Outdoors member. [Click here](#) for more hunting and recreational specials available in their seven locations.

Access Illinois Outdoors Current Events and Activities Include a Winery Tour and Christmas Tour. For more information click here: [Winery Tour](#) [Christmas Tours](#)

Purpose

Location

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Activities

Guidelines

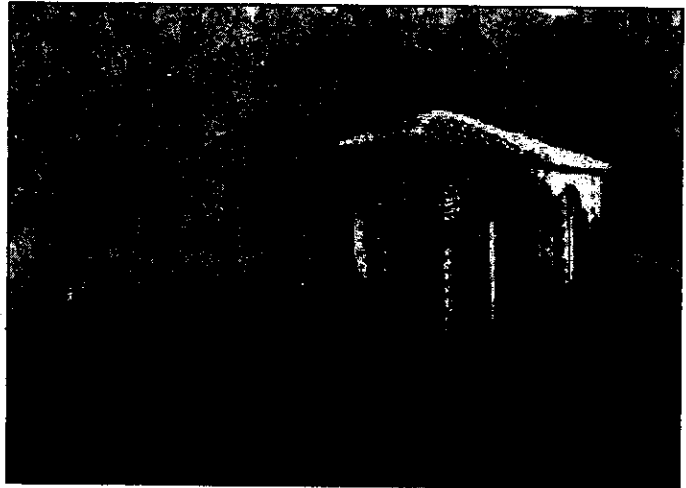
Members

Landowners

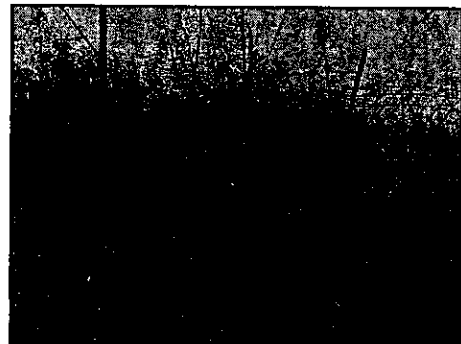
ATTENTION DEER HUNTERS! Access Illinois Outdoors is sponsoring the Access Food program. To learn more about this important effort visit our Access Food Page Here: [Access Food](#)

This peaceful scene is part of an interpretive trail on private (Access Illinois Outdoors) property located in Calhoun County.

Native hardwoods along the river bluffs display a wide spectrum of bright colors during the autumn season. Hiking, picnicking, and nature watching are all popular along with enjoying local restaurants.



Fishing Streams

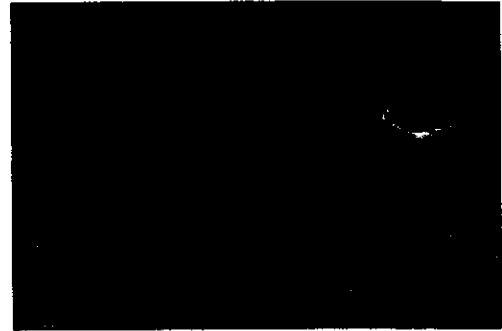


Nature Study



Whitetail Deer Hunting

Bird Watching



Fall bow hunting for whitetail deer is one of our most popular forms of outdoor recreation.

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ILLINOIS. MILE AFTER MAGNIFICENT MILE.

Access Illinois Outdoors is a program where outdoor enthusiasts are matched with private landowners for whitetail deer hunting, turkey hunting, and other outdoor recreational experiences such as hiking, bird watching, fishing, camping, trail riding, biking, photography, etc. This innovative concept is designed to increase the public's outdoor recreational opportunities by facilitating access to private lands.

Purpose

Location

Process

Activities

Guidelines

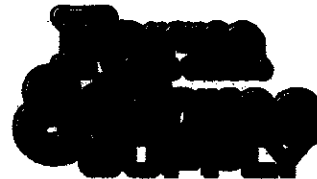
Members

Landowners



Enjoy whitetail deer hunting!!

The program is managed by the Two Rivers Resource, Conservation and Development, Inc.
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ITEM # 3

Providing Public Access for Hunting on Private Land in Illinois - a Proposal for a New Program

2 March 2000

Goal of the New Program:

Develop a voluntary program to encourage private landowners to offer public access to their property for the purposes of hunting and trapping and to create or enhance wildlife habitat on those properties. This program is intended to compliment rather than compete with other efforts to create additional hunting opportunity.

Program design:

- The program designed will be based upon an analysis of Access Illinois and information obtained from randomly selected hunters and private landowners around the state. A review of similar programs in the country will be updated. Hunter and landowner attitudes about issues such as liability, incentives and hunter scheduling will be assessed.

Implementation

- A pilot approach will be used to field test the program and to provide opportunity to fine tune and build success/support. The DNR would like to target a specific area where survey or other data indicate widespread landowner and hunter support and where demand for access and/or habitat is at least average or greater.

Program Considerations

- Consider varying incentives based on such things as total acreage, habitat type, habitat quality, amount and type of hunting opportunity, proximity to urban areas, etc.
- Evaluate the potential for piggybacking the access program to other successful programs such as CREP, C-2000, etc.
- Consider enrolling properties held in trust by banks, by corporations or utilities, or in receivership (FmHA or FHA, etc.), especially near urban areas.
- Based on the source of funding, consider to what extent other activities should be encouraged or authorized (trapping, fishing hiking, camping, bird watching, etc.). If this is an Outdoor Recreation program to include a number of outdoor activities, there might

- 6) Identify individuals/groups to serve on an ad hoc advisory committee (approximately 5-10 members). *In progress.*
- 7) Analyze other state programs and the results of the surveys and convene the ad hoc advisory committee to consider a limited number of options. *Pending.*
- 8) Seek funding, legislation and other authorities necessary to implement and test the program. *Pending.*

Public Access Proposal - ADHOC Deer Committee

November 29, 1999

The following dot points have been developed to generate additional discussion and to aid in the development of the concept for a new program. Under most of the dot points I have listed a few possibilities. Please feel free to add your comments on these as well as listing your own suggestions.

Because of the time frame for this project, it was decided to create this survey instead of trying to get everyone together again for another meeting.

Please send your comments to Jim Riemer as soon as you can. Your cooperation is appreciated.

- **What is the goal of the new program (state clearly and concisely)?**
 - *To develop a voluntary program with private landowners to provide public access to their land. To compete with outfitting and private leasing, landowner incentives will need to be offered to generate interest in the program.*

- **Should the program incorporate ideas based on an opinion survey or a focus group survey of potential users (landowners and hunters) and if so, what types of issues should be considered.**
 - *Incentives*
 - *Cost sharing for habitat enhancement*
 - *Tax Breaks*
 - *PILT's*
 - *Cash*
 - *Technical assistance*
 - *Free Loan of Equipment*

 - *Access Scheduling*
 - *Landowner responsibility*
 - *Department responsibility*
 - *Lotteries with a certain % of permits given to a landowner to distribute/sell (Montana's Block Management Program)*
 - *Reservation system*
 - *First come first serve*

- **Evaluate a variety of incentives¹ (mentioned above) that would generate the interest necessary to sustain the program.**

- Several incentives for landowners are listed in the preceeding dot point.

- **Should a pilot approach be considered to field test the program and provide opportunity to fine tune and build success/support.**

- Target a specific area where we currently have data to minimize front end labor. Our CREP program would be in this category as we know the landowner the geographic areas, and we have already completed a Conservation Plan of Operation.

- **Consider varying incentives based on such things as total acreage, habitat type, habitat quality, amount and type of hunting opportunity, proximity to urban areas, etc.**

- Should a payment schedule be developed based on these variables?

- **Evaluate the potential for piggybacking the access program to other successful programs such as CREP, C-2000, etc.**

- **Consider using a term other than "Access" for the title of the program to avoid the negative connotations associated with the current Access Illinois program.**

- Access II Illinois - This still contains the word access and also it projects that we are inviting people to Illinois as more of a recruitment initiative.

- Other State Programs that would be comparable:

Montana - Block Management Program

Colorado - Ranching for Wildlife

Arkansas - Lease Land Permit Program

- Possibilities

Outdoor Recreation Enhancement Program

Landowners Partnership Program

Hunters and Habitat Enhancement Program

- **Identify and secure funding sources.**
 - *Increase cost out of state deer and turkey permits.*
 - *Utilize interest from Habitat Fund once the \$10 million threshold is reached.*

- **Estimate operational impacts and overhead.**
 - *If the program is operated by Department and/or Contracted*
 - *Database management*
 - *Staff to organize the public hunts*
 - *Field staff to perform habitat studies/habitat's enhancements*
 - *Support staff for financial obligations*

 - *If partnerships can be developed with local groups(i.e., SWCD's), this would decrease the need for additional Departmental staff.*

- **Determine necessary legislation, rules and authorities.**
 - *Possible Legislative Initiatives*
 - *Reduced Liability*
 - *Funding Mechanisms*
 - *For this new program, is there a vehicle bill to amend or do we need to craft new legislation.*

- **How do we target Illinois hunters without excluding nonresident hunters?**
 - *If lottery system is chosen, perform two selections, the first with Illinois residents only, the second a combination of out of state residents and the remaining group of Illinois residents.*
 - *Set aside a certain percentage of hunting days or permits for out of state residents with the majority of the hunting for Illinois residents.*

- **Consider enrolling properties held in trust by banks, by corporations or utilities, or in receivership (FmHA or FHA, etc.) - especially near urban areas.**

- A survey to these groups might be helpful to give us an idea of what it would take to peak their interest in participating.

- **Based on the source of funding, consider to what extent other activities should be encouraged or authorized (trapping, fishing hiking, camping, bird watching, etc.).**

- If this is an Outdoor Recreation program to include a number of outdoor activities, there might be an opportunity for additional revenue sources. However, if the funding is only coming from one specific activity, we should not allow other activities to prevent constituent problems.

¹ The results of a very recent Illinois wildlife cooperator survey still under analysis indicate that when it comes to incentives for encouraging wildlife habitat, the most popular (“somewhat important” and “very important” responses combined) were (1) cost sharing for plant materials or site preparation - 86%; (2) tax breaks - 81%; (3) free loan of equipment - 71%; (4) federal farm program subsidies - 63%; and (5) free labor - 48%.

Private Land Cooperator Survey Results

Q.33 How important would each of the following financial incentives be in encouraging you to improve or establish habitat for wildlife?

A. Tax Breaks

Very Important	600	56.1%	} 81%
Somewhat Important	264	24.7%	
Not Too Important	91	8.5%	
Not At All Important	115	10.7%	
	1070		

B. Cost Share for Planting Materials or Site Preparation

Very Important	563	52.8%	} 86%
Somewhat Important	356	33.4%	
Not Too Important	71	6.7%	
Not At All Important	77	7.2%	
	1067		

C. Federal Farm Program Subsidies

Very Important	472	44.5%	} 63%
Somewhat Important	198	18.7%	
Not Too Important	115	10.8%	
Not At All Important	275	25.9%	
	1060		

D. No Cost Loan of Equipment

Very Important	427	40.4%	} 71%
Somewhat Important	328	31.0%	
Not Too Important	148	14.0%	
Not At All Important	154	14.6%	
	1057		

E. Free Labor

Very Important	260	24.3%	} 48%
Somewhat Important	249	23.3%	
Not Too Important	242	22.7%	
Not At All Important	317	29.7%	
	1068		

ITEM #4

Private Land Access Program Work Group Proposed Hunting and Access Programs

June 13, 2002

Work Group Members: Bob Becker, Illinois Federation of Outdoor Resources
Jerry Gille, United Bowhunters of Illinois
Randy Sims, Illinois Farm Bureau
Rick Wombles, Illinois Hunting and Outdoor Sports
Association
John Buhnerkempe, Illinois Department of Natural
Resources (Technical Advisor)

Youth Hunting Program

A special youth hunting program should be developed during the month of August that would focus on squirrel hunting. August is the ideal time to provide special hunting opportunities for youth because school is not in session, many hunters are not preoccupied with hunting, and a hunting season is open that provides plentiful opportunity for young hunters. Success of such a program would be dependent on a promotional campaign to get youth to participate. Involvement of hunters, hunter groups, and landowners would be required to implement the program.

In addition, a statewide youth deer hunt should be implemented that would allow youth to take antlerless deer during two weekends in September.

Private Land Access Program

A new private land access program would emphasize the importance of our hunting heritage within our rural communities and provide incentives for hunters and landowners to work together. Key to the success of such a program would be developing an outreach program that shows the values of our rural and hunting heritages. The program would strive to provide hunters access to private property without displacing hunters, provide incentives to landowners to open their property to hunting, and encourage landowners and hunters to develop a cooperative relationship. The following are specific ideas to consider when developing a new program:

1. The program will initially be for resident programs, but would include nonresident hunters after the program has proven itself.
2. Landowners would be provided a cash payment between \$3.00 and \$10.00 per acre. The payment rate would be based upon data already published by a government agency. Property tax rates, FSA maps, and habitat quality data were discussed as potential guidelines for establishing incentive rates. A lease agreement would need to be at least five years in duration to prevent hunters from outbidding the Department for at least five years.
3. Access to private property enrolled in the program would be first come, first

served with a limit placed on the number of hunters that can be on the property at one time. Landowners would have to allow every hunter enrolled in the program to access his/her property as long as the number of hunters on their property is below the maximum allowed. A system similar to those used on state sites would be used to monitor hunters on the property and to provide data to the landowner and the Department.

4. Properties enrolled in the program will be published in a booklet.
5. For a hunter to be part of the program, he or she would have to purchase a Private Land Access Card at a cost of \$25.00 or higher. The money from the Access Card would go back into the program. When a landowner enrolls into the program, he or she and their immediate family would be given free Access Cards to their property.
6. A formal complaint process would be developed for participating landowners and hunters.
7. Lands enrolled in the program will be closed for two days a week to provide the landowner and their immediate family the opportunity to hunt their property without interference from other hunters. This two-day break will also give wildlife and the landowner a weekly break from hunters.
8. Landowners and hunters would be encouraged to work together to help establish wildlife habitat and place boundary signs on properties enrolled in the program.
9. The Department would investigate the potential for reducing the liability of landowners participating in the program.

Late Season Deer Hunting Opportunities

Deer hunting outfitters would be encouraged to open the properties they control to resident archery deer hunters after the close of the firearm deer season. Outfitters would control who would have access under this program. These hunters would be limited to antlerless deer. Outfitters would have their outfitter permit fee waved as an incentive for participating in the program.

ITEM #5

Access Program
Prepared by Jerry Beverlin

There are parts of Illinois that have issues with social acceptance to the number of deer in this state. Those counties are identified by auto deer collisions per billion miles driven. For the most part, those counties follow the Illinois River. The population issues cannot be resolved unless there is a commitment by commercial hunting, as well as landowners who have a responsibility to allow access to control those problem population areas. Without access to these areas to control does, any other program is neutered. Other states have programs that have had some success. Most of those states are west of the Mississippi River and their programs are difficult to reproduce in a populated state such as Illinois. To make a program successful in Illinois, it will take a more open approach. One that does not select just one avenue, but considers any opportunity that may come along.

In order for this program to work, it will have to have a staff person whose sole responsibility is to deal with access possibilities in this state. It would be one staff person with a one time cost that would include vehicle, gas, and office equipment. This position is key to making this work. The responsibility of access would be this person's sole objective. While he would report to the Division of Wildlife, there would also be an access committee created that this individual would report through.

The program would have a standing committee made up of various leaders from conservation organizations, Legislative Sportsman's caucus leaders, and others deemed appropriate. It would function along the same lines as the Duck Stamp, and Habitat Stamp committee's. The committee would evaluate and approve proposed projects dealing with access. They would have the flexibility to approve projects but would have to follow any existing rules that govern state contracts.

Anyone from the public would be able to submit access opportunities to the committee or the DNR. Examples of projects could be the leasing of publicly held properties from City, State, or County governments, leasing of private property, or providing dollars so that private concerns can organize hunting opportunities, and, in some cases, land acquisition. This program would have the ability to join with the other stamp committees to jointly fund projects that directly affect access.

The DNR staff person would concentrate on those areas that are known to have population issues, but would not be limited to only those areas. All areas of the state would have consideration. The staff person would work with different entities to develop areas and programs with access potential. This person would evaluate and make recommendations to the committee for their approval.

Initial funding would come from the non-resident deer permit fees. A percentage of that revenue would be used to fund access programs. Since those dollars are tied into the Federal Fish and Wildlife funds they would have to qualify under Federal guidelines. The staff person's salary and other costs should have no problem qualifying for these dollars.

If the program is successful, consideration could be given to increasing the cost of resident deer permits to increase revenue and expand opportunities. There are also components of the new Federal Farm Bill that would dovetail with an access program.