

SWG Grant Application System

Applicant (Grantee if awarded)	
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PROJECT TITLE - Acquisition of an addition to Apple River Canyon State Park

Project Description - IDNR requests a SWG grant to acquire an 82 acre addition to Apple River Canyon State Park in the Apple River Conservation Opportunity Area in the Wisconsin Driftless Natural Division in Jo Daviess County. The tract, known as the Wiley tract (Figure 1), includes nearly a mile of the Apple River, high quality dolomite bluffs along the river, oak-hickory forest on the bluffs overlooking the river, a small remnant prairie and pastured grassland. The Apple River is a significant cool water stream with priority fish and mussel species. The tract is directly adjacent to IDNRs 1800 acre Apple River Canyon State Park. The Apple River is protected both upstream and downstream of the Wiley tract so acquisition of this parcel is a key link in the strategy of maintaining and improving the natural resources of the Apple River. The tract is owned by the Natural Land Institute of Rockford who acquired it in a cooperative effort with The Nature Conservancy and with funding assistance from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The Natural Land Institute is donating more than 40 acres of the 82 acre acquisition to the DNR.

Type of Project: Implementation

Match Rate - Implementation: 50% Federal : 50% Non-Federal

Dollars Requested	Total Federal	Total Non-Federal	Total Cost of Project
1st Year Funding	\$267,000	\$267,000	\$534,000
2nd Year Funding	0	0	0
3rd Year Funding	0	0	0
Totals:	\$267,000	\$267,000	\$534,000

Need: The project is located in a region both rich in natural resources and threatened with

development. DNR has been acquiring land along the Apple River since 1932 so that now more than five miles of the river are protected. Acquisition of the Wiley tract will add nearly one mile of the river to the conservation holdings.

Objectives: The objective of this project is to increase protection for the Apple River, a priority stream listed in the Wildlife Action Plan, and its associated wildlife in greatest need of conservation by acquiring an 82 acre tract that contains nearly a mile of the river. The tract will be added to DNR's 1800 acre Apple River Canyon State Park and receive permanent protection and stewardship.

Approach: The DNR will acquire an approximate 82 acre tract from the Natural Land Institute. DNR will acquire 41 acres for \$267,000 and the Natural Land Institute will donate to DNR an additional 41 acres valued at approximately \$267,000. DNR will hold the 82 acre tract in perpetuity as part of Apple River Canyon State Park. The tract will be open to the public for compatible use and enjoyment. Recognizing the ecological significance of the site, all or most of the 82 acres will be dedicated as an Illinois Nature Preserve or registered as a Land and Water Reserve.

Relationship To Plan: The Apple River has been identified as a Conservation Opportunity Area in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan because of the quality of the water and its cool water fishery. Completion of the Wiley tract acquisition helps to achieve a major goal set forth for the Wisconsin Driftless Natural Division portion of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan by helping to “restore the continuum of the Upper Apple River Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site (coolwater stream with significant primary communities) to the Lower Apple River Illinois Natural Areas Inventory site (mussel beds, bottomland habitat)”. The combination of existing natural features within the Wiley tract, its relationship to surrounding natural areas, and the potential opportunities available for restoration and management make the Wiley tract a prime site for implementation of the recommendations in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.

The Wiley tract is part of a large historic forest block including the Boy Scout's Canyon Camp to the west and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources property to the south that is bisected by the Apple River. The property proposed for acquisition contains roughly 82 acres of forest, savanna, and shrubland. Most of this acreage is upland forest which is a targeted natural community type within the Wisconsin Driftless Natural Division in the Wildlife Action Plan. The upland forest natural community types include dry-mesic upland forest and mesic upland forest. The Boy Scout's Canyon Camp and the IDNR property directly to the south (Figure 1) contain an additional 458 acres of mostly wooded upland forest acreage. Protection of the Wiley tract will help to implement the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan by protecting part of a large forested block of at least 500 acres in size and by preventing additional fragmentation or development of the forest.

Upon acquisition, livestock grazing will be discontinued, ceasing an existing threat to wildlife and habitat. Additional management to be implemented as part of restoration efforts which will help achieve the goals of the Wildlife Action Plan include reintroducing prescribed fire to deter sugar maple invasion of the oak forest, encourage oak regeneration, and reduce non-native invasive species. Reforestation of formerly pastured areas will help close gaps within the forest canopy directly benefiting many priority wildlife species identified in the Wildlife Action Plan. These management practices will provide more habitat for veery, ovenbird, scarlet tanager, and wood thrush which have been identified as “Species in Greatest Need for Conservation” for the Wisconsin Driftless Natural Division by the Wildlife Action Plan.

Additional bird species identified by the Wildlife Action Plan that will benefit from protection and subsequent habitat improvement at the Wiley tract include brown creeper, yellow-billed cuckoo, northern flicker, bald eagle, red-headed woodpecker, American

woodcock, American redstart, and blue-winged warbler. Mammalian species which will benefit include river otter, which utilize the riparian corridor, and bobcat which has been known to use forested riparian corridors throughout the state to travel within their territories. Game Species including the white-tailed deer and wild turkey will also benefit.

A small prairie remnant composed of less than 0.5 acres is located on the east side of the Apple River, above the cliff. Removal of grazing pressure, prescribed burning, and control of woody encroachment will help to enhance the diversity found within this prairie remnant and help to achieve the goal of increasing the extent of prairie remnants in the Wisconsin Driftless Natural Division as recommended in the Wildlife Action Plan.

The Apple River has been classified as a biologically significant stream. This section of the Apple River contains priority resources including cool water streams and fishes, and freshwater mussels. The water quality of the Apple River will be further protected upon the completion of this project and subsequent removal of livestock from having access to the river. The Apple River is known to have significant mussel beds. In addition, the longnose dace, largescale stoneroller, and Ozark minnow are found in this section of the Apple River and are listed as critical species for the Wisconsin Driftless Natural Division of the Wildlife Action Plan. A healthy population of smallmouth bass is also located here; it is identified as an important game species in the wildlife plan. The black redhorse, ozark minnow, rosyface shiner, largescale stoneroller, and smallmouth bass are all on the list of Species in Greatest Need of Conservation. All have been found by the IDNR in the Apple River at Townsend Road.

Anticipated Outcomes and Benefits: Completion of this project will result in expansion of Apple River Canyon State Park to 1884 acres, protecting six miles of the Apple River. a coolwater stream recognized as a Conservation Opportunity Area in the Wildlife Action Plan.

Signature of Principal Investigator:

Ronald W. McJannet

Date: *Feb. 4, 2010*

Signature of department or unit head (if required):

Date:

Apple River Canyon Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Site



BSA Parcels



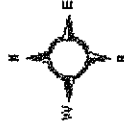
Wiley Parcel



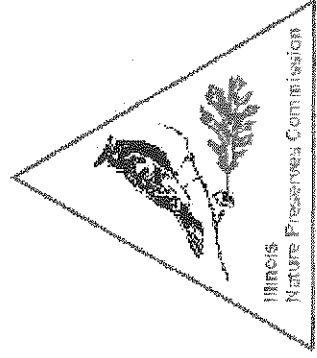
INAI Boundary



IDNR Property



NATURAL LAND INSTITUTE



**Illinois
Nature Preserves Commission**