

A Priority Plan
for the
Forest Land Enhancement Program in Illinois

July, 2003

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ILLINOIS STATE PRIORITY PLAN

for the

Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP)

The purpose of the Forest Land Enhancement Program (FLEP) is to provide a coordinated and cooperative federal, state and local sustainable forestry program for the establishment, management, enhancement and restoration of forests on non-industrial private forest land.

The federal law that created the Forest Land Enhancement Program is Section 4 of the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act (16 U.S.C. 2101 et seq.) as amended by title V III of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Pub. L. 107-171).

The federal regulations that govern the operation of the Forest Land Enhancement Program are provided in a Department of Agriculture Interim Final Rule, a new subpart C in part 230 of the Title 36 Code of the Federal Regulations. This was published June 9, 2003 in the Federal Register (Volume 68, #110, pages 34309-34319).

The Forest Resources of Illinois

General Overview

The 43 million acres of Illinois forestland offer remarkable benefits of which most of us are unaware. Obviously we use a number of wood products every day and certainly we enjoy hiking and camping in our forests, finding not only physical renewal but also spiritual solace. On the other hand, we may not appreciate the role that forests play in protecting the soil and preserving the quality of water. Even more difficult to perceive are the relationships between our woodlands and the preservation of biodiversity. That connection becomes clearer, however, when we realize that 61 percent of the flora native to Illinois and 75 percent of its wildlife habitat are found in its forests, which occupy only 12 percent of the state. Illinois forests, like forests everywhere, help to reduce global warming. Consider, for example, that Illinois is responsible for 4 percent of the carbon dioxide contributed by humans to the earth's atmosphere; yet our state accounts for only 0.2 percent of the world's population and 0.1 percent of its land surface. The forests of Illinois help to alleviate this startling disproportion because trees capture carbon dioxide as they grow, thereby reducing the load the atmosphere must bear. It is not so much that concepts like these are difficult to understand as that we are unaccustomed to thinking about them.

FOREST CONDITIONS

Distribution and Species Composition

According to 1998 estimates by the U.S. Forest Service, about 12 percent of Illinois (4.3 million acres) is forestland, particularly in the southern and western counties. At one extreme is Ford County with no forested acreage with Pope County at the other end of the spectrum with 67 percent forested. Of the state's 4.3 million acres of forestland, nearly all of this forestland (4.1 million acres) is capable of and potentially available to produce commercially valuable trees. In addition to these forested lands, just over one million acres of land, that although not forested, contain significant numbers of trees. This category would include wooded pastures, windbreaks, wooded strips along streams and the urban forest. These miscellaneous wooded areas in combination with the forestland account for over 5 million acres.

The considerable range of latitude between the northern and southern boundaries of Illinois, a distance of nearly 400 miles, gave rise to climatic conditions that favored a wide variety of trees. Over 250 species of trees have been recorded in Illinois. Southern counties have the greatest variety; Jackson has 145 species, Pope 129, and Union 128. The eastern white pine, which is common to the northern coniferous zone, is native to northern Illinois; the bald cypress and short leaf pine, found in southern Illinois, are typical of the southern and coastal plain forests of the United States. Elm species comprise the biggest percentage of tree species by number statewide.

The species abundance, described above, provides for seven forest types that occur in Illinois. Oak-hickory is the most dominant forest type found in Illinois accounting for more than half the total forested acreage. Although this forest type is common throughout the state, acreage is highest in the western and southern counties. The oak-hickory forests of Illinois are generally uneven aged with the majority older than 60 years. However, there are many examples of even aged stands created from past management practices. Such practices include clear cutting and forest land conversion to agricultural uses. As these cuts regenerated and the agricultural uses abandoned, even aged conditions have developed. Fifteen species of oak and 9 species of hickory have been recorded in Illinois. Oak-hickory forests have the greatest herbaceous plant diversity of Illinois' upland forests. The next two important forest type groups in Illinois are the elm-ash-cottonwood and the maple-beech-birch. When combined, these account for the majority of the remaining forestland. The maple-beech forest type accounts for 21 % of the forest with the highest acreage in the western counties. Sugar maple is the dominant species in this group. Most of the maple-beech is young trees, less than 30 years old. Maple-beech-birch attains its highest acreage in the southern unglaciated part of the state and in several counties in each of the other regions. Its distribution is less than that of oak-hickory because it is a less common upland forest type, occurring on more mesic areas. The elm-ash-cottonwood forest type makes up another 21% of the forest.

Elm-ash-cottonwood is found in the majority of bottom lands throughout Illinois. This type is most abundant in the bottom land forests of the southern counties.

The remaining forest type groups make up very little of the total forest land in Illinois but they are critically important. The oak-gum-cypress type is an important bottom land forest type found exclusively in southern Illinois. Oak-pine forests are scattered throughout the state, with the highest acreage again occurring in counties in the southern and western portions of the state. The oak-pine forest type group is composed of about 60 percent plantations. The white-red-jack pine forest type group occurs sporadically in Illinois, with highest acreage in northern counties. Illinois is the southern extent of the native range for Lake States eastern white pine. However, most of the occurrences of this type are in forest plantations. Plantations also account for 90 percent of the acreage of the loblolly-shortleaf pine forest type group. Shortleaf pine occurs naturally in Illinois only in isolated locations along the Mississippi River bluff. The distribution of the loblolly-shortleaf pine forest type group is exclusively in the southern counties.

Stocking and Size

The majority of the forestland in Illinois is fully or overstocked. Fully stocked conditions represent the best use of timberland, with trees occupying the amount of space in a forest that creates conditions for the best growth and form. Approximately 30% of the forestland are in a medium to poorly stocked condition. Poorly stocked forestland represents underutilized sites. These areas should be a focus for

management activities leading to improved growth and better stocking. The highest acreage of timberland in Illinois currently occurs as fully and medium stocked classes. This is a good indicator of the capability of quality timberland to meet the state's demand for timber products. Management activities need to focus on moving the non-stocked, poorly stocked and overstocked timberland to fully stocked and medium stocked classes. An increase in forestland acreage of the fully stocked class would subsequently mean more trees would be occupying the forest, providing an even greater forest benefits for Illinois.

Size and age data are useful in developing a picture of the current structure of today's forests and offers a picture of the future developmental trend. Illinois forests are maturing into stands dominated by large trees. This trend can be expected to continue as the trees increase in diameter. Almost 75% of the forestland in the state is in a saw timber size class, which refers to trees that are of larger diameters and potentially available as a commercial product. This is evident in all forest types throughout the state. In the pole timber and seedling-sapling size classes (trees less than 12 inches in diameter), the dominant forest type in this group is maple-beech-birch. The seedling-sapling size class accounts for only 3% of the forestland. The low acreage of forestland in the seedling-sapling stand-size class, however, does not necessarily reflect a low number of seedlings and saplings overall in the forests. Trees of small size classes are also present in stands classified as saw timber or pole timber.

Much of the forestland acreage in Illinois is in the 20 - 60 year old age class. Only a small percentage of forested acreage is in the 100+ year category, most of which occurs in the oak-hickory forest type. The younger stand-age classes have a lower percentage of oak-hickory forest acreage than the older stand-age classes. Although the oak-hickory forest type group comprises a substantial portion of the acreage in the younger stand-age classes, it does not dominate these younger stand-age classes as it does the older stand-age classes. The maple-beech-birch forest type group has more than half of its acreage in the younger stand-age classes. This accentuates a potential trend of the oak-hickory forest type now occurring on the more mesic sites of changing to more shade tolerant species, primarily sugar maple.

Growth, Mortality, Removals

Annual growth on the forestland in Illinois (174.2 thousand cubic feet) far exceeds annual losses from mortality (73.4 thousand cubic feet) and removals (66.5 thousand cubic feet). The average annual growth on timberland is more than 2.5 times the average annual removals. The fact that average annual

mortality is greater than removals suggest that Illinois' forest resources are being underutilized. Oaks are responsible for approximately one third of the annual growth, by volume, primarily due to the fact that these species dominate the larger size classes. They also undergo the highest removal rates due to their commercial value. The growth data suggests that the elms have an average annual growth rate greater than any other species group. This is offset by a particularly high mortality rate due to Dutch elm disease. Hard maples have a higher net average annual growth rate than the white oaks. This is about equal to that of the red oaks. This is another indication of shade tolerant species, such as sugar maple, becoming dominant in many forests of Illinois. The large number of small maples continue to grow and eventually begin to dominate the canopy.

Ownership Patterns

Private individual ownership accounts for 82 percent of the total timberland in Illinois. Illinois' forests are utilized in a variety of ways. The uses to which that forestland might be utilized vary. The ability of this land to protect soil, improve water quality and provide renewable forest resources depends on the number of owners who elect forest management objectives that generate these benefits. For this reason, the largest responsibility is placed on the private landowner for helping ensure the continued existence of quality forestland and the societal benefits received from those forests. Corporate and National Forest ownership accounts for 7 percent and 6 percent, respectively. The remaining ownership classes hold smaller percentages of forestland that include state, county, municipal and other federal ownership.

The USDA Forest Service estimates that there are approximately 114,500 private forest landowners in Illinois with an average forest land ownership of 31 acres. A study of private ownership of forestland, including both forestland and reserved forestland (Birch, 1996), found that a large portion of ownership units (people or groups of people that own forestland) own small acreages of forestland. Only 6 percent of all ownership units own parcels of forestland between 100 and 499 acres. Fewer than 50 owners, less than 5%, own parcels of forestland greater than 500 acres. Individual private ownership units account for 84 percent of all ownership units. Of the individual private ownership units, 36 percent own parcels of forestland less than 10 acres in size and 57 percent own parcels of forestland between 10 and 99 acres in size. Over 80 percent of forested parcels are less than 50 acres in size. This means that agencies responsible for assisting private owners have a large number of people to serve in order to initiate the successful management of the forest resources of Illinois.

Forest Benefits

The forests of Illinois provide extensive benefits to the people of Illinois, including wood products, recreation, wildlife, botanical resources, aesthetic values, watershed protection, energy conservation, and an escape valve for the urban dweller. The FLEP will serve to promote and enhance the environmental, economic and social benefits derived from the Illinois forests as outlined below.

Timber as a crop is important to the economy of Illinois. Our state ranks fifth in the nation in demand for wood but 32nd in the production of wood. As a result, we import much of the wood we need from other states. It is somewhat surprising, therefore, to discover that 14 percent of the wood we harvest in Illinois is processed in neighboring states and then often imported back into Illinois. Currently the annual growth of timber (174.2 million cubic feet) exceeds timber removals (66.5 million cubic feet), and a higher proportion of our demand for wood could be met within the boundaries of our own state if we had the processing facilities. With judicious management of an increased harvest, negative effects on the environment could be minimized and a greater percentage of our wood demand met in state. The trees of Illinois contribute to the financial stability of the state. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, forest-related industries in Illinois employ 55,000 people with an annual payroll averaging \$965 million. Each year these firms contribute more than \$4.5 billion to the state's economy through value added by manufacture. Forest-related industries annually invest more than \$144 million in capital improvements.

Wildlife values derived from the forest are extremely important as 75 percent of the state's wildlife habitat is found in its forests. Losses in the quality and quantity of that habitat severely affect wildlife populations. Such game species as gray squirrel, eastern wild turkey, quail, raccoon and white-tailed deer depend on woodlands as do many more non-game species such as bobcats, chipmunks and many bird species including thrushes, warblers, woodpeckers, nuthatches, kinglets and whippoorwills. Some relationships between wildlife and forests are subtler. The dependence of wood ducks on natural cavities in the trees of bottom land forest is well known. However, bottom land forests also provide food and habitat for aquatic life by mitigating the effects of floods, filtering the movement of agricultural chemicals into lakes and streams and by lowering water temperatures during stressful summertime months.

Biological diversity in Illinois' forests is important in providing for many flora and fauna species that are dependent upon a healthy, functioning forest ecosystem. Illinois ranks second in the nation in value of crops marketed and first in value of crops exported. Those rankings could not have been achieved without the dramatic alteration of the landscape of our state. Since row crops occupy approximately

69% of the landscape, we are now almost totally dependent on our remaining forests to preserve the diversity of species that have managed to survive. More than 500 species of trees, shrubs, and woody vines are found in the state and 69 percent of them are associated with forests. At present, exotic species make up 28 percent of the Illinois flora. Non-woody species also find a home in the forest and 1,414 species, or 61 percent of the native Illinois flora, are associated with forest habitats. Rare plants are also found at disproportionately high rates in forest habitats. Forty seven percent of the 356 threatened and endangered plants of Illinois are found in forest settings. Thus Illinois forests, which occupy only 12 percent of the area of the state, provide habitat for over half of the plant species native to the state. Forests are essential refuges for wildlife as well, especially in the face of unremitting pressure from urban and agricultural growth. If we are to protect this irreplaceable biological diversity, we must maintain, restore and expand forest communities. It is essential to manage for a full range of forest communities and successional stages in order to optimize diversity of plants and animals native to Illinois' forests.

Scenic Values and Visual Quality are of great importance to Illinois forestland owners. Preservation of natural beauty, the provision of shelter for wildlife, or heritage for future generations are goals often defined by landowners. The high percentage of landowners who maintain very small, unmanaged woodlands is explained in part by the desire to retain the forests in a natural state and in part because many timber-harvesting activities introduce harsh visual elements into the landscape. Thus, many timber stands have remained unmanaged for want of visually acceptable methods of harvesting. The basic objective of forest management is to create a type of vegetation development that will achieve specific objectives. Aesthetic values, however, can often be realized by designing management systems that incorporate individual tree, group selection and shelterwood cutting techniques to improve forest stands while maintaining visual quality.

Forest Resource Issues

Fragmentation/Parcelization

The changing pattern of forest ownership and the impacts of this shift have become major concerns of forest planners. The division and sale of large forested tracts in Illinois threatens the forest ecosystem values and functions. The average forest parcel size in Illinois is approximately 31 acres. This average size will continue to decrease over time. Small parcels are more difficult to manage and present difficulties in maintaining the ecological processes associated with large forested tracts. As average size decreases, the chance of these holdings being converted to non-forest uses increases. Many smaller forest tracts are becoming sites for single-family homes. The shift to home sites has a negative impact on

wildlife populations and on the ability to produce future forest products and environmental benefits. In the late 1970s a search for natural communities identified 1,089 important natural areas. Of these areas 392 contained forestland. Only 149 of these forested natural areas, a mere 11,593 acres, were rated as relatively undisturbed or mildly disturbed. The fragmentation and parcelization of our forest lands will have a negative impact on the state's economy, the ability to provide clean air and water, recreational opportunities, plant and animal diversity and aesthetic values provided by our forests.

Wildlife Diversity

While we have achieved stable populations of some wildlife species (e.g., deer, turkey), other species still need protection and enhancement. Increasing emphasis is being placed on the management needs of nongame species, including rare, threatened, and endangered species and their habitats. As a given habitat declines, the number of animals capable of inhabiting the area also declines. When large tracts of forest area are broken into smaller, isolated tracts, more forest edge is created and there is greater opportunity for edge-adapted species to usurp habitat from forest interior species. In Illinois, much of our remaining forests occur as one of two types:

- 1) Very small isolated patches, where the edge-to-center ratio is very high
- 2) Riparian zone forests, with practically no center and lots of edge

Both of these forest types are highly susceptible to the negative effects of habitat edges. In addition, small forest tracts effectively reduce population size, a predictor of extinction probability. Disjunction of forest patches inhibits animals' movement among the isolated habitats. The resulting genetic isolation can be detrimental to the long-term health of resident populations because of inbreeding. Inbreeding erodes genetic variability and eventually reduces the viability of a given population. The variety, frequency, distribution, and health of Illinois' wildlife depend directly on the size, species, and distribution of forest tracts. Functional ecosystems depend on the continuity and connectivity of forest tracts. Linkages or corridors between forest tracts will enable these forests to provide diverse ecological benefits for our state's game and nongame wildlife.

Forest Health

Illinois forests are experiencing damage from many sources, including insects (e.g., gypsy moth, Asian longhorned beetle), diseases (e.g., oak wilt, dogwood anthracnose), deer, invasive and exotic plants, floods, wildfires, wind, and drought. A healthy forest is a fully functioning community of plants and animals interacting in their physical environment. It is more than tree health and is reflected at the stand, landscape, and ecosystem levels. Fires, insects, and disease-causing organisms, at appropriate levels, can be components of healthy forests. Forest health is generally considered to include a balance of growth, mortality, regeneration and species diversity. When these factors are in balance, the forest has substantial ability to withstand and recover from the impacts of various stresses, such as insect or disease outbreaks, adverse weather, and air pollution. The most extensive forest health issue throughout the state is invasive

and exotic plants. These plants present a serious threat to the forest ecosystem by invading and dominating the understory. This condition affects the natural plant community and impedes or prevents the natural tree regeneration process. Of particular note are bush and Japanese honeysuckle, oriental bittersweet, European buckthorn, garlic mustard and kudzu.

Another potentially significant forest health issue is the gypsy moth, an exotic insect pest that causes extreme defoliation of hardwoods. The gypsy moth feeds on leaves of more than 600 species of trees, shrubs, and vines. The Illinois Department of Agriculture has been monitoring and trapping this insect for years. Trapping helps to control the insect, monitor its movement and population growth. Gypsy moth must continue to be monitored in order to track its spread and determine effective means to stop or slow its movement into other areas of the state.

Poor Management Practices

Forestland grazing and indiscriminate logging activities are two problems that negatively affect the forest ecosystem. It is estimated that approximately 20% of the privately owned forestland in Illinois is grazed and therefore subject to excessive erosion. Proper forest management, however, can greatly reduce erosion by providing sunlight to the forest floor and stimulate plant growth on the forest floor. Although approximately 12.7 million tons of soil erode each year from forested acres, 66 percent of that tonnage comes from the relatively few grazed forestland acres. Elimination of heavy grazing usually permits the development of understory vegetation and a layer of litter on the soil surface that control excessive erosion. Even in its current condition, Illinois' forestland contributes significantly to the retention of soil and the reduction of sediments and nutrients that fill and pollute Illinois lakes and streams. In addition, forestland benefits stream and lake habitats by contributing organic matter, reducing water temperature, providing logs and habitat structure for aquatic organisms and by absorbing excess nutrients in surface and ground water.

It is estimated that only 5% - 10% of the timber harvested in Illinois is conducted with a forest management plan or under the guidance of a professional forester. This lack of professional guidance has biological and economic consequences for the landowner and the future productivity of the forest. It is imperative to find ways to promote the use of professional forestry assistance to landowners when harvesting timber. Using professional forestry assistance when harvesting will ensure that harvesting takes place in a controlled manner using best management practices (BMP's) according to a plan that recognizes and takes into account all the forest resource values. All Illinois residents will benefit from an improvement in how Illinois forests are managed.

Economics

Timber sales and the manufacture and sale of finished forestry products can encourage forestland owners

to manage their forest properly. This has the advantage of increasing production while improving the overall benefits that forests are capable of producing. A diverse forest-products industry can contribute to the economic health of the state. Illinois has experienced a significant reduction in the number of saw mills operating over the past 40 years by nearly two thirds. At the same time, timber harvesting has increased. This has resulted in an increased number of Illinois logs being exported and processed outside the state. This translates into a reduction of income created by value added processing, a decrease in economic exchanges among industries located within Illinois and a potential loss of value to the landowner for their standing timber due to the increased transportation costs of exporting their saw logs.

Increased parcelization of the resource base, combined with a shorter tenure of forestland ownership, also has had a great impact on the timber industry in Illinois. Loggers and saw mills face higher operating costs in obtaining timber from smaller parcels of land (e.g., more expensive machinery, higher fuel and labor expenses). Many landowners are not aware of the value in their forest lands. Those that are aware may be reluctant to harvest timber. Many secondary wood-using firms in the state are unaware that Illinois hardwoods are available and similar in quality to those purchased from other states. No central market exists to bring buyer and seller together. Landowners must have access to reliable information and estimates on the value of their timber. The lack of an accessible marketing system has contributed to the present composition of the forest. Through better management, the volume of locally grown, high quality hardwoods can be increased.

Erosion and Water Quality

The best approach to protecting surface water quality and reducing soil erosion is to minimize disturbance of vegetative cover adjacent to waterways, particularly on slopes. Detrimental practices associated with agriculture, silviculture and road building must be modified. Planting and retaining "vegetative filter strips" and riparian forest buffers must be emphasized in the management of lands along streams in Illinois. Livestock access to streams must be eliminated. Development must be designed to minimize sediment runoff into streams. Nutrient and pesticide management and livestock waste management must be improved to minimize runoff into streams and prevent contamination of water supplies. The cost of treating surface water supplies will decrease as water quality improves. Recreation and tourism, as well as public health and safety, will benefit from improved water quality. The use of trees and forestry practices such as riparian forest buffers and filter strips will help prevent erosion and improve water quality by contributing to bank stabilization, reducing runoff and filtering nutrient and pesticide runoff.

Program Vision

The intent of participating in the Forest Land Enhancement Program is to work towards achieving forest management goals designed to provide long term environmental, economic and social values to the

citizens of Illinois. Private landowners need to be motivated, through education, financial incentives and demonstrations, to develop and implement a forestry plan on their properties. Educating landowners can reduce the mismanagement or benign neglect of their forestland and the negative consequences that have resulted. Adequate financial and technical resources must be provided to meet the demands by the public for forest management assistance. Coordination among all natural resource partners in the state will avoid duplication and make the most efficient use of limited staffing and funds. Training of natural resource professionals will enable the best information being transferred to landowners resulting in better management decisions. With this vision in mind, the following goals can be met through the program practices that will be offered under FLEP.

Program Goals

Goal #1 - Retain, enhance and expand the existing forest resource base in Illinois.

Action

Strengthen the programs of various agencies and their ability to provide more landowner-oriented technical, stewardship and management assistance.

Action

Enhance forest health through the protection of forests and associated land from wildfire, the invasion of exotic flora & fauna, disease and from physical damage

Action

Encourage forest landowners to cooperate in state programs that conserve our natural resources

Action

Increase the net growth and overall quality of the forest.

Action

Continue and improve incentives for the maintenance and active management of privately and publicly owned forest land and encourage private landowners to convert marginal crop land to forest cover.

Goal #2 - Strengthen and expand education programs that instill a forest stewardship and land ethic

Action

Coordinate a statewide information program to educate landowners about forestland stewardship and the implementation of a forest management plan in order to achieve multiple benefits.

Action

Educate forest landowners, public officials, and the general public about the important values of forestland and the need to protect, manage and utilize those areas for the future.

Action

Develop and implement landowner education programs for proper harvesting, wood utilization, marketing, and product manufacturing

Goal #3 - Increase professional development and delivery of technical services to implement practices that will improve and enhance all the values associated with a healthy forest ecosystem.

Action

Initiate training for loggers that demonstrate harvesting techniques and practices in a safe, cost-effective manner that will minimize negative impacts to the forest and overall environment.

Action

Provide training to professional foresters that will result in the transfer of the most up-to-date biological and technological information needed to promote and meet the demand for forestry assistance to Illinois landowners.

Complementary Programs

There are numerous federal (WRP; CRP; CREP; WHIP; EQIP; Forest Legacy) and state programs (CPP; FDA; Wildlife Habitat Fund) that can be enhanced and complemented through FLEP. Stewardship program staff will coordinate with Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) program leaders to ensure that forest landowners served by NRCS are fully aware of opportunities through FLEP. The development and use of FLEP practices will be cognizant of target area and practice emphasis with these other programs to keep duplication of effort to a minimum. However, this does not preclude the use of FLEP funds, when applicable, to be used concurrently with other state cost-share programs to strengthen and expand practices. This will be particularly useful in conjunction with the Illinois Forestry Development Act (IFDA) which guarantees forest landowners reduced taxes for acreage enrolled in the IFDA program. Acreage, adjacent to, but ineligible for some of these other programs, should be a target of opportunity to enhance and compound the benefits of FLEP. When applicable, FLEP may be used to match state program funds to enhance cost-share opportunities.

Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the State Forester, State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee (Illinois Forestry Development Council - IFDC) and other agencies and organizations in FLEP planning, delivery and accountability to the program objectives are as follows.

The Illinois State Priority Plan for FLEP is developed jointly by the State Forester and the Illinois Forestry Development Council.

The State Forester is to develop, implement and administer the FLEP consistent with the state priority plan. The State Forester must ensure that all activities are carried out properly and that all cost-shared practices meet the appropriate standards and specifications.

The State Forester submits an annual report, as required by the final rule, reporting all activities and practices funded through FLEP for the previous fiscal year. The report will contain data on

accomplishments by educational, technical and cost share assistance based on state objectives and measurable outcomes included in the state's priority plan. By July 15, 2006, the State Forester must submit a summary report of all state activities and practices funded through FLEP as of June 1, 2006.

The State Forester, in cooperation with the IL Forestry Development Council, has designated a third party, the Illinois Conservation Foundation, a 501 C-3 non-profit, to administer the cost share financial assistance and other FLEP elements as necessary.

The plan will guide the program implementation in Illinois through fiscal year 2007 and will be revised as needed. Questions about the Plan or about FLEP in Illinois should be directed to: Stewardship Program Coordinator; One Natural Resources Way; Springfield, IL 62702-1271. (217)785-8774.

Public Participation Process

The Illinois Forestry Development Council (IFDC) is comprised of representatives from a wide variety of natural resource stakeholder groups and institutions. The members of the Council meet with their constituencies to discuss their needs and interests as they relate to FLEP issues. This feedback was important in defining issues and developing priorities in the State Priority Plan. In addition, a public review process was conducted via the internet. The FLEP priority plan was posted on three websites (Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois Forestry Development Council and Illinois Tree Farm) inviting public review and comment. During this time period, a direct mailing was also made to all forestry consultants in the state and all landowners currently enrolled in the Illinois Forestry Development Act program seeking input into the plan process. The Stewardship Program Coordinator received comments and incorporated those into the final Plan.

Program Components

FLEP funding will be allocated among four program elements as follows: education (10%), technical assistance (5%), cost share assistance to NIPF landowners (75%) and program administration (10%). The IFDC will retain the authority to reallocate this distribution throughout the program as the needs and resources among these areas change in order to fully obligate and spend the funds.

Education

Educational efforts will contain two elements: 1) creating an awareness and a desire among Illinois' 114,500 landowners to begin managing their forest land and 2) providing technical training to forestry professionals in the state. The primary method for accomplishing these goals will be through the use of grants. The IFDC, in consultation with IDNR Forest Ecology program leader and IDNR regional

foresters, will review and approve education grant proposals. Education grant guidelines will be developed by the Stewardship Information and Education task group of the IFDC to give focus and direction for proposals. Educational assistance efforts may include all of the following: activities, events, programs, curricula, written materials, workshops, training sessions, website construction and maintenance. Emphasis will be placed on field days, publications and training sessions for professional development of foresters, loggers and timber buyers.

The expected outcome will be to enhance the skills of forestry professionals through professional training and development and to increase landowner participation in forest management activities through an increased awareness of management opportunities through the FLEP. This will improve the ability of forestry professionals in the state to plan and implement forestry practices that improve and utilize the state's forests while protecting and enhancing the water, soil and wildlife values associated with this valuable resource. Educational efforts will also help close the gap between the number of landowners who are unaware of the benefits of properly managing their forests and the types of forestry assistance and information that is available to them.

The accomplishment of these objectives will be measured by 1) tracking responses or actions taken by landowners contacted or participating in events or activities and 2) documenting attendance at activities designed to improve professional skills. The documentation and evaluation of funded projects will require the submission of copies of all materials developed, registration lists from activities, events, programs, workshops and a follow-up report from the grantee as to how the goals and objectives of the grant were met. Potential partners to deliver educational component: landowner based groups (Tree Farm ; Walnut Council; ILNW Forestry Assoc.); ILSAF; state universities; NRCS ; SW CD ; IDNR ; Ecosystem Partnerships and other watershed based planning groups.

Technical Assistance

There is a shortage of professional forestry assistance available to landowners throughout the state. This can result in prolonged delays to landowner requests for forestry assistance and missed opportunities for developing forest management plans and implementing forest stewardship practices. Technical assistance will be used to help alleviate this situation through: (1) agreements with other agencies, institutions of higher education, natural resource consultants or private organizations to augment or complement existing services of the state forestry agency; (2) supporting existing or further development of technical assistance delivery by the state forestry agency; (3) grants, agreements or contracts to provide services to landowners not offered by the state; and/or (4) the development or application of new tools or technology for providing service to landowners.

It is expected that services provided in this manner will reduce the response time to landowner requests for forestry assistance, reduce the backlog of landowners now waiting for technical assistance and increase services in areas where service has been reduced due to manpower reductions within the state forestry agency.

Any grants, agreements or contracts developed will have specific targets established that a vendor will be required to meet. A method for tracking and reporting these accomplishments will be included in any contract or grant agreement. Accomplishments will be included in the annual report as required by the Forest Service.

Accomplishments, as a result of FLEP funds that are used to support or further develop technical assistance by the state forestry agency, will be documented by using the IDNR

programmatic/accomplishment reporting system. Accomplishments that result from the application or development of tools or technology funded through the program will be documented and reported in the annual report as required by the Forest Service.

Administration

The Illinois Conservation Foundation will be the mechanism used to distribute payments to vendors, landowners, and organizations that implement or carry out programs and practices that meet the program goals and objectives.

Cost Share Assistance

The cost share program will be structured like the Illinois Forestry Development Act (IFDA) cost share assistance program (Appendix 2). A minimum of 10 acres will be required to participate up to a maximum of 1,000 acres treated annually. A certified Forest Stewardship Plan will be required in order to be eligible for cost share assistance. Landowners will be reimbursed for eligible costs at a rate of 75% within specified limits. Cost share rates were established based upon NRCS and IFDA practice guidelines. Rates will be monitored throughout the life of the program and adjusted as needed to reflect current market rates. The following is a list of practices that are available under the FLEP. The practice specifications and standards for those that will be offered in Illinois are outlined in Appendix 1.

FLEP 1 - Forest Stewardship Plan Development - Development or revision of a forest plan, or upgrading of an existing management plan to meet or exceed forest stewardship standards.

- FLEP 2 - Afforestation/Reforestation - Site preparation, planting seedlings, seed or other practices to encourage natural regeneration or insure forest establishment and carbon sequestration.
- FLEP 3 - Forest Stand Improvement - Practices that increase tree growth and quality; improve stand vigor and health; influence tree species composition and enhance overall diversity of native plants and animals
- FLEP 4 - Agroforestry - This will not be offered due to anticipated low demand, size of practices would be small in nature. Silvopasture, alley cropping and other such practices could be accomplished as a demonstration opportunity under the educational component. Riparian plantings are offered under other practices.
- FLEP 5 - Water Quality Improvement & Watershed Protection
Construction, establishment, maintenance, renovation and/or restoration of roads, trails, culverts, stream crossing structures and log landing areas for the purposes of improving and protecting water quality, riparian areas, forested wetlands and watersheds.
- FLEP 6 - Fish & Wildlife Habitat Improvement - This will not be offered. Landowners participate and receive priority in several other programs for establishing, maintaining and restoring habitat practices. These include the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP); Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP); Illinois Wildlife Habitat Fund and Wildlife Preservation Fund.
- FLEP 7 - Forest Health - This will not be offered and will be addressed under the educational component. Educational activities will promote awareness and educate the public of specific potential threats to forest health relating to wildlife damage, insect and disease problems.
- FLEP 8 - Invasive Species Control - Establishment, maintenance and restoration practices, primarily to detect, monitor, eradicate or control the spread of exotic and invasive species.
- FLEP 9 - Fire and Catastrophic Risk Reduction - This will not be offered due to the rare and infrequent occurrences of catastrophic fire events in Illinois. It is recognized the firebreak establishment and maintenance can be important under some conditions and in some geographic areas. In these instances, such risk reduction activities can be addressed under other practices.
- FLEP 10 - Fire and Catastrophic Event Rehabilitation - This will not be offered due to the rare and infrequent occurrences of catastrophic fire events in Illinois. Rehabilitation and restorative

practices may be addressed under other practices. However, most of the fire damage that occurs within the state does not cause significant damage to merit rehabilitation.

FLEP 11 - Forest Protection - Establishment of practices primarily to reduce the risk from wildfire, harmful livestock grazing and damage by wildlife that would prevent the successful establishment, growth or development of a forest stand.

Program Eligibility and Other Requirements

- a. All non-industrial private forest landowners owning at least 10 acres. Corporations whose stocks are publicly traded or owners principally engaged in the processing of wood products are excluded.
- b. Participants are eligible to receive funds for treatment of not more than 1,000 acres annually. The maximum aggregate amount of cost share payment to any one landowner shall not exceed \$100,000 through 2007.
- c. An approved Forest Stewardship management plan, as defined in the FLEP 1 practice standards, must be in place before receiving approval for funding with the exception of the FLEP 1 practice - Forest Stewardship Plan Development. No practices completed or costs incurred prior to approval of funding are eligible for reimbursement.
- d. Approval will be made using a FLEP plan certification form indicating concurrence by the landowner and IDNR District Forester.
- e. Practices must be maintained for the required amount of time as specified in the plan. Failure to do so will result in the participant being subject to the recapture provision.
- f. Practice life span of practices is ten years unless specifically stated otherwise. The 10 year life span does not apply to recurring practices such as prescribed burning, light disking, herbicide applications and other practices specified in the management plan.
- g. Chemicals used in performing practices must be federally, state and locally registered and used according to label directions and requirements.
- h. Partial payments for individual components of a practice are not authorized.
- i. Cancellation of program participation may occur by either the landowner or the IDNR as a result of a violation of a practice or the approved plan without cost to the IDNR.
- j. Capital investments, capital improvements, purchase of land or any interest in land are not eligible to receive funds.

Cost Share Program

Allocation, Priorities and Targets

- (a) State Forester shall coordinate the FLEP program fund distribution through the IDNR regional foresters. Cost share funds will be distributed through the District Forester's office via allocations received from the IDNR regional forester.
- (b) District Foresters shall conduct a continuous sign up process through their offices and by making applications available through the USDA and SW CD offices in each county.
- (c) FLEP cost share practices offered are based on the practice's ability to address forestry issues, as defined in the state priority plan, the extent the practice can alleviate technical assistance shortages that exist and the availability of similar practices offered under other federal and state programs. Practices identified as a high priority in the FLEP State Priority Plan will receive priority for funds that remain at the time of application.

FLEP Practice	Priority	C/S %	Annual Target
FLEP 1 - Forest Stewardship Plans	High	75	2,000 acres
FLEP 2 - Afforestation/Reforestation	Medium	75	300 acres
FLEP 3 - Forest Stand Improvement	High	75	1,300 acres
FLEP 5 - Water Quality Improvement & Watershed Protection	High	75	500 acres
FLEP 8 - Invasive Species Control	Medium	75	100 acres
FLEP 11 - Forest Protection	Medium	75	100 acres

Accomplishments will be documented and reported through the IDNR programmatic/accomplishment reporting system. Completed cost share practices will also be reported monthly by the Illinois Conservation Foundation to IDNR. This information will be reported in the annual report as required by the Forest Service.

Application and Payment Procedures

- (1) Cost share applications will be accepted by the District Forester for all eligible landowners. Applications will be funded on a first-come, first-served basis.

(2) Approval of applications will be made by the District Forester and subject to practices that are included in the approved management plan and funding availability. Practices identified as a high priority in the FLEP State Priority Plan will receive priority for funds that remain at the time of application.

(3) Upon approval of the application, the landowner shall be notified in writing. Such notice shall state that the landowner can begin to implement the approved practices and that funds have been obligated to cover the costs of implementing such practices within the program limits. The notice shall also state the landowner is to notify the District Forester when the practice is completed. Payment will be made following verification by the District Forester that the practice has been completed according to specifications. Practices not completed within 12 months from the approval date to begin the practice will be cancelled. Those funds will be re-obligated by the District Forester to other pending applicants.

(4) Practice approval will be made once a field inspection by the District Forester has verified completion according to specifications and proper documentation has been received by the landowner for costs incurred to implement the practice.

(5) Authorization and documentation needed to pay the landowner will be transmitted to the Illinois Conservation Foundation who will disburse funds for payment.

(6) A refund process to recapture expended funds will be initiated when a) overpayments have occurred for any reason; b) participants fail to maintain completed practices for the entire practice life span;

(7) participants sell, convey or otherwise lose control of the land upon which there is a continuing obligation to maintain a practice and the new landowner does not agree to assume responsibility for maintaining that practice. Recaptured funds will be deposited with the Illinois Conservation Foundation for redistribution and payment of practices under the FLEP program.

(8) Nothing in this section requiring the withholding or refunding of financial assistance payments shall preclude any penalty or liability otherwise imposed by law.

(9) Non-federal program funds and other donated assistance may be used to supplement cost share through FLEP; however, the total of all funds and assistance shall not exceed 100 percent of the total cost of practice implementation. The federal share of the total cost shall be reduced by any gross revenue from any material sold as result of the cost share practice. In-kind contributions cannot be reimbursed.

(10) Any landowner, successor or assignee who is dissatisfied with any determination made under FLEP may request reconsideration by the State Forester. All requests for reconsideration shall be in writing and shall contain factual information explaining the basis for the request. All decisions on reconsideration must be issued in writing.

Prohibited Practices

a. Costs incurred before an application for cost share is approved by the IDNR District Forester.

b. Repeated practices on the same site within the required maintenance period which have been implemented under any other state, federal or local government programs, except where such practices are repeated due to a failure of a prior practice without fault of the landowner.

c. Practices less than one acre in size.

d. Practices associated with the development or improvement of Christmas trees, tree nurseries, nut or fruit orchards are not eligible

References

Bretthauer, S. and Edgington, J. 2002. Forest Resources of Illinois

USDA Forest Service North Central Station Resource Bulletin NC - 198 Illinois' Forests in 1998

IL Forestry Development Council 1999. Realizing the Forests' Full Potential: Assessment and Long Range Action Plan for Forest Resources in Illinois

msfilename:IL_FLEP_priority_plan_8_19_03

FLEP 1

Practice: Forest Stewardship Plan Development

Purpose: Development or revision of a forest plan, or upgrading of an existing management plan to meet or exceed forest stewardship standards.

Eligible Components and cost share rates: Cost share shall be 75% of actual costs not to exceed the following rates:

New Forest Stewardship Plan	\$50
Plus	\$7/acre
Revise or update an existing plan	\$50
Plus	\$7/acre

Standards and Specifications: Cost share is authorized for the preparation of a new plan or the updating of an existing land management plan to Forest Stewardship standards. All forested acreage on the property must be included and enrolled in the program. The plan must include the following: landowners name, address and phone number; plan preparer's name, address and phone number; plan preparation date; legal description; stewardship acres; statement of landowner(s) goals; general property description; description of forest stands; supporting stand objectives; silvicultural recommendations; natural resource threats; acknowledge any known endangered/threatened species or cultural features; soils information; time table of management activities to occur over the next ten-years; reforestation sites with planting recommendations that also include pre and post planting activities; maps including soils, and aerial photos depicting property boundaries, forest stand delineations; water and road features.

Refer to: <http://www.fs.fed.us/nc/burlington/ncd/product.htm#StewPlan>

IDNR - Division of Forest Resources Policy & Procedural Manual; Section 1801

FDA/Stewardship Forest Management Plan and Section 1802 FDA/Stewardship Tree Planting Plan

FLEP 2

Practice: Afforestation/Reforestation

Purpose: Site preparation, planting seedlings, seed and other practices to encourage natural regeneration or insure forest establishment and carbon sequestration.

Eligible Components and cost share rates: Cost share shall be 75% of actual costs not to exceed the following rates:

Direct seeding		Private Seedlings	No Cost Seedlings
Hardwood seedlings* 10' x 10' (436 trees/acre)		\$325/acre	\$100/acre
Hardwood seedlings* 8' x 10' (540 trees/acre)		\$405/acre	\$120/acre
Hardwood seedlings* 8' x 8' (680 trees/acre)		\$510/acre	\$140/acre

* The above rates include seedling and herbicide costs and the labor to plant and apply chemical vegetation control.

Standards and Specifications: Cost share is authorized to plant tree seedlings, or direct seed, carry out any necessary site preparation and follow up maintenance activities to ensure the satisfactory establishment of trees for conservation purposes, the production of wood products and the sequestration of carbon.

A Forest Stewardship plan, that includes areas to be planted and/or regenerated, approved by the IDNR District Forester, is required. The plan will describe any needed site preparation, species selection, spacings, protective and follow up maintenance activities to meet the objectives.

Practices will be implemented and completed according to the provisions of the Illinois Forestry Development Act as outlined in 17 IL Administrative Code; Chapter I; Section 1536; Part 1536.30 Forestry Development Cost-Share Program guidelines.

Refer to: NRCS Conservation Practice Standards #612 Tree & Shrub Establishment
NRCS Conservation Practice Standard #391 Riparian Forest Buffer

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>

Illinois Direct Seeding Handbook - <http://www.directseeding.org/>

FLEP 3

Practice: Forest Stand Improvement

Purpose: Practices that would increase tree growth and quality; improve stand vigor and health; influence tree species composition and enhance overall diversity of native plants and animals

Eligible Components and cost share rates: Cost share shall be 75% of actual costs not to exceed the following rates:

Thinning practices designed to improve species composition, timber quality improve tree growth and vigor and enhance other resource objectives	\$45/acre
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Standards and Specifications: Cost sharing is authorized for the thinning of forest stands based upon a silvicultural prescription, approved by the IDNR District Forester, and developed upon stand data analysis that supports the goals and objectives stated in the Forest Stewardship plan.

Practices will be implemented and completed according to the provisions of the Illinois Forestry Development Act as outlined in 17 IL Administrative Code; Chapter I; Section 1536; Part 1536.50 Forestry Development Cost-Share Program guidelines

Refer to: NRCS Conservation Practice Standards #666 Forest Stand Improvement

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>

Crop Tree Management in Eastern Hardwoods; Publication #NA-TP-19-93

<http://www.sirsi.fs.fed.us/uhb/in/webcat>

FLEP 5

Practice: Water Quality Improvement & Watershed Protection

Purpose: To promote the use of best management practices (BMP's) and stream side management zones (SMZ's) through the construction, establishment, maintenance, renovation and/or restoration of roads, trails, culverts, stream crossing structures and landing areas for the purposes of improving and protecting water quality, riparian areas, forested wetlands and watersheds.

Eligible Components and cost share rates: Cost share shall be 75% of actual costs not to exceed the following rates:

Forest access corridor design and layout		\$ 20/lineal foot
Critical area seeding		\$200/acre
Waterbars & Diversions		\$3/lineal foot
Temporary stream /drainage crossings		
Culverts -	6"	\$3.50/lineal foot
	8"	\$3.75/lineal foot
	10"	\$5.50/lineal foot
	12"	\$8.50/lineal foot
	15"	\$15.75/lineal foot
	18"	\$18.75/lineal foot

Standards and Specifications: Cost share is authorized for the design and layout of forest access corridors (skid trails, haul roads and landing areas) to insure that water quality is maintained or enhanced. A harvesting site plan will include a topographic map locating routes and identifying BMP practices that will restrict soil erosion and protect water quality.

Cost share is authorized for the establishment of grasses and legumes in openings in forested areas resulting from road, skid trails and log landing areas developed or used during a harvesting operation. Rates include site preparation, seed costs, nutrient and lime tests and installation.

Cost share is authorized for the construction and seeding of waterbars and diversions to mitigate potential impacts of soil erosion and water quality from sedimentation due to water runoff from logging skid trails, roads and landing areas.

Cost share is authorized for the construction and installation of fords, culverts and bridges that will be used as temporary crossings over streams, ravines and ditches during a logging operation in order to preserve and protect water quality.

Practices will be implemented and completed according to the provisions of Forestry Best Management Practices for Illinois.

Also refer to: NRCS Conservation Practice Standards #342 Critical Area Planting
 NRCS Conservation Practice Standards #656 Forest Trails and Landings
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/>

FLEP 8

Practice: Invasive Species Control

Purpose: Establishment, maintenance and restoration practices, primarily to eradicate or control the spread of non native or invasive species that are particular threats to the successful regeneration of the forest.

Eligible Components and cost share rates: Cost share shall be 75% of actual costs not to exceed the following rates:

<u>Level of invasion</u> *	
light level (30%)	\$60/acre
medium level (31% - 60%)	\$90/acre
heavy level (> 60%)	\$180/acre

* The percent of area covered by the target species

Standards and Specifications: Cost share assistance is authorized for the control of the following species that are considered a long term threat to the successful establishment of the forest through natural regeneration processes: Japanese and bush honeysuckle; European buckthorn; kudzu; garlic mustard, multiflora rose, Japanese stilt grass, Chinese yam, Chinese privet and oriental bittersweet.

Practices will be implemented and completed according to the provisions and recommendations of the Forest Stewardship plan.

FLEP 11

Practice: Forest Protection

Purpose: Establishment of practices primarily to reduce the risk from wildfire, harmful livestock grazing and damage by wildlife that would prevent the successful establishment, growth or development of a forest stand.

Eligible Components and cost share rates: Cost share shall be 75% of actual costs not to exceed the following rates:

firebreaks	\$1.50/rod
fencing (protection from wildlife)	\$.50/foot
fencing (protection from livestock grazing)	
woven wire	\$12/rod
barbed wire	\$11/rod
high-tensile	\$9/rod
repellants	\$15/acre

Standards and Specifications: Cost share assistance is authorized for the construction of permanent firebreaks to provide protection to forests or forest plantations from damage by wildfire.

Cost share assistance is authorized for the use of fencing and animal repellants to prevent or reduce wildlife damage in tree plantings, direct seeding and natural regeneration practices.

Cost share assistance is authorized to construct interior, permanent fence to exclude livestock from forested areas.

Practices will be implemented and completed according to the provisions of the Illinois Forestry Development Act as outlined in 17 IL Administrative Code; Chapter I; Section 1536; Part 1536.40; Part 1536.60; Part 1536.65 Forestry Development Cost-Share Program guidelines

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TITLE 17: CONSERVATION
CHAPTER I: DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCHAPTER d: FORESTRY

PART 1536

FORESTRY DEVELOPMENT COST-SHARE PROGRAM

Section

- 1536.10 General
- 1536.20 Eligibility
- 1536.25 Preparation of Forest Management Plans
- 1536.30 Planting Trees and Direct Seeding
- 1536.40 Fencing to Protect Forests and Plantations
- 1536.50 Tending Forest Stands
- 1536.60 Firebreaks to Protect Forests
- 1536.65 Reducing Wildlife Damage
- 1536.70 Site Preparation for Natural Regeneration
- 1536.80 Appeal
- 1536.90 Information
- 1536.100 Penalty

AUTHORITY: Implementing and authorized by the Illinois Forestry Development Act [525 ILCS 15].

SOURCE: Adopted and codified at 8 Ill. Reg. 13689, effective July 25, 1984; amended at 9 Ill. Reg. 14286, effective September 5, 1985; amended at 10 Ill. Reg. 6838, effective April 3, 1986; amended at 10 Ill. Reg. 18168, effective October 15, 1986; amended at 11 Ill. Reg. 18632, effective November 2, 1987; amended at 14 Ill. Reg. 18244, effective October 29, 1990; amended at 17 Ill. Reg. 16485, effective September 27, 1993; recodified by changing the agency name from Department of Conservation to Department of Natural Resources at 20 Ill. Reg. 9389; amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998.

Section 1536.10 General

The purpose of this program is to encourage the planting, management, use, and regeneration of forests.

- a) Timber growers and/or landowners participating in this program may also be eligible for federal forestry cost-share programs administered by agencies of the United States.
- b) An application for the cost-shared practice must be completed by the timber grower and/or landowner and submitted to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources's District Forester, hereinafter referred to as the District Forester. The requirements for installation of the practice will be described in the approved forest management plan, hereafter called the "Plan". The cost-shared practice can not be started until the application is approved by the District Forester.
- c) The reimbursement for the approved cost-shared practice will be based on the landowner's documentation of cost to install the practice and will not exceed the established cost-share percentages and will not exceed maximum amounts per unit allowed in this Part.

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- d) Timber growers and/or landowners must provide an itemized statement with paid receipts for expenses of more than \$10 in the implementation of the approved practice. In determining the cost of a timber grower and/or landowner or family member doing the practices, the labor rate shall not exceed \$12 per hour. Reimbursement for amounts less than \$50 will not be processed for payment.
- e) This is a reimbursement cost-share program. Advance payment will not be allowed. Furthermore, cost-share payment cannot be made to a third party or to vendors.
- f) When Federal or other cost-share program practices are utilized concurrently with the Illinois Forestry Development Act (IFDA) Cost-Share Program, the cost-share percentage shall equal the percentage of the other concurrent cost-share program in effect in the county where the practice is installed. The IFDA cost-share percentage and the "not to exceed per practice unit amount" shall be adjusted proportionately from the standard rate now in effect. Timber growers and/or landowners may not be reimbursed more than the actual cost not to exceed the base cost of the practice. The base cost represents the amount upon which the cost-share maximum is derived. The adjusted maximum fixed rate is determined by taking the federal cost-share percent rate times the average cost per acre. Federal programs will be used for initial payment.
- g) A practice cannot be repeated on the same land within a 10 year period and must be effective for a minimum of 10 years, except as allowed under Sections 1536.30 and 1536.70.
- h) Property upon which cost-shared practices are installed must be protected from wildfire and grazing by measures set forth in the Plan.
- i) Chemicals used in performing practices must be federally, state and locally registered and must be applied strictly in accordance with authorized registered uses, directions on the label, and other Federal and State requirements.
- j) If a timber sale has occurred within 2 State of Illinois fiscal years prior to the approval of a cost shared practice, then timber growers and/or landowners will have their cost-share increased by an amount not to exceed 50% of their harvest fee. The combined payment for the practice and the harvest fee rebate shall not exceed 100% of the timber grower's and/or landowner's practice cost. Timber growers and/or landowners who sold timber based upon provisions of the Plan shall have priority for harvest fee rebates. Federal cost share programs cannot be used with the harvest fee rebate.
- k) While this program may be combined with a federal program for implementation of a specific practice, it cannot be combined with another State program for the same practice.
- l) Only approved and satisfactorily completed practices provide the basis for reimbursement to landowners. All components must be completed and approved before payment is approved.
- m) Cost share practices shall not be authorized for any action that is determined to be harmful to threatened or endangered species or their habitat.

(Source: Amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998)

Section 1536.20 Eligibility

- a) Participation in the program is limited to landowners and/or timber growers who own or operate at least 5 contiguous acres of land in this State. A forest must be at least 100 feet wide.
- b) The property on which the cost-shared practices will be installed must have an approved forest management plan as described in 17 Ill. Admin. Code 1537, except for a cost-share application for "preparation of forest management plans" practice under Section 1536.25.

(Source: Amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998)

Section 1536.25 Preparation of Forest Management Plans

This practice provides timber growers and/or landowners with another opportunity to obtain professional conservation assistance in Plan preparation.

- a) This cost-share practice is valid only when a timber grower and/or landowner pays another party for preparation of a Plan. The timber grower and/or landowner must approve and sign the Plan before the District Forester will authorize reimbursement of the cost-share of the Plan practice.
- b) A cost-share application for this practice must be submitted and approved by the District Forester prior to initiation of a Plan. However, for all other cost-share practices, an approved Plan must be in effect prior to submission of a cost-share application.
- c) The Plan must meet the conditions, requirements, standards and specifications as contained in IFDA and 17 Ill. Admin. Code 1537 and this Part. Additional information to clarify the requirements mentioned above is listed in two publications published by the Illinois Technical Forestry Association: "Recommended Silvicultural and Management Practices for Illinois Hardwood Forest Types" (1972), Extension Forester, Illinois Cooperative Extension Service, University of Illinois, 110 Mumford Hall, Urbana, IL 61801 (no later editions or amendments are included) and "Forest Planting Practices for Illinois" (1974), Illinois Technical Forestry Association, Inc., c/o Department of Forestry, 211 Mumford Hall, Urbana, IL 61801 (no later editions or amendments are included).
- d) Components eligible for cost-sharing can include: reconnaissance, travel costs, secretarial, mailing and telephone costs, forest inventory, data analysis and plan writing.
- e) Reconnaissance notes; field data; inventory per acre and per stand; and analysis of forest inventory must be submitted with the Plan, to the District Forester.

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- f) All of the land in a county owned by the same individual(s), partnership(s) or corporations(s) shall be included in a single Plan. Amendments of Plans to increase acreage during the 10 year lifespan of a Plan shall be cost-shared as described below.
- g) Cost-share rate for Plans of silviculture and management on existing forest stands shall be 75% of the owner's cost not to exceed \$7 per acre.
- h) Cost-share rate for reforestation and afforestation Plans as defined in 17 Ill. Adm. Code 1537 shall be 75% of the landowner's cost not to exceed \$4 per acre.
- i) Fractional acres for all Plans shall be rounded to the nearest acre for cost-share payment as follows: .01 to .49 acres will be rounded down and .50 to .99 shall be rounded up.

(Source: Amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998)

Section 1536.30 Planting Trees and Direct Seeding

The purpose of this practice is to establish a stand of forest trees for timber production purposes and compatible multiple uses and to provide general environmental benefits.

- a) The District Forester shall determine the suitability of the land for site preparation and tree planting, considering soil erodibility and the economic feasibility of soil stability practices such as tilling of the practice and ground cover requirements.
- b) Cost-sharing is not authorized for:
 - 1) planting trees or direct seeding on less than 1 acre or planting less than 435 trees per acre unless specifically modified later under Section 1536.30 (c) (2) (D) (iii) as approved by a District Forester.
 - 2) planting or culture of fruit or nut orchards, Christmas trees or planting for ornamental, landscaping or violation mitigation purposes. For the purposes of this subsection (b), mitigation means alleviation, reduction, abatement or diminution of a condition that is prohibited by State or federal law or regulation.
 - 3) irrigation of planted trees.
- c) Cost-Share Rates/Specification:
 - 1) Site Preparation - 75% of the actual cost not to exceed a variable amount ranging from \$30 to \$180 per acre, as determined by the Plan preparer and approved by the District Forester. The Plan preparer conducts a careful field inspection of current vegetation cover on the site to be prepared, and then uses categories and amounts in subsection (c) (1) (B) to make a determination about the cost-share rate per acre.
 - A) Cost-share categories and corresponding variable cost-share amounts shall be prorated per acre, per category, and shall be approved by the District Forester.

B) Cost-share categories and variable cost-share payments follow :

Category	Variable Cost-Share Amounts Not to Exceed, Per Acre
i) Vegetation or heavy residues which will cause some difficulty in normal planting.	\$30
ii) Sixty percent or more of area in sod and broad leafed herbaceous plants. Or up to 40% of area in light woody cover, stems two inches or less diameter at ground line.	\$60
iii) More 40% of area occupied by woody vegetation, briars, vines, or woody stems two inches diameter or less at ground line, but can include up to 25 stems per acre greater than two inches line.	\$90
iv) More than 40% of area occupied by woody vegetation greater than two inches diameter at ground line; or more than 25 stems per acre greater than two inches diameter at ground line.	\$180
C) This is limited to areas having undesirable vegetation (such as grass sod, perennial and annual broad-leafed plants and trees or shrubs). These areas will be replanted to desirable tree species.	
D) Measures necessary to minimize erosion must be undertaken and plantings must be according to prescribed standards set forth in the approved Plan. Measures may include, but are not limited to, hand	

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planting, machine planting on contour, establishment of temporary herbaceous cover, the use of herbicides for minimum disturbance of established cover and similar accepted practices as set forth in the approved Plan. Temporary herbaceous cover means oats, rye, wheat or similar grain.

- E) Removal may be undertaken mechanically with machinery including all normal farm tillage implements, chopping or sawing. Herbicides may also be used with mechanical measures or to replace mechanical measures.
- 2) Tree Planting (Trees and Labor) - 75% of the actual cost not to exceed \$95 for no-cost planting stock or \$280 for purchased planting stock, per acre.
- A) Selected tree species and seed sources to be planted must be in accordance with the Plan.
- B) Plantings must be made in accordance with the Plan. Trees must be firmly planted at the proper depth. Tree planting machines, augers or hand tools may be used.
- C) At least 90% of the conifer stock must be not less than 3/32 inch in caliper at 1 inch above the root collar (nursery soil line). At least 90% of the hardwood stock shall be 7/32 inch caliper at 1 inch above the root collar (nursery soil line). In addition to the standards above, hardwood stock purchased from private nurseries shall be ordered from the 12-18 inch category as described in the nursery's catalog or other written description.
- D) Spacing requirements are as follows:
- i) Plant seedlings 6 to 12 feet apart in rows 6 to 12 feet apart. Plant at least 435 trees per acre.
- ii) Interplantings with in wooded areas are to be spaced 6 feet apart or more in openings which receive partial or full direct sunlight.
- iii) Variations in spacing and seedling density standards may be made to enhance an existing forest area or riparian area in accordance with written recommendations approved by the District Forester. Cost-share for planting of less than 435 trees per acre will be prorated using 435 trees as the basis.
- E) Stocking and replanting requirements:
- i) At least 300 of the planted trees, per acre, must be maintained throughout the practice lifespan.

- ii) Cost-share assistance for replanting will be available where losses are due to natural causes, such as heat, drought, flood, hail, and similar occurrences, if 70% of a stand is not obtained, or if a stand deteriorates to less than 70% within the first two growing seasons.

3) Direct Seeding Component

The purpose of this practice is to extend limited supplies of plant materials and thereby to increase forestation.

- A) Direct seeding may be used in lieu of seedling planting, when approved by the District Forester as part of a Plan.
- B) As references for standards use: "Direct seeding of Southern Oaks - A PROGRESS REPORT", by Robert L. Johnson and Roger M. Krinard, Southern Hardwoods Laboratory, Stoneville, MS, Forest Service, USDA (1988) and the guidelines offered in Silvics of Forest Trees of the United States (1974), Agriculture Handbook 271, Forest Service, USDA, Washington, DC 20250 (no later editions or amendments are included.)
- C) This cost-share practice may be attempted a second time if through no direct fault of the landowner (i.e., drought, tornado, etc.) fewer than 300 seedlings of acceptable growing stock per acre survive after one full growing season.
- D) If, after 2 full growing seasons there are fewer than 300 seedlings of acceptable growing stock per acre, no further attempts to direct seed shall be made. However, tree planting must be done per subsection (2).
- E) Cost-share Rate and Specifications
 - I) This practice shall pay 75% of the owner's cost not to exceed \$95 per acre for seed collected or purchased plus labor and machinery use.
 - ii) Seed shall be local source, within 25 miles of the seeding site. Or, if local seed is not available, seed shall be collected within an area described as 50 miles west of the Mississippi River, 50 miles north of the Illinois-Wisconsin border, a north-south line extended along the eastern border of Ohio and 100 miles south of the Ohio River.
 - iii) Measures to protect seed from predator pilferage shall be required when predator pilferage is identified as a problem.
 - iv) Site preparation measures are best done before direct seeding. Additional treatments to introduce adequate sunlight and to reduce competition may be needed.

- v) Overstory removal may be required following establishment of seedlings - saplings.
- 4) Control of Undesirable Vegetation With Herbicides or Mulching - 75% of the actual cost not to exceed \$40 per acre with herbicides, \$60 per acre with mulch.
- A) The practice is limited to plantings that conform to specifications cited in Section 1536.30.
- B) Application of herbicides may be in either the liquid or granular form and may be pre-emergents or post-emergents or combinations of these types as approved by the District Forester. Application may be made as pre-plant, post-plant or at time of planting. If vegetation control is a component of the forestation practice, it must be completed to qualify for reimbursement for site preparation and planting. Treated bands for hardwoods shall be 4 feet, spot treatments shall be at least 12 square feet. For conifers minimum band width is 2 feet, and spots of 4 square feet.
- C) Organic mulches may be used in combination with herbicides or in lieu of herbicides and must be used if required in the approved management Plan, to qualify for site preparation and planting payments. Minimum per seedling mulched area is 12 square feet with an initial depth of 4 inches. Mulched areas must be pretreated by removing existing vegetation to expose mineral soil prior to applying the mulch. Weed control fabric (cloth) can be used if at least 9 square feet is used around each seedling.
- D) Herbicide or mulching applications must be made, if required in the Plan and included on the practice cost-share application, to qualify for site preparation and planting payments.
- E) Treatments for control of undesirable vegetation may be cost-shared for a second and third application as prescribed in the Plan and approved by the District Forester.

(Source: Amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998)

Section 1536.40 Fencing to Protect Forests and Plantations

- a) The practice is limited to building permanent fences needed to exclude livestock.
- b) The distance between posts or live trees must not exceed 1 rod (165 feet). Limited use of live trees is permitted, provided 2" x 4" nailing strips of durable wood are used between the wire and the tree.
- c) No assistance will be given for boundary fences or fences adjacent to roads.
- d) Cost-Share Rates/Specification - The cost-share amounts vary by type of fence constructed; however, the rate will be 75% of actual cost not to exceed these limits:

- 1) A woven wire fence must consist of at least a 26 inch woven wire with at least two strands of barbed wire on top - \$12 per rod.
- 2) A barbed wire fence must be at least three strands - \$11 per rod.
- 3) If other fence materials are used, all weather wood or native lumber highly resistant to decay may be substituted for barbed wire if required for certain domestic animals - \$12 per rod.
- 4) A suspension fence will consist of at least four strands of barbed wire with the distance between posts not to exceed 100 feet and sufficient wire spacers to prevent sagging - \$6 per rod.
- 5) A high-tensile fence will consist of at least 6 strands of wire with the distance between posts not to exceed 100 feet with sufficient droppers to maintain proper wire spacing - \$9 per rod.

(Source: Amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998)

Section 1536.50 Tending Forest Stands

Profitable production for timber, wildlife management, or aesthetics can result from the application of proper methods of thinning or releasing of desirable crop trees and by cutting of designated vines attached to desirable crop trees. Thinning, vine removal and pruning are methods to increase growth rates of the best crop trees. Vines not on crop trees shall be retained for wildlife benefit.

- a) Cost sharing will be approved for areas one acre or larger.
- b) Improvement measures shall be carried out in such a manner as to improve or protect the quality of the environment, especially wildlife habitat, as described in the Plan.
- c) Cost-Share Rates/Specifications
 - 1) Thinning/Crop Tree Release - 75% of actual cost not to exceed \$45 per acre.
 - A) The District Forester must give prior approval of the practice area, the methods to be used based upon the density and condition of the trees, and the economic feasibility of the practice.
 - B) Work shall be done by cutting, girdling, and herbicide treatment of the surplus, diseased, cull or weed trees and by cutting designated vines attached to desirable crop trees. Thinning should release desirable tree species so as to leave per acre an adequately stocked stand composed predominantly of high ranked timber species, well distributed, as described in the Plan. Stocking guides and species rank shall be determined by use of the appropriate table in "Recommended Silviculture and Management Practices for Illinois Hardwood Forest Types", Illinois Technical Forestry Association (1972), Extension Forester, Illinois

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Cooperative Extension Service, University of Illinois, 110 Mumford Hall,
Urbana, IL 61801 (no later editions or amendments are included).

- C) Crop tree management practice guidelines will follow the recommendations provided by "Crop tree Management in Eastern Hardwoods", (Circa 1993), NA-TP-19-93, USDA Forest Service, Arlyn Perkey, Morgantown, W V (no later editions or amendments are included).
- D) Herbicide treatment of stumps may be omitted when crop trees released are more than 20 feet tall. Herbicide treatment may also be omitted, if a double girdle is utilized. Double girdling shall be done only when stump sprouting will not be a serious problem. This method is described in Central Hardwood Notes, 610, August 1989 Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry. USDA Forest

Service. Both exceptions above must be approved in writing by the District Forester. All other treatment methods require use of approved herbicides.

- E) Harvesting practices and silvicultural systems as prescribed in the Plan must be followed.
- F) Cost-Share assistance will not be given for any acre from which commercial products are being sold or traded in the process of carrying out the timber stand improvement practices.

2) Pruning Crop Trees (side branch pruning) - 75% of actual cost not to exceed \$75 per acre.

- A) The District Forester must give prior approval of the practice area. Crop trees must be marked or otherwise designated and the methods must be described in writing.
- B) In coniferous stands, the trees must have a minimum total height of 18 feet. All dead branches and all live branches up to one-half the total height of the trees must be pruned. Pruning to a total height of 17 feet is required where the trees are tall enough to meet this requirement. Not more than 100 final coniferous crop trees per acre, well distributed throughout the stand will be considered in determining the cost-share payment.
- C) In deciduous stands, pruning to total height of 17 feet is required where trees are tall enough to meet the requirement of 34 feet. Pruned trees shall retain 40% to 50% of total height as live crown. Deciduous stands must have attained a minimum height of 12 feet to effect a minimum pruning height of 6 feet. Not more than 100 well distributed desirable crop trees per acre shall be selected and fine hardwood (white and red oak, black walnut, etc.) species will be given prime consideration. In order to reduce the risk of decay, prune no live limbs over 3 inches in diameter.

- D) All pruning must be as close to the stem as possible without disturbing the branch bark ridge and branch collar.
- E) Corrective pruning to influence tree form may be required in the Plan; but such pruning shall not be cost-shared unless undertaken along with side branch pruning.

(Source: Amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998)

Section 1536.60 Firebreaks to Protect Forests

The purpose of this practice is to provide a practical and low cost way of affording protection to forests from damage by wild fire.

- a) The lower branches of trees adjacent to firebreaks must be pruned to increase the effectiveness of the practice.
- b) Cost-Share Rates/Specifications
 - 1) Firebreak construction - 75% of actual cost not to exceed \$1.50 per rod.
 - 2) Firebreaks for the area shall be cleared to a minimum of 1 rod in width. (If erosion is a problem, place firebreaks on the contour, or construct the appropriate number of water bars to deflect flowing water.)
 - 3) Firebreaks must be disked at least twice annually to keep vegetation from accumulating or as indicated in the Plan.

(Source: Amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998)

Section 1536.65 Reducing Wildlife Damage

Wildlife damage control is necessary at times to protect the investment in tree planting, direct seeding, or natural regeneration.

- a) This practice is limited to situations where the need for damage control is evident or highly probable based on wildlife population. Consultation with DNR District Wildlife Biologists is advised.
- b) In addition to cost-share practices, other strategies to control wildlife damage must be included in the Plan and must be implemented with this cost-share practice.
- c) Strategies can include: Legal hunting, providing alternate habitats, planting of species not favored by a given wildlife species, eliminating mowing, or planting a companion species.

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- 1) Tree shelters - 75% of the actual cost not to exceed \$150 per acre. The recommendation in the Plan as approved by the District Forester shall be followed. Requirements include:
 - A) Tree shelters shall be evenly distributed throughout each acre.
 - B) Shelters shall be maintained as installed for the life of the shelter or until they interfere with the growth of the tree. Shelters may be moved to other seedlings only if the original trees have died.
 - C) Durable rot resistant stakes must be used.
 - D) Nylon mesh caps or other approved barriers may be needed to prevent death of birds.
 - E) For protection from deer, 4 foot shelters meet minimum requirements.
 - F) 50 shelters per acre is the minimum.
- 2) Electric Fencing - 75% of the actual cost not to exceed \$0.50 per foot. The purpose is to repel deer from forestation or natural regeneration sites, as follows:
 - A) VGR type fence wire, stainless steel enclosed in plastic is the preferred type. Other wire may be used, but must be marked with bright color at minimum intervals of 25 feet.
 - B) Form aximum benefit the fence must be charged throughout the year so as to affect deer behavior.
 - C) The service life of the fence shall be determined in the Plan or by separate written prescription.
 - D) The fence should be installed prior to planting or at the time of planting to influence deer behavior.
- 3) Repellants - 75% of the actual cost not to exceed \$15 per acre to protect forestation or natural regeneration sites.
 - A) Either scent or taste repellents may be used; the Plan shall prescribe specific types.
 - B) Label directions on approved products must be followed. Renewal applications must be made in a timely manner, per the label.
 - C) The primary treatment shall be done by treatment of the central leader of the seedling.
- 4) Bud or Growing Point Protectors - 75% of the actual cost not to exceed \$5 per acre. Such devices as mesh netting, tubes, or bud caps may be used to protect

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seedling plants. Installation of such devices shall be according to the manufacturer's recommendations and the written prescription in the Plan.

(Source: Amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998)

Section 1536.70 Site Preparation for Natural Regeneration

The purpose of this practice is to establish a stand of high value forest species through natural regeneration for timber production purposes and to protect and improve the environment. For guidelines on species preference, refer to the ITFA Guide, cited previously, in Section 1536.25[©]).

- a) Cost-sharing is not authorized for areas of less than one acre.
- b) Cost-sharing is authorized for one additional regeneration treatment, by use of seed or seedlings on the area originally site prepared, if by uncontrollable circumstances, such as weather related problems, etc., natural regeneration fails to become established to the required stocking level.
- c) Cost-Share Rates/Specification
 - 1) Site preparation for natural regeneration - 75% of actual cost not to exceed \$30, \$60, \$90, or \$180 per acre determined by the District Forester using the cost-share categories as described in Section 1536.30 (c) (1) (B) (i) through (iv), as guidelines to determine an appropriate maximum cost-share amount.
 - 2) The goal is to obtain a 60-80% stocking level whereby a minimum of 20% to 40% of the available light reaches the forest floor, and other site factors are modified to enhance regeneration, by means of: reduction or elimination of competing vegetation, including unmerchantable or undesirable trees and brush, disking or tillage, use of foliar, cut surface, injected herbicides, mechanical removal of shallow rooted species, prescribed burn, and other measures as prescribed in the Plan.
 - 3) A complete written prescription, in the Plan or submitted as an addendum, must be approved by the District Forester prior to initiation of this practice. The prescription shall address the process outlined in "Regenerating Red Oaks" by Rod Jacobs, Silviculturalist, U.S. Forest Service, State and Private Forestry, St. Paul, Minnesota (1987) (no later editions or amendments are included). The prescription shall also address the "Elements of a Silvicultural Prescription" and the appropriate "Silvicultural Systems and Regeneration Methods" described in the "FORESTRY HANDBOOK" 2nd Edition, Edited by Karl F. Wenger, for the Society of American Foresters, 5400 Grosvenor Lane, Washington, DC 20014 (1984) (no later editions or amendments are included).
 - 4) Creation of suitable soil conditions for establishment of seedlings of desired species is particularly crucial for oak species. A reasonable expectation of seed deposition on the area to be regenerated must be imminent and abundant before site preparation is performed.

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- 5) This practice should not be done more than 20 years prior to a scheduled regeneration cut.

(Source: Amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998)

Section 1536.80 Appeal

- a) Any timber grower and/or landowner whose Plan or practice is not approved by the District Forester may appeal to the Regional Review Committee pursuant to 17 Ill. Admin. Code 2530. The Regional Review Committee is composed of the Regional Administrator, a District Forester from another district in the Region and the Forest Management Program Administrator.
- b) The appeal must be made within 30 days from the date that the Plan or practice was disapproved by writing to the address in Section 1536.90.
- c) The Regional Review Committee will conduct a meeting to receive written and oral arguments after the applicant and to reconsider the Plan and cost-share practices.
- d) The Regional Review Committee will notify the applicant in writing within 30 days after the meeting date stating the reasons for which the original decision is upheld or reversed.

(Source: Amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998)

Section 1536.90 Information

Anyone wishing additional information concerning this Part, may contact the Administrator, Forest Management Programs.

Department of Natural Resources
Office of Resource Conservation
One Natural Resources Way
Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271

(Source: Amended at 17 Ill. Reg. 16485, effective September 27, 1993)

Section 1536.100 Penalty

Each participant in this State Cost-Share Program is responsible for complying with the terms and conditions stated on the agreement, and shall follow the provisions detailed in the Plan. Refund of all cost-share payments made will be required if the agreement is not followed and/or the practice is not maintained for its minimum lifespan. Each practice carries a 10 year life span starting on the date the practice was completed and approved by the District Forester. Refund checks should be made payable to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Participants who refuse voluntary repayment will be subject to liens filed against their property or withholding of State payments by the Comptroller of Illinois.

(Source: Amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 10473, effective June 1, 1998)

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