



Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves

2021-2023 Strategic Plan

Mission – What is our purpose?

To support the Illinois Nature Preserves System by advocating for and finding increased support, resources, funding, and staff for the system and assisting local volunteer communities as they help restore and care for their Illinois biodiversity reserves.



Vision – What drives us? What do we hope to become? What do we ultimately want to achieve?

When people are connected to their Nature Preserves this leads to more resilient support for the conservation of the state's Nature Preserves.

Values – What are our core principles? How do we work with one another and with partners and stakeholders? When our strategies change, our values will remain.



- A friendly, supportive, and collaborative approach is the best way to ensure long-term, sustainable conservation.
- All people of Illinois are impacted by the loss of biodiversity, and Friends are committed to biodiversity conservation and following science driven ecological priorities.
- Connecting people to nature is critical for the future of conservation. We value the relationship between the land and the people.
- Working in partnership with state and local government is important for the sustainability of the nature preserve system.
- The work-learn-lead approach to stewardship fosters competent volunteer leaders and catalysts that should be welcomed and supported.
- Every child in Illinois should have the opportunity to discover nature, which includes the State's prairies, dunes, forests, savannas, wetlands, and bodies of water.
- A more diverse, equitable, inclusive organization is a stronger organization.

2021-2023 Goals & Strategies

Stewardship

1. Friends will establish effective, model stewardship communities for at least one site in the northern, central, and southern parts of the state.
 - 2021-2023 Strategies/Projects:
 - Promote and host kick-offs and workdays at sites to establish or strengthen stewardship communities.
 - Hire field representatives as pilot staff in at least 2 INPC areas.
 - Work with INPC and VSN to develop training resources, facilitate herbicide applicators licensing and other training, and obtain tools and other resources for stewardship volunteers.
 - Develop regional stewardship conferences, trainings, or networking opportunities.
2. Friends will draft criteria for determining how Friends will decide where to work and where to prioritize efforts (based on the condition of the site, existing resources, capacity, input from INPC staff, etc.)
 - 2021-2023 Strategies/Projects:
 - Work with INPC staff and other researchers to develop criteria for assessing site needs.
 - Developing training for assessing sites.
 - Collect baseline data on conditions of each of the Nature Preserves or Land and Water Reserves at the beginning of Friends involvement in stewardship at a site to demonstrate the effectiveness of the stewardship activities.
3. Assist IDNR and INPC with compiling the INPC Biennial Report to the General Assembly.

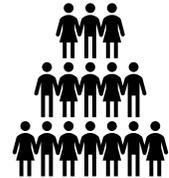


Education

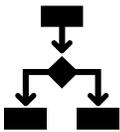
1. Friends will increase public understanding and support of Illinois Nature Preserves.
 - 2021-2023 Strategies/Projects:
 - Raise the profile of the system through publications, media, neighbors, elected officials, attending workshops, conferences, and events in each INPC area highlighting the preserves.
 - Develop a communications strategy to include social media, logo refresh and website development.
 - Draft and begin to utilize education and outreach materials.
 - Celebrate preserves and committed volunteers through existing social media and blog outlets.
 - Contact external media outlets (i.e. TV stations, newspapers, radio) that may be interested in sharing stories about this work.
 - Develop anniversary “press kits” for communities to celebrate milestone anniversaries of dedication.
 - Capitalize on the 60th Anniversary (in 2023) of the Illinois Nature Preserve System to educate, celebrate, and promote the system statewide.

2. Friends will help monitor and protect preserves and reserves at state and local levels.
 - 2021-2023 Strategies/Projects:
 - Make and solicit site reports and share these reports on the Friends' website and with INPC staff and landowner representatives.
 - Working with IDNR and other partner agency staff (See INPC Strategy 5.4), develop training information for volunteers on administrative rules, policies, and procedures and informing IDNR staff of violations so that an appropriate response can be made.

Partnership Building



1. Friends will develop relationships with preserve owners.
 - 2021-2023 Strategies/Projects:
 - Foster better connections among preserve owners, new volunteers, advisors, neighboring landowners, and tools and materials necessary for effective preserve management (see stewardship goals)
 - Survey preserve owners and Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and Illinois Department of Natural Resources staff to gather input on the stewardship needs and available resources across the state; Include in this data compilation, information on all of the other organizations and individuals doing work on Nature Preserves and Land and Water Reserves
2. Friends will develop relationships with partners.
 - 2021-2023 Strategies/Projects:
 - Connect with communities by attending local meetings (one per INPC area), introducing the Friends, and promoting local sites.
 - Connect with conservation organizations around the state, aiming to connect with at least one group per INPC area (including native plant society groups, birding groups, hiking groups, etc.) to bolster work currently in process and identify ongoing opportunities and needs the Friends can meet.
 - Connect with interested individuals in universities in proximity to nature preserves to promote interest in stewardship, research, and connecting students with nature.



Organizational & Administrative

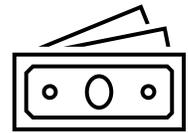
1. Friends will assemble a 12-member board made of former Commissioners, civic leaders, and conservation volunteers and professionals, including youthful and diverse supporters of the Preserves and the System from all corners of Illinois.
 - 2021-2023 Strategies/Projects

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- Develop board recruiting information, job description/expectations, and a matrix.
 - Expand the board to include a diversity of conservationists around the state, aiming to recruit 9 new board members.
2. Friends will Develop and propose organizational structures for statewide efforts (e.g., possible regional chapters, county committees, etc.)
 - 2021-2023 Strategies/Projects
 - Hire field representatives as pilot staff in at least 2 INPC areas.
 - Develop a budget to include staffing for the organization that includes a Director, Administrative Manager, and Field Representatives and the associated employee benefits, supplies and administrative costs.

Fundraising

1. Friends will raise funds for projects laid out in preserve management plans.
 - 2021-2023 Strategies/Projects
 - Identify grant opportunities and partner with landowner representatives for grant applications.
2. Friends will raise funds for organizational sustainability.
 - 2021-2023 Strategies/Projects
 - Develop a budget and fundraising goal for staff including funding the following positions: Director, Administrative Manager, and Field Representatives.
 - Develop a list of prospective donors and funders.
 - Develop and implement fundraising strategy.



INPC Strategic Plan 2015-2020

This section is a summary of the goals and strategies from the INPC Strategic Plan. The full document can be found here:

https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/INPC/Documents/INPC15_20StratPlanPublicReviewDraft81115.pdf

1. Land Stewardship
 - 1.1 Engage our partners, landowners, and the public to increase stewardship in the NP System by leveraging funding, activities, and other assistance from those partners.
 - 1.2 Integrate best science available into the development and implementation of management plans for nature preserves and land and water reserves.
 - 1.3 Maintain or increase management and restoration of natural areas in the NP system
2. Natural Areas Protection
 - 2.1 Promote good preserve system design by filling the gaps in the system and protecting the lands with the most significant natural areas conservation value.
 - 2.2 Promote good preserve design, connectivity, and long-term sustainability of individual reserves/reserves.
3. Natural Areas Data and Analysis

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- 3.1 With assistance from landowners, partners, volunteers, researchers, and students, develop a systematic, prioritized approach to gather local baseline and current information that can be useful for monitoring, and documenting the success of land stewardship or impacts of unplanned stressors during enforcement actions.
- 3.2 Better define lands that qualify for inclusion in the INPC system.
- 3.3 In support of IDNR Natural Heritage Database Program efforts, systematically collect and archive basic natural and archeological resource data on sites, natural communities, and species to support decisions to include sites into the NP System.
- 4 Natural Areas Defense
 - 4.1 Develop and implement response protocols (Standard operating procedure and work flow chart) by incident type
 - 4.2 Strengthen coordination and communication with IDNR and partners using available tools to avert threats.
- 5 Outreach
 - 5.1 Leverage partnerships to meet agency goals
 - 5.2 Work with partners with expertise in communication to increase public awareness and support of INPC programs, its partners and their impact.
 - 5.3 Examine the effectiveness of bilingual/bicultural communication to enhance the public profile of INPC and its partners
 - 5.4 Develop a “Friends of the INPC” group to support Commission programs and efforts.*
 - 5.5 Establish a Natural Areas Training Academy to provide training for staff, volunteers, commissioners, IDNR, landowners, and other partners.
- 6 Operation and Administration
 - 6.1 Obtain dedicated funding for biological and archeological inventories, land acquisition, stewardship, and defense.
 - 6.2 Support, promote, and regularly review the INPC’s Strategic Plan to evaluate progress and ensure it is aligned with current conditions.
 - 6.3 Develop and implement a succession strategy.
 - 6.4 Meet technology needs to realize agency goals.