A cooperative agreement for collaboration between conservation-minded partners from the region.

Prepared by the Vermilion River Wildlife Conservation Partnership

March 2011
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The Illinois Comprehensive Conservation Plan & Strategy
In the year 2000, recognizing that there was a gap in federal fish and wildlife conservation funding between sport fish and game funding and the endangered species programs, Congress authorized the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program (WCRP) and the State Wildlife Grants Program (SWG) as part of the annual federal budget. These programs were designed to provide conservation funding for species that are neither generally thought of as sport animals nor in immediate need of protection from extinction. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) was designated as the lead agency to manage distribution of funds.

In order to ensure that the funds were used in the manner they were intended, Congress identified eight required elements for each state to include in a Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Plan & Strategy, with the expectation that “species in greatest need of conservation” would be identified, and the full array of wildlife and wildlife-related issues would be addressed. However, this effort became much more than an avenue to disperse federal conservation dollars to the states. Along with the required elements set forth by Congress, many states, including Illinois, made the decision to use the planning process to produce a document that could serve not only as a guide to state conservation priorities, but also as a filter through which all conservation partners (federal, state, and private) could better focus resources to the benefit of all.

The Illinois Comprehensive Conservation Plan & Strategy, otherwise known as the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (IWAP) was written by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and partners. The IWAP was approved by the FWS in 2005. The planning process (including a full list of partners involved in the development of the plan) is detailed in the introduction of the IWAP. The full text of the IWAP is available for download from the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies website: http://www.wildlifeactionplans.org/illinois.html

The IWAP lays out conservation priorities at three scales:

**The Statewide Scale:**
The “Campaigns for Conservation Success” address the most widespread and urgent issues affecting wildlife and habitats.

**The Regional Scale:**
The “Natural Division Assessments” focus on the major habitats and conservation challenges in the 15 natural divisions of Illinois.

**The Local Scale:**
Conservation Opportunity Areas are locations identified by available data and conservation partners as high importance for conserving species in greatest need of conservation.
Conservation Opportunity Areas
The IWAP identified 32 Conservation Opportunity Areas (COAs) within Illinois. COAs are defined as:

...locations with significant existing or potential wildlife habitat resources, where partners are willing to plan, implement and evaluate conservation actions, where financial and human resources are available, and where conservation is motivated by an agreed-upon conservation philosophy and set of objectives. (IWAP, pg. 18)

Although the IWAP addressed some conservation needs within the COAs, the IDNR recognized that local expertise is the key to understanding conservation at the local scale and that local partners’ knowledge would help direct resources to where they would do the most good.

One of the COAs identified in the IWAP is the Vermilion River (Middle Fork, North Fork, & Salt Fork) and Little Vermilion River COA. The proposed border of this COA encompasses large portions of Vermilion and Champaign counties and also crosses into sections of Ford, Iroquois, and Edgar counties (Figure 1).

In May of 2009, stakeholders with conservation interests in the area covered by the Vermilion River COA met to discuss forming a coalition to assess the gaps and overlaps between local conservation efforts and the objectives of the IWAP. Three meetings were held in 2010, and potential partners worked together to assess how local efforts could help support the implementation of the IWAP within the Vermilion River COA. An initial group of 27 individuals, representing interests of private landowners, local NGOs, and natural resource professionals, developed a list of priorities (n = 17) and challenges (n = 18) for wildlife habitat management in the COA. Understanding landowner concerns, attitudes, and values was ranked as the main challenge to conservation efforts within the VR COA and improving outreach to landowners and stakeholders was ranked as the group’s priority goal. The list of priorities and challenges was refined and used to develop the group’s main goals. Prairie Rivers Network and David Myers, IDNR COA project coordinator, put together an initial action plan based on the group’s discussions. At the second meeting, the group began to refine the plan by beginning to set goals and objectives. At the third meeting the group discussed the strategies that would be taken to implement the VR COA action plan. The VR COA action plan was accepted by all partners in March 2011. The VR COA action plan is a working document that will be revised yearly. Anyone is welcome to participate.
Figure 1. Vermilion River Conservation Opportunity Area
**Conservation in the Vermilion River COA**

**Description of the Vermilion River Conservation Opportunity Area**

The Vermilion River Conservation Opportunity Area (VR COA) covers 791,665 acres (1,231 square miles) in Champaign, Vermilion, Ford, Edgar, and Iroquois Counties. The VR COA lies within both the Grand Prairie Natural Division and the Vermilion River section of the Wabash Border Natural Division described in the IWAP. The majority of the land is privately owned and monoculture agricultural production dominates the landscape. The Vermilion River (Salt Fork, Middle Fork, and North Fork) as well as the Little Vermilion River lie within the boundaries of the VR COA. The Middle Fork is the only designated National Wild and Scenic River in Illinois. Additionally, parts of the VRCOA area include portions of Indiana in Warren, Benton, and Vermillion counties.

**Illinois Wildlife Action Plan and the Vermilion River Conservation Opportunity Area**


A more complete list of protected properties can be found in Appendix I.

Conservation Partners—The Vermilion River COA has a long history of engagement from organizations and individuals with interest in natural areas and stewardship activities. The area has strong county conservation agencies, active state and federal agricultural agencies, university research projects, and active grassroots conservation groups, all of which have played key roles in conservation, recreation, and preservation of natural areas throughout the region. See page 19 for a list of the Vermilion River COA partners.

Priority Resources—streams (National Wild and Scenic River), fishes, mussels, geographically restricted amphibians

Current Status—The majority of land in the VR COA has been radically altered from its natural state. Land that was historically prairie is now utilized for agricultural production of corn and soybeans. Prairie restorations are small, and there is a lack of resources to provide adequate management against woody invasion and exotics. Most of the wetlands have been drained for agriculture or damaged by development. The streams within the VR COA have reduced natural function due to erosion, increased sedimentation, altered water flows, and nutrient loads. Forested areas are fragmented, and most have been invaded by bush honeysuckle, multiflora rose, garlic mustard, and other exotic invasive plant species.
Additionally, there has been an increase in maples with an accompanying decline in oak abundance. There is little open woodland/savanna left in the VR COA.

However, the VR COA does have significant natural resources remaining. The VR COA is home to many of the species listed as Species in Greatest Need of Conservation in the IWAP as well as the recently reintroduced Federally Endangered Northern Riffleshell (Epioblasma rangiana) (see Appendix II). The Vermilion River and its tributaries provide habitat for: 97 species of fish, 46 species of mussels, 16 species of large crustaceans, and 540 species of aquatic macroinvertebrates. The rivers support many state listed fish and mussels species. In fact, the North Fork of the Vermilion River supports the greatest concentration of rare, threatened, or endangered mussels in Illinois. The COA supports at least 270 bird species, 46 species of mammals, 23 species of amphibians, and 27 species of reptiles. The VR COA includes the State’s first prairie restoration to be designated as a nature preserve (Doris Westfall Prairie), the State’s first river nature preserve (Carl Fliermans’ River Nature Preserve), and Kickapoo State Park which was the first park in the United States to be built on reclaimed strip-mined land. Additionally the VR COA encompasses seeps and eroding bluff communities.

Conservation Philosophy—Maintain and enhance the Middle Fork corridor, including the Scenic River Corridor, the Salt Fork corridor, the North Fork corridor, and their buffer areas; utilize historic vegetation conditions as a guide for a mosaic of prairie, shrubland, savanna, and open woodland on sandy terraces and flat uplands and dry-mesic and mesic forest in ravines; and emphasize forest establishment and enhancement.

Objectives—Assess streambank erosion and stabilization needs; protect and restore terrace wetlands and all seeps; maintain 3-5 forested tracts >200 acres; develop channel evolution model for river to help identify future management needs; enhance oak recruitment in existing wooded tracts; decrease amount of “hard” habitat edges through burning, invasive species control, and planting.

Priority Actions—Hydrologic analysis and plan (especially vis-à-vis streambanks and channel stability); restoration of degraded habitats using historical vegetation conditions as a guide; landowner contact for all rare resources in database; establish amphibian breeding habitat adjacent to existing woodlands, forests, and woodland/forest restorations; control/remove exotic species; reduce hard habitat edges; increase prescribed burning, especially in oak woodlands and forests; and perform biotic inventories and establish monitoring protocols.

Conservation Goals for Vermilion River COA
Conservation partners identified the following goals for the COA. These goals are listed in order of priority as identified by a majority of the conservation partners.

Goal 1: Improve outreach to landowners and stakeholders

Objective 1: Work to address and understand landowner concerns, attitudes and values
**Challenges:** Improving outreach to landowners and stakeholders was identified as the most significant challenge to, and priority for, conserving and managing wildlife habitat in the VR COA. Partners recognize that landowners have different needs and concerns about their land (economics, “fear” of conservation and losing control over their land, concern about damage caused by wildlife or trespassers, reduced recreational access because of liability concerns, etc). These issues must be addressed. Additionally, landowner levels of awareness, motivations, and philosophies are important, and the group recognizes that we do not always know what the landowner needs or wants. To effectively target education and assistance, it is critical to know the needs of the audience.

**Strategy 1:** Identify geographic groupings of land that can most affect the goals of the IWAP.

**Action a:** Landowner contact has historically been done through SWCD/NRCS with support and direction from IDNR. Landowner contact has been conducted along all or portions of the North Fork, Salt Fork, and Little Vermilion River from 1990-2004. Follow-up should be conducted to determine the response of previous contact and to update landowners on information and assistance options. The Vermilion County SWCD, North Fork River Maintenance group (NFRM), North Fork Lake Vermilion Water Quality Coalition (NFLVWQC), and Pheasants Forever have contact programs with landowners on the North Fork.

**Action b:** Future conservation efforts in the VRCOA should encourage increased connectivity between publically protected properties and privately owned properties that provide quality habitat for wildlife. The SWCD has a list of properties where the SWCD owns development rights. NRCS has a list of properties enrolled in CRP. Pheasants Forever has a list of properties where they have cost shared on establishing habitat.

**Action c:** Building upon information collected by the partners above, create a GIS database with additional layers collected from various agencies, counties, and watersheds within the VRCOA. This has proven too difficult to achieve in the past. Having access to one source of info for the VRCOA and making this information available to partners involved in VRCOA conservation planning efforts would be beneficial to prioritizing efforts for protection, conservation, and outreach. This effort will require the hire of a GIS professional to consolidate existing data from agencies and organizations throughout the VRCOA. Vermilion County government has a GIS division, and technicians. A working arrangement could be developed with Vermilion County to achieve this goal.
Strategy 2: Contact owners/operators of identified lands (see above) with information about the importance of the natural resources on their properties and how their land relates to other properties within the VRCOA.

**Action:** IDNR, NRCS, and SWCDs currently supply landowners with maps and information about the forms of assistance that are available to them. For future efforts, ask if the landowner/operator is interested in managing for wildlife on their property. If they are not interested in managing part of their property as wildlife habitat, try to learn why they have made that decision. If they are interested, review protection options available for their land.

Strategy 3: Contact stakeholders (municipalities, industry, developers/developments- both urban and rural, county boards, drainage districts, township road districts/Department of Transportation, water treatment facilities, zoning boards) of the identified lands (see above).

**Action:** Supply them with info about the natural areas within the VRCOA and their relationship to them. Review government rules and regulations as they pertain to environmental protection and conservation and help them to coordinate their efforts with other agencies when possible. Provide assistance opportunities, both financial and technical, and review protection options available for their site(s) when needed. Determine their level of interest in managing for wildlife on their property, and if they are not interested in managing part of their property as wildlife habitat try to understand why they have made that decision. Partners that could be involved include: SWCDs, NRCS, IL Environmental Protection Agency, IL Department of Health, County Boards (Champaign County Land Resource Management Plan), and Prairie Rivers Network (PRN).

Objective 2: Share information about best management practices and local technical and financial resources available to manage wildlife habitat

**Challenges:** Multiple partners have hosted workshops, tours and programs, and hired private contractors for landowner contact in the past, but new approaches and wider audiences must be reached. Finding new ways to draw interest from private citizens and groups is becoming a greater challenge as competition for their time increases. Incorporating new technology and social networking will be necessary to reach a broader audience.

**Strategy:** Provide easily accessed information about BMPS for wildlife management.

**Action a:** Develop a web-based clearinghouse to provide easy access to information. In addition to county, state, and federal natural resources/wildlife agencies (IDNR, SWCDs, NRCS, CCFPD, UPD, VCCD), there are several organizations that maintain chapters within the VRCOA that conduct habitat management programs and provide technical assistance, equipment, and
some financial support. Examples of organizations include: Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, Whitetail Unlimited, and Smallmouth Alliance.

**Action b:** Publicize the website to conservation groups and the general public to increase awareness of the agencies and organizations providing education and technical and financial assistance for wildlife habitat management.

**Action c:** Education related to conservation, preservation, and stewardship and natural resource awareness are provided on an ongoing basis by IDNR, County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, NRCS, Champaign County Forest Preserve District, Vermilion County Conservation District, Urbana Park District, University of Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Program, and others. For example, homeowner outreach was done north of Homer Lake to address sedimentation and nitrogen issues.

**Action d:** Write articles in local papers to educate the general public about basic wildlife habitat management topics and make them more aware of the efforts and resources available through partner organizations.

**Goal 2: Improve aquatic wildlife habitat quality**

**Objective 1:** Reduce excess nutrients, pesticides, and sediment loads in the rivers.

**Challenges:** Excess nutrients and pesticides applied by homeowners and agricultural producers negatively impact water quality which in turn negatively impacts aquatic plants and wildlife. Farming practices and land use patterns have eliminated permanent vegetation cover along many rivers and streams. Maintenance of drainage ditches that do not use BMPs can cause erosion, loss of riparian vegetation, and streambank destabilization which all contribute to increase sediment loads. Improper sediment control practices at construction sites also add to sediment loads.

**Strategy 1:** Promote improved management of urban stormwater

**Action:** Prairie Rivers Network will engage municipalities and homeowners to increase urban stormwater detention by promoting support of green infrastructure (e.g., permeable pavement, rain gardens). Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Champaign County Forest Preserve District, and Urbana Park District also support such measures. The state Partners for Conservation Program offers cost share for the establishment of rain gardens.

**Strategy 2:** Increase acreage of natural vegetation along waterways
**Action a:** Restore up to 100% permanent native riparian land cover inclusive of the 100 year floodplain. IDNR is currently working on restoration of bottomland fields/forests using the Natural Areas Inventory Funds. For examples of current IDNR projects see Appendices III, IV, and V. The Farm Services Agency (FSA) is also working on riparian restorations by implementing programs such as the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

**Action b:** NRCS encourages landowner participation in conservation programs such as CRP, WHIP, etc. Other partners such as Vermilion County and Champaign County Pheasants Forever (can provide cost share), Vermilion and Champaign County SWCDs, Vermilion County Farm Bureau Conservation Committee, Lake Vermilion North Fork River Water Quality Coalition also encourage landowners to participate in these programs.

**Action c:** Pursue opportunities to encourage private conservation easements. Partners that could potentially pursue this action on private lands include the Vermilion County SWCD, Champaign County SWCD, Grand Prairie Friends and the Land Conservation Foundation. The Vermilion County SWCD currently holds development rights on about 600 acres along Jordan Creek, a tributary of the North Fork.

**Strategy 3:** Increase participation in upland best management practices (e.g., appropriate application of fertilizer, etc.)

**Action a:** Encourage and promote landowner participation in conservation programs offered by the Department of Agriculture: the NRCS and FSA administer many of these programs and are partners in the Vermilion River COA, NRCS' efforts will take into account the expertise of the COA partners when targeting landowners for outreach.

**Action b:** Implement riparian wetlands that intersect field tile to reduce nutrient concentrations of runoff waters. In the Wetlands Campaign of the IWAP the plan calls for the restoration of “basin marshes in the Northeastern Morainal and Grand Prairie natural divisions and stream-side marshes in floodplain areas.” The partners support this action and will continue to seek out opportunities to fund streamside wetland restoration efforts.

**Strategy 4:** Support in-stream measures to reduce sedimentation and nutrient concentrations that also benefit aquatic wildlife

**Action a:** Implement 2-stage ditch design on channelized stream reaches. The IWAP Streams Campaign calls for the protection, restoration and enhancement of near-stream and in-stream habitats and processes, and for projects to “re-meander channelized streams; provide technical assistance, publish and market to drainage districts best practices that reduce erosion.
and improve habitat while lowering costs.” 2-stage ditches are an example of a conservation practice that would fit this charge, and the partners will seek opportunities to promote the design.

**Action b:** Implement bank stabilization at sites of severe erosion. SWCD offers cost sharing for such projects through EQIP and the Streambank Stabilization and Restoration Program (SSRP). Other funding sources for this type of work could include Environmental Protection Agency 319 grants and IDNR State Wildlife Grants. The partners will seek funding to implement bank stabilization when needed.

**Action c:** Implement grade control to arrest sediment bed loads and downcutting: The IWAP calls for similar action in the streams campaign through “development and promotion of upland agricultural practices and developed land practices that decrease the energy, sediment load, temperature, and pollutant load of drainage waters. Streambed grade control is part of this effort and the partners will continue to seek opportunities to fund these efforts. EPA 319 grants and SWG grants can also be used for this purpose.

**Objective 2: Protect the natural processes of the rivers**

**Challenges:** Certain stream maintenance activities designed to improve drainage such as dredging, channelization, and installing riprap can have negative impacts on the river’s natural processes and on the animals and plants dependent on healthy river systems.

**Strategy:** Enlarge or enhance protected core aquatic areas, which function as long-term, quality aquatic wildlife habitat

**Action a:** Many of the above upland and riparian actions.

**Action b:** Pursue opportunities for conservation easements (see also: Goal 2, Objective 1).

**Action c:** encourage protection and sound stewardship of riparian corridors and associated lands in a natural condition through voluntary landowner efforts with an emphasis on maintaining, restoring, and connecting natural habitats along all streams recognized by the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory within the COA.

**Objective 3: Increase populations of Species in Greatest Need of Conservation**

**Challenges:** Species are threatened by the loss of habitat, and habitat fragmentation and degradation.

**Strategy 1:** Maintain existing habitat, restore or enhance degraded habitat
**Action:** Protect existing riparian forests and replant trees into riparian areas previously cleared to allow shading of waterways. Many of the habitat protection practices mentioned above promote these actions. Private landowners, forest preserve district partners and other land protection partners continue to protect and enhance streamside forest areas.

**Strategy 2:** Allow unobtrusive large woody debris to remain intact for habitat in the stream channels

**Action:** Work with landowners and drainage districts to promote undisturbed in stream habitat. This action corresponds closely with landowner outreach and BMPs (see also: Goal 1, Objective 1, Strategies 1 and 2) for streams. The American Fisheries Society (AFS) “Stream Obstruction Removal Guidelines” (AFS, 1983) provides an overview on how targeted stream obstruction removal can permit some habitat to remain relatively intact while still allowing for proper drainage (see also: Appendix VI).

**Strategy 3:** Increase accessible habitat to migrating species

**Action:** Remove obstructions such as low head dams and poorly constructed culverts and road crossings. The IWAP Streams Campaign calls for removal of “unnecessary dams” and fitting “necessary dams with effective fish passage structures”. The partnership supports this action and will continue to seek opportunities to fulfill it.

**Strategy 4:** Improve degraded aquatic habitat

**Action a:** Implement in-stream habitat enhancement measures. The IWAP Streams Campaign has a similar action “protect, restore and enhance near-stream and in-stream habitats and processes,” although specific measures are not mentioned. The partnership will continue to seek opportunities to implement this action. Examples of stream enhancement measures that could be pursued in degraded stream segments are artificial riffles, rock weirs and lunker structures.

**Action b:** Promote native aquatic vegetation. Although the IWAP does not explicitly call for the promotion of native aquatic vegetation in streams, the partnership will continue to seek avenues of support for this effort in our area.

**Objective 4:** Correct situations that negatively affected the natural processes of the rivers or are likely to do so

**Challenges:** Land-use practices that promote rapid drainage and flashy flow such as cropping on or near banks of waterways, excessive paving, etc.
**Strategy 1:** Dam removal and/or enhancement

*Action:* There are plans to remove the low head dam on the Vermilion River at Danville below Elsworth Park (not the dam on the North Fork). The IWAP Streams Campaign calls for removal of “unnecessary dams” and fitting “necessary dams with effective fish passage structures”. The partnership supports this action and will continue to seek opportunities to promote it.

**Strategy 2:** Slow the delivery of floodwaters to minimize flashy stream channels

*Action a:* Promote projects that increase the water holding and filtering capacity of the uplands adjacent to streams. This would include encouraging landowners to participate in wetland easement programs to help mitigate flashy drainage (see also: Goal 2, Objective 1).

*Action b:* Encourage permanent vegetative cover, preferably native, along streams where cover is absent to slow the rate of water movement from uplands to streams. This would include encouraging landowner participation in programs to help pay for streambank re-vegetation and agricultural buffer programs (see also: Goal 2, Objective 1 and 2).

*Action c:* Restore riparian and bottomland wetlands to reduce delivery rates and increase retention of runoff waters. This would include encouraging landowners to participate in wetland easement programs to help mitigate flashy drainage (see also: Goal 2, Objective 1 and 2).

**Goal 3:** Increase the amount and quality of terrestrial wildlife habitat

**Objective 1:** Protect biodiversity and increase populations of Species in Greatest Need of Conservation

*Challenges:* The quantity of habitat available does not ensure quality of the sites. Many acres of habitat are not managed effectively due to lack of resources or know-how, and isolated parcels essentially function as islands of habitat. These patches of habitat do not realize their full potential benefit for wildlife.

**Strategy 1:** Improve existing sites. Enlarge and/or enhance protected conservation sites such as nature preserves, land and water reserves, natural heritage landmarks, easement sites, and sites owned by various conservation agencies and organizations.

*Action:* Work with owners or managers of protected sites 1) to identify adjacent areas that might be acquired to add to the protected area, and 2) to identify ways in which the protected site might be improved or enhanced to
make it a better site for wildlife, particularly for Species in Greatest Need of Conservation and T&E species.

**Strategy 2:** Acquire new sites. Build corridors for wildlife by connecting currently isolated protected areas with new protected areas.

**Action:** Develop an action plan for connecting isolated protected areas by identifying properties that public agencies such as park districts or conservation organizations could acquire. Work with owners of these properties to make them aware of the advantages of conservation of their land either through conservation easements or outright sale to a conservation organization. USDA programs are available.

**Objective 2: Restore native plant communities**

**Challenges:** Many patches of protected land at present support only a small proportion of the native plants that once lived there. A plant community consisting of a more diverse population of native species would support a more diverse wildlife community, whether the protected land is forest, savanna, barrens, grassland, or wetlands.

**Strategy:** Where practical, restore native plant communities within the VRCOA.

**Action a:** Work with land owners to identify the native species currently present on protected land and develop a list of suggested species that might be planted to improve the biodiversity of the land and hence its usefulness to wildlife.

**Action b:** There is a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) area in the VRCOA. SAFE is a USDA program. In Illinois, the guidelines for the program were developed by IDNR, Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, and Illinois Audubon Society. While the focus is habitat for grassland birds, other species also benefit.

**Action c:** Illinois Nature Preserves Commission and Illinois Department of Natural Resources staff restore forest, grassland, open woodlands, and wetlands. See Appendices III, IV, and V for examples of work.

**Forest:** ongoing reforestation at Babe Woodyard State Natural Area, including the Georgetown addition (IDNR staff is doing reforestation)

**Grassland:** hill prairie restoration at Dynegy Tract of Kickapoo State Park will continue (IDNR staff and volunteers conduct this work)

**Open woodland, savanna, barrens:** open woodland restoration at Orchid Hill Natural Heritage Landmark
**Wetlands:** Illinois Nature Preserves Commission will continue efforts to control exotic species on natural areas within INPC programs

**Goal 4: Control invasive plant species**

**Objective:** Practice exotic/invasive plant species management on lands within the VR COA

**Challenges:** Non-native plants are outcompeting native plants and degrading the quality of wildlife habitat within the VR COA. There is a shortage of adequately trained people and labor to control the invasives. Landowners may not be able to do the work themselves or may not be aware of volunteer groups that could help them. Additionally, there are limits on the kinds of activities volunteers can perform on public lands.

**Strategy 1:** Educate landowners and urban homeowners on the identification of invasive plants and on the importance and benefits of removing them and not introducing them to the landscape. Engage landscape and garden center professionals to increase awareness of the problem and to identify and provide suitable alternative plants for garden and landscape applications.

**Action:** Work with conservation groups to develop educational programs aimed at landowners for the identification and control of invasive species and the benefits of keeping them out of natural areas and residential/commercial landscaping.

**Strategy 2:** Educate landowners on techniques that can be used to eradicate invasive plant species that have already been established.

**Action:** Work with conservation groups to develop educational programs aimed at landowners for the control and eradication of invasive species.

**Strategy 3:** Promote the use of volunteer workers to help control invasive species from remnant or restored natural areas.

**Action:** Partner with existing conservation groups and natural areas managers to coordinate volunteer workers to aid in removal of invasive species from existing, restored or remnant natural areas. Facilitate volunteers to assist private landowners willing to control invasive plants.

**Goal 5: Provide educational and recreational opportunities that are concerned with the natural resource issues of the VRCOA**

**Objective 1:** Support the construction of an Environmental Education Center at Kennekuk County Park, adjacent to the Middle Fork River.
**Challenge:** Public knowledge about wildlife and wildlife management is severely lacking, and there is a public disconnect from nature.

**Strategy:** Promote and support the efforts of the Vermilion County Conservation District Foundation and Board, in their project to construct an education center. The proposed "Environmental Education Center" at Kennekuk, will incorporate all available green technologies, and will serve as a showcase for such technologies.

**Action:** Support complete funding. The VCCDF has developed a video presentation to provide information about the project and to solicit donations. Blue prints have been drawn, and financial pledges are being tabulated.

**Objective 2:** Creating a wildlife/ recreation/ habitat corridor from Urbana to the Environmental Center, beginning in Urbana with the rail trail, connecting with Kickapoo State Park, and hiking along the Middle Fork River to Kennekuk County Park.

**Strategy:** Promote the efforts of the Champaign County Design & Conservation (CCDC) group, VCCD and the Champaign County Forest Preserve District in their efforts to create a rail trail.

**Action a:** CCDC is in negotiations with CSX Railroad to purchase rail right of way to convert to a trail. The CCDC is currently seeking partners for this funding and this effort will continue.

**Action b:** Sodemann and Associates (Champaign) produced a feasibility study. The trail is also heavily mentioned in the Westgate Land Use Plan produced by the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission. The partnership will use these reports and partner expertise to continue to promote the trail for habitat, educational and recreational benefits.

**Objective 3:** Educate the public about outdoor recreational activities that are ecologically responsible, and promote outdoor recreation.

**Challenges:** The public is not fully aware of the outdoor recreational activities within the VR COA. And access is limiting in some cases.

**Strategy:** Cooperate with other entities within our COA that promote and provide outdoor recreation. Illinois PF has such a program in place, working within the Grand Prairie area.

**Action:** Encourage environmentally responsible development of motorless river access areas.

**Action:** Kickapoo Landing currently focuses its non-internet promotion on Vermilion and Champaign Counties. Pursue cooperative promotional
opportunities with other entities interested in drawing the public to the VRCOA region. Create advertising, notify media. The Middlefork Outfitters, Keep Vermilion County Beautiful, Vermilion Advantage, and the Vermilion County Convention and Visitors Bureau all have such programs.

**Objective 4:** Educate the public on the importance of wildlife corridors & connecting areas of habitat.

*Strategy:* Public outreach through presentations and articles in local newspapers and conservation newsletters.

*Action:* East Central Illinois Master Naturalists will be engaged to educate the public about these topics.

**Objective 5:** Educate the public on easements, mining rights, windmill siting, and other technical issues.

*Strategy:* Public outreach through presentations and articles in local newspapers and conservation newsletters.

*Action:* Vermilion County Farm Bureau periodically has forums to address these issues.

This document outlines the conservation philosophy of the Vermilion River Conservation Opportunity Area partners. New partners are welcome. This document will be revised on an annual basis by the partnership.
## List of Partners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kammin, Laura</td>
<td>East Central Illinois Master Naturalist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lkammin@illinois.edu">lkammin@illinois.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bergeron, Ann</td>
<td>Private Landowner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:abergero@illinois.edu">abergero@illinois.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Berkson, Alice</td>
<td>East Central Illinois Master Naturalist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:aberkson@illinois.edu">aberkson@illinois.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bobsin, Kurt</td>
<td>IDNR</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kurt.bobsin@illinois.gov">kurt.bobsin@illinois.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buck, Steve</td>
<td>University of Illinois, Nat. Areas Mang.</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sbuck@illinois.edu">sbuck@illinois.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burkhamer, Ken</td>
<td>Vermilion County PF</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ken.burkhamer@att.net">ken.burkhamer@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell, Marilyn</td>
<td>Middlefork Chapter of Audubon Society</td>
<td><a href="mailto:owlwatcher@egix.net">owlwatcher@egix.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Caveny, Bob</td>
<td>Pheasants Forever</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bcaveny@pheasantsforever.org">bcaveny@pheasantsforever.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cummings, Kevin</td>
<td>INHS</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ksc@inhs.illinois.edu">ksc@inhs.illinois.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ellis, Jamie</td>
<td>Grand Prairie Friends</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jamese@inhs.illinois.edu">jamese@inhs.illinois.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Esarey, Joan</td>
<td>Ford Co. SWCD/ Res. Cons.</td>
<td><a href="mailto:joan.esarey@il.nacdnet.net">joan.esarey@il.nacdnet.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Eshleman, Thad</td>
<td>Iroquois SWCD Resource Conservationist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:thad.eshleman@il.nacdnet.net">thad.eshleman@il.nacdnet.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Garver, Luke</td>
<td>Ford Co. NRCS</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lucas.garver@il.usda.gov">lucas.garver@il.usda.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green, Kevin</td>
<td>Private Landowner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kggdiver@gmail.com">kggdiver@gmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grider, Rob</td>
<td>ISA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rg4646@comcast.net">rg4646@comcast.net</a></td>
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<td>Helms, Kerry</td>
<td>Private Landowner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jackson, Doug</td>
<td>Private Landowner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dkjackson@illinois.edu">dkjackson@illinois.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jansen, Roger</td>
<td>IDNR</td>
<td><a href="mailto:roger.jansen@illinois.gov">roger.jansen@illinois.gov</a></td>
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<td>Johnston, Cindy</td>
<td>Vermilion Co. SWCD</td>
<td><a href="mailto:cindy.johnston@il.nacdnet.net">cindy.johnston@il.nacdnet.net</a></td>
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<td>Kanter, Rob</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rkanter@illinois.edu">rkanter@illinois.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirwan, Bryon</td>
<td>Lincoln Heritage RC&amp;D, RC&amp;D Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bryon.kirwan@il.usda.gov">bryon.kirwan@il.usda.gov</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Kuchinke, Betsy and Peter</td>
<td>Private Landowner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ekuchink@illinois.edu">ekuchink@illinois.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lane, Joan</td>
<td>Private Landowner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ilnat@hughes.net">ilnat@hughes.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lane, Lex</td>
<td>Private Landowner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:llane0@hughes.net">llane0@hughes.net</a></td>
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<td>Larimore, Ken</td>
<td>Private Landowner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kenlarimore@hotmail.com">kenlarimore@hotmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Larimore, Rick</td>
<td>Private Landowner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rlarimo@inhs.illinois.edu">rlarimo@inhs.illinois.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liebert, Derek</td>
<td>Urbana Park District</td>
<td><a href="mailto:daliebert@urbanaparks.org">daliebert@urbanaparks.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin, Glen</td>
<td>Private Landowner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gmartin@illinois.edu">gmartin@illinois.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mateus Pinilla, Nohra</td>
<td>INHS</td>
<td><a href="mailto:nohram@illinois.edu">nohram@illinois.edu</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>McCollum, Dan</td>
<td>Private Landowner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dannel.mccollum@sbcglobal.net">dannel.mccollum@sbcglobal.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>McMahon, Jim</td>
<td>Vermilion County Board</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jcmahon@vercounty.org">jcmahon@vercounty.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Merritt, Joe</td>
<td>Salt Fork Association</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jlmerritt@netzero.com">jlmerritt@netzero.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mountjoy, Natalie</td>
<td>SIU</td>
<td><a href="mailto:natalie_179@hotmail.com">natalie_179@hotmail.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myers, David</td>
<td>IDNR, COA Project Coordinator</td>
<td><a href="mailto:david.myers@illinois.gov">david.myers@illinois.gov</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Newhouse, Dan</td>
<td>IDNR</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dan.newhouse@illinois.gov">dan.newhouse@illinois.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olson, Dan</td>
<td>Champaign County Forest Preserve District</td>
<td><a href="mailto:dolson@ccfpd.org">dolson@ccfpd.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payne, Jim</td>
<td>Grand Prairie Friends; Private Landowner</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jpayne@shout.net">jpayne@shout.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prunty, Sally</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:sprunty@ccfpd.org">sprunty@ccfpd.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Satterthwaite, Tod</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:tod@kickapoolanding.com">tod@kickapoolanding.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott, Sarah</td>
<td>Prairie Rivers Network</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sscott@prairierivers.org">sscott@prairierivers.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Skadden, David and Kim Smith</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:smithskadden@gmail.com">smithskadden@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Smith, Eric</td>
<td>IDNR</td>
<td><a href="mailto:eric.l.smith@illinois.gov">eric.l.smith@illinois.gov</a></td>
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<td>Smith, Jim</td>
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<td><a href="mailto:smithjes@egix.net">smithjes@egix.net</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Smith, Suzanne</td>
<td>RiverWatch</td>
<td><a href="mailto:suzanne56smith@gmail.com">suzanne56smith@gmail.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Smith, Tom</td>
<td>Res. Mang. Plan. Comm. for Champaign Co.</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Farmertom79@gmail.com">Farmertom79@gmail.com</a></td>
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<td>IDNR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Solter, Leellen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<td>Stikkers, Bruce</td>
<td>Champaign Co. SWCD</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bruce.stikkers@il.nacdnet.net">bruce.stikkers@il.nacdnet.net</a></td>
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<td>IDNR</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Trent.Thomas@illinois.gov">Trent.Thomas@illinois.gov</a></td>
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<td>Tiemann, Jeremy</td>
<td>INHS</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jtiemann@illinois.edu">jtiemann@illinois.edu</a></td>
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</table>
References:


Descriptions of Natural Areas. Committee on Natural Areas, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.


Vermilion River Basin: An Inventory of the Region’s Resources. 2000. Illinois Department of Natural Resources


## Appendix I: List of properties currently protected with the Vermilion River Conservation Opportunity Area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Owned/Assist with Management</th>
<th>Approximate Total Area (acres)</th>
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<td>Collison Marsh</td>
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Appendix I Cont.: List of properties currently protected with the Vermilion River Conservation Opportunity Area.

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<th>Type</th>
<th>Area (acres)</th>
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<td>K. Green property</td>
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<tr>
<td>L &amp; J Lane property</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Private landowner</td>
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<tr>
<td>D McCollum property</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Private landowner</td>
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<tr>
<td>M Heggarty property</td>
<td>Private</td>
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<td>R Russian property</td>
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<td>Unity East Elementary School prairie restoration</td>
<td>Unit 7 School District</td>
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<td>Champaign SWCD</td>
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<td>9-13 tracts with permanent conservation easements on North Fork and tributaries (Middle Branch and Jordan Creek)</td>
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<td>Brownfield Woods</td>
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<td>University of Illinois</td>
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<td>CCDC Collins Woods</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phillips Tract</td>
<td>University of Illinois Natural Area</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>52.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edgar and Sophia Richter Research Area</td>
<td>University of Illinois Natural Area</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
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<td>Rutan Research Area</td>
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<td>University of Illinois Natural Area</td>
<td>University of Illinois</td>
<td>60.5 (71.2 with buffers)</td>
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<td>Tamlinson Pioneer Cemetery Prairie</td>
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<td>Champaign County Forest Preserve/GPF</td>
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<td>Potomac City Park</td>
<td>City Park</td>
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<td>Camp Drake on the Salt Fork</td>
<td>Camp Ground</td>
<td>Prairieland Boy Scout Council #117</td>
<td>200</td>
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</table>
Appendix II: Species in Greatest Need of Conservation found in the Vermilion River Conservation Opportunity Area.  
SE = State Endangered; ST = State Threatened; FE = Federally Endangered; FT = Federally Threatened (August 2010 list)  
** Not currently listed as SGNC in IWAP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Mollusks</strong></th>
<th><strong>(Reviewed by Bob Szafoni, Kevin Cummings, and Chris Phillips)</strong></th>
</tr>
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| slippershell mussel         | Alasmidonta viridis
|                            | Amnicola limosa**
|                            | Campeloma decisum**
| midland slitsnail           | Cincinnatia integra
| purple wartyback            | Cyclonaias tuberculata
|                            | Elimia livescens**
| Northern riffleshell        | Epioblasma rangiana**
|                            | Ferrissia rivularis**
|                            | Fossaria modicella**
|                            | Fossaria parva**
|                            | Gyraulus parvus**
|                            | Helisoma anceps**
|                            | Helisoma pseudotrivelvis**
| wavy-rayed lampmussel       | Lampsilis fasciola
| creek heelsplitter          | Lasmigona compressa
| fluted shell                | Lasmigona costata
| black sandshell             | Ligumia recta
|                            | Planorbella trivolvis**
| clubshell                   | Pleurobema clava
|                            | Pomatiopsis lapidaria**
| kidneyshell mussel          | Ptychobranchus fasciolaris
| rabbitsfoot mussel          | Quadrula cylindrica
| monkeyface                  | Quadrula metanerva
| salamander mussel           | Simpsonaias ambigua
|                            | Stagnicola caperata**
| eightfold pinecone          | Strobilops affinis
| spotted ambersmail          | Succinea forsheyi
| purple lilliput mussel      | Toxolasma lividus
| multrib vallonia            | Vallonia gracilicosa
| rainbow mussel              | Villosa iris
| little spectacle case mussel| Villosa lienosa
| sharp wedge                 | Xolotrema obstrictum
| dull gloss                  | Zonitoides limatulus

Reintroduced 2010 as part of federal recovery plan
<table>
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<th><strong>Crustaceans</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>a cave obligate isopod</td>
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<td>Packard's cave amphipod</td>
<td>Crangonyx packardi</td>
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<td>Carpoidees velifer</td>
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<td>lake chubsucker</td>
<td>Erimyzon sucetta</td>
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<td>northern pike - native stocks</td>
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<td>muskellunge - native stocks</td>
<td>Esox masquinongy</td>
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<td>bigeye chub</td>
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<td>Lythrurus fumeus</td>
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<td>river chub</td>
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<td>rosyface shiner</td>
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<td>mountain madtom</td>
<td>Noturus eleutherus</td>
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<td>shovelnose sturgeon</td>
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<td>sauger</td>
<td>Stizostedion canadense</td>
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<td>walleye</td>
<td>Stizostedion vitreum</td>
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<table>
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<th><strong>Amphibians</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>spotted salamander</td>
<td>Ambystoma maculatum**</td>
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<tr>
<td>marbled salamander</td>
<td>Ambystoma opacum**</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
silvery salamander
Ambystoma platineum

Fowler's toad
Bufo fowleri

five-lined skink
Eumeces fasciatus

southern two-lined salamander
Eurycea cirrigera

four-toed salamander
Hemidactylium scutatum

mudpuppy
Necturus maculosus

redback salamander
Plethodon cinereus

zig-zag salamander
Plethodon dorsalis

northern slimy salamander
Plethodon glutinosus

crayfish frog
Rana areolata

dinker frog
Rana palustris

wood frog
Rana sylvatica

(Reviewed by Chris Phillips)

smooth softshell turtle
Apalone mutica

Kirtland’s snake
Clonophis kirtlandii

Blanding’s turtle
Emydoidea blandingii

smooth green snake
Liochlorophis vernalis

lined snake
Tropidoclonion lineatum

(Reviewed by Jeff Walk)

Henslow’s sparrow
Ammmodramus henslowii

LeConte’s sparrow
Ammmodramus leconteii

Nelson’s sharp-tailed sparrow
Ammmodramus nelsoni

gasshopper sparrow
Ammmodramus savannarum

American black duck
Anas rubripes

great egret
Ardea alba

short-eared owl
Asio flammeus

lesser scaup
Aythya affinis

canvasback
Aythya valisineria

upland sandpiper
Bartramia longicauda

American bittern
Botaurus lentiginosus

red-shouldered hawk
Buteo lineatus

broad-winged hawk
Buteo platypterus

Smith’s longspur
Calcarius pictus

stilt sandpiper
Calidris himantopus

chuck-will's-widow
Caprimulgus carolinensis
whip-poor-will  
Caprimulgus vociferus
brown creeper  
Certhia americana
chimney swift  
Chaetura pelagica
black tern  
Chlidonias niger  
SE
common nighthawk  
Chordeiles minor  
SE
northern harrier  
Circus cyaneus  
SE
marsh wren  
Cistothorus palustris
sedge wren  
Cistothorus platensis
yellow-billed cuckoo  
Coccyzus americanus
black-billed cuckoo  
Coccyzus erythropthalmus  
ST
northern flicker  
Colaptes auratus
northern bobwhite  
Colinus virginianus
yellow rail  
Coturnicops noveboracensis
trumpeter swan  
Cygnus buccinator
cerulean warbler  
Dendroica cerulea  
ST
prairie warbler  
Dendroica discolor
bobolink  
Dolichonyx oryzivorus
little blue heron  
Egretta caerulescens  
SE
snowy egret  
Egretta thula  
SE
willow flycatcher  
Empidonax traillii
Acadian flycatcher  
Empidonax virescens
rusty blackbird  
Euphagus carolinus
peregrine falcon  
Falco peregrinus  
ST
common moorhen  
Gallinula chloropus  
SE
Wilson’s snipe  
Gallinago delicatula
whooping crane  
Grus americana
sandhill crane  
Grus canadensis
bald eagle  
Haliaeetus leucocephalus
worm-eating warbler  
Helmitheros vermiformis
wood thrush  
Hylocichla mustelina
yellow-breasted chat  
Icteria virens
Mississippi kite  
Ictinia mississippiensis  
ST
least bittern  
Ixobrychus exilis  
ST
loggerhead shrike  
Lanius ludovicianus  
SE
black rail  
Laterallus jamaicensis  
SE
short-billed dowitcher  
Limnodromus griseus
hooded merganser  
Lophodytes cucullatus
red-headed woodpecker  
Melanerpes erythrocephalus
yellow-crowned night-heron  
Nyctanassa violacea  
SE
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<tr>
<td>Connecticut Warbler</td>
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<td>Savannah Sparrow</td>
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<td>Wilson’s Phalarope</td>
<td>Phalaropus tricolor</td>
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<td>American Golden-Plover</td>
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<td>Pied-billed Grebe</td>
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<td>Prothonotary Warbler</td>
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<td>King Rail</td>
<td>Rallus elegans</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Woodcock</td>
<td>Scolopax minor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ovenbird</td>
<td>Seiurus aurocapillus</td>
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<td>Dickcissel</td>
<td>Spiza americana</td>
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<td>Field Sparrow</td>
<td>Spizella pusilla</td>
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<tr>
<td>Least Tern</td>
<td>Sterna antillarum</td>
<td>FE SE</td>
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<td>Forster’s Tern</td>
<td>Sterna forsteri</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Tern</td>
<td>Sterna hirundo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brown Thrasher</td>
<td>Toxostoma rufum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater Yellowlegs</td>
<td>Tringa melanoleuca</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buff-breasted Sandpiper</td>
<td>Tryngites subruficollis</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn Owl</td>
<td>Tyto alba</td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-winged Warbler</td>
<td>Vermiforma pinus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bell’s Vireo</td>
<td>Vireo belli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mammals** *(Reviewed by Dan Newhouse)*

| River Otter              | Lontra canadensis       |    |
| Bobcat                   | Lynx rufus              |    |
| Woodland Vole            | Microtus pinetorum      |    |
| Least Weasel             | Mustela nivalis         |    |
| Gray Bat                 | Myotis grisescens      | FE SE |
| Indiana Bat              | Myotis sodalis         | FE SE |
| Muskrat                  | Ondatra zibethicus      |    |
| Franklin’s Ground Squirrel | Spermophilus franklinii | ST |
| American Badger          | Taxidea taxus           |    |
| Gray Fox                 | Urocyon cinereoargenteus|    |

**Job Title:** Middlefork Woods Nature Preserve, Dynegy Tract, and Woodyard State Natural Area Habitat Restoration in the Vermilion River Conservation Opportunity Area

**Job Leader:** Roger Jansen  
1660 W Polk Ave  
Charleston, IL 61920  
217-345-2420

**Purpose/need:**

**Dynegy Tract**

The Dynegy tract is located in Vermilion County northwest of Danville, Illinois (Figure Y1). The 1,100 tract was transferred to the IDNR in 2008. The tract links Kickapoo State Recreation Area (2,800 acres), Kennekuk Cove County Park (3,000 acres) and Middlefork State Fish and Wildlife Area (2,700 acre). Combined, these 9,600 acres of publicly owned land are managed for natural resources, compatible recreation, and buffer to the Middlefork River, Illinois’ only National Wild and Scenic River. The Dynegy tract provides habitat for several species that are threatened and endangered and conservation priority. The buffered Middlefork River also has several threatened and endangered and conservation priority species (Table Y).

The upland forest community is the dominant forest type on the Dynegy tract and is characterized by oak hickory associations with herbaceous characteristics suggesting a past history of open woodland. The ravine forest community consists of beech-maple forest associations. Ravine forest community consists of cottonwood, sycamore, and maple associations. Several seeps occur at various sites throughout the property. Exotic and invasive species removal and periodic prescribed fire could help to maintain these various community types. Open fields will be planted to trees to reduce edge and create larger blocks of forested tracks for forest interior breeding birds. See Figures 1, 1A

**Middlefork Nature Preserve**

The 87 acre Middlefork Woods Nature Preserve (MWNP) was dedicated as a Nature Preserve in 1979. The site represents a high quality upland forest and provides critical breeding habitat for the state endangered silvery salamander (*Ambystoma platineum*). MWNP buffers the Middlefork of the Vermilion River, the only National Scenic River in Illinois. MWNP and adjacent State Park property have exotic and invasive species which threaten the integrity of the Nature Preserve. Those exotic species include garlic mustard (*Alleria petiolata*), autumn olive (*Eleagnus umbilata*), bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera sp.*), etc. A 4 acre section of MWNP needs native upland trees planted into the openings. Prescribed fire will be applied to selected sites. See Figures 2, 2A

**Woodyard State Natural Area (SNA)**

Woodyard SNA is 1300 acres located in Vermilion County east of Georgetown, Illinois. The site is an outstanding representation of terrestrial and aquatic diversity in the Vermilion River Watershed. The Little Vermilion River is included in the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory as an outstanding example of a river system in the Wabash River drainage. The river is largely unmodified and is of very high natural quality.

Upland forest communities are scattered throughout the area mostly on west- to south-facing slopes and level uplands. The dominant trees include oak/hickory association. The shrub layer is generally
sparse and the herbaceous layer is characterized by open woodland species. Ravine forests include maple/beech, and red oak association. Flowering dogwood, spicebush, and sassafras are common shrubs. There is a high diversity of ferns and wildflowers in these forests. Floodplain forests are present along the Little Vermilion River. These forests are dominated by silver maple, sycamore, Ohio buckeye, green ash, and cottonwood. Shrubs are very rare in this forest type. Wildflowers such as goldenglow, wing stem, ironweed, and nettle are common. Seeps and streams are common throughout all the mesic forest ravines. Exotic and invasive species removal and prescribed fire will help to maintain these various community types including reforestation fields. See Figures 3, 3A

**Site Significance:**
This project falls within the Vermilion River Conservation Opportunity Area and will address the following IWAP Campaigns with priority actions to be implemented.

**Forestry Campaign**
**Actions**
- Reintroduction of prescribed fire
- Increase in forest acreage
- Restore high quality forest, savanna and barrens communities

**Wetlands Campaign**
**Actions**
- Develop and manage additional wetland habitat. Recreate ephemeral and semipermanent wetlands for amphibians in the Wabash Border Division

**Invasive Species Campaign**
**Actions**
- Invasive control in high quality natural areas, large habitat patches, and other key locations. Maintain on-going control of invasive species.

**Land and Water Stewardship Campaign**
**Actions**
- Improve the stewardship of public land and water resources.

Threatened and Endangered species and Species in Greatest Need of Conservation are listed in Table 1 below. The species listed will benefit directly from this project.

**Objectives:**

**Dynegy Tract**
This project will accomplish the removal of exotic species and subsequent restoration of the same tracts to open woodland/savanna to create a larger woodland block and decrease fragmentation. Prescribed fire will be reintroduced to portions of the tract to improve the woodland communities. Ephemeral/semi-permanent wetlands will be created primarily in forested upland habitats to benefit amphibian species. See Figures 1, 1A

**Middlefork Woods NP**
We will accomplish control of exotic species (garlic mustard, autumn olive, etc) within the boundaries and adjacent public land of the Nature Preserve. The control effort will be a multiple year effort to bring exotic species to a level of annual maintenance. This project will also reforest a small portion of the
Nature Preserve. See Figures 2, 2A

Woodyard SNA
This project will accomplish the removal of exotic species from reforestation tracts (former agricultural fields) in upland and bottomland areas to maintain the integrity of tree plantings. Prescribed fire will be reintroduced to portions of the tract to improve the woodland communities. See Figures 3, 3A

Approach:
IDNR personnel and contractors will implement projects to eliminate invasive and exotic plant species, restore open woodland/savanna, and encourage oak regeneration through forest management throughout the tracts. Primary practices to be applied will include prescribed fire, invasive woody plant control, invasive exotic species control, and habitat creation/restoration.

Budget:

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<th>Line Item</th>
<th>Federal Share</th>
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<td><strong>$39,920.00</strong></td>
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Table 1: Species in Greatest Need of Conservation at Kickapoo State Park and Woodyard State Natural Area

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Name</th>
<th>Scientific Name</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indiana Bat</td>
<td><em>Myotis sodalis</em></td>
<td>E, FE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henslow’s sparrow</td>
<td><em>Ammotrichus henslowii</em></td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-shouldered hawk</td>
<td><em>Buteo lineatus</em></td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chimney Swift</td>
<td><em>Chaetura pelagica</em></td>
<td>CP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yellow-billed Cuckoo</td>
<td><em>Coccyzus americanus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black-bill Cuckoo</td>
<td><em>Coccyzus erythropthalmus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Flicker</td>
<td><em>Colaptes auratus</em></td>
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<td>Northern Bobwhite</td>
<td><em>Colinus virginianus</em></td>
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<td>Cerulean Warbler</td>
<td><em>Dendroica cerulea</em></td>
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<td>Acadian Flycatcher</td>
<td><em>Empidonax virescens</em></td>
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<td>Wood Thrush</td>
<td><em>Hylocichla mustelina</em></td>
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<td>Yellow-breasted Chat</td>
<td><em>Icteria virens</em></td>
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<td>Species</td>
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<tr>
<td>Red-headed Woodpecker</td>
<td><em>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</em></td>
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<td><em>Oporomis formosus</em></td>
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<td><em>Seiurus aurocapillus</em></td>
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<td>Blue-winged Warbler</td>
<td><em>Vermiforma pinus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Silver Salamander</td>
<td><em>Ambystoma platineum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pickerel Frog</td>
<td><em>Rana palustris</em></td>
<td>CP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wood Frog</td>
<td><em>Rana sylvatica</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Eastern sand darter</td>
<td><em>Ammocrypta pellucidum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bluebreasted darter</td>
<td><em>Etheostoma camurum</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Bigeyed Chub</td>
<td><em>Hybosis amblops</em></td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>River redhorse</td>
<td><em>Moxostoma carinatum</em></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Chub</td>
<td><em>Nocomis micropogon</em></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigeye Shiner</td>
<td><em>Notropis boops</em></td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slippershell Mussel</td>
<td><em>Alasmidonta viridis</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wavy-rayed lampmussel</td>
<td><em>Lampsilis fasciola</em></td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little Spectaclecase Mussel</td>
<td><em>Villosa lienosa</em></td>
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<td>Drooping Sedge</td>
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<td>Fibrous-rooted Sedge</td>
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CP = Conservation Priority  
FE = Federally Endangered  
E = State Endangered  
T = State Threatened
Figure 1: Map showing location of Dynegy Tract of Kickapoo State Park
Figure 1A: Dynegy Tract work units
Figure 2: Map showing location of Middlefork Woods Nature Preserve at Kickapoo State Park
Figure 2A: Middlefork Woods Nature Preserve work units
Figure 3: Map showing location of Woodyard State Natural Area
Figure 3A: Woodyard State Natural Area work units
Appendix IV: Vermilion County Conservation District Foundation Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) proposal for Jordan Creek Wildlife Preserve prepared by Roger Jansen, Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Roger Jansen met with Mark Pittman on September 1, 2009 to look at and discuss options of habitat improvements at Jordan Creek Wildlife Preserve. The site lends itself well to creating habitat which will benefit species that need large blocks of habitat.

WHAT IS THERE
The tract was heavily grazed in the past. A large portion of the site is Osage orange (hedge) and introduced cool season grasses. A woodland of approximately 40 acres has an over story of mature mixed oak species primarily white and bur oak. Under story consists primarily of Osage orange. Herbaceous layer at the time of the visit was mostly smartweed and snakeroot. A seep exists in the west side of the property but was not visited. Jordan Creek runs through the property and is partially wooded along the banks. Balance of the property is in ag. production.

WHAT TO PLANT
According to the Government Land Office (GLO) surveys, the site was forested in some form. This was likely riparian forest near the creek, upland forest, and savanna. The establishment of woodlands and savanna would the optimum practice. The large deer herd, however, negates the planting of trees due to the excessive deer browse that would happen. The establishment of native prairie with wetlands would be the next best practice.

Prairies and wetlands are rare habitats (especially in large contiguous blocks) in the Grand Prairie areas of the State. Prairies and wetlands historically occurred together and provide critical habitat for many endangered and threatened species and species in greatest need of conservation (SGNC). Game species such as pheasant would greatly benefit as well from these grasslands. See attached spreadsheet of potential species that would benefit from prairie and wetland establishment.

All the Osage orange would need to be removed from the site; this would be accomplished by bull dozing and burning brush piles. The cool season grass fields would need to be chemically treated and planted to prairie. Wetlands would be built in various areas depending on topography.

ABOUT WHIP
WHIP is a federal program that is administered by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). The program is available to establish wildlife habitat. WHIP is a 75% cost share program. The NRCS will cover 75% of maximum allowable costs and the landowner is responsible for the remaining 25%. Maximum allowable costs are reflected in the spreadsheet attached. Once approved, the landowner has 10 years to complete the practices. It is important to complete a portion (even if a small portion) in the first year.

Roger Jansen met and talked to the NRCS biologist to discuss WHIP on the property. After doing a brief discussion of possible practices, he determined that the site should have enough points to qualify for WHIP.

THE OPPORTUNITY
This is an opportunity for the Foundation to make a great leap forward in the area of habitat restoration. It is a rare opportunity to convert 150 acres of old pasture to native prairie. When it comes to size of
restorations larger tracts are better. Area sensitive species respond positively to habitat. A site this size would create a “source” area for pheasant that would subsequently supply the surrounding private land with pheasant. WHIP can provide the avenue and means to make this happen provided the request is granted.

VCCDF points to consider at Jordan Creek site

1. If WHIP contract is accepted, the Foundation has 10 years to complete the contract

2. Suggest dividing the site into 8 to 10 subunits. Each subunit represents each year of the contract. Each subunit would then need completed each year of the contract. This would reduce the size and costs of the project and likely make the project easier to deal with from a financial aspect.

3. Suggest the Foundation devote a person and there time (when needed) to implementing the project. The Foundation can turn in a bill for their labor and get reimbursed. For example: Someone could be on a tractor and drill prairie grass and forbs in a field. The Foundation could turn in a bill for labor for planting native grass and forbs and get paid for it. This will reduce costs and help offset the cost of the next subunit.

4. Outside funds could be found at NWTF, Audubon, Pheasants Forever, State Pheasant Funds, Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund, and any others.

5. Applications for WHIP are accepted year round but will not be acted on till USDA has the next round of selections.

6. The Foundation can explore grant opportunities and determine how much grant money would be available to offset costs (primarily the 25%). Formal WHIP application could be completed this winter perhaps

See the list below for a list of non-game species that would benefit from this project

Potential Species That Would Benefit From WHIP Project

**Listed Species**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franklins Ground Squirrel</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn Owl</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King Rail</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Crown Night Heron</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Crown Night Heron</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Rail</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least Bitter</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Harrier</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-eared Owl</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Bittern</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henslows Sparrow</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Species in Greatest Need of Conservation**
Grasshopper Sparrow
Marsh Wren
Sedge Wren
Savanna Sparrow
Dickcissel
Field Sparrow

E = Endangered
T = Threatened

Jordan Creek Wildlife Preserve Proposed Budget for WHIP Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Max Cost/ac</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brush Management (314 – very high)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$236.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$236.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$236.00</td>
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<td>Unit 4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$236.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 5</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total acres</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Prairie Establishment (327 – native species for pollinators)</strong></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$532.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unit 7</td>
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<td>Unit 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total acres</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Shallow Water Development (646 – excavated wetlands)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excavation/earthmoving</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>$2,314.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water control structure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>$1,050.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Max Allowable Total Cost</td>
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<td>$117,660.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Max Allowable Federal</td>
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<td>$88,245.00</td>
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Share

VCCDF Share $29,415.00

Maximum Cost Per Unit
For Brush Removal and Prairie Establishment

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<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$13,826.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$13,826.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$13,826.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$13,826.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>$13,826.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>$9,218.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>$15,962.00</td>
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</tbody>
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150
Figure 1: Map of Jordan Creek Wildlife Preserve.
Appendix V: Illinois Department of Natural Resources’ State Wildlife Grant proposal for Kickapoo State Recreational Area.

Job Title: Job 25. Community Restoration at Kickapoo State Recreational Area – Dynegy Tract

Job Leader: Roger Jansen
Natural Heritage Biologist
1660 W Polk Ave
Charleston, IL 61920
Ph: 217-345-2420
Fax: 217-348-5873
Roger.Jansen@illinois.gov

Purpose/Need:
The Dynegy tract is located in Vermilion County northwest of Danville, Illinois (Figure Y1). The 1,100 acre tract was transferred to the IDNR in 2008. The tract links Kickapoo State Recreation Area (2,800 acres), Kennekuk Cove County Park (3,000 acres) and Middlefork State Fish and Wildlife Area (2,700 acre). Combined, these 9,600 acres of publicly owned land are managed for natural resources and compatible recreation. This tract provides additional buffer to the Middlefork River, Illinois’ only National Wild and Scenic River. The Dynegy tract provides habitat for several species that are threatened and endangered and conservation priority. The buffered Middlefork River also has several threatened and endangered and conservation priority species (Table Y).

The dry mesic upland forest community is the dominant forest type on the Dynegy tract. The dry-mesic upland forest on the Dynegy tract has herbaceous characteristics suggesting a past history of open woodland/savanna. The western extent of *Fagus grandifolia* (American beech), and the beech-maple forest association ends in the Vermilion River watershed in east-central Illinois and is present on this tract. Several seeps occur at various sites throughout the property. The largest seep has some uncommon species and is relatively undisturbed and may have been much larger at one time. Swamp wood betony and *Solidago patula* (rough leaf goldenrod) are rare species in the Vermilion River valley. Exotic and invasive species (i.e. maple) removal and periodic prescribed fire could help to maintain these various community types.

Objective:
Restore and manage upland forest and seep communities. Enhance habitats for forest, savanna, and grassland species of conservation concern. Objective is to restore and maintain 50 acres dry-mesic oak woodland, 10 acres open woodland, 3 acres of seep, 16 acre tree planting, and 20 acres of prairie.

Approach:
IDNR personnel and contractors will implement a program to eliminate invasive and exotic plant species, restore prairie, and encourage oak regeneration through forest management throughout the tract. Primary practices to be applied will include prescribed fire, invasive woody plant control, invasive exotic species control, and habitat creation/restoration planting.
Budget:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Line Item</th>
<th>Federal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contractual</td>
<td>$19,500.00</td>
<td>$16,500.00</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commodities</td>
<td>$2,000.00</td>
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<td>$4,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personnel</td>
<td>$0.00</td>
<td>$3,000.00</td>
<td>$3,000.00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$21,500.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>$21,500.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>$43,000.00</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table Y. State Endangered (SE), Threatened (ST), and Conservation Priority Species (CP) at the Dynegy tract of the Kickapoo State Recreational Area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMMON NAME</th>
<th>SCIENTIFIC NAME</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henslow’s sparrow</td>
<td><em>Ammodramus henslowii</em></td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-shouldered hawk</td>
<td><em>Buteo lineatus</em></td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern flicker</td>
<td><em>Colaptes auratus</em></td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow-breasted chat</td>
<td><em>Icteria virens</em></td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-headed woodpecker</td>
<td><em>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</em></td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky warbler</td>
<td><em>Oporornis formosus</em></td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovenbird</td>
<td><em>Seiurus aurocapillus</em></td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue-winged warbler</td>
<td><em>Vermiforma pinus</em></td>
<td>CP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River redhorse</td>
<td><em>Moxostoma carinatum</em></td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bluebreasted darter</td>
<td><em>Etheostoma camurum</em></td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern sand darter</td>
<td><em>Ammocrypta pellucidum</em></td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigeye chub</td>
<td><em>Hybopsis amblops</em></td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mollusks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wavy-rayed lampmussel</td>
<td><em>Lampsilis fasciola</em></td>
<td>SE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedge</td>
<td><em>Carex communis</em></td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure Y. The Dynegy Tract links Kickapoo State Recreational Area with the Middlefork Fish and Wildlife Area and Kennekuk Cove County Park in Vermilion County, Illinois.

- Pink = tree planting
- Yellow = prairie planting
- Red = open woodland
- Green = dry mesic woodland
- Blue = seep