



## 103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### State of Illinois

2023 and 2024

SB2781

Introduced 1/17/2024, by Sen. Rachel Ventura

#### SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act  
20 ILCS 801/1-15  
30 ILCS 105/5.990 new

Creates the Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Act. Provides that the Department of Natural Resources shall prepare and maintain a comprehensive Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant plan for the preservation and enhancement of forests, prairies, and wetlands in Illinois. Provides that the Department of Natural Resources, pursuant to the comprehensive plan and subject to appropriation, shall establish and administer a Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program to restore degraded forest lands and native prairies, and to promote the growth of native vegetation that remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and help to mitigate the impact of climate change. Provides that units of local government are eligible to submit a grant proposal in a format and at a time prescribed by the Department of Natural Resources. Provides that grants may be used by units of local government to fund: (1) local projects restoring or expanding forests, wetlands, prairies, or other natural landscapes demonstrated to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; (2) education and marketing regarding local projects or steps community members may take to promote the growth of native vegetation that removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; and (3) any other purpose approved by the Department of Natural Resources that advances the State goal that there be no overall net loss of the State's existing forest, prairie, or wetland acres or their functional value due to State-supported activities. Amends the Department of Natural Resources Act and the State Finance Act to make conforming changes.

LRB103 37263 JAG 67384 b

1 AN ACT concerning conservation.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**  
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the  
5 Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Act.

6 Section 5. Findings. The General Assembly finds it is in  
7 the interest of the State to encourage natural solutions as  
8 one component of the State's efforts to reduce and remediate  
9 the impacts of climate change. Natural solutions must include  
10 planting native trees and other vegetation demonstrated to  
11 reduce carbon dioxide. To accomplish this, the State must  
12 offer assistance to other units of local government that are  
13 taking steps to fight climate change by restoring forests,  
14 wetlands, prairies, and other landscapes native to Illinois  
15 and demonstrated to have a positive environmental impact.

16 Section 10. State goal. It is the goal of the State that  
17 there be no overall net loss of the State's existing forest,  
18 prairie, or wetland acres or their functional value due to  
19 State-supported activities. Further, the State and units of  
20 local government shall preserve, enhance, and create forests,  
21 prairies, and wetlands where practical in order to mitigate  
22 the impact of climate change and reduce carbon dioxide from

1 the atmosphere.

2 Section 15. Receipt of federal moneys. The Department of  
3 Natural Resources may receive federal moneys to administer a  
4 Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program.

5 Section 20. Establishment of the Healthy Forests,  
6 Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program.

7 (a) The Department of Natural Resources, subject to  
8 appropriation, shall establish and administer a Healthy  
9 Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program to restore  
10 degraded forest lands and native prairies, and to promote the  
11 growth of native vegetation that remove carbon dioxide from  
12 the atmosphere and help to mitigate the impact of climate  
13 change.

14 (b) Eligible entities for the Healthy Forests, Wetlands,  
15 and Prairies Grant Program include:

16 (1) units of State and local government, including,  
17 but not limited to, State agencies, municipalities,  
18 townships, counties, forest preserves, and park districts;

19 (2) conservation land trusts;

20 (3) not-for-profit entities with conservation  
21 missions, including, but not limited to, climate change  
22 mitigation, preservation of natural lands, and  
23 conservation of the State's natural resources; and

24 (4) other entities to be determined by the Department

1 as eligible recipients of the grants under this Act.

2 (c) The Department may use an amount not to exceed 25% of  
3 the funds appropriated for the Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and  
4 Prairies Grant Program for administrative costs and for the  
5 purposes described in subsection (e).

6 (d) The Department shall adopt any rules necessary for the  
7 implementation of this Act, including requirements and  
8 timeframes for the submittal of grant applications by eligible  
9 entities.

10 (e) Grants under this Act may be used by eligible entities  
11 for the purpose of:

12 (1) matching funds for federal or private dollars for  
13 projects that forward the goal of climate change  
14 mitigation through the promotion of the management,  
15 planting, maintaining, and preserving of native grasses,  
16 plants, and trees;

17 (2) projects along roadways and in parks and forest  
18 preserves on public or private lands to plant native trees  
19 and prairie grasses demonstrated to absorb carbon;

20 (3) projects promoting the stewardship of existing  
21 public and private urban forests and natural lands,  
22 including the removal of invasive or non-native plant  
23 species;

24 (4) funding regional teams tasked with planting native  
25 prairie grasses and trees, prescribed burning for the  
26 maintenance of natural lands, removing invasive plant

1 species, and educational outreach;

2 (5) education and marketing regarding local projects  
3 or steps community members may take to promote the growth  
4 of native vegetation that removes carbon dioxide from the  
5 atmosphere; and

6 (6) other projects to be determined by the Department  
7 as eligible projects under the grant program established  
8 under this Act.

9 Section 25. Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant  
10 Fund. The Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Fund  
11 is created in the State treasury. The fund shall be  
12 administered by the Department of Natural Resources. The fund  
13 may receive moneys appropriated by the General Assembly or  
14 from the federal government, private donations, or any other  
15 legal source.

16 Section 90. The Department of Natural Resources Act is  
17 amended by changing Section 1-15 as follows:

18 (20 ILCS 801/1-15)

19 Sec. 1-15. General powers and duties.

20 (a) It shall be the duty of the Department to investigate  
21 practical problems, implement studies, conduct research and  
22 provide assistance, information and data relating to the  
23 technology and administration of the natural history,

1 entomology, zoology, and botany of this State; the geology and  
2 natural resources of this State; the water and atmospheric  
3 resources of this State; and the archeological and cultural  
4 history of this State.

5 (b) The Department (i) shall obtain, store, and process  
6 relevant data; recommend technological, administrative, and  
7 legislative changes and developments; cooperate with other  
8 federal, state, and local governmental research agencies,  
9 facilities, or institutes in the selection of projects for  
10 study; cooperate with the Board of Higher Education and with  
11 the public and private colleges and universities in this State  
12 in developing relevant interdisciplinary approaches to  
13 problems; and evaluate curricula at all levels of education  
14 and provide assistance to instructors and (ii) may sponsor an  
15 annual conference of leaders in government, industry, health,  
16 and education to evaluate the state of this State's  
17 environment and natural resources.

18 (c) The Director, in accordance with the Personnel Code,  
19 shall employ such personnel, provide such facilities, and  
20 contract for such outside services as may be necessary to  
21 carry out the purposes of the Department. Maximum use shall be  
22 made of existing federal and state agencies, facilities, and  
23 personnel in conducting research under this Act.

24 (c-5) The Department may use the services of, and enter  
25 into necessary agreements with, outside entities for the  
26 purpose of evaluating grant applications and for the purpose

1 of administering or monitoring compliance with grant  
2 agreements. Contracts under this subsection shall not exceed 5  
3 2 years, without an executed extension in length.

4 (d) In addition to its other powers, the Department has  
5 the following powers:

6 (1) To obtain, store, process, and provide data and  
7 information related to the powers and duties of the  
8 Department under this Act. This subdivision (d)(1) does  
9 ~~not~~ give authority to the Department to require reports  
10 from nongovernmental sources or entities.

11 (2) To cooperate with and support the Illinois Science  
12 and Technology Advisory Committee and the Illinois  
13 Coalition for the purpose of facilitating the effective  
14 operations and activities of such entities. Support may  
15 include, but need not be limited to, providing space for  
16 the operations of the Committee and the Illinois  
17 Coalition.

18 (e) The Department is authorized to make grants to local  
19 not-for-profit organizations for the purposes of development,  
20 management, maintenance, and study of wetland areas, forests,  
21 prairies, and other landscapes demonstrated to reduce the  
22 impact of climate change.

23 (f) The Department has the authority to accept, receive  
24 and administer on behalf of the State any gifts, bequests,  
25 donations, income from property rental and endowments. Any  
26 such funds received by the Department shall be deposited into

1 the DNR Special Projects Fund, a trust fund in the State  
2 treasury, and used for the purposes of this Act or, when  
3 appropriate, for such purposes and under such restrictions,  
4 terms and conditions as are predetermined by the donor or  
5 grantor of such funds or property. Any accrued interest from  
6 money deposited into the DNR Special Projects Fund shall be  
7 reinvested into the Fund and used in the same manner as the  
8 principal. The Director shall maintain records which account  
9 for and assure that restricted funds or property are disbursed  
10 or used pursuant to the restrictions, terms or conditions of  
11 the donor.

12 (g) The Department shall recognize, preserve, and promote  
13 our special heritage of recreational hunting and trapping by  
14 providing opportunities to hunt and trap in accordance with  
15 the Wildlife Code.

16 (h) Within 5 years after the effective date of this  
17 amendatory Act of the 102nd General Assembly, the Department  
18 shall fly a United States Flag, an Illinois flag, and a POW/MIA  
19 flag at all State parks. Donations may be made by groups and  
20 individuals to the DNR Special Projects Fund for costs related  
21 to the implementation of this subsection.

22 (Source: P.A. 102-388, eff. 1-1-22; 102-699, eff. 4-19-22;  
23 103-363, eff. 7-28-23.)

24 Section 95. The State Finance Act is amended by adding  
25 Section 5.990 as follows:



1 (30 ILCS 105/5.990 new)

2 Sec. 5.990. The Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies

3 Grant Fund.