

ILLINOIS
STATE
REPORT
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Overview

The Office of Resource Conservation within the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) is responsible for the management of Illinois' wildlife, fisheries and forest resources, along with stewardship and restoration of natural lands. ORC manages Fish and wildlife populations through hunting and fishing regulations based on scientific data. ORC also promotes the state's hunting and fishing heritage. Primary funding comes from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, supported by Federal Fish and Wildlife Funds, State Wildlife Grant Funds, Illinois Forestry Development Funds, and Natural Areas Acquisition Funds. The Office also works with the Federal Government and other agencies to remediate lands contaminated by industrial discharges or accidental release of pollutants. The Office administers the state portion of Federal Farm Bill programs including the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and others. Regulation of state-endangered and threatened species is included among the responsibilities of the Office.

30x30

The IDNR currently is serving as chair of the 30x30 task force established by the Illinois General Assembly. The initiative's goal is to protect 30 percent of the nation's land and water by 2030. The task force was tasked with gathering public input at a series of meetings held this spring. A final report is due to the General Assembly by July 1, 2022. Additional meetings with experts and stakeholders are planned to continue the task force's work after its statutory duties are completed.

Division of Fisheries

Fish Hatcheries

The IDNR operates three state hatcheries located strategically across the state including Jake Wolf Memorial Fish Hatchery, Little Grassy Fish Hatchery and the LaSalle Fish Hatchery. In FY21, the hatchery system produced and stocked a total of 23,010,852 fish of 18 species.

Lake Michigan Program

Charter and non-charter recreational anglers last year expended 406,101 angler-hours to harvest 2,664 yellow perch and 102,558 trout and salmon from the Illinois waters of Lake Michigan.

Mississippi River

IDNR biologists continued collaborating with state and federal partners on Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Projects as part of the Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program, onsite dredge material

placement inspections, bridge demolition fish surveys, aquatic nuisance species management, and water level management discussions.

Illinois River

In conjunction with the state hatchery system, over 9.9 million Sauger fry measuring up to 1.6 inches were stocked into the upper Illinois River in 2021. The upper Illinois River continues to be known for producing a world-class Sauger fishery and hosts the Master's Walleye Circuit Tournament out of Spring Valley every spring.

Wabash River

During 2021, IDNR Fisheries Biologists collected 53 Shovelnose Sturgeon from the Wabash River. Passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags and external Floy® tags were inserted into in each fish so anglers could provide us the Floy® tag number to cross reference the internal PIT tag number.

Region 2

In 2021, the last two of the 11 dams on the Des Plaines River were removed, restoring over 100 miles of free-flowing river in northeastern Illinois.

Region 3

The Lake Shelbyville Fish Habitat Alliance (LSFHA) comprised of staff from the IDNR and USACE, local businesses, fishing clubs, and volunteers continues to enhance the quality of the Lake Shelbyville fishery for anglers and the economic benefit of local communities. Since January 2017, the LSFHA has raised well over \$150,000 through fundraising and grant writing activities, solicited tens of thousands of dollars' worth of donated materials, and coordinated thousands of hours' worth of volunteer time to put towards projects to improve aquatic habitat in Lake Shelbyville.

Region 4

High school bass fishing continues to gain popularity among young anglers in Illinois. In 2022, 25 sectional tournaments were held at different locations across the state, with almost 400 schools in participation. Top finishing anglers in each sectional compete at the state final at Carlyle Lake.

Region 5

Fisheries managers worked cooperatively with both Federal partners, municipalities, and private entities to place fish habitat structures at 19 lakes in southern Illinois. Most notably, approximately 430 structures were constructed and placed in Rend Lake with the Assistance of the Army Corp of Engineers.

Aquatic Nuisance Species Program

The IDNR continues to be a major partner in the Invasive Carp Regional Coordinating Committee, and continues to work above and below the Corps of Engineers' electric barrier system to monitor and prevent the upstream migration of invasive carp on the Illinois River and in the Chicago Area Waterway System (CAWS). Contracted harvest efforts continue to suppress densities of invasive carp above the Starved Rock Lock and Dam.

Only two Invasive carps have been found upstream of the electric dispersal barriers since intense actions began in 2010 despite continued and intensive monitoring in the CAWS.

- Contracting with commercial fishers has removed 3.2 million pounds from below Starved Rock so far in 2022.
- A rebranding effort will be launched this summer to establish a more appealing name for consumer related products to enhance utilization of invasive carp as a food fish.

Mississippi and Ohio Basin

- The IDNR is coordinating with neighboring states to achieve management and control of invasive carp in the Mississippi and Ohio River drainages.
- A program modeled off the Illinois River contracting with commercial fishers for the harvest of invasive carp has been launched on the Wabash River.
- A new program to support removal via payments to processors for local pickups of invasive carp has resulted in almost 2 million pounds of invasive carp removed so far in 2022.

Division of Wildlife Resources

2021-2022 Deer Season Harvest

Hunters in Illinois harvested a preliminary total of 147,004 deer during all 2021-2022 archery and firearm seasons that concluded Jan. 16. The total preliminary deer harvest for all seasons compares with a total harvest for all seasons of 162,752 deer in 2020-2021. During the 2021-2022 deer seasons, hunters took 43.75% does and 56.25% males.

- Archery deer hunters in Illinois took a preliminary total of 67,637 deer during the season that began Oct. 1 and concluded Jan. 16. The total archery harvest during the 2020-2021 season was 75,106 deer.
- Youth deer hunters harvested a preliminary total of 1,829 deer during the three-day Illinois Youth Deer Season Oct. 9-11, compared to 2,322 in 2020.
- Hunters took a preliminary total of 69,990 deer during the Illinois Firearm Deer Season Nov. 19-21 and Dec. 2-5, compared with 77,160 deer taken during the 2020 firearm season.
- Muzzleloader: Hunters using muzzleloading rifles harvested a preliminary total of 3,043 deer during the Muzzleloader-Only Deer Season Dec. 10-12, compared with a harvest of 3,451 deer in the 2020 muzzleloader season.
- Late-Winter Seasons: The 2021-2022 Late-Winter Antlerless-Only and Special CWD (chronic wasting disease) deer seasons concluded Jan. 16 with a combined preliminary harvest total for both seasons of 4,505 deer.
- Season dates for the seven-day Late-Winter and CWD seasons were Dec. 30-Jan. 2 and Jan. 14-16. During those seasons in 2020-2021, a harvest of 4,713 deer were taken. Sixteen northern Illinois counties were open to the Special CWD season, which is used to assist in slowing the spread of chronic wasting disease in the Illinois deer herd. A total of 21 counties were open for the Late-Winter Antlerless Season in 2021-2022. Counties that are at or below their individual deer population goal for two consecutive years may be removed from the Late-Winter season.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

During the period of July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 (FY2021), IDNR staff collected and submitted 8,377 tissue samples statewide from white-tailed deer, yielding a total of 163 CWD cases in 19 northern Illinois counties from 8,340 testable samples.

- Lee County was added as a new county with the occurrence of CWD. Disease prevalence in CWD counties for adult deer harvested by hunters was 4.42%. The prevalence rate for hunter-harvested adult males (5.4%) continues to be higher than that of adult females (3.0%).
- Counties along the Wisconsin border produced the highest number of hunter-harvested CWD positive deer including McHenry (15) in the northeast and Jo Daviess (11) in the northwest. These were followed by LaSalle (9), Carroll (7), Boone (6), Kendall (5) and Grundy (5).
- The highest infection levels were observed along the Illinois River including central LaSalle (block 6,0— 18.4%), and northwest Grundy (block 6,2—14.5%). Other areas with prevalence above 10% include north central McHenry (block 0,2 - 12.6%), southeast Winnebago/southwest Boone (1,1 - 11.1%), and southeast Boone/southwest McHenry (block 1,0 - 10.9%).
- During 2002-2010, 80% of all CWD-positives identified in Illinois originated from either Boone or Winnebago County. In FY2021, only 17% of CWD-positives came from those counties. The spread of CWD and the establishment of new disease foci into new areas of the state remains the biggest management challenge in Illinois. Final results of the 2022 sharpshooting operations are being compiled now.

2021-2022 Turkey Harvest

Fall 2021

- Hunters in Illinois harvested a statewide total of 683 wild turkeys during the 2021-2022 fall archery turkey season. The total compares with a statewide turkey harvest of 783 in 2020-2021 and a five-year average of 688 birds harvested.

Youth 2022

- Youth turkey hunters harvested a preliminary total of 1,258 birds during the 2022 Illinois youth turkey season March 26-27 and April 2-3. In 2021, a total of 1,304 turkeys were taken.

Spring 2022

- Turkey hunters harvested a preliminary statewide total of 13,701 wild turkeys during the 2022 Illinois Spring Turkey Season. This year's preliminary harvest total compares with the 2021 statewide turkey harvest of 13,613.

Bobcat Hunting

The 2021-2022 Illinois bobcat season concluded Feb. 15 with 290 bobcats harvested by hunters and trappers. A total of 174 (56%) of bobcats were taken by hunting, while trapping accounted for 116 (37%) of the harvest. Twenty-three (7%) were salvaged by permit holders from circumstances such as roadkill. Hunters and trappers in Jefferson County reported 17 bobcats, which was the most for any county this year. There were more than 6,000 bobcat lottery applicants in 2021, and 1,000 permits were issued for the season. The bobcat harvest from the 2020-2021 season was 339, with 22 salvaged.

Division of Natural Heritage

Endangered Species Program

- Three surveys are underway focusing on State and Federally listed mussel species. A qualitative survey of the Wabash River is recording occurrence of listed mussel species. Additional Wabash River surveys in 2022 will estimate abundance of listed species at locations where the species were found in 2021. Finally, qualitative mussel surveys of the Kankakee River in Illinois and Indiana are underway.
- Illinois Caverns, a staple attraction in southern Illinois, was reopened to the public in the summer of 2021, after being closed for more than 10 years due to White Nose Syndrome concerns.
- In 2021, Illinois joined Bat Conservation International's "Fat Bats-Supporting Hibernating Bats Affected by White-nose Syndrome" research project.

Natural Areas Stewardship

The Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Grant Program was established one year ago and is currently accepting the second round of applications through May 2022. \$500,000 was made available for the program's inaugural round of grants to support Conservation Land Trusts in performing stewardship at some of Illinois' highest quality natural areas. In the second year, the grant program will continue to provide support to partner-applied management practices bringing uplift in quality to remnant and restored sites identified in the 1970's as examples of Illinois' original landscape. Eligible land for the grant program must be permanently protected by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission.

Rare Plant Initiative

Illinois has embarked on a two-year project to update the Conservation Status Ranks of Illinois' endangered and threatened plant species, plus an additional subset of species of concern that are not yet listed. This ranking will utilize NatureServe's methodology to analyze the rarity, threats, and trends of each species to inform global ranking and Illinois' prioritization of land acquisition, perpetual protection, and stewardship.

Illinois Wildlife Action Plan

The IWAP Program continues to support work assessing Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) including state-listed species and efforts to enhance and restore key habitats using Projects funded through the State Wildlife Grant Program (SWG). Twenty-four SWG Projects are currently active with work directed at stewardship of IDNR managed sites dedicated or registered within the Illinois Nature Preserves System and toward recovery of Illinois Threatened and Endangered Species. Projects are focused on Category I (high-quality Natural Communities) and Category II (habitat for endangered and threatened species) sites and will provide over \$750,000 of work during the next three years. SWG Projects are also directly providing information about many SGCN including 35 Endangered and 23 Threatened species listed in Illinois. These include state-listed fish (1E, 3T), amphibian (3E, 6T), reptile (9E, 9T), bird (9E, 2T), crayfish (4E), and insect (9E, 3T) species.

Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) consists of nine members appointed by the Governor. Pursuant to the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act (525 ILCS 30/6), the Commission has certain powers and duties, including approval for dedication of nature preserves and registration of land and water reserves in the Illinois Nature Preserves System. The Commission, in partnership with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), protects lands in perpetuity for landowners such as the IDNR,

forest preserve and park districts, not-for-profit organizations, corporations, land trusts, and individuals. Lands protected include high quality natural communities, habitats that support endangered and threatened species, geological features, and archaeological sites. The INPC is a great example of a public-private partnership that has been successful for nearly 60 years and is supported by staff members employed by the IDNR. In calendar year 2020, the INPC permanently protected 14 sites, including 10 new or additions to nature preserves, four new or additions to land and water reserves. The total acreage dedicated was 1,242 and the total registered 1,373 acres. Adding these 14 sites into the Illinois Nature Preserves System brings the statewide, total number of dedicated Nature Preserves to 411 comprising approximately 62,924 acres; and the total number of registered land and water reserves to 200 with approximately 56,137 acres. Altogether, at the end of 2021, there were 611 sites comprising approximately 119,061 acres.

IDNR Nursery Program (Mason Nursery)

During the Fall 2021 and spring 2022 season, the Mason State Nursery produced approximately 1,020,000 native Illinois plants for landowners. These included 58 species of wildflowers/grasses, and 39 species of trees/shrubs. In addition, Mason Nursery harvested and cleaned 2,000 pounds of native Illinois wildflower/prairie grass seed for distribution to landowners for pollinator and monarch butterfly habitat. The nursery processed over 1,500 orders for this plant material.

Illinois Forestry Development Act (IFDA) Forest Management Program

IFDA requires landowners to have a IDNR-approved forest management plan. Illinois has approximately 9,770 forest management plans covering 553,000 acres. This equates to approximately 15% of non-industrial private forestland in Illinois being managed for wildlife, timber, recreation, clean water, carbon, and long-term forest health. Recommended forest management practices vary parcel to parcel.

Illinois Forest Legacy Program (IFLP)

The Forest Legacy Program is a partnership between the IDNR and the USDA Forest Service to identify and acquire environmentally important and threatened forests in Illinois. The Division of Forestry maintains federal eligibility, completing three projects/year within the threatened Illinois forest landscapes. Illinois has seven IFLP properties under easement totaling 558 acres.

Urban and Community Forestry Program (UCFP)

IDNR's Urban and Community Forestry Program assists communities, counties, townships, military bases, etc. with urban forest management. UCFP administers all the Tree City USA (TCU) programs in partnership with the Arbor Day Foundation and the USDA Forest Service. In 2021, UCFP reached millions of Illinois residents through DNR Forestry staff, including directing \$404,727 in USFS dollars to communities. With match, a total of \$1,050,889 was used for tree planting, ordinance revisions, inventory, and urban forest planning. Illinois is among the top three states in all TCU programs.

Illinois Forest Utilization & Marketing Program (IFUP)

DNR Forestry bonded/licensed 360 timber buyers and listed 801 total authorized agents. Seventy-five sawmills and a few dozen additional hobby mills are currently operating in the state. Verified sales of timber and products, primarily as hardwood logs from private forests, continues to exceed \$50 million annually. The total economic value of the forest products industries to Illinois, including all primary and secondary sectors, exceeded \$22 billion in 2020. The IFUP partners with Stewardship and other forestry

programs to expand the multiple use philosophy of forest management which includes wildlife, timber, carbon, protected species, recreation, soil, and water conservation.

Wildland Fire Programs

IDNR staff conducted prescribed burning on approximately 8,500 acres statewide during the last burn season. Three wildland firefighting classes were held for IDNR staff and volunteers. The Midwest Wildfire Training Academy was held at John A Logan College and provided courses for 158 students. Wildland Fire classes were presented to volunteer fire departments for 54 students. Through federal excess equipment programs, IDNR acquired approximately \$10,000,000+ of surplus fire equipment, including, trucks, rescue boats, trailers, generators, and a variety of other items. IDNR Forestry deployed two 20-person Type 2-IA crews to Minnesota to help with the fires during the drought. Illinois also has a representative on the NASF Wildland Fire Committee and a representative on the Big Rivers Fire Compact.