

Illinois Forestry Development Council

Fiscal Year 2020 Report

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IFDC Website

<http://ifdc.nres.illinois.edu/>

From the Director

Illinois forests cover nearly 5,000,000 acres across the state, most of which is privately owned. These forest resources are used by our citizens for multiple reasons, from recreation to job creation, and contribute *billions* of dollars to the Illinois economy.

As required by the Illinois Forestry Development Act (525 ILCS 15), the Illinois Forestry Development Council (IFDC)

submits this report outlining its activities and analysis of Illinois' forest resources.

The IFDC met six times over the course of FY-2020. All meetings are open to the public. The Council meets on the 2nd Wednesday of the odd months. Locations are varied across the State. These locations are selected by the Council and posted in advance to the Councils' website: <http://www.ifdc.nres.illinois.edu/>. Minutes of previous meetings are also available on the website.

The start of the fiscal year brought about a change in leadership to the Council. Bill Gradle retired as Director of the IFDC and Jim Zaczek stepped down as Council Chair. The Council thanks these individuals for their many years of service and dedication to Illinois forestry. In their place, I (Eric Holzmueller) will be serving as Director. In addition to this role, I am a Professor of Forestry at Southern Illinois University. Jay Hayek was selected to serve as Council Chair. He is a Forestry Extension Specialist at University of Illinois.

Despite the Covid-19 crisis over the past few months, the Council had an active year. We provided feedback to the IL DNR on a number of legislative issues that affect the forest resources in our State and we also reinstated our small grants program that attracted applicants from across the State. While there are challenges ahead for Illinois forestry, we look forward to continuing to work with our partners to have a successful FY21.

Sincerely,

Eric Holzmueller, Director
Illinois Forestry Development Council



IFDC Accomplishments

SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

The IFDC provided funding to five agencies for the following small grants. These grants helped address forestry issues defined by the Council and included actions to mitigate these issues as outlined in the Illinois Forest Action Plan.

- The Forest Restoration Support Team was granted funding to build a website that engages landowners in the fight against invasive species.
- The Illinois Forestry Association obtained funding to provide landowner education through a series of webinars and print educational materials that promote forest management.
- Touch of Nature at Southern Illinois University developed educational displays demonstrating invasive control techniques in heavily infested areas with funding obtained from the IFDC.
- The Shawnee Resource and Development was granted funding to develop a video on introducing forest stewardship to private landowners.
- Chris Benda obtained funding to host two Illinois Natural Areas Inventory workshops that educated natural resource professionals on how to classify natural resource quality based on disturbance factors and quality indicators.

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The IFDC continued to serve as the lead organization for the "Improving Oak-Hickory forest type" project with the USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service. This project has brought over \$2,000,000 in funding to Illinois to implement management practices that benefit Illinois forests. Unfortunately, funding for this project has been all allocated.

STATE FOREST STEWARDSHIP COORDINATING COMMITTEE

The IFDC serves as the State Forest Stewardship Coordinating Committee for the Illinois DNR – Division of Forestry. Over 500,000 acres of private forest land are enrolled in management plans approved by Illinois DNR foresters. These plans provide management recommendations that improve forests for better wildlife habitat, timber production, recreational opportunities, and more. The Council also provides guidance in urban forestry through the Urban and Community Forestry Program. In 2019 Illinois' UCF program touched 7,781,108 Illinois residents through local urban and community forestry assistance and included communities as small as Cerro Gordo's 492 acres and as large as the Forest Preserve of Cook County's 70,000 acres of managed land.

VOICE FOR ILLINOIS FORESTRY

Oftentimes various groups or agencies call upon the IFDC to speak at different events to promote sound forestry practices in their area. IFDC gave presentations at on a number of topics at multiple events, from timber harvesting to forest ecology on reclaimed mine soils. Additionally, the Council reviewed and commented on several documents pertaining to Illinois forestry, such as the National Woodland Owner Survey published by the United States Forest Service.

Recommendations to the IL General Assembly

PRIVATE LANDOWNER FUNDING

As documented in the Illinois Forest Action Plan, Illinois forest health is declining. One reason for this is that there is a lack of cost share assistance programs to encourage landowners to engage in management activities that will improve forest health. While the Regional Conservation Partnership Program with the NRCS provided a temporary band-aid solution, funding for this program has run out and is not likely to be renewed. Illinois timber harvest taxes generate nearly \$2,000,000 annually. A portion of this should go back to landowners to improve forest health on their properties as the original IL FDA law (525 ILCS 15) intended.

Recommendation: Direct \$1,000,000 to a statewide forestry practices cost-share program.

ILLINOIS DNR DIVISION OF FORESTRY FUNDING

Early retirement and subsequent budget cuts to Illinois DNR have reduced the Division of Forestry professional, technical, and clerical staff by as much as 86%. Not only do these losses reduce the ability of the Division to engage with private landowners to assist them with the technical expertise needed to improve forest health on their property, it also reduces the ability of the Division of Forestry to acquire Federal dollars that are available at a national level on a competitive basis.

Recommendation: Increase Division of Forestry budget by \$3,000,000 for additional field and urban foresters. Direct an additional \$1,000,000 to the Mason County Nursery for labor and infrastructure.

WORKMAN'S COMPENSATION

Illinois grows some of the finest hardwood timber in the Midwest. Annual sales of hardwood logs from private landowners exceed \$50,000,000. While we have about 75 mills in the State that process this timber into higher-end products, the bulk of our wood goes out of state. One reason for this is that our Workman's Compensation rates are not competitive with adjacent States.

Recommendation: Revamp Illinois Workman's Compensation system so that Illinois can compete with our neighboring states for jobs and keep our wood industry strong.



Illinois Forestry Development Council

The Illinois Forestry Development Council was created in 1983 upon passage of the Illinois Forestry Development Act (525 ILCS 15). The Council's charge is to identify and evaluate the social, economic, scientific, and educational value of Illinois' forest lands and forest products industries. The 29 members of the Council represent the following interests or groups:

MEMBER	REPRESENTING	MEMBER	REPRESENTING
Mr. Terry Davis	Landowner Engaged in Farming	Ms. Lydia Scott	Environmental Issues
Vacant	Landowner Engaged in Farming	Dr. Robert Schooley Mr. Jay Hayek**	University of Illinois/Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences
Mr. Roy Bailey	Private Timber Grower	Dr. John Groninger	Southern Illinois University, Forestry Program
Vacant	Private Timber Grower	Mr. Jerry Costello II Mr. Elliot Legacy**	Illinois Department of Agriculture
Mr. Stan Curtis	Wood Products/Primary Forest Industry	Ms. Collen Callahan Mr. Paul Deizman	Illinois Department of Natural Resources IDNR State Forester
Vacant	Wood Products/Primary Forest Industry	Ms. Kim Watson	Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity
Mr. Stephen Felt	Illinois Tree Farm Committee	Mr. Chris B. Meister	Illinois Finance Authority
Mr. Mike McMahan Mr. Dave Gillespie**	Illinois Forestry Association	Mr. Christopher Merrett	Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
Vacant	Illinois Walnut Council	Mr. Nathan Reitz (D)	IL Speaker of the House
Ms. Jenny Lesko	Illinois Chapter of the Society of American Foresters	Mr. Patrick Windhorst (R)	IL House Minority Leader
Dr. T.J. Benson	Illinois Chapter of the Wildlife Society	Vacant	IL Senate President
Vacant	Urban Forestry Representative	Mr. Jason Barickman (R)	IL Senate Minority Leader
Mr. Robert Sproule	Illinois Arborist Association	Mr. Ivan Dozier* Mr. Wade Conn**	USDA/Natural Resources Conservation Service Illinois
Mr. Steve Stierwalt Mr. Dale Shumaker**	Association of Illinois Soil & Water Conservation Districts	Mr. Brendan Cain*	U.S. Forest Service Shawnee National Forest

**Ex-officio Members*

***Designee or Alternate*

For more information on the Illinois Forestry Development Council go to:

ifdc.nres.illinois.edu/