



NEWS RELEASE

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

1021 North Grand Avenue East, P.O. Box 19276

Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276

Phone: 217/782-3397

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 15, 2021

Contact: Kim Biggs

217-558-1536

Kim.Biggs@illinois.gov

Pritzker Administration Awards \$207,751 in Rebuild Illinois Capital Funding to HeartLands Conservancy to Address Stormwater Runoff

Illinois EPA Green Infrastructure Grant Opportunity program to fund implementation project

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Director John Kim announced HeartLands Conservancy will receive nearly \$208,000 in Green Infrastructure Grant Opportunity (GIGO) funding to implement the Brushy Lake Wetland and Floodplain Restoration project, which will create and enhance wetlands and wet meadows in the Cahokia Creek floodplain in Madison County.

The project by HeartLands Conservancy and its partners, made possible by funding from Governor Pritzker's bipartisan Rebuild Illinois capital plan, will enhance water quality, stormwater storage, and wildlife habitat. The project will restore 9.5 acres of emergent wetland, enhance 20 acres of forested wetland, and establish 50 acres of wet meadow habitat. Existing drainage ditches, that were originally installed to drain water to allow agricultural production, will be reshaped and meandered to re-establish the wetlands within the floodplain. The floodplain is the flat area adjacent to the creek, which during rain events can store stormwater and release the water back into the creek more slowly. This can help reduce the number and duration of flood events downstream of the site. The entire site is in the floodplain of Cahokia Creek.

"Protecting Illinois communities and businesses from persistent flooding and water damage is a top priority for my administration which is why the Rebuild Illinois capital plan has funding specifically dedicated to green infrastructure initiatives," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "Through the Brushy Lake Wetland and Floodplain Restoration project, the HeartLands Conservancy will implement systems to provide communities with increased protection against excess stormwater and peace of mind that their homes and families are safe."

HeartLands Conservancy applied for a GIGO grant from Illinois EPA. The total project budget is \$282,645, with Illinois EPA providing \$207,751 in grant funds and HeartLands Conservancy and its partners providing \$74,894 in matching funds.

"The Brushy Lake Wetland and Floodplain Restoration Project is physically the largest GIGO project this year and focuses on improving the Cahokia Creek floodplain," **said Director Kim**. "A goal of this project is to hold more water in the wetlands on the Brushy Lake site to reduce the frequent flooding in the downstream communities of State Park Place and Fairmont City and help improve Cahokia Creek's water quality."

“Restoration of Brushy Lake will provide an increase in stormwater storage capacity and wildlife habitat in the Metro East American Bottom. HeartLands Conservancy is enthusiastic to get working on a decades-long goal of restoring this critical floodplain,” **said HeartLands Conservancy President and CEO Mary Vandevord.**

“HeartLands Conservancy has made a meaningful impact on the environment in our region by protecting natural areas, enriching communities and promoting responsible development,” **said Sen. Rachelle Crowe (D-Wood River).** “By investing in the restoration of Brushy Lake, our state is showing its commitment to address flood concerns and improve public safety, enabling residents to enjoy our natural spaces.”

The GIGO Grant Program is a competitive financial assistance grant program established to help protect Illinois’ water resources. The GIGO Program is funded through the Rebuild Illinois Capital Plan. The funds are used to implement green infrastructure best management practices to control stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff causes flooding and carries pollutants into waterways such as rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and groundwater.

For additional information on Illinois’ Green Infrastructure Grant Opportunities Grant Program, please visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/epa/topics/water-quality/surface-water/Pages/green-infrastructure.aspx> .

###