



Illinois Department of **Natural Resources**

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IDNR Awarded Federal Grant for Illinois Recreational Access Program

New initiative to provide more public and youth access to outdoor recreation

SPRINGFIELD, IL – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) recently received notice from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) of a \$525,250 federal grant to implement a new public access program for hunting and fishing. The Illinois Recreational Access Program will begin enrolling landowners in the Illinois River and Kaskaskia River watersheds to participate in the program later this year.

“Hunting is declining nationwide, and here in Illinois our outdoorsmen and women need publicly accessible areas to pursue their sports – and we need places to provide the next generation safe and successful experiences to learn our outdoor heritage,” said IDNR Director Marc Miller. “During the Illinois Conservation Congress, our constituents called for a true public access program and additional opportunities to get our youth outside. This program will help accomplish both of those goals.”

The federal grant for the new Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP) is from the USDA Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Incentive Program.

The new program will include a Fishing Access Campaign targeted in the Kankakee River watershed, a Youth Turkey Hunting Campaign to be implemented with the National Wild Turkey Federation and a Large Landowner Campaign to allow access for hunting, fishing and other compatible recreational opportunities.

IRAP will provide incentives and liability waivers to landowners who allow free public access to their properties for recreational opportunities including hunting, fishing, boating and other activities compatible with the land and water conditions.

In the first year, IDNR hopes to provide access to 100 youth turkey hunting sites; two new access points for fishing, canoeing and boating on the Kankakee and Iroquois

Rivers; walk-in fishing access for 200 acres of impounded water; walk-in fishing access for five miles of non-navigable streams; and access to 500 acres for youth deer hunting on large landowner properties.

Illinois ranks 5th in the nation in population, but ranks only 46th for public lands available for recreation. Approximately 80 percent of the state is farmland and around 96 percent is privately owned.

“With this program we hope to complement our successful Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and provide the state’s 323,000 hunters, 780,000 fisherman and millions of other recreational users with additional opportunities to carry on our unique outdoor heritage,” Director Miller added.

Program implementation will begin in Illinois this fall. Landowners interested in the new program or more information should contact the IDNR Office of Resource Conservation at (217) 524-4111.

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