



Protecting Land For Future Generations



Newsletter

Volume 2
Spring 2005

Loss of Farmland In Illinois

Illinois ranks fifth in the nation in the loss of high-quality farmland over the past several years behind Texas, Ohio, Georgia, and North Carolina. Illinois land in farms has been reduced by 3.7 million acres from 1950 to 1997 according to the Illinois Agricultural Statistics Service data. Even with these high losses of farmland, there is still relatively little public concern about this issue since Americans continue to enjoy abundant, safe, and affordable food supplies. Loss of open space and aesthetic landscapes is often a more compelling factor for people interested in preserving land and limiting its conversion to urban uses.

According to the Natural Resources Inventory conducted by USDA's NRCS, approximately 6 % of the nation, excluding Alaska, is considered urban developed land. Cropland, rangeland, forest, and federal land each make up about 21% of the nations land area for a total of 84%.

A concept to help address current development pressure is called Smart Growth. According to Jim Chaffin, Urban land Institute Chairperson, "Growth is inevitable, growth is necessary, but how growth is accommodated can be good or bad. In setting the framework for land development and redevelopment, we must focus on practices that are environmentally sound, economically vital, and that encourage livable communities – in other words, Smart Growth."

In future newsletters look for feature articles on the following topics: Smart Growth, Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE), Planning and Zoning, Urban Redevelopment, and Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA).

Thanks to TLC Supporters

A special thanks to Elizabeth Crown for her very generous contribution to the Southwestern Illinois RC&D, and to Wetlands Forever. Our gratitude also goes to all those who gave in honor of the late Judge John L. DeLaurenti: The Federer Family, Bill and Joan Sackett, Berry and Karen File, The Gilomen Family, Steve Black, William Mudge, Kent Boyles, Diane Chappel, George & Susanne Luber, Dennis and Rebecca Yarbrough, Theresa Duricek, Kenneth Childerson, and Kimberly and George Dempsey, Jr.

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**Property Owners
who want to
permanently protect
their land for future
generations can
create a customized
conservation
easement and
realize significant
reductions in
income tax, estate
taxes, and in some
cases property
taxes.**

Help With Controlling Invasive Species

If alien invaders are overrunning your property, get help from the professionals. Not the X-files, the INPC! The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission provides comprehensive information for property owners about management of invasive species including control recommendations, which herbicides work the best, and failed or ineffective practices. These vegetative management guidelines are available at www.inhs.uiuc.edu/chf/outreach/VMG/VMG.html.

In Illinois, we now have less than 1/10 of 1% of the original native prairies, savannas and woodlands that the settlers found when they first came to this area. In the last few decades, exotic species have aggressively crowded out many of our native wildflowers and have taken over natural landscapes including woodlands, prairies, savannas and wetlands.

Almost all plants provide food or shelter in some form, but native plant species are better adapted for native Illinois wildlife. Although some exotic species of plants from other continents or areas thrive in the Midwest, many of them do more harm than good. Many non-native species crowd out, outgrow, and smother native plants. Some of the worst offenders in this area are Japanese Honeysuckle, Glossy Buckthorn, Multiflora Rose, Autumn Olive, Gooseberry, and Climbing Euonymus. Not only are we in danger of losing some of our most beautiful native flowers and other plants; the loss of native plants also affects our populations of native wildlife. For example, many of the species of birds that keep our insect populations under control also need the seeds and berries of native plants to survive. Watch out for invasive species on your property and in your neighborhood, and eliminate them before they become a problem. Learn more about invasive alien species from the Illinois Native Plant Society at www.ill-inps.org or contact the Illinois DNR at (217) 785-8774. Information about landscaping with native plants including area nurseries is available at www.grownative.org.

Conservation Easements - Q & A

Will a conservation easement prohibit a unit of government from taking my land under the power of eminent domain?

Normally a conservation easement does not stop a unit of government from using the power of eminent domain to acquire land for the public good. One exception, however, is participation in certain Illinois Nature Preserves Commission easement programs that will give some level of protection from eminent domain. The U.S. Supreme Court is currently considering a case where a local unit of government took land under eminent domain for economic development purposes. Their ruling will have a major impact on whether governments can use that purpose alone to take private lands. The Illinois Supreme Court ruled several years ago that a local unit of government in this region over-stepped their authority in using eminent domain to take land for a parking lot under the purposes of economic development when in fact the transaction provided mostly private sector benefits.



Does a conservation easement have to be forever or can it be for a certain period of time?

Some programs offer incentives for entering into a conservation easement for a specified period of time. To take advantage of federal income and estate tax benefits, however, the conservation easement must be perpetual and be recorded with the land deed. The Internal Revenue Service established these requirements. The perpetual easement provides assurances that the property will remain as you have designated for generations to come regardless of who owns that land in the future.

Calendar of Events



April Outing

Saturday, April 16th, 11:00 am

Join others interested in land conservation on a hike in Washington County. See the ephemeral magic of Larkspur, Beardstoung, Buttercup, and other wildflowers. Also tour a prairie restoration project on the property of Glen Schuetz. Meet at 11:00 at intersection of IL Route 177 and Venedy Road (county highway 12) which is 4 miles west of Okawville or 12 miles east of Mascoutah. There is a gravel parking lot at the intersection, we will meet there and then car-pool to Glen's. Box lunch will be provided. Please RSVP at (618) 566-4451 or steveblack@swircd.org.

Presentation About Conservation Easements

Thursday, June 9, 7:00 pm

201 North Church Street, Belleville

Learn more about using conservation easements to permanently protect land from development. Steve Black, Coordinator of The Land Conservancy, will speak about the tax advantages of conservation easements and how to establish a conservation easement. The presentation will be given at a meeting of the Sierra Club at the SWIC Programs and Services for Older Persons Program Building in downtown Belleville. The meeting is free and open to the public, park in lot across the street.

Join The Land Conservancy!

Join us in protecting land for future generations. Your membership dues will help us reach more people in the community about the tax advantages of conservation easements, preserve more land through donations, and provide a voice to policy makers about the importance of land conservation.

As a TLC member, you will receive a quarterly newsletter, invitations to exclusive outings to some of the most beautiful private land in this area, and numerous social opportunities.

Yes! I want to become a friend of The Land Conservancy.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

- Student/Retired \$25
- Friend of Open Spaces \$40
- Prairie Guardian \$75
- Wildlife Patron \$100
- Forest Benefactor \$500
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Mail to:

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The Land Conservancy, a division of Southwestern Illinois RC&D, is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) land trust organization and all donations are tax deductible.



MISSION OF THE LAND CONSERVANCY

To work regionally to protect agricultural, forest, and other natural lands in order to provide for open space, landscape diversity, sustainable agriculture, wildlife habitat, and conservation benefits for present and future generations.

The Land Conservancy is a member of the national Land Trust Alliance www.lta.org



Protecting Land For Future Generations

Share Your Favorite Photos

Help The Land Conservancy show off the natural beauty of Southwestern Illinois. Have you taken photographs of a special place in this area that is close to your heart? If so, now's your chance for photographic fame!

Please share your photos with us to use on our website and other materials, including a new membership brochure. Photos of natural beauty in this area including landscapes, wildlife, plants, flowers, etc. are welcome. Under the photos, credit will be given to the photographers of any of the work utilized by TLC. Please send digital photos to lindawegrzyn@swircd.org, or mail copies of photos to TLC, 406 East Main, Mascoutah, IL 62258. Please send only copies, we will not be able to return any original photographs.



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The Land Conservancy

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Protecting land for future generations in Bond, Clinton, Madison, Monroe, Randolph, St. Clair and Washington counties.

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