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PRAIRIE STATE CONSERVATION COALITION RECEIVES GRANT TO MAP ALL PROTECTED NATURAL LANDS IN ILLINOIS

Prairie State Conservation Coalition (PSCC) of Illinois is pleased to announce its receipt of a grant for \$48,000 from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (ICECF) in Chicago. This grant will support the production of I-View, a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) spatial database of all Illinois permanently protected conservation lands. I-View will significantly enhance the ability of conservation organizations, private and public, to establish an interconnected system of healthy and protected lands and waters. The shared information available through I-View will allow for strategic collaboration and leveraging of critical resources for the benefit of Illinois' residents and our wildlife.

All mapped lands will meet three criteria: 1) natural or restorable to natural condition, 2) permanently protected, and 3) primary purpose as a natural area. Ownership categories include the nonprofit conservation land trusts represented by PSCC, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, Forest Preserve Districts, and others. This web-based spatial resource will encompass 10,000 properties across Illinois. With I-View, future land acquisition and current management can be coordinated across ownership categories for the first time at a landscape ecological scale.

The ICECF grant will provide over half of the funds necessary for PSCC to develop I-View. The I-View team is composed of Angelo Capparella (Associate Professor, Illinois State University), Lisa Haderlein (Executive Director, The Land Conservancy of McHenry County), David Holman (GIS Consultant), and Gretchen Knapp (Adjunct Professor, Illinois State University). GreenInfo Network (www.greeninfo.org) will assemble the data processed by this team into an interactive web-viewer.

Through its Natural Areas Grant Program, the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (www.illinoiscleanenergy.org) helps nonprofit organizations and local government agencies to acquire over 23,000 acres of natural areas and wildlife habitat located throughout the state. It recently provided a limited amount of assistance for the stewardship of some of these sites. The Foundation is impressed that I-View will lead to on-the-ground results by assisting users to identify and protect additional natural lands that serve as important connections among existing natural areas.

Prairie State Conservation Coalition (www.prairiestateconservation.org) is a statewide, nonprofit coalition serving conservation land trusts across Illinois. It works to strengthen the effectiveness of conservation land trusts, land owners and communities in their efforts to protect Illinois' land, water and wildlife resources. Collectively, these organizations have protected more than 200,000 acres of Illinois' open space and natural lands. PSCC and its member organizations also work closely with governmental agencies at all levels towards the common goal of a network of interconnected lands and waters that will protect and enhance the natural areas and wildlife of Illinois. The Illinois Wildlife Action Plan and other statewide initiatives have identified a critical need for a database like I-View.

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