



Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance

Preserving our natural and cultural heritage

July 27, 2019

Governor J.B. Pritzker
Office of the Governor
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Re: Illinois Nature Preserves Commission

Dear Governor Pritzker,

I am writing on behalf of Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance (PDHA). PDHA is dedicated to preserving the natural and cultural heritage of Downers Grove. We have a 25+ year history of supporting and promoting our tree canopy, natural open spaces, and education on the benefits of natural areas and wildlife. Downers Grove is host to Belmont Prairie, a high-quality remnant prairie that is designated as an Illinois Nature Preserve.

We urge you to support a revitalization of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC). The mission of the INPC is to assist private and public landowners in protecting high quality natural areas and habitats of endangered and threatened species. The Commission oversees the preservation of these significant lands and provides leadership in their management and protection. There are 383 preserves in the system, scattered across every region of Illinois.

Stewardship of these preserves is both important and difficult. They host a considerable fraction of Illinois's endangered species, and preserve landscapes and biological communities from Illinois' past. Development, infrastructure projects, invasive species, and climate change pose significant challenges to their continued viability.

Meeting these challenges requires an active agency with the personnel and resources to provide oversight, assistance and guidance to the state, local and private owners. However, as noted in a July 16, 2019 Chicago Sun-Times editorial, the position of director has been vacant for nearly four years. The assistant director position has been vacant even longer. The agency's strategic plan for 2015-2020 has not been finalized, and the agency has suffered declining funding for the last 16 years.

We agree with the Sun-Times that the Governor and Legislature should give the commission the resources it needs to fulfill its intended mission of preserving our irreplaceable natural heritage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ken Lerner, Chairman
Pierce Downer's Heritage Alliance

Ken Lerner,
Chairman

Chris Saricks,
Chairman Pro-tem

Gordon Goodman,
Treasurer

Mark Bragen,
Secretary

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Cc: Wayne Rosenthal, Director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources
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President of the Senate John J. Cullerton
Senator John F. Curran
Representative Jim Durkin
Senator Suzy Glowiak
Representative Gregory Harris
Representative Terra Costa Howard
Senator Kimberly A. Lightford
Speaker Michael J. Madigan
Representative Deanne M. Mazzochi
Representative Anne Stava-Murray