

AN ACT concerning conservation.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Act is amended by changing Section 20 as follows:

(525 ILCS 22/20)

Sec. 20. Establishment of the Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program.

(a) The Department of Natural Resources, subject to appropriation, shall establish and administer a Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program to restore degraded forest lands and native prairies and to promote the growth of native vegetation that removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and helps mitigate the impact of climate change.

(b) Entities that may apply to participate in the Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program include:

(1) State agencies and units of local government, including, but not limited to, municipalities, townships, counties, forest preserves, and park districts;

(2) conservation land trusts;

(3) not-for-profit entities with conservation missions, including, but not limited to, climate change

mitigation, preservation of natural lands, and conservation of the State's natural resources; and

(4) other entities that, because of their missions, are determined by the Department to be eligible recipients of the grants under this Act.

(c) At least 75% of the moneys appropriated for the Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program shall be awarded to the State agencies, units of local government, land trusts, and other entities that the Department determines are eligible for a grant under this Section. The Department may use an amount not to exceed 23% of the moneys appropriated for the Program for the purposes of restoring degraded forest lands and native prairies and to promote the growth of native vegetation that remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and help mitigate the impact of climate change. The Department may use an amount not to exceed 2% of the moneys appropriated for the Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program for administrative costs associated with the Program.

(d) The Department shall adopt any rules necessary for the implementation of this Act, including rules establishing requirements and timeframes for the submission of grant applications by entities that are authorized to apply to participate in the Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program.

(e) Grants provided under this Act may be used by eligible entities for the purpose of:

(1) matching funds for federal or private dollars for projects that forward the goal of climate change mitigation through promotion of the management, planting, maintaining, and preserving of native grasses, plants, and trees;

(2) financing projects along roadways and in parks and forest preserves on public or private lands to plant native trees and prairie grasses demonstrated to absorb carbon;

(3) financing projects that promote the stewardship of existing public and private urban forests and natural lands, including the removal of invasive or nonnative plant species;

(4) funding regional teams tasked with planting native prairie grasses and trees, prescribed burning for the maintenance of natural lands, removing invasive plant species, and educational outreach; ~~and~~

(5) promoting education and marketing regarding local projects or steps community members may take to promote the growth of native vegetation that removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; and -

(6) financing shoreline restoration and protection projects on behalf of counties and park districts.

(Source: P.A. 103-923, eff. 1-1-25.)