



## 103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

### State of Illinois

### 2023 and 2024

### SB2357

Introduced 2/10/2023, by Sen. Rachel Ventura

#### SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

New Act  
20 ILCS 801/1-15  
30 ILCS 105/5.990 new

Creates the Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Act. Provides that the Department of Natural Resources shall prepare and maintain a comprehensive Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant plan for the preservation and enhancement of forests, prairies, and wetlands in Illinois. Provides that the Department of Natural Resources, pursuant to the comprehensive plan and 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 remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and help to mitigate the impact of climate change. Provides that units of local government are eligible to submit a grant proposal in a format and at a time prescribed by the Department of Natural Resources. Provides that grants may be used by units of local government to fund: (1) local projects restoring or expanding forests, wetlands, prairies, or other natural landscapes demonstrated to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere; (2) 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 (3) any other purpose approved by the Department of Natural Resources that advances the State goal that there be no overall net loss of the State's existing forest, prairie, or wetland acres or their functional value due to State-supported activities. Amends the Department of Natural Resources Act and the State Finance Act to make conforming changes.

LRB103 29077 RLC 55463 b

1 AN ACT concerning conservation.

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

4 Section 1. Short title. This Act may be cited as the  
5 Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Act.

6 Section 5. Findings. The General Assembly finds it is in  
7 the interest of the State to encourage natural solutions as  
8 one component of the State's efforts to reduce and remediate  
9 the impacts of climate change. Natural solutions must include  
10 planting native trees and other vegetation demonstrated to  
11 reduce carbon dioxide. To accomplish this, the State must  
12 offer assistance to other units of local government that are  
13 taking steps to fight climate change by restoring forests,  
14 wetlands, prairies, and other landscapes native to Illinois  
15 and demonstrated to have a positive environmental impact.

16 Section 10. State goal. It is the goal of the State that  
17 there be no overall net loss of the State's existing forest,  
18 prairie, or wetland acres or their functional value due to  
19 State-supported activities. Further, the State and units of  
20 local government shall preserve, enhance, and create forests,  
21 prairies, and wetlands where practical in order to mitigate  
22 the impact of climate change and reduce carbon dioxide from

1 the atmosphere.

2 Section 15. Comprehensive plan. The Department of Natural  
3 Resources shall prepare and maintain a comprehensive Healthy  
4 Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant plan for the  
5 preservation and enhancement of forests, prairies, and  
6 wetlands in Illinois.

7 Section 20. Receipt of federal moneys. The Department of  
8 Natural Resources may receive federal moneys to administer a  
9 Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program.

10 Section 25. Establishment of the Healthy Forests,  
11 Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program.

12 (a) The Department of Natural Resources, pursuant to the  
13 comprehensive plan developed according to Section 15 and  
14 subject to appropriation, shall establish and administer a  
15 Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairies Grant Program to  
16 restore degraded forest lands and native prairies, and to  
17 promote the growth of native vegetation that remove carbon  
18 dioxide from the atmosphere and help to mitigate the impact of  
19 climate change.

20 (b) Units of local government are eligible to submit a  
21 grant proposal in a format and at a time prescribed by the  
22 Department of Natural Resources.

23 (c) Grants may be used by units of local government to

1 fund:

2 (1) local projects restoring or expanding forests,  
3 wetlands, prairies, or other natural landscapes  
4 demonstrated to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere;

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

9 (3) any other purpose approved by the Department of  
10 Natural Resources that advances the State goal described  
11 in Section 10 of this Act.

12 Section 30. Healthy, Forests, Wetlands, and Prairie Grant  
13 Fund. The Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairie Grant Fund is  
14 created in the State treasury. The fund shall be administered  
15 by the Department of Natural Resources. The fund may receive  
16 moneys appropriated by the General Assembly, the federal  
17 government, private donations, or from any other legal source.

18 Section 35. Rules. The Department of Natural Resources  
19 shall adopt any rules necessary for the implementation of this  
20 Act.

21 Section 90. The Department of Natural Resources Act is  
22 amended by changing Section 1-15 as follows:

1 (20 ILCS 801/1-15)

2 Sec. 1-15. General powers and duties.

3 (a) It shall be the duty of the Department to investigate  
4 practical problems, implement studies, conduct research and  
5 provide assistance, information and data relating to the  
6 technology and administration of the natural history,  
7 entomology, zoology, and botany of this State; the geology and  
8 natural resources of this State; the water and atmospheric  
9 resources of this State; and the archeological and cultural  
10 history of this State.

11 (b) The Department (i) shall obtain, store, and process  
12 relevant data; recommend technological, administrative, and  
13 legislative changes and developments; cooperate with other  
14 federal, state, and local governmental research agencies,  
15 facilities, or institutes in the selection of projects for  
16 study; cooperate with the Board of Higher Education and with  
17 the public and private colleges and universities in this State  
18 in developing relevant interdisciplinary approaches to  
19 problems; and evaluate curricula at all levels of education  
20 and provide assistance to instructors and (ii) may sponsor an  
21 annual conference of leaders in government, industry, health,  
22 and education to evaluate the state of this State's  
23 environment and natural resources.

24 (c) The Director, in accordance with the Personnel Code,  
25 shall employ such personnel, provide such facilities, and  
26 contract for such outside services as may be necessary to

1 carry out the purposes of the Department. Maximum use shall be  
2 made of existing federal and state agencies, facilities, and  
3 personnel in conducting research under this Act.

4 (c-5) The Department may use the services of, and enter  
5 into necessary agreements with, outside entities for the  
6 purpose of evaluating grant applications and for the purpose  
7 of administering or monitoring compliance with grant  
8 agreements. Contracts under this subsection shall not exceed 2  
9 years in length.

10 (d) In addition to its other powers, the Department has  
11 the following powers:

12 (1) To obtain, store, process, and provide data and  
13 information related to the powers and duties of the  
14 Department under this Act. This subdivision (d)(1) does  
15 not give authority to the Department to require reports  
16 from nongovernmental sources or entities.

17 (2) To cooperate with and support the Illinois Science  
18 and Technology Advisory Committee and the Illinois  
19 Coalition for the purpose of facilitating the effective  
20 operations and activities of such entities. Support may  
21 include, but need not be limited to, providing space for  
22 the operations of the Committee and the Illinois  
23 Coalition.

24 (e) The Department is authorized to make grants to local  
25 not-for-profit organizations for the purposes of development,  
26 maintenance and study of wetland areas, forests, prairies, and

1 other landscapes demonstrated to reduce the impact of climate  
2 change.

3 (f) The Department has the authority to accept, receive  
4 and administer on behalf of the State any gifts, bequests,  
5 donations, income from property rental and endowments. Any  
6 such funds received by the Department shall be deposited into  
7 the Natural Resources Fund, a special fund which is hereby  
8 created in the State treasury, and used for the purposes of  
9 this Act or, when appropriate, for such purposes and under  
10 such restrictions, terms and conditions as are predetermined  
11 by the donor or grantor of such funds or property. Any accrued  
12 interest from money deposited into the Natural Resources Fund  
13 shall be reinvested into the Fund and used in the same manner  
14 as the principal. The Director shall maintain records which  
15 account for and assure that restricted funds or property are  
16 disbursed or used pursuant to the restrictions, terms or  
17 conditions of the donor.

18 (g) The Department shall recognize, preserve, and promote  
19 our special heritage of recreational hunting and trapping by  
20 providing opportunities to hunt and trap in accordance with  
21 the Wildlife Code.

22 (h) Within 5 years after the effective date of this  
23 amendatory Act of the 102nd General Assembly, the Department  
24 shall fly a United States Flag, an Illinois flag, and a POW/MIA  
25 flag at all State parks. Donations may be made by groups and  
26 individuals to the Department's Special Projects Fund for

1 costs related to the implementation of this subsection.

2 (Source: P.A. 102-388, eff. 1-1-22; 102-699, eff. 4-19-22.)

3 Section 95. The State Finance Act is amended by adding  
4 Section 5.990 as follows:

5 (30 ILCS 105/5.990 new)

6 Sec. 5.990. The Healthy Forests, Wetlands, and Prairie  
7 Grant Fund.