



**Agreement for Shared Stewardship  
between  
THE STATE OF ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT  
OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
and the  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOREST SERVICE**



This Agreement for Shared Stewardship is hereby made and entered into by and between the State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, hereinafter referred to as “the Parties.”

## **BACKGROUND**

The Illinois Department of Natural Resource’s mission is to manage, conserve, and protect Illinois’s natural, recreational, and cultural resources, further the public’s understanding and appreciation of those resources, and promote the education, science, and public safety of Illinois’s natural resources for present and future generations.

The mission of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forest Resources is to protect, perpetuate, restore, conserve, and manage the forest and related resources of Illinois, both public and private, rural and urban; and to ensure for future generations the greatest economic, scientific, and social benefits that can only be provided through a forest ecological system.

The United States Department of Agriculture provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on public policy, the best available science, and effective management. The Department of Agriculture has a vision to provide economic opportunity through innovation, helping rural America to thrive; to promote agriculture production that better nourishes Americans while also helping feed others throughout the world; and to manage our Nation’s natural resources through conservation, restored forests, improved watersheds, and healthy private working lands.

The mission of the Forest Service, an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Forest Service manages 193 million acres of National Forest System lands with tribal governments and state and private landowners, and maintains the largest forest research organization in the world. Being a good steward is an essential component of the Agency’s work.

## **I. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Agreement is to establish a framework for the Parties to work collaboratively on accomplishing mutual goals, to further common interests, and effectively respond to the increasing ecological challenges and natural resource concerns in Illinois, whether aquatic, terrestrial, or air.

Through Shared Stewardship, the Parties have an extraordinary opportunity to work together to set landscape-scale priorities, implement projects at the appropriate scale, co-manage risks, share resources, and learn from each other while building long-term capacity. This commitment will support healthier and more resilient forests, while also providing wood products, reducing catastrophic wildfire risks, controlling non-native invasive species, protecting special habitats, and supporting local economies.

The federal, state, and private land managers in the central hardwood forest region of Illinois face a range of urgent challenges, among them catastrophic storms, droughts, flooding, insect and disease outbreaks, invasive species, and increasing use from the public. We recognize that these challenges must be met with proactive measures across all lands including:

- Restoring fire-adapted ecosystems and reducing the risk of wildfire.
- Identifying, managing, restoring, and reducing threats to forest and prairie ecosystems' health.
- Maintaining a sustainable use model to ensure forests meet the present and future demands for natural resources and public recreation.
- Fostering economic development strategies that keep working forests productive.

The Parties will work together using all available authorities and resources to:

- Identify land management priorities and priority natural resource concerns.
- Prevent and/or co-manage ecological health risks and natural catastrophes.
- Protect and enhance water quality and quantity.
- Improve air quality and conserve energy.
- Assist communities and private forest landowners in planning for and reducing wildfire risks.
- Maintain and enhance the economic benefits and values of forests.
- Protect, conserve, restore and enhance wildlife and fish habitat, including rare species and rare communities.
- Understand and address the climate demands of the future.
- Connect people to trees and forests and engage them in environmental stewardship activities.
- Provide and enhance public access.
- Seek out opportunities to connect people and their recreational use of forests with the importance of forest conservation in Illinois.

In consideration of the above, the Parties agree as follows:

## **II. STATEMENT OF MUTUAL BENEFIT AND INTERESTS**

The Parties will collaborate to carry out projects as identified and prioritized under the PURPOSE section. The Parties will take a more integrated approach to prioritizing investments where they will have the greatest impact and will set priorities which address ecological risks across broad landscapes. A collaborative approach that addresses ecological risks across different ownership boundaries and habitat types will have direct and positive effects on land

management practices, rural economies, and the people in Illinois.

### **III. THE PARTIES SHALL**

- A. Collaborate on mutually agreed upon projects and other work in pursuit of the overarching goals of this Agreement for Shared Stewardship, sharing decision space to identify priorities which are consistent with the State Forest Action Plan as well as the State Wildlife Action Plan, NRCS State Technical Committee recommendations, and the Forest Plans for the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and Shawnee National Forest.
- B. Collectively evaluate and examine options for managing ecological risks and natural resource concerns. Realistically prioritize actions in order to focus and direct concerted investments for achieving landscape-scale improvements.
- C. Make reasonable efforts to achieve consistency and avoid conflicts between Federal, state, tribal, and private objectives, plans, policies, and programs; and address and resolve all issues and concerns raised by any partner unless precluded by law.
- D. Encourage the use of applicable state and Federal programs and authorities to carry out actions.
- E. Share, consider, and incorporate state and local expertise and data, including socioeconomic data, in the development and analysis of actions.
- F. Agree upon mechanisms to ensure substantial participation from other state and policy makers. To effectively reach these agencies, organizations, and other partners, the Parties will develop a communication and outreach plan to gauge interest, determine desired levels and methods of engagement, and seek input to prioritization processes.
- G. Create an outcome-based investment strategy that prioritizes shared goals and accomplishes work in partnership.

### **IV. MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE PARTIES**

- A. The Parties are bound by all applicable Federal, state, and local statutes and regulations. If conflicts arise, the Parties will evaluate how authorities can best achieve the goals of a project.
- B. The Parties will protect sacred sites, preserve cultural resources, and take all necessary actions to protect data collected from Native American tribes in accordance with applicable law.
- C. The Parties will communicate on a regular basis to enhance and develop the institutional arrangements necessary to facilitate the purposes of this Agreement for Shared Stewardship.
- D. The Parties will conduct business pertaining to this Agreement for Shared Stewardship by means of in-person meetings, conference calls, or other means. In each calendar year, the Parties will meet at least once in person to evaluate progress on the Agreement for Shared Stewardship.

### **V. AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES**

**The Parties celebrate the long-standing and successful relationship we have built. Through Shared Stewardship the Parties will further advance our collaboration to the benefit of forests**

and the people of Illinois.

In witness whereof, the Parties hereto have executed this Agreement for Shared Stewardship as of the last date written below.

State of Illinois:

Date: 1-5-2021

By:   
Colleen Callahan  
Director, Illinois Department of Natural Resources

United States Department of Agriculture:

Date: Jan 5, 2021

By:   
Victoria Christiansen  
Chief, Forest Service  
United States Department of Agriculture