



Support SJR52 & HJR55 **Capital Funding For Open Space Protection**

iSPACE:

Illinois Special Places Acquisition, Conservation, and Enhancement Program

iSPACE would invest in Illinois' future by protecting natural areas and open spaces for future generations. iSPACE would provide \$100 million annually as part of a bonded multi-year capital program to:

- Allow IDNR to establish new parks and conservation holdings, and to expand existing properties
- Provide matching funding to local open space agencies to help them stretch locally raised dollars to protect more acres and offer more recreational opportunities
- Expand hunting opportunities, helping IDNR meet the goals set by the Hunting Heritage Protection Act
- Provide grants for habitat restoration and other land management needs to maximize the value and function of properties already in public ownership.

THE NEED IS CLEAR

According to the Illinois DNR, there is a current need of \$3 billion to protect places important for our future that are currently unprotected. With only 1% of state owned land protected for future generations, Illinois ranks last in Midwest in acres protected per capita.

The Illinois General Assembly last approved capital funding for land acquisition in 1999, with \$200 million for the Open Land Trust program. The last of these funds were spent in FY 2003.

The Real Estate Transfer Tax does provide a stream of income for the Open Space Land Acquisition and Development Fund (OSLAD) and the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund (NAAF). While OSLAD funds are critical matching funds for local open space agencies, they are not available to the IDNR for state purchases, nor do they provide significant new hunting opportunities. The transfer tax has never provided more than \$10 million for the Natural Areas Acquisition Fund.

THE POSITIVE IMPACTS WILL BE WIDESPREAD

Provide New Recreation Opportunities

New acres, whether city, suburban, or in rural areas, provide new opportunities for Illinoisans of all ages to enjoy a wide variety of outdoor experiences.

Improve Water Quality

Acquiring wetlands, stream and river corridors, and groundwater recharge areas will cleanse our drinking water of harmful pollution, and protect our homes and businesses from flooding. A single acre of protected wetland will store one million gallons of rainwater during a storm.

Enhance Public Health

Active outdoor recreation contributes to a healthy lifestyle for kids and adults alike. Giving young people more access to safe, rewarding outdoor experiences will help address the growing epidemic of child obesity. Natural habitats have also been shown to improve air quality.

Create Jobs and Economic Activity

Fishing, hunting and wildlife-associated recreation generates \$4.2 billion in economic activity in Illinois each year.

THE TIME IS NOW

In recent history, Illinois has only been able to fund major land acquisition initiatives (such as the Open Land Trust initiative and the conservation component of the Build Illinois program) as components of larger capital spending plans. As Illinois looks to fund the other critical infrastructure needs of the state, we need to consider the value of our green infrastructure in protecting us from flooding, improving water quality, generating economic activity, and improving our quality of life.

If we don't provide for conservation land acquisition funding as part of the next capital budget, there will be two consequences. First, many parcels of great value today and for the future will be lost forever to development. Second, the price tag on those that remain will surely increase over time, making delay costly to taxpayers.

The Illinois Special Places Acquisition, Conservation and Enhancement Program (iSPACE) will provide \$100 million annually for conservation programs, including the following:

1. A new statewide land acquisition program to protect the State's most precious natural resources and provide recreational opportunities, including matching grants to local governments.
2. Implementation of Partners for Conservation Program (formerly C2000) through land acquisition and management grants.
3. Implementation of the Hunting Heritage Protection Act by increasing the amount of land acreage available for hunting opportunities in Illinois.

SJR 52 and HJR 55 call for the inclusion of \$100 million for the iSPACE program in any new capital spending plan.