

Wetland Task Force Meeting Agenda - 5.14.2025

8:30 AM - 9:30 AM @ RI City Hall

Wetland Task Force Members and Key Roles

Attended meeting

- Ashley Harris - RI Mayor?
- Mike Thoms?
- Miles Brainard - RI Community Economic Development
- Thomas Flaherty - Assistant to RI City Manager & Economic Development Director
- Todd Thompson - RI City Manager
- Sarah Hayden - RI Community Engagement Manager
- Randy Hurt - RI Second Ward Council Member
- Tanner Osing - Planning & Zoning
- Missy Gasiorowski - General contractor with Hodge construction with the development
- Hannah Alexander - NTI Representative
- Nina Struss - River Health & Resiliency Organizer with Prairie Rivers Network
- Tim Pressly - Land owner
- Jon Duyvejonck - Retired Wildlife Biologist (USFWS), Sierra Club
- Kathy Wine - Executive Director at River Action
- **Special Guest:** Lorraine Foelske - IL DNR

Agenda

A. Presentation & Discussion with Lorraine Foelske - IL DNR Regarding Wetland Protection as an Illinois Land & Water Reserve - All

- a. Questions for Lorraine:
 - i.

B. Notes on IL Land & Water Reserve process from 4.25 meeting:

- a. **Description** - *"Lands and waters of Illinois that support significant natural heritage or archaeological resources qualify for this land protection tool. The agreement to register an area as a Land and Water Reserve determines allowable uses and stipulates management objectives. Registered Reserves may be in public or private ownership. The agreement may be for a term of years or permanent. The property can be sold or passed on to heirs subject to the agreement. Land and waters permanently registered may qualify for reduced tax benefits in the form of a local property tax reduction and possibly a charitable contribution deduction on federal income taxes."*
- b. **Process**
 - i. Meet with Lorriane Foelske (Lead with IDNR here in QC) to discuss the full process and enter into agreement to move forward.
 - ii. A formal commitment from the city (council vote) would be needed for Lorraine to begin work on the LWR application process and management plan.
 - iii. Over the next 12 months, Lorraine would work collaboratively with the Task Force to develop the two documents needed to present to the commission:
 - iv. Proposal Document - Why important, what exists, photos, maps
 - v. Management Plan.
 - vi. Once the Proposal and Management Plan are developed, it would move forward for consideration by the commission at the May 2026 meeting. The plan would be approved for 5 years and then reassessed with the landowner.
 - vii. Once approved by the commission, implementation of the management plan would begin, including drafting terms for a permanent conservation easement.
 - viii. Signs that show the boundaries
 - ix. Recreation, education that is permitted
 - x. Fees (before proposed to the commission): surveys, state picks it up but if landowner can pay it is easier. Hire and state can reimburse?

1. Title search fee? - covered by the state

c. Considerations

- i. *LWR is not quite the level of legal protection as a nature preserve but uses are more flexible. Potential uses could include: Hunting, Hydraulic restoration/alteration, seed collection, hiking, trail maintenance/creation, species research, birding, food plot maintenance and establishment.*
- ii. *Aside from collaboration with the TF, the management plan and easement would be taken care of by IDNR.*
- iii. *Initial fees would include surveys - state can pick up this fee, but it is an easier process if the landowner can pay. Potential for reimbursement from the state. There may be a title search fee that would be covered by the state.*
- iv. *Long term management of the site would vary depending on the needs. More funding = more involvement. The state does provide stewardship through staff work days like species surveys, burns, removals, etc.*
- v. *Internal grants may be available for small projects on an annual basis - would work with a contractor and is funded through the state.*
- vi. *Recommended the City of RI dedicate some sort of recurring money, no matter how small, to have reliable funding in case there is a shortage at the state level. (trails, infrastructure, maintenance...)*

C. Public Engagement & TF Discussion - Nina

- a. Periodic updates from TF members at study sessions or council meetings?
 - i. Suggest first update at next meeting on May 19th
- b. Public Meetings Act & social media considerations

D. Next Steps - All

- a. Legal counsel - thoughts to move forward?
- b. Touch base with USACE real estate re: Mill Creek drainage
- c. Meeting with Alan Branhagen, Natural Land Institute - Executive Director on **Thursday, May 22nd at 8:30 AM**. to discuss conservation easement process with land trust.
- d. Next TF meeting on **Wednesday, May 28th at 8:30 AM**.