



# FACT SHEET

## Update Grant Applications Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation & Arlington Wetland Acquisition Madison County Planning & Development

### Background

As an integral part of our ongoing efforts to attract new funding to assist in acquiring land associated with the East St. Louis & Vicinity, Illinois, Ecological Restoration and Flood Damage Reduction Project, we have applied for and received approval for two grant awards, as well as securing an additional partner, that will assist the county in protecting approximately 70 acres at the intersection of Horseshoe Lake Road and Arlington Drive.

The **Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation** is a private foundation, located in Chicago, which directs a portion of its funds to the protection of natural areas. As this site is a remnant meander of the Mississippi River, the Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation and Development, Inc. prepared a letter of inquiry on behalf of the county to acquisition. A full proposal was requested by the foundation and submitted in March, followed by a site visit on March 25. On April 29<sup>th</sup> the foundation awarded the county **\$283,000** to be used towards this acquisition.

The Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation and Development, Inc. prepared an additional application, on behalf of the county, to the **North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA)**, a program of the **US Fish & Wildlife Service**. In March this agency awarded the county **\$75,000** to be used towards this acquisition.

On April 15 the **Collinsville Area Recreation District (CARD)** authorized **\$125,000** to be utilized towards this acquisition. CARD envisions developing wetland interpretive programming at the site in the future.

### Project Budget:

Expense	ICECF	NAWCA	Mad. Co.	CARD	Total
Status	(Confirmed)	(Confirmed)	(Confirmed)	(Confirmed)	
Acquisition; 63 acres @ \$5,000/Acre	\$243,750	\$71,250			\$315,000
Acquisition; 7.5 acres @ \$17,500/Acre	\$11,250			\$120,000	\$131,250
Survey	\$15,000		\$5,000		\$20,000
Title			\$3,000		\$3,000
Legal			\$10,000		\$10,000
Environmental Assessment	\$8,000		\$7,000		\$15,000
Conservation Easement	\$5,000			\$5,000	\$10,000
Closing			\$5,000		\$5,000
Administration		\$3,750			\$3,750
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$283,000</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>	<b>\$30,000</b>	<b>\$125,000</b>	<b>\$513,000</b>

The Southwestern Illinois Resource Conservation and Development, Inc. is currently negotiating an option agreement with the landowner and anticipates a closing in fall 2008.

## **Background Information**

This site, located within the American Bottom ecosystem, is a remnant channel of the Mississippi River and is uniquely sited immediately adjacent to an ongoing habitat restoration initiative, the “East St. Louis & Vicinity Ecological Restoration and Flood Damage Reduction Project”. It’s proximity to Horseshoe Lake State Park, the Chouteau Island complex, as well as other wetland mitigation sites ensures that this project will be a benefit to local and migratory wildlife, and will also be consistent with the implementation of the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan (Lower Mississippi River Bottomlands Natural Division).

## **The American Bottom Ecosystem**

The proposed acquisition site is located within the American Bottom ecosystem, which lies immediately south of the confluences of the Illinois and Missouri Rivers with the Mississippi River. Changes in the Mississippi’s channels during the Wisconsin (late Pliocene) and Holocene period left undulating sand ridges, sweeping natural levees, and rich alluvial scars, pocked with abandoned channels, swamps, sloughs and wetlands within the American Bottom. Public Land survey data indicates that rivers, wetlands, swamps, lakes and soughs once covered on order of about 35% of this ecosystem.<sup>1</sup>

Much of the physical changes to the ecosystem’s landscape occurred during the last 150 to 175 years. By the 1850s, the fertility of the land led settlers to begin digging ditches, tiling fields and building levees to drain what had previously been an extensive network of wetlands, swamps and sloughs. Drainage control systems and sedimentation have significantly reduced the open water/wetland habitat remaining within the region. Small pockets of the original landscape can still be located; however the consumptive rate is still larger than the protective and or restoration rate.<sup>2</sup>

## **A Piece of a Larger Puzzle**

The proposed acquisition site, while within a rapidly urbanizing area, is uniquely located within a proposed ecological restoration corridor. The US Army Corps of Engineers has developed a plan, the East St. Louis & Vicinity Ecological Restoration and Flood Damage Reduction Project<sup>3</sup>, which outlines a number of ecological restoration opportunities within the Metro East. This site is located immediately adjacent to the historic Brushy Lake component of this plan, which will recreate the historic stream channel and vegetative types. This site is increasingly important to the completion of this component as one of the primary identified parcels has recently been lost to commercial development.

Components of the Brushy Lake corridor have already been protected and restored, including lands owned and managed by Madison County, Metro East Sanitary District and the Illinois Department of Transportation. The site is also just east of the existing Horseshoe Lake State Park.

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1 Illinois State Museum; Environmental Diversity of the American Bottom, 2001

2 Southwestern Illinois RC&D, Inc.; American Bottom Ecosystem Partnership Issues and Opportunities Report, 2001-2002

3 US Army Corps of Engineers; East St. Louis and Vicinity, Illinois Ecological Restoration and Flood Damage Reduction Project, (2003)

While historic flood pulses of the Mississippi River are now longer possible for the site, two prominent canals, Cahokia and Schoolhouse, merge adjacent to the site and it is very possible that regular pulses of water could be directed to the site.

### **Ecological Importance**

The location of this project is significant in terms of migration due to its proximity to the confluence of the Missouri, Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. In this rapidly urbanizing setting, remaining wetlands have exceptional value, and all waterfowl species characteristic to the Mississippi Flyway have the potential to utilize this wetland during migration.

The location of this project in the American Bottom also attracts a wide variety of non-game and migratory birds. The diversity of wetland types within this project site will benefit multiple species, including providing critical habitat for several state-listed waterbirds. Forested and shrubby portions of this site will provide migratory and breeding habitat for willow flycatcher, prothonotary warbler and American woodcock. The emergent and herbaceous wetland vegetation will provide feeding and roosting habitat for the migratory rusty blackbird. This same vegetation will be suitable for migrating marsh and sedge wrens. In addition, American bittern, king rail and common moorhen will utilize the vegetated shallow water areas in migration. Common moorhen are known to breed in the area. Shorebirds that have been documented using wetlands within a mile of this project location and will likely find migratory stopover habitat here, when suitable, include the stilt sandpiper, buff-breasted sandpiper, white-rumped sandpiper and greater yellowlegs.

Several wetland-dependent Illinois threatened and endangered species of birds known from a 5-10 mile radius of this project location could find both critical breeding and foraging habitat and or migratory habitat. Open herbaceous and emergent wetland vegetation in association with shallow water at this project could be used as nesting habitat for least bittern and common moorhen that use similar habitat within one mile. The breeding population of snowy egret in this area is the only known one in Illinois. This project would secure important foraging habitat for this species.

The federal candidate and state endangered eastern massasauga rattlesnake is known from within one mile immediately north of this project location. Population attrition and habitat degradation may have resulted in it's extirpation at this site. Individuals were observed in the last ten years but none were found in spring 2007 surveys. Habitat within this project site would be considered suitable for the massasauga. Select species in greatest need of conservation identified in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan not mentioned above that would directly benefit from this project would be the pied-billed grebe, great egret, brown thrasher, chimney swift and muskrat.

### **Partners**

Madison County Planning and Development Dept. has an active array of programs for which the County is applying for funding to supplement various environmental restoration programs and management projects. In November, Madison County made application to the North American Wetlands Conservation Act for matching funds to assist in the acquisition of this parcel. Once acquired, the county will use the acquisition as match (35%) with the US Army Corps of Engineers (65%) to restore the historic natural conditions of the Brushy Lake corridor at the site.

Southwestern Illinois RC&D, Inc. (The Land Conservancy) will assist with the acquisition of this parcel, and will ultimately hold the conservation easement (required by NAWCA) on the property. The Land Conservancy currently holds two additional easements for property that Madison County has acquired for use in ecological restoration