

City of Chicago Releases Nature & Wildlife Plan for 2011-2016

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The City of Chicago recently released the [“Chicago Nature & Wildlife Plan Update: A Strategy to Enhance Urban Ecosystems 2011-2016.”](#) This plan updates the original 2006 plan to “continue Chicago’s commitment to expand and improve our important urban natural areas.” It also reviews progress since the original plan, considers new issues and emerging information, and sets priorities for the next five years. Those new issues include the impacts of climate change, the role of green infrastructure, and the need for applied urban ecological research. The updated plan sets four goals and objectives for the city in the next five years:

(1) Protecting remaining natural areas in the city and creating new ones to expand the green infrastructure network. Priority actions include–

–Acquiring or protecting additional unprotected natural areas in the city, especially along the riverfront,

–Working with land managers to set targets and identify priority land for acquisition, protection, and natural area expansion, and

–Creating new programs to work with large land owners to enhance the quality of their natural lands.

(2) Managing existing natural areas, which is imperative for sustaining and improving the quality and usefulness of natural areas to native plants and animals and city residents. Priority actions include–

–Publishing management plans for all natural areas for public participation and engagement,

–Establishing a climate-ready checklist for restoration projects to ensure today’s efforts will be sustained in the face of climate change,

–Supporting long-term options for hydrologic separation of the Chicago River that support fish habitat and biodiversity, and

–Using the city’s built infrastructure to improve biodiversity where possible and encourage architects to create designs that are safe for birds and other wildlife.

(3) Fostering stewardship to engage residents in a deeper appreciation and stronger stewardship of our natural areas will ensure the long-term survival of natural areas and increase the quality of life for all Chicagoans. Priority actions include–

–Initiating a “Backyard Biodiversity” outreach campaign that engages large property owners and homeowners to protect and expand wildlife habitat on private land,

–Exploring innovative ways to inspire new connections with nature for the public, and

–Increasing awareness of and opportunities for ecotourism in Chicago.

(4) Monitoring the effects of management and conducting applied ecological research will ensure that restoration efforts are done well and will utilize resources more effectively.

Priority actions include–

–Support professional consistent, ongoing monitoring, and link with citizen science,

–Assessing and improving the ecoliteracy of Chicago residents on urban ecosystems, and

–Creating new integrated approaches to human-wildlife conflicts.

Stay tuned to the [Illinois Environmental Law Blog](#) for more news and developments. To set up a free initial consultation to discuss your legal matter, please contact Chicago environmental attorney [Dave Scriven-Young](#) at (312) 239-9722 or dscriven-young@pecklaw.com.