

Dear We will personalize each letter and target them to key legislators.

RE: SB3462 Illinois Partners for Nutrient Loss Reduction Act

The undersigned groups ask for your support and co-sponsorship of SB3462-- The Illinois Partners for Nutrient Loss Reduction Act. This bill will set up the framework for the existing Partners for Conservation Fund to also serve as a vehicle for implementation of the Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy (Strategy) and will extend the fund's existence beyond Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) to FY26. The bill lays out increasing funding goals for the fund over the next five years which the General Assembly will determine on a yearly basis during the appropriations process. **We are asking you to pass the bill now during this year's Veto Session in order to have the framework already set up for FY22.**

What does the Illinois Partners for Nutrient Loss Reduction Act Do?

Many of the existing purposes of the Partners for Conservation Fund¹ focus on caring for Illinois' farmland and conservation lands in a manner that will improve soil health and protect our waterways from pollution. SB3462 simply adds as a purpose:

"to implement the State's Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy, including, but not limited to, funding the resources needed to support the Strategy's Policy Working Group, cover water quality monitoring in support of Strategy implementation, prepare a biennial report on the progress made on the Strategy every 2 years, and provide cost share funding for nutrient capture projects."

The bill will also extend the fund beyond FY21 through FY26. Bill language also includes the funding levels that the Departments of Agriculture (DOA) and Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Illinois EPA all agree are needed to meet the fund's existing purposes and its new purpose to implement the Strategy.

Why is this update to the Partners for Conservation Fund Needed?

As the current law stands, appropriations to the fund end in FY21. Future funding is needed to continue to support vital programs that foster sustainable agricultural practices such as the

¹ **What is the Partners for Conservation Program?**

The Partners for Conservation Program is a long-term, state-supported initiative to protect natural resources and enhance outdoor recreational opportunities in Illinois. (Source: Sustainable Agriculture: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/Resources/Conservation/Pages/default.aspx>)

Landmark legislation was passed (without a dissenting vote) by the General Assembly in 1995 initiating Conservation 2000, (C2000) a comprehensive, six year, \$100 million initiative, designed to take a holistic, long-term approach to protecting and managing Illinois' natural resources. With overwhelmingly positive support for the program, in 1999, House Bill 1746 was signed into law in August of 1999 extending the C2000 Program until the year 2009.

In 2008, House Bill 1780 was signed into law as Public Act 95-0139, extending the program to 2021 as Partners for Conservation. The Partners for Conservation Program funds programs at IDNR, Illinois Department of Agriculture, and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency. (Source: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/conservation/pfc/pages/default.aspx>)

Illinois Conservation Reserve Enhancement program (CREP)² managed by IDNR and support of Illinois' soil and water conservation districts that are the front line delivery system **for both state and federal conservation programs and funding** to all 102 Illinois counties.³

Extension of the fund with consistent yearly appropriations over the next six years is also needed if Illinois is to meet the 2025 targets set in the Strategy to reduce phosphorus losses to our waterways by 25% and nitrate by 15%. The wastewater sector is on track to meet those targets, having already reduced phosphorus in their discharges by 24% and nitrate by 10%. The agricultural sector is also committed to reducing nutrient losses from farmland but are in need of the technical assistance and cost-share funding which the Partners for Conservation Fund provides. Recommended funding levels and distribution of funds for FY21-26 as laid out in SB3462 Amendment 1 are presented in Table 1 with further explanation provided in the notes below the table.

Fiscal Year	IEPA ^a Strategy Adm	IEPA ^b USGS Super Gages	DOA ^c SWCD Staff	DOA ^d SWCD Cost-Share & Health Insurance	DOA ^e Technical Assistance	DOA ^f Cover Crop Premium Discount Program	IDNR ^g (CREP etc)	IDNR ^h Nutrient Capture Practices on State of IL Ag Leased Acres	TOTAL
2021	\$530,000	\$545,000	\$5,500,000	\$3,900,000	\$ 60,000	\$ 600,000	\$6,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$18,135,000
2022	\$530,000	\$545,000	\$6,000,000	\$4,500,000	\$125,000	\$1,200,000	\$6,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$19,900,000
2023	\$530,000	\$545,000	\$7,000,000	\$6,000,000	\$150,000	\$1,800,000	\$6,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$23,025,000
2024	\$530,000	\$545,000	\$8,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$190,000	\$2,400,000	\$6,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$25,665,000
2025	\$530,000	\$545,000	\$8,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$205,000	\$2,400,000	\$6,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$25,680,000
2026	\$530,000	\$545,000	\$8,000,000	\$7,000,000	\$220,000	\$2,400,000	\$6,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$25,695,000

Table 1. Proposed 2021-2026 funding levels for and distribution of funds from the Partners for Conservation Fund.

Table Notes

a- Illinois EPA has fully supported the development of the Strategy and administration of its implementation since 2013. The agency needs funding to continue its contract with Illinois Extension to provide facilitation for the Strategy's many working groups and to prepare the biannual progress reports on Strategy implementation.

² Read more about how the CREP program contributes to the Strategy's nutrient reduction goals at <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/conservation/CREP/Pages/NLRS.aspx>

³ Read more about SWCDs' role at <http://www.aiswcd.org/about-aiswcd/swcds/>

b- Illinois EPA also requires funding to continue the state's Supergage Monitoring Network run by the United States Geological Survey. This network, which IEPA has fully funded for the past 5 years, is the most comprehensive effort by any state to track its nutrient pollution.

c-d-e- If funding is increased year after year as proposed in the bill, the Illinois Department of Agriculture will be able to provide increased assistance to Illinois farmers to reduce nutrient losses from their fields, through increasing support for the state's 97 soil and water conservation districts, which provide local technical assistance to farmers and increasing resources for DOA itself to provide more technical assistance.

f- In addition, Partners for Conservation funds will also be used to ramp up and sustain DOA's Cover Crop Premium Discount Program through FY26.

g- IDNR will use its funding as a state-match to enhance the federal CREP program that helps Illinois landowners implement conservation practices that reduce sediment and nutrient runoff.

h- IDNR will also use funds to implement nutrient capture practices on State of Illinois ag-leased acres.

The attached [factsheet](#) provides additional information on Illinois efforts to address the nutrient pollution problem in our rivers, lakes and streams. Illinois is nationally known for the outstanding partnership our state has forged in which stakeholders from the wastewater, urban, agricultural and environmental sectors are all working together to implement the Illinois Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy. However, Illinois is lagging behind other Midwestern states in statewide investment in programs **and the staffing infrastructure needed to tackle** nutrient pollution. SB3462 reinvigorates the Partners for Conservation Fund with new purpose and funding targets to provide a framework for Illinois to ramp up its investment in clean water over the next six years in order to better equip our state agencies to help farmers and other stakeholders to meet the Strategy's 2025 Targets. **We ask again for your support and co-sponsorship of this important legislation.** Please reach out to any of us with your questions.

Sincerely,

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Additional organizations in this format

Name, Title
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NOTES

Other Orgs asked AISWCD PRN ISA AFT IWL TWI TNC NLI NREC ILLICA

Factsheet to include (updated with more logos): IWL wants to be added.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GQQX69AXnvFaBAn2KjpSnyl5rMjhFBF1/view?usp=sharing>

Amendment with agreed language

<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/fulltext.asp?DocName=10100SB3462sam001&GA=101&SessionId=108&DocTypeId=SB&LegID=125214&DocNum=3462&GAID=15&SpecSess=&Session=>