

# Chicago Wilderness



Protecting Biodiversity in a Large Urban Area  
Through Partnerships

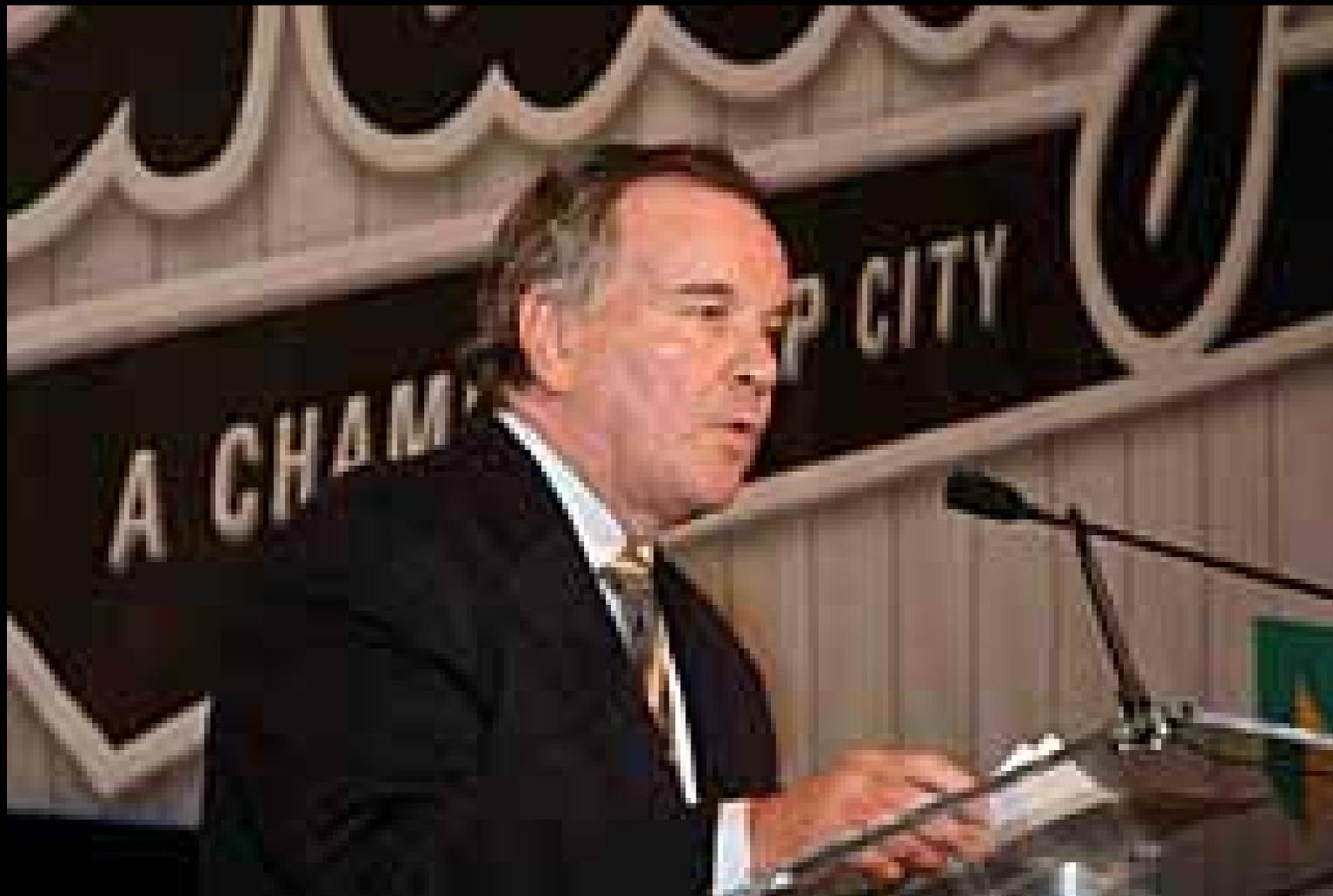
**Laurel Ross**

**Urban Conservation Director, Field Museum  
Chicago Wilderness, Steering Committee**

**Mike Prouty**

**Northeastern Area, USDA FS  
State and Private Forestry**

Imagine...





# Overview of this talk

- Why Chicago Wilderness Formed
- Who makes up the Consortium?
- Forest Service Involvement
- Six Roles of the Consortium
- Measuring Results
- Exporting the Model
- Questions and Answers



# Chicago





Chicago Wilderness

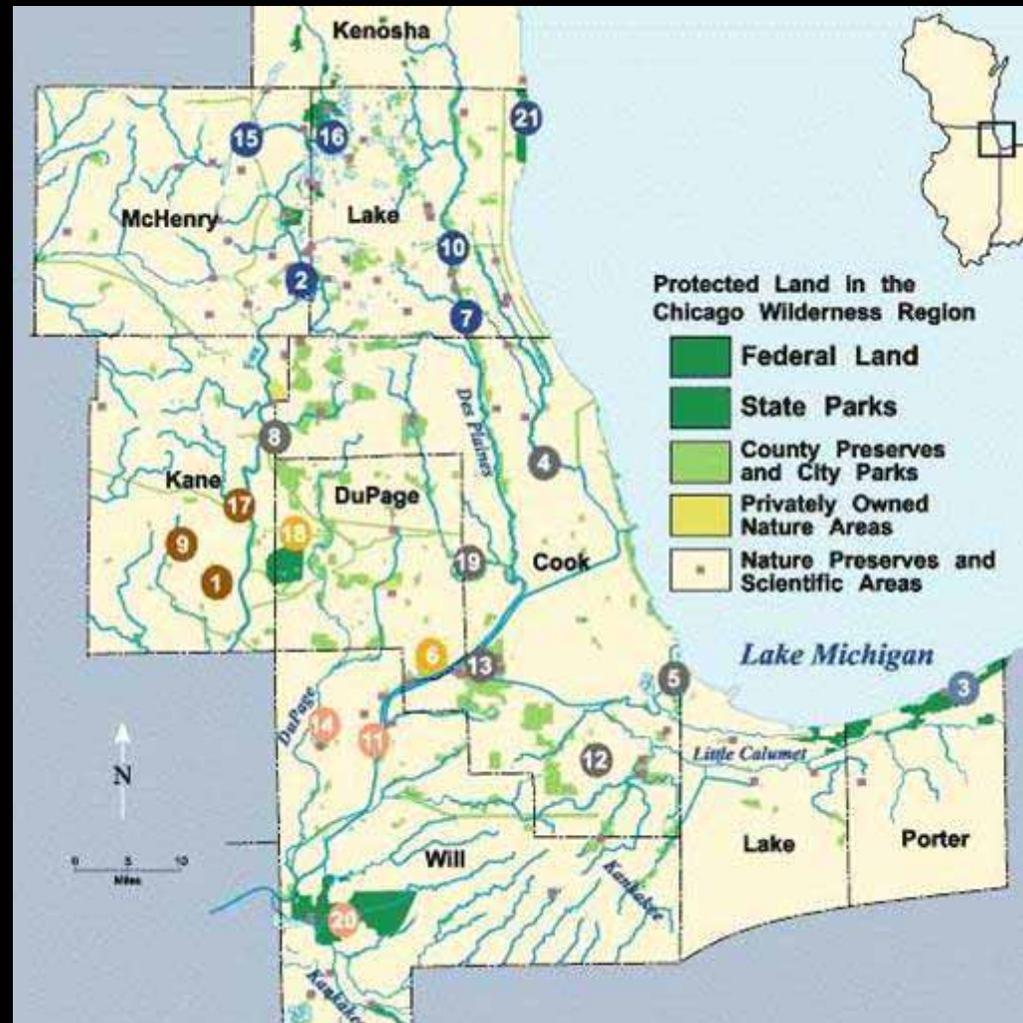
The biodiversity of the Chicago region is important both globally and locally.

Over 300,000 acres are now protected as conservation land.

The region also holds nine million people—a rich and diverse human resource.

# Distribution of public conservation land

- County Forest Preserve Districts
- Municipalities & Park Districts
- Federal land
- State Depts.  
of Natural Resources
- NGOs



# MAJOR THREATS

- Habitat fragmentation
- Land use history
- Invasive species
- Fire deprivation
- Incompatible land development
- Limited public understanding

The nature of these threats calls for a regional approach:  
**Chicago Wilderness**



- A **consortium** to protect, restore, and manage natural ecosystems
- **203\*** organizations with common goals



- Founded in **1995** by 34 groups
- A **model** for urban conservation
- Initial funding: **USDA Forest Service**

# Chicago Wilderness



- **Membership includes**
  - Landowners and land managers
  - Local, state and federal governments
  - Research and education institutions
  - Conservation NGOs
  - A growing number of municipalities
  - Corporate Council
- **Organized through a Memorandum of Understanding**

# The Vision

Residents and decision-makers understand the significance of local biodiversity and support its conservation

Natural communities of the Chicago region are protected and restored to long-term viability

Residents exist in a sustainable relationship with nature and enjoy an enhanced quality of life

Chicago region contributes to the preservation of global biodiversity





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CHICAGO WILDERNESS™

*A Regional Nature Reserve*



Photo by the McHenry County Conservation District



# Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

## *Volunteers*



# The Chicago Wilderness Science Research Agendas



## Developing A Scientific Research Agenda for Chicago Wilderness

Project Managed by:  
Liam Heneghan, Christopher Mulwaney and Lauren Umek

Text Written by:  
Liam Heneghan



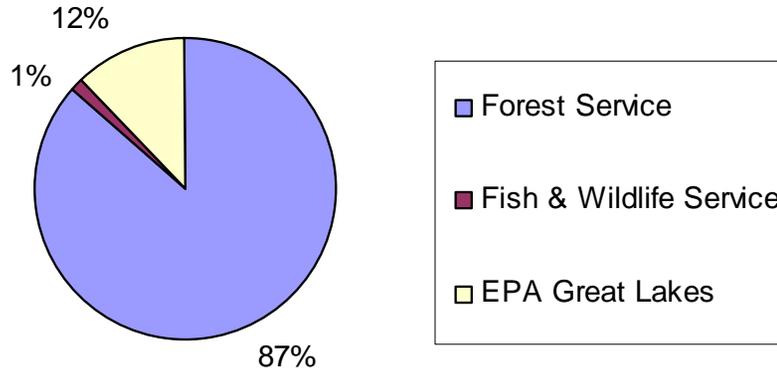
- Natural Science
- Social Science

# Support for Chicago Wilderness

- USDA Forest Service
- USDI Fish and Wildlife Service
- Illinois DNR
- CW Corporate Council
- Local Foundations
- Member organizations
- Individuals

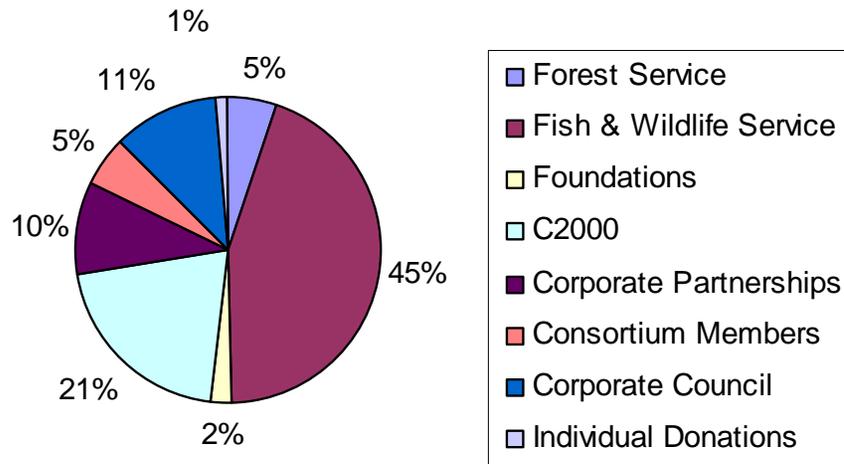


## Chicago Wilderness Funds FY96



# Chicago Wilderness Funding History

## Chicago Wilderness Funds FY06



# Roles of the consortium

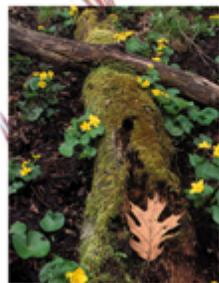
1. Develop **common goals and principles** to help guide the work of member organizations
2. Catalyze **new work** and initiatives
3. Increase **partnering**
4. Share **lessons** learned
5. Develop and disseminate **tools**
6. Increase **public involvement** in local conservation



## 1- Develop Common goals

# Biodiversity Recovery Plan 1999

## Biodiversity RECOVERY PLAN



- “Road map” for conservation
- Threats analysis
- Recovery goals for species, communities, landscapes
- Priority conservation actions
- Communication strategies

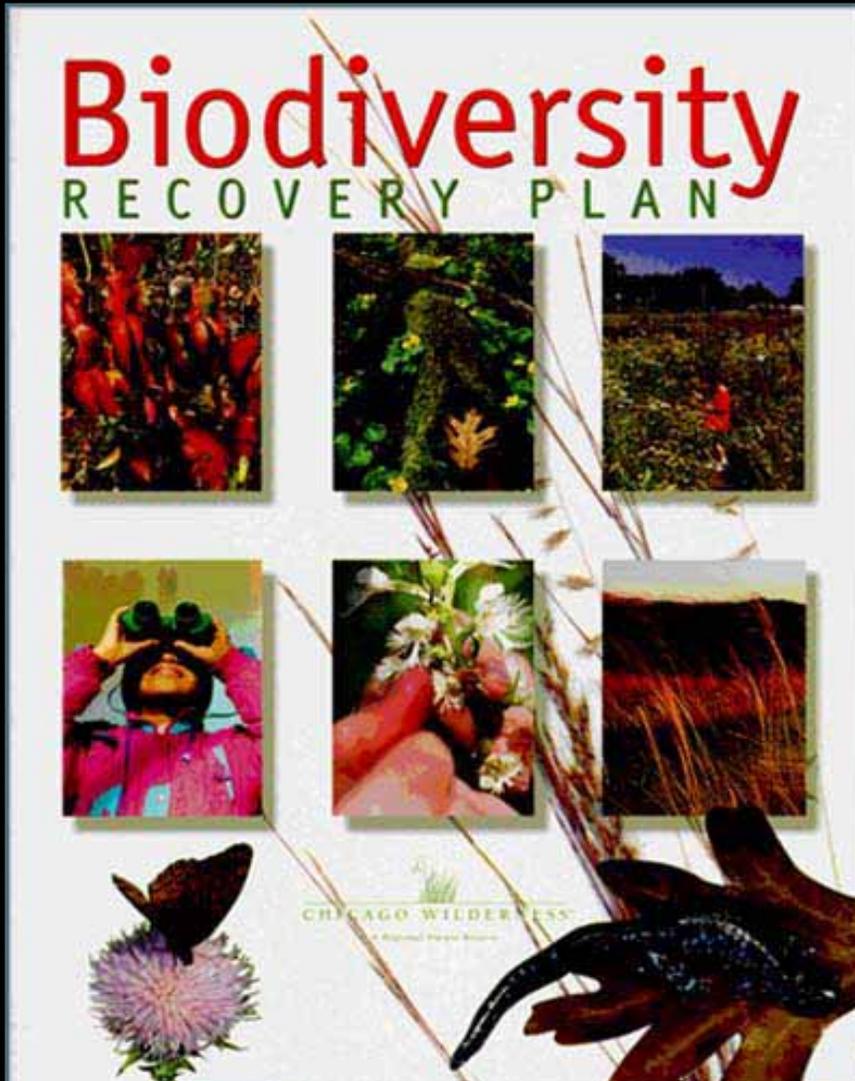


CHICAGO WILDERNESS™  
A Regional Nature Reserve



## 2- Catalyze New Work

# 1999 - 2007 Implementation



- Wetlands & Streams component
- Lake Michigan component
- Burn task force
- Invasive species task force
- CW boundaries expanded
- Grassroots team
- Research agendas
- Sustainability tools
- Education and outreach
- Public involvement expansion

## 2- Catalyze New Work: Burn Task Force

### CW Midwest Ecological Prescription Burn Crew Training

- Two-day training
- Since 2002, over 400 individuals trained
- Messages created for the public

#### MIDWEST ECOLOGICAL PRESCRIPTION BURN CREW MEMBER TRAINING MANUAL



#### PARTNERS

CHICAGO WILDERNESS  
FOUNDED CHICAGO AREA

FOREST SERVICE  
DISTRICT OF COOK COUNTY

FOREST SERVICE  
DISTRICT OF MARSHFIELD

FOREST SERVICE  
DISTRICT OF SANGAMON

FOREST SERVICE  
DISTRICT OF TARRANT

FOREST SERVICE  
DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON



## Communicating Biodiversity

The Chicago Wilderness  
Workbook for Volunteers

learn connect contribute inspire



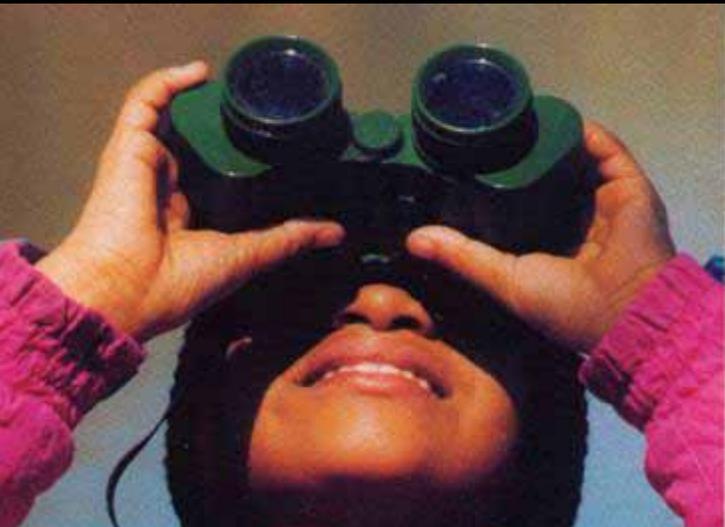


# Mighty Acorns



3- Increase partnering

Youth stewardship: 8000 children annually and 23 partner agencies



## 4- Share lessons

# CW JOURNAL

BEST PRACTICES IN  
CONSERVATION AND  
RESTORATION

Volume 1 • Number 1  
November, 2003



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The lands stretching south and west from the shores of Lake Michigan hold one of North America's great metropolises. Nearly eight million people live in northwestern Indiana, northeastern Illinois and southeastern Wisconsin. Living among them, on islands of green, are thousands of species of native plants and animals, species that make up some of the rarest natural communities on earth. We call these communities, and the lands and waters that are their homes, **Chicago Wilderness**.

The **Chicago Wilderness coalition** is an alliance of more than 130 public and private organizations working together to study, restore, protect and manage the natural ecosystems of the Chicago region for the benefit of the public.

[The Chicago Wilderness Coalition](#)

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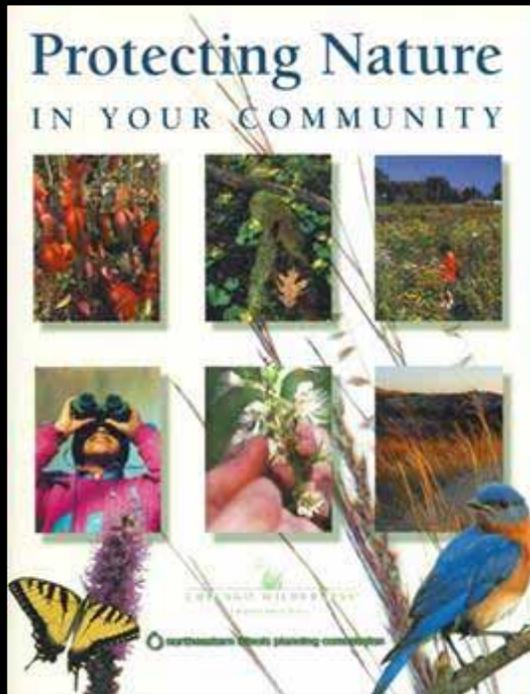
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# Internal communication

# 5- Develop and disseminate tools

## Sustainability Guide for Municipalities Conservation Design: Model Ordinance Cost/benefit analysis Natural Landscaping Guide



**conservation design resource manual**  
Language and Guidelines for Updating Local Ordinances

A planning tool from the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission and Chicago Wilderness

March 2003

**northeastern illinois planning commission**

**CHICAGO WILDERNESS**  
A Regional Nature Network

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES FOR PROTECTING NATURE**  
[IN THE CHICAGO WILDERNESS REGION]

The following principles provide guidance to local government and developers on the planning and design of new development and redevelopment projects, to protect and enhance nature as an integral part of the development process. The principles are largely based on the natural resource aspects of sustainable development—land reuse, habitat, and water—and recognize that having healthy natural communities also creates economic and social benefits.

Each land development project offers a unique set of opportunities and constraints. It is important for a single set of regulations or guidelines to anticipate every circumstance. It is also a challenge to implement every sustainability principle in every development project. However, it is recommended that all of the principles be considered and applied to the greatest extent possible by planners, developers, engineers, planners and designers in each development proposal and project. The aim of the planning and design process is to follow it through the entire life-cycle of the project to ensure a network of the environment for the benefit of current communities and future generations.

Local regulations can provide developers with the design flexibility needed to protect natural areas and still achieve the prevailing overall intent of development. Government involvement can help develop systems and planning using more sustainable development techniques. Conservation development—development that protects natural resources through techniques such as clustering structures on a site—can protect nature while allowing for expansion and functional community development. Encouraging conservation development techniques are growing in recognition because they promote economic, cultural, property values, and reduce infrastructure costs. Conservation development helps preserve communities, reduce urban sprawl, improve air quality, and provide the quality of life that communities need to thrive. The principles in this document are a compilation of conservation development techniques that can be applied to those situations in conservation development.

Preparation of this document, design, layout, printing, all design and construction-related to assist the public in understanding that design and application. The design and construction of the Chicago Wilderness project, a partnership between the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois, is the result of the design and construction of the Chicago Wilderness project, a partnership between the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois.

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**SOURCEBOOK ON NATURAL LANDSCAPING FOR LOCAL OFFICIALS**

Updated and third printing August 2004

prepared by **northeastern illinois planning commission**

## 5- Develop and disseminate tools

# Sustainable Watershed Action Team: SWAT



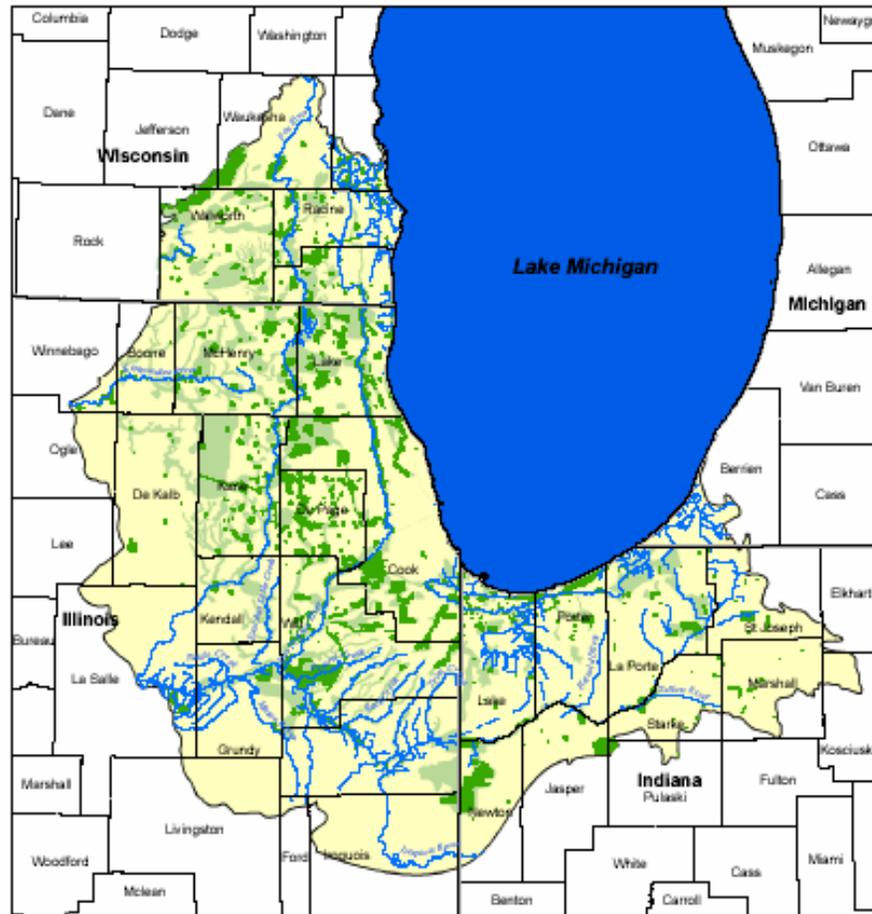
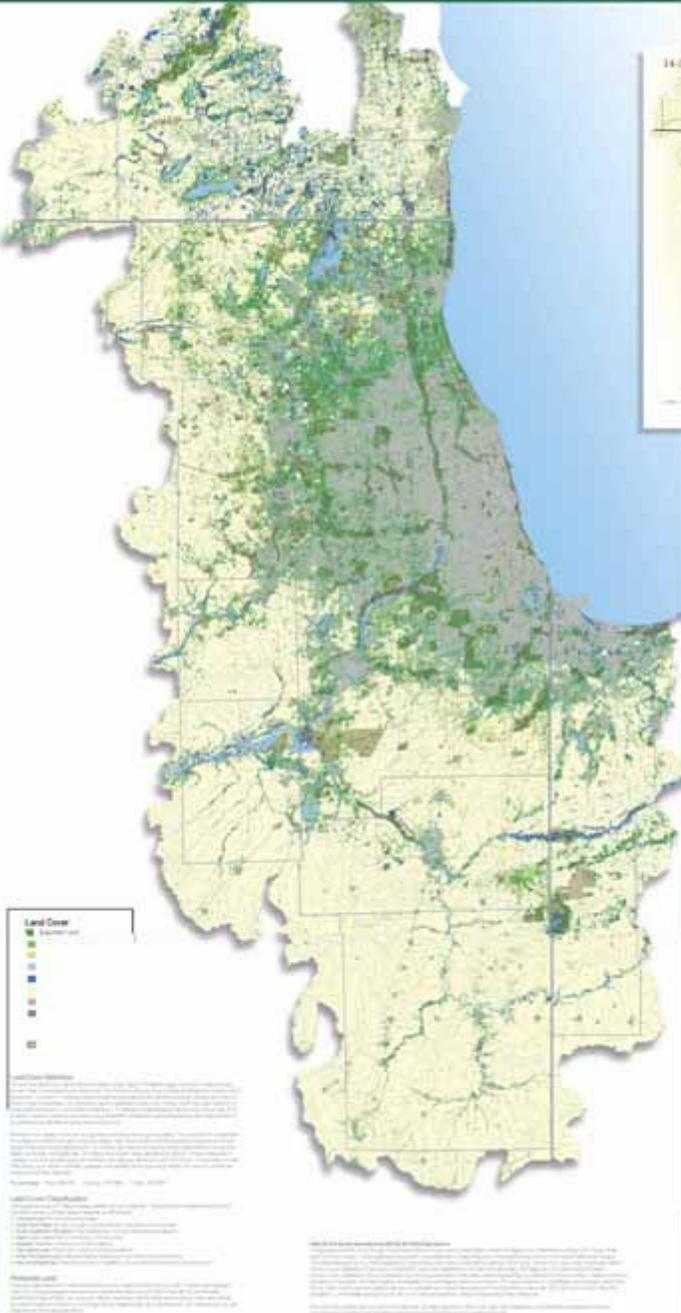
- CW Team available to provide technical expertise to developers in planning conservation-friendly developments.



- Experts in conservation design, storm water management, and native landscaping.

# 5- Develop and disseminate tools

- Green Infrastructure Vision
- Regional scale opportunities for protection



### Legend

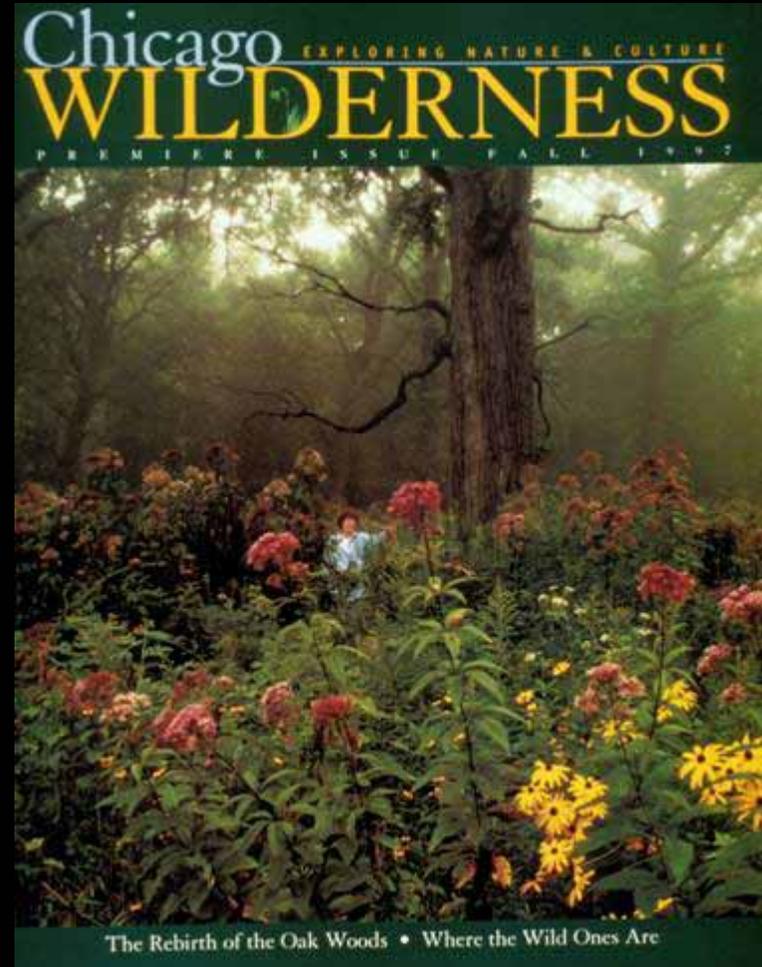
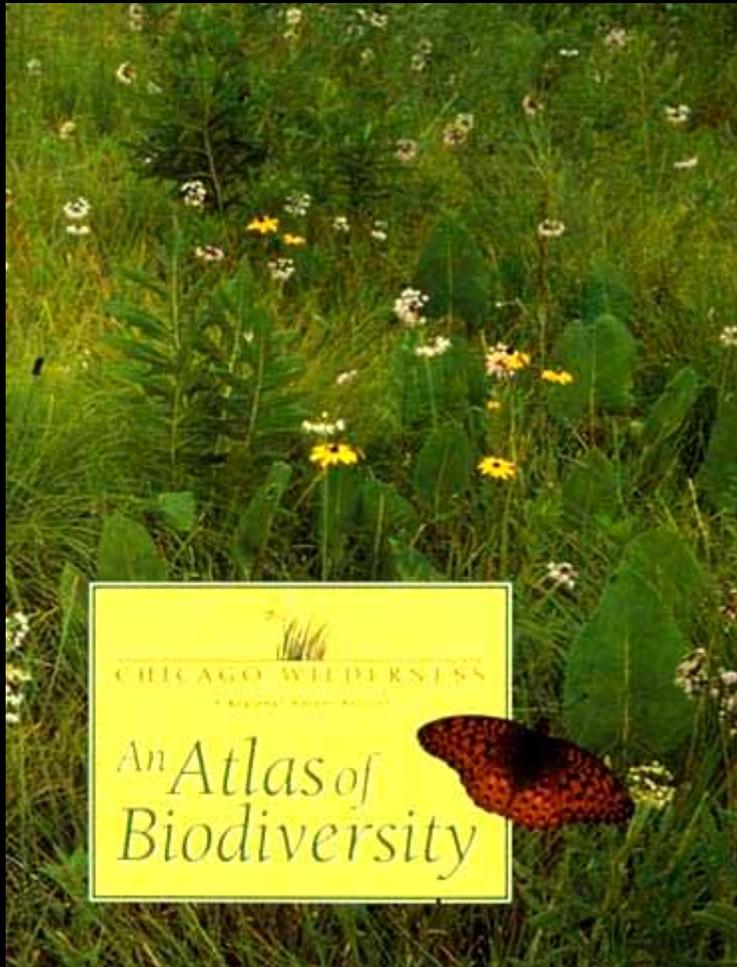
- Chicago Wilderness Region
- Public Open Space
- Recommended Resource
- Major Rivers
- Counties
- States
- Lake Michigan



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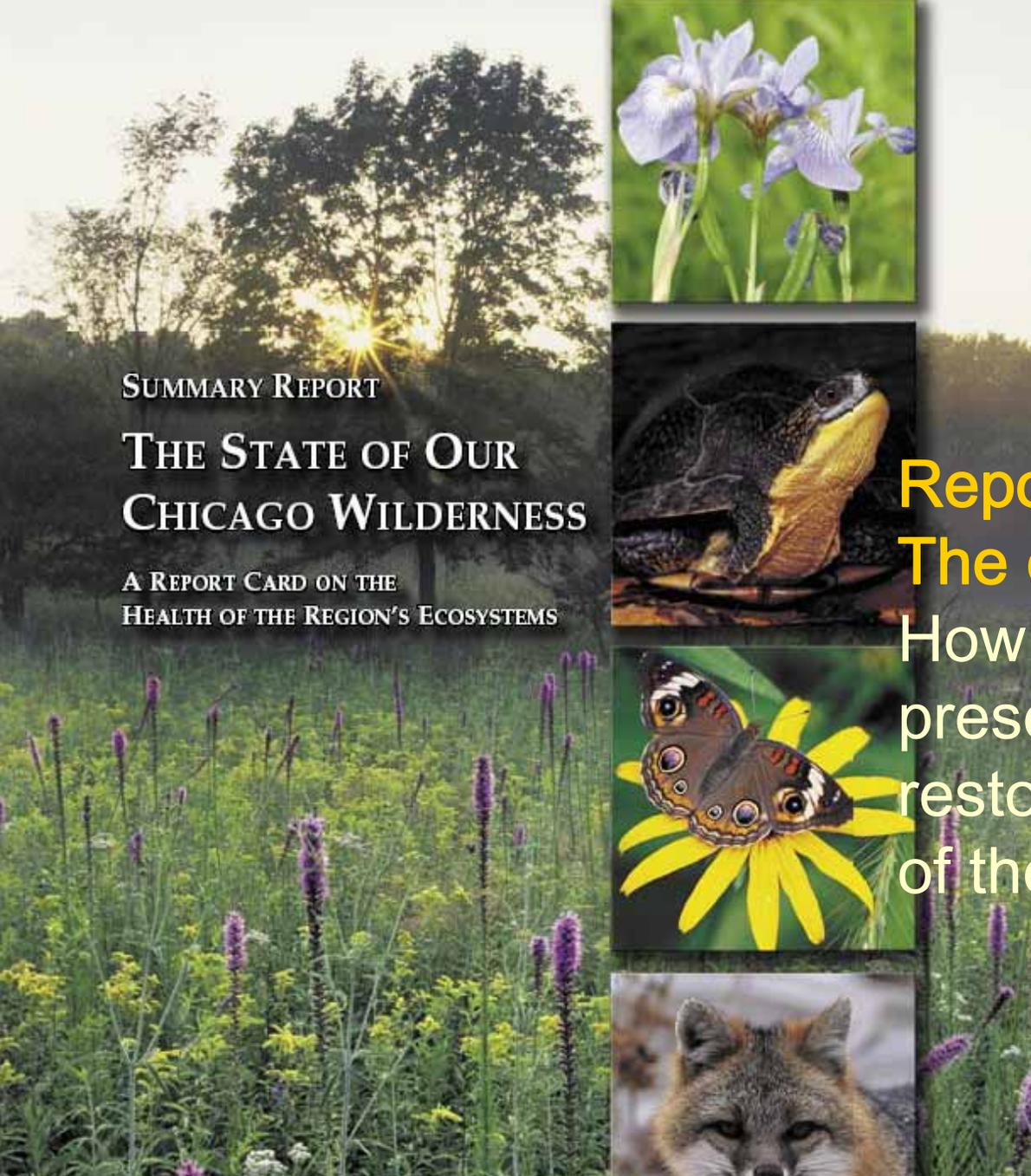
## 6- Increase Public Involvement Biodiversity Atlas

Magazine



# Overview of this talk

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SUMMARY REPORT

# THE STATE OF OUR CHICAGO WILDERNESS

A REPORT CARD ON THE  
HEALTH OF THE REGION'S ECOSYSTEMS

## Measuring Results

### Report Card 2006

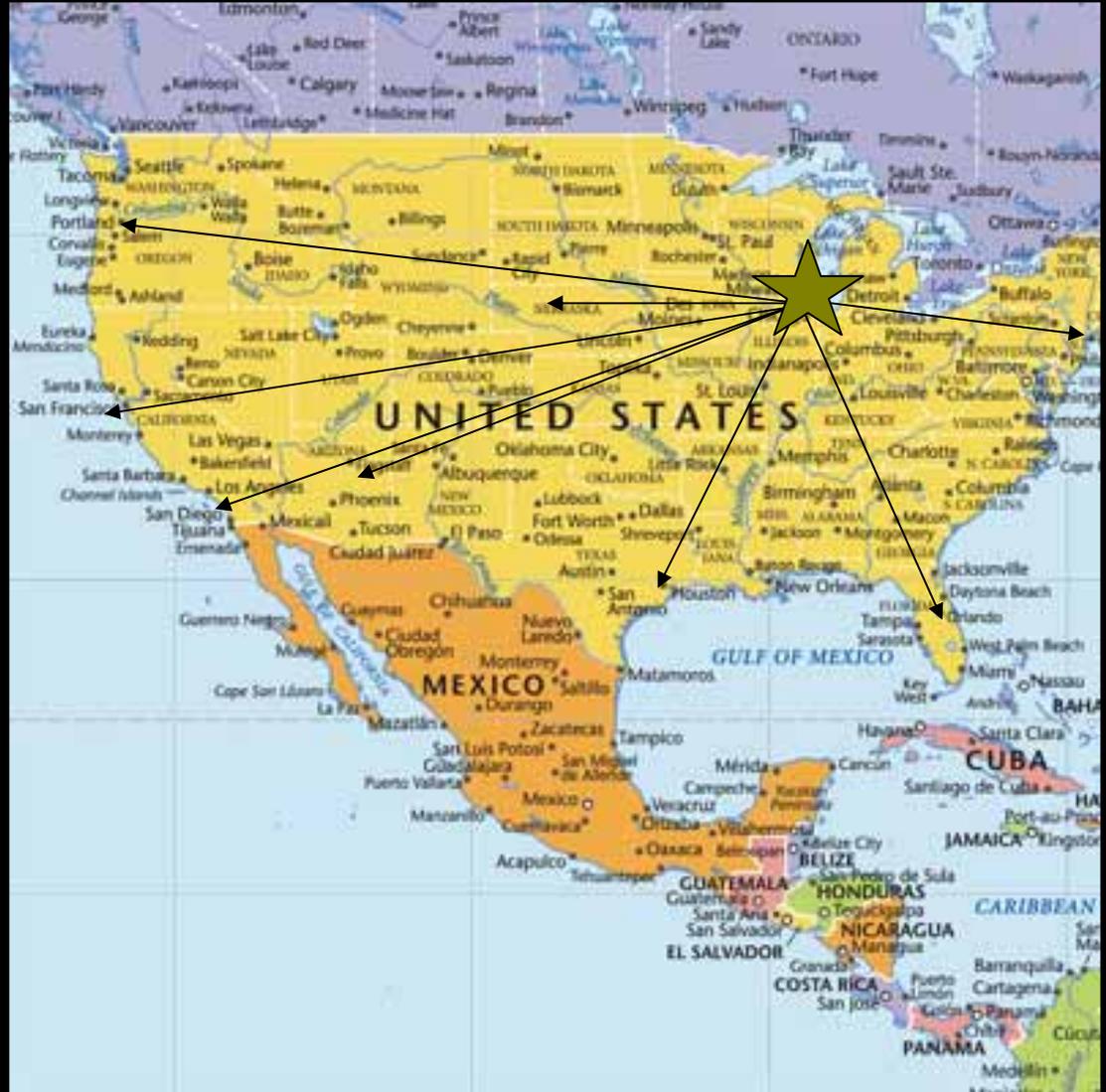
### The question:

How are we doing in  
preserving and  
restoring the biodiversity  
of the region?

# Exporting the Chicago Wilderness Model

Houston  
Oahu  
Pittsburgh  
Washington DC  
Portland  
San Francisco  
Milwaukee  
Detroit  
Toledo...

International  
contacts



# Lessons Learned

- Core Leadership
- Flexibility
- Clear Mission
- Relationships
- Initial investment
- Diversifying Funding
- Political Support





Questions?