



The Oblate Woods #1 and #2

Forest Legacy Tract, Illinois

May 2000 and April 2001

On May 25, 2000, the State of Illinois Department of Conservation acquired a conservation easement on a 60-acre tract of land along the Mississippi River from the Oblates Missionary. Reverend Robert Moosbrugger signed for the Missionary Oblates, and Brent Manning, director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR), signed for the State to close the first Forest Legacy conservation easement in Illinois.

The Oblate Fathers are a Catholic order with land on the bluff above the Mississippi River between Alton and Pere Marquette State Park. The Illinois DNR, the Great Rivers Land Trust, and the local Village of Godfrey were all interested in keeping this unique riverfront habitat—formed because of a rare stretch of the Mississippi that stretches from east to west instead of north to south—from becoming developed. “A new bridge connecting Alton, Illinois, to St. Louis, Missouri, gives commuters a greater ability to work in St. Louis and live in a rural setting,” observed Dave Gillespie, Illinois Forest Legacy Coordinator.

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Annie Hoagland, Great Rivers Land Trust

On May 24, 2000, the easement negotiations, stewardship plan development, and landowner name changes all culminated so that an easement on 23 acres owned by the Missionary Oblates was protected through a State program called Conservation 2000. This land, valued at \$92,000, will serve as the Forest Legacy match. The next day, the same parties signed a conservation easement on 60 adjacent acres, funded with \$252,000 from the Forest Legacy Program.

On April 6, 2001, an additional 60 acres of adjacent land was also protected with Forest Legacy funds. The State of Illinois purchased the second 60-acre tract from the Oblate Fathers for \$240,000, creating a 143-acre forest that is protected from development. An adjacent 70-acre



Large forest blocks are important for many values, including wildlife habitat, watershed protection, and recreation. The Oblate Woods conservation easement adds to the efforts in the area by protecting these large forest tracts.

Photo by Wayne Freeman

tract is in the process of being placed under a conservation easement using Forest Legacy funds.

Annie Hoagland of the Great Rivers Land Trust spearheaded the effort to implement Illinois’ Forest Legacy Program with these two tracts. “It’s a history-making event by the Oblate priests to help Great Rivers preserve the natural beauty of the bluff land along the Great River Road for future generations to enjoy. The Forest Legacy easement granted by the Oblates will save one of the most beautiful forests in the country,” Ms. Hoagland commented at the closing. The State and the Great Rivers Land Trust continue to add protected land in the area through the Forest Legacy Program with two adjacent tracts that are expected to close shortly.

The Forest Legacy Program protects important forests from conversion to nonforest uses. These forests provide essential wildlife habitat, protect water quality, offer outstanding recreation opportunities, afford outstanding scenic views, are home to historic sites, and/or provide the opportunity to continue traditional forest uses. A Federal-State partnership allows landowners to keep their land private while ensuring it remains forest forever through the use of conservation easements.