

Protecting Native Forests in the Cache River Wetlands in Illinois

Background

Extensive fragmentation, degradation, and loss of Illinois' native forests over the last century have had a significant impact on the hundreds of wildlife species that rely on these forests. Remaining fragmented parcels are susceptible to invasive plants and animals, and ongoing habitat loss and degradation continue to threaten many already imperiled species. Consequently, the few healthy native forest ecosystems that remain are extremely important to at-risk species and other wildlife.

The Cache River wetlands complex in southern Illinois is such a place. It contains one of the richest and most biologically diverse ecosystems in the Midwest and is recognized internationally for its conservation importance. The wetlands complex includes 1,000-year-old cypress and numerous other swamp trees, and supports 128 native breeding bird species, 87 fish species, and 47 mammal species. The wetlands are estimated to contain 104 state-listed threatened or endangered species and 7 federally listed species.

Location

Cache River wetlands complex in Pulaski County, IL (star on map).

Goals

The goal of the project is to protect 40 acres of forested wetlands in the Cache River wetlands complex, to be added to the Cache River State Natural Area, under the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Expected Results

This project will enlarge the protected Cache River State Natural Area and ensure that the parcel is not fragmented, cleared, or converted to agricultural use in the future. The Cache River wetlands complex is a high priority conservation target for the State and conservation groups, and supports the objectives of numerous bird conservation plans.

Expected Outcomes

The long-term outcomes of the project are that it will protect native wetland forests in Illinois; conserve habitat for neotropical birds, migratory waterfowl, and other wildlife; and prevent forest fragmentation in one of Illinois' richest and most ecologically diverse natural areas.

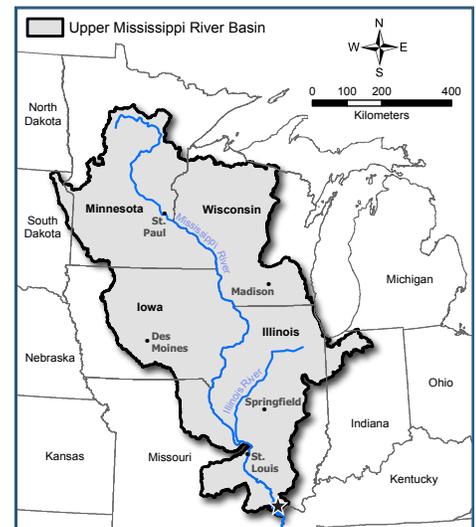
The American Land Conservancy has worked in the Cache River area since 2006 and has conserved nearly 400 acres there to date. While conserving the 40-acre parcel targeted by this project, the conservancy will continue to work with other landowners to lay the groundwork to protect additional parcels in the Cache River area. A 200-acre parcel has already been identified, and the Conservancy is currently working with the landowner.

Partners

- American Land Conservancy (grantee)
- Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation
- Grand Victoria Foundation (Vital Lands Illinois Program)

Grant Amount

\$61,844



The Upper Mississippi Forest Partnership and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation jointly initiated the Upper Mississippi River Watershed Fund. The fund supports projects that benefit the forests of the Upper Mississippi while improving wildlife habitat and water quality.

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