

Memorandum

To: Chicago Wilderness Executive Council
From: Jesse Elam, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Date: July 11, 2011
Subject: Status report on refinement of the CW Green Infrastructure Vision

Summary

The Chicago Wilderness Green Infrastructure Vision Task Force is updating and refining the original Green Infrastructure Vision. The project is being led by The Conservation Fund, a national leader in green infrastructure planning, with technical support by Applied Ecological Services, Inc. and with funding and project management by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. The project is expected to be complete by June 2012, and will add detail to the original GIV as well as provide a set of GIS tools for conservation partners in the region to use to identify portions of the green infrastructure network on which they wish to concentrate their efforts. Participation by Chicago Wilderness members broadly is welcomed; specific opportunities for engagement are described below.

Background

The original Green Infrastructure Vision (GIV) was completed for Chicago Wilderness in 2004 by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, a predecessor of Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). The original GIV product consisted of geospatial data delineating the "Recommended Resource Protection Areas" (RPAs) in the region, a final report with recommendations for each RPA along with a description of the methods used to create the GIV, and finally a set of printed maps showing the GIV in a three-state context. It has often been described as a "visual representation of the Biodiversity Recovery Plan," and it forms the backbone of the conservation recommendations in the GO TO 2040 regional comprehensive plan for northeastern Illinois, which was completed last year. To remain powerful and relevant, the Green Infrastructure Vision needs to be refined and updated. A "next generation" data product and decision support system are now needed to help organizations in the region collaborate in protecting a network of green infrastructure, including important natural resource areas.

Contractors

The Conservation Fund and Applied Ecological Services will be carrying out the work. This team was chosen through a competitive procurement process using a request for proposals issued by CMAP on April 15, 2011. The proposals were reviewed by a team comprised of Jim Anderson (Lake County Forest Preserves), Steve Byers (Illinois Nature Preserves Commission), Jesse Elam (CMAP), Jennifer Hammer (The Conservation Foundation), Jeff Mengler (Cardno Entrix), Chris Mulvaney (Chicago Wilderness staff), Jesse Oakley (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), Laurel Ross (The Field Museum), Sean Wiedel (City of Chicago) and Nancy Williamson (Illinois Department of Natural Resources). The TCF/AES team was recommended

to the CMAP Board on June 8, and the contract between CMAP and TCF was executed on June 28. Will Allen and Randy Vogel are the project leads for TCF and for AES, respectively. Jesse Elam is the project manager at CMAP (312.386.8688, jelam@cmmap.illinois.gov); please direct questions about the project to him.

Products and key dates

The main products are (1) a set of more-detailed geospatial data delineating the regional green infrastructure network in northeastern Illinois,¹ based fundamentally on land cover, along with a depiction of priorities for certain actions within the network as defined by criteria selected by stakeholders; (2) a “map package” containing ESRI ArcGIS tools for identifying landscape linkages and for prioritizing green infrastructure elements that organizations in Chicago Wilderness will be able to use to support their own decision-making; and (3) reports describing and characterizing the data and methods used.

The contractors will try to use webinars as much as possible to hold down travel costs, but the project will entail two important in-person work sessions for Chicago Wilderness members. The first webinar is for “data discovery,” the object of which is to ensure that relevant datasets have been considered, and will be scheduled between August 2 and August 4. An invitation will be sent out through the GIV Task Force. A summary of data quality and usefulness will then be delivered September 20. Throughout July, August, and September, efforts will be made to identify and assess the data available in the Chicago Wilderness.

The first major in-person meeting will be held sometime between October 3 and October 14 and is intended to establish concurrence on the methods to be used to delineate a refined green infrastructure network. A summary of these methods will be delivered shortly thereafter (“network design protocol”). The meeting would be advertised through the CW GIV Task Force. After carrying out the work according to the agreed methods (holding webinars as needed), a second in-person meeting will be held between March 12 and 23 to establish concurrence on methods for ranking individual green infrastructure elements. The final products will be due at the end of May 2012. A detailed scope and schedule can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/683t5h5>.

Dissemination of the data

The green infrastructure network layers are expected to be made available through the CMAP website and the CW website, as well as through internet map servers like the Openlands/Center for Neighborhood Technology website www.greenmapping.org. CMAP also hopes to offer training in the use of the ArcGIS tools.

¹ This network will be aligned to the extent practicable with similar corridors delineated for Wisconsin and Indiana.