



July 2008

## Governor Blagojevich Proposes \$14 Million in IDNR Cuts

Dear Partners for Parks and Wildlife member:

Over the last several years, the members of PPW have been working to prevent funding cuts to the Department of Natural Resources. Unfortunately, as part of the ongoing budget dispute with legislative leaders, Governor Blagojevich has proposed cutting another \$14 million from the IDNR budget which would decrease the general fund budget for IDNR another 20%. This at a time when our parks, forests, lakes and streams continue to experience increases in attendance by outdoor enthusiasts.

### A Steady Decline Since 2001

At the end of June 2001, there were 1,982 staff members at the IDNR, according to figures supplied by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Council 31. By the end of June 2003, Governor Blagojevich's hiring freeze dropped IDNR staff to 1,615. By 2007, IDNR staff had been cut by 24% with the deepest cuts coming from the IDNR Office of Land Management and the Office of Resource Conservation.

### Example of Cuts

The Office of Resource Conservation is the home for the biologists that oversee the state's parks, wildlife, fish and forests. Unfortunately, staffing has been cut by 38% since 2001 resulting in reductions in forest staff from 23 to 17, fish biologists from 29 to 18, and fisheries technicians reduced to 6 people covering the whole state of Illinois. The result is inadequate oversight for managing fish stock, game stock, protecting endangered species, protecting habitats, combating invasive species, and maintaining public lands, waterways, and recreational areas.

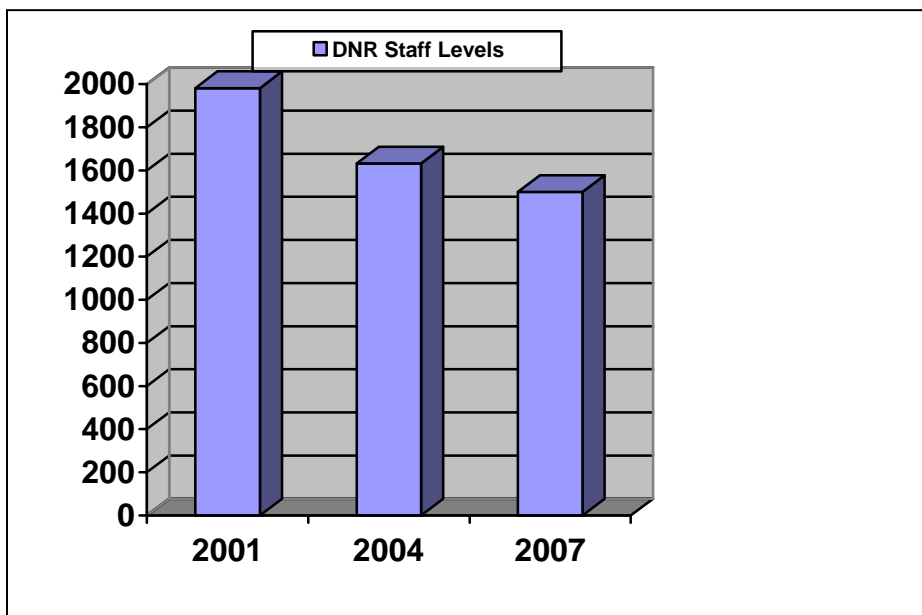


Figure 1 – Data from AFSCME Council 31

**The additional cuts Governor Blagojevich is proposing represent a cut of over 7% to IDNR. The Department will be the most severely impacted agency among those identified by the Governor.**

### Loss of Critical Staff

Governor Blagojevich is cutting crucial IDNR staff at a time when demand for state parks, natural areas, lakes and streams are increasing. The impact on our state's natural resources includes:

- Eliminating education programs, guided hikes, programs for school groups, and outdoor recreational and educational programs.
- Eliminating staff that maintain and protect 4.5 million acres of forest and woodland areas.
- Eliminating staff that complete annual water surveys on our over 87,000 miles of streams and 91,400 other water bodies. Now these vital assessments of the quality of fish and wildlife populations in our streams may only occur every 2 to 4 years
- Eliminating staff needed to manage land acquisition for public recreation. This will reduce the number and slow the purchase of these valuable recreation areas.
- Eliminating staff responsible for timber management and the safe harvest of commercially viable timber. Landowners will have to wait years for a management plan.
- Eliminating the reporting of deer kills at check points. Biologists believe this will increase the spread of chronic wasting disease.
- Eliminating conservation police. Experts agree this will likely contribute to increased poaching and violations of laws protecting sensitive natural areas.

### A Time for Action

The budget passed by the General Assembly for fiscal year 2009 included more expenditures than revenues, and it is out of balance by approximately \$1.5 billion. In response, Governor Blagojevich detailed \$1.5 billion in budget cuts that he will make if the legislature does not approve additional revenue.

It is imperative that Illinois' natural resources do not receive a disproportionate share of cuts. Once again, we have a chance as a coalition of more than 125 organizations to make a difference and save our natural resources from falling into disrepair.

**The Partner for Parks and Wildlife calls on Governor Blagojevich to retain the current funding levels for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The \$14 million in cuts proposed by the Governor would devastate Illinois' ability to protect open space, preserve natural resources, and keep Illinois a desired destination for outdoor enthusiasts.**

### **Take action in support of open space acquisition funding!**

Contact Governor Blagojevich to demand that IDNR be saved from the chopping block:  
Governor Blagojevich's phone number in Springfield: **(217) 782-6830**.

**Leave your name, city, organization you represent (if applicable), and a brief message similar to the one above.**

**Thanks for taking action!**