



Illinois Native Plant Society

PO Box 9245
Springfield, IL 62791

Sunday, March 30, 2025

10:00 pm to 4:00 PM

Hybrid In-Person and Online via Zoom

Humiston Woods Nature Preserve at 2100 North Road Pontiac, IL 61764

Join Zoom Meeting By Clicking Here

Link to strategic session

I. Welcome, Purpose, and Agenda (10:00 am)

- A. Ed Lipinski, INPS member and Director of Humiston Woods (invited)
- B. Emily Dangremond, INPS President to kick off the strategic session

II. Opening Exercise (10:15 AM)

III. SWOT Analysis for All Chapters (10:30 AM)

- A. Participants to discuss strengths and weaknesses facing chapters
- B. Participants to discuss opportunities and threats facing chapters

Lunch Break (11:30 AM - 12:30 PM)

IV. Roadmap (So Far) for 2025 (12:30 - 1:30 PM)

- A. Overview of packet materials and Q&A (Contributors)
- B. Treasurer's report and 2025 budget (Becky)
- C. Website, dues and payments roadmap (Kate, Becky, Kelsay)
- D. Eriginea (John)
- E. INPCA (Brian)
- F. Grants (Susanne)
- G. Procedures/Policies (Nancy)

V. Breakout Groups (1:30 PM)

- A. Chapter development wish lists and commitments
- B. Other

VI. Report Outs (2:30 PM)

- A. Breakout teams report out
- B. Participants vote on highest priorities

VII. Align on highest 3 priorities for 2025 and next steps (3:30 PM)

VIII. Closing remarks (no later than 4:00 pm)

Packet Contents

- I. Roster of Attendees and Invitees (Nancy, Board Secretary) ([Link](#))
- II. 2025 Budget (Becky, Board Treasurer)
- III. Proposed Bylaws Changes ([Link](#)) (Bylaws Committee - Floyd, Trish, Nancy)
- IV. Information about Illinois Native Plant Conservation Alliance ([Link](#)) (Brian Charles)
- V. Website/Membership Roadmap ([Link](#)) (Kelsay, Kate, Becky)
- VI. Policies and Procedures Roadmaps and Drafts ([Link](#)) (Nancy Smith, Board Secretary)
 - A. Board Manual Reference Manual
 - B. Policies and Procedures to make public on INPS website
 - 1. Code of Conduct
 - 2. Dues Sharing and Disbursement Policy.
 - 3. Chapter Guidelines (Chapter leaders a quick reference of where to send reports and when)
 - 4. Donation Acknowledgment Procedures
 - C. Chart of policies/procedures documents in development
- VII. Grants Report ([Link](#)) (Susanne)
- VIII. Chapter Reports and Events (Chapter Representatives)
 - A. Kankakee Torrent
 - B. Central Chapter ([Link](#))
 - C. Forest Glen Chapter
 - D. Grand Prairie Chapter
 - E. Quad Cities Chapter ([Link](#))
 - F. Southern Chapter ([Link](#))
 - G. Northeast Chapter
- IX. Summary of 2023 Strategic Planning and Member Survey ([Link](#))
(collated by Nancy, Board Secretary)

Roster

Participant	Organization	Attendance Mode
Emily Dangremond	INPS President	In-Person
Susanne Masi	INPS Vice President	In-Person
Becky Croteau	INPS Treasurer	In-Person
Nancy Smith	INPS Secretary	In-Person
John Taft	Erigenia Editor	Zoom
Chris Benda	Harbinger Editor	Not Attending
Brian Charles	INPS Secretary Illinois Native Plant Conservation Alliance	Zoom
Daniel Lara-Newman	INPS Board Member Asst. Webmaster	In-person
Kate Ahrens	INPS Board Member Asst. Webmaster	In-person
Kelsay Shaw	INPS Membership Chair	Zoom
Eric Ulaszek	INPS Board Member	In-person
Carolyn Villa	INPS Board Member	In-person
Floyd Catchpole	Kankakee Torrent representative	In-person
Trish Quintenz	Central Chapter Representative	absent
Paul Marcum	Forest Glen Chapter Representative	In-person
Joe Armstrong	Grand Prairie Chapter Representative	Zoom
Samantha Chavez	Quad Cities Chapter Representative	In-person
Kurt Neubig	Southern Chapter Representative	
TBD	Northeast Chapter Representative	
Ed Lipinski	Director, Humiston Woods Nature Preserve INPS, a very recent new member	

Proposed 2025 Budget

Prepared by Becky Croteau, INPS State Treasurer

INCOME:

Description	Amount
Memberships ? (2025)	\$20,000.00
Grant Donations	\$ 1,000.00
General Fund Donations	\$ 1,000.00
Merchandise (Do we still have this) ?	\$ 200.00
CD Interest	\$ 1,000.00
Money Market Interest	\$ 5.00
Estimated Income Total	\$23,205.00

{Donation totals are estimates based on 2024}

*{Membership totals are a guess based on 2023 data,
showing that \$18,267 was collected that year.}*

{I still do not have final membership numbers for 2024}

EXPENSES:

Description	Amount
2025 Chapter Disbursements (25%)	(\$ 5,000.00)
2024 Chapter Disbursements (25%)	(\$ 5,000.00)
Grant Payments for 2024 & 2025 Grants	(\$ 15,016.50)
Donations to Other Groups	(\$ 3,000.00)
Zoom & Goggle	(\$ 330.00)
Square Fees (3.6% of income)	(\$ 396.00)
Insurance	(\$ 833.00)
Erigenia & Harbinger <i>(Includes postage)</i>	(\$ 5,000.00)
Website	(\$ 3,500.00)
IEC Membership	(\$ 150.00)
P.O. Box	(\$ 660.00)
Office Supplies, postage, other printing	(\$ 100.00)
Registered Agent	(\$ 100.00)
Accountant (Taxes)	(\$ 300.00)
Accountant (1099 Filing)	(\$ 300.00)
Milage Reimbursements	<u>(\$ 1,500.00)</u>
Estimated Expense Total	(\$ 41,185.50)

Estimated Net Loss for 2025 (\$17,980.50)

2025 INCOME & EXPENDITURES (up to 3/23)

INCOME:

Description	Amount
Memberships (2025)	\$ 7,493.60
Grant Fund Transfers to Checking	\$ 5,250.00
)	
General Fund Donations	\$???
Grant Fund Donations	\$???
CD Interest (4.07%)	\$ 187.48
Money Market Interest	\$.50

Income Total since Jan. 1 **\$12,931.08**

Bank AccountBalances as of 3/23/25:

Checking: \$ 8,427.39

Grant Account: **\$29,387.55**

Certificate of Deposit: \$25,880.63

3

TOTAL = \$63,695.57

**Est. remaining 2025 expenses= (\$30,533.62)
(\$10,651.88)**

PAID EXPENSES:

Description	Amount
2023 Chapter Disbursements (25%)	(\$ 4,568.75)
2024 Chapter Disbursements (25%)	(\$
Final Grant Payments for 2023 Grants	(\$ 5,250.00)
Donations to Other Groups	(\$)
Zoom & Goggle	(\$ 159.90)
Square Fees (3.6% of income)	(\$ 112.37)
Insurance	(\$)
Harbinger - Printing	(\$ 220.21)
Website (Duplicator Pro)	(\$ 119.70)
IEC Membership	(\$ 150.00)
P.O. Box	(\$ 55.00)
Office Supplies, postage, other printing	(\$ 15.95)
Registered Agent	(\$)
Accountant (Taxes)	(\$)
Accountant (1099 Filing)	(\$
Milage Reimbursements	(\$)

Expense Total Jan. 1st to March 23rd

Proposed Bylaws Changes

Executive Summary

Changing the Illinois Native Plant Society abbreviation to ILNPS would help differentiate our organization from other organizations for web searches. Please take the survey [here](#) to indicate whether or not you support the change to the abbreviation.

The INPS state bylaws need to clarify that Chapters cannot have their own bylaws. The proposed changes clarify this and could further clarify what steps are necessary to comply with INPS state-wide policy.

Further changes clarify dues distribution from the state to the chapters and clarify reporting requirements

Changing the abbreviation to ILNPS would help differentiate our organization from other organizations.

Proposed Changes

Text to delete is ~~lined out~~.

Added text is in **red**

Article I - Name

Section 1.

The name of the Organization shall be the Illinois Native Plant Society, hereby abbreviated as ~~INPS~~ **ILNPS**.

Article VII – Chapters

Section 4. The elections, lengths of terms, and responsibilities of the chapter officers shall be at the discretion of each chapter. The officers shall include a President, Secretary, and Treasurer ~~as well as any other deemed necessary~~.

Section 6. ~~A proposed chapter must ratify a set of chapter by-laws, and these by-laws must be approved by the Governing Board. Chapter by-laws must have an article on dissolution similar to Article XII. Chapter by-laws may not conflict with those of the INPS.~~

Section 6. A proposed chapter shall follow the bylaws of the INPS. Chapters may create Standing Rules of Order for operating purposes, as long as rules do not conflict with bylaws of the INPS.

Section 7. Chapters may be inactivated ~~by a two-thirds vote of the state board~~ after a period of two years of inactivity. Inactivity is defined as a lack of chapter meetings, elections and regular contact with the INPS State Governing Board. **The State Board will send a notification of pending dissolution to the membership of the inactive chapter sixty days prior to a vote on**

dissolution to allow chapter members time to resume chapter activities. After the waiting period, the State Board may vote, with a two-thirds majority required, to inactivate the chapter. An inactive chapter's resources (e.g. funds, materials) will be held by the State INPS for a period of one year, during which time the chapter may reactivate and claim its resources from the INPS State Governing Board. After this time, these will be combined with INPS State Governing Board assets.

Article VIII. Dues

Section 1. ~~The dues of the INPS shall be recommended by the Governing Board for approval by the membership at an annual meeting.~~

Section 1. The dues and disbursement rate and term of the disbursement rate of the INPS shall be recommended by the Governing Board for approval by the membership at an annual meeting.

How do we notify members of the rates provided to Chapters?

- Annual treasurer's report?
- Membership subscription documents (online or written)

Section 2. The dues shall include a component for the State INPS budget and a component for regional chapter budgets. The component for regional chapters will be based on a per member or percentage rate, ~~for a term~~ set by the State Governing Board. Members who do not belong to a regional chapter pay the full dues to the ~~State~~ INPS.”

Article VII. Section 5. The chapter secretaries shall submit a ~~year-end~~ report of activities to the Governing Board and the chapter treasurers shall submit a ~~year-end~~ financial statement to the Governing Board; both reports are due by ~~January 15 of the following year~~~~31 August for the preceding fiscal year~~.

Comments Section

Article V. Section 4. Length of term for At-large members. Prefer 3 years for more continuity.

Illinois Native Plant Conservation Alliance

Illinois is launching a Native Plant Conservation Alliance (PCA). The National Plant Conservation Alliance, Launched in 1995, includes federal and non-federal cooperators; INPS is a non-federal cooperator along with CBG and others in Illinois. The eederal organization's goal, among many others, was to increase seed for restoration and launched the National Seed Strategy.

Many other states have PCAs, including Indiana, which launched theirs in 2020. PCAs focus primarily on threatened and endangered species conservation and tracking which species are being grown.

Why does Illinois need one?

- Coordinating statewide priorities for our at-risk species; collecting, growing out seed, growing out plants
 - State priorities are often not aligned with local entities
- Tracking where seeds/plants are from, where they are going into the ground, and the scale of restorations
 - A shared database will be created with selective access depending on species/project
- Facilitating connections between individuals/orgs working on the same species or in the same region; collaborative grant applications; pooled resources
- Tracking watch list species using a public network

INPS involvement?

- Spreading awareness, linking up with PCA to make shared resources available

Website/Membership Roadmap for 2025

Click [here](#) for a PDF of the webmaster presentation slides. Also to be sent as an attachment.

2024	
WordFence	\$490.00
Gravity Forms *	129.00
Gravity Kit	69.00
Gravity View app	
Duplicator Pro *	\$119.70
Dreamhost	\$19.99
Domain renewal	
Dreamhost *	Free
Hosting for nonprofit	
Askimet Anti-spam *	Free
Canva *	Free
Yoast SEO (not on paid plan)	Free
Total	827.69

Proposed Changes	
WordFence	\$490.00
Gravity Forms *	129.00
Gravity Kit *	199.50
All Access	
Duplicator Pro *	\$119.70
Dreamhost	\$19.99
Domain renewal	
Dreamhost	Free
Hosting for nonprofit	
Askimet Anti-spam *	Free
Canva *	Free
SEO Tools??	??
Total	958.19

Policies and Procedures Roadmap and Drafts

This document is a work in progress and needs to be reviewed by members of the board before it is finalized.

Please provide requests and input about the structure

[Draft Board Manual Link.](#)

Outline

1. Overview of INPS
 - a. Mission
 - b. Bylaws
 - c. Purpose
2. Board Members Roles and Responsibilities
 - a. Treasurer
 - b. Secretary
 - c. Membership Coordinator
3. Board Committees
 - a. Standing Committees
 - b. Ad Hoc Committees
 - c. Governing Board's Role in Ensuring Board Transparency for Members
 - d. Board Member Development, Including for Members-at-Large
4. Regional Chapters
5. Policies and Procedures
6. Volunteer Staff
 - a. Working Board
 - b. Board non-voting positions
 - c. Publications
 - d. Correspondence
 - e. INPS Webmaster/Web Administrator
 - f. Social Media

Overview of INPS

This document is intended as an introduction to new Board members joining the Illinois Native Plant Society Board and as a reference for established members of the Board.

Mission

The mission of the organization is that it is **“Dedicated to the study, appreciation, and conservation of the native flora and natural communities of Illinois.”**

As Board members fulfill their fiduciary duties, each should keep in mind how the Board’s actions, decisions and policy direction help the organization achieve its mission.

Bylaws

The bylaws of INPS are available [on the INPS website](#). INPS Board members ensure that the organization follows the practices for governance outlined in the bylaws. New members are expected to read the bylaws and make note of the practices therein. The bylaws spell out the roles and responsibilities of the Governing Board members in detail.

Purpose

The purpose of INPS as set forth in the bylaws are as follows:

1. To promote the study, appreciation, and conservation of the native flora and natural communities of Illinois;
2. To provide education to the general public as to the value of the native flora and its habitat and
3. To produce publications that provide an outlet for such information, including but not limited to the peer-reviewed journal of the INPS (Eriogena) and the quarterly newsletter (The Harbinger).
4. To ensure that all are equitably and inclusively welcomed to INPS membership and programs

Board Members Roles and Responsibilities

The [bylaws](#) spell out the roles and responsibilities of the Governing Board members in detail. The information provided in the bylaws will not be repeated in this Governing Board manual. This section will focus on general requirements and specify practices not covered by the bylaws.

Board members of organizations have a “fiduciary role” (that is, legal obligations) when serving to fulfill a duty of care toward the organization. This requires board members to act with reasonable diligence and prudence, meaning they must be informed, attentive, and exercise sound judgment in making decisions. This includes:

- Attending meetings, reviewing materials, and actively participating in discussions.

- Being aware of the organization's mission, plans, and policies.
- Ensuring the organization has sufficient resources and that its programs align with its mission.
- Investigating irregularities and asking questions to ensure informed decision-making.
- The Board's officers and members have clearly defined duties as set out in our bylaws and by the statutes of state and federal law. But we can also establish rules for our officers and other activities in our roles as volunteer staff.

The primary legal duties of a board and its board members is to advance the mission of INPS.

Other fiduciary duties under Illinois state laws in addition to the duty of care are the duty of loyalty and the duty of obedience. The **duty of loyalty** requires members to put the interest of INPS ahead of personal interests, or, as a rule against self-dealing or against conflicts of interest. The **duty of obedience** requires members to be faithful to the organization's mission.

Treasurer

The Governing Board Treasurer assists chapters by training treasurers and reminding either chapter president or treasurer of financial report deadlines.

While not outlined in the bylaws, the Treasurer works with other Governing Board members and Chapter representatives to prepare an annual budget.

The Governing Board Treasurer readies financial and other documents for tax filing.

State Treasurer Calendar of Activities

January

- Prepare final fiscal year treasury report for Jan board meeting
- Annual Illinois Sales Tax submission – due Jan 20th
- 1099-MISC to be sent to grant recipients with grant payments > \$600 – due by 1/31
- Request fiscal year treasury reports from local chapters (to be used in 990-N filing due in May)
- Prepare next year's fiscal budget

February

- Prepare next year's fiscal budget, present to board in March
- Pay IEC membership
- 1096 form mailed to govt (for 1099-MISC reporting) – due by 2/28

March

- Obtain approval from board for budget
- Contact KEB accounting to ensure they agree to prepare tax return for the year

April

- Finalize annual tax return & sent to KEB accounting
- Google Drive payment automatically renews yearly on April 14th.

May

- File taxes via KEB accounting procedure – tax filing due 5/31

June

- Plan and prepare with board's annual audit, who will conduct. This will inform annual report

July

August

- Prepare annual financial report

September

- Annual report published

October

November

December

- Order 1099-MISC forms from IRS
- Request addresses for 1099-MISC from Susanne (grant committee)
- Request local chapter sales tax details for submission that is due Jan 20th

Continuous responsibilities

- Deposit membership checks
- Monitor Square account & membership dues payments
- Investigate, refund, etc. membership dues errors (usually membership coordinator will send any issues where the member contacted us about an issue)
- Make grant payments at Susanne's request
- Ensure PNC bank balance doesn't go below \$500 (or a fee will occur).
- Transfer money from PayPal account to PNC bank if necessary
- Renew debit card prior to expiration (currently 4/25)
- Prepare quarterly treasurer report for board meeting
- Attend annual board retreat
- Ensure someone coordinates annual gathering financials. Handle any transactions for that event. E.g., sometimes the state Paypal account is used for entry fees and then you need to transfer it.

Procedures List for Treasure Responsibilities

The following policies and procedures remain to be documented:

Grant payments

IEC membership

990 filing

1099-MISC

Transfer Signature at banks (PNC & SIU)

Other Treasury-Related Items

Download apps on phone

- PNC Bank – use mobile deposit for membership checks
- SIU CU
- Square

Secretary

Minutes

The Secretary prepares the minutes of meetings and ensures they are posted on the INPS website once approved.

Tracks Reporting Requirements and Recommends Agenda Items

The Secretary tracks reporting requirements and ensures that the reports at the meeting follow the cadence described in the bylaws. Also, the Secretary works with the Committee chairs to ensure that materials are provided in advance of the meeting and are attached to the records of the meetings as part of the minutes. For example, the Grants Committee presents the year's awards and final budget for approval at the April Board meeting.

Annual Meeting Requirements

Calendar

The Secretary works with the Board to provide an annual calendar of Board meetings for approval at the Annual meeting. Once approved, the calendar schedule is posted on the INPS website with instructions for how members can join the meetings and address the Board on matters of interest or concern, if desired.

Dues

Also, the organization reviews the dues and the members vote to approve the dues levels at each annual meeting.

Membership Coordinator

In addition to the maintenance of emailing lists and contact information for each member, the Membership Coordinator also is responsible for the following:

- Follows up on bad addresses or emails to correct membership database
- Prepares membership directory
- Prepares chapter membership sheets

The Membership Coordinator implements the dues as set by the Membership at the Annual Meeting. At present, INPS has 14 unique levels of membership, each with varying dues.

Board Committees

The bylaws gives the Governing Board the authority to establish both standing and ad hoc committees. Committees meet independently from the regular Board meetings to perform work requested by the Governing Board. Committees also provide an opportunity for the board to recruit members and experts to serve on the committees, reducing the workload on board members. Clear reports of progress or questions can be brought to the board or executive committee for guidance. Final reports should be presented to the board for approval or disapproval, or can be sent back to committee for more development.

While the number of committees are limited, the INPS Governing Board has the option of creating more standing committees to engage more volunteers with the work of the organization, as described in [this proposal](#).

Standing Committees

Standing Committees have ongoing responsibilities to report regular progress to the INPS Governing Board.

As of March 2025, the standing committees are

- The Executive Committee is composed of the President, Vice-President, Past President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Membership Coordinator
- Web/Membership
- Grants

Ad Hoc Committees

Ad hoc Committees exist for a short period of time to perform tasks of a finite duration. The bylaws direct that each year the Governing Board establish the following Committees:

- Nominating Committee
- Financial Records Audit Committee

Other Ad hoc committees can handle other short-term work. At present,

- Bylaws Committee
- Policies and Procedures Review Committee
- Code of Conduct Committee
- Communications Committee
- Donation Acknowledgement Committee

Governing Board's Role in Ensuring Board Transparency for Members

INPS seeks to conform to the guidelines of the Illinois Open Meetings Act by ensuring the Board Secretary

- Schedules of upcoming meetings approved at the Annual meeting

- Communications pertaining to matters coming before the Board follow required open meeting practices
 - Board items directly related to business before the board are discussed in email threads with the entire board, such discussions may constitute an unpublished meeting of the board and is a violation of the Open Meetings Act.
 - Committee work (volunteer hat) can be discussed by the Committee in email threads, meeting or phone calls.
- Minutes of board meetings are posted on INPS website.
- Instructions are provided online for how members can attend Governing Board meetings and provide a statement to the Governing Board, if desired.

Board Member Development, Including for Members-at-Large

It is a best practice for Board members to receive training in effective organizational leadership. For the time being, such study at INPS is self-directed.

See the following resources for further guidance of regulatory requirements and best practices for INPS fiduciaries.

- Illinois Assembly Guidelines Governing General Not-For-Profit Corporations ([Link](#))
- Illinois State Bar Association publication, “Your Guide to Organizing an Illinois Not-for-Profit Entity” ([Link](#))
- BoardSource publication, “Nonprofit Board Member Codes of Conduct and Ethics” ([Link](#))
- Charity Navigator publication, “Our Methodology and Ratings” ([Link](#))

Regional Chapters

The INPS Governing Board oversees the activities of regional chapters. As members join INPS, they each select the chapter they wish to affiliate with plus others a second choice.

Representation on Governing Board

Chapters can select a representative to attend the board meetings Article V Section 2. The representative need not be an officer of the chapter.

Disbursements Based on Dues Collected

The INPS Governing Board will publish a proposal each year for the dues and the disbursements for approval at the Annual Meeting.

Reporting Requirements

The Board will provide a procedure document to the Chapter leadership regarding reporting requirements. The State of Illinois requires INPS to report on sales tax. The INPS Bylaws require the chapters to report activities to the INPS Board.

Creation and Termination

The Board will provide procedures and guidelines for creating new chapters as well as for termination of chapters that are no longer active.

Policies and Procedures

Here is a [tracker of policies and procedures](#) for INPS.

Description	Type	Status	Link	Public/Internal
Code of Conduct	Policy	In progress	Link	Public
Dues, Setting, Sharing and Disbursement Policy.	Policy	Not started		Public
Best Practices Policy (separation of duties, continuous improvement, data protection, policy for polices and procedures)	Policy	Not Started		Public
Financial Policies (Grants payment, IEC membership, 990 filing with Board review, signature transfer, signature requirements, 1099-MISC, inventory of accounts/assets)	Policy	Not Started		Internal
Chapter Guidelines (Chapter leaders a quick reference of where to send reports and when)	Procedure	Not started		Internal
Donation Acknowledgment Procedures	Procedure	In progress	Link	Internal
Harbinger Publication Procedure	Procedure	Pending Update	Link	Internal
Erienia Publication Procedure	Procedure			Internal
How to Send a Google Ballot	Procedure	Pending Update	Link	Internal
How to Send a Blast Email through Substack	Procedure	Not Started		Internal
How to Submit a Website Request or Report an Issue	Procedure			Public
How to approve plant sale submissions	Procedure			Internal
INPS NE Chapter Social Media Style Guide	Reference		Link	Internal
INPS Website Administration Guide	Reference		Link	Internal
INPS Web Style Guide	Reference		Link	Internal
NE Chapter Board Handbook -	Reference		Link	Internal

Volunteer Staff

Working Board

As an all-volunteer organization with no paid staff, INPS board members are expected to help with implementing and doing much of the work of the organization. Board members can assist INPS by connecting to other communities they are involved with, bringing more diversity of people (age, race, class and gender) to our organization and eventually to our board.

Board non-voting positions

The Board may appoint non-voting positions. These positions include, but are not limited to, editor of Erienia, editor of The Harbinger, and INPS webmaster. The term of these appointed positions is one year and there is no limit on the number of terms that may be served consecutively.

Publications

The purpose of INPS is, in part, to publish two periodicals.

The *Harbinger* is a quarterly newsletter. The editor is Chris Benda (botanizer@gmail.com). The deadline for submissions are March 1, June 1, August 1, and November 1 of each year.

The Erienia is a peer-reviewed scientific journal. The editor is John Taft (erienia.editor@gmail.com). Associate Editors are Jason Koontz Eric Ulaszek

Correspondence

INPS Governing Board members share responsibility for corresponding with donors and members of the public.

Questions from the Contact Form

INPS added a [custom ChatGPT](#) feature to answer common questions to the website in March 2025. Also, visitors to the site can ask various questions, which are routed as indicated:

Listed on the [Governing Board List](#)

Type of Question	Routing
Botanical Identification	plantid@illinoisplants.org Brian Charles
Native Gardening Advice	Floyd Catchpole fcatchpole@comcast.net nativegardens@illinoisplants.org

Membership	membership@illinoisplants.org currently kate until new chair
Grant Information	grants@illinoisplants.org >to their gmail
Technical Support	webmaster@illinoisplants.org kate
General Inquiry	contact@illinoisplants.org nancy
Looking for ILNPS Mailing Address or Phone Number	Posted on selection

INPS Webmaster/Web Administrator

The INPS Webmaster will document aspects of the configuration of the website so that, should it be required, someone could quickly assume the role. (See [here](#) for an outdated draft that could be updated.)

The documentation covers the following topics:

- Domain/Web hosting
- Emails and Forwarding
- Website Configuration
- Business Continuity
 - Backup Procedures
 - Webmaster practices (Account Recover)
 - Passwords Management in KeePass
 - Recovery Procedures
- Security Procedures and Vendors

Webmaster Contact Info

Name: **Kate Ahrens**

Role: **Administrator**

Username:

Name: **Daniel Lara-Newmann**

Role: **Assistant Administrator**

Username:

Payment Systems

- Square is the online payment platform
- State Square is connected by _____
- Square info may be different for events like IL Indigenous Plants Symposium.

Regular Webmaster Activities

- Monthly
 - Draft and share web activity reports at board meetings showing web visitor stats and ranking of pages most visited
- Winter
 - Work with Southern Chapter to create post and online registration form for Indigenous Plants Symposium
- Spring
 - Work with hosting chapter to create post and registration form for Annual Gathering
- Grants
 - post grant announcements
 - create/modify grant descriptions and protocols for applying and reporting
 - create/modify application form and budget form
 - create/modify submission form for grant reports
- As needed
 - Add misc. content to website as requested
 - Create posts/registration forms for events
 - Add new website accounts
 - Add new Erienia articles / issues
 - Modify emails that notification are sent to (donations, memberships, etc)
 - Train new chapter leaders/helpers on making changes to website
 - Update board and committee members on About Us page
 - Invite/Train new chapter leaders/others to INPS Slack (erienia.slack.com)
- Every Few Weeks
 - Monitor website for spam, “hacking” instances - Wordfence notifications are currently set to go to illinoisplants@gmail.com but should be set to go to the webmaster
 - Check for updates to plugins or Wordpress itself. Update the plugins and/or Wordpress
- Couple Times a Year
 - Switch out front page image
 - Add new Harbingers to publication page
 - delay - have decided that the most recent Harbinger is available only to members
 - Remind chapters to update their chapter pages
 - To update their board members
 - To add their events to their respective Google Calendars
 - Ask if they need help generally or want us to make the changes for them

Social Media

As of March 2025, INPS is not active on Social Media.

Grants Report

March 30, 2025.

Submitted by the Grant Committee: Susanne Masi, Connie Cunningham and Eric Ulaszek

Grant History

42 Research Grants total in 8 cycles since 2018.

7 Survey Grants in 5 cycles since 2021.

The grant program is our single largest budget and program, and most agree that it is well worth the expense.

Grant Committee and Review Panel: Connie and Susanne have served on the Committee since 2018. Connie was part of the earlier grant program back in 2009. Eric Ulaszek has now served for 2+ years on the Committee. This year we have 5 Research Grant review panelists of high professional quality -anonymous). 5 panelists serve on the Survey Grant Review Panel.

Awards have gone to undergrad students, grad students (MS and PhD), Citizen Scientists, Independent Researchers, and a few to faculty working with students. (Students sometimes have a Co-PI faculty advisor and always an advisor.) Institutional affiliations of grantees have included U of Illinois (multiple campuses throughout the state), smaller private colleges, INHS, the Chicago Botanic Garden/ Northwestern U. program. Two grants (and one current application) went to experienced stewards and one to a small private contractor in Ecological Restoration. This seems a good mix. A variety of topics have run the gamut: experimental field studies, comparative plant surveys, pollinator associations, phenology, genetics, soil characteristics and native plants, invasive species and native plants, etc. Survey Grants have yielded important finds and recommendations for some of the rarest listed and priority species. (One of the more interesting ones was a 2023 grant (just completed) involving the use of a drone to survey plants in difficult to reach locations – cliff sides in this case.

More advertising this year did not yield an increase in applications, but 5 applicants is a manageable number. We are overall pleased with the Research Grant as it exists now. We have used Kelly Mikenas' (reviewer and faculty member at Elmhurst University) suggestion that we move the Research Grant application date ahead to January 15 to allow for earlier release of funds for ordering supplies and paying student assistants. The Survey Grant deadline remains the same.

Current awardees are included in a separate listing, since their awards were announced after this report was developed. However, we can confidently predict the budget.

Budget: Board approved \$12,000 for Research Grants and \$10,000 for Survey Grants. Total \$22,000.
Results: Research Grants: \$ 14,2951. Survey Grant: \$5000. **Total = \$19,2951.**

Research Grant amount is \$2,951 over its approved budget. After discussion with Emily, Treasurer Becky is asked to move that amount to the Research Grant from the Survey Grant for her reporting, since only \$5000 will be awarded to the single Survey Grant awardee. The overall budget is within the approved amount. This change will be included in the full 2025 budget to be approved by the Board.

Other Issues:

Both Grants: One question that arises with both grants is the final report deadline. Each year we receive requests for extensions - this year three of the four 2024 Research grantees. The requests are all reasonable, extensions have been granted, and reports have been submitted by the new deadlines. Problem: extension requests have involved additional reporting and correspondence on the part of both grantees and the committee. Should we keep to the current deadlines of March 15 (Research Grant) and April 1 (Survey Grant)?

Solution: officially extend both grants' final report deadline to May 15 or June 1. (Many grantees can meet this deadline, but some do request an additional field season.) The problem here is that the later date conflicts with field season for reviewers - March is much more flexible for them.

Except for very special cases, extensions should not extend beyond the calendar year (a Dec. 1 deadline to allow for review and issuing checks by Dec. 31). **Ideas?**

Equipment: our Guidelines stipulate that items of greater than \$150 in value belong to INPS. This is unrealistic, since what would we do with such items? We also state that, upon negotiation, the item can be retained by the grantee. This has come up twice, and we have asked grantees to ensure that the item is available for botanical research by other users in some way (submit a plan) or that the grantee will continue to use it for botanical research (submit a plan). We don't want the grant to be an opportunity to acquire personal possessions. We need to spell this option out in more detail in the Guidelines.

Ideas?

Survey Grant for Priority Rare and Endangered Plant Species: there have been relatively few applications over the life of this program, although each year we revise the guidelines to streamline the process, accommodate institutional requirements for salary compensation or indirect costs, etc. Still, there are very few takers, despite substantial administrative effort. Additionally, in Illinois overall we are experiencing more professional botanists and knowledgeable citizen scientists in the field searching for and reporting rare plants (we have heard this from several sources, and through the ESTAC listing process). The POC program has expanded to greater areas within the State, monitoring both listed and rare species. All these efforts largely cover what the Survey Grant was created to achieve.

Suggestions/Recommendations for going forward for the Survey Grant:

- **Add a grant for comprehensive Floristic Surveys** for (INAI?) sites lacking one or for which surveys are old; to include FQI (or similar) analysis, species abundance, and plant community delineation, possibly comparing 2 or more sites with similar natural communities. New rare plants may be found.
Therefore, offer **two grants**: one for the existing comprehensive surveys for rare/listed species, and one for Floristic Surveys.
- **Discontinue** the Survey Grant because the need for it has been met by other efforts.
- **Substitute** the Floristic Survey for the existing Rare Plant Survey; **recruit a committee to help develop the parameters and guidelines.** **Other?**

Recipients of Grant Funds during 2024

1. Melissa Duda 1/7/2024)	\$873.00 (paid on Final 2023 INPS grant payment
2. The Wetlands Initiative 4/21/2024) for Katie	\$1104.00 (paid on First 2024 grant payment Kuchera INPS research grant
3. Leidy Arias Martinez 7/19/2024)	\$1000.00 (paid on First 2024 INPS grant payment
4. Illinois State University 4/24/2024) School of Biological Sciences for Cassie	\$1437.00 (paid on First 2024 grant payment McGinnis INPS research grant
5. Ilana Zeitner 4/22/2024)	\$1500.00 (paid on First 2024 INPS grant payment
6. Dr Mary Ashley 4/22/2024)	\$1500.00 (paid on Second 2023 INPS grant payment
7. Dan Marshalla 4/24/2024)	\$1443.00 (paid on Second 2023 INPS grant payment

8. Keegan McConnell 4/24/2024)	\$1211.00 (paid on Second 2023 INPS grant payment
9. Rory Schiafo 4/24/2024)	\$1500.00 (paid on Second 2023 INPS grant payment
10. Will Overbeck 12/16/2024)	\$1250.00 (paid on Second 2023 INPS grant payment
11. Board of Trustees Southern Illinois University 4/22/2024) Attention: Ashley Matzenbacher	\$1500.00 (paid on Second 2023 grant payment for Thenchira Suriymongkol/ James Zacek INPS research grant
12. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign 8/7/2024) Grants & Contracts payment for Susan grant	\$1250.00 (paid on Second 2023 McIntyre INPS research

TOTAL PAID ON GRANTS in 2024 = \$20,011.00

2025 Grant Payments

These were sent out in December of 2024, but they were not cashed until Jan. or Feb. of 2025.

13. Eric Ziombor 1/31/2025)	\$250.00 (paid on Second 2023 INPS grant payment
14. Noah Farris /2025) Second 2023 INPS grant Payment	\$2500.00 (paid on 2/3
15. Chris Benda 1/ 29/2025) Second 2023 INPS grant Payment	\$2500.00 (paid on

TOTAL PAID ON GRANTS (from 2024) in 2025 = \$6,500.00

Anticipated 2025 Grant Budget

2025 Survey Grant = \$ 5,000.00

2025 Research grants = \$14,951.00

Total = \$19,951.00

Final Payments on 2024 Grants = \$ 5,041.00

First Payments on 2025 Grants = \$ 9,975.50

Expected payments in 2025 = \$15,016.50

*Funds for final Payments on 2025 Grants, due in 2026 = \$ 9,975.50

Total needed to cover our current Grant contracts = \$24,992.00

*The INPS Grant Account created this year already contains the \$22,000.00 budgeted for 2025 Grants.
The current balance on the INPS Grant Account is \$29,387.55. This is a surplus of 4,395.55.*

Chapter Reports and Events

Kankakee Torrent

No report. (Will update once provided.)

Central Chapter

Plant sales, field trips, and regular monthly meetings at the Illinois Audobon Headquarters

Forest Glen Chapter

No report. (Will update once provided.)

Grand Prairie Chapter

No report. (Will update once provided.)

Quad Cities Chapter

April: White Pines State Park for Snow Trillium hike, Saturday April 5

Sandy Town & Prophetstown State Rec., April 13th 11am

May: Mississippi Palisades Sentinel Trail, May 3rd?

August: Baldwin Marsh & Eden Valley

Southern Chapter

In January, Nick Seaton led a "cadaver botany" hike at Pleasant Valley, where we saw communities recently managed by fire and the beneficial effects on the plants. In February, Clarice Esch organized "Science on Tap" seminars at Brews Bros in Murphysboro, including "Why are mushrooms and other forest fungi important in the Shawnee?" by Greg Mueller and "Protecting and Restoring Natural Lands within Private ownership in Southern Illinois" by Kevin Sierzega.

For future events, the Southern chapter has been busily planning events for the year. In April, we will have a Zoom presentation by Anna McAtee on the Trout Hill Prairie. On May 3rd, we will have a native plant sale at Turley Park in Carbondale, IL. And most importantly, the 2025 Annual Gathering will be held June 20-22 at Touch of Nature in Makanda, IL. The event will hold tours at Ferne Clyffe, Sand Cave, Simpson Barrens, Buttonland Swamp, and LaRue Pinehills.

Northeast Chapter

No report. (Will update once provided.)

Reference: Summary of 2023 Strategic Planning and Member Survey

Information from the 2023 Board Retreat and Member Survey is still relevant. Links to selected documents are provided, with the written responses included in the Board Retreat Packet

- A. Notes following 2023 Strategic Planning Meeting ([Link](#))
- B. 2023 Membership Survey Results ([Link](#))
- C. Member Survey Response Summary ([Link](#))

2023 Membership Survey Results Summary

This document summarizes the INPS members' answers to three questions posed in 2023.

- Question 1: What needs do you think ILNPS should be filling?
- Question 2: What activity do you think INPS could do that would benefit you and other members?
- Question 3: Suggestions for Improvement

Question 1: What needs do you think ILNPS should be filling?

Chapters	9
Adopt nature preserves	3
Expansion, including to underserved areas	2
Volunteer recruitment	2
Member engagement	1
Events	1
Advocacy	8
Counter invasive plants	4
Preservation	3
Preservation of natural areas	1
Marketing	7
Awareness	6

K-12	1
Education	5
K-12	2
Invasives	1
Native plant propagation	1
Plant ID	1
Community	4
Networking	2
Education	1
Projects	1
Partnerships	4
Ag / Landholders	1
Clearinghouse for restoration orgs	1
Friends of IL Nature Preserves	1
IDNR, USFWS and USFS	1
Website	3
Consumer resources for seeds and plants	2
Facilitate communications with chapters	1
Partnerships	2
Master Naturalists	1
Restoration	1
Grants	1
Grants	1
Services	1
Landscape design	1

Question 1: Selected Excerpts

Community Engagement/Education:

- "Community education on the importance of using native species whenever possible."
- "Involve kids/families at their levels."
- "Teaching plant taxonomy to younger generations."
- "Introduce and educate lay people on conservation, emphasizing on botany/habitat relationships."

Invasive Species Management:

- "Activism regarding invasive plants. Noxious weeds list."
- "Force IDOT to treat Teasel on ROW."
- "Increase effort to reduce invasive species spread."
- "Help members eradicate invasives."

Native Plant Advocacy:

- "Getting the word out better about the value of native plants in the landscape."
- "Advocacy for remnant natural areas in addition to teaching people on a more regular basis about plant ID."
- "Publicize stewardship work days."

Workshops/Events:

- "Having events and programs."
- "More field activities, including natural areas management."
- "More practical/applied workshops."

Collaboration with Organizations:

- "Working closer with IDNR, the USFWS & the USFS."
- "Partnering with the Illinois Master Naturalist program."

Natural Area Management:

- "More attention to the management of natural areas. Less to rare species."
- "Restoration event clearinghouse for many organizations."
- "Resource guides for landowners."

Resource Guides/Assistance:

- "Members need more access to plant nurseries that provide more Illinois ecotypes."
- "Homeowner assistance with landscape design."

Question 2: What activity do you think INPS could do that would benefit you and other members?

Education	23
Plant ID	6
Native Plants in Urban Landscape	4
Land management information and best practices	4
Meetings, Workshops, Symposia - online and in-person	4
Beginners Training	3
Indigenous methods of land management	1
Invasives	1
Field Trips	15
Field Trips, mostly for networking and education, but also include options to improve plant ID skills and help update plant surveys	15
Community-building, Community Engagement, and Education	7
Networking	4
Plant Sales	2
Member Directory	1
Comms	4
Improved Communications (more frequent emails, more information on benefits of membership, more information on chapters and events)	4
Marketing	4
Speakers Bureau to educate people about native plants and INPS	2
Tabling at community events	1
K-12 Outreach	1
Partnerships	3
Land Management Agencies	1
Master Naturalist	1

Form of community engagement	1
Advocacy	2
Advocacy	2
Plant Giveaways	1
Plant Giveaways	1
Demo Plots	1
Demonstration Gardens	1
Volunteer Management	1
Find ways to engage willing volunteers	
Leadership Development	2
Strengthen chapters through leadership development	1
Be more intentional about developing organizational leadership	1

Question 3: Suggestions for Improvement?

Culture	11
More for novices and new members	7
Focus on natural communities and less on gardens	1
More notice for Annual Gatherings and chapter meetings	2
More members attending and involved with the Annual Gathering	1
Chapters	9
More events and better communications	4
More chapters so people don't have to drive so far to chapter meetings. Also, rotating venues in a chapter region could help	3
Leadership Development	1
Membership directories	1
Marketing	9

Awareness - people don't know about INPS	6
Focus on natural communities and less on gardens	1
Partnering with other organizations	1
Pick an abbreviation and stick with it (INPS not ILNPS)	1
Website	3
Gardening info and seed resources	1
Remove stale posts from the website	1
Make technical plant resources available on the website	1
Comms	2
Provide more emails with more information	1
Provide notice of expiring membership	1
Activities	1
Invasive Removal Workdays	1
Advocacy	1
Protection of native plants	1
Org Development	1
Look for best practices in other states	1
Volunteer Management	2
Organize one-off volunteer opportunities to encourage greater participation. Take steps to strengthen volunteer engagement.	2

References

[Here is a link](#) to the PDF of the responses page.

[Here is a link](#) to the response categorization worksheet used for the enclosed tables