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Suzanne Malec-McKenna
Named Executive Director of Chicago Wilderness

Chicago —The Chicago Wilderness alliance announced that Suzanne Malec-McKenna has accepted the position of executive director. In this role, Malec-McKenna will facilitate and leverage collaborative, regional conservation efforts of more than 300 conservation organizations, cultural and educational institutions, government agencies, volunteer groups and corporations.

The Chicago Wilderness region—Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan—is home to diverse opportunities and challenges for our natural and human habitat. Two centuries of farming, industry, and urban development have transformed the landscape. Local nature faces serious threats, including habitat loss and fragmentation; invasive species; pollution; and the effects of a changing climate.

Alliance members have the commitment, energy and knowledge necessary to address these challenges while building opportunities for economic development and improved quality of life across the region.

Malec-McKenna is intimately familiar with the conservation challenges and opportunities in this region. She served as Deputy Commissioner and Commissioner for the City of Chicago's Department of Environment, during which time she helped create and oversaw the implementation of the Chicago Climate Action Plan, the Chicago Conservation Corps and Greencorps Chicago, and spearheaded the City's Calumet initiative. She also oversaw environmental enforcement, energy management and brownfield cleanups.

More recently she staffed the Millennium Reserve Steering Committee, a body of leaders appointed by Governor Quinn in 2013 to develop a work plan to advance environmental and cultural opportunities on the Illinois side of the Calumet region. Malec-McKenna also recently worked with The Morton Arboretum to develop a tree management strategy for the Chicago region, and has served as senior adviser at Jasculca Terman Strategic Communications.

“The conservation opportunities in our region are tremendous,” says Malec-McKenna. “From restoring nature and preparing the region for resiliency amidst climate change, to building smart infrastructure and getting kids outdoors, our vibrant alliance is making positive strides to improve the quality of life for all our region’s residents,” she says. “I am thrilled to be a part of this effort, and to work with the conservation, civic, and corporate leaders who are driving positive change for people and nature.”

Malec-McKenna has 25 years of experience in private industry, nonprofit, and government positions. She has worked for organizations committed to natural resource protection, expansion and improvement; water quality; communications; environmental education, stewardship, and enforcement; and sustainability efforts—especially those that intersect with successful business development and community engagement. In 2012 she completed a Ph.D. in Communication Studies at Northwestern University.

“We are so pleased that Suzanne has joined Chicago Wilderness,” said Arnold Randall, General Superintendent of the Forest Preserves of Cook County and Chair of Chicago Wilderness. “She brings extensive knowledge and expertise to the position and has a proven track record of success in regional conservation efforts.”

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Chicago Wilderness

Chicago Wilderness is a regional alliance that connects people and nature. We are more than 300 organizations working together to restore local nature and improve the quality of

life for all who live here, by protecting the lands and waters on which we all depend. Chicago Wilderness has four key initiatives: to restore the health of local nature, promote green infrastructure, take climate action and leave no child inside. These initiatives reflect our commitment to using science and emerging knowledge, as well as a collaborative approach to conservation, to benefit all the region's residents.

Members of Chicago Wilderness are working in or near your community. View the list of member organizations at www.chicagowilderness.org/who-we-are/our-members/.

PRESS CONTACT

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