



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chicago Pioneering Large Landscape Conservation

Chicago, IL— Managing urban growth while maintaining a high quality of life for residents is an increasingly complex challenge, as metropolitan regions address issues related to water, energy, land use, transportation, open space, recreation, and sustainability. The answer may lie in landscape-scale conservation.

Large landscape conservation enables leaders and land use planners to work across jurisdictional boundaries to create livable communities and maintain “green infrastructure” – the interconnected lands, waters, and natural systems that support people. It recognizes metropolitan regions as dynamic environments where natural areas, parks, preserves, and other green open spaces don’t just provide habitat for wildlife and opportunities for outdoor recreation, but also provide residents with environmental, economic and social benefits.

Chicago is a national leader in large landscape conservation, with more than 300 organizations working through the Chicago Wilderness alliance to pioneer and promote this approach. Two recently-completed regional plans—the GOTO 2040 Plan created by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan produced by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission—are based in part on the Chicago Wilderness “Green Infrastructure Vision,” which identifies areas in our region that can be protected, connected, or sensitively developed so that we achieve a region that is ecologically and economically sustainable.

On Saturday, April 13, local and national leaders in conservation, community development, resource management, and land use planning will consider how to best maintain the functioning landscapes that are critical to our country’s economic and ecological health. During a day-long conference, “*Large Landscape Conservation in Metropolitan America: Taking Stock and Shaping the Future*,” they will consider the latest and future trends in large landscape policy, practice, and performance throughout North America.

“We are proud to promote this national exchange of ideas,” said Melinda Pruett-Jones, Executive Director of Chicago Wilderness. “Meeting the enormous challenges and advancing the goals of large landscape conservation will not succeed without relevance to and support from metropolitan America.”

The workshop is hosted by the Metropolitan Greenspaces Alliance, a national network of conservation coalitions chaired by Chicago Wilderness, and the Practitioners’ Network for Large

Landscape Conservation. Other national sponsors include the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Center for Natural Resources and Environmental Policy, The University of Montana School of Natural Resources and Environment, University of Arizona, Regional Plan Association, and Sonoran Institute. Chicago Wilderness is one of several local sponsors including The Boeing Company, The Searle Fund at the Chicago Community Trust, Liberty Prairie Foundation, Openlands, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, The Field Museum, and Loyola University.

The workshop was planned to coincide with the American Planning Association's National Planning Conference, also taking place in Chicago from April 13 – 17 and featuring sessions on large landscape conservation.

Taking Stock and Shaping the Future will take place at the Loyola University School of Law from 8:00 am to 7:00 pm. The event is by invitation only. Individuals interested in attending or requesting a press pass should contact Catherine Game, Chicago Wilderness, at Catherine.game@chicagowilderness.org.

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Metropolitan Greenspaces Alliance (MGA)

The **Metropolitan Greenspaces Alliance** is a national network of conservation coalitions including Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Portland, Oregon, and San Francisco. MGA members include more than 550 private, nonprofit, and public organizations from these seven metropolitan regions. Members work together to promote a collaborative approach to urban conservation and address many critical issues facing metropolitan regions. www.chicagowilderness.org/mga

Practitioners' Network for Large Landscape Conservation

The Practitioners' Network for Large Landscape Conservation is an alliance of professionals and citizens engaged in leading, managing, researching, advocating, funding, educating or setting policy to advance large landscape conservation initiatives. <http://largelandscapenetwork.org/>

Chicago Wilderness

Chicago Wilderness is a regional alliance that connects people and nature. More than 260 public, private and corporate organizations work 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. The four key initiatives of Chicago Wilderness—to restore the health of local nature, promote green infrastructure, combat climate change, and leave no child inside—reflect our commitment to using science and emerging knowledge, as well as a collaborative approach to conservation, to benefit all the region's residents. For more information, visit www.chicagowilderness.org.