

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CHICAGO WILDERNESS AWARDED GRANT TO SUPPORT MIGHTY ACORNS PROGRAM

Chicago, IL – The **Chicago Wilderness** alliance received a grant from the **Illinois Department of Natural Resources Coastal Management Program** in support of the Mighty Acorns program and its goal to enhance environmental awareness and sustainability for Illinois’ residents. Governor Quinn announced the \$38,000 award to Chicago Wilderness at a public beach clean-up event hosted by the Alliance for the Great Lakes at Oak Street Beach.

The Mighty Acorns program introduces youth to nature through unique, hands-on experiences at local parks and forest preserves. Through Mighty Acorns, fourth through sixth graders learn about ecology while helping to restore natural areas. What they learn is reinforced through a classroom curriculum that helps them understand the importance of biodiversity. More than 8,000 school children across the region will have the chance to learn about nature while carrying out work to restore it. Each student will get outside three times per school year in this program. It impresses upon them the understanding that they can make a difference in improving the environment and quality of life for themselves and others.

With this grant Chicago Wilderness members, led by The Field Museum, will create a new curriculum that brings issues of wetland management to the forefront. The project will build the capacity of more than a dozen public agencies and conservation organizations to connect elementary and middle school Mighty Acorns students with nature and acquire an awareness and understanding of local habitat, ecosystem, and natural area restoration in the Illinois Coastal Zone and the broader Chicago Wilderness region.

“We are grateful for the support of the Illinois Coastal Management Program,” says Suzanne Malec-McKenna, Executive Director, Chicago Wilderness. “Mighty Acorns is a highly successful program and a terrific example of the exceptional, collaborative work of Chicago Wilderness members. We are excited for this opportunity to

enhance the curriculum and increase the number of students that connect with local nature.”

Mighty Acorns is the largest and longest running multi-agency environmental education program in the Chicago region. Since its inception in 1993, 90,000 students have participated in Mighty Acorns.

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Illinois Coastal Management Program

The Illinois Coastal Management Program received Federal approval from the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources Management on January 31, 2012 and is dedicated to protecting and managing the natural and cultural resources along our magnificent 63 mile stretch of Lake Michigan shoreline. For more information, visit <http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/cmp>.

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. The four key initiatives of Chicago Wilderness—to restore the health of local nature, promote green infrastructure, take climate action, and to 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.

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