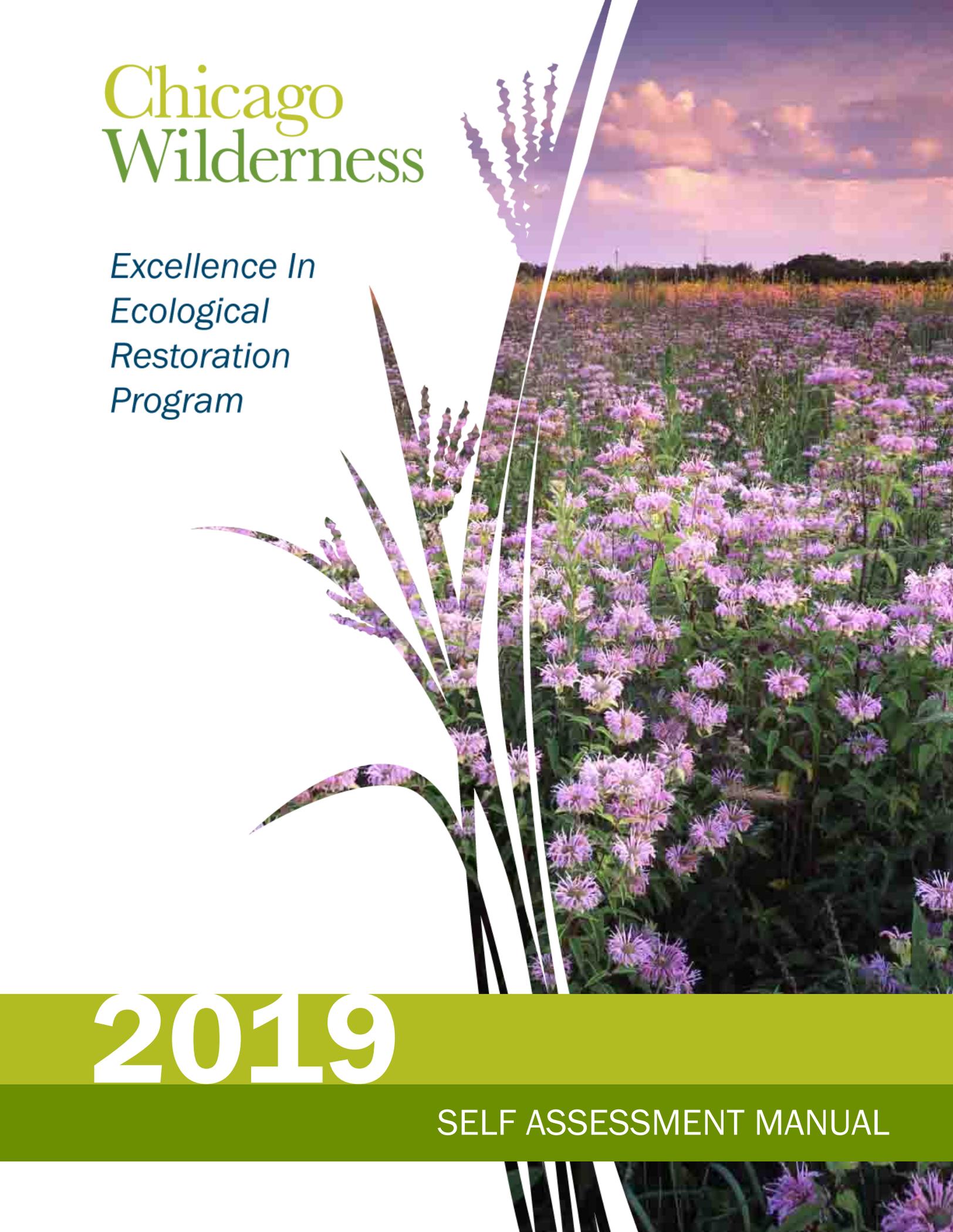


# Chicago Wilderness



*Excellence In  
Ecological  
Restoration  
Program*

# 2019

SELF ASSESSMENT MANUAL

## FOREWARD

*Imagine a region filled with life...*

*Where the evening air is rich with bird calls and the scent of flowers...*

*Where children splash and play in clean creeks, and peer below the surface of the water at fish and other aquatic creatures...*

*Where people learn to gently and respectfully enter back into a positive relationship with the nature that surrounds them...*

*And where rare plants, animals and natural communities are nurtured back to health and offered a permanent home next to our own – to benefit our health and our economy – in preserves large enough to sustain them forever.*

*This is the promise of the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan.*

—Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan, 1999

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Term: December 31, 2019

## INTRODUCTION

Chicago Wilderness is a regional alliance of organizations working together to restore nature and improve the quality of life for all who live here, by protecting the lands and waters on which we all depend.

One of the key initiatives of Chicago Wilderness is to restore the health of local nature, using the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan as our guide. Many Chicago Wilderness natural resource managers have led the way in ecological restoration, using science and on-the-ground experience to develop best practices. In an effort to recognize high-quality restoration sites and develop professional standards of excellence in natural resource management and ecological restoration, a Chicago Wilderness working group developed the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program. This accreditation program is administered by the Commission on Excellence in Ecological Restoration.

The primary purpose of the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program is to establish best management practices, which will improve ecological restoration management efforts in the Chicago Wilderness region and across the nation through a voluntary comprehensive assessment process. The Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program offers the following benefits beyond restoring the ecological health of a site:

- *Raises credibility for agencies and organizations restoring sites;*
- *Provides professional standards for both internal and external comparisons;*
- *Supports Chicago Wilderness initiatives;*
- *Demonstrates on-the-ground commitment to the Biodiversity Recovery Plan;*
- *Provides opportunity for self-assessment and continuous improvement through the application process;*
- *Educates staff and volunteers involved with the process;*
- *Provides recognition for excellence in management of natural communities and sites;*
- *Increases pride for work and builds confidence in managing sites for ecological health;*
- *Provides an opportunity for peer review, networking and education;*
- *Provides opportunity for updating and clarification of policies and procedures; and*
- *Ensures demonstrated practice is in alignment and on par with written policies and procedures.*

### **Eligibility**

The Chicago Wilderness' Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program is open to both Chicago Wilderness Member Organizations and Non-Member Organizations.

### **What is a Standard?**

A standard is a statement of desirable practice set forth by experienced and recognized professionals. Standards are an indirect measurement of effectiveness, using the cause and effect approach. Standards are not a quantitative measure of the availability of funds, land, personnel,

etc., but of operational practices which are desirable to provide the best management practices in ecological restoration.

### **Program Rationale and Development of the Standards**

The Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program addresses all eight of the high-level objectives outlined in the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan, and represents an evolutionary step from the 2006 “State of Our Chicago Wilderness: A Report Card on the Health of the Region’s Ecosystems.” The Chicago Wilderness report card served as an important assessment of the health of the region’s natural communities. While the report established important benchmarks on the condition of natural communities and other indicators, Chicago Wilderness leaders recognized that the regional conservation community lacked a process by which stakeholders could assess the adaptive management programs and quality of sites that met or exceeded best practice in natural resource restoration and management. These sites, if certified or accredited, could serve as models for excellence and examples of what the conservation community is striving for in its biodiversity recovery efforts. By establishing a self-assessment process, coupled with third-party accreditation review standards, Chicago Wilderness could recognize and celebrate best management practices in ecological restoration based upon the goals and objectives of the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan.

The working group spent over two years developing the standards for the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program. The group solicited input from a wide scope of Chicago Wilderness members including the Executive Council, Corporate Council, Coordinating Group, Science Team, and natural resource managers across the Chicago Wilderness region, and based their standards on the current science of restoration and documented best practice. The standards and site accreditation process were field-tested by numerous agencies and organizations with diverse characteristics.

With direct experience with other third-party assessment programs administered by state and national associations, working group members applied relevant information and knowledge from various accreditation/certification programs while developing Chicago Wilderness’ standards and procedures. What sets the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program apart from other third-party assessments is that its foundation is built upon the Biodiversity Recovery Plan for our region, and evaluates excellence based upon the plan’s stated objectives.

It is envisioned that the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program’s standards and process will be adapted to conform to new trends in the field. The Program requires that a comprehensive review of an accredited site will take place no less than every five years to ensure relevancy and clarity.

### **The Commission**

In July 2012, a Chicago Wilderness Commission on Excellence in Ecological Restoration was established to implement and administer the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program. The Commission is co-chaired by two members of Executive Council who recruit commissioners to be approved by Executive Council, and lead the Commission’s activities. The Commission is charged with identifying sites for Excellence in Ecological Restoration accreditation and recognition by the Chicago Wilderness alliance. The Commission reviews sites for accreditation and makes recommendations on qualifying sites to the Executive Council for approval once every two years and

assists with development of Restoration Roundtable Discussions highlighting those accredited sites in the off year of the accreditation.

The Commission consists of seven (7) to nine (9) commissioners serving staggered four-year terms.

- a. One (1) Representative from Chicago Wilderness Executive Council;
- b. Three (3) Natural Resource Professionals from Chicago Wilderness Member Organizations;
- c. Two (2) to five (5) At-Large Representatives from Chicago Wilderness Member Organizations;

Commissioners shall review on-line site nomination applications, visit nominated sites to ensure accurate reporting and compliance, provide recommendations for improvement to nominated sites, and establish accreditation policies, procedures, and standards. The Commission is augmented with an Advisory Panel consisting of professionals with expertise in the following disciplines: Hydrology, Entomology, Botany, Ornithology, Herpetology, Aquatics Biology, Soil Science, Malacology, and Wildlife Biology. The Commission receives staff support from Chicago Wilderness and will consult with members of the Advisory Panel as needed.

Cumulatively, Commissioner’s responsibilities will require approximately 20 hours of commitment per year.

**Application of Standards**

The Standards were selected to help agencies and organizations evaluate their overall effectiveness in managing ecological restoration efforts on a specific site. While it is recognized that each applicant agency/organization and its sites are unique, the standards can be applied to both public and private and small, medium and large agencies.

**Scope of the Standards**

The emphasis of the Standards is on the management of a site. The Standards are organized into five (5) categories:

Categories	Government	Non-Government Organizations
<b>Section 1: Landscape Context &amp; Site Features</b>	<b>46 points (15%)</b>	<b>46 points (16%)</b>
<b>Section 2: Management Practices</b>	<b>101 points (33%)</b>	<b>101 points (33%)</b>
<b>Section 3: Threat Assessment &amp; Action Plan</b>	<b>84 points (28%)</b>	<b>84 points (28%)</b>
<b>Section 4: Collaboration &amp; Resources</b>	<b>15 points (5%)</b>	<b>15 points (5%)</b>
<b>Section 5: Agency/Organization Programs, Practices, Policies &amp; Procedures</b>	<b>56 points (19%)</b>	<b>52 points (18%)</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>302 points (100%)</b>	<b>298 (100%)</b>

Each category is composed of a varying number of Standards and are weighted as to importance for scoring purposes, but all criterion identified in the Standards are pertinent to demonstrate the best management practices in ecological restoration. Some of the Standards from one category to another may appear to be repetitive. An applicant Agency or Organization must achieve 50% of scoring in Section 2 and Section 3.

## **Notes for Interpreting the Standards**

To assist in understanding the Standards, notes are provided for further explanation, direction or education.

### **Terminology**

**Active Management:** Active management means having a defined plan and having planned activities happening on the site in accordance with that plan. Such activities may include brush cutting, weed scouting including control of found weeds, hydrological restoration, deer control, prescribed burning, seeding, ecological monitoring as well as other management practices.

**Core Habitat:** An area within the site's preserve boundary composed of contiguous vegetation that is essential for the long-term survival and recovery of targeted species.

**Buffer Habitat:** An area within the site's preserve boundary that is being managed to buffer the core habitat owned and/or managed by the applicant. Lands used as a buffer helps protect a natural community from stresses while providing the benefits of open space.

**Protected Open Space:** Property owned by a public agency or private land trust (e.g., parks, conservation easements, etc.).

**Ecological Restoration:** The use of ecological management techniques such as prescribed burning, brush removal, exotic species control and water table restoration to re-establish natural processes, ecosystem structure and native compositional diversity.

### **Suggested Evidence of Compliance**

For each Standard there is a section "Suggested Evidence of Compliance." This is provided so that the applicant agency or organization may have a better understanding of what type of documentation will give evidence of meeting the Standards. It should be understood that these are only suggestions and that other documentation may be used to show efforts towards compliance. The burden of proof regarding compliance rests with the applicant agency or organization and appropriate documentation should be made available for review by the Commission during or immediately after the on-site field visit.

### **Site Certification**

The Standards were developed to recognize best management practices in ecological restoration. Site Certification is the recognition given by the authorized entity (Chicago Wilderness' Commission on Excellence in Ecological Restoration) that an agency/organization has met the standards designated as important to ensure the best biodiversity of the site. Site accreditation is awarded at four levels Bronze (50%), Silver (60%), Gold (70%) and Platinum (80%). Site designation is good for five years and then must be renewed.

## Application Process

An agency or organization interested in applying for site accreditation should be aware of the following steps necessary for completion of the site accreditation process. Applications will be accepted January 1, 2019 – March 31, 2019. Applicants are limited to submitting two sites for accreditation.

1. Applicant Agency or Organization downloads Excellence in Ecological Restoration Self-Assessment Standards Manual from the Chicago Wilderness website.
2. Applicant Agency or Organization reviews Excellence in Ecological Restoration Self-Assessment Standards Manual and independently determines if one or more of their sites are eligible and can comply with a sufficient number of criteria necessary for accreditation.
3. Applicant Agency or Organization completes formal on-line application along with a non-refundable application fee payable to Chicago Wilderness by March 31, 2019.

### Fee Schedule

Type	Fee	Notes
Chicago Wilderness Member Organization	\$100	
Non-Chicago Wilderness Member Organization within Chicago Wilderness Region	\$300	
Non-Chicago Wilderness Member Organization outside Chicago Wilderness Region and within Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin	\$1,500 plus site visit expenses	Not Yet Available – 2020

4. Commission reviews applications and selects number of agencies and organizations for on-site field visits and accreditation.
5. Applicant Agency or Organization hosts Commission for on-site field visit.
6. Commission reviews the findings of the on-site visit and sends a preliminary written report to the Applicant Agency or Organization.
7. Applicant Agency or Organization submits a written response to the Commission.
8. Commission reviews Applicant Agency or Organization response and formally acts to propose designation of accreditation at the appropriate level (bronze, silver, gold, platinum).
9. Commission submits recommendation to Chicago Wilderness Executive Council for approval.
10. Commission notifies Applicant Agency or Organization of level of achievement received and invites Applicant Agency or Organization to the Chicago Wilderness Annual Celebrating Nature Awards program for formal recognition.
11. Applicant Agency or Organization evaluates the process through an on-line assessment form.

12. Applicant Agency assists with, hosts or attends a Restoration Roundtable in 2020.
13. Applicant Agency or Organization can resubmit application for reassessment for higher level of recognition after two years of receiving initial designation.
14. Applicant Agency or Organization must resubmit site for re-accreditation after five (5) years.

### **Chicago Wilderness Force of Nature Awards**

The Chicago Wilderness Force of Nature Awards program will be held in November 2019. Details for the event will be forthcoming.

### **Publications Available**

- Self Assessment Manual for Excellence in Ecological Restoration  
A guide to standards for Chicago Wilderness Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program with interpretation notes, compliance suggestions and scoring.
- Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan

### **For Further Information**

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411 S. Wells Street, Suite 300  
Chicago, IL 60607  
Phone: 312-356-9990  
[chicagowilderness.org](http://chicagowilderness.org)

**SECTION 1: LANDSCAPE CONTEXT & SITE FEATURES**  
Prerequisite & Credits 1.0 – 1.10 [46 Possible Points]

**PR Prerequisites for Site Qualifications**

**Notes:** The site is owned, or otherwise protected, by a public agency or private organization dedicated to preserving and protecting lands with significant natural resources. The site is a natural area containing a remnant resource and/or a recreation that is more than 100 acres. The site is currently being managed and/or restored. The site has been under active management for the last five (5) years. Applications may only be submitted by the legal owner of the site; however, partners may assist in completing the application for the agency/organization.

**Credits:** Prerequisite

**1.0 Site Map**

**Notes:** There shall be a site map for the site being presented for consideration.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide an aerial map of the site showing the site boundaries and at least one (1) mile of the surrounding property. Label significant features, roadways, and clearly distinguish between the site's core habitat and buffer habitat areas, as defined by the applicant. The core habitat could be the entire site or a portion of the site. The buffer habitat is portions of the site or preserve outside the core habitat owned and/or managed by the applicant.

**Credits:** Prerequisite

**1.1 Chicago Wilderness Green Infrastructure Vision**

**Notes:** The site is located within the Chicago Wilderness regional green infrastructure network as identified in GIV 2.1.

[Chicago Wilderness \(www.chicagowilderness.org\)](http://www.chicagowilderness.org):

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Verification that the site is within a core, hub, corridor, or Resource Protection Area of the Chicago Wilderness green infrastructure network as defined by GIV 2.1.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points.  
0 points Site is not within the Chicago Wilderness green infrastructure network (GIV 2.1).  
5 points Site is within the Chicago Wilderness green infrastructure network (GIV 2.1).

## 1.2 Landscape Context

**Notes:** The site is within a matrix of open space preserves. Scoring is based on proximity of the applicant site to other protected open space.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3.38 and Chapter 5, Section 5.8

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide an aerial map showing the location of the site and its distance from other protected open space (this may be the same map as the prerequisite map given all the information can be clearly presented). Other properties need not be owned by the applicant. Provide a brief description of the site location and surrounding land uses in the text box provided. Protected Open space is defined as property owned by a public agency or private land trust (e.g., parks, conservation easements, etc.).

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points.

0 points Limited to no connectivity to protected open space. The applicant site is more than one (1) mile from other sites.

3 points Moderate connectivity to protected open space. The applicant site in less than one (1) mile from other protected open space.

5 points Excellent connectivity to protected open space. The applicant site is connected or immediately adjacent to other protected open space.

## 1.3 Preserve Size

**Notes:** The size of the entire preserve.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Mapped on prerequisite site map. Enter number of core habitat acres into box.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of seven (7) points.

0 points Preserve Size is <100 Acres.

3 points Preserve Size is 100 to 500 Acres.

5 points Preserve Size is 500 to 1000 Acres.

7 points Preserve Size is >1000 Acres.

## 1.4 Preserve Buffer

**Notes:** The size of the buffer is judged based on a ratio of the acres of buffer: acres of core habitat.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Include buffer habitat on site map. Enter ratio for acres of buffer habitat to acres of core habitat into text box. {Example: “20 acres of buffer: 100 acres of core habitat = .2” OR “200 acres of buffer: 100 acres of core habitat = 2”} Also provide a brief description of the buffer lands surrounding the site – 350 characters maximum.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points.

0 points Limited to no buffer (ratio < than 1:1).

3 points Moderate buffer (ratio 1:1).

5 points Excellent buffer (ratio 2:1).

## 1.5 Natural Communities

**Notes:** List the natural communities present on the site.

**Reference:** Terms can be found in the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 5 and Appendix 1, Table 4.7.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Check all that apply in column 1 (1.5a) enter the number of acres of each natural community in the text box. For columns 2-5 (1.5b) check all that apply.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points.

Column 1 (1.5a) is for informational purposes only and no credits are given.

1 point Presence of any Fifth Tier Community Type.

2 points Presence of any Fourth Tier Community Type.

3 points Presence of any Third Tier Community Type.

4 points Presence of any Second Tier Community Type.

5 points Presence of any First Tier (Highest) Community Type.

## 1.6 Dedicated State or Federal Preserve

**Notes:** Indicate whether or not applicant site or portion thereof has been dedicated as a State Nature Preserve (IL), enrolled in the Natural Heritage Program (IN), has a similar state designation (WI, MI), is a National Wildlife Refuge, or another level of natural area designation.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 8, Sections 8.2.3 and 8.2.4

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Please enter the name of the designations into the text box provided. Provide Site Visitation Team with a copy of a letter or certificate showing the designations.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of nine (9) points.

0 points No action taken to dedicate a portion of the site as a State/Federal Nature Preserve, Natural Heritage and/or Land and Water Reserve.

1 point Portions and/or entire site has other layers of protection (i.e., conservation easement, etc.).

3 points Site is dedicated as a Land and Water Reserve.

- 5 points Preliminary Approval submitted to and granted by State/Federal agency toward dedicating a portion of Site as a State/Federal Nature Preserve.
- 9 points Final Approval submitted to and granted by State/Federal Agency dedicating a portion of the site as a State/Federal Nature Preserve.

### 1.7 Protection of Federal/State Priority Areas

**Notes:** Indicate whether all or a portion of your site is listed as a federal/state inventory indication area (EPA – Advance Identification Wetland (ADIA), Illinois Natural Areas Inventory Site, etc.).

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 5, Section 5.8; Regional Greenways Plan for Northeast Illinois; and Natural Areas Plan for Southwestern Wisconsin

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** If site is listed as a federal/state inventory indication area, check “yes”. If you are unsure or site is not listed as a federal/state inventory indication area, check “no”. Please enter the type of federal/state inventory indication area in the text box. Provide Site Visitation Team with correspondence from state/federal agency showing the designations.

- Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of two (2) points.
- 0 points Portion of site not listed as a federal/state inventory identification (ADID Wetland, INAI, etc.).
  - 2 points Portion of site listed as a federal/state inventory identification.

### 1.8 Presence of Federal/State Listed Plant/Animal Species

**Notes:** Indicate if applicant site harbors Federal and/or State Threatened and/or Endangered species.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 7

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide the Site Accreditation Visitation Team with documentation of species names, dates, etc.

- Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points.
- 0 points No Federal/State Listed Plant/Animal Species present.
  - 3 points T/E State Listed Plant/Animal Species.
  - 5 points T/E State and/or Federal Listed Plant/Animal Species.

### 1.9 Other Designated Priority of Conservation Significance

**Notes:** Indicate if your site or a portion of site is designated a priority of conservation significance (i.e., certified as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society (<http://web4.audubon.org/bird/iba/>), watershed action plan, etc.) that is not covered elsewhere in this section.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Please enter the name of the designation in the text box. Provide Site Visitation Team with correspondence from agency awarding the designations.

- Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of one (1) point.
- 0 points Site or portion of site is not designated as an area of priority conservation significance.
- 1 point Site or portion of site has received designation as an area for priority conservation significance.

#### 1.10 Species of Greatest Need of Conservation Concern

**Notes:** Indicate whether your site contains species of greatest need of conservation concern as indicated in the State Wildlife Action Plan for your respective state.

**Reference:**

Illinois:

<https://dnr.state.il.us/ORC/WildlifeResources/theplan/PDFs/SGNC/SGNC%20list.pdf>

Indiana: [http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/files/fw-](http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/files/fw-Species_of_Greatest_Conservation_Need.pdf)

[Species of Greatest Conservation Need.pdf](http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/files/fw-Species_of_Greatest_Conservation_Need.pdf)

Michigan:

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/CO\\_Species\\_Summaries\\_Introduction\\_320198\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/CO_Species_Summaries_Introduction_320198_7.pdf)

Wisconsin: <http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/WildlifeHabitat/profiles.asp>

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide Site Visitation Team with documentation of species names, dates, etc.

- Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of two (2) points.
- 0 points Site does not contain species of greatest need of conservation concern as indicated in the State Wildlife Action Plan.
- 2 points Site contains species of greatest need of conservation concern as indicated in the State Wildlife Action Plan.

## **SECTION 2: MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

Prerequisite & Credits 2.0 – 2.3 [101 Possible Points]

### **Prerequisites for Site Qualifications**

#### **2.0 Management Plan**

**Notes:** A management plan should describe the sites condition, state desired conditions, and document the steps needed to attain the desired conditions goal. In addition to addressing the questions of where we are now, where we are trying to go, and what actions are needed, other important questions are: what natural processes have been disrupted, what human activities are causing problems, and how will progress be monitored? Threats to the ecological integrity of the site, as well as actions to address these threats, should be stated in the plan with the intent for the land manager to commit to those actions. Very often management success depends on one action interacting synergistically with another management action; therefore a good plan will include a timeline for sequencing. In many cases management actions are being undertaken by multiple partners or players (example paid contractors, volunteer stewards, staff); therefore, a good plan will specify responsible parties for each management action and serve as a template to coordinate between them. Site evaluation, monitoring, data analysis, and stakeholder feedback are just as important to adaptive management as on-the-ground labor; therefore a great plan will also include these elements, as well as public outreach and educational considerations. Plans can vary widely in terms of scope and timescale: the Chicago Wilderness standard of excellence recommends updates to accommodate adaptive management; accordingly this Evaluation recognizes the qualifying criteria that the candidate site has a plan which has been created or updated within the past five years.

Chicago Wilderness further encourages land management planning to incorporate climate change considerations. Such changes may include: considering the needs native species at the site which may be particularly vulnerable to climate change; considering the needs of the site in the face of possible climate-driven species loss/change; consider hydrological changes (flashier floods, drought, etc.) that may impact the site, and ways to adapt or mitigate. A complete list and explanation of Chicago Wilderness Climate Ready Action Recommendations can be found at web site ([www.chicagowilderness.org/what-we-do/climate-action/](http://www.chicagowilderness.org/what-we-do/climate-action/)).

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 9

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Attach a copy of Management Plan. Briefly list and describe any climate-ready action elements in your plan.

**Credits:** Having a Management Plan is a required pre-requisite for eligibility. The applicant's Management Plan will be evaluated and scored based on whether it includes the following eight (8) critical elements: (a) description of site condition, (b) description of desired site condition, (c) steps needed to attain the desired conditions, (d) goals, (e) monitoring, (f) adaptive management strategies, (g) climate ready strategies, and (h) timeline. Maximum of seventeen (17) points possible with two (2) points for each element incorporated in the plan

and one point for the plan adopted by the agency/organization.

2 points For each element incorporated into the Management Plan.

1 point Agency/Organization formal approval of the overall Management Plan.

## 2.1 Site Under Active Management

**Notes:** Indicate the % of the site which has been under active management for at least the last five (5) years. This means both that 1) management has been taking place for five years or longer, and also that 2) some management activity has taken place in the indicated area within the past five years.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 5, Section 5.8

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Copy of Annual Report and/or site map highlighting and stating what management has taken place.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of thirty (30) points.

4 points Less than 25% of the site is under active management.

8 points At least 25% but less than 50% of the site is under active management.

15 points At least 50% but less than 75% of the site is under active management.

30 points 75% or more of the site is under active management.

## 2.2 Inventory – Taxa Presence and Condition

**Notes:** Indicate what inventory surveys have been completed for the applicant site. An inventory documents the plants and animals present in the natural communities. It is the basis for understanding the species that may be affected by threats or management actions, and is an integral part of formulating an adaptive management strategy that meets the habitat and life-cycle needs of the plants and animals dependent on those communities being ecologically managed. Individual inventories often focus on a particular taxonomic group defined by the surveyor's field of expertise – a wildlife biologist surveys birds while a botanist surveys plants. A complete plan and adaptive management strategy would involve up-to-date inventories of all significant features and taxonomic groups.

For scoring purposes, this application categorizes inventories into several broad taxonomic groups: plants, birds, insects, reptiles and/or amphibians, fish, mussels and/or aquatic macroinvertebrates, and mammals.

For the purpose of this evaluation, we are considering those inventories which were conducted no longer than ten (10) years prior to the time of application.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 5, Section 5.9

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** List/check the taxonomic groups for which inventories were done, and state the date of completion.

**Credits:**

- A. Plant Surveys
- B. Bird Surveys
- C. Insect Surveys
- D. Reptile and/or Amphibian Surveys
- E. Fish Surveys
- F. Mussel, and/or Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Surveys
- G. Mammal Surveys
- H. Other

- 10 points if a baseline inventory of any taxa was completed.
- 11 points if a baseline inventory was done for two taxa groups.
- 12 points if a baseline inventory was done for three taxa groups.
- 13 points if a baseline inventory was done for four taxa groups.
- 14 points if a baseline inventory was done for five or more taxa groups.

### 2.3 Monitoring – Ecosystem Responses

**Notes:** Monitoring is conducted to measure change over time, and as such is an integral part of good adaptive management. Monitoring differs from an inventory in that it strives to gather data that is quantifiable, repeatable, and collected according to an objective protocol. Monitoring includes physical, chemical and biological. A plant inventory would scour the entire site to document all plants growing in it; a plant monitoring protocol would take place within a defined plot, or inside of quadrats placed along established transects. A butterfly inventory would visit the site many times to observe every conceivable butterfly emerging or arriving at the site throughout the year; butterfly monitoring might involve a timed walk along established monitoring routes a few times a year. A bird inventory could be pieced together by bird watchers, site stewards, and biologists uniting their collective sightings. Bird monitoring may involve timed point counts by trained experts adhering to a protocol that defines a fixed area for recording birds seen/heard near a particular consistent point. Some examples of monitoring within Chicago Wilderness include Illinois CTAP, breeding bird survey point counts, butterfly monitoring transect walks, River Watch, and calling frog surveys.

Similar to the inventories section, for scoring purposes, this application categorizes monitoring into several broad taxonomic groups: plants, birds, insects, reptiles and/or amphibians, fish, mussels and/or aquatic macroinvertebrates, and mammals as well as a category for other to include soil, physical stream monitoring, water quality, hydrology, light, and ground water monitoring.

Because it is important that monitoring take place often enough to document changes as part of an important adaptive management strategy, this evaluation considers only monitoring that has taken place within the past five (5) years.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 5, Section 5.8

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** List/check the taxonomic groups for which monitoring was done, and state the date of completion.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of forty (40) points. Five (5) points will be added for each taxa group:

- A. Plant Monitoring
- B. Bird Monitoring
- C. Insect Monitoring
- D. Reptile and/or Amphibian Monitoring
- E. Fish Monitoring
- F. Mussel, and/or Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Monitoring
- G. Mammal Monitoring
- H. Other (e.g., soil, physical stream monitoring, water quality, hydrology, light and ground water monitoring, etc.)

## **SECTION 3: THREAT ASSESSMENT & ACTION PLAN**

### **Credits 3.0 – 3.12 [84 Possible Points]**

#### **3.0 Hydrologic Change**

**Notes:** Altered hydrology is a severe threat to a number of natural communities including wetlands, prairies, flatwoods and dolomite cliffs. There are a number of sources of hydrologic change that result from urban and suburban development, nearby mining activities, paving of recharge areas, and past or present agricultural use on or near our natural areas. To effectively manage and restore our natural communities, resource managers must be aware of these actual or potential impacts and mitigate or remove them when possible. Without addressing hydrologic impacts or alterations, the quality of our natural communities will likely decline over time.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (5.7.1 Hydrological Change)

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how the natural hydrology on the site has been altered, what steps they have taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include drain tile removal or alteration, dechannelization of streams, filling in constructed drainage ditches, acquisition and/or restoration of buffer recharge areas, management of flows coming from adjacent properties, incorporating permeable materials or other infiltration measures into construction projects and reversal of historical topographic changes or those resulting from sedimentation.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. As part of this visit, applicants should provide evidence of any work that has been completed. Each threat is worth two (2) points. Applicant's score may be reduced due to lack of appropriate practices to address the threat. Additional points may be achieved depending upon the prioritization of Hydrologic Change amongst all the threats associated at the site.

#### **3.1 Fragmentation**

**Notes:** Fragmentation threatens natural communities that were once more wide spread such as prairies, savannas, woodlands and upland forests. It is somewhat of a lesser threat to smaller natural communities although some species may still suffer a loss of genetic variability if migration patterns are disrupted. Fragmentation is caused by many forms of human development including those outside the control of natural management agencies as well as their own developments such as roadways and trails. Fragmentation may also result from natural processes that reduce the size and contiguousness of remnant community types such as woody encroachment into prairies. Fragmentation impacts not only the size of natural communities but also may affect the manner in which agencies can manage the remaining isolated patches.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (5.7.2 Fragmentation)

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how fragmentation has affected the site, what steps have been taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include purchase of property or conservation easements to buffer natural areas and provide dispersal corridors, habitat restoration to join fragmented natural areas, entering management agreements with adjacent land owners, reintroduction of species to former habitats that have been fragmented from the primary population, placing trails and other infrastructure to minimize fragmentation, natural area restoration within the site to join smaller fragmented communities, removal of man-made impediments such as roadways, dams, fence rows or utility corridors, or incorporating specialized wildlife crossings into the fragmenting road ways, dams, railroads or trails.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. As part of this visit, applicants should provide evidence of any work that has been completed. Each threat is worth two (2) points. Applicant's score may be reduced due to lack of appropriate practices to address the threat. Additional points may be achieved depending upon the prioritization of Fragmentation amongst all the threats associated at the site.

### 3.2 Altered Fire Regime

**Notes:** Fire was once a natural disturbance across the entire Chicago Wilderness region. While landscape features may have protected some pockets, all of the community types evolved in the presence of fire. Lack of fire has or altered fire regimes have led to the degradation of most natural community types. Lack of fire is most threatening to the forested, prairie and savanna communities. Fire is being used as a management tool at a rate far below what is necessary to sustain healthy natural communities. This may be caused by a lack of human or financial resources and the lack of public understanding of the importance of fire as a natural area management tool. Suppression or lack of fire can lead to canopy closure in woodlands, a rise in exotic species and a loss of species leading to declines in biodiversity.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (5.7.3 Altered Fire Regimes)

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how the lack of fire has affected the site, what steps have been taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include use of fire as a management tool, including adapting fire intensity, seasonality, and timing to achieve management goals and community effects. Other actions may include mitigating past fire suppression and altered fire regimes by thinning of canopy and understory trees, removal of invading shrubs or exotic species, prescribed mowing, haying, or grazing to suppress woody

invasion and thin herbaceous material, the use of other control methods including herbicides, or introducing other periodic disturbances to mimic the effects of fire.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. As part of this visit, applicants should provide evidence of any work that has been completed. This section is worth two (2) points and may receive additional points depending on the prioritization of an Altered Fire Regime amongst all the threats associated at the site.

### 3.3 Loss of Structural Integrity

**Notes:** For many animals, the structure, or spatial arrangement of the community elements is very important. A loss of structural integrity typically results from the loss of natural disturbance and then the lack of management to mimic these processes. Limitations on the use of fire, a rise in invasive species, overabundance of deer and lack of native grazers may all contribute to a loss in the structural integrity of our natural communities.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (5.7.4 Loss of Structural Diversity)

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how or if a Loss of Structural Integrity has affected the site, what steps have been taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include use of fire as a management tool, removal of invasive species, reintroduction or management of naturally occurring species, managing the grass height and shrub density of grasslands, managing the density, species composition, and age structure of savanna and forest trees, prescribed mowing, haying, or grazing, managing the vegetation and substrate of riparian and aquatic communities, reintroduction of native grazers, and animal control activities.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. Each threat is worth two (2) points. Applicant's score may be reduced due to lack of appropriate practices to address the threat. Additional points may be achieved depending upon the prioritization of Loss of Structural Integrity amongst all the threats associated at the site.

### 3.4 Nutrient Loading

**Notes:** Excess nutrients in a natural system are often a stress to the plants adapted to that system. Many native plants do not compete well against invasive plants at higher nutrient levels. Excess nutrients typically entered a system through agricultural run-off, urban and suburban run-off and air pollution.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (5.7.5 Nutrient Loading)

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how Nutrient Loading has affected the site, what steps have been taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include installation of bio-filtration systems, re-routing of point source run-off inputs, working with adjacent land owners to address discharge or acquisition of and restoration of buffer lands.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. As part of this visit, applicants should provide evidence of any work that has been completed. Each threat is worth two (2) points. Applicant's score may be reduced due to lack of appropriate practices to address the threat. Additional points may be achieved depending upon the prioritization of Nutrient Loading amongst all the threats associated at the site.

### 3.5 Increased Contaminants or Pollutants

**Notes:** Increased Contaminants or Pollutants are a possible threat in all communities, but is recognized primarily in the wetter ones including some prairies, wetlands, marshes and floodplain forests. A major contaminant affecting many communities is increased salinity due to road salt, both airborne and dissolved.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (5.7.6 Increased Salinity)

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how Increased contaminants or pollutants have affected the site, what steps have been taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include installation of bio-filtration systems, physical barriers in areas with high airborne salt concentrations, rerouting of road-way run off, working with road agencies to reduce or minimize salt use where it most highly impacts natural areas, or minimizing salt use in parking lots and roadways operated by the land management agency.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. As part of this visit, applicants should provide evidence of any work that has been completed. Each threat is worth two (2) points. Applicant's score may be reduced due to lack of appropriate practices to address the threat. Additional points may be achieved depending upon the prioritization of Increased Salinity amongst all the threats associated at the site.

### 3.6 Erosion and Increased Sedimentation

**Notes:** Erosion and increased sedimentation are caused by a variety of problems typically associated with urban and suburban development and agriculture. Development can create large quantities but it typically experienced over a shorter period (one to two years) where agriculture can produce large quantities over an extended period unless conservation measures are adopted. Invasive species may also cause exposed soil conditions in natural

areas which may lead to increased erosion. Excessive sedimentation is of greatest threat to streams, lakes and low-lying areas including wetlands, floodplain forests, and vernal ponds in flatwoods and other forested communities.

While erosion and sedimentation are natural processes along the lakeshore, if these processes are disrupted, erosion becomes a threat, as in the case of pannes. Recreational pressures and storms may also affect pannes when the natural processes are disrupted.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3.3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (5.7.7 Erosion and Increased Sedimentation)

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how Erosion and Increased Sedimentation have affected the site, what steps have been taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include acquisition and restoration of upland areas to reduce sedimentation, removal of sediments in impacted areas, using cover crops or native vegetation to minimize erosion, managing stream channels to reduce bank erosion, increasing forest floor light levels and herbaceous density in sloping woodlands, and installing erosion prevention measures including bio-swales.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. As part of this visit, applicants should provide evidence of any work that has been completed. Each threat is worth two (2) points. Applicant's score may be reduced due to lack of appropriate practices to address the threat. Additional points may be achieved depending upon the prioritization of Erosion and Increased Sedimentation amongst all the threats associated at the site.

### 3.7 Invasive Species

**Notes:** Invasive species are a threat to almost every community type in the Chicago Wilderness region to their alteration of the species composition. These invasive species have been brought into the region either intentionally or unintentionally by human actions. Most non-native species are not invasive, the few that are, are often aided by having few if any predators or diseases that held them in balance in their native habitat. Some native species may also become invasive when they move into habitats that did not originally contain them due to human introduction, disruption in natural processes or lack of management. Natural communities which are under stresses including, but not limited to, nutrient loading, hydrological change and soil compaction, are most threatened.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3.3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (5.7.8 Invasive Species)

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how Invasive Species have affected the site, what steps have been taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include control of buckthorn, bush honeysuckle, garlic mustard, and earthworms in forest communities and savannas,

control of non-native grasses, sweet clover, crown vetch, teasel, leafy spurge, knotweed and invasive shrubs in prairies, control of giant reed, purple loosestrife, buckthorn, hybrid cattail, reed canary grass and carp in wetlands and control of other invaders in other community types. Applicants should also describe the control methods associated with each. Potential control methods can be chemical, physical, or biological.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. As part of this visit, applicants should provide evidence of any work that has been completed. Each threat is worth two (2) points. Applicant's score may be reduced due to lack of appropriate practices to address the threat. Additional points may be achieved depending upon the prioritization of Invasive Species amongst all the threats associated at the site.

### **3.8 Overabundance of Deer and Other Animal Species**

**Notes:** A major concern for forested and savanna communities is deer overabundance resulting from the absence of natural predators, the shrinking of available habitat due to development and lack of management. The primary effects of overabundant deer are reduction or elimination of some herbaceous plants and selection against certain woody species including oaks leading to increased maple, white ash and ironwood. Deer often harm species of conservation concern. Overabundant deer are also a severe threat to high-dune communities and a threat to prairie restoration and management. Overabundant voles are a threat to prairie and savanna communities. These small mammals can reduce or eliminate certain forb species, and kill the seedlings of oaks and other native trees. Other animal species may also cause threats such as nest predation and nest parasitism by house cats, raccoons or brown-headed cowbirds.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3.3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (5.7.9 Overabundance of Deer and Other Animal Species)

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how an Overabundance of Deer and Other Animal Species have affected the site, what steps have been taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include monitoring deer and other animal impacts, removal of deer and control of other species.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. As part of this visit, applicants should provide evidence of any work that has been completed. Each threat is worth two (2) points. Applicant's score may be reduced due to lack of appropriate practices to address the threat. Additional points may be achieved depending upon the prioritization of Overabundance of Deer and Other Animal Species amongst all the threats associated at the site.

### 3.9 Site Use and Encroachments

**Notes:** Some natural communities may be affected by planned or unplanned site use and by encroachments from off-site. These may include both recreational and operational uses that impact the natural area including, the siting of amenities, trampling, collection, poaching, dumping, allowance of pets, sound and light pollution, non-point source pollution or soil compaction. In some instances managers may have inherited these uses with the site in other cases; they are planned and allowed by ordinances or land use policies.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3.3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (5.7.9 Overabundance of Deer and Other Animal Species)

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how Site Use and Encroachments have affected the site, what steps have been taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include development of land use and development plans to protect natural areas, strict enforcement of ordinances, developing effective signage, developing working relationships with neighbors and stakeholders, intervening in adjacent existing or proposed developments and removal or restriction of certain uses to protect natural areas.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. As part of this visit, applicants should provide evidence of any work that has been completed. Each threat is worth two (2) points. Applicant's score may be reduced due to lack of appropriate practices to address the threat. Additional points may be achieved depending upon the prioritization of Site Use and Encroachments amongst all the threats associated at the site.

### 3.10 Lack of Genetic Flow Between Populations

**Notes:** A lack of genetic flow between natural populations may occur due to a site's isolation, small population sizes, or inadequate populations of native pollinators. Inbreeding depression can result from a lack of genetic flow and significant reductions in viable offspring can occur. For rare or sensitive species, this can result in a drop in the population levels and the eventual extirpation of the species.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3.3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how a Lack of Genetic Flow Between Populations has affected the site, what steps have been taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include introduction of new individuals or propagules from a different population, management actions to increase the population size or acquisition and restoration of properties to link isolated populations.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. As part of this visit, applicants should provide evidence of any work that has been completed. Each threat is worth two (2) points. Applicant's score may be reduced due to lack of appropriate practices to address the threat. Additional points may be achieved depending upon the prioritization of Lack of Genetic Flow Between Populations amongst all the threats associated at the site.

### 3.11 Other Threats

**Notes:** There may be other threats to sites such as major public works projects, oil spill, hazardous material release, mosquito abatement, adjacent development proposals, reduction in financial or personnel resources or restrictions on the use of certain management techniques. These may be site specific or organizationally based but affect the overall ability of the organization to properly manage the natural resources under threat.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 3, Section 3.3 (3.3.10 Stresses on Ecological Communities) and Chapter 5, Section 5.7 (5.7.10 Other Threats)

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Applicants should briefly describe how any Other Treats have affected the site, what steps have been taken to address or mitigate those impacts and the positive or negative effects of those actions. Actions may include a proactive approach to adjacent land use planning, mitigation for impacts from public works projects, amending or developing revised policies and procedures, public outreach or identifying and securing outside funding for management work.

**Credits:** Applicants should rate the level of the actions they have taken to address this threat on a scale from None to Excellent. Scoring will be based on the applicants self assessment but will be verified through a field visit by the Commission. As part of this visit, applicants should provide evidence of any work that has been completed. Each threat is worth two (2) points. Applicant's score may be reduced due to lack of appropriate practices to address the threat. Additional points may be achieved depending upon the prioritization of Other Threats amongst all the threats associated at the site.

### 3.12 Threat Prioritization

**Notes:** Applicants should rank the threats in the foregoing Sections 3.0-3.11 from highest to lowest priority. The highest priority threats and the applicant's actions toward them will be used to determine a final scoring for this section. The three (3) highest priority threats will be scrutinized and verified by the Commission based on the field visit and in discussion with the applicant. Up to sixty (60) points will be awarded based on those three (3) highest priority threats and the level of accomplishment by the applicant. It should be noted that the Commission may determine that highest priority threats may not have been appropriately determined by the applicant and may be changes. This determination may affect the distribution of points.

**Credits:** Sixty (60) points will be awarded for this credit. For each of the three highest priority

threats points will be awarded based on the success of the applicant's actions. None will result in a score of zero (0) points, moderate success will result in a score of ten (10) points and excellent success will result in a score of twenty (20) points for each of the highest priority threats.

0 points None

10 points Moderate

20 points Excellent

## **SECTION 4: COLLABORATION OF RESOURCES**

### **Credits 4.0 – 4.2 [15 Possible Points]**

#### **4.0 Resource/Partnership Collaboration**

**Notes:** Indicate if there is resource or partnership collaboration on your site, the level of collaboration activity, and evidence of positive outcomes.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a brief description (500 character maximum) of the partnership and its outcomes. Indicate the level of resource and partnership collaboration at the applicant site - None, Limited, Limited to Moderate, Moderate, Moderate to Excellent, Excellent.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points. The number of points awarded will be determined by the Commission.

0 points	None
1 point	Limited
2 points	Limited to Moderate
3 points	Moderate
4 points	Moderate to Excellent
5 points	Excellent

#### **4.1 Innovation – Resource Management**

**Notes:** Indicate whether your organization has deployed innovative ecological restoration management strategies at the site.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a brief description (500 character maximum) of innovative management strategies used and their outcome. Indicate the level of success the innovative strategies deployed had on the site - None, Limited, Limited to Moderate, Moderate, Moderate to Excellent, Excellent.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points. The number of points awarded will be determined by the Commission.

0 points	None
1 point	Limited
2 points	Limited to Moderate
3 points	Moderate
4 points	Moderate to Excellent
5 points	Excellent

## 4.2 Research

**Notes:** Indicate whether there has been ecological restoration research conducted at the site.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a brief description (500 character maximum) of the research activity and any known outcomes. Indicate the level or importance of the research conducted on the site – None, Limited, Limited to Moderate, Moderate, Moderate to Excellent, Excellent.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points. The number of points awarded will be determined by the Commission.

0 points	None
1 point	Limited
2 points	Limited to Moderate
3 points	Moderate
4 points	Moderate to Excellent
5 points	Excellent

**SECTION 5: AGENCY/ORGANIZATION PROGRAMS, PRACTICES,  
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**Credits 5.0 – 5.3 [56/52 Possible Points]**

**5.0 Agency/Organization Programs, Practices, Policies and Procedures**

- A. Land Acquisition and Preservation Policy
- B. Prescribed Burn Policy
- C. Seed Use and Genetic Diversity Policy
- D. Seed Collection Policy
- E. Wildlife Propagation Policy
- F. Nuisance/Invasive Wildlife Species Policy
- G. Nuisance/Invasive Plant Species Policy
- H. Land Use Policy
- I. Agricultural/Cropland Conversion Policy
- J. Wetland Mitigation Policy
- K. Conservation Easement Policy
- L. Other

**Notes:** These credits apply differently to NGOs and governmental agencies. These discrepancies will be addressed through a dynamic scoring system, which will change the total number of points available for each type of agency. The agency/organization will have adopted a Land Acquisition and Preservation Policy, Prescribed Burn Policy, Seed Use and Genetic Diversity Policy, Seed Collection Policy, Wildlife Propagation Policy, Nuisance/Invasive Wildlife Species Policy, Nuisance/Invasive Plant Species Policy, Land Use Policy, Agricultural/Cropland Conversion Policy, Wetland Mitigation Policy, Conservation Easement Policy, or other policies of importance to Ecological Restoration.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:**

- a. Copy of board approved policy.
- b. Copy of minutes indicating board approval of policy.
- c. Copy of procedure.
- d. Date of approval.
- e. Evidence of distribution to staff and/or volunteers and training on policy.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of twenty-two (22) points [two (2) points per policy].

0 point No program, policy and procedure.

1 point Demonstrated practice follows written administrative rules/procedure

2 points Demonstrated practice follows board approved policy.

**5.1 General Use Ordinance/Rules & Regulations**

- A. General Use Ordinance/Rules & Regulations

**Notes:** Governmental agencies/organizations will have a Board adopted General Use Ordinance or Administrative Rules/Procedures in lieu of a policy. NGO's will have formally adopted Rules & Regulations to protect the site's natural integrity.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:**

- a. Copy of board approved policy.
- b. Copy of minutes indicating board approval of policy.
- c. Date of approval.
- d. Evidence of distribution to staff and/or volunteers and training on policy.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of two (2) points.

0 points None

1 point Demonstrative practice follows written Administrative Rules/Procedures.

2 points Board adopted Ordinance and demonstrated practice follows board approved policy.

**5.2 Plans**

- A. Biodiversity Recovery Plan (NGOs/Governments)
- B. Green Infrastructure Vision (NGOs/Governments)
- C. Agency/Preserve Master Plan (Governments)
- D. Capital Improvement Plan (Governments)
- E. Land Acquisition Plan (NGOs/Governments)
- F. Other (NGOs/Governments)

**Notes:** The applicant agency or organization should have Board adopted comprehensive plans or has adopted similar plans created by others such as Chicago Wilderness, local or county agencies or region-wide organizations.

- A. Biodiversity Recovery Plan
- B. Green Infrastructure Vision
- C. Agency/Preserve Master Plan
- D. Capital Improvement Plan
- E. Land Acquisition Plan
- F. Other

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:**

- a. Copy of board approved plan(s) which includes goals, plans and recommendations.
- b. Copy of minutes indicating board approval of plan(s).
- c. Evidence of the use of the plan(s)
- d. Evidence that plan has been reviewed in the last five (5) years with input from staff and board.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of twelve (12) points for Governmental Agencies/Organizations and maximum of eight (8) points for NGOs [two (2) points per plan].

- 0 points None
- 1 point Other Agencies
- 2 points Agency

### 5.3 GIS and Data Base

- A. Agency-wide GIS
- B. Ecological Data Base

**Notes:** The applicant agency or organization has a comprehensive GIS and Ecological Data-Base.

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:**

- a. Verification on site visit by Commission.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points.

- 0 points No evidence of comprehensive Agency-wide GIS or Ecological Data Base.
- 2 points Evidence of comprehensive Agency-wide GIS or Ecological Data Base.
- 5 points Evidence of comprehensive Agency-wide GIS and Ecological Data Base

### 5.4 Volunteer Stewardship Program

**Notes:** There are many values and benefits to utilization of volunteers, in addition to supplementing leadership when there are financial budgetary resources and/or limited organizational capacity. The Volunteer Stewardship Program will include the following components:

- A. Volunteer Utilization  
Volunteers should be utilized by the applicant agency/organization for functions such as assisting with the management, monitoring and restoration of the site, education, public relations, and promotion.
- B. Recruitment, Selection, Orientation, Training, Certification & Retention  
There should be an ongoing recruitment, selection, orientation, training, certification and retention program for volunteers.
- C. Supervision and Evaluation  
Volunteers should be monitored, provided in-service training opportunities and be evaluated regarding performance.
- D. Recognition  
There should be a program to recognize volunteers for their service.
- E. Risk Management/Liability  
Volunteers should be covered for negligence liability by the agency/organization.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 11, Section 11.4

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:**

- a. Provide a list of functions in which volunteers are used and the extent of such utilization (i.e., job description).
- b. Provide description of recruitment, selection, orientation and retention procedures.
- c. Provide written description of the monitoring system, current practices for supervisory oversight, in-service training and evaluation process.
- d. Provide a description of the nature of the recognitions given, including awards and public recognition.
- e. Provide copy of documentation indicating coverage.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points.

0 points None

3 points Evidence of Comprehensive Volunteer Program and Workday Opportunities at the Site.

5 points Evidence of a Comprehensive Volunteer Program and Stewardship Program at the Site.

**5.5 Environmental Education Program Active at the Site**

**Notes:** The applicant agency or organization has self-guided or naturalist led programs at the site.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 10

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of Program Guides, Program Plan, Program Evaluations, Informational Boards, etc.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points.

0 points No Programs.

3 points Self-Guided Opportunities.

5 points Naturalist Led Programs.

**5.6 Public Outreach**

A. Comprehensive Public Outreach Geared Toward Ecological Restoration

B. Site Specific Interpretation and Outreach

**Notes:** To operate effectively, an agency/organization must have the support of the community in regards to ecological restoration. An agency/organization can obtain such support by informing the public and news media of its activities and its importance to the biodiversity of the region. The applicant agency or organization should be committed to proactively communicating the benefits of ecological restoration to its constituents/members and the general public. There should be a Public Outreach Plan and/or written statement regarding the role of public outreach.

**Reference:** Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan Chapter 10

**Suggested Evidence of Compliance:** Provide a copy of the Public Outreach Plan and provide examples of its implementation.

**Credits:** This credit is worth a maximum of five (5) points.

0 points No site specific interpretation and public outreach of restoration efforts.

3 points Moderate efforts toward site specific interpretation and public outreach of restoration efforts.

5 points Comprehensive efforts toward site specific interpretation and public outreach of restoration efforts.