

Background Information Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD)

What does the OSLAD program mean Illinois land acquisition efforts?

- The OSLAD program is a 50-50 matching program with local units of government providing at least 50% of the required funding. The state's investment leverages at least on a 2 to 1 basis donations of land at the local level saving taxpayers literally millions of dollars.
- Since its inception in 1986, the OSLAD program has acquired 8,631 acres of land in Illinois for parks, open spaces, and natural areas. These properties have been saved from development and are now available for public recreation.
- In the past three years alone, the OSLAD program has acquired 1,860 acres of open space and parkland for the people of Illinois.
- Currently the state of Illinois ranks 48th among the 50 states in public open space, per capita. With the proposed cuts and elimination of conservation funding, Illinois will fall even further behind.

How is the OSLAD program funded?

- The OSLAD program is NOT funded through the state's General Operating Budget.
- In 1989, in order to help ensure more stable and predictable funding, a portion of the revenues derived from the state's Real Estate Transfer Tax was specifically dedicated for the OSLAD program.

What impact has the OSLAD program had on park development in Illinois?

- 94 of Illinois' 102 counties have received OSLAD grant funding.
- A total of more than \$197 million has been awarded to local park and recreation agencies since 1986 through the OSLAD program. These dollars have been matched by local tax dollars and private donations with the local investment providing more than 60 percent of the funding. This is a clear demonstration that state dollars provide strong leverage for local investment through the OSLAD program.
- Demand for OSLAD funds has far outpaced availability. Between 1986 and 2004, more than \$366 million was requested. Only about 54 percent of that total was awarded. The need for funding is overwhelming.

- Recent studies show that one of the greatest contributors to habitat fragmentation is sprawl. Illinois, the sixth most populous state, is losing more than 130 acres a day, or 41,420 acres of farmland each year to sprawl. Illinois' suburban fringes are undergoing a rapid transformation as its population seeks larger lot sizes away from urban centers. Without the protection of open space, on an ongoing basis, opportunities for preservation will be lost forever.

Do the people of Illinois place a value on parks and open space?

- According to a statewide opinion poll, conducted by Richard Day Research of Evanston, 95 percent of Suburban Cook and collar county residents believe that their community is developing too fast and that open space should be preserved for future generations.
- Nearly half of the Suburban Cook and collar county residents polled believe that there are no more important issues in their community than the protection of open space.
- 93 percent of the residents in Suburban Cook and the collar counties believe that parks and open space help improve their property values.

Key Findings—Illinois Land at Risk—A statewide Assessment of Public Park and Green Space Needs (a report developed by the Trust for Public Lands and the Illinois Association of Park Districts)

- In order to meet public demand for parks and open space, local and state agencies would need to acquire over 83,000 acres over the next five years.
- The Chicago Park District plans acquisition of 250 additional acres at a projected cost of \$550 million.
- Renovation and/or restoration funding needs for existing parks and recreation facilities in Illinois are estimated in excess of \$600 million.
- The need to preserve open and natural lands is great. In 2002, Illinois state and local units of government identified open space and recreation land acquisition needs totaling almost \$1.2 billion.