



## City Forest Credits Carbon Preservation Project Application

### 1. Project Name

Fitzgerald Road Preservation Project

### 2. Project Type

Preservation

### 3. Project Location

*Project must be in or adjacent to one of the following. Describe which one of the criteria the project meets and provide name of city, town, or jurisdiction where project is located.*

- "Urban Area" per Census Bureau maps; see <https://www.census.gov/geographies/reference-maps/2010/geo/2010-census-urban-areas.html>
- An incorporated or unincorporated city or town
- A planning area for a regional metropolitan planning agency or entity
- Land owned, designated, and used by a municipal or quasi-municipal entity for source water or watershed protection
- A transportation or utility right of way through one of above

The project is located in Rockford Township, unincorporated City of Rockford, Illinois and is within the boundaries of the Region 1 Planning Commission (R1PC) for Rockford.

Parcel Numbers: 151-92-26-012 & 152-01-02-001

### 4. Project Operator

*Provide name of organization/entity, and contact information*

*Organization/Entity:* Natural Land Institute  
*Address:* 320 S. Third St.  
*City:* Rockford  
*State:* Illinois  
*Zip:* 61104

*Contact(s):* Kerry Leigh  
*Phone:* 815-964-6666  
*Email:* [kleigh@naturalland.org](mailto:kleigh@naturalland.org)

Jill Kennay  
815-964-6666  
[jkennay@naturalland.org](mailto:jkennay@naturalland.org)

## 5. Project Description

*Provide short narrative of the overall project goals, project acreage, land ownership, forest characteristics, and land use/zoning*

The Fitzgerald Road Preservation Project (the Project) is a 21.1 acre Project Area on a 42.28 acre property that is part of a larger complex of protected lands. Natural Land Institute (NLI) is seeking to preserve the Project, creating substantial conservation and community benefits including carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat and open space protection. The surrounding land is facing a continued threat of urban expansion from the City of Rockford.

Preservation of the Project is important as our urban wooded lands are becoming increasingly fragmented and rare in Winnebago County due to urban development pressures and agricultural development.

The Project has dry-mesic upland Oak Hickory forest consisting of *Carya ovata* (shagbark hickory), *Ostrya virginiana* (ironwood), *Quercus alba* (white oak), *Quercus rubra* (red oak), *Quercus velutina* (black oak), and *Viburnum prunifolium* (black-haw). The wet-mesic floodplain forest on the east side is predominantly *Acer saccharinum* (silver maple), *Celtis occidentalis* (hackberry), *Fraxinus pennsylvanica* (green ash), *Quercus macrocarpa* (burr oak), and *Ulmus americana* (American elm). The Project consists of 90% canopy cover with 9 acres of mature, ~150 year old trees in the northern portion, 7.85 acres of ~95 year old trees mainly in the western portion and 4.25 acres in the west and eastern portions of ~75 year old trees. The project is zoned Agriculture but it hasn't been farmed for several years.

The Natural Land Institute's (NLI) overall goal is to protect the Project area in perpetuity through fee simple acquisition, and with a conservation easement deed restriction. NLI is a not-for-profit Conservation Land Trust since 1958, with extensive experience in land management and conservation easements. Our portfolio consists of holding and monitoring over 40 conservation easements and managing over 3,000 acres of fee land properties. Over its history, NLI has protected over 18,000 acres of natural land. NLI will ensure the Project's natural resources are upheld to the standards identified in the conservation easement restrictions. This legal protection and stewardship monitoring granted through the easement terms will ensure continued provision of conservation benefits for future generations.

## 6. Project Impacts

*Provide short narrative of the impacts this project will achieve. Examples include how the project addresses increased access to green spaces for under-resourced communities, flood control, watershed protection, human health benefits, recreation or bird and wildlife habitat.*

The impacts of this project will offer residents of Winnebago and surrounding counties several community and conservation benefits.

Human Health Benefits: The Project's forest will assist with flood mitigation and function as a groundwater re-charge area, assisting with reducing erosion and sedimentation of the streams from reduced runoff, and with maintaining a base stream flow from infiltrated precipitation. This will re-charge our drinking water aquifer and assist with water quality. This will keep the stormwater out of storm drains and culverts. The Project's forest will have a beneficial impact on air quality as a single mature tree can absorb up to 48 pounds of carbon dioxide per year. These combined air, flood reduction and water quality benefits will increase over time as protection of the Project will allow for

continued maturation of the 21.1 acre forest, maximizing carbon and stormwater sequestration. The Center for Biological Diversity is an organization that is spotlighting how habitat destruction threatens human health, and how important and urgent it is that we change our relationship with nature.

Equity for Underserved Communities and Recreation: Ensuring that greenspace is preserved within urban areas furthers the goals of environmental justice and access. According to the 2019 US Census Bureau, Winnebago County is 14% Black or African American, 13.5% Hispanic, 2.8% Asian and .6% Native American. The median household income was \$52,743 which is ~ 30% below the national average of \$68,703. NLI has secured a grant to provide public amenities for a parking area in the preserve outside the Project area, and trails through the preserve to enhance passive recreational activities such as hiking and bird watching. This preservation of the Project's forest will ensure development does not occur and the air quality, water quality, flood amelioration and watershed benefits remain accessible to the community. We are engaged in creating a new vision for conservation which includes striving to make conservation of our land and water more inclusive and meaningful for all our communities, particularly for access and participation. This includes changing both the culture of conservation, and how we practice. Both land and water physically connect and ground everyone, yet we understand that it has also been used to marginalize entire communities of people, impacting health outcomes, length and quality of life, and economic stability. NLI is part of the whole conservation sector, and we have inherited and benefitted from a history of racial and economic privilege and power that intentionally displaced and excluded people of color. Our work, therefore has not benefitted all people in the way we had intended it to. We have committed ourselves to changing our future. We understand that this is a process, and crafting a new approach to conservation needs to account for differences in opportunities, barriers and needs. If the process is sound the outcomes will also be successful.

Bird and Wildlife Habitat Benefits: The Project's forested habitat provides an essential stopover habitat for neotropical migratory birds as Winnebago County is within a migratory flyway. These species rely on intact stands of deciduous trees along their migration routes. This Project is part of a landscape scale matrix of protected lands by NLI and other conservation organizations providing a network of important nodes and corridors for wildlife habitat. The site will be managed for invasive species and to enhance its biodiversity and resiliency.

Open Space Benefits: Residential and agricultural development continues encroach into this area of the county, and it is a priority area for protection in NLI's Strategic Conservation Plan and the Winnebago, Boone and Ogle Counties Greenways Plan. It is extremely important to conserve what is left of our forests that, with prairie, provided the natural cover in this region. This will provide a buffer to the expansion of the Chicago-Rockford International Airport that is east of this Project. The Project will be protected in perpetuity with a conservation easement. NLI's Strategic Conservation Plan calls for expansion of this preserve along the stream corridor.

## **7. Additional Information**

*Provide additional information about your project. Examples include collaboration with other partners or how this project fits into a larger effort.*

This is NLI's first project in a carbon program, and it fits in with our efforts to protect the Project's trees within a larger, strategic, regional protected complex with the Rockford Park District, the Winnebago and Byron Forest Preserve Districts and others. The Winnebago, Boone and Ogle Counties Greenways Plan's purpose is to promote a regional greenway network that protects natural and cultural resources in a manner which supports equal access to green space; provides alternative forms of transportation

and recreational benefits; enhances environmental and scenic qualities; and stimulates sustainable, equitable economic development. This Project lies within a priority protection area and conservation opportunity area and helps further the goals of the plan.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1U-eT1RqGwa9yjN-jw0Ydgoi165qa1j3V/view>

NLI is an accredited land trust and is Illinois oldest conservation land trust established in 1958. Our mission is to create an enduring legacy of natural land in northern Illinois for people, plants and animals. NLI has negotiated the acquisition of more than 100 tracts of land totaling more than 18,000 acres. <https://www.naturalland.org/>

The future of land preservation in our area is expanding from preservation to protecting and restoring whole ecosystems in cooperative efforts with our important partners in conservation. NLI currently owns and manages 28 preserves totaling 3,155.74 acres and holds 49 conservation easements on private land totaling 3,814.15 acres. This Fitzgerald Road Preservation Project will achieve lasting conservation impacts that will contribute to the well-being of northern Illinois.

Signed on October 13, in 2022, by Kerry Leigh, Executive Director, for Natural Land Institute.



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Signature

Kerry Leigh  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

815-964-6666  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

kleigh@naturalland.org  
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Email

### Lind-McGeachie Preserve CFC Preservation Project (21.1ac)

Fitzgerald Rd.



Site Access



- Trail
- Lind McGeachie Preserve Boundaries
- Project Area (21.1ac)
- Acquired December 2020
- Acquired 1987 and 1992

Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

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