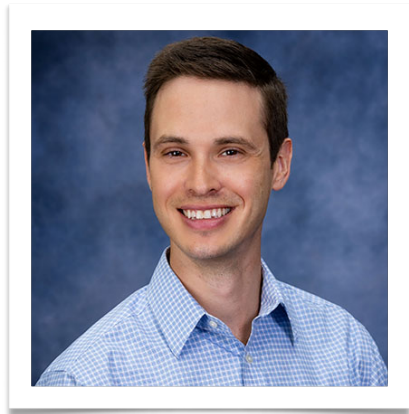


2026 Board of Directors



Jim Johannsen, President

The Conservation Fund

Jim Johannsen is Illinois State Director of The Conservation Fund (TCF.) His day-to-day work at TCF is focused on partnering with governmental entities (federal, state, local, and tribal) and nonprofit organizations to permanently protect natural areas, farmland, parkland, open spaces, and cultural sites. Jim also works in advocating for public policies that advance land and water conservation across the state. Jim previously served for 12 years at the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation, most recently in the role of Director of Land Conservation, where he led the organization's land protection and land stewardship programs.

He holds a B.A. in English and Religion from Augustana College and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Illinois - Springfield. Jim currently sits on the Board of Directors of the Natural Areas Association (NAA), a national nonprofit organization, and serves as their Treasurer. Jim volunteered for the PSCC Executive Director Search Committee and also serves as Chair of the PSCC Board Development Committee.



Sarah Livesay, Vice President

Grand Prairie Friends Land Trust

As a Central Illinois native, Sarah Livesay graduated from Eastern Illinois University and pursued a career in field biology and environmental education. From 1995-2017, Sarah focused on the development and capacity building of conservation non-profit and government entities including state DNRs, Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Japan Parks & Recreation.

In 2017, Sarah was hired as the first Executive Director for Grand Prairie Friends Land Trust. Since 1984, Grand Prairie Friends has served as a conservation land trust which preserves, protects and restores over 1,200 acres of natural areas across six counties in East-Central Illinois. Sarah recently completed her tenth (and final) year on the Board of Commissioners for the Champaign County Forest Preserve District. She now assists with development work for the Forest Preserve as a board member on the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation.



Paul Botts, Secretary

The Wetlands Initiative

Paul Botts has been President and Executive Director of the Wetlands Initiative since 2011. In that capacity he's served on a variety of statewide and regional councils such as Vital Lands Illinois, the Chicago Wilderness Executive Council, Illinois The Beautiful, and PSCC starting in 2021.

Previously, he was Director of Chicago Programs at the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation. Paul served in operations and development roles at The Nature Conservancy of Illinois during the 1990s, and spent a few years as managing director of a professional theater company in Chicago. A Chicago native, retired local musician, and recovered newspaper reporter, Paul now lives with his family in the city's South Loop.



Erin Herbez, Operations Director

Illinois Audubon Society

Erin Herbez is the Operations Director for the Illinois Audubon Society in Springfield. She previously worked as Administrative Director for ParkLands Foundation.

She was born in New Orleans, Louisiana, and remained there through the first two years of college. She completed her Bachelor's in Ecology, Evolution and Conservation from the University of Texas at Austin. Through this program, she found a love of observing wildlife, including reptiles and birds. After working for a local water conservation nonprofit and completing two years of field jobs, she attended Louisiana State University and studied management of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers to earn her Master's Degree.

She worked as a consultant on pre-construction surveys for wind turbine siting before moving to Bloomington where she became acquainted with ParkLands Foundation and the small, but passionate group of philanthropists and nature lovers that keep the foundation thriving. In her free time Erin likes to go birding and take her children to outdoor spaces so they can hopefully begin a lifelong love of nature as well.

2026 Trustees



Johari Cole-Kweli

Community Development Corporation of Pembroke-Hopkins Park

As president and managing director of the Community Development Corporation of PHP, Johari Cole-Kweli focuses on youth and community engagement, clean energy solutions, and the preservation of historical, cultural, and ecological resources. She also runs Iyabo Farms, an organic farm and homestead in Pembroke Township alongside her family.

Cole-Kweli holds a Bachelor of Science degree in microbiology and genetics from Walden University and a Master of Business Administration from the Keller University School of Management. She serves as president of the University of Illinois Extension Council for Kankakee, Will and Grundy counties; is on the University of Illinois Extension State Advisory Council; a member of the USDA Farm Service Agency Illinois State Committee; acts as an advisor to the Pembroke Farming and Family Association; and is on the board of directors of STAR Farm Chicago.

She is a fourth-year Ph.D candidate specializing in Learning, Instruction, and Innovation (LII) with a focus on STEAM, Biomimicry, and Transdisciplinary Education.



Amy Doll

Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves

Amy Doll became the first Director of Friends of Illinois Nature Preserves in 2021. She is responsible for leading the nonprofit organization as they build collaborations throughout the state of Illinois to provide support for the Illinois Nature Preserve System.

Doll joins the Friends with more than 15 years of Illinois public lands experience, most recently leading the DeKalb Park District for the past five years. She brings her passion and energy for conservation and natural lands protection, along with experience in developing collaborative partnerships.



Joanne Fessett

Illinois Audubon Society

Jo has worked for the Illinois Audubon Society since 2006. Before becoming Executive Director in 2022, she previously had been the Assistant to the Director under Marilyn Campbell, Tom Clay, and Jim Herkert. Jo's history with Illinois Audubon Society began as an At-Large member of the Board of Directors from 2000 to 2006. She served as the Chair of the Education Committee before becoming staff. Her experience with the Society has included administration, marketing, grant writing, volunteer management, event planning and coordination as well as designing and conducting the annual Adventures Field Trip program for members and nonmembers. Jo's past employment includes Argonne National Laboratory near her hometown of Lemont, Illinois, and The Nature Conservancy. She received a B.A. from Lewis University (Business Administration).



Allison Frederick

Citizens for Conservation

Allison Frederick is Administrative Director at Citizens for Conservation, a nonprofit organization in northeastern Illinois. Prior to that, she held positions in public relations, environmental education, limnology laboratories and as an aquatic entomology research technician.

She is an active citizen scientist, surveying calling frogs and Odonate populations in McHenry County. Her background in Forestry and Natural Resources from Purdue University and passion for land stewardship makes her well-suited to lead a conservation agency.

She believes that we can join forces to take major action against climate change and other environmental challenges—and strong, clear communications are the first step. From restoration workdays in local preserves to exploring natural areas with her family, she works daily to inspire positive changes in the world around us.



Caleb Grantham

Illinois Environmental Council

Caleb is the Senior Manager of Campaigns at the Illinois Environmental Council (IEC), where he is responsible for leading a new effort at IEC, working at the local level to support the deployment of renewable energy across Illinois.

Prior to joining IEC in 2026, Caleb worked for The Nature Conservancy in Southern Illinois from 2014 – 2025. His role evolved from hands on stewardship and ecological restoration, to permanent habitat protection and land acquisitions, marketing and social media content support, annual fee and easement monitoring, and in later years he focused on environmental advocacy and community engagement.

Caleb grew up in Central Illinois and has lived in Southern Illinois since 2010. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Forestry Natural Resource Management and a Minor in Environmental Studies from Southern Illinois University – Carbondale in 2014.

He has a proven ability to collaborate with governmental agencies, conservation partners, community stakeholders, private landowners, and technical teams to protect natural habitats, improve biodiversity, and expand public engagement in stewardship activities. He values gaining public trust in the conservation community and is motivated to form new relationships, build meaningful support, and deliver positive, lasting results for people and nature.

Caleb has been an Illinois Certified Prescribed Burn Manager since 2017 and was recruited to be on the Executive Committee of the Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development, Inc in 2024. He has continued to be an active council member since 2022. Caleb joined PSCC's Board of Directors in early 2025 and contributes to the annual conference committee and the advancement committee.



Fran Harty

Retired

Fran Harty is retired from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. He is a co-founder and past president of Prairie State Conservation Coalition. He is co-founder and current treasurer for the Friends of the Illinois Nature Preserves. Fran helped write and pass the Illinois Prescribed Fire Act.

Fran helped establish the 19,000-acre Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and add 9,000 acres to the Upper Mississippi River Wildlife Refuge at the Savanna Army Depot. He secured a \$1-million-dollar donation to support the TNC/Forest Service Volunteer program at Midewin. He wrote the Illinois Natural Areas Stewardship Act, is an advisor to the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, and is a past president of the Natural Areas Association. He also developed the Division of Natural Heritage's Natural Heritage Residency Program.



James Hill

Clifftop NFP

James Hill has provided diverse professional conservation and life quality services in Illinois for over 40 years. He earned a BS in Forestry from Southern Illinois University - Carbondale in 1982. James worked for the St. Louis District US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for over 32 years as a Natural Resource Specialist/Project Manager.

After retirement from USACE in 2013, James founded JMHill Consulting and provides natural resource and outdoor recreation planning and development services for numerous clients.

James also volunteers extensively and serves on the Board of Directors for four southwestern Illinois regional not-for-profit organizations: Clifftop, a natural heritage land trust; Kaskaskia Cahokia Trail Coalition; Discover Downstate Illinois Tourism Bureau (formerly IL South Tourism Bureau); and the Monroe County IL Economic Development Corporation. James has been an active member of the PSCC since 2017 through his Clifftop affiliation.



Lindsay Keeney

Illinois Environmental Council

Lindsay Keeney is Chief Programs Officer, Conservation and Agriculture at the Illinois Environmental Council (IEC) and previously was Conservation Director where she served as lead staff on IEC's conservation, open space, and river issues. In that role, she also supported IEC's sustainable agriculture and local food programming.

She has been with the IDNR's Jim Edgar State Fish and Wildlife Area, Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Illinois Natural History Survey's Illinois River Biological Station, and the Illinois Stewardship Alliance. She's served as network architect for the Illinois Vital Lands Network and is on the Board of the Old Capitol Farmers Market in Springfield. Lindsay holds a Master's degree in Biology from the University of Illinois at Springfield and a Master's certificate in Geographic Information Service.



Brook McDonald, President

The Conservation Foundation

Brook McDonald has been President and Chief Executive Officer for The Conservation Foundation since 1996. He chaired the DuPage River Coalition from 1989 to 1995 and is past chairman of the DuPage River Watershed Ecosystem Partnership. He is principal author of Illinois's first citizens stream monitoring manual published in 1990.

Brook served on the board of the Illinois Environmental Council from 1998 to 2001, as a member of the Kendall County Extension Unit's Advisory Council and is a past member of the board for the Campaign for Sensible Growth. He served more than 10 years as an appointed member of the DuPage Environmental Commission, served as chairman of the DuPage County Trails Maintenance Task Force, and as the chairman of the DuPage Green Government Council.

Brook worked as Public Affairs Director for the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, Manager of Interpretation and Natural Resources for the Wheaton Park District, a naturalist for Metro Parks of Columbus and Franklin County, and as a Stream Monitoring Coordinator for the Ohio Scenic Rivers program for Ohio Department of Natural Resources.



Alley Ringhausen

Great Rivers Land Trust

Alley Ringhausen has served as the Executive Director of Great Rivers Land Trust since 2001. He joined Great Rivers Land Trust in 1999 as Developer and Manager of the Piasa Creek Watershed Project. Under his leadership, Great Rivers Land Trust has protected thousands of acres of property in Illinois and Missouri; developed wetlands, reduced erosion, planned parks, restored streams; and partnered with numerous organizations on a wide variety of conservation projects.

He has an extensive background in conservation consultation and assists other nonprofit organizations, municipalities, colleges, government agencies, corporations, and school districts. Some of his accomplishments include implementing the Piasa Creek Watershed Project in partnership with Illinois American Water Company, restoration of the Boy Scout Lake at Camp Warren Levis, and improvement of scenic, historic and ecologically significant properties along the Meeting of the Great Rivers National Scenic Byway in Illinois.



Matt Ruhter

Openlands

Matt Ruhter is the Conservation Attorney at Openlands where he works on conservation easements, land preservation, and overall company success. For more than 15 years Matt has enjoyed a varied career in law and natural resources.

Matt holds a Bachelor's degree in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Florida, a Master's degree in Biology from DePaul University, and a Juris Doctor from Indiana University Maurer School of Law. He sits on the board of the Illinois Indiana Bison Association and is an attorney with Administer Justice.