



Dates:



July 28-29
IFB Commodities
Conference

August 13-23
Illinois State Fair

August 28-Sept. 07
Du Quoin State Fair

September 01-03
Farm Progress Show

Property Tax Bills
Some counties mailed the bill in May for partial payment in June; the remaining balance will be due in September. Other counties will mail tax bills in late summer for full payment in September. Check with your County Clerk for local details.

Did you know...

Illinois covers over 55,000 square miles and has an estimated population of 12,880,580 people, but only 1,496,980 live in a rural area.

That means an estimated 88% of the population lives in incorporated areas.



Conservation land

One of the benefits includes favorable property assessment

By Brenda Matherly

The use of vegetative cover as a conservation tool is a common and extremely beneficial preservation practice used by farmers. A couple of these practices include the use of vegetative filter strips and enrollment in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). And, while there are differences in the application of these practices, they both offer protection and improvement to water quality, provide shelter for small wildlife, and reduce soil erosion. Because of these benefits, this land that has been taken out of production receives a property assessment (for the purpose of taxation) that better reflects its conservation benefit as opposed to its production potential.

To better understand these conservation

tools and how they are assessed, we'll cover each individually beginning with vegetative filter strips.

A vegetative filter strip is an area planted with vegetative plants to serve as a buffer between cropland and bodies of water including streams, ponds, and lakes. The filter strips are designed to slow water flow, and allow sediment and nutrients to be trapped and contained in the vegetation. Those accumulated nutrients are utilized by the vegetation rather than entering the water supply.

As a result of the benefits the filter strips provide, legislation was passed in 1997 to provide a tax incentive to landowners who plant and maintain these conservation areas. The Vegetative Fil-

(See Conservation on page 6)

Rural Partners

A voice for rural Illinois

By Brenda Matherly

While we might not spend hours of our day focusing on the needs of our rural communities, it's good to know there is an organization out there doing just that.

Rural Partners of Illinois is a member-driven forum that links individuals, businesses, organizations and communities with public and private resources to max-

imize the potential of rural Illinois. More succinctly, Rural Partners is a voice for Illinois.

As a valuable, yet ever diminishing, asset to the state, our rural communities can benefit from organizations fighting in their corner. Since their creation in 1989, Rural Partners of Illinois has been

(See Partners on page 3)

2015 Illinois Farm Bureau Commodities Conference: Illinois Farm Bureau Approaches its Centennial Year

As the Illinois Farm Bureau's Centennial year approaches, join us on Wednesday, July 29 from 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. as we examine current and future issues that will affect Farming: The Next Hundred Years. Hear the latest projections from experts on farmland prices, the economic impact of agriculture, markets, weather, farm legacies, cover crops, precision farming, and consumer trends.

Please contact your County Farm Bureau for more information or visit www.ilfb.org/commoditiesconference

LINK

Farming: The Next Hundred Years

2015 IFB' FARMER-CONSUMER DIALOGUE AND RECEPTION
Tuesday, July 28 from 6:00-8:00 pm

COMMODITIES CONFERENCE
Wednesday, July 29 from 8:30 am-4:00 pm

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:
Mary Shelman, Harvard Business School
Dave Alwan, Echo Valley Meats

ILLINOIS FARM BUREAU
Farm. Family. Food.

#IFBCC15

Normal Marriott Hotel and Conference Center
201 Broadway St., Normal, IL 61761

Contact your County Farm Bureau for more information and to register or visit ilfb.org/commoditiesconference. Registration opens June 6th.

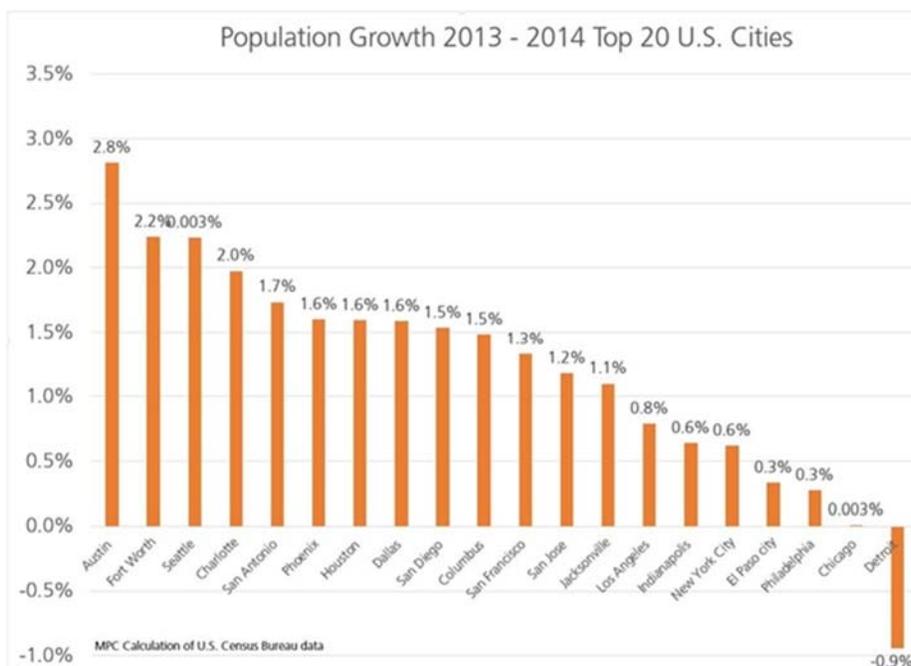
Chicago teeters on zero growth

That puts more pressure on outlying areas

"82. No, that's not the number of your favorite Blackhawks player or the people coming to your next block party. It's the number of people Chicago gained last year. 82. Chicago's population of 2,722,307 grew by a measly 0.003 percent. Of the top 20 most populated U.S. cities, Detroit, with a declining population, was the only city to grow

So Chicago is growing much slower than its peers.

To boost population growth in the city, one proposal from the MPC is to change Chicago's zoning ordinance that limits development near transit. People want to live near transit, but zoning limits the number of units available, pricing them out of that market.



more slowly than Chicago."

That's from a report published by the Chicago-based Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC).

That report also looked around the Midwest to compare Chicago to other Midwestern cities. Pittsburgh, Detroit, St. Louis and Cleveland all experienced population declines in 2013-14. Meanwhile, Minneapolis and Columbus grew by more than 1.5 percent, Kansas City and Des Moines each grew by 0.8 percent, and Indianapolis grew by 0.6 percent.

"The result?" according to MPC, "We're not making Chicago as attractive as it could be. We're pricing people out of the most in-demand areas because there isn't enough housing stock. So what do people do? Maybe they move to the suburbs."

That, in turn, puts more development pressure to convert farmland in surrounding counties.

Here's to hoping that Chicago can be more successful in attracting population growth in the coming year.

LINK

Partners

(Continued from page 1)

committed to community and economic development.

Serving Illinois as a point of contact for information, assistance and resource development and encouraging private/public partnerships on rural issues is just a few of their goals. In addition, Rural Partners strives to influence public policy by representing the comprehensive needs of rural residents and increasing collaboration among local governments and their communities.

When you think about the needs in your own rural community or those communities around you, I'm sure you can come up with a list of attributes that can make these communities more attractive. Expanding broadband access, enhancing affordable housing, enhancing rural education, improving rural health care are just a few of the advancements Rural Partners has made in many of our rural areas.

Some of their most recent projects include:

- Funded Rural Development Initiatives across the State - Rural Partners launched a rural grant initiative and funded two projects: (1) Four rural business succession planning workshops with an emphasis on helping support rural community foundations, and (2) A rural youth entrepreneurship and workforce development initiative taking place in East Central Illinois.
- Provided Funding for the Illinois Rural Life Poll - The results of this poll have been widely used by community leaders, policy makers, conference planners and others.
- Keeps You in Touch with State

Government Leadership - As a member of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council, and councils on Housing and Child Care, University of Illinois Extension, Illinois Transportation and other task forces, Rural Partners is informed on state rural development initiatives and funding opportunities, providing an opportunity to better share issues and address problems facing rural communities and businesses.



- Sponsors, Plans and Participates in Conferences - they co-sponsor and attract exhibitors to community and business development, broadband, leadership and other conferences to inform rural leaders, enable them to replicate success, and find creative approaches to address problems and develop opportunities. They also co-sponsor the annual Rural Economic Development Conference and help the Governor's Rural Affairs Council host rural "Listening Posts" across the state.

Illinois is one of 28 states that have a Rural Development Council. All of these councils are associated with the National Rural Develop-

ment Partnership (NRDP). This connection to other states and the national organizations also allows Rural Partners the opportunity to provide direct input into national policy, procedures, and regulations.

The creation of NRDP goes back to the late 1980's and early 1990's. It began with a White House Economic Policy Council and their directive to analyze and evaluate existing Federal rural development programs and develop policy options for improving policy coordination and execution.

With the growth of NRDC's membership, the next logical step was to set up eight pilot State Rural Development Councils (SRDC). By 2000, 40 State Rural Development Councils had been established. Over the years, funding issues have reduced the number of SRDC to the 28 we currently have around the nation, including the Rural Partners of Illinois.

So, if you find yourself interested in spending a few more hours involved in rural development issues and initiatives, contact visit Rural Partner's website at <http://www.ruralpartners.org/> and see how you can be a part of their goal of Connecting people and communities to the resources.

LINK

**Illinois State Fair
in August**

15th Local Officials Day

18th Ag Day

HB 228

Pending bill would have the Legislature hit pause on local government creation

House Bill 228 is sitting on the Governor's desk awaiting his signature. If he signs it, the State of Illinois will be obligated to resist passing any law that would create a new unit of government for the next four years.

That includes a ban on splitting any existing unit into two or more separate units. However, the prohibition does not apply to the creation of a new unit of local government from the consolidation of 2 or more pre-existing units of local government.

The bill's chief sponsor is Representative Jack D. Franks (D-63) of Marengo. Franks, who has been an outspoken advocate for local government consolidation and tax relief, was appointed by Governor Rauner to the Local Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates Task Force.

The bill was widely supported on a bipartisan basis, even passing the

Senate under the sponsorship of Senator Michael Connelly, (R-) of Wheaton with no dissenting votes.

It's impact is limited to units created by an act of the State Legislature, so it might not slow the pace of local government growth so dramatically as it first sounds.

Most units are created via local referenda, without oversight by the General Assembly. The types of local units restricted by this bill appear to be those created by law, include such things as port authorities, airport authorities, civic center authorities, and other such powers.

However, the rapid growth in numbers of local government units in Illinois over the decades has been due to the creation of special purpose units. This type of expansion does not appear to be affected by the legislation.

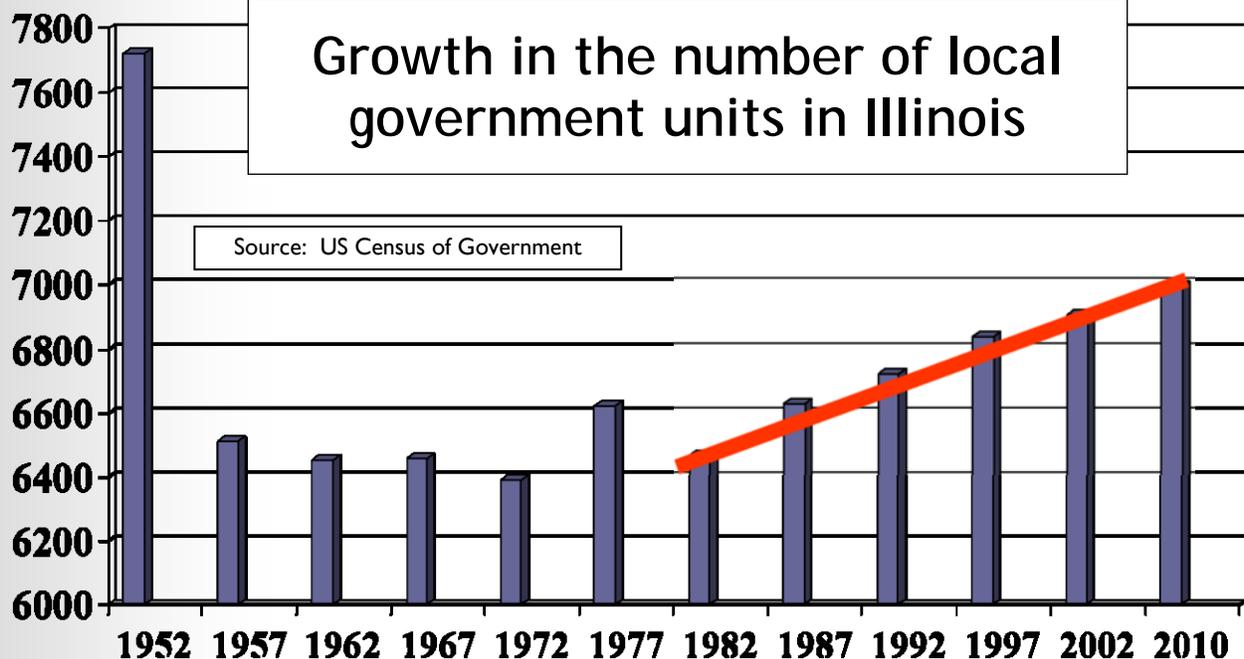
Overall, the legislation itself might not be as important as is its illustration of the growing interest in limiting the expansion of governmental units.

BY THE NUMBERS

The chart below illustrates the growth Illinois has experienced in total governmental units. The watershed era was the adoption of the 1970 State Constitution. The 1977 blip in the chart for the otherwise unbroken steady rise of units is likely due to transitional counting/adding/dissolution that transpired brought on by the new Constitution.

The vast majority of new units are special purpose districts. The number of municipalities has grown modestly while school consolidations have significantly driven down the number of school districts that remain.

[LINK](#)



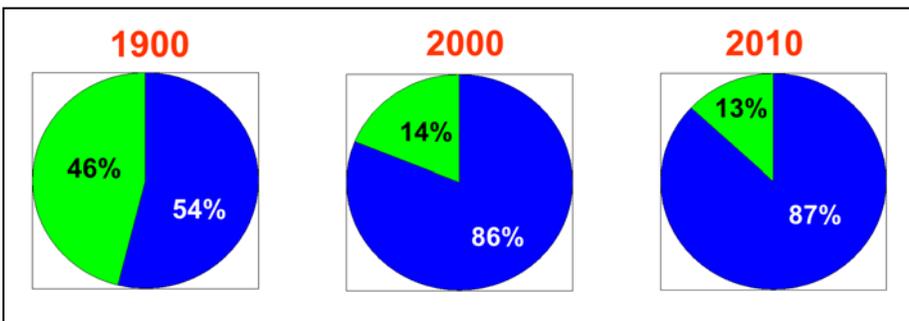
Shrinking Rural Impact

Population migration

Shifts in demographics over the years has reduced the influence of rural residents and the farm community when it comes to local government.

A look at the pie charts below illustrated the dramatic shift in the past century—a trend that still continues, albeit at a slower rate.

This impacts the ability to influence the establishment of local government units.



Illinois local government unit growth by type

Unit	1977	2007	Change
• Counties	102	102	0%
• Municipalities	1,274	1,299	+1.9%
• Townships	1,436	1,432	-0.2%
• School Districts	1,063	912	- 14.2%
• Special Purpose	2,745	3,249	+18.5%

IRHA Conference

Mid-August educational opportunity

Source: IRHA

The Illinois Rural Health Association (IRHA) will host its 26th Annual Educational Conference in a new location this year. On August 13-14th the IRHA will hold its annual conference at the Embassy Suites River Front Conference Center in East Peoria, IL. The conference is an opportunity for rural healthcare administrators and clinicians to advance their professional skills, while networking and learning best practices from their counterparts throughout the state.

The opening session will be a panel discussion coordinated by the U of I

College of Medicine at Peoria, on successfully cultivating physicians for rural practice settings through educational partnerships. General Sessions will also including training for the Federal ICD-10 Medical Coding System (which takes effect October 1st) and a Federal Rural Health update from government affairs attorney Maggie Elehwany, from the National Rural Health Association.

Attendees will have over 17 workshops to choose from over the two-day conference, on such topics as Medical Cannabis, Home Health Care, Workplace Violence Prevention, Perinatal Mental Health, Improving Oral Health and the latest on the Medicaid Care Coordination Roll Out. There will also be a special double session specifically for Rural Health Clinics administrators, as well as separate round table discussions for rural hospitals, public health departments and Rural Health Clinics.

During the Thursday luncheon and Annual Meeting, a special award presentation will be held honoring those in the health care field which have made great strides to improve access to rural health care.

Conference registration is \$185 for IRHA members and \$210 for non-Members and \$50 for students. Student scholarships are available which will cover hotel accommodations, registration fees, and travel.

For more information go to www.ilruralhealth.org or call Margaret Vaughn at 217-280-0206. Conference fees cover all meals as well as a 12 month membership for those paying the non-member rate.

LINK

Conservation

(Continued from page 1)

ter Strip Assessment Law (35ILCS 200/10-152), calls for the valuation of land serving as a filter strip to be valued at 1/6th of its soil Productivity Index (PI) equalized assessed value as cropland. In other words, to be assessed at 1/6th of the soils assessed value lying underneath the vegetation.

For example, if the soil under the filter strip has a PI of 99, its cropland value would be assessed, in 2016, at \$133.06 per acre. Once removed from production and approved as a filter strip, those same soils would be assessed at 1/6th the value giving it an assessment of \$22.17 per acre.

Qualifying vegetative filter strips must meet NRCS standards and specifications to be assessed at 1/6th the value of cropland. Some of those qualifications include:

- Width in feet (based on slope)
- Uniform ground cover
- Heavy fibrous root system
- Tolerant to field pesticides

Moving on to land enrolled in a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Acres that are enrolled in a CRP are part of a cost-share and rental payment program under the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

CRP is designed to establish long-term conservation covers and local ecosystem improvements on farmland. The program pays producers a rental payment for establishing long-term plant cover to improve water quality, control soil erosion, and improve wildlife habitat. En-

rollment in CRP is voluntary and the land will remain in the program for 10 to 15 years.

Established in 1985, the CRP encourages farmers to voluntarily plant permanent areas of grass and trees on erodible land that benefits from that type of plant protection. Other benefits include the creation of windbreaks, and improvement to water quality. In return, the Illinois Department of Revenue (IDOR) has published guidelines for consistent property assessment practices across the state.

Those guidelines can be found in IDOR's information bulletin titled *Publication 122: Instructions for Farmland Assessments*.

In that publication, IDOR states that *“land in the CRP is eligible for a farmland assessment provided it has been in the CRP or another qualified farm use for the previous two years and is not a part of a primarily residential parcel. CRP land is assessed according to its use. Land enrolled into the CRP can be planted in grasses or trees. If grass is planted, this land will be classified as cropland (according to the Bureau of Census' cropland definition). If trees are planted, then the cropland assessment should apply until tree maturity prevents the land from being cropped again without first having to undergo significant improvements (e.g., clearing). At this point, the “other farmland” assessment should apply.”*

To clarify, if the land is planted in grass, those acres will be valued at 100% of the soil's assessed value lying beneath the vegetation. Using the example above, if the soil under the CRP grassland has a PI of 99; its cropland value would be assessed,

in 2016, at \$133.06 per acre. If planted in trees, once the trees got large enough that an implant of husbandry can no longer operate around them, those same acres with the PI 99 soil type would be assessed at 1/6th the value giving it an assessment of \$22.17 per acre.

IDOR calls for the same assessment practices for land enrolled in a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP is an enhanced version of CRP. Land enrolled in this program is land that is frequently flooded and as a result is pulled out of production to provide long-term protection of environmentally sensitive areas. However, unlike CRP, land eligible for CREP must be located in the Illinois or Kaskaskia River Watershed which covers 68 Illinois counties.

Note that in both CRP and CREP, the land is eligible for these assessment values only after it's been in a qualified farm use for the previous two years and is not a part of a primarily residential parcel.

LINK

HB228

Sitting on the Governor's desk is a piece of legislation that would prohibit the State over the next four years from enacting any law to create a new unit of local government. It would, however, still allow consolidation of existing units.