

[Press Releases](#)

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**ILLEGAL HERBICIDE TREATMENT HARMS NATURE PRESERVE, PROMPTS MADIGAN LAWSUIT**

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed suit against two Illinois companies for environmental damage caused by herbicides sprayed near a McDonough County nature preserve.

As part of its right-of-way maintenance program, McDonough Power Cooperative hired Spoon River Electric Cooperative in August 2010 to spray the ditch adjacent to the Short Fork Seep Nature Preserve in Walnut Grove Township. Madigan's suit alleges the herbicide was discharged by a high-pressure sprayer directly into standing water in the preserve.

"Significant waters and meadows in this protected area suffered serious damage. The destruction and damage to trees, shrubs and other plants is still obvious one year later," said Attorney General Madigan. "With this lawsuit, we're seeking to hold the defendants accountable and ensure the natural area is properly restored."

The 41-acre preserve contains some of the last high-quality remnants of seep and meadows in the state, according to the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. "Seeps" are wetlands with saturated soil that form when groundwater percolates downward until it reaches a layer of rock or clay that channels it horizontally. Seeps are most common along the lower slopes of ravines, terraces, and hills.

Attorney General Madigan is seeking restoration costs and civil penalties against each Cooperative of \$10,000.

Bureau Chief Thomas Davis is handling the case filed in McDonough District Circuit Court for Madigan's Environmental Bureau.

-30-

[Return to December 2011 Press Releases](#)

