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## **State takes possession of Land near Lawrenceville**

***\$1.7 million settlement reached earlier this year will protect waterways, expand public land and preserve wildlife habitat on 1,900 acres of land***

SPRINGFIELD, IL – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has today officially taken possession of 1,900 acres of land near Lawrenceville Illinois as a result of a natural resource damages case that was settled in February of this year. The settlement will ultimately result in 2,300 acres of ecosystem restoration projects to preserve waterways and enhance wildlife habitat near the former Indian Refinery south of Lawrenceville. The state expects to take possession of the remaining 400 acres over the next several months.

The IDNR and IEPA reached the settlement agreement with Texaco Inc., a former owner of the refinery. Represented by the Illinois Attorney General, the State of Illinois entered into a Consent Order with Texaco in U.S. District Court that will preserve and enhance ecological features in the area south and east of the former refinery.

“This is a great day for Illinois and the public. We are happy to take ownership of this very important and large area that will increase available public lands for the citizens of Illinois and become good habitat for our native species,” said IDNR Director Marc Miller.

“The transfer of this land to the state is another important step in our efforts to return this environmentally devastated land to an asset for the community,” said IEPA Interim Director Lisa Bonnett. “The Agency will continue oversight of the cleanup at Indian Refinery through the Superfund process.”

“In taking possession of the land, the state can now turn its attention to the important work of restoring natural waterways and habitat for the benefit of generations to come,” said Attorney General Lisa Madigan.

The Indian Refinery site (adjacent to the property acquired by the state) was listed on the National Priorities List, or Superfund, in 2000, due to contamination from various hazardous substances resulting from decades of operation as a refinery. The contamination affected wetlands that are hydraulically connected to the nearby Embarras River.

The Natural Resource Damage Assessment Consent Order includes provisions for the transfer by Texaco to IDNR of approximately 2,300 acres of land south of the former refinery, and for the IDNR and IEPA to restore and enhance habitat on those tracts, which are located in the Embarras River watershed. Texaco will provide more than \$1.7 million for habitat enhancement and related costs, plus groundwater management assistance to the City of Lawrenceville.

The settlement included funding for the IDNR and IEPA to undertake ecological restoration activities, groundwater management assistance, and related expenses as compensation for releases of oil and hazardous substances into the environment at and near the 990-acre former refinery, which ceased operation in 1995. Environmental cleanup activities on the refinery property were overseen by the IEPA, and have been ongoing since the mid 1990s.

Much of the area targeted for restoration work will provide habitat for songbirds, marsh birds and migratory birds as well as a number of other wetland-dependent animals. A number of animal and plant species of conservation concern, including several on the state list of threatened or endangered species, have been documented in the area.