



## **URGENT NEED FOR ADDITIONAL STAFF WITHIN THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

### **Position**

The Illinois Forestry Association (IFA) calls for the restoration of staff to at least FY 2000 levels and/or additional staff in the Division of Forest Resources of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).

### **Issue**

Over 90% of the state's forest land is under private ownership. Landowners rely on the state for technical forestry assistance in managing this important resource. Early retirements and budget cuts in IDNR have reduced the Division's professional, technical, and clerical staff by 39%, 67%, and 86% respectively. The decrease in staff has had many negative effects including:

- ♦ Poor response times to public requests for forestry assistance places forests at risk;
- ♦ Loss of federal dollars from lack of state matching dollars;
- ♦ 40% of the state does not have adequate forestry assistance;
- ♦ Loss of landowners' income and investment because they were not provided timely assistance;
- ♦ Increase in forest property owners' incentive to sell or clear forested land for other uses, which may cause irreversible damage to the woodland resources of Illinois.

### **Recommendations**

Foresters and nursery personnel in the IDNR Division of Forest Resources possess the education, training, resources, and practical experience necessary to take care of this complex resource that pays economic, social, and environmental dividends to the citizens of Illinois. To achieve this goal, the IFA recommends the following:

- ♦ Restore the Division of Forest Resources by increasing headcount and funding to fill the following vacant positions: **(9) District Foresters**; (6) Forestry Technicians; (2) statewide Program Managers; (2) nursery managers; (7) Nursery Technicians; (15) clerical positions to support field office, statewide program and nursery staff.
- ♦ The IFA will work with other forestry organizations, groups, and individuals to urge the Governor, the Illinois General Assembly, and the IDNR to increase and fund staffing levels in the Division that will meet the current demands for forestry service.
- ♦ Add at least four (4) additional IDNR urban forester positions located at critical need urban centers to address a void that becomes more apparent each year.