

# Ron Fargen Named IRAP Landowner Of The Year

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**SPRINGFIELD** – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) today announced Fulton County conservation advocate Ron Fargen has been selected as the Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP) Landowner of the Year for 2020.

Nominated for his dedication to conservation, Fargen began allowing IRAP participants to hunt for turkey, deer and squirrel on his property in Fulton County in 2013. In exchange for hunter access, IRAP pays Fargen an annual lease payment, provides liability insurance, and has written a habitat management plan specific to his property. IRAP also provides technical assistance and cost-share to help him implement the management plan and effectively manage his property through prescribed burning, tree planting, brush management and related conservation efforts.

For Fargen, the IRAP program is much more than just conservation tips and cost-share. It's a complete program which continues to provide benefits to both him and hunters who utilize his property.

“There isn't really one thing – it's the whole thing,” Fargen said. “IRAP really cares and provides efficient yet quality work, and really wants people trying to manage their land to be successful.”

The IRAP Landowner of the Year award is presented to landowners enrolled in the IRAP program who have demonstrated outstanding wildlife management, habitat improvement, and conservation practices on their land while allowing public access on their private property through the IRAP initiative.

This is the first year for the IRAP Landowner of the Year award. Ron Fargen and five other nominees were selected by IRAP staff in recognition of their conservation efforts and stewardship of Illinois' natural resources, as well as their willingness to allow public access to their land for recreational opportunities. Other 2020 nominees included Bill Jacoby and Jay Greenwalt of Macoupin County, Jeff Farrero of Schuyler County, Larry Childress of Fulton County, and Mike Hampton of Montgomery County.

The IDNR IRAP was developed in 2011 to address one of Illinois' biggest issues facing sportsmen and women: the lack of public access for hunting and other outdoor activities. With more than 96 percent of Illinois land owned privately, outdoor enthusiasts, especially hunters, need places to go while private landowners need access to technical and cost-share assistance to improve habitat on their land.

IRAP is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Voluntary Public Access – Habitat Incentive Program (VPA-HIP). IDNR was awarded its fourth VPA-HIP grant in 2020 to continue and expand its IRAP program. Currently, there are 25,200 acres enrolled in 50 counties for public access for hunting and fishing activities.

For more information on IRAP, check the IDNR website at <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/conservation/IRAP/Pages/default.aspx>