

# Chicago Wilderness

*Excellence In  
Ecological  
Restoration  
Program*



**Program Overview**

***December 4, 2014***

# What is the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program? (EERP)

## Program Background & Description

The primary purpose of the Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program (EERP) is to recognize and promote the use of Best Management Practices (BMP's), and ultimately improve Ecological restoration efforts in the Chicago Wilderness region through a voluntary, Comprehensive assessment and accreditation process.

## Program Benefits

The EERP offers benefits beyond restoring the ecological health of site. It:

- Provides recognition for excellence in management of natural communities and sites;
- Raises credibility for the agencies and organizations restoring sites;
- Provides professional standards for both internal and external comparisons;
- Demonstrates on-the-ground commitment to the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan;
- Provides opportunity for self-assessment and continuous improvement through the application process;
- Educates staff and volunteers involved with the process; and
- Increases pride for work and builds confidence in managing sites for ecological health.

# Program Administration

The Chicago Wilderness Commission on Excellence in Ecological Restoration and Native Landscaping implements and administers the EERP. The commission consists of seven to Nine commissioners serving staggered three-year terms, including:

- One representative from the Chicago Wilderness Executive Council;
- Three natural resource professionals from Chicago Wilderness member organizations;
- Two to four at-large representatives from Chicago Wilderness organizations; and
- One staff member from Chicago Wilderness.

# Standards for Accreditation

A wide array of experts and stakeholders contributed to the development of the EERP accreditation standards, including natural resource managers, scientists, including land use planners, members of the business community, and leaders of conservation and land management agencies across the region. Numerous, diverse organizations field tested the standards and site accreditation process.

The focus of the standards is on the management of a site, and the standards are Organized into five categories:

1. Landscape Context & Site Features
2. Management Practices
3. Threat Assessment & Action Plan
4. Collaboration & Resources
5. Agency/Organization Programs, Practices, Policies & Procedures

## Recognition

Site accreditation is awarded at four levels based on the Standards: Bronze (50%), Silver (60%), Gold (70%) and Platinum (80%).

This designation lasts for five years and then must be renewed. Selected sites are also recognized through an annual formal event to celebrate their achievements.

## Site Accreditation Levels of Distinction

Platinum	80%
Gold	70%
Silver	60%
Bronze	50%

*Site designation applies for five (5) years.  
Opportunity to upgrade after two (2) years.*

# Application Process

An Agency or organization interested in applying for site accreditation will follow this process:

1. Complete an online preliminary application.
2. Attend an EERP Workshop or Webinar to learn about the application and self assessment process and standards.
3. Complete the formal on-line application.

The Commission members then review applications and conduct field visits to selected sites. They provide a preliminary report to the applicant, who has an opportunity to respond in writing.

The Commission will then select the appropriate level of accreditation and obtain approval from the CW Executive Council – leaders of more than 50 members of the CW alliance – prior to notifying applicants of accreditation.

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**Introduction – Applicant and Site Background:**

Site Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency Overview:

Name of Agency or Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

State/Local Agency    Private Landowner    Not-For-Profit

Population Served: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Full-Time, Part-Time and Seasonal Employees:    \_\_\_\_\_ Full Time    \_\_\_\_\_ Part Time    \_\_\_\_\_ Seasonal

Agency/Organization Executive Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_



Scope of Standards		%	Public Agency Credits	NGO Credits
Sections of Application				
1	Landscape Context & Site Features	15%	46 pts	46 pts
2	Management Practices	33%	101 pts	101 pts
3	Threat Assessment & Action Plan	28%	84 pts	84 pts
4	Collaboration & Resources	5%	15 pts	15 pts
5	Agency/Organization Programs, Policies & Procedures	19%	56 pts	52 pts
	TOTAL	100%	302 pts	298 pts

# Site Eligibility

\* Public/Private Agency

\* Chicago Wilderness Members and Non-Members

\* Site is owned, or otherwise protected by a public or private agency dedicated to preserving and protecting land with significant natural resources.

\* Site is a Natural Area (Remnant Resource)

\* Site is currently being managed and/or restored

\* Site has been under active management for at least five (5) years

# Steps to Site Accreditation

1	Applicant Agency downloads EERP Self-Assessment Manual from CW Website
2	Applicant Agency completes preliminary on-line application.
3	Applicant Agency attends EERP Workshop to learn about the application and self-assessment process and standards.
4	Applicant Agency reviews EERP Self-Assessment Manual and independently determines if one or more of their sites are eligible and comply with a sufficient number of criteria necessary for accreditation.
5	Applicant Agency completes formal on-line application along with a non-refundable application fee payable to CW.
6	Commission reviews applications and selects number of agencies for on-site field visits and accreditation.



# Steps to Site Accreditation

7	Applicant Agency hosts Commission for on-site field visit.
8	Commission reviews the findings of the on-site visit and sends a preliminary response to Applicant Agency.
9	Applicant Agency submits a written response to the Commission.
10	Commission reviews Applicant Agency response and formally action to propose designation of accreditation (bronze, silver, gold, platinum).
11	Commission submits recommendation to CW Executive Council for approval.
12	Commission notifies Applicant Agency of level of achievement received and invites Applicant Agency to special event for formal recognition.

# Steps to Site Accreditation

13	Applicant Agency evaluates the process through an on-line assessment form.
14	Applicant Agency can resubmit application for reassessment for higher level of recognition after two years or receiving initial designation.
15	Applicant Agency must resubmit site for re-accreditation after five (5) years.

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