

For Immediate Release
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OMP Introduces Ordinance to Secure Wetlands Developers (May 26, 2004)

The City of Chicago's O'Hare Modernization Program (OMP) today introduced an ordinance that would allow the Program to select wetland developers to secure land for developing and maintaining wetlands mitigation sites. The City is seeking to replace relatively low quality wetlands and other Waters of the United States (WUS) that are impacted by O'Hare modernization with better quality wetlands. The replacement wetlands will provide greater value to the public, and a more natural environment for wildlife, improving the overall quality of the resource.

"The existing wetlands at O'Hare are relatively low quality with respect to water quality, storm water and flood storage, and they attract wildlife which poses a potential hazard for aircraft," said Rosemarie S. Andolino, OMP Executive Director. "By relocating these wetlands away from O'Hare, the OMP presents a unique opportunity to improve wetlands values for everyone, and safety for the traveling public."

The ordinance would allow the City to satisfy the requirements of the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and DuPage County to obtain the necessary permits and approvals in order to develop and maintain wetlands in other areas to compensate for the wetlands and other WUS that would be affected by the OMP.

The OMP will need to mitigate approximately 153 acres of wetlands and other WUS on Airport property. The City is looking at a number of sites for replacement wetlands within the Des Plaines River Watershed, and may include a few sites within the City of Chicago. Funding for this project would come solely from Airport funds available for the OMP.

The OMP will follow criteria established by the USACE, FAA and DuPage County when identifying potential mitigation sites. Those criteria include sites that satisfy the FAA's safety criteria; are located within the Des Plaines River Watershed; are larger, able to support a diverse ecosystem; have no obstacles to immediate design, permitting and construction and provide high plant ground cover and diversity, contain minimal invasive species; provide wetlands functions and improve the quality of the resources; and those that will have the highest chance of success.