

C H A P T E R T W O

Statewide Land Cover



Illinois' grassland is primarily rural and is concentrated in the northwestern and southwestern areas of the state.

Illinois counties range in size from 110,190 acres in Putnam County to 759,040 in McLean County; the median is 329,377 acres. The typical Illinois county has nearly 190,000 acres of cropland, more than 56,000 acres of rural grassland, approximately 42,000 acres of forested and wooded land, less than 9,000 acres of wetland and approximately 11,000 acres of open water. It also has about 8,000 acres of urban or other built-up land and roughly 50 acres of barren land.

The following provides statewide information on seven land cover categories: cropland, grassland, forest/woodland, wetland, urban/built-up land, open water, and barren/exposed land. Figure 4 illustrates the land cover of the state as a whole.

CROPLAND

- All 102 Illinois counties have cropland; the concentration ranges from 4.0% in Cook County to 85.2% in Piatt County.
 - Eight counties have more than 80% of their acreage in crops.
 - Twenty-two counties have 70-79% of their acreage in crops.
 - Twenty-eight counties are 60-69% crop covered.
- On average, Illinois counties plant 62.6% of their acreage in crops.
- Nearly 91% or 19.6 million acres of the state's cropland is in row crops, primarily corn and soybeans.
 - Small grains account for most of the remaining 9% of cropland.
 - Orchards cover only about 16,000 acres.

GRASSLAND

- Illinois' grassland is primarily rural.
 - About 91% of the state's grasses are rural including pastures, rural roadsides, hay/alfalfa, etc.

- Only 9% of the grassland is located in urban areas, primarily residential areas, airports, golf courses and other open spaces.

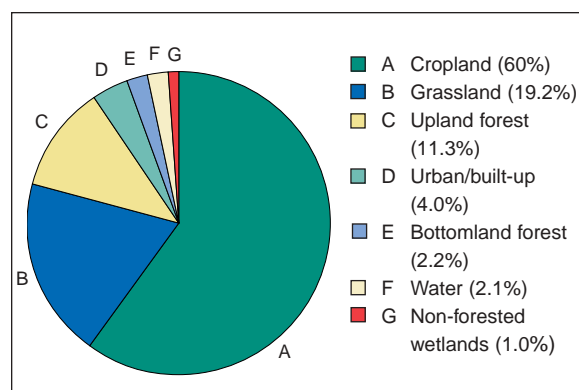


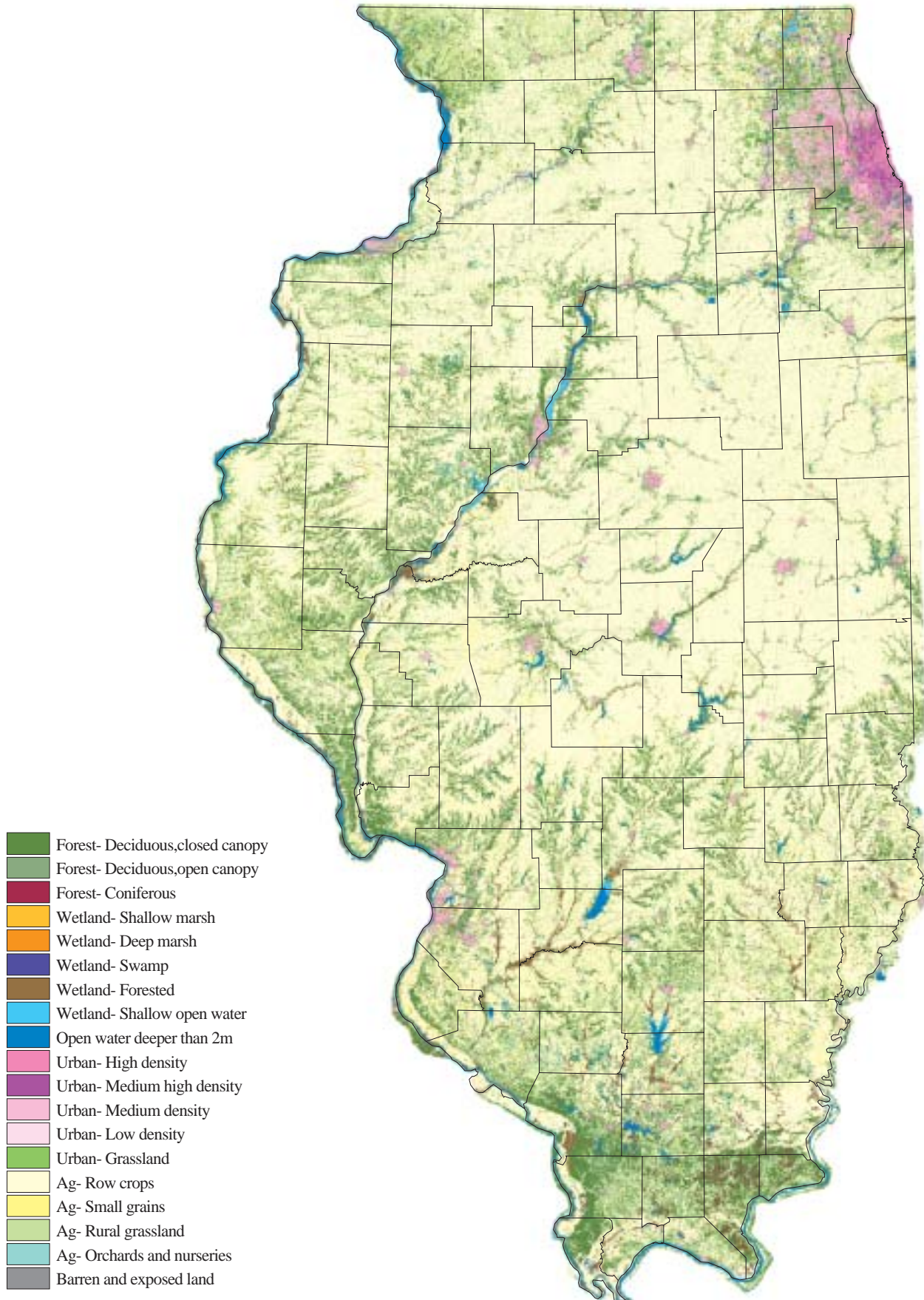
Figure 3. Statewide land cover percentages

- Urban grassland is concentrated in or near the Chicago metropolitan area.
 - Sixty percent of the state's urban grassland, or about 240,900 acres, is located in Cook, Lake, DuPage, Will and Kane counties.
 - Cook County alone has more than 75,000 acres of urban grassland.
- Rural grassland is concentrated in the northwestern and southwestern areas of the state.
 - Fifteen counties have more than 25% of their total acreage in rural grasses.

FOREST/WOODLAND

- Illinois has more than 4 million acres of forest and woodland.
- All Illinois counties have forest or woodland; the predominant type is deciduous woods (87.9%, about 3.6 million acres).
 - Open canopy woods — sparsely wooded land in both rural and urban areas — cover more than 400,000 acres.
 - Coniferous woodland is found on only 72,000 acres.

Figure 4. Statewide land cover



- Forested or wooded areas cover an average of 10.8% of each county.
- The concentration of forested and wooded land ranges from 0.4% of Ford County to 58.4% of Pope County.
 - Two counties, Pope and Hardin, are more than 50% forested or wooded.
 - An additional nine counties are 25 to 49% forested or wooded.

WETLAND

- Illinois has nearly 1.2 million acres or 3.2% of its surface in wetland.
 - The majority of wetland, 69%, is bottomland forest — approximately 809,000 acres situated along the state's rivers.
 - Shallow water wetland comprises 14.9% and shallow marsh/wet meadow comprises 12.0% of all wetland.
 - Deep marsh and swamp combined are only 4.0% of the total wetland.
- All counties have some bottomland forest, shallow and deep marsh, wet meadow, and shallow water wetland.
 - Four Illinois counties have more than 10% of their area covered by wetland (Alexander, Calhoun, Clinton, and Lake); 24 counties have 5 to 10% of their area in wetland.
 - Twenty-seven counties have swamp, comprising a total of 11,726 acres, mostly situated near the southern tip of the state.

URBAN/BUILT-UP LAND

- Illinois has 10 metropolitan areas.
 - The largest, Chicago, encompasses nine counties.
 - The second ranked metropolitan area, East St. Louis, covers five counties.
 - The Peoria and Rockford metropolitan areas take in three counties each.
 - Springfield and Rock Island extend over two counties each.

- There are four single-county metropolitan areas: Bloomington, Champaign, Kankakee and Decatur.
- Urban and built-up land constitutes 4.0% of Illinois' surface.
 - Low density and medium density land uses, primarily residential, account for 57.5% of urban and built-up land.
 - High density development, mostly urban centers, accounts for another 20.9%.
 - Transportation, including major roadways and rails, comprises 21.6% of all urban and built-up land.

OPEN WATER

- Roughly two-thirds of Illinois' boundary is defined by rivers.
 - The Mississippi, Ohio and Wabash rivers border the state.
- Lakes, rivers and perennial streams cover 2.1% of Illinois' surface.
 - The Illinois River bisects the state from St. Louis to Chicago.
 - Other major rivers include the Rock River in the north, the Kaskaskia in the south and the Mackinaw and Sangamon rivers in the center of the state.
- Twenty-four counties contain more than 10,000 acres of lakes, rivers and streams.
 - These counties are concentrated along the Mississippi and Illinois rivers.

BARREN/EXPOSED LAND

- Twenty-five Illinois counties contain barren or exposed land, mostly quarries.
 - Acreage of barren/exposed land is small, ranging from one acre in Macon and Williamson counties to 1,823 in LaSalle County.
- Only four counties (Cook, LaSalle, McHenry and Will) contain more than 1,000 acres of barren/exposed land.



Four Illinois counties have more than 10% of their area covered by wetland.