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Illinois' 188,000 private woodland owners, who control an estimated 82% of the state's 4.86 million acres of forestland, are the primary audience targeted by RREA funds. In Illinois, RREA funding is leveraged with state monies and private gifts estimated at around \$50,000 per year.

### **Taking a deep dive into the oaks of Illinois**

*"Thanks for presenting the wonderful oak workshop on Thursday. I have a new appreciation for the many species of oak." – Oaks of Illinois Webinar Attendee*

Enhancing oak regeneration is a conservation priority in Illinois. The Extension Forestry program at the University of Illinois took a deep dive into the 21 oak species native to Illinois to develop a comprehensive photo collection, identification resources, and a series of programs to raise awareness and increase action on oak management. The central event was a 3-hour online workshop on oak ecology and identification, attended by 745 with the recordings viewed an additional 1,591 times. Four additional programs were held including professional development programs for Illinois Natural Resource Professionals as well as events open to the public. Forest management programs and field days focused on oak management and the practices needed to promote oak regeneration. Additionally, Extension Forestry specialists participated in the development of Forestry for the Birds resources that highlight the impacts to avian wildlife from forest management, with an emphasis on oak management.

### **Safety is at the forefront of training program**

Illinois Extension Forestry also focused on increasing safety practices in the Forestry and Natural Resources community by providing high-quality chainsaw safety workshops informed by national safety standards and regulations (ASTM & OSHA). Workshops covered the importance of personal protective equipment, hierarchical safety controls, operation and maintenance of saws, and basic felling techniques. This year, Illinois Extension Forestry provided 7 chainsaw safety workshops to 70 participants (with an additional chainsaw demonstration event to 75 attendees) including professionals and non-professionals from state agencies (IDNR), businesses, and volunteer organizations (Master Naturalists). Additionally, we provided unique opportunities for members of underrepresented groups by offering sessions such as women-only workshops to increase accessibility for those groups.



*Justin Vozzo instructing a chain course for women.*

**University of Illinois RREA Project Director:** Dr. Robert Schooley, Professor and Head; Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences; 1102 S. Goodwin Ave.; W-503 Turner Hall, Urbana, IL 61801, (217) 244-2729, [schooley@illinois.edu](mailto:schooley@illinois.edu)