

LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES Achievements 2008



Your Lake County Forest Preserves achieved much in 2008. Thanks to your support, we were able to protect some of Lake County's most important natural areas, maintain over 125 miles of trails and restore many acres of habitat for Lake County's native plants and animals.

Highlights

Lake County voters overwhelmingly **approved a Lake County Forest Preserve referendum** on the November 4 ballot to make significant land purchases and preserve improvements without a tax increase. Sixty-six percent of voters supported the \$185 million bond issue, giving the Forest Preserves \$148 million to acquire new open spaces and \$37 million to complete additional trails, restore more habitats for endangered wildlife and plants, improve educational, historical and cultural facilities, and renovate existing preserve and facilities.

This year we celebrated our **50th Anniversary**. To commemorate the event we hosted a Rock N' Roll Birthday Party, created a touring 50th Anniversary Mobile Exhibit that visited libraries and community events, and debuted new trailside educational signs at preserves around the county. Each sign tells the history and significance of the preserve in which it is located.

New lands preserved

Prairie Stream, near Antioch. This new 260-acre preserve along Route 45 provides upland habitat and a natural buffer for the adjacent Redwing Slough Natural Area.

Kettle Grove, near Wauconda. This new 248-acre preserve between Route 120 and Route 60 contains high quality glacial kettle wetlands.

Egret Marsh, Kildeer. This new 119-acre preserve on Route 22 protects valuable natural resources and preserves sensitive wetlands.

Grassy Lake, near Lake Barrington. This 94-acre addition located on Kelsey Road protects multiple fen communities, streamside marsh areas and savanna tracts.

Hastings Lake, Lake Villa. An 8-acre addition on Gelden Road provides bird habitat and protects high quality wetlands.

Fourth Lake, Lindenhurst. 19 acres of additions were added to help protect valuable wetlands and provide space for expansion of the Millennium Trail.

Lakewood, Wauconda. This 5-acre addition provides a buffer for Broberg Marsh and space for possible future trail connections.

Singing Hills, near Volo. A 72-acre addition expands the preserve to 685 acres.

Heron Creek, Ela Township. A 94-acre addition, north of Cuba Road, features a large lake, ponds, woodlands and open prairies.

Pine Dunes, Antioch. 29 acres were added to help protect an oak grove and provide valuable habitat for wildlife.

Habitat restored

Habitat restoration is an ongoing part of properly maintaining your Forest Preserves. In addition to actively managing our land and waters, and monitoring the health of our natural areas, we made significant progress on several key initiatives:

Old School, near Libertyville. HSBC entered into a partnership with the Preservation Foundation of the Lake County Forest Preserves and the Lake County Forest Preserve District. Through its gift and a team of employees, HSBC is helping to restore areas within Old School Forest Preserve by removing non-native, invasive species and reforesting areas with native plants.

Lakewood, near Wauconda. Began restoration work on a 600-acre parcel north of Route 176 by finalizing the restoration plan, planting native trees and shrubs, removing invasive woody species, seeding native prairie and beginning plans for drain tile removal. This large habitat restoration project is funded in large part by a very generous contribution by Gordon McLean of Lake Zurich. The project, when complete, will expand wetland, savanna and prairie habitats near existing wetlands to provide critical habitat for grassland and wetland birds.

Spring Bluff, Winthrop Harbor. Four major efforts were implemented including removal of invasive woody species across 100 acres, control of invasive herbaceous species across 80 acres, ecological monitoring of the preserve's hydrology and a study of the influence of cattails upon nutrient levels.

Fort Sheridan, near Highland Park. Through two grants the District has continued its efforts to restore the high quality areas of the preserve. Restoration efforts are underway for Janes Ravine and the northern lake bluff area.

The Wildlife Biologists began a long-term **monitoring program** to identify the fauna that is found in the Forest Preserves. They began with four monitoring locations this year and will expand to 18 next year. This monitoring will help the District track the success of restoration efforts and monitor wildlife species found in our preserves.

Habitat restoration projects including tree and shrub planting, native seed reintroduction and removal of invasive species also occurred at **Tanager Kames, Lyons Woods, Wright Woods, and Middlefork Savanna.**

We oversaw two **university research projects** studying the means and methods for the translocation of Blanding's turtles and amphibians.

Natural Resource staff played a major role in the development of the **cooperative invasive plant networks**, including the New Invaders Program, which identifies populations of new invasive species in the area, Midwest Invasive Plant Network, providing educational information about known invasive species, and the Illinois Invasive Plant Council. Staff also took the lead on establishing a Cooperative Weed Management Area which allow for collaborative projects with state, county and local transportation agencies.

Public access improved

The 309-acre **Nippersink Forest Preserve**, near Round Lake, opened to the public with five picnic shelters, two miles of trail and two accessible fishing piers.

The 245-acre **Heron Creek Forest Preserve**, in Ela Township, opened to the public with 2.3 miles of trail for hiking, biking and cross-country skiing, and two new picnic shelters.

The newly restored **Adlai E. Stevenson Historic Home** in Mettawa opened to the public, featuring outdoor exhibits and docent guided tours. Visitors to the home are able to learn about the property and the significance of Adlai E. Stevenson II.

A new trail tunnel under Hawley Street, built by Del Webb, allows safe passage between the two halves of **Countryside Golf Club**. In addition, a continuous cart path was installed at the course to prevent disruption of play after heavy rains.

The Youth Conservation Corps built an accessible fishing pier at **Wright Woods Forest Preserve**.

A new 0.75-mile trail connection between Barrington Park District's Citizens Park and **Cuba Marsh Forest Preserve** opened. The connection features a long boardwalk over wetlands and the Keith Pederson Bridge. The project was funded in part by lead contributions from an anonymous donor and the Barrington Park District. The Park District and Forest Preserves received an **Intergovernmental Cooperation Award** from the Illinois Association of Park Districts for the project.

A new parking lot on Cedar Lake Road and a 1-mile new mowed grass trail opened at **Grant Woods Forest Preserve**.

A new 0.6-mile trail connecting the **Des Plaines River Trail** to River Road opened.

The parking area was paved and a new shade shelter added at the **Lakewood Dog Exercise Area**, near Wauconda.

A new bird observation area, featuring two spotting scopes, opened at **Rollins Savanna Forest Preserve**, near Grayslake.

New picnic shelters replaced aging shelters at **Old School** and **Greenbelt Forest Preserves**.

Constructed two new miles on the **Millennium Trail** between Lakewood and Ray Lake Forest Preserves. Another 0.5-mile section was completed near Singing Hills Forest Preserve. Both new sections will open to the public in 2009.

Completed digitizing the **Lake County Discovery Museum's World War II Collection**. The images are now available to the public through the DigitalPast Web site (www.digitalpast.org). Funding for the project was provided by an \$85,000 grant from the Illinois State Library, a Division of the Office of Secretary of State, using funds provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, under the federal Library Services and Technology Act.

Other achievements

Annual **preserve visits** climbed to 3.5 million.

District's **total acreage** reached 26,800.

Identified 1,105 species of plants and animals at Middlefork Savanna Forest Preserve in a 24-hour **BioBlitz**.

The Forest Preserve **Web site** and **Horizons newsletter** were both redesigned with public input to make them more user-friendly.

Expanded **e-mail newsletter** offerings and started connecting to visitors through social media on **Facebook, Twitter, Flickr** and **YouTube**.

Plans were completed and construction started on the new **Operations and Public Safety Facility**. The facility will help ensure that our growing number of preserves, trails and facilities are properly maintained, restored and patrolled for years to come.

A master plan for **Hastings Lake Forest Preserve** was completed and approved.

Lake County Discovery Museum was honored as the **2008 Library of the Year** by the North Suburban Library System.

The bioswales and rain gardens at the Welcome Center at Ryerson Woods received a **2008 Conservation and Native Landscaping Award** from the United States Environmental Protection Agency and Chicago Wilderness.

ThunderHawk Golf Club ranked among the top 10 in *Golfweek's* first-ever list of **Best Municipal Courses in the U.S.** The course was also rated the number five best public course in Illinois by *Golf Magazine*.

Planning continued for expansion of the **Greenbelt Cultural Center** to accommodate continued growth in events, programs and community rentals at the popular facility.

Entered into a license agreement with the non-profit Adlai Stevenson Center on Democracy for operation of the main house at the **Adlai E. Stevenson Historic Home**.

Hosted the national touring exhibition **The American Soldier: A Photographic Tribute** at the Lake County Discovery Museum. Also, designed and installed the original temporary exhibitions **LP Art** and **The Mischievous Art of Jim Flora**.

Twenty-eight students graduated from the **Science First** summer science program. Abbott Fund generously donated \$30,000 to support this program as the Lead Sponsor. ComEd returned as a Platinum Sponsor with a generous commitment of \$20,000.

Forest Preserve volunteers Bob and Anne Rizzolo of Libertyville received the **Chicago Wilderness 2008 Grassroots Conservation Leadership Award**.

Prairie Wolf Dog Exercise Area was named **Best Dog Park of Chicago 2008** by *Chicago Reader Magazine*.

An anonymous donor generously contributed \$200,000 toward restoration at **Middlefork Savanna Forest Preserve** in Lake Forest. The donation will be used to help restore the oak savannas along the site's trail system.

Opened the **Children's Learning Gallery**, an exhibition and play space, at the Lake County Discovery Museum. Also began renovations on the Bringing the World Home exhibition.

Planning continued on exhibit designs and an operating plan for the Main "Great" Barn at the **Bonner Heritage Farm**. This year-long design process is being funded by an Institute of Museums and Library Services Museum's for America grant.

For more information contact:

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