

PRESERVATION
FOUNDATION
LAKE COUNTY
FOREST PRESERVES
ANNUAL REPORT

2019





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FOLIA
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In 2019, the Lake County Forest Preserves introduced a refined logo and visual identity. The familiar leaf shape remains, but we incorporated new color to capture the essence of the forest preserves: WATER, SOIL, FOLIAGE, and NEW GROWTH.

This report illustrates how your gift to the Preservation Foundation last year went to the heart of the Forest Preserves mission, helping steward and sustain the diverse natural ecosystems on which all life in Lake County depends.



WATER

34% OF FOREST
PRESERVE LAND IS IN
FLOODPLAIN

It is impossible to capture in a few words all that water means to us. It is clean, safe drinking water, and healthy lakes and rivers for recreation. It is essential to the production of technology that fuels the information age, and it is a mode of transportation for goods and people, little changed throughout human history.

It is essential to sustaining life and capable of immense destruction. In recent years, Lake County has seen frequent and severe flood events. Land preservation and restoration are among the most important actions we can take to mitigate this threat to human health and property. Every acre that is permanently protected by the Forest Preserves is an acre that can hold more rainwater on the landscape than a parking lot or other impervious surface.



One acre
of restored
wetland can
hold 330,000
gallons of
stormwater—
reducing
downstream
flooding.



IN 2019, A LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND GRANT ALLOWED US TO ACQUIRE A 99-ACRE ADDITION TO RAY LAKE FOREST PRESERVE IN WAUCONDA. THE PROPERTY WAS A TOP PRIORITY FOR MORE THAN TWO DECADES. PRESERVATION OF THIS PARCEL AT THE HEADWATERS OF SQUAW CREEK IS ESSENTIAL TO THE FOREST PRESERVES LONG-TERM PLANS TO HELP RESTORE THIS HIGHLY IMPAIRED WATERSHED.



“There can be no life
without soil and no soil
without life.”

— Charles E. Kellogg

ILLINOIS
HAS ABOUT
1,500 DIFFERENT
TYPES OF

SOIL

Our fertile Illinois soils are a gift from the ice age. The glaciers retreat left a deep layer of rich deposits and sediment. Centuries of decomposing prairie plants further enriched the soil. Today, Illinois has some of the most productive land in the world.

Early in the Forest Preserves history, we focused on preserving Lake County’s highest quality natural areas. Recently, most protected land has been in agriculture. To return farmland to ecological health, our ecologists use the soil as a road map, telling us whether to return the land to wetland, prairie, savanna, or forest.

With a \$197,000 grant from the Illinois EPA in 2019, we retired 95 acres of farmland at Van Patten Woods in Wadsworth. The soils tell us that we can restore 60 acres to shrub and woodland, and 35 acres to savanna. Ending farming and restoring ecological function to this land, which is immediately adjacent to the Des Plaines River, will reduce erosion and fertilizer run-off and improve the soil’s ability to retain rainwater.



AT OUR GREEN YOUTH FARM, LOCATED WITHIN GREENBELT FOREST PRESERVE IN NORTH CHICAGO, THE SOIL YIELDS FRESH, HEALTHY PRODUCE. LOCAL TEENS GAIN JOB SKILLS, LEARN ABOUT NUTRITION, EXPERIENCE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND SPEND TIME WITH ADULT MENTORS IN THIS PROGRAM THAT IS ENTIRELY SUPPORTED BY CHARITABLE DONATIONS.



IN 2019, THE PRESERVATION FOUNDATION HOSTED A HARVEST DINNER TO RAISE FUNDS AND DRAW NEW SUPPORTERS TO THE GREEN YOUTH FARM. ULTIMATELY, THE INAUGURAL EVENT SECURED MORE THAN \$50,000 FOR THIS PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN.



FOLIAGE

“I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person. There was such a glory over everything. The sun came up like gold through the trees, and I felt like I was in heaven.”

— Harriet Tubman

Although Illinois is known as the Prairie State, oak-hickory woodlands were historically prominent in our region. For most of the past 5,000 years, oaks towered over Lake County, literally and figuratively. As a keystone species*, oaks provide food and support for thousands of native birds, wildlife and insects.

Unfortunately, oaks are nowhere near as prolific in Lake County today. European buckthorn is our most common plant. By any measure, it is our most insidious invasive species, decimating our native woodlands, wetlands, and prairies to create a monoculture.

The Forest Preserves restoration mission is an essential struggle to support native plants to reclaim our landscape from non-native, often invasive, plants that would change the nature of our diverse habitats.



IN 2019, WE RECEIVED A \$500,000 DONATION TO CONTINUE HABITAT RESTORATION ACROSS HUNDREDS OF ACRES AT GRANT WOODS FOREST PRESERVE IN INGLESIDE. THOUGH IT MAY SEEM COUNTER-INTUITIVE, ONE STRATEGY IS TO REMOVE NATIVE TREES, SUCH AS MAPLES AND EVEN YOUNG OAKS, TO OPEN UP THE CANOPY. DOING SO BRINGS LIGHT TO EMERGENT OAK SAPPLINGS TO DIVERSIFY THE TREE MATRIX BY AGE. A RANGE OF YOUNG, MIDDLE-AGED, AND MATURE OAKS INCREASES RESILIENCE AGAINST ECOLOGICAL THREATS SUCH AS CLIMATE CHANGE.



2,300⁺

SPECIES OF BIRD, ANIMAL, AND INSECT DEPEND ON THE OAK IN OUR CENTRAL HARDWOOD FORESTS ACROSS LAKE COUNTY

A species on which other species in an ecosystem largely depend, such that, if it were removed, the ecosystem would change drastically.



NEW GROWTH

New growth speaks to the native plants that emerge spontaneously from the soil even after a parcel has been farmed for 80 years. It refers to the seven critically rare plants, such as the lady slipper orchid and wild ginseng, that are being reintroduced into new forest preserves today, thanks to a \$15,000 pilot program funded by our Annual Fund in 2019.

New growth speaks to baby Blanding's turtles, hatched and nurtured by Forest Preserve staff until they are mature enough to be released into the globally important Illinois Lake Plain habitat along Lake County's eastern coast.

New growth refers to new faces. Individuals and families, as well as communities and groups that may be underserved. From Conservation Explorers, to volunteerism and community engagement at Greenbelt Forest Preserve, to the Latinx Community Engagement project at the Bess Bower Dunn Museum. All made possible through charitable support.



Our dedicated Turtle Champions and other Adopt-a-Turtle program supporters together contributed more than \$18,000 last year to make this program possible.



New growth speaks to ensuring the future of the Forest Preserves through a new endowment. In 2019, the Forest Preserves Board of Commissioners and the Preservation Foundation Board of Directors passed resolutions establishing a \$20 million endowment goal by 2025. We expect the fund to generate \$800,000 annually to care for our restored lands and trails.



AS PART OF THE *CELEBRATION OF SOULS* EXHIBITION AT THE DUNN MUSEUM, AN ANNUAL FUND GRANT ALLOWED STAFF AND STUDENTS AT COLLEGE OF LAKE COUNTY TO USE THIS *DIA DE LOS MUERTOS* EXHIBITION TO BUILD THE MUSEUM'S RELATIONSHIP WITH LAKE COUNTY'S DIVERSE LATINX COMMUNITIES.

3:1 IN 2019, A COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP CHALLENGE GRANT FROM ILLINOIS CLEAN ENERGY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION PROVIDED \$3 FOR EVERY NEW DOLLAR RAISED TO CONTINUE HABITAT RESTORATION AT GREENBELT FOREST PRESERVE. ANOTHER \$4,000 WILL BE PROVIDED WHEN WE REACH OUR GOAL OF 400 HOURS OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS.



As we put this annual report together, our work and home lives have changed dramatically, and the stories from 2019 feel as if they come from another age. While the Forest Preserves is not a direct COVID-19 relief organization, the crisis highlights the value of the preserves in supporting our overall well-being.

Especially now, we can appreciate how time spent in nature supports our **physical, mental, and emotional health**. Visits to forest preserves this spring were, on average, 40% higher than our peak summer months in previous years. Countless users have expressed gratitude for the opportunities for fresh air, exercise and stress relief they find on our trails.

Even if you never step foot in a preserve, they are always working for you. The Forest Preserves is the primary guardian of the **natural capital**—clean air, clean water, floodwater storage and groundwater recharge—that sustains all life in Lake County.

While these difficult times have caused an immediate loss in earned revenue and the next few years are uncertain, the Forest Preserves strength is in our focus on the long term. From our 100-year vision to our 10-year budget projections, our management approach allows us to **react** quickly to uncertainty.

At its core, this is our rationale for building a long-term endowment, something few government agencies have done. A robust endowment is a hedge against future fiscal challenges. We will get there by building a world-class public-private partnership between the Forest Preserves and the Preservation Foundation.

Thank you for your support of our efforts and for all you do to make Lake County a better place to live and work.

Sincerely,

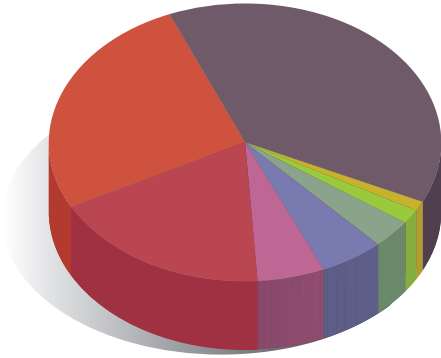

Nels Leutwiler
President


Rebekah Snyder
Executive Director

2019 DONATIONS

\$2,147,604

- **NATURAL RESOURCES, \$822,472**
- **ENDOWMENT, \$566,445**
- **PLANNING AND LAND PRESERVATION, \$393,671**
- **EDUCATION, \$119,631**
- **ANNUAL FUND, \$111,648**
- **FUNDRAISING EVENTS, \$73,525**
- **PUBLIC ACCESS, \$35,317**
- **IN-KIND SUPPORT, \$24,895**

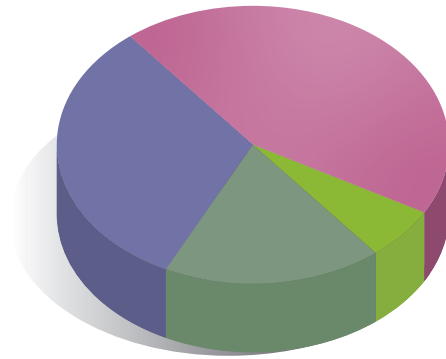


2019 ANNUAL FUND GRANTS

\$132,319

- **LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY, \$58,189**
 \$34,800 - a three-year grant to fund the Annual Volunteer Recognition event;
 \$23,389 to update the Forest Preserves Strategic Plan
- **NATURAL RESOURCES, \$42,105**
 \$26,316 to restore native habitats and increase volunteer engagement at Greenbelt Forest Preserve;
 \$15,789 for a pilot project to reintroduce critically rare plants into the forest preserves

- **BESS BOWER DUNN MUSEUM, \$24,026**
 \$15,789 to sponsor the *Marvelocity: the Art of Alex Ross* exhibition;
 \$3,158 to support public programming during the *Reima Ratti* exhibition;
 \$5,079 to engage Lake County's Latinx communities in the *Celebration of Souls* exhibition
- **EDUCATION, \$7,999**
 \$5,789 to continue support for Conservation Explorers in 2020;
 \$2,210 to initiate a Teacher Ambassador



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Audited financial statements and a complete list of institutional and individual donors can be found online at ThePreservationFoundation.org.

Photography: (in order of appearance) Pat Wadecki, page 3; Jeff Goldberg, pages 5 (top), 10 and back cover; Steven Diver, page 5 (bottom); John Kovc, page 6; Kim Karpeles, page 11 (middle); Dave Cassin, page 11 (bottom left); Ken Klick, page 13

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of the Lake County Forest Preserves

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Lake County
Forest Preserves