

A large hawk is shown in flight, its wings fully extended, against a clear blue sky. The hawk's feathers are a mix of brown, white, and black, with a prominent pattern on the wings. The hawk is looking towards the right of the frame.

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

LOOKING FORWARD

FOREST
PRESERVE
DISTRICT
WILL COUNTY



HIGHLIGHTS OF 2021

- ① More than **1,035 ACRES** of land acquired.
- ② A total of **22,981 ACRES** preserved throughout the county.
- ③ A total of **39,300 PEOPLE** served through education, outreach & public programs.
- ④ More than **383,000 FOLLOWERS** across all social media platforms.
- ⑤ Almost **9,200 HOURS** of volunteer service donated.
- ⑥ More than **\$1.6 MILLION** received through grants.



The Forest Preserve District protects and enhances Will County's natural and cultural resources for the benefit of current and future generations.

PROTECT

We protect the health and well-being of nature and the residents of Will County by conserving parcels of land – some of which are of the highest quality and have rare ecological value.

ENHANCE

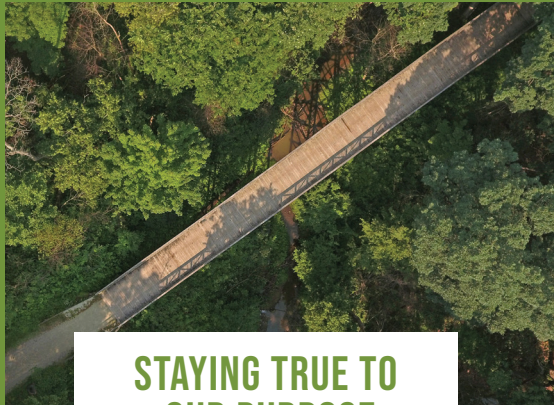
We enhance our communities by restoring land back to its natural state as closely as possible and providing opportunities for people to engage with the outdoors through trails, fishing lakes, dog parks and more.

BENEFIT

We benefit current and future generations by helping to keep air and water clean, by preventing floods to residential areas and by promoting an overall healthy ecosystem.



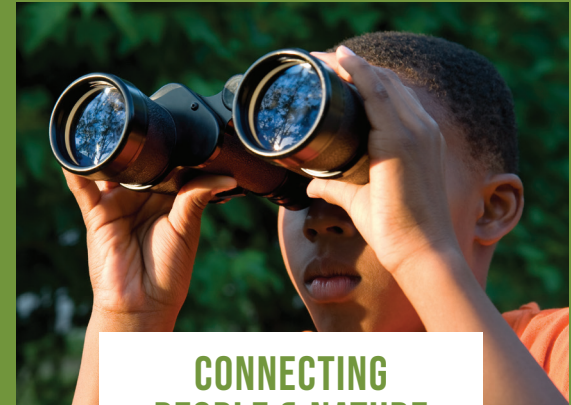
OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES



**STAYING TRUE TO
OUR PURPOSE**



**BEING GOOD
STEWARDS**



**CONNECTING
PEOPLE & NATURE**



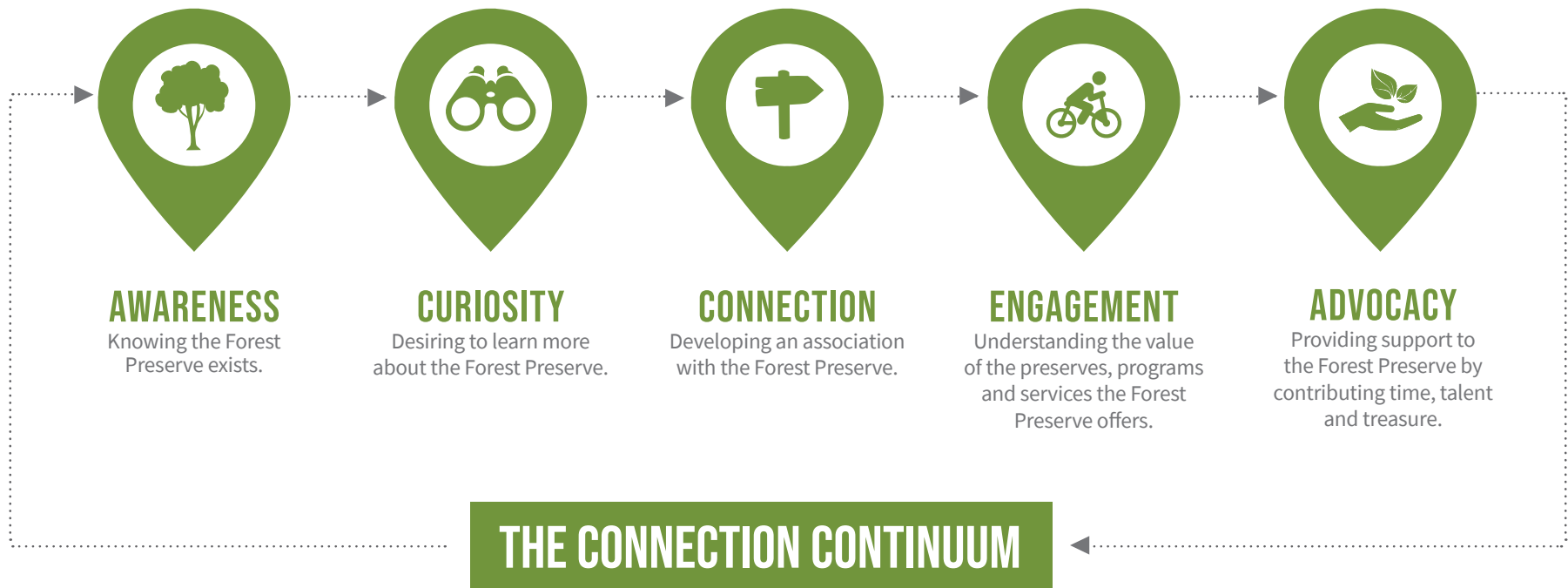
**FOCUSING
ON WELLNESS**



**WORKING
WITH OTHERS**



**PROMOTING
SUSTAINABILITY**



“Bringing People and Nature Together” is more than just the Forest Preserve’s tagline. It’s shorthand for our organization’s purpose. People arrive at the Forest Preserve along a continuum of experiences. In response, we celebrate where they are along that continuum and encourage further cultivation of their connection with nature and our agency.

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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Monee

Sherry Newquist,
Steger - *Operations
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Frankfort

James Moustis,
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Committee Vice Chair*

Mimi Cowan,
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Tom Weigel,
New Lenox

District 13

Mica Freeman,
Plainfield - *Secretary*

Debbie Kraulidis,
Joliet



DEAR FRIENDS,

As your Forest Preserve, our main goal is to protect a portion of our county lands for the enjoyment of present and future generations. We do this by preserving our most significant natural areas, greenways, regional trail corridors and lands that can be restored to their natural condition. We help provide clean air, clean water, habitats and open spaces that allow all species to thrive. Most of all, we work to connect, or reconnect, people and nature.

In 2021, we completed critical acquisitions at Hadley Valley Preserve, Jackson Creek Preserve, Forked Creek Preserve and Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve. We continued restoration of natural habitats at Kankakee Sands Preserve, Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve and Prairie Bluff Preserve along with management of thousands of acres of natural areas. We renovated miles of trails and connected the Rock Run Greenway Trail and DuPage River Trail with new bridges spanning the DuPage River and Interstate 55. We broke ground on the next segment of the Veterans Memorial Trail connecting the Spring Creek Greenway Trail to the 159th Street Bikeway and Fiddymont Creek Preserve. We also completed the installation of new exhibits at Isle a la Cache Museum and initiated the renovation of Four Rivers Environmental Education Center. Maybe best of all, we agreed to purchase Hidden Oaks Nature Center in Bolingbrook to expand our educational offerings in one of the most populated areas of the county.

Our social media outreach continued to explode, we initiated an update of our website, and our monthly long-form nature video series, "The Buzz," won national acclaim. Hundreds of thousands of people follow our social media and appreciate the quality of information we deliver. Moving forward, we will continue to provide safe, clean and well-maintained preserve access areas and trails and will work to meet our purpose as your Forest Preserve District.

Sincerely,
Joe VanDuyne,
Board President



DEAR FRIENDS,

As we continued to understand the effects of the pandemic, the Forest Preserve adjusted and readjusted the way in which we served the public. But what did not change was our focus on our mission, or purpose, as an organization. The Forest Preserve's purpose is set by an act created by the State Legislature in 1913. In 1926, voters approved a referendum establishing the Forest Preserve District of Will County to "acquire ... and hold lands ... containing one or more natural forests or lands connecting such forests or parts thereof, for the purpose of protecting and preserving the flora, fauna and scenic beauties within such district, and to restore, restock, protect, and preserve the natural forests and said lands together with their flora and fauna, as nearly as may be, in their natural state and condition, for the purpose of the education, pleasure, and recreation of the public." That's a mouthful that we like to boil down to "bringing people and nature together." Throughout the pandemic, as people continued to flock to open spaces, natural areas and trails, what we already understood became all the more evident. Nature heals.

In 2021, we revisited our purpose as expressed in our mission and reaffirmed the six principles we hold at the core of our operation: 1.) Staying true to our purpose; 2.) Being good stewards; 3.) Connecting people and nature; 4.) Focusing on wellness; 5.) Working with others; and 6.) Promoting sustainability.

While our county will continue to experience ongoing change, the Forest Preserve will remain committed to working in the best interest of all living things that call Will County home. We understand that our main goals are to preserve, protect, restore and connect. Your preserves serve many purposes. Rest assured that they will be there for you and the generations that follow to enjoy.

Sincerely,
Ralph Schultz,
Executive Director

STAYING TRUE TO OUR PURPOSE

As the Forest Preserve has evolved over the past century, we have witnessed many changes in the landscape and the built environment. What remains unchanged is our commitment to our mission.

LAND ACQUISITION

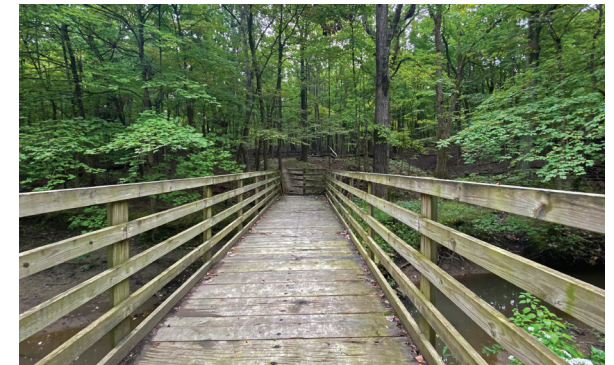
The Forest Preserve acquired more than 1,035 acres of land in 2021. Highlights include:



The agreement to purchase Hidden Lakes Trout Farm and **Hidden Oaks Nature Center** in Bolingbrook. This 33-acre parcel is located immediately south of the Forest Preserve's 249-acre Whalon Lake preserve. A DuPage River Trail bridge, completed in 2015, connects the two sites.



Three separate acquisitions of property totaling more than 362.5 acres. Located approximately two miles west of Forest Preserve existing holdings within the **Jackson Creek Greenway**, this land protects Jackson Creek and its associated floodplain in an area facing higher development pressures.



The transfer of approximately 473 acres of **Thorn Creek Woods Nature Preserve** by the State of Illinois. The transfer will give the Forest Preserve more local control of the property and allow the District, as well as partners within the Thorn Creek Woods Management Commission, to apply for grant funding.



TOGETHER WITH OUR FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL PARTNERS,
APPROXIMATELY **10% OF THE COUNTY'S LAND** IS SET ASIDE AS OPEN SPACE.

PRESERVE, VISITOR CENTER & TRAIL ENHANCEMENTS

Hammel Woods dam in Shorewood was removed in 2021 to benefit the health of the DuPage River and the wildlife that lives in and around it. As part of the project, an ADA-accessible kayak launch was installed south of where the dam had been located. Kayakers can now pass through this area of Hammel Woods without having to portage.

An improvement project completed at **Isle a la Cache Museum** in Romeoville was funded by an Illinois Department of Natural Resources Public Museum Capital Grant. Enhancements included additions to the Native American Longhouse, site orientation kiosks, a series of outdoor exhibits and a new trail segment.

Work on the **Black Road trail connection project** was finished in 2021 and included the installation of two pedestrian bridges over the DuPage River and I-55, linking the DuPage River Trail in Shorewood with the Rock Run Greenway Trail in Joliet.

Improvements were made to the bird sanctuary viewing area at **Plum Creek Nature Center** in Crete Township with the installation of bird-friendly windows, an improved water feature and new, more comfortable seating.

Monee Reservoir in Monee Township went green with its concession items in 2021, no longer selling beverages in plastic bottles. The visitor center now sells boxed water, and pop in recyclable aluminum cans. Monee Reservoir also rebranded itself with a new logo.



Hammel Woods dam removal



Isle a la Cache improvements



Black Road trail connection project



Plum Creek Nature Center's bird sanctuary



Monee Reservoir's concessions

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2022, we will work to:

- 1 Continue to prioritize Forest Preserve investments to maximize equitable opportunities for all communities.
- 2 Maintain or exceed a ratio of 1 acre of Forest Preserve property per 30 Will County residents.
- 3 Enhance, expand and improve the regional and local trail systems to maintain or exceed a ratio of 1 mile of trail per 5,500 Will County residents.
- 4 Break ground on improvements at Lake Chaminwood Preserve, expanding parking and connecting the internal trail system to the I&M Canal State Trail via a new bridge.
- 5 Continue development of the Veterans Memorial Trail linking the Spring Creek Greenway Trail to the 159th Street Bikeway.
- 6 Continue fabrication and installation of new exhibit features at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon.
- 7 Open the recently acquired Hidden Oaks Nature Center in Bolingbrook.

BEING A GOOD STEWARD

As stewards, we preserve, manage and restore significant natural and cultural resources to support an environmental legacy and encourage a community-wide respect for nature. The decisions we make today will have impacts that may be seen for generations to come.



RESTORATION

Habitat restoration is vital because human health as well as the health of wildlife are dependent upon a thriving ecosystem. In 2021, natural area stewardship activities were conducted on more than 6,200 acres of the District's holdings with efforts focused on 15 preserves located throughout the county. These included: Braidwood Sands Natural Area (1,423 acres), Hickory Creek Barrens Nature Preserve (1,000 acres), Goodenow Grove Nature Preserve (898 acres) and Messenger Woods Nature Preserve (443 acres).

PRESCRIBED FIRE

Many species rely on fire to maintain the habitat in which they live. In 2021, prescribed burns were completed on more than 2,100 acres at 58 burn units to introduce natural fire disturbance on remnant and restored plant communities.

INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL

Invasive species degrade native habitats and are in competition with our native flora for resources. More than 6,200 hours were spent performing invasive species management on over 3,300 acres in 2021. Fifty different invasive plant species within 37 preserves were controlled.

NATIVE SEED COLLECTION

An important part of regenerating native habitat is the responsible collection of seeds from native plants onsite or in other nearby preserves. More than 470 pounds of seed from 292 different native plant species were collected in 2021 to establish native plant communities in newly restored areas and to enrich degraded natural areas.



THROUGH STEWARDSHIP, THE FOREST PRESERVE HAS:

- ASSEMBLED GREENWAYS ALONG OUR CREEKS AND WATERWAYS.
- ESTABLISHED WILDLIFE CORRIDORS.
- CREATED A **REGIONAL TRAIL SYSTEM** CRISSCROSSING THE COUNTY.

RESEARCH

Science-based research informs and guides best practices and policies. In 2021, the Forest Preserve completed wading bird nesting surveys at Lake Renwick Preserve and Rock Run Rookery; grassland bird surveys at 10 preserves; and aerial surveys of deer populations at 33 preserves. Among other projects, it also monitored 24 populations of rare plant species at 14 preserves and conducted small-mammal studies at Messenger Woods Nature Preserve to determine the effectiveness of sapling protection measures. In addition, the Forest Preserve developed geodatabases and maps in 2021 for easier data collection.

REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURE

Regenerative agriculture methods are beneficial because they reduce the environmental impact of farming with less pollution, soil erosion and energy use. The Forest Preserve awarded its first organic farm license in 2021. A total of 147 acres will begin the transition to organic in 2022 and become certified organic by 2025. In addition, farm fields at Fiddymment Creek Preserve and Hadley Valley are the first to have cover crops grown outside of the seasonal row crops of corn and soybean. A 166-acre farm license at Jackson Creek Preserve, awarded in 2021, will also require that cover crops be planted. Moreover, farm fields at Laughton Preserve and Fiddymment Creek Preserve have ongoing establishment of prairie strips to reduce erosion and provide habitat for wildlife.



LOOKING FORWARD

In 2022, we will work to:

- 1 Restore nearly 160 acres of existing farmland to native habitat, including property at Kankakee Sands Preserve; Forked Creek Preserve; and Hadley Valley.**
- 2 Convert 416 acres of newly acquired farmland to conservation farming/regenerative agriculture.**
- 3 Conduct land management activities on 11,500 acres of owned or managed property, including hay and row crop management.**
- 4 Initiate conversion of 147 acres of agricultural row crops to certified organic.**

CONNECTING PEOPLE TO NATURE

The Forest Preserve provides multiple avenues for the public to experience nature. Through these opportunities, we share the very purpose for which forest preserve lands have been preserved, protected and managed as well as the value that they provide.



PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

Camping	3,000
Dog Parks	3,577
Non-District Events & Special Use	7,700
Picnics	40,100

PEOPLE SERVED

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

District Outreach	600
Education Programs	9,100
Public Programs	13,500
Visitor Center Events & Exhibitions	15,000
Volunteer Events	1,100

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Social Media Presence	383,183 Followers
Social Media Posts	79.8 Million Impressions
Website Traffic	3.38 Million Page Views
YouTube Videos	100,400 Views
Traditional Media	34.4 Million Impressions

FACILITY VISITATION



**Four Rivers
Environmental
Education Center**

14,700



Isle a la Cache Museum

21,000



Monee Reservoir

11,000



**Plum Creek
Nature Center**

19,000



**Sugar Creek
Administration Center**

7,000



WE CONNECT PEOPLE TO NATURE THROUGH:

- COMPELLING PROGRAMS, EXHIBITS & EVENTS.
- A NUMBER OF RECREATIONAL AMENITIES.
- A VARIETY OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2022, we will work to:

- 1 Develop and present a dynamic schedule of 400+ interpretive-led public programs.
- 2 Present monthly outreach programs for the wider community including those for libraries, clubs and local communities.
- 3 Offer a minimum of five visitor center-based events and five exhibitions, collectively designed to increase awareness and visitation.
- 4 Grow the number of followers and engagements on social media by 10-15%.
- 5 Increase the number of website page views by 30%, and the number of digital newsletter subscribers by 15%.
- 6 Expand viewership of “The Buzz” nature program by 20%.
- 7 Complete a refresh of the Forest Preserve’s website that will update its content management system and provide new features for the public.

FOCUSING ON WELLNESS

Research shows that being in nature has a positive effect on mood, boosts energy, reduces stress and promotes overall health. The Forest Preserve strives to make nature accessible to all and to offer a variety of ways for people to engage with the outdoors in support of their mental and physical health.



In 2021, we not only continued to offer programs that focused on a variety of recreational interests, but that also represented a variety of groups to provide greater access for everyone. Programs were held for seniors, Spanish speakers, women, men, children and families, individuals with sensory-processing needs, and even dogs and their owners. In addition, programs on trail, bicycle and boating safety as well as environmental topics were included in the year's program lineup. Online programming and digital communications also provided other avenues for people to connect with the outdoors.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2022, we will work to:

- 1 Complete and open to the public the new All-Abilities Trail at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center.
- 2 Develop an inclusion initiative consisting of a promotional campaign, a "Four Rivers for All" event, and additional programming for diverse audiences.
- 3 Seek 2-4 opportunities to engage with underserved communities.

WE PROVIDE:



RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



PROGRAMS FOR DIVERSE AUDIENCES



AN EMPHASIS ON ADA BEST PRACTICES



129 MILES OF REGIONAL TRAILS



A COMMITMENT TO ACCESS FOR ALL



USER-FRIENDLY DIGITAL OPTIONS

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Having a cooperative approach allows us to fulfill our mission as well as to assist others. Together with federal, state and local agency partners; non-governmental organizations; volunteers; and private citizens, we multiply our efforts and improve the environment for all life that calls Will County home or relies on its natural resources.



GRANTS

Grants expand local tax dollars to enable the District to provide more amenities to Will County residents. In 2021, the following grants were received:

Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation	\$1,520,000
<i>Land Acquisition and Restoration Grant</i> <i>Purchase of 47.5-acre parcel adjacent to Hadley Valley</i>	
Illinois Department of Natural Resources	\$92,000
<i>Habitat Preservation Grant</i> <i>Braidwood Sands Natural Area</i>	
Total Grants for 2021	\$1,612,000

PROJECTS

Collaborating with others on special initiatives establishes important relationships, combines resources, promotes innovation and produces favorable outcomes for the residents of Will County. Highlights from 2021 include:

- Coordinating with NRG and RailWorks to install six new turtle crossing trenches at Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve.
- Seeking consultation from Easterseals Joliet Region on the design and content of an all-abilities trail at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center.
- Implementing an intergovernmental agreement with Plainfield Township Park District to offer financial assistance for land acquisition and the construction of a multi-use trail. The project will remove a gap within the DuPage River Trail system.
- Working with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary to host a boating safety mini-event at Monee Reservoir.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Forest Preserve partners with dozens of organizations each year in an effort to further its mission. From these, the District recognizes two agencies annually with its Appreciation of Partners Awards. Honorees are presented with a plaque before the full Board of Commissioners.

Organizations selected in 2021 were:

- The City of Lockport for its commitment to the Veterans Memorial Trail extension from Spring Creek Greenway Trail in Hadley Valley to 159th Street (Route 7). Ground was officially broken for this project in late 2021 after years of coordination between the City and the Forest Preserve. The City also contributed \$575,000 to the local share of the trail construction.
- The Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition for its support and provision of resources to make the Hammel Woods dam removal project possible. The Coalition handled all aspects of the environmental and engineering phases and contributed nearly \$600,000 toward the cost of the project.

Other valuable partnerships in 2021 included those with:

- Joliet Junior College
- National Weather Service
- Romeoville Area Chamber of Commerce
- SCARCE (School & Community Assistance for Recycling and Composting Education)
- Thorn Creek Audubon Society
- Will County Land Use

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers play an important role in the day-to-day operations of the Forest Preserve. In 2021, more than 9,158 hours of service were generously donated by 576 individuals, allowing the District to accomplish much more than it could have without their diligent efforts. Volunteers contribute in a variety of ways from taking part in habitat management or assisting with programs and events to monitoring local wildlife or serving as the eyes and ears of the Forest Preserve while walking or riding the trails.

Individual Volunteers

Diane Aigner	Rodney Dabe	Scott Holladay
Jo Dell Albi	Georgeann Davis	Cindy Hostert
Gilbert Anderson	Joanne Dinaro	Bill Huish
Linda Andrews	Nicholas Dory	Katie Jandeska
Erik Attaway	Dawn Downey	Glenn Johnson
Jim Avila	Frank Dundek	Debbie Jones
Dave Babich	Lee Ecker	Jill Juban
Laticia Baltius	Nicholas Epley	Ronald Kaye
Olivia Baltius	James Evans	Efty Kelly
Isabel Bejar	Marilyn Evans	Emily Kenny
Roberta Bennett	Joan Fasanella	Jackie Kibler
Emily Berndt	Barb Ferry	William Kibler
Debra Bettenhausen	Ash Fitzwater	Ed Klama
Gary Bettenhausen	Joyce Flanagan	Victoria Kroll
Mark Bettin	Tammy Forrest	Ken Lewellen
Hunter Blough	William Frankenberger	Bob Lewis
Greg Bluhm	John Fuqua	Wayne Lezon
Arianna Borgra	Stephen Galdek	Richard Llewellyn
Maura Carlisle	Jim Garrison	Nicole Lomax
Olivena Carlisle	Amy Godbey	David Lowe
Joan Carrigan	Jeanne Golec	Susan Malkowski
Jo Chenell	Joel Greenberg	Carol Malnar
Carol Cooley	Courtney Grey	Stan Malnar
Jan Corbett	Cindy Gustafson	Matthew Martin
Kerrie Counts	Scecilia Hampton-Tyler	Sarah Mastny
Joel Craig	Kathy Hearne	Dave Mauger
Jeff Crisman	Sabrina Hines	Kenneth McAllister



Thomas McCafferty	John O'Lear	Lydia Pultorak
Sean McQuown	Ceile O'Neill	Rita Renwick
Ruth Meyer	Bernie O'Reilly	Carrie Rock
John Mittelbrun	George Opiola	Roger Ross
Bill Morris	Izzy Opiola	Michael Rusnak
Scott Mortenson	Carrie Palmiter	Sandra Rust
Kent Munro	Curtis Pascarella	Mike Rzepka
Pat Naylor	Jody Payne	Joe Sanchez
Don Nelson	Carol Picciolo	Midge Saunders
Espie Nelson	Andrea Pletske	Janet Schleeter
Dave Nordin	Gloria Pollack	Paul Schroeder
Michael O'Brien	Alan Potyen	Phyllis Schulte

Max Scott-Schroeder
 Samuel Scott-Schroeder
 Kim Shehorn
 Robert Sherwood
 Stephen Sherwood
 Steve Sierra
 Lucy Singireti
 Larry Skisak
 Sally Skoff
 Ryan Sorrells
 Bob Soukup
 Ginger Strass
 Sharon Sullivan
 Russ Swanson
 Grace Swift
 James Swift
 Jerry Swift
 John Swift
 Kathleen Swift
 Max Swift
 Molly Swift
 Cindy Tabor
 Theresa Tabor
 Karen Tellef
 Tristan Trobaugh
 Joaquin Tsoukatos
 Bernie Twait
 Richard Wachenheim
 Dave Wendt
 Marie Wendt
 Mark Wieclaw
 Sally Wieclaw
 Bill Willis

Robert Wilson
 Connie Witkowski
 Lee Witkowski
 Carter Wright
 John Zielinski

**Community
 Volunteer Groups**

Backcountry Hunters
 & Anglers
 Boy Scouts of America
 Cornerstone Services
 Girl Scouts of Greater
 Chicago and Northwest
 Indiana
 Joliet Junior College
 Lewis University
 Lincoln-Way School
 District 210
 Nature Schoolers
 Neuqua Valley High School
 Northern Illinois University
 Pieces From the Heart
 Quilt Guild
 St. John Lutheran Church
 University of St. Francis
 Will County Trail Riders

**Corporate
 Volunteer Groups**

Amazon
 Crane Composites
 Goldman Sachs
 Ozinga
 Panduit
 Phillips Chevrolet



MANY OF THE GREENWAYS AND TRAILS THAT EXIST IN WILL COUNTY TODAY ARE THE RESULT OF THE FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT WORKING WITH PARTNERS TO ACHIEVE A COMMON GOAL.

LOOKING FORWARD

In 2022, we will work to:

- 1 Continue to seek partnerships and outside funding sources to assist with programs and projects.
- 2 Expand volunteer opportunities, providing more options for the public to engage with the Forest Preserve and rallying even greater support for the work that we do.
- 3 Offer programs at Hidden Lakes Trout Farm and Hidden Oaks Nature Center in cooperation with the Bolingbrook Park District to introduce residents to the Forest Preserve; and seek community input through an interest survey of area residents to determine needs, relevant topics and expectations for this site.
- 4 Continue our focus on community policing of our preserves, and to sponsor and participate in the annual National Night Out event, which promotes community building between law enforcement and the public.
- 5 Partner with other local forest preserve and park district police departments on concerns within the community.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY

We manage the Forest Preserve’s financial, physical and human resources to protect past investments and ensure future success in achieving our goals. Changes in the economy, in our climate and in social conditions will all have an impact. Understanding and planning for these changes is critical to the sustainability of our organization. We strive to be a leader among our contemporaries in the region, as well as an agency of choice within the local community and beyond.

USE OF FUNDS

General Government	\$3,919,814
Planning & Development	\$3,705,781
Visitor Services and Marketing & Communications	\$2,338,843
Debt Service*	\$17,883,700
Capital Outlay	\$8,235,573
Operations	\$5,166,045
Police	\$1,616,109
Other Financing Uses	\$842,650
Total:	\$43,708,515

* Each bond issuance requires debt service. These are scheduled to be paid down over 20 years for each.

SOURCE OF FUNDS

Property Taxes	\$33,250,984
Licenses & Permits	\$1,044,953
Investment Income	\$146,596
Grants & Other Intergovernmental	\$1,516,307
Miscellaneous Other	\$2,350,454
Total:	\$38,309,294



LEVY YEAR

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Corporate/C&D	0.0702	0.0687	0.0682	0.0672	0.0668
Debt Service	0.1242	0.1208	0.0822	0.0790	0.0775
Total:	0.1944	0.1895	0.1504	0.1462	0.1443

MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENTS

In 2021, through the Forest Preserve's Infrastructure Maintenance and Replacement Program, improvements to preserve roadways, parking lots and trails at Riverview Farmstead Preserve were completed, as well as engineering for future enhancements at other preserve sites. Renovations to the Operations and Law Enforcement main building also began with a new roof, gutters and tuckpointing of the exterior brickwork. Additionally, through the Forest Preserve's Capital Improvement Program, the Old Plank Road Trail bridge over the Norfolk Southern railroad received much needed renovations.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Our policies and procedures are meant to create an inclusive, respectful and responsible workplace and to allow employees to gain experience and grow professionally through ongoing training and experiential learning. In 2021, the Forest Preserve's Human Resources section was elevated to department status and a full-time staff member was added to the new department, which now includes a director and a full-time human resources generalist position, as well as the Forest Preserve's volunteer services supervisor. Forest Preserve staff also met over a six-month period in 2021 to refresh our mission statement, reaffirming our organizational purpose, establishing guiding principles and setting forth a series of goals as measures of our effectiveness.

SPONSORSHIPS AND DONATIONS

Nearly \$98,000 was received by the Forest Preserve in 2021 through sponsorships and donations. These included sponsorships provided by The Nature Foundation of Will County as well as donations from the following individuals and organizations:

Kimberly Ardolino

Mark Bogdan Family

Chevron

Chris Meade Foundation

Major Taylor Chicago/Joliet Bicycle Club

Betty Nehls

Greg and Laura Schweitzer

Elaine Torrence

Richard Wachenheim

Sponsorships and donations listed above exceed \$250 in cash value.



THE FOREST PRESERVE HAS A BALANCE SHEET OF MORE THAN \$400 MILLION IN ASSETS. THE DISTRICT MUST CONTINUE TO ADAPT AND PROVIDE FOR ITS MAINTENANCE AND IMPROVEMENT AS WELL AS ITS ONGOING SUSTAINABILITY.

AWARDS

The Forest Preserve District works to improve the quality of life for Will County residents, but we take pride in knowing that our accomplishments not only benefit the local community but also are part of a larger effort by numerous organizations to protect and secure nature's precious resources. A win for one of us is a win for all of us.



Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting

Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA)

For the 26th consecutive year, the Forest Preserve District has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. The certificate was awarded by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for the District's comprehensive annual financial report ending December 31, 2020. This award is the highest recognition given in governmental accounting, and designates the Forest Preserve's financial statements as being of the highest quality and transparency for the users and residents of the District.



Excellence in Ecological Restoration, Gold Accreditation

Chicago Wilderness

The Excellence in Ecological Restoration Program recognizes large, high-quality natural areas and the organizations that manage them. In 2021, the Forest Preserve received the program's gold accreditation from Chicago Wilderness for its restoration efforts at Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve. The entire 315-acre property is designated as an Illinois Nature Preserve and provides valuable habitat for 17 state listed species. Through prescribed fire and overseeding, the Forest Preserve is working to promote recovery of the land from past environmental impacts.



Marketing Award

**National Association of County Parks
and Recreation Officials (NACPRO)**

The Forest Preserve District's nature show "The Buzz" won a first-place award in 2021 from the National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials. The award recognizes marketing efforts "demonstrating unique, significant or remarkable outcomes." The show, which debuted in 2020 and returned for a second season in 2021, leads viewers on an adventure each month, covering a variety of nature and Forest Preserve topics and allowing an inside look into places that the general public may never see. The goal of each episode is to inspire a greater appreciation for nature through education.



LOOKING FORWARD

In 2022, we will work to:

- 1 Evaluate and revise existing, or create new, field trip and in-school programs to meet current education standards and curriculum needs.
- 2 Embark on several large pavement renovation projects, including resurfacing the Joliet Junction Trail; a portion of the Old Plank Road Trail; and the roadways and parking areas at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center.
- 3 Develop and implement a new cross training program in the Maintenance and Operations Department for staff who may want to advance in their positions.
- 4 Continue to present organizational financial reports that are complete, comprehensive and in full disclosure.
- 5 Stay informed regarding current financial markets and investing opportunities within the parameters of the Forest Preserve's investment policy.
- 6 Secure information technology systems, providing a resilient infrastructure that mitigates risk, provides security and supports business continuity.

STAFF ROSTER



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Kyle Siegel
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Roy Smith
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Angela Rafac
Sara Russell
Tina Riley
James Segatto
Scott Sobbe
Bailey Stevenson
Jason Stevenson
Barbara Sudsberry
Mary Thomas
Angela Trobaugh
Erin Ward
Melissa Zanzola
Janet Zavoral

Retired

Catherine Caldwell
Renee Gauchat
Diana Jaworski
Jon Panozzo
Denzil Smothers



TRAVEL OUR TRAILS

Wherever you are in Will County, a Forest Preserve is nearby.

If hiking, biking or in-line skating interests you, the Forest Preserve District of Will County has a variety of trails to enjoy. Some trails are also available for horseback riding, and winter trail recreation includes cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. Visit ReconnectWithNature.org to view our trails and map your next adventure today!

Photo credits: Mark Bettin, Alan Bulava, Jason Buss, Lane Cameron, Chris Cheng, Carol Goolsby, Laura Kiran, Glenn P. Knoblock, Chad Merda, JoAnn Saleme, Anthony Schalk





RECONNECTWITHNATURE.ORG



Bringing People and Nature Together

Sugar Creek Administration Center

17540 W. Laraway Road
Joliet, IL 60433
815-727-8700

Four Rivers Environmental Education Center

25055 W. Walnut Lane
Channahon, IL 60410
815-722-9470

Isle a la Cache Museum

501 E. 135th Street
Romeoville, IL 60446
815-886-1467

Monee Reservoir

27341 Ridgeland Avenue
Monee, IL 60449
708-534-8499

Plum Creek Nature Center

27064 S. Dutton Road
Beecher, IL 60401
708-946-2216

Hidden Oaks Nature Center

419 Trout Farm Road
Bolingbrook, IL 60440
815-722-4121