

A close-up photograph of a vibrant purple columbine flower with yellow stamens, set against a background of other similar flowers and green foliage. The image is used as a background for the report cover.

FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF WILL COUNTY

PROGRESS REPORT

2017

OUR MISSION

The Forest Preserve District of Will County is dedicated to protecting, conserving, enhancing and promoting Will County's natural heritage for the educational, recreational and environmental benefit of present and future generations. Six distinctive values guide the District in fulfilling its mission.

QUALITY

Committing to excellence in every endeavor.

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

Respecting, valuing and mentoring those who serve the District.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Being responsive to the needs of a diverse community.

COOPERATION

Working together to achieve the District's mission.

LEADERSHIP

Leading in the community and the workplace by inspiration and example.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

Promoting and practicing environmental stewardship.

CONTENT

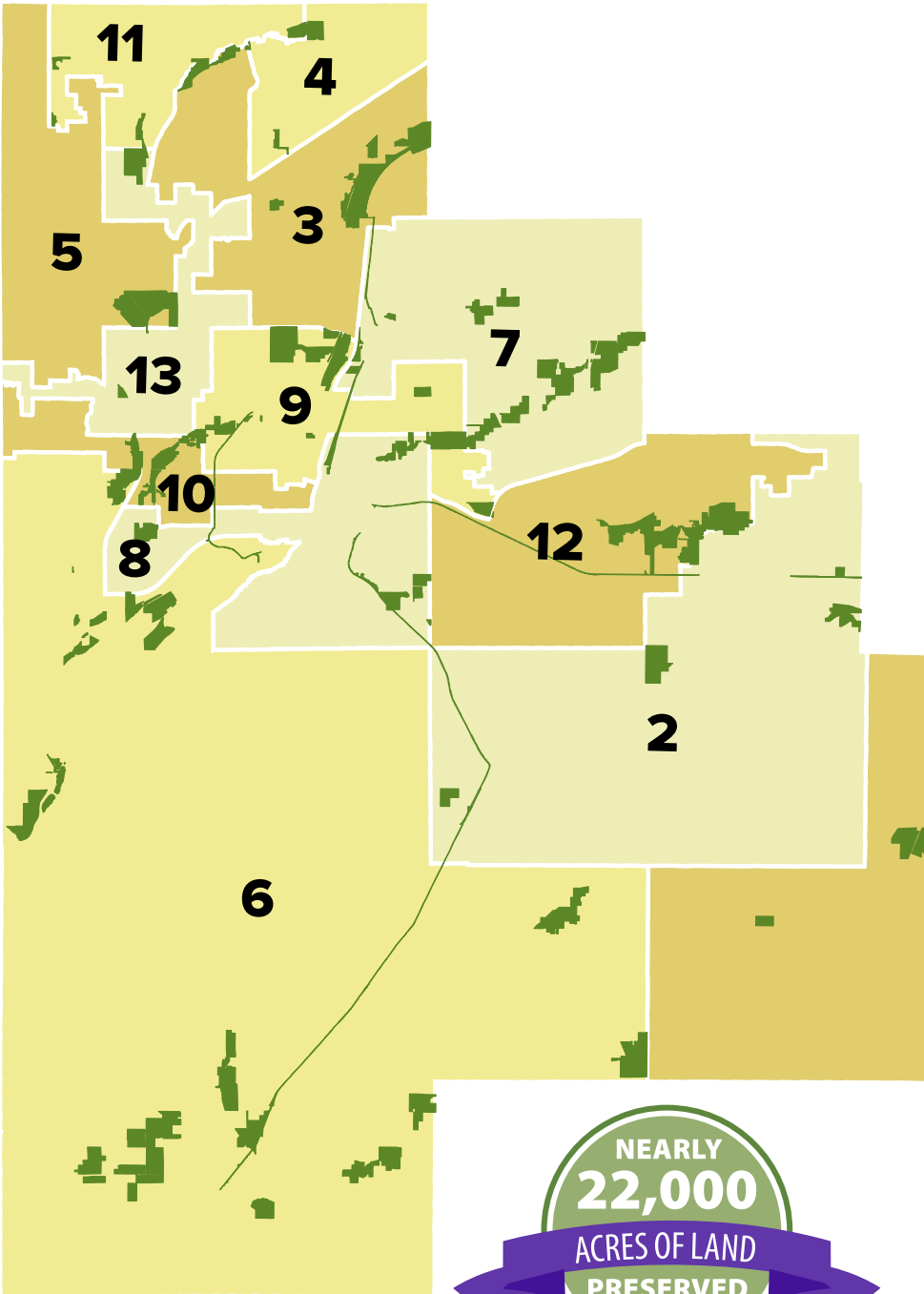
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NEARLY
22,000
ACRES OF LAND
PRESERVED

DISTRICT 1

Judy Ogalla, Monee

Secretary

Laurie Summers, Crete

DISTRICT 2

James G. Moustis, Frankfort

Treasurer

Cory Singer, Frankfort

DISTRICT 3

Donald A. Moran, Romeoville

Elizabeth Rice, Bolingbrook

DISTRICT 4

Kenneth E. Harris, Bolingbrook

Jacqueline Traynere, Bolingbrook

DISTRICT 5

Darren Bennefield, Aurora

Operations Committee Vice Chair

Gretchen Fritz, Plainfield



DISTRICT 7

Steve Balich, Orland Park

Mike Fricilone, Homer Glen

Operations Committee Chair

DISTRICT 8

Herbert Brooks Jr., Joliet

Ad Hoc Rules Committee Chair

Denise Winfrey, Joliet

DISTRICT 9

Annette Parker, Joliet

Vice President

Lauren Staley-Ferry, Joliet

DISTRICT 10

Gloria Dollinger, Joliet

Tyler J. Marcum, Joliet

DISTRICT 11

Suzanne Hart, Naperville

President

Charles E. Maher, Naperville

DISTRICT 12

Ray Tuminello, New Lenox

Finance Committee Chair

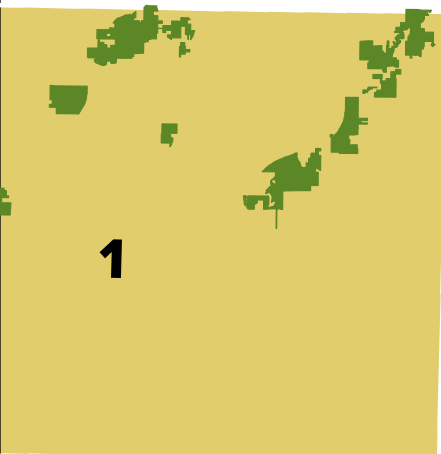
Tom Weigel, New Lenox

Finance Committee Vice Chair

DISTRICT 13

Mark Ferry, Plainfield

Tim J. Kraulidis, Joliet



DISTRICT 6

Donald Gould, Shorewood

Debbie Militello, Channahon



1ST PLACE

PRESERVE THE MOMENT PHOTO CONTEST 2017

Isle a la Cache Preserve

"Snow-Capped Cardinal" by John D'Agostino



SUZANNE HART

We've been focusing a lot this past year on expanding our online community and striking up the conservation conversation with all of you. In the recent past, we've made decisions to reimagine and relaunch our Forest Preserve website, transition away from some of the traditional print materials we've produced, and to dramatically increase the use of social media. These actions were taken in order to provide you with more timely, in-depth, relevant and engaging information about the Forest Preserve District and the world of natural resource conservation.

In addition to getting the word out about the many interesting and creative programs and events that we host, we're providing informative, fun and sometimes brainy information through our news stories, photographs and video, as well as providing links to similar items posted by other organizations that are a part of the same larger conversation. I'm excited that by the end of 2017 we grew our online community to more than 75,000 followers across all of the social media platforms we're engaged in. These efforts are an important part in helping us all better understand and place value on the open spaces we protect and manage across Will County, including the ones that you may manage in your backyards.

We also know that conservation isn't just about the Forest Preserve but includes all of our federal, state and local conservation partners helping to manage and improve our open space and the quality of life for our residents and those around us. Together, the benefits of conservation to the landscapes, habitats, plants, critters and creatures that call Will County home can be more fully realized.

Come out and enjoy your forest preserves, share your experience and join the conversation.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Suzanne Hart". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid and elegant.

Suzanne Hart, *President*

PRESERVE THE MOMENT PHOTO CONTEST 2017



2ND PLACE

*Rock Run Rookery
Preserve*
**"Monarch
Caterpillar
Munching"**
by **Kathy Bobal**



3RD PLACE

McKinley Woods
**"Stunning
Sunset"**
by **Michael
Fagan**



RALPH SCHULTZ

Protecting and restoring ecosystems, habitats and natural resources are at the core of our mission. But the Forest Preserve is equally committed to providing access to them, helping to interpret them and offering you opportunities to learn something new, become inspired, exercise, relax or just have fun. In 2017, we focused on maintaining and improving our trails and access areas; launching new outreach programs, events and exhibitions; developing new access areas and trail connections; expanding our digital footprint; restoring and managing our high quality natural areas; and providing education and interpretation programs to more than 20,000 individuals – all while being fiscally responsible and managing our budget and appropriations to the highest standards.

We opened our newest Forest Preserve access area at Kankakee Sands Preserve in southwest Will County, providing residents the opportunity to enjoy the recently developed site as well as have a firsthand view of ongoing habitat restoration. The 555-acre preserve lies between two state nature preserves and is currently undergoing a transition from an agricultural landscape to the natural wetlands and prairies that once existed there. We hope you'll visit and watch as the preserve changes and new life begins to emerge.

Also in 2017, we developed trails and trail connections between our preserves and other open spaces in Shorewood, Naperville and Bolingbrook. We're planning future trail additions in Joliet, Plainfield, Lockport and Crete Township.

Moreover, our events and outreach programs were well attended. For example, thousands of you visited a local forest preserve during "Food Truck Fridays." In addition, nearly 4,000 visitors came to the Four Rivers Environmental Education Center at McKinley Woods in Channahon to learn about water and the way it impacts our lives during the "Water|Ways" exhibition on loan from the Smithsonian.

We have much more planned in 2018, from preserve improvements and programs to exhibitions and events. We hope you'll take advantage of these and the many other opportunities that we provide for you to reconnect with nature.

Ralph Schultz, Chief Operating Officer

KANKAKEE SANDS PRESERVE OPENS

The Forest Preserve's new Kankakee Sands Preserve – Route 113 Access opened in December 2017. The 555-acre preserve, located on the north side of Route 113, east of Route 53, in Custer Township, includes a parking lot, a 2.5-mile crushed limestone trail, a picnic pavilion that can accommodate 80 people, an information board and a latrine.

The preserve protects savanna and wetland habitat, and is also the site of a multiyear restoration project that includes drainage improvements, invasive species removal and the planting of specialized seeds that will replenish and expand native plant stock there.

Creating a new trail and a picnic shelter at Kankakee Sands is the latest Forest Preserve improvement project that has provided public access to Will County's many natural areas.

The preserve access area is one of the last projects to be constructed with money from the District's Capital Improvement Program, funded by referendums approved by voters in 1999 and 2005.



REGIONAL EFFORT WORKS TO SAVE BLANDING'S TURTLE

The Forest Preserve became a part of a regional recovery program for the state-endangered Blanding's turtle.



Forty-nine baby Blanding's turtles spent the winter sunning themselves under heat lamps and swimming to and fro in specialized water basins at a Forest Preserve location. The turtles will be released back into the wild as 1-year-olds in summer 2018 as part of the effort to reverse the species' decline in Illinois. Designed to increase the odds that the turtles will survive into adulthood, the Blanding's Turtle Recovery Program is spearheaded by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County and overseen by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The program is also underway at Illinois zoos, universities and other northern Illinois forest preserve districts.



In addition to the hatchling program, an educational component has been established at the Forest Preserve's Isle a la Cache Museum in Romeoville. This includes the installation of a 4,000-pound display tank containing 300 gallons of water. The tank will display Blanding's turtles that cannot be released into the wild, and currently houses a 12-year-old male on loan for the exhibit. The Forest Preserve will use the tank display to educate members of the public about the turtle's plight. Signage also accompanies the display and interprets the turtles in the context of Native culture.



TRAVELING EXHIBIT FLOWS THROUGH FOUR RIVERS

The Forest Preserve hosted a fascinating exhibit called “Water|Ways” in the winter of 2017. More than 3,000 visitors toured the traveling exhibit, which is part of the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum on Main Street program.

Four Rivers was one of only six Illinois sites selected by Illinois Humanities to host the traveling exhibit. “Water|Ways” explored the significance of water in the human experience. Companion exhibits about birds and plastic pollution along the river highlighted local water topics. Additional features were sponsored by RiverWorks Discovery, the Village of Channahon and Three Rivers Library. Water-related programs and activities rounded out the offerings and created a compelling experience for all who participated.



PROGRAMS AND RECREATIONAL OFFERINGS REV UP

A fresh new palette of Forest Preserve programming was unveiled in 2017 bringing a creative mixture of nature, art and culinary options to preserve patrons.

“Food Truck Fridays” rolled into three preserves in June, July and August. The food truck fare was a hit, drawing 6,000 customers who tasted everything from gourmet grilled cheese sandwiches and cupcakes to appetizing empanadas and barbecue sandwiches. The program was designed to entice Will County residents to visit their local forest preserves and it will be expanded to four preserves in 2018.

In August, the “Hummingbird Festival and Nature Celebration” attracted 3,500 people to its debut. Activities included hummingbird banding, demonstrations, guided walks, vendors, local artisans and a special “Backyard Bird” exhibit.

Finally, in late 2017, Plum Creek Nature Center’s winter recreational activities expanded to include snowshoe rentals, which formerly had been offered at Monee Reservoir. The snowshoes are a better fit for Plum Creek, which has an existing tube rental program for its 40-foot sled hill as well as ice skating opportunities. The switch will allow preserve visitors to snowshoe on more than 5 miles of trails at Goodenow Grove Nature Preserve and the District can expand winter program offerings at the site.



NEW WEBSITE OFFERS ENHANCED FEATURES

The Forest Preserve launched a new website, offering a more interactive and photo rich experience than ever before. The new site, which debuted in May 2017, has the same address – *ReconnectWithNature.org* – but an entirely new look and feel. It's also faster, better organized and packed with the latest programs, events and District news.

The new website is mobile friendly, which means it can be accessed as easily from a phone or tablet as it can from a desktop computer, and the pages will load in less than half the time. The site is also better structured to help visitors find what they are seeking. It has more responsive features to allow visitors to scout out the preserves in advance by viewing an interactive map from any page. It's revamped calendar lets users see the entire list of programs and events, or filter the results based on date and/or location. In addition, unique sections such as "Video Highlights" and "The Big Picture" take a multimedia approach to showcasing the preserves, and a new blog titled "The Buzz" features general interest – and often wacky – nature news.

In June 2017, online program registration and the ability to check availability of preserve picnic shelters were included as added offerings to the website. And in November, the ability to purchase dog park permits online opened to the public for the first time.



NEW TECHNOLOGY MAXIMIZES EFFICIENCIES AND ENHANCES SERVICE TO PUBLIC

In 2017, the Forest Preserve purchased a new financial software system, necessitated by outdated technology no longer serviced by its provider. The switch to a new software presented an opportunity to improve financial tracking and reporting, and migration will be completed in early 2018.

Other technological improvements included increased network communications for our visitor facilities, which are now connected on a fast and reliable fiber-based communication network. These network enhancements will open the door to improved staff efficiencies, such as allowing video conferencing to reduce travel costs, and providing enhancements for the public through new automated processes including Wi-Fi hotspots.

These information technology improvements will also allow the Forest Preserve to modernize its business continuity and disaster recovery technology plan by utilizing cloud-based backup technology to help ensure the Forest Preserve's data and critical systems remain available and secure in the event of a disaster.



PARTNERSHIP PROMOTES NATIVE PLANT PROGRAM

The Forest Preserve partnered with The Conservation Foundation in 2017 to promote its “Conservation@Home” program. The program encourages homeowners to practice environmentally friendly landscaping techniques, including water conservation and the use of native plants.

Plum Creek Nature Center’s pollinator garden, which hosted more than 70 monarch caterpillars in 2017, provides a living example of a conservation garden. Nature center staff also distributed free milkweed seeds to visitors.



ANNUAL MAINTENANCE PROGRAM PAVES THE WAY FOR PRESERVE, TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

Throughout the summer and fall of 2017, work was underway to keep forest preserve parking lots, roadways and trails in tip-top shape. As part of the Forest Preserve's Infrastructure Maintenance and Replacement Program (IMRP), sealcoating, restriping and pavement replacement took place at a number of forest preserve locations throughout the County.

Among the work completed, improvements were made to the parking lot and roadway at Hickory Creek Barrens Nature Preserve in New Lenox, the parking lots at Lower Rock Run Preserve in Joliet, and segments of the DuPage River Trail at Hammel Woods in Shorewood and the Lake Renwick Bikeway in Plainfield. These two trail segments were the first major trail replacements completed through the IMRP.

Established in 2013, the IMRP outlines a systematic approach for preventative pavement maintenance and replacement. The program was expanded in 2017 to include bridge and shelter rehabilitation. This expansion provides for routine inspection of these structures as well as a plan to budget for their improvement.



WRISTBAND CAMPAIGN PROMOTES PRESERVE SAFETY

In partnership with the Joliet Bicycle Club, a wristband campaign kicked off in 2017 to help people remember the telephone number they should call if they need police assistance in a preserve or on a trail.

The colorful wristbands are imprinted with the telephone number for the Laraway Communications Center dispatch. The center provides dispatching services for the Forest Preserve District's Police Department.

Those facing an emergency where seconds count should call 911. But if there is a non-emergency that requires police assistance or preserve visitors see something suspicious, they should call the dispatch number, 815.727.6191. The wristband campaign is part of the Forest Preserve police department's "Eyes, Ears and Cell Phones" campaign, which provides advice about how to stay safe in the forest preserves by using your sight and hearing to be aware of your surroundings and a cell phone to call for assistance or report concerns. The free wristbands can be picked up at most Forest Preserve visitor centers.



LAND PRESERVATION

THE IMPACT OF PROTECTING AND CONNECTING OPEN SPACE

While the Forest Preserve District's land acquisition has slowed, its goal of connecting open space throughout Will County has not. Working in conjunction with local park districts, municipalities and federal and state conservation agencies and others, the Forest Preserve continues to piece together greenways that improve the quality of life, provide access to public recreation, protect and restore habitat and provide sanctuary for wildlife.

The Forest Preserve continues to look for opportunities to enhance, extend or enlarge existing open space areas because larger blocks of property offer benefits smaller ones cannot. And, even when disconnected from other open space, preserves can be linked to each other and to communities via streams, rivers, sidewalks, trails or roadways.

Adding trails to the landscape not only stitches together natural areas, it also provides for alternative transportation methods, enhanced recreational opportunities and improved health. Creating more open space also reduces urbanization and increases biodiversity by protecting unique natural and cultural assets.

Flood storage, groundwater recharge, water purification and air pollution removal are additional ecosystem services provided by the open space that exists in Will County. Open space – whether managed as grassland, forest, turf or even agriculture – helps purify our air and water as plants and soil bind to pollutants.

In the years to come, the Forest Preserve will continue to work toward protecting high quality natural areas and creating buffers around them when possible. Whether it's by acquisition, restoration or land management practices, the District will remain dedicated to reestablishing the natural communities and processes that existed prior to our settlement.





PRESERVE DEVELOPMENTS

TWO KEY DEVELOPMENTS WERE COMPLETED IN 2017.

DUPAGE RIVER TRAIL EXTENSION

A small, but important 612-foot trail extension was completed at the end of 2017, setting the stage for future trail connections as the puzzle that is the DuPage River Trail system comes together piece by piece. The \$148,500 trail extension that was completed stretches from Grinton Grove, on the southern end of Hammel Woods – Route 59 Access in Shorewood, under Route 52 (Jefferson Street) to Eastshore Drive. While the pavement's length is small, it's an important part of the DuPage River Trail system that will bring pedestrians and bicyclists safely through the busy intersection of routes 52 and 59. A proposed Village of Shorewood project would extend the path west of Route 59 sometime in the future.



KANKAKEE SANDS PRESERVE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

The Forest Preserve District of Will County's new Kankakee Sands Preserve – Route 113 Access opened in December 2017. The 555-acre preserve is located on the north side of Route 113, east of Route 53, in Custer Township. This \$1 million improvement project includes a parking lot, a 2.5-mile crushed limestone trail, a picnic shelter that can accommodate 80 people, an information board and a latrine. Work on the preserve began in spring 2016. Kankakee Sands also is the site of a multiyear restoration project that includes drainage improvements, invasive species removal and the planting of specialized seeds that will replenish and expand native plant stock at the site.





NATURAL AREA RESTORATION PROJECTS

In 2017, land management activities continued on more than 1,876 acres of the District's holdings. Efforts focused on 12 preserve locations and included wetland, forest and prairie restoration, seed collection, habitat monitoring, removal of invasive plant species, and prescribed burns. As in the previous year, one of the most significant projects is the ongoing restoration of 700 acres of sand savanna, prairie and wetland communities located at Kankakee Sands Preserve in Custer Township and Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve in Wilmington/Custer Township. In 2017, the removal of drainage tiles and earthen dams on the site were completed, along with the filling in of a drainage ditch to restore natural hydrologic conditions. The drainage correction enhances and expands a wetland area where high quality species already live. The restoration project also involves invasive species control as well as the collection of seed from approximately 300 species of local native plants for use on site.



WILDLIFE RESEARCH PROJECTS

Wildlife research projects are conducted each year to monitor local flora and fauna. In 2017, these projects included the completion of a Blanding's turtle survey at three forest preserves along Rock Run Creek, bat monitoring at 16 forest preserves, and a reptile and amphibian survey within Messenger Marsh and Messenger Woods Nature Preserve, both in Homer Glen.

The Forest Preserve also completed a survey to confirm the presence of the state-threatened *Eryngium* stem borer moth at Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve in Braidwood, Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve in Wilmington/Custer Township and Kankakee Sands Preserve in Custer Township.

In addition, the District cooperated with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in the removal of Asian carp from the Des Plaines River system at Rock Run Rookery Preserve in Joliet, and partnered with this agency to continue monitoring the spread of chronic wasting disease in deer in the southern part of Will County.

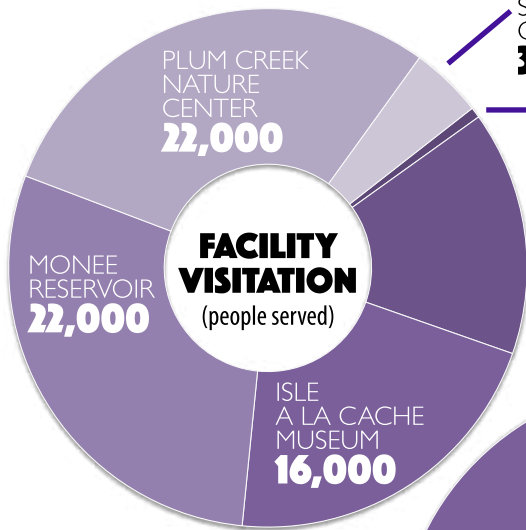
Aerial deer population surveys also were completed at 12 preserves and the impact of deer browse was documented at seven preserves.



PRESERVE USE, PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Tens of thousands of visitors gathered at Will County forest preserves in 2017. Picnicking, camping, enjoying a dog park or participating in other permitted activities brought 53,400 people out to the preserves, while another 78,200 spent time at one or more of the District's visitor centers. The Forest Preserve also hosted programs and events, and participated in a variety of outreach opportunities to engage with Will County residents.

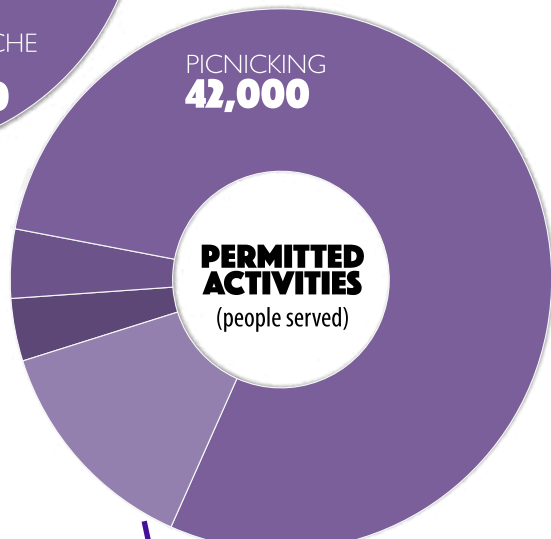




SUGAR CREEK ADMINISTRATION CENTER
3,400

ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING CENTER
800

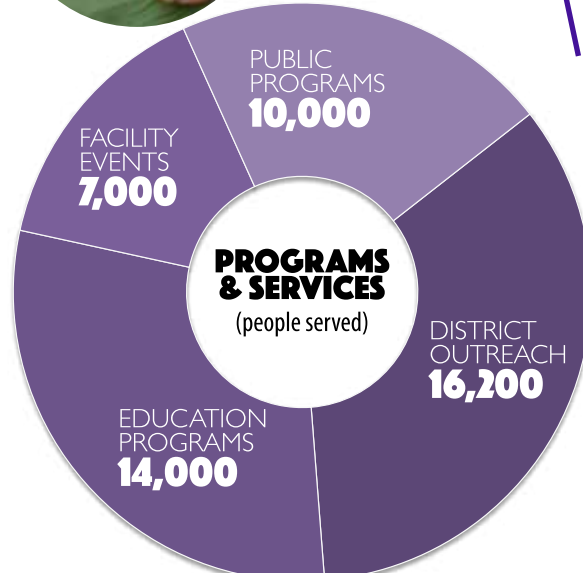
FOUR RIVERS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER
14,000



DOG PARKS
2,200

CAMPING
2,000

NON-DISTRICT EVENTS AND SPECIAL USE
7,200



AWARDS IN APPRECIATION OF PARTNERS

The Forest Preserve District partners with dozens of organizations each year. From these, the District selects its annual Appreciation of Partners Award honorees. Recipients are awarded a plaque before the full Board of Commissioners. Two organizations were selected in 2017 for this prestigious honor.

University of St. Francis

The Appreciation of Partners award presented to the University of St. Francis was earned by the school's Recreation Sports Management Team under the leadership of professor Sydney Sklar. Under his direction, 125 students in the Joliet university's freshman orientation program helped to remove invasive plants in the forest preserves as part of four consecutive high school workdays. This enabled the high school students involved in academics, band, the arts and sports to earn community service credits, while also benefiting the Forest Preserve's land management efforts.



Xylem Inc.

Mokena company Xylem Inc. was selected for an Appreciation of Partners award for its volunteer efforts at two Forest Preserve sites. A company that encourages its employees to give back to the community, Xylem is a global corporation involved in wastewater treatment with offices around the world. In the fall of 2017, Matt Johnson, an application engineer at Xylem's Mokena office, approached the District seeking volunteer opportunities that involved water resources. As a result, Xylem employees from the Mokena office helped with clean-up efforts at the Forest Preserve's Monee Reservoir in Monee and Rock Run Rookery Preserve in Joliet.



ALTERNATIVE REVENUE INITIATIVES

The following grants were awarded to the Forest Preserve District in 2017. Grants expand local tax dollars to enable the District to provide more amenities to Will County citizens and to help restore critical natural habitats.

Grants and Development Partnerships

Army Corps of Engineers Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Projects Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve and Prairie Bluff Preserve	\$2,300,000
PetSafe Bark for Your Park Grant for Dog Park Improvements Hammel Woods – DuPage River Access	\$10,000
ONEOK Program Development Grant for Water Quality Field Trip Four Rivers Environmental Education Center	\$4,000
Illinois Humanities Programming Grant for the Smithsonian’s “Water Ways” Exhibit Four Rivers Environmental Education Center	\$1,000
Total Grants for 2017	\$2,315,000

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM

The Forest Preserve received a total of \$21,773 in 2017 through sponsorships and donations. Thank you to the following sponsors and donors.

- Bentley's Pet Stuff
- Boy Scouts of America Troop 49
- Cabela's
- Chicagoland Speedway
- Cornerstone Media
- Goldman Sachs
- Joe Kubal
- Joliet Bicycle Club
- JULIE Inc.
- Laner Muchin Ltd.
- Meijer
- PetSmart
- Richard Wachenheim
- Shorewood HUGS
- The Family of Bert L. Neill
- The Nature Foundation of Will County
- Tucker's Doggie Delights

\$21,773
Received in sponsorships
and donations

* Sponsorships and donations listed exceed \$250 cash or in-kind value.





AWARDS



CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT IN FINANCIAL REPORTING

GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION (GFOA)

The Forest Preserve District received the Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting in 2017 for the 22nd consecutive year. The award recognized the Forest Preserve's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2016. The Certificate of Achievement, awarded by GFOA, is the highest recognition given in governmental accounting.

EXCELLENCE IN ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION ACCREDITATION CHICAGO WILDERNESS

The Chicago Wilderness accreditation program assesses how well land management agencies implement biodiversity recovery plans for the land they own and manage. This special accreditation was presented in 2017 in recognition of the Forest Preserve's restoration work at Lockport Prairie East Preserve. Recent efforts at the preserve have salvaged the land which was previously almost impossible to traverse due to the overgrowth of invasive species. The restoration work included tree and shrub removal, prescribed burning, invasive species control, native seeding, and monitoring of flora and fauna. The project was so successful, it not only tripled the number of federally endangered leafy prairie clover at the site, but the land is now an outstanding example of globally rare dolomite prairie and sedge meadow.

MASTER INTERPRETIVE MANAGER

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR INTERPRETATION (NAI): HEARTLAND REGION

Lynn Kurczewski, director of Visitor Services for the Forest Preserve, received this award for her innovative approach to handling the complex demands of her position while providing ongoing encouragement and guidance to her staff.

Kurczewski has been with the District for almost 30 years. According to her award nomination, "Her strong yet calm leadership style allows staff under her care to thrive." Kurczewski said she supports her staff's involvement in the National Association for Interpretation, and recognizes the NAI as an important resource.



MEMBER OF THE MONTH & VALERIE ANDRES AWARD

GMIS INTERNATIONAL

Denise Steffen, director of Information Technology for the Forest Preserve, was chosen for two awards by GMIS International, an association of government IT leaders. In October 2017, she was selected as the GMIS Member of the Month based on her service and management of the District's IT department, including overseeing a plan to bring increased network communications to Forest Preserve visitor centers. She and her staff also made modernization of the District's IT disaster recovery center a top priority following a fire that damaged the site. In November 2017, she was recognized a second time, receiving the Valerie Andres award, which is named after the founder of the GMIS-Illinois state chapter, and given to one person per year in recognition of their leadership, dedication and commitment to excellence. She received the award for her extensive work on the board as the vice president of membership for the state chapter. Steffen has been a member of GMIS since 2013.



NAPERVILLE YOUTH SERVICE AWARD

CITY OF NAPERVILLE AND KIDSMATTER



Forest Preserve volunteer John Grimmer, a student at Neuqua Valley High School in Naperville, was recognized with the Naperville Youth Service Award for his efforts to make a difference in the community. Grimmer completed his Eagle Scout project at Messenger Woods Nature Preserve in Homer Glen, working with fellow Scouts to build a small bridge for Forest Preserve gator utility vehicles. The bridge will allow staff and volunteers to conveniently cross a shallow stream and gain further access to the preserve. According to the award nomination, Grimmer "showed great leadership and time

management in the supervision of the group of Scouts, completing the project in a timely manner."

OUTSTANDING NEW INTERPRETER

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR INTERPRETATION (NAI): HEARTLAND REGION

This award was presented to Suzy Lyttle, an interpretive naturalist with the Forest Preserve, for her motivation, passion and innovation in the area of interpretation. Her award nomination stated that "she works relentlessly figuring out how to improve programs and exhibits at Plum Creek Nature Center." She has been employed with the District since 2012, and was nominated by her peers.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

In 1926, voters approved a referendum to establish the Forest Preserve District of Will County as a separate taxing body of county government. Even then, when Will County was overwhelmingly rural, its citizens realized the importance of preserving its natural treasures. In 2017, the Forest Preserve District Board of Commissioners, made up of 26 members from the county's 13 elective districts, oversees all District business and approves property purchases and District expenditures. The District currently owns, manages and leases nearly 22,000 acres of land.

The Forest Preserve is organized financially into two operating funds. The Construction and Development Fund supports new site improvements, natural area management and associated staffing costs, maintenance of existing facilities and properties, and infrastructure improvements. The Corporate Fund is used for employee salaries, benefits, and administrative costs of the Forest Preserve including offerings related to Accounting and Finance, Information Technology, Law Enforcement, Marketing and Communications, and Visitor Services.

BOND ISSUES

In 1999 and 2005, voters approved referendums to preserve land and improve Forest Preserve properties for public use. In both cases, voters recognized that the county was changing at an unprecedented pace and that special properties needed to be preserved before they were developed. The 1999 referendum provided \$70 million and the 2005 referendum \$95 million for land acquisition and development. These funds have led to thousands of acres preserved and dozens of properties improved.

In 2007, the Forest Preserve Board of Commissioners authorized \$50 million in general obligation limited taxable bonds for the purpose of acquiring land for future use. In 2007 and 2008, the Forest Preserve issued \$10 million and \$30 million, respectively, of limited taxable bonds. The remaining \$10 million in bonds was issued during 2010. During 2012, \$66,775,000 of the 2005 referendum bonds was re-funded. As a result, the District will save taxpayers approximately \$4.8 million in interest costs over the life of the bonds.

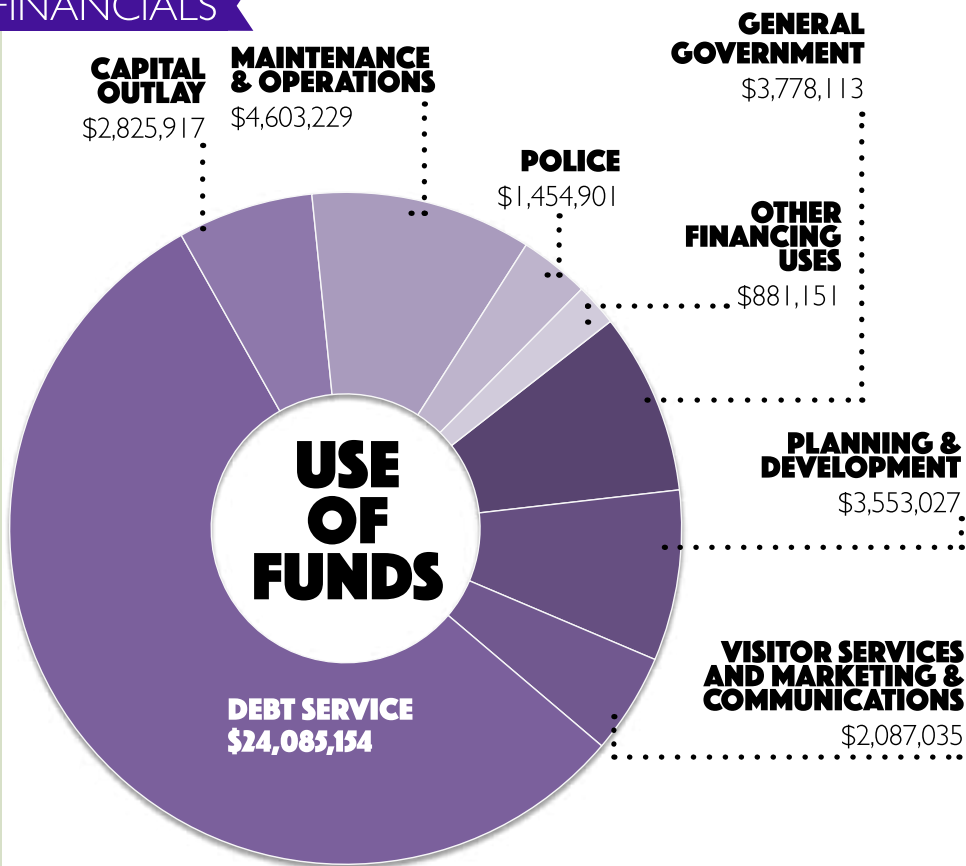
In May 2016, \$16,705,000 of series 2008A bonds was refinanced, with an estimated savings of \$2,000,000 in interest costs over the life of the bonds. Also, \$1,495,000 of general obligation limited taxable bonds series 2016B was issued during late 2016 to finance the early retirement incentive that occurred during 2015-2016.

DEBT SERVICE

Each of the bond issuances requires debt service. These are scheduled to be paid down over 20 years for each.



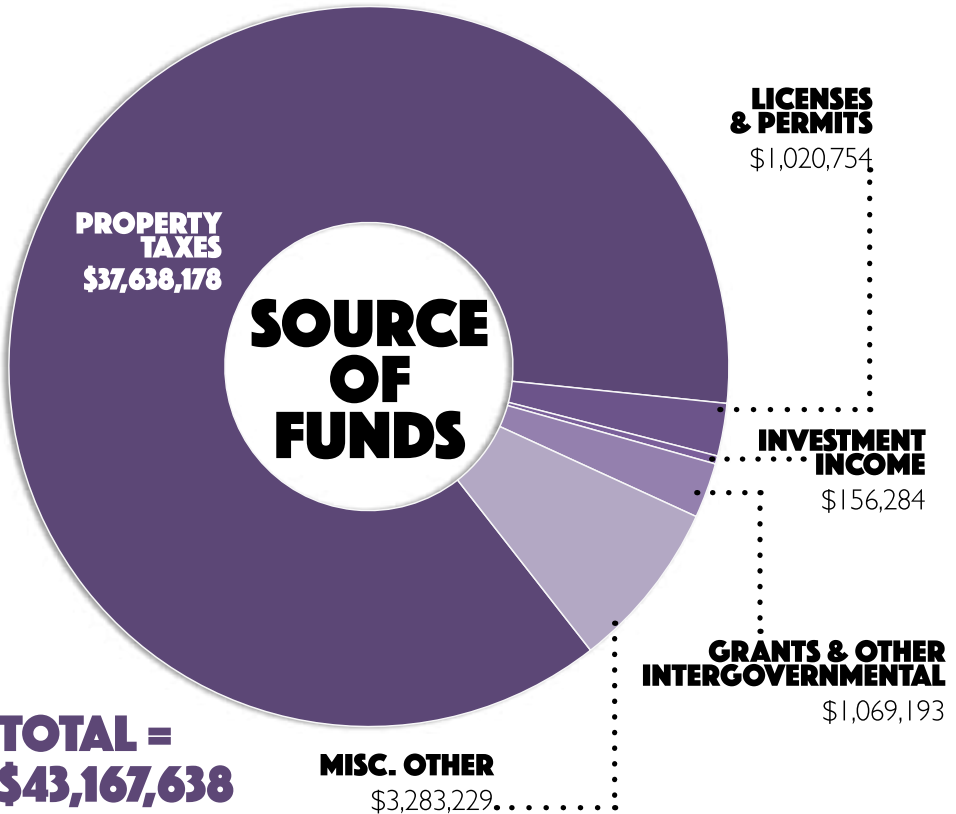
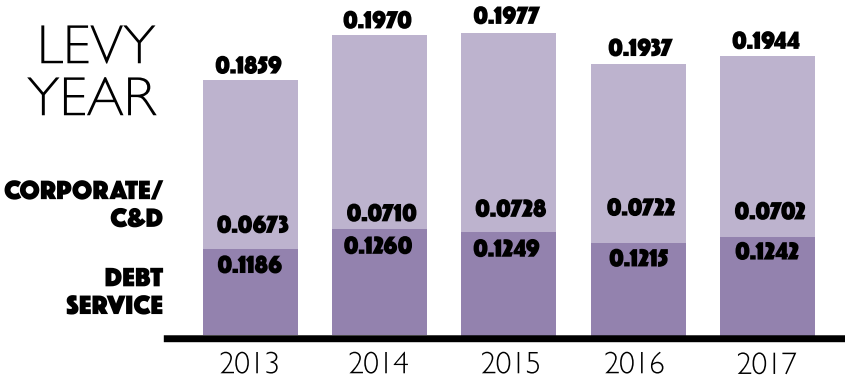




TOTAL = \$43,268,528



LEVY YEAR





VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

Volunteerism plays a critical role in meeting the Forest Preserve's goals. In 2017, a total of 16,333 hours of service were generously donated by Forest Preserve volunteers. In all, 1,047 individuals contributed time and talent to assist the District in restoring the landscape of its preserves, in hosting programs and events for all ages and in providing various other services to the public. Of these, 220 were Prairie People volunteers. These loyal citizens regularly support the Forest Preserve year after year. The additional 827 individuals participated in District volunteer opportunities for the first time or intermittently throughout the year. Without these volunteer efforts, the Forest Preserve could not accomplish all that it does in support of its mission. Volunteers are recognized each spring with a volunteer banquet, where awards are presented for outstanding contributions in a variety of categories.

Division or Department	Total Volunteers	Hours
Business Administration and Financial Services	18	777
Law Enforcement	22	2,329
Maintenance and Operations	231	908
Marketing and Communications	1	7
Planning and Development	662	8,893
Visitor Services	113	3,419
Grand Total	1,047 Volunteers	16,333 Hours

2017 INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEERS

Diane Aigner
Olivia Amezcua
Gilbert Anderson
Kaylee Anderson
Linda Andrews
Julie Arvia
Jim Avila
David Babich
Robert Bacon
Katherine Bader
Nicholas Bain
Teresa Baron
Brandon Beddigs
Debra Bettenhausen
Mark Bettin
Bonnie Blevins
Gregory Bluhm
Linda Brnck
Nick Bryerton
Scott Carevec
Charlie Carlisle
Olive Carlisle
Pete Caldwell
Vanessa Caldwell
Jean Christensen
Carol Cooley
Kerri Counts
Jimmy Craig
Joel Craig
Rodney Dabe
Paul Dacko
Judy Dehm
Joan Dietrich
Dawn Downey
Brian Duffie
Frank Dundek
Mary Dyer
Dennis Eakright
Lee Ecker
Joan Fasanella
Barb Ferry
Joyce Flanagan
Adam Ford
Bill Frankenberger
Nikki Franson

Dave Fuller
Carolyn Gann
John Gantz
Jim Garrison
Amy Gibson
Rachel Goad
Jeanne Golec
Jan Gonzales
Yvonne Greer
Sabrina Hines
Pat Hoffman
Cindy Hostert
Bill Huish
Dawn Ishida
Heather Jensen
Glenn Johnson
Debbie Jones
Ronald Kaye
Efty Kelly
Margaret Kelly
Emily Kenny
Bill Kibler
Jackie Kibler
Scott King
Ed Klama
Karen Klama
Myrt Larson
Kathryn Lewellen
Ken Lewellen
Krystal Lewellen
Wayne Lezon
Phil Liput
Keith Listermann
Chuckie Llewellyn
Richard Llewellyn
Valarie Loekle
David Lowe
Susan Malkowski
Carol Malnar
George Marshall
Thomas McCafferty
Martin Mesewicz
Bonnie Mesewicz
Ruth Meyer
Jacquelyn Miller

John Mittelbrun
Bill Morris
Kent Munro
Don Nelson
Espie Nelson
Mark Nelson
John Nerren
Dave Nordin
Brandon Nye
Michael O'Brien
Michael O'Leary
Bernard O'Reilly
Paul Pawlowski
Jodie Payne
Mike Perry
Carol Picciolo
Andrea Pletzke
Diane Pool
Tom Prisch
Skip Pronger
Phillip Pursley
Adyta Rajan
Bruce Renwick
Rita Renwick
Carrie Rock
Roger Ross
Michael Rusniak
Rene Russell
Mike Rzepka
Patty Salinas
Joe Sanchez
Midge Saunders
Janet Schleeter
Jennifer Schmuhl
Anita Schneidewind
Mark Schneidewind
Paul Schroeder
Phyllis Schulte
Max Scott-Schroeder
Samuel Scott-Schroeder
Ray Setzke
Hannah Sigler
Kelley Sigler
Carol Smith
Bob Soukup

Jeff Spanbauer
Bailey Stevenson
Linda Stevenson
Gary Suptis
Eileen Sutter
Mary Svitek
Grace Swift
Jerry Swift
Kathy Swift
Max Swift
Molly Swift
Cynthia Tabor
Theresa Tabor
Karen Tellef
Alan Thomas
Alan D. Thomas
Dick Thomas
Bernie Twait
Delia VanZyl
Huck VanZyl
Linus VanZyl
Oliver VanZyl
Patrick VanZyl
Zoe VanZyl
Bruce Vasa
Dave Vasa
Richard Wachenheim
Penny Wakeland
Brandon Ward
Dave Wendt
Marie Wendt
Mark Wieclaw
Sally Wieclaw
Bill Willis
Rob Wilson
Connie Witkowski
Lee Witkowski
John Zalanka

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER GROUPS

Boy Scout Troop 13
 Boy Scout Troop 19
 Boy Scout Troop 40 Eagle Scout Projects
 Boy Scout Troop 49 Eagle Scout Project
 Boy Scout Troop 50
 Boy Scout Troop 100 Eagle Scout Project
 Boy Scout Troop 258 Eagle Scout Project
 Boy Scout Troop 318
 Boy Scout Troop 444 Eagle Scout Projects
 Boy Scout Troop 755
 Boy Scout Troop 889 Eagle Scout Project
 Cathedral of St. Raymond Nonnatus
 Channahon Music Boosters
 Cub Scout Pack 13
 Cub Scout Pack 64
 Cub Scout Pack 82
 Earth Week Naperville Volunteers
 Girl Scout Troop 21
 Girl Scout Troop 70748
 Girl Scout Troop 75424
 Great Lakes Bassmasters
 Hufford Junior High School
 Illinois State University
 Joliet Catholic Academy
 Joliet Central High School
 Joliet Junior College
 Joliet West High School
 Keepers of Mother Earth
 Lewis University
 Lincoln-Way Central High School Airforce Cadets
 Lincoln-Way East High School Key Club
 Lincoln-Way West High School
 Lockport Township High School
 Loyola University
 Miami University
 Northern Michigan University
 Plainfield East High School Key Club
 Plainfield Central High School Key Club
 Providence High School
 Sertoma Centre



Shepherd of the Hill Lutheran Church
 St. Mary Catholic Church, Mokena
 S.T.E.P. Program
 Summit Hill Junior High School
 The Siberian Husky Club of Greater Chicago
 University of Illinois
 University of St. Francis
 Western Illinois University

16,333

**Total hours of service
from volunteers**

CORPORATE VOLUNTEER GROUPS

Citgo Lemont Refinery
Goldman Sachs
JCPenney
Manheim Auto
Meijer
Target
Xylem



1,047
VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEERS





Business Administration and Financial Services

John Gerl, Chief Financial Officer

Accounting and Finance

Lisa Lukasevich, Director

Mary Borgra

Meredith Clavenna

Renee Gauchat

Lori Green

Diana Jaworski

Donna Suca

Information Technology

Denise Steffen, Director

Jackie Kibler

Tom Mancari

Michael Prybell

Barb Sudsberry

Eleanor Wagner

Operations and Program Services

Ralph Schultz, Chief Operating Officer

Law Enforcement

Tracy Chapman, Chief of Police

David Barrios Jr., Lieutenant

Jason Allbert

Robert Baikie

Steven Bettenhausen

James Burnette

Russell Burroughs

Vincent Cimino

Jeffrey Cowe

Jack Ellingham

Steven Formenti

Eric Gabrielson

Donald Gardiner

James Gerdich

Steven Gutowski

Jennifer Hemmeger

Gregory Hidlebaugh

Shane Kelly

Steven Kirsch

Dean Klier

Eric Kobe

Richard Lewandowski

Michael Liebermann

Darrell Mayle

Reginald McCrary

Jeffrey McKenzie

Daniel Olszewski

Dan Rankovich

Michael A. Reilly

Michael P. Reilly

David Starcevich

Bradley Veerman

Nicole Veerman

Robert Veron

James Wendt

Matthew Yates

Maintenance and Operations

John Fay, Director

Calvin Anderson

Robert Balsie

Tracy Bianco

Cole Biltgen

David Blaskey

Elise Brazzale

Tyler Brown

Scott Carevic

Rina Cheney

Steven Crobie

Paul Doran

Todd Doran

Christopher Dowell

Benjamin Dunkman

Kelsey Eickstoedt

Ian Eskridge

Cedric Foster

Terrence Garvey Jr.

Ben Gauchat

Alex Gonzalez

Gregory Griffin

Austin Guglielmucci

William Hibler

Scott Kikkert

Brian Krabbe

Jeff Kure

Eric Latz

John Latz

Amanda Mackey

Brian Mackey

Edward McDermott

Michael Milligan

Arthur Moeller

Christopher Moeller

Craig Newberg

Ryan Nichols

Adam Oestmann

Ryan Osman

Jon Panozzo

Justin Parks

Daniel Parthun

Kimberly Pasch

Alex Pasteris

James Patnoudes

Brendon Phillips

Kyle Siegel

Roy Smith

Denzil Smothers

Jeffery Steichen

William Suca Jr.

Dane Thayer

Donald Thayer

Richard Therkildsen

Sara Therkildsen

Charles Thomas

Thomas Watson

Jonathan Wychocki

Robert Zinkiewicz

Marketing and Communications

Laura Kiran, Director

Cindy Cain

Bruce Hodgdon

Glenn P. Knoblock

Katie McCollum

Chad Merda

Rose Scofield

Planning and Development

Andrew Hawkins, Director
Juanita Armstrong-Ullberg
Andy Bessette
Michelle Blackburn
Allison Borecky
Glen Buckner
Nick Budde
Jason Buss
Floyd Catchpole
Corinne Crawford
Wendy Leonard
Julianne Mason
Lisa Nevins
Colleen Novander
Matt Novander
John O'Lear
Karen Rinke
David Robson
Matthew Ruhter
Judith Wallace

Visitor Services

Lynn Kurczewski, Director
Matthew Briggs
Bob Bryerton
Catherine Caldwell
Diane Carson
Debra Descano
Erin Ecker
Mallory Fischer
Jen Guest
Christopher Gutmann
Ben Hecke
Mark Loekle
Nicholas Lusson
Suzy Lyttle

Jenna Newcomb
Angela Opiola
Kelli Parke
Jessica Prince-Sharrar
Angela Rafac
Tina Riley
Mike Speller
Dakota Stevenson
Jason Stevenson
Mary Thomas
Heather VanZyl
Melissa Zanzola

Retired

Ray Setzke
Terry Snyder



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Forest Preserve District
OF WILL COUNTY

**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



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