

NATURE CONNECTIONS

2022 ANNUAL REPORT



FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
WILL COUNTY



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



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



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



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



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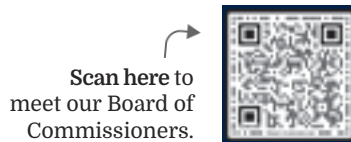
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Staff roster
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Also serving on the Board in 2022:

Amanda Koch (District 2), James Moustis (District 2), Margaret Tyson (District 3), Saud Gazanfer (District 4), Gretchen Fritz (District 5), Donald Gould (District 6), Mike Fricilone (District 7), Herbert Brooks Jr. (District 8), Rachel Ventura (District 9), Tyler Marcum (District 10), Mimi Cowan (District 11), Tom Weigel (District 12), Debbie Kraulidis (District 13)



From the Board president

In 2022, the Forest Preserve provided hundreds of public programs, events and special exhibitions introducing individuals and families to some of the wonders of Will County and the habitats, plants and animals it contains. These programs serve to engage, inspire and educate our visitors as well as cultivate an appreciation of the nature that surrounds us.

News today is filled with reports of the state of our physical and mental health. Physical ailments including obesity, diabetes and hypertension along with mental stress, anxiety and fatigue plague our society. Research shows that nature is healing and having access to nature is important to realize this healing effect. The Forest Preserve strives to make nature accessible to everyone, regardless of race, gender, socio-economic status or physical abilities. We work to make your forest preserves accessible to as many people as possible and to offer a variety of ways for people to engage with the outdoors through their choice of recreational pursuits.

Whether you enjoy hiking, biking, running, paddling, photography, meditation or learning about the natural environment, you'll find opportunities at the Forest Preserve. Alone, or together with others, we offer a variety of ways for you to engage with nature.

You'll likely find that being in nature has a positive effect on your mood, boosts your energy and helps you focus on your tasks or issues at hand.

To offer some motivation, the Forest Preserve launched the Take it Outside Challenge in January 2023. This is a fun and interactive way for you to explore the rich diversity and unique attributes of your forest preserves. I encourage you to visit us at ReconnectWithNature.org for more information on how to participate in the yearlong program and to learn more about all the opportunities the forest preserves have to offer.

Sincerely,

Meta Mueller
Board President



From the Executive Director

The Forest Preserve exists to protect and restore Will County's natural resources, provide public access to the preserves and to interpret what they contain. In 2022, we continued to manage our highest-quality sites and to restore natural habitats in several others. These efforts were supported by grants and partnerships as well as by the dedication of hundreds of volunteers who logged thousands of hours engaged in resource management activities. This important work helps to restore our forest preserve landscapes and improve the health and resiliency of our natural areas.

We were also able to complete rehabilitation projects on two of our oldest rail trails, Old Plank Road Trail and Joliet Junction Trail. And the newest segment of the Veterans Memorial Trail opened, creating a truly multimodal transportation corridor along Interstate 355. Additionally, we expanded or upgraded other preserve access areas, making sure to maintain the high-quality public spaces that visitors have come to expect from the Forest Preserve. We also renovated the Four Rivers Environmental Education Center and opened the newly acquired Hidden Oaks Nature Center, further broadening our outreach and supporting our environmental education initiatives – another area of our service that the public relies on and appreciates.

In 2023, we will continue to invest in renovating and enhancing existing forest preserve access areas and trails.

We will also initiate or complete new trail linkages that connect our communities and preserves, and we will continue our planning of others for the future.



In addition, you will be able to enjoy dozens of free events, programs and exhibitions throughout the year. You can also keep track of all that's happening through our website, *ReconnectWithNature.org*, by following us on social media and by subscribing to our three digital newsletters. I'm sure you'll find something that will pique your interest and motivate you to explore your forest preserves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ralph Schultz". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Ralph Schultz
Executive Director







More than
160 ACRES
of land acquired

Land acquisition

Highlights from 2022 include:

The agreement to purchase Hidden Oaks Nature Center and Hidden Lakes Trout Farm in Bolingbrook was made official in 2022. This 33-acre parcel, formerly owned by the Bolingbrook Park District, is adjacent to the Forest Preserve's 249-acre Whalon Lake preserve. A DuPage River trail bridge connects the two sites. The property serves as a central access to the local and regional trail systems.

The acquisition of 73 acres of land, north of and adjacent to Black Walnut Creek Preserve in Crete Township. Acquisition of this property will protect high-quality hydric soils, in addition to wetland and marsh habitat. The parcel will expand the Forest Preserve's current holdings at Black Walnut Creek and provide continuity for management and maintenance.

The purchase of 47.5 acres of land located within the Spring Creek Greenway, adjacent to Hadley Valley in Homer Township. The parcel

buffers and protects the Forest Preserve's existing property at Hadley Valley and offers continuity in management and access. The Forest Preserve was awarded an Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Grant to assist with this acquisition.

The donation of 6.3 acres of land adjacent to Kraske Preserve in Crest Hill. This property holds value to the Forest Preserve for continuity with resource management along with the opportunity to preserve open space in an area facing development pressures. This donation, in combination with Lockport Township Park District's property and Kraske Preserve, will conserve approximately 80 acres of land, protecting natural resources including wetlands and floodplain.

PHOTO: Hidden Oaks Preserve offers access to shoreline fishing on four lakes at Hidden Lakes Trout Farm. Hidden Lakes Trout Farm will also include a new bait shop which, when construction is complete, will sell bait, tackle and concessions.



Preserve, visitor center and trail enhancements

A new exhibit hall, Four Rivers at the Confluence, opened in 2022 at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon. Exhibits include an interactive river table, a watershed sand table, birdfeeder and identification display, mussel exhibit, and a 2,000-gallon aquarium showcasing local fish species. The exhibit hall provides hands-on opportunities for visitors and was funded in part by an Illinois Department of Natural Resources Public Museum Capital Grant.

In the summer of 2022, the Forest Preserve celebrated the opening of the newly acquired Hidden Oaks Nature Center in Bolingbrook. To kick off the opening of its sixth visitor center, the Forest Preserve partnered with the Morton Arboretum's Nature Artist Guild to host the Visions of Nature Art Exhibition, funded by the Nature Foundation of Will County. The interior space of the nature center was transformed with temporary exhibits as staff continued to work on a comprehensive exhibit plan, including architectural improvements both inside and out, and to schedule a full complement of events and programs for the public and youth groups.



Operations department crews began installation in 2022 of 1,980 new trailhead signs at 396 Forest Preserve trail locations. The new signs include information on trail length, width, grade, surface, cross slope and obstructions. This information will help all trail users, including those with disabilities, to be better informed about each trail's features.

An All-Persons Trail was constructed in 2022 at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon. This accessible trail includes six interpretive signs located along the concrete walkway around the visitor center. The signs highlight the wildlife and habitats surrounding Four Rivers. Additionally, the trail includes sensory panels, and rumble strips to indicate arrival at each interpretive sign. Audio readers that can verbally describe the information along the trail for individuals with hearing or visual disabilities are also available for use. The project was partially funded by contributions from J-Power USA and The Nature Foundation of Will County.

PHOTOS: The 2,000-gallon fish tank at Four Rivers is stocked with catfish, black crappie, smallmouth bass, bluegill and walleye. The new trailhead signs list the grade of each path, making the trail distances more accurate than they have been in the past.

PHOTO: Construction of the new trail segment of Veterans Memorial Trail in June 2022. The trail officially opened in October of 2022.

A new 3.5-mile section of Veterans Memorial Trail officially opened in Homer Township in fall of 2022. The new paved trail segment travels north from Spring Creek Greenway Trail in Hadley Valley preserve in New Lenox to the state-owned 159th Street Bikeway in Homer Glen. The 7-mile bikeway links to a trail system in and around Orland Park's Centennial Park in Cook County. From there, path users can travel east on trails into Chicago or north into DuPage County. The project was funded in part by a Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) grant and through contributions from the City of Lockport and the Village of Homer Glen.



Scan here to watch the Veterans Memorial Trail project.

In 2023, we will:

1. Continue to pursue land preservation priorities in the Spring Creek, Jackson Creek and DuPage River greenways, utilizing proceeds from the 2020 bond sale.
2. Prepare a comprehensive Land Preservation Plan to help guide and direct future decision makers in developing new preservation programs for properties with the most conservation, recreation, and open space potential to meet our mission.





STEWARDSHIP

Land Management

In 2022, natural area restoration was conducted on more than 6,300 acres of District holdings, with efforts focused on 16 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

In 2022, prescribed burns were completed on more than 2,700 acres at 57 burn units to introduce natural fire disturbance on remnant and restored plant communities.

Invasive Species Control

More than 11,300 hours were spent performing invasive species management on more than 4,800 acres in 2022. Fifty different invasive plant species were controlled within 41 preserves.

Native Seed Collection

Forest Preserve staff and volunteers collected more than 490 pounds of seed from 177 different native plant species in 2022. These seeds will be used to establish native plant communities in newly restored areas and to enrich degraded natural areas.



PHOTO: Controlled burning requires extensive planning, training, personnel and equipment. Planning is often underway six months or more prior to implementation.

Scan here to learn more about prescribed burns.



Regenerative Agriculture

The first acre of the local growers' program was awarded in 2022. The program allows urban farmers to grow herbs and vegetables. They will also seed a pollinator buffer and use cover crops. The farmland will be available for site visits to educate the public on urban farming. In addition, in 2022, a total of 147 acres at Jackson Creek Preserve in Green Garden Township began the transition to organic and will become certified organic by 2025. Farm fields at Fiddymont Creek Preserve, Hadley Valley and Jackson Creek Preserve saw a substantial increase in cover crops from 85 acres in 2021 to 398 acres in 2022. The Forest Preserve also hosted the first "Growing with Agriculture" Will County field day. The Chicago Wilderness Team was assembled in 2021, and the first outreach goal of the group was to host such a field day to showcase different agricultural practices in Will County. More than 50 people attended the event.

Research

In 2022, the Forest Preserve partnered with Midwest Bat Hub/NABat to deploy and maintain four bat detectors at Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve in Reed Township. The Forest Preserve also completed grassland bird surveys at seven preserves; wading bird nesting surveys at Lake Renwick Preserve in Plainfield and Rock Run Rookery in Joliet; and aerial surveys of deer populations at 29 preserves. Among other projects, seven populations of rare plant species were monitored at seven preserves in coordination with the Plants of Concern monitoring program. In addition, Forest Preserve volunteers participated in a number of wildlife surveys including the Calling Frog Survey at four preserves, the Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network Survey at eight preserves, and the Illinois Odonate Survey at six preserves.



In 2023, we will:

1. Complete invasive species control and other natural resource best management practices on 4,100 acres of restored and remnant natural areas.
2. Restore 60 acres of lands that were previously converted to agriculture in Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve in Wilmington and Hadley Valley Preserve in Homer Glen.
3. Manage agricultural lands with regenerative practices to improve soil conditions or grassland bird habitat including 3,200 acres of row crop and 700 acres of grass hay.
4. Expand opportunities for volunteers to engage in resource management activities.

PHOTO: The Illinois Butterfly Monitoring Network engages citizen scientists in the process of collecting quantitative data on butterfly populations.





PEOPLE



More than
48,500
 people served
 through programs
 and outreach

Community engagement

Permitted activities

Picnics	41,700
Non-District events and special use	7,000
Dog parks	3,300
Camping	2,000

People served

Programs and services

Events and exhibitions	15,600
Public programs	12,000
Education programs	9,600
Community outreach	9,100
Volunteer events	2,300

People served

PHOTO: The Forest Preserve District offers youth group programs. Many programs are designed to meet specific badge or adventure requirements for scouting groups. However, any youth group may book these programs.

Scan here to browse our event calendar.



Facility visitation

Isle a la Cache Museum	24,000
Four Rivers Environmental Education Center	17,000
Plum Creek Nature Center	15,400
Monee Reservoir	13,000
Hidden Oaks Nature Center	8,600
Permitting and Recreation	18,000
Sugar Creek Administration Center	2,000

People served

Digital communications

Social media impressions	39.7 million
Social media video views	1.2 million
Website page views	3.68 million
Traditional media impressions	98.3 million

Views and impressions



Law Enforcement

The Forest Preserve's Police Department participated in multiple community outreach events in 2022. These included the Special Olympics Illinois Polar Plunge, Plane Pull, Torch Run, and Cop on a Rooftop. It also hosted a National Night Out event at Monee Reservoir and participated in many touch-a-truck events as well as parades.



PHOTO: Isle a la Cache Museum transports visitors back to the 18th century, when "Illinois Country" was home to the fur trade.

In 2023, we will:

1. Offer more than 400 public, youth and family education and recreation programs.
2. Host three traveling exhibitions – on loan from the Smithsonian Institution, Denver Botanic Garden, and the American Museum of Fly Fishing – at visitor centers in Romeoville, Channahon and Monee.
3. Host 10 public events throughout the county offering individuals and families unique opportunities to engage with staff, presenters, partners and the environment.
4. Complete installation of exterior exhibits as part of improvements to Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon and initiate phase I exhibit design for Hidden Oaks Nature Center in Bolingbrook.
5. Host a yearlong campaign to grow further awareness of and participation in Forest Preserve offerings.
6. Increase the number of followers engaging with our social media, while implementing new digital avenues for the public to connect with us.
7. Continue to manage dynamic websites and digital newsletters that are a valuable source of information about our natural and cultural landscape.

PHOTO: Fishing programs are offered seasonally at select forest preserves.







PHOTO: Paddling is a great way to enjoy nature and see the preserves from a different perspective. You can explore all the nooks and crannies and see parts of the preserves you would never be able to from land.

Promoting health

The Forest Preserve offers a variety of recreational opportunities from hiking, biking, bird-watching and photography to meditation, kayaking, yoga and more. These activities allow people to engage with the outdoors in support of their mental and physical health.

The Forest Preserve also provides:

- Programs for audiences with special interests or needs including bilingual programs as well as programs for those with autism and sensory sensitivities.
- A built environment with an emphasis on ADA best practices.
- Regional trails that connect many of our communities and people to each other.
- Welcoming visitor centers and staff that are firmly committed to appreciating and promoting equity, diversity, inclusiveness and wellness.
- Digital options in the form of online programming, newsletters, websites and social media platforms.

Additionally, the Forest Preserve's Police Department logged more than 7,400 additional foot patrols, building checks and special details in 2022 to ensure safe and secure environments for the public and Forest Preserve staff.

In 2023, we will:

1. Initiate reconstruction and improvement of a 2.25-mile segment of the Rock Run Greenway Trail within Rock Run Preserve in Joliet.
2. Start construction of a 0.65-mile trail segment closing the last remaining gap in the 12-mile Rock Run Greenway Trail in Joliet.
3. Initiate renovation of the Hidden Oaks Nature Center and surrounding campus in Bolingbrook to improve accessibility, increase program space and develop additional exhibition space.
4. Complete an expansion of the Lake Chaminwood – Dollinger Family Access in Channahon to improve trail and kayak access, and provide additional visitor amenities.
5. Finish construction of the Hidden Lakes Bait Shop in Bolingbrook.
6. Continue planned bridge and trail renovation and reconstruction in several locations on the Wauponsee Glacial Trail.



COLLABOR
ATION



PHOTOS: The new trail segment of the Veterans Memorial Trail officially opened in October 2022. Tollway Executive Director Cassandra Rouse and Rocco Zucchero, the Tollway's chief planning officer, accepted the Appreciation of Partners award at the Feb. 9 Forest Preserve Board of Commissioners meeting in 2023.



Partnerships

The Forest Preserve partners with dozens of organizations each year to further its mission. From these, the District recognizes agencies annually with its Appreciation of Partners Award. Honorees are presented with a plaque before the full Board of Commissioners. The Illinois State Toll Highway Authority received the 2022 award. By dedicating a 20-foot-wide corridor along Interstate 355 for a future multi-use trail, the Tollway laid the groundwork for local jurisdictions and municipalities to make this trail a reality. To date, more than 8 miles of the Veterans Memorial Trail have been constructed, 4.7 miles connecting the Centennial Trail to the Southern DuPage County Regional Trail, and most recently, a 3.5-mile addition connecting the Spring Creek Greenway Trail to the Illinois Department of Transportation's 159th Street Trail. With the continued commitment of the Tollway and local agencies, it is the Forest Preserve's hope to make the remaining phases of the Veterans Memorial Trail a reality.

Other partnerships in 2022 included:

- City of Lockport
- District 201 Balmoral Elementary School
- Easterseals Joliet Region
- Elmhurst History Museum
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
- Romeoville Art Society
- Village of Homer Glen
- SCARCE (School & Community Assistance for Recycling and Composting Education)
- U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary



PHOTO: Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve protects a diversity of habitats, including forest, prairie, savanna, wetland and a portion of the Des Plaines River.

Grants

In 2022, the following grants were received:

- **Restoration at Lockport Prairie Nature Preserve and Prairie Bluff Preserve**
Army Corps of Engineers
\$281,935.36
- **Trail cleanup along Joliet Junction Trail**
Youth Service America
\$100.00

Total grants: \$282,035.36



Projects

Highlights from 2022 include:

- Collaborating with Working Bikes of Chicago to offer the Recycle Your Bicycle program, collecting bikes to refurbish and distribute locally and around the world.
- Coordinating efforts with Irons Oaks Environmental Learning Center of Olympia Fields, Will-South Cook Soil and Water Conservation District, Will County Land Use, the Environmental Education Association of Illinois, and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to present the “Dive IN!” Traveling Special Exhibition at Plum Creek Nature Center.

Volunteering

In 2022, more than 11,800 hours of service were generously donated by 792 individuals, allowing the District to accomplish much more than it could without their diligent efforts.

Individuals

Megan Abellera
 Jo Dell Albi
 Linda Andrews
 Todd Aschbrenner
 Jim Avila
 Dave Babich
 Amy Bala
 Alexandria Baxter
 Isabel Bejar
 Emily Berndt
 Mark Bettin
 Patricia Bochenek
 Arianna Borgra
 Bill Bromer
 Stacy Browner
 Daphne Burke
 Eileen Burke
 Jennifer Cain Vocu
 Katie Caldwell
 Pete Caldwell
 Therese Caldwell
 Maura Carlisle
 Lorna Carrara
 Camryn Cassady
 Jo Chenell
 Jim Colwell
 Carol Cooley
 Jan Corbett
 Kerri Counts
 Joel Craig
 Tiffany Crate
 Jeff Crisman
 Rodney Dabe
 Georgeann Davis
 Donna Davlantis

Dawn Downey
 Frank Dundek
 Lee Ecker
 Carrie Ephgrave
 Nicholas Epley
 James Evans
 Marilyn Evans
 Joan Fasanella
 Barb Ferry
 Gail Fischetti
 Ash Fitzwater
 William Frankengerger
 Michele Friske
 Barbara Fuqua
 John Fuqua
 Jim Garrison
 Amy Gibson

Amy Godbey
 Jeanne Golec
 Joel Greenberg
 Courtney Grey
 Cindy Gustafson
 Bailey Hantak
 Kathy Hearne
 Greg Hejnar
 Leda Herrera
 Sabrina Hines
 Yvonne Hines-Greer
 Scott Holladay
 Cindy Hostert
 Bill Huish
 Paul Ingram
 Sheila Ingram
 Katie Jandeska

Glenn Johnson
 Debbie Jones
 Jill Juban
 Ronald Kaye
 Carrie Kelly
 Efty Kelly
 Jackie Kibler
 William Kibler
 Lindsay Lake
 Kathryn Lewellen
 Ken Lewellen
 Bob Lewis
 Keith Listermann
 Nicole Lomax
 David Lowe
 Deborah Maish
 Susan Malkowski
 Carol Malnar



PHOTO: There are many benefits to volunteering with the District. You engage in some physical activity while meeting like-minded people. And you help improve Will County's preserves, which enhances the quality of life for all residents.

Individual volunteers continued

Julie Massa
Kenneth McAllister
Thomas McCafferty
Mary Anne
McLeann
Dan McNamee
Sean McQuown
Ruth Meyer
John Mittelbrun
Scott Mortenson
Rafael Munoz
Pat Naylor
Don Nelson
Espie Nelson
Dave Nordin
Nick Nothhelfer
Michael O'Brien
Ceile O'Neill
George Opiola
Izzy Opiola
Bernie O'Reilly
Carrie Palmiter
Diane Palumbo
Carol Picciolo
Gloria Pollack
Alan Potyen
Lorie Power
Heidi Provost
Lydia Pultorak
Michael Puskar
Rita Renwick
Ron Richter
Carrie Rock
Jeff Ronspies
Roger Ross
Michael Rusnak
Sandra Rust
Mary Catherine
Ryan

Mike Rzepka
Alfredo Salcedo
Nuño
Joe Sanchez
Gina Sandvik
Courtney Sass
Midge Saunders
Janet Schleeter
Paul Schroeder
Ryan Schuda
Phyllis Schulte
Max Scott-
Schroeder
Samuel Scott-
Schroeder
Kim Shehorn
Robert Sherwood
Stephen Sherwood
Greg Siefert
Steve Sierra
Lucy Singireti
Sally Skoff
Ryan Sorrells
Bob Soukup
Kathy Stephens
Tom Stephens
Sharon Sullivan
Russ Swanson
Grace Swift
James Swift
Jerry Swift
John Swift
Kathleen Swift
Max Swift
Molly Swift
Karen Tellef
Tristan Trobaugh
Alex Vancina
Richard
Wachenheim

Chuck Wanner
Erin Ward
Dave Wendt
Marie Wendt
Robert Widuch
Mark Wieclaw
Sally Wieclaw
Royce Williams
Bill Willis
Robert Wilson
Connie Witkowski
Lee Witkowski
Carter Wright
Danielle Wright-
Hantak
William Zoch
Wyatt Zoch

Community volunteer groups

Boy Scouts
of America
Catholic Charities
Girl Scouts
of America
Joliet Junior College
Lewis University
School District 203
School District 204
School District 210
University of
St. Francis

Corporate volunteer groups

Amazon
Crane Composites
Goldman Sachs
Home Depot
IKEA
Phillips Chevrolet
Xylem Watermark

Scan here to
learn about our
upcoming volunteer
opportunities.





More than
11,800
hours of volunteer
service donated



PHOTOS: Volunteers contribute in many ways, from taking part in habitat management or assisting with programs to monitoring local wildlife or serving as the eyes and ears of the Forest Preserve District while riding the trails.

In 2023, we will:

1. Participate in the yearlong 175th anniversary celebration of the I&M Canal throughout the I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor.
2. Participate in three outreach events in the local communities surrounding our visitor centers in Romeoville, Channahon, Bolingbrook, Crete Township and Joliet to increase local residents' awareness of the Forest Preserve as well as the importance of the environment.
3. Secure an intergovernmental agreement with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources for standing permission to provide programming on IDNR properties.
4. Partner with local organizations to offer three collaborative recreational programs or programs for specialized populations at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center.
5. Continue to work with Plainfield Park District on preservation of properties along the DuPage River and the extension of Normantown Trail.



SUSTAINABILITY

Financials

Use of funds

General Government	\$3,872,078
Planning & Land Preservation	\$1,536,006
Conservation	\$2,570,572
Visitor Services and Marketing & Communications	\$2,598,260
Debt Service	\$16,070,200
Capital Outlay	\$9,618,471
Operations	\$5,537,485
Police	\$1,724,007
Other Financing Use	\$545,875
Total	\$44,072,954

Source of funds

Property Taxes	\$31,938,948
Licenses & Permits	\$920,888
Investment Income	\$246,212
Grants & Other Intergovernmental	\$4,023,253
Miscellaneous Other	\$2,117,996
Total	\$39,247,297

Levy year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Corporate/C&D	0.0687	0.0682	0.0672	0.0668	0.0667
Debt Service	0.1208	0.0822	0.0790	0.0775	0.0672
Total	0.1895	0.1504	0.1462	0.1443	0.1339

PHOTO: The Forest Preserve District launched a campaign in 2022 called “The Preserves Are for You.” As part of the campaign, the Forest Preserve featured the stories of people of varied cultures and abilities who spend time in the preserves. One story highlighted Mokena residents Bill Bogdan and his daughter Hannah. Born with a tumor on his spine and paralyzed since he was eight months old, Bill Bogdan is extremely active in adaptive sports and loves nature. His lifetime of exploring the preserves, especially Hickory Creek Preserve near his home, has inspired his daughter, Hannah, to seek a career in adaptive outdoor recreation.



Donations

In 2022, a total of \$25,000 in donations was received from the following individuals and groups:

Jeffery and Marcia Baldacci
 Rita and James Brady
 Deborah Wise, Gianna Ellis and Peyton Charley
 FEMA Region 5 - Mitigation
 Forest Preserve employees
 Tammy Horvath
 Robert W. Jonas
 Mark and Gail Page
 Robert Petrouski
 Christina Snitko
 Deb Stamm
 Allen Thomas
 Jackie Traynere
 Richard Wachenheim



Donations listed above exceed \$250 in cash value.

Sponsorships

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

Dive IN! Traveling Special Exhibit	\$2,000.00
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The Nature Foundation of Will County

Accessible audio readers at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center's All-Persons Trail	\$5,000.00
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Animal Ambassadors at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center, Isle a la Cache and Plum Creek Nature Center	\$1,421.57
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Dive IN! Traveling Special Exhibit	\$1,851.70
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Diversity of Life Exhibit	\$2,260.00
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Supplies for Volunteer-Managed Natural Areas	\$1,999.00
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"The Buzz" Nature Show	\$8,750.00
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The Preserves are For You Campaign	\$1,500.00
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The Way We Worked Exhibit	\$3,000.00
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Visions of Nature Art Exhibit	\$2,392.04
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Willy's Wilderness Website	\$1,000.00
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Woods Walk Program	\$1,460.21
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Thorn Creek Audubon Society

Hummingbird Fest	\$300.00
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Total	\$32,934.52
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Awards

Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA)

The Forest Preserve District has been awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the previous 26 consecutive years. 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. In 2022, the Forest Preserve submitted the most recently completed Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for the period ended December 31, 2021. As of this printing, the report is still under review for consideration of the award.

Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Parks and Recreation National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials (NACPRO)

The Forest Preserve received a NACPRO award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Parks and Recreation for the Black Road Regional Trail Connection Project. The project, which was completed in 2021, linked two major trails and provided a safer route for path users with the installation of pedestrian bridges over the DuPage River and Interstate 55. The Black Road Regional Trail Connection project dates back more than 20 years when Forest Preserve staff sought to connect two trail systems that were separated by the DuPage River and Interstate 55. The existing route along Black Road was not safe for pedestrians due to a lack of a shoulder and a 45-mph speed limit on the road. The Forest Preserve obtained grants to fund 80 percent of the \$3 million project and the trail connection opened to the public in November of 2021.



PHOTO: Becky Blankenship (second from left) received the Young Professional Award.

Young Professional Award National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials (NACPRO)

Forest Preserve wildlife ecologist Becky Blankenship of Shorewood won NACPRO's 2022 Young Professional Award, which recognizes "up-and-coming leaders in the parks and recreation profession 30 years of age and younger, who possess leadership qualities and talents," according to NACPRO. Blankenship, a 2017 graduate of the University of St. Francis in Joliet, has worked for the Forest Preserve District since June 2020. She is responsible for wildlife monitoring, management and concerns in more than 23,000 acres of preserves in Will County. In her rookie year with the District, Blankenship started a radiotelemetry tracking program to capture and track the movements and habitat use of state-endangered ornate box turtles. She also worked with Canadian National Railroad to get turtle crossings installed in a rail line that runs through critical habitat for the state-endangered Blanding's turtle, which will help reduce turtle mortality. And she monitors wildlife at preserves using game cameras, which have generated photos of many species, including rare pictures of bobcats at a southern Will County preserve.

In 2023, we will:

1. Continue funding the Infrastructure Maintenance & Replacement Program, allowing for renovations of the Wauponsee Glacial Trail, Old Plank Road Trail and other facilities across the county.
2. Continue habitat restoration efforts in the Kankakee Sands Area preserves, Goodenow Grove Nature Preserve and Forked Creek Preserve.
3. Continue land management activities on the highest-quality natural areas and restoration sites throughout the forest preserve system.
4. Continue to support the Prairie People Volunteer program.
5. Continue to assist The Nature Foundation of Will County in building capacity and identifying projects, programs, events and exhibitions that it can support.



PHOTO: Kankakee Sands Preserve protects savanna and wetland habitat. A unique feature of the site is its sand dunes and savanna.

Staff Roster

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Executive Director
Tracy Chapman,
*Deputy Director/Public
Safety Administrator*
Leisa Nevins

Accounting and Finance

Lisa Lukasevich,
Director
Sheri Bembenek
Mary Borgra
Meredith Clavenna

Human Resources

Donna Suca, *Director*
Veronica Frausto
Emily Kenny

Information Technology

Denise Steffen,
Director
Adam DeRoss
Omar Lopez
Thomas Mancari Jr.

Marketing and Communications

Laura Kiran,
Director
Cindy Cain
Glenn Knoblock
Katie McCollum
Meghan McMahan
Chad Merda
Anthony Schalk
Rose Scofield

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Director
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Janice Kasprisin
Matt Novander
John O'Lear
Megan Raimbault
Matthew Ruhter
John Stecyk
Sara Wittchen

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Kylee Beckwith
Bob Bryerton
Michelle Cipiti
Jerome Gabriel
Jen Guest
Amy Haller
Anita Healy
Marissa Jones
Jenna Krukowski
Alexis Lyons
Suzy Lyttle
Michael Manna

Jessica McQuown
Jenna Newcomb
Julie Panozzo
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Jessica Prince-Sharrar
Angela Rafac
Tina Riley
Sara Russell
Brittany Schaller
Scott Sobbe
Jason Stevenson
Barbara Sudsberry
Alyssa Szymanski
Kirsten Thalacker
Mary Thomas
Angela Trobaugh
Heather Van Zyl
Erin Ward
Jessica Wolff
Melissa Zanzola
Janet Zavoral

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Director
Michelle Blackburn
Rebecca Blankenship
Allison Borecky
Nicholas Budde
Floyd Catchpole

Allen Hartmann
Julianne Mason
Karey O'Brein
Jessica Quinn
Joshua Rae
David Robson
Barbara Sherwood
Judith Wallace

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Director/Deputy Chief
James Pacetti,
Lieutenant
Jason Allbert
Terence Bergin
Steve Bettenhausen
Gregory Bufford
Antonio Camardo
Morgan Carrier
Thomas Cimbalista
Lawrence Collins
Justine Constantino
Jesus Espinoza
Mark Feijoo
Guillermo Gamboa
James Gerdich
Jessica Glecier
Phillip Glecier
Bradley Greenup

PHOTO: Laura Kiran during our Make Trail Moments on the Old Plank event, which featured family-friendly games and activities for all ages as well as entertainment from Chicago's 103.5 KISS FM.





Robert Guerrieri
 Mark Houlihan
 Jeffrey Hughes
 Kimberly Kaniewski
 Eric Kobe
 Dorota Lepionka
 Richard Lewandowski
 Darrell Mayle
 Hugh McCorkle
 Jeffrey McKenzie
 Caitlin Mosier
 David Neumann
 Daniel Olszewski
 Jeffrey Pogose
 Dan Rankovich
 Michael Reilly
 Robert Reyes
 Kelly Robertson
 Terrence Shubert
 Daniel Troike
 Daniel Vargas
 Nicole Veerman
 Matthew Yates

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 and Operations**

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Director
 Calvin Anderson
 Tracy Bianco
 Cole Biltgen
 Elise Brazzale
 Thomas Burns
 Jason Buss
 Scott Carevic
 Josh Catlow

Rina Cheney
 Anthony Congelosi
 Steven Crobie
 Gerald Dawson
 Nathaniel Degnan
 Paul Doran
 Ian Eskridge
 Cedric Foster
 Terrence Garvey Jr.
 Ben Gauchat
 Jesus Gonzalez
 Austin Gugliemucci
 William Hibler
 Shane Hondrombilas
 Eric Hummitsch
 Sean Johnson
 Nicholas Kalcsits
 Jason Kaphusman
 Noah Kasmer
 Brian Krabbe
 Karl Krudup
 Eric Latz
 John Latz
 Brian Mackey
 Juan Martinez
 Jace McWilliams
 Christopher Moeller
 Thomas Murray
 Ryan Nichols
 Adam Oestmann
 Justin Parks
 Daniel Parthun
 Kimberly Pasch-
 McQuen
 Alex Pasteris

Denise Pollworth
 William Prince Jr.
 Michael Prybell
 Bailey Rejzek
 Isaiah Romo
 Noah Schad
 Jacob Shewmake
 Kyle Siegel
 Bryan Smith
 Roy Smith
 Steve Stronk
 William Suca Jr.
 Gabe Suhadolc
 Collin Talkie
 Richard Therkildsen
 Charles Thomas III
 Nicholas Vella
 Thomas Watson
 Jonathan Wychocki
 Robert Zinkiewicz

Retiree

Edward McDermott



PHOTOS (from left):
 Christopher Moeller
 installing the Forest
 Preserve's new trailhead
 signs, Bob Bryerton and
 Suzy Lyttle on the set of
 November's episode of
 our award-winning nature
 show, "The Buzz," and
 Jess McQuown during our
 Pelican Watch event at
 Four Rivers.

Photo credits: Glenn P. Knoblock,
 Chad Merda, Amy Miller, JoAnne Saleme,
 Anthony Schalk, Scott Seifrid





PHOTO: The views atop the bridge at Goodenow Grove Nature Preserve are amazing in any season. The bridge spans a 40-foot ravine and is 267 feet long.

**FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
WILL COUNTY**

ReconnectWithNature.org

