Congressional Delegates Reconvene

Conservation Congress delegates reconvened in early February for the 2019 State of Conservation Address. McHenry County Conservation District Executive Director Elizabeth Kessler led delegates through the progress that has been made over the past twelve months since the 2nd Conservation Congress met. In addition, Kessler introduced the “McHenry County Citizens’ Conservation Bill of Rights,” and encouraged delegates to bring the McHenry County Citizens’ Conservation Bill of Rights to their governing boards to affirm and endorse.

Following the presentation delegates broke into smaller groups to address how individual residents might work to implement items identified in the McHenry County Citizens’ Conservation Bill of Rights, and how delegate organizations can work to bring awareness of the Conservation Bill of Rights to their membership and the public.

Thoughtful discussions identified personal involvement, leading by example, and sharing on own social media platforms as ways to embrace and promote what the Conservation Bill of Rights stands for in their personal lives. In addition, delegates identified that their role, representing diverse groups throughout the county, presents an opportunity for them to take on the responsibility to share with all their members and colleagues, to help incorporate the McHenry County Citizens’ Conservation Bill of Rights within their work place/organization environment. A synopsis of those discussion is captured below.

Question #1: How might a resident implement items identified in the Conservation Bill of Rights?

Take it Personally—
• Lead by Example; Volunteer!
• Video yourself taking the pledge and share on social media.
• Bring environmental issues/topics before your local unit of government and village board.
• Reflect on how these rights are important to you individually so they are not taken for granted.
• Speak on behalf of the District in your professional and personal circles about the richness of our natural resources and outdoor recreational experiences available in McHenry County.
• Landscape native plants and trees; don’t over-mow; plant milkweed; use your own property and the Conservation at Home program to promote conservation to neighbors.
• Purchase local foods, eating at restaurants that support local food suppliers; don’t expect the Conservation District to do it all.

Experience & Share—
• Visit as many sites as possible and share with friends through social media, and post and tag photos. (Ex. a person shared where she hiked with her Weight Watchers group; as a result they found out about new places to walk.)
• Get outside and involved in immersive experiences in nature and interact with wildlife; share those experiences; spread the word to neighbors, friends, and co-workers!
• Share stories about your experiences at conservation areas and programs. Talk it up.

Question #1A: What can the Conservation District do to promote the Conservation Bill of Rights?

Attract New Audiences—
• Host new opportunities at different sites to expand the types of people exposed to the District; those who might not come otherwise.
• Hook to health aspects like yoga or forest bathing.
• Place birding experiences on social media – use volunteer grassland bird monitors to teach about species.
• Reaching out to ethnic communities.
• Reach out to teens through social events and outings. Example: pizza and a bonfire.

Partner—
• Work with doctors and medical community to prescribe getting outside — put brochures in waiting rooms.
• Use partner organizations to increase reach and share expertise (e.g. the Eagle Watch program with USFWS, McHenry County Audubon, IDNR and Friends of Hackmatak.)
• Link with businesses near sites as destinations. Examples: bike ride the Prairie Trail and visit ice cream shop; visit Glacial Park and have lunch at XYZ restaurant. Different outing each month.
• Gain support from chambers of commerce, churches and faith groups.
• Promote understanding of ecosystem services and their value; groundwater protection and the protection of lands critical to groundwater recharge; the value of open spaces and green infrastructure planning.
• Partner with businesses for programs, events, and corporate volunteer workdays.

Question #2: How can a delegate organizations bring awareness of the Conservation Bill of Rights to their membership and the public?

Promote at the Work Place—
• Add the Conservation Bill of Rights to company/organization website and push out on social media.
• Post in offices, lunchrooms, bathrooms, and social media.
• Have organization members sign the pledge, frame it and hang up.
• At every organization, township meeting have an agenda item at every meeting where a member points out the advantages to open space, water, wildlife, and way of life in McHenry County.
• Recite at meetings.
• Advocate native plantings at businesses.
• Promote Hackmatack; make a bigger deal about the fact we have a national wildlife refuge right here in McHenry County.
• Promote District’s programs with colleagues

Stand up for Conservation—
• Have company/organization select and work to advance an individual right.
• Encourage newspapers and organization newsletters to support the Conservation Bill of Rights.
• Request the McHenry County Board adopt.
• Ask McHenry County Planning Department to incorporate into updates to their planning ordinance updates.
McHenry County Citizens’ Bill of Conservation Rights

We believe that every citizen in McHenry County is entitled to certain intrinsic rights that afford the best opportunity for healthy and sustainable natural resources, thoughtfully developed cities and towns, a strong economy, and beautiful outdoor places to explore, discover and recreate.

We believe McHenry County is a truly stirring landscape upon which to put down roots, raise families and create a future.

IT STARTS WITH YOU — SPREAD THE WORD!

BELIEVE in our Mission;

GET INVOLVED in Conservation:
Find your passion and get outdoors; seek places to be active; attend programs and events; volunteer and/or become a friend of McHenry County Conservation Foundation.

INVEST in McHenry County’s future:
Provide input and feedback, protect, fund and advocate.

Next Steps:
1. Request a conservation district speaker to present to your group.
2. Bring the McHenry County Citizens’ Conservation Bill of Rights to your governing board to affirm and endorse.
3. Brainstorm and create your own pledge that enhances our way of life in McHenry County.
4. Join the conversation! Connect with us on social media. Subscribe to Landscapes magazine and Discover Your District newsletter at mccd@mccdistrict.org
WE PLEDGE: To create opportunities for meaningful outdoor recreational experiences for people of all ages, cultures and abilities.

Create Outdoor Recreational Experiences

WE PLEDGE: To build strong resilient woodlands, prairies and wetlands while striving to foster a deep sense of place.

Build Resilient Woodlands, Prairies & Wetlands

WE PLEDGE: To provide outdoor places to reflect, play and interact with family, friends and community.

Provide Outdoor Places to Reflect, Play & Interact

WE PLEDGE: To help build a sustainable and vibrant local economy by providing a destination for outdoor recreation.

Provide a Destination for Outdoor Recreation

WE PLEDGE: To manage public lands through science and in a manner that is responsive and resilient to a changing climate.

Manage Public Lands

WE PLEDGE: To empower you to conserve our water, wildlife and way of life in McHenry County by actively seeking input and support.

Preserve Our Way of Life
WE PLEDGE: To promote actions that contribute to clean air.

WE PLEDGE: To protect land which filters and removes pollutants from water while enhancing groundwater recharge.

WE PLEDGE: To protect wetlands, streams and rivers; which help to reduce flooding.

WE PLEDGE: To protect and restore wetlands, streams and rivers; which help to reduce flooding.

WE PLEDGE: To remain steadfast in our commitment to protect distinct natural areas.

WE PLEDGE: To work vigilantly to influence the health and well being of our county.

WE PLEDGE: To spark hope for a future more closely intertwined with the natural world.

WE PLEDGE to make a difference by standing up for your Water, Wildlife & Way of Life in McHenry County.