Assembled, Acknowledge and Believe:

Accordingly, We the Delegates to the First McHenry County Conservation District Congress, 6th February 2016, in McHenry County, Illinois,

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in, and our responsibility for, the total community of life and in doing so to adopt a conservation ethic compelling us to assume a moral duty to

become engaged in the care of public lands and to pass this responsibility on to future generations.

Further, public lands afford each of us regardless of the basis for our interest in nature, the opportunity to develop a greater awareness of our role in, and our responsibility for, the total community of life and in doing so to adopt a conservation ethic compelling us to assume a moral duty to

become educated about conservation issues and to act on that information.

Additionally these lands also include sites and features of important native and current cultural value allowing the citizens of the county to connect with and learn from both the historic and prehistoric past enabling them to move into the future with a strong foundation and a clear understanding of how that past has influenced the county's growth.

Accordingly, We the Delegates to the First McHenry County Conservation District Congress, 6th February 2016, in McHenry County, Illinois, Assembled, Acknowledge and Believe:

- That the public lands of McHenry County, protected by the McHenry County Conservation District are an irreplaceable natural and cultural legacy that should be passed on to future generations and in sound ecological health for public use and enjoyment and for their own intrinsic value.

- That the varied recreational uses and user groups of these lands should be bound together by governing principle that all such uses will have as their common goal the ecological health and long-term sustainability of these public lands upon which such activities are carried out.

- That differing user groups should be united in support of the larger goals of protecting the public lands of the District from misuse, environmental degradation, resale, transfer or conversion to other uses that destroy or diminish the ecological, cultural, historic, aesthetic or recreational values for which they were preserved.

- That a healthy and vibrant civil society requires that the citizens of the county have opportunities to enjoy the public lands of the District for recreation, education and contemplation and that such opportunities be accessible, available and safe.

- That the non-human components comprising the natural heritage of the county such as native wildlife, native plants, waters and natural communities be considered as a recognized constituent group for which McHenry County Conservation District has a responsibility to provide both a voice for and stewardship of its decisions relating to the use of the county’s public lands.

- That farmland, orchards, nurseries, grazing and other compatible working landscapes provide an opportunity for successful and innovative long term conservation partnerships between protected public lands of the District and such working landscapes, benefiting both, while providing citizens important ecosystem services.

- That working partnerships between conservation agencies, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, health providers and recreational user groups are critical to the long term future of McHenry County Conservation District public lands and to public lands at large across the nation and that such partnerships should be encouraged, developed and fostered whenever possible.

- That existing funding for land preservation, recreational access and outdoor education should be considered a regional and national conservation priority and continuation of programs that provide such funding should be of concern to individuals, organizations and user groups that utilize McHenry County's public lands.

- That a personal land ethic should be cultivated in all those who enjoy and utilize the outdoors encompassing not only wise use of the legacy represented by public lands but a personal and moral responsibility that encourages involvement in their long term protection and stewardship.

- That such a land ethic requires of those who enjoy today’s opportunities to utilize the public lands of the county to recognize such enjoyment and such use requires a personal commitment to an intergenerational equity between current and future generations yet unborn that we may bequeath unto them a healthy landscape that they too may come to appreciate and cherish.

- That a land ethic should also include among its highest forms a commitment to introduce young people and diverse cultures to the natural heritage represented in McHenry County Conservation District’s public lands and to public lands in general.

- That the governance of the McHenry County Conservation District shall continue to offer county citizens of all walks of life an opportunity to serve in an unpaid and voluntary Trustee position allowing them to become directly engaged in a conservation leadership capacity and that any changes to that form of governance shall be done in the manner prescribed and envisioned by the Conservation District Act of 1963.

We therefore, representatives of the first McHenry County Conservation District Conservation Congress, assembled, deeply aware of the trust placed upon us by future generations for the safeguarding of the county’s natural and cultural heritage and of our responsibility to the intricate and ancient web of life of which we are stewards, do solemnly publish and affirm this Fundamental Declaration of Conservation Principles. And for implementation of the tenets embodied within this framework, we pledge our mutual support, enthusiasm and ethical conscience to the preservation and integration of McHenry County’s open lands, agricultural areas, trails, wildlife, waters and scenic beauty.

In Witness Whereof, we the delegates affix our signatures assembled this 6th day in February, two thousand sixteen in Woodstock, Illinois.