Sustaining the Dream

STEWARDING THE PLACES WE LOVE

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Center
Declaration of Fundamental Conservation Principles
1 Introduction

Created by a group of ecologically conscientious citizens in 1971 and supported by the Illinois Conservation District Act of 1963. McHenry County Conservation District was established by a successful county wide referendum held in conjunction with the general election in April 1971 and formally organized in July 1971.

The distinctiveness of McHenry County’s natural land was a driving force in the creation of the Conservation District. That desire for preservation has continued to inspire land purchases. The first land purchase was made in 1973 when 50 acres that make up a portion of Beck’s Woods Conservation Area in Chemung were acquired. Since that time, thousands of acres have been added to the land holdings of the District.

Throughout the 1970s the District added 2,167 acres. The 80s added 2,353 acres. The rapid growth of the 90s increased the value of land preservation and the District acquired 7,144 acres. Today, the Conservation District protects over 25,500 acres of open land diverse with woodlands, prairies, wetlands, ponds, creeks, and rivers throughout McHenry County.

Our vision and commitment of protecting natural areas for future generations, and offering inspiring educational and recreational opportunities remains steadfast. We host more than one million visitors each year and offer opportunities and fun ways for people of all ages to explore, discover, learn, relax and renew in the wide open spaces and places that matter found throughout McHenry County.

MISSION:

*McHenry County Conservation District exists to preserve, restore, and manage natural areas and open spaces for their intrinsic value and for the benefits to present and future generations.*
McHenry County Conservation District is home to over 105 miles of hiking trails, 59 miles of biking trails, 18 fishing sites, 5 campgrounds, 4 canoe launches, 49 miles of horse trails, and 21 sites with picnic shelters.

Sites are open sunrise to sunset.
EARTH DAY NATURE HIKE—PRAIRIEVIEW EDUCATION CENTER, CRYSTAL LAKE
#DiscoverMCCD

Residents can hike glacial kames, traverse under the branches of ancient oaks, wander along glistening streams and linger in dazzling prairies filled with wildflowers, songbirds and fluttering insects. Outdoor recreational opportunities abound in thirty-three conservation areas and along regional trails that are open to the public year round.

Residents can enjoy hiking, biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, camping, canoeing, picnicking and fishing. A wide variety of environmental education programs and outdoor experiences invite residents of all ages to discover the wonders of nature; from nature scavenger hunts to canoe clinics, adventures abound for individuals and families to connect with their natural, cultural, and historical surroundings.

Summer camps allow youth to discover and enjoy the outdoors in greater depth, while outreach program to schools, civic groups and other community venues invite residents to discover the great outdoors locally. In addition, a variety of special events, as well as outdoor concerts enrich the lives of thousands of visitors each year, while interpretive trails, changing exhibits, and exploration backpacks allow for self-guided learning and discovery.
6 Conservation Efforts

From Rivers to Ridges

The Conservation District preserves and manages over 25,500 acres including 17 Illinois State Nature Preserves. These wetlands, savannas and prairies contain hundreds of native plants and animals that flourish in the wildlife habitat protected within conservation areas, including numerous threatened and endangered species like prairie bush clover and the short-eared owl.

Restoration efforts are designed to protect the county’s natural heritage by restoring the biological character of the county’s last remaining high-quality ecosystems. Large macrosites of native and restored ecosystems linked by greenway corridors are two of the key tenets that underpin the philosophy of land protection efforts of the District.

Natural area management efforts focus on restoring these larger core preserves and smaller high-quality natural areas within McHenry County’s major watersheds—the Fox River/Nippersink Creek and Kishwaukee River systems. District staff and dedicated volunteers focus on the removal and control of invasive, non-native species like common reed, garlic mustard and European buckthorn. By conducting controlled burns, removing brush, and collecting and spreading native seed, great strides have been made in restoring the land to a healthier and more sustainable condition. Renewed areas have supported successful reintroduction of several native species like orange throat darters, Blanding’s turtles, smooth green snakes, wild turkeys and the Aphrodite butterfly.

McHenry County Conservation District is home to

2,062 DIFFERENT SPECIES
THAT LIVE IN HABITAT PROVIDED ON PROTECTED WIDE OPEN SPACES

AND TRACKS 324 BIOLOGICAL INVENTORIES

McHenry County Conservation District preserves

OVER 8,000 ACRES
OF HIGH-QUALITY
WETLANDS, SAVANNAS & PRAIRIES
The Value of Nature

Ecosystem Services

Ecosystem services define the value and impact of protecting nature and the benefits gained. There is a direct correlation with natural systems and their diverse benefits to human economies. Once we understand the impact and overall value of Ecosystem Services, we can better prioritize money and resources to protect ecosystems far into the future. When ecosystems are considered valuable, they are more likely to be preserved. Today, McHenry County Conservation District preserves over 25,500 acres. This public investment goes well beyond just protecting open space—it safeguards the quality of health and wellness on multiple levels for all residents far into the future.

There are three important factors that ring true regarding ecosystem services:

1. Natural habitats provide ecosystems benefits to people 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
2. People receive more ecosystem benefits when there are more natural habitats.
3. Better quality habitats provide more ecosystem benefits than poor quality habitats.

The numerous benefits received from nature can be classified into four significant categories: ecological benefits, economic benefits, regulating benefits and cultural benefits. These ecosystem services are important to environmental health, as well as a significant factor in human health and well-being—yet they are often taken for granted.

**ECOLOGICAL Services**… Ecosystems function in a complex and dynamic way that include natural processes, such as photosynthesis and the water cycle. These processes are fundamental to sustaining everything from basic life forms, to entire ecosystems and ultimately people.
- Pollination
- Water Cycle
- Photosynthesis
- Soil Creation
- Biodiversity
- Nutrient Cycling

**ECONOMIC Services**… Ecosystems provide numerous direct benefits to people that can be extracted from nature:
- Drinking Water
- Food: livestock, crops, wildlife, fruits, seeds, etc.
- Timber/Firewood
- Fiber: Plants made into clothes and other materials
- Medicinal: Biological materials used for medicines

**REGULATORY Services**… Plants clean air and filter water. Wetlands hold water and prevent flooding. Soils filter water and aquifers store water below ground. These benefits extend outside the boundary of the natural ecosystem to clean and regulate the environment in the most sustainable and eco-friendly way.
- Clean Air
- Flood & Erosion Control
- Water Purification
- Carbon Storage
- Climate Regulation
- Decomposition

**CULTURAL Services**… The environment shapes us as we shape the environment. It aids in our overall health and well-being. The importance of ecosystems to humans can be traced back to the beginning of mankind with drawings of animals and plants on cave walls.
- Education
- Recreation
- Aesthetic
- Inspirational / Spiritual
- Tourism/Destination
- Cultural Heritage
**ECOLOGICAL**

**GENETIC DIVERSITY:** Habitats that contain a high number of species are more genetically diverse than others and are known as ‘biodiversity hotspots’. Genetic diversity distinguishes different breeds or races from each other providing the basis for locally, well-adapted cultivars and a gene pool for developing commercial crops and livestock. **McHenry County Conservation District** has a record of 93 endangered and threatened species existing on its protected lands, including 17 bird species, 10 fish, 1 mammal, 3 insects, 55 plants, 5 mussels, and 2 herpetiles.

**POLLINATION:** Insects and wind pollinate plants and trees which is essential for the development of fruits, vegetables and seeds. Animal pollination is an ecosystem service mainly provided by insects, but also by some birds and bats. **McHenry County Conservation District** provides these species available habitat.

**HABITATS:** Each ecosystem provide everything an individual plant or animal needs to survive: food, water, and shelter. Different habitats also are be essential for a species’ life-cycle. Migratory species including birds, fish, mammals and insects all depend upon different ecosystems during their movements. **McHenry County Conservation District** can provide specific information on number of species in each group (plants to animals).

**RECREATION AND PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH:** Walking and playing sports in green space is not only a good form of physical exercise, but also allows people an outlet to relax and unwind. The role that green space plays in maintaining mental and physical health is increasingly being recognized, despite difficulties of measurement. **McHenry County Conservation District** provides 200 miles of hiking, biking and horseback riding trails, 33 sites that are open to the public, and hundreds of programs, activities and special events to engage residents.

**TOURISM:** Ecosystems play an important role for many kinds of tourism, which in turn provides considerable economic benefits, and is a vital source of income. In 2008 global earnings from tourism topped $944 billion. Ecotourism and geotourism can also educate people about the importance of biological diversity.

**AESTHETIC APPRECIATION AND INSPIRATION FOR CULTURE & ART:** Language, knowledge and the natural environment have been intimately related throughout human history. Biodiversity, ecosystems and natural landscapes have been the source of inspiration for our art, culture and increasingly, for science.

**SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE AND SENSE OF PLACE:** Nature is a common element of all major religions and traditional knowledge, and associated customs are important for creating a sense of belonging.

**CULTURAL**

**LOCAL BENEFITS McHenry County Conservation District Provides**

**LOCAL CLIMATE AND AIR QUALITY:** Trees provide shade while forests influence rainfall and water availability both locally and regionally. Trees and plants also play an important role in regulating air quality by removing pollutants from the atmosphere. **McHenry County Conservation District** provides woodlands, prairie and wetlands cover that, in turn, minimize local water and air pollutants.

**CARBON SEQUESTRATION AND STORAGE:** Ecosystems regulate the global climate by storing and sequestering greenhouse gases. As trees and plants grow, they remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and effectively lock it away in their tissues. In this way forest ecosystems are carbon stores. Biodiversity also plays an important role by improving the capacity of ecosystems to adapt to the effects of climate change. **McHenry County Conservation District** provides woodlands, prairie and wetlands cover that, in turn, provide CO2 intake in each habitat type.

**MODERATION OF EXTREME EVENTS:** Extreme weather events or natural hazards include floods, storms, tsunamis, avalanches and landslides. Ecosystems and living organisms create buffers against natural disasters, thereby preventing possible damage. For example, wetlands can soak up flood water while trees can stabilize slopes. **McHenry County Conservation District’s** protected lands allow for 24,438,825 gallons of storage capacity, stream runoff and water filtration.

**ECONOMIC**

**FRESH WATER:** Ecosystems play a vital role in the global hydrological cycle, as they regulate the flow and purification of water. Vegetation and forests influence the quantity of water available locally. Groundwater infiltration and discharge are likely the biggest ecosystem services that **McHenry County Conservation District** provides.

**FOOD:** Ecosystems provide the conditions for growing food. Food comes principally from managed agro-ecosystems. Marine and freshwater systems or forests also provide food for human consumption. Wild foods from forests are often underestimated. **McHenry County Conservation District** provides deer, waterfowl, fish, mushrooms, honey (indirectly), turkey, to the market and directly to residents.

**RAW MATERIAL:** Ecosystems provide a great diversity of materials for construction and fuel including wood, biofuels and plant oils that are directly derived from wild and cultivated plant species. **McHenry County Conservation District** provides corn, beans, hay, cattle, vegetables, fire wood, wood chips to the market and directly to residents.
The 25,000 acres of public open space protected by McHenry County Conservation District since its inception by voter referendum in 1971 represents an irreplaceable legacy to be cherished, safeguarded and passed on to future generations of county residents. These lands constitute a natural heritage of woodlands, prairies, wetlands, streams, agricultural lands and buffers that afford habitat for native plants and wildlife, clean and filter surface and ground water, provide for clean air, promote healthy outdoor activities, connect county citizens to the natural world and inspire the heart and senses with an opportunity to experience the beauty and aesthetics of nature.

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 in 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.
BALD EAGLE NESTING NEAR HICKORY GROVE RIVERFRONT, CARY
For every dollar a resident pays in property taxes, approximately two cents is paid to the McHenry County Conservation District:

- Less than one cent goes for the purpose of managing and operating public lands that constitute the natural heritage of McHenry County.
- Slightly over one cent goes to service the District’s debt approved by the voters for the preservation of open space, protection of wildlife habitat and public access improvements.

Did you know?

McHenry County Conservation District pro-actively reduced property taxes.

- This is the fourth consecutive year the District’s total property tax levy has either been decreased or not increased from the previous year.
- Recently refinanced its outstanding voter approved general obligation bonds to save tax payers over $14 million dollars over the life of the bonds.
- In less than ten years, 100% of the District’s debt service will be paid-off; resulting in a reduction of the District’s total annual property tax levy of more than 60%.
Just the Facts

- **89% of the District’s revenue comes from property taxes and the remainder from user fees, licenses, grants, donations and sponsorships.** Education services and recreational programs, special events and land/facilities use licenses and lease agreements generate non-tax revenue for full or partial cost recovery.

- **The District does not have the same ability or flexibility like the County or municipalities to fund operations and services with other tax and non-tax options.** No authority to impose sales tax, motor fuel tax, hotel/motel tax and state aid is not received from the Local Government Distributive Fund for operations.

- **Since 2011, the District’s General Corporate Levy (main General Fund operating levy) has increased less than 1% on an average annual basis.** This is a direct result of the District effectively reducing costs by $1.6 million dollars over the same period; which represents 18% of the District’s total current FY 2018 annual operating budget.

- **The District’s property tax dollars are 55% less than the average of the four (4) collar county forest preserve districts.** While there are operational and programmatic differences, we share the same core mission of preserving and protecting public open space. One performance measurement that offers insight into the effectiveness of financial management is to compare the total operational (non-debt) property tax burden (or levies) collected by the agencies vs. the total acres of land each agency owns. The District’s total 2016 operational levy was $7,794,197. If that total levy is divided by the total District acres of land under management of 25,540; it reflects that only $305.18 of property taxes are utilized to manage each acre owned. In contrast, the four collar county forest preserves averaged $685.78 per acre managed over the same time period.

- **In a continued effort to support lower property taxes for McHenry County residents, the District elected to abate $341,092 of its original requested 2017 property tax levy. This is the fourth consecutive year the District’s total property tax levy has either been decreased or not increased from the previous year.** The $341,092 includes a reduction of $216,270 which represents the total amount that the 2017 non-debt related levies could have been increased under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law. The District also abated $124,822 of the Debt Service levy which represents the annual increase of the contractual payments of the referendum approved General Obligation bonds for the 2018 calendar year.

- **Expanded areas and public access improvements per the approval of the voters—managing more with less.** Per the approval of the voters of McHenry County, the District increased acres of public open space preserved and managed from 2001 to 2017 by 25%. During the same time period expanded opportunities for outdoor recreational pursuits by 39% (13 additional sites (from 20 to 33) and expanded opportunities for bicycling by adding 20 miles or 43.5% more of bicycle trails.
All Funds—Summarized, Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2017

### Revenues:
- **Tax Revenue**: $19,719,453
- **Grants & Donations**: $1,172,725
- **Farm & Property Leases**: $1,049,176
- **Program & Service Fees**: $134,882
- **Investment Earnings**: $90,132
- **Other Revenues**: $70,669
- **Total Revenues**: $22,237,037

### Expenditures:
- **Debt Service**: $12,006,029
- **Conservation & Recreation**: $5,173,066
- **General Administrative**: $1,959,878
- **Public Safety**: $1,255,135
- **Capital Outlays**:
  - **Land Preservation**: $1,848,718
  - **Site & Trail Improvements**: $580,225
  - **Buildings, Vehicles and Equipment**: $279,675
- **Total Expenditures**: $23,102,726

### Other Financing Sources:
- **Transfers in**: $234,000
- **Transfers (out)**: $(234,000)
- **Sale of Capital Assets**: $28,225
- **Total Other Sources**: $28,225

### Net Change in Fund Balances
- **Net Change in Fund Balances**: $(837,464)
Our Destination

As a nationally recognized leader in the parks, recreation and conservation industry, the McHenry County Conservation District’s Board of Trustees, staff, and volunteers, strive to achieve the highest standards of excellence in everything it does while focusing on sustainability and quality.

The FY 2016-FY 2020 Strategic Plan provides clear direction for the work of the Conservation District as a single, unified organization, in order to advance the mission of the District. It also encourages sensible decision-making by the Board of Trustees in a manner that reflects the best interests of the District.

It is clearly evident that the District does not have a shortage of ideas and suggestions for new initiatives that the McHenry County Conservation District could pursue, but there are significant fiscal constraints on how much expense the District can manage given the current economic and political landscape, as well as the capacity of staff to administer an expanded portfolio of programs, projects or services.

The current strategic plan acknowledges the current position of the District through an in-depth analysis of strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats and identifies the critical issues believed to be of paramount importance.

“In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”
~ John Muir
Our Destination / Strategy

GOAL 1: PRESERVATION
Protect, restore, preserve or otherwise promote elements identified as key county natural and cultural resources.

- 1.1 Land Preservation. Protect additional acres of high quality natural areas, stream corridors, recreational lands and other lands of conservation concern.
- 1.2 Land Use Planning. Integrate land use plans for all properties owned and managed by the District to ensure the wise use of land and resources.
- 1.3 Ecological Restoration. Manage remnant habitats, nature preserves, and restored areas using the best available natural resource management techniques, research and practices.
- 1.4 Cultural Heritage Protection. Protect cultural heritage features that are significant to McHenry County and on District sites.

GOAL 2: EDUCATION & PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Increase public awareness, build an understanding of the need for healthy ecosystems, and foster a desire to take actions that will benefit the natural environment.

- 2.1 Self-Guided Activities. Increase and diversify the opportunities available for the public for self-guided nature exploration and education.
- 2.2 Guided Opportunities. Increase and diversify the number of citizens served by our environmental education program and services while increasing the amount of revenue generated.
- 2.3 Customer Service & Engagement. Create initiatives and increase efforts to provide exemplary customer service.

GOAL 3: RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, SITE ACCESS AND PUBLIC SAFETY
Provide high quality outdoor recreational programs, activities and experiences while ensuring safe and efficient use of resources.

- 3.1 Human Health and Well-Being. Expand the District’s offerings of wellness/holistic based programs and activities to foster a land ethic and connect children and adults with the natural world.
- 3.2 Maintenance of Infrastructure. Maintain public investments in an efficient and sustainable manner.
- 3.3 Public Safety. Analyze current practices and create new initiatives to maintain professionalism and pro-actively protect public safety, natural resources, and District’s infrastructure.
- 3.4 Site Improvement Initiatives. Address high priority infrastructure improvements that provide public access and recreational opportunities through creative, consistent, and cost-efficient planning and design.

GOAL 4: ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE
The District will be an effectively governed, well managed, fiscally sound organization positioned to deliver maximum value to its internal and external stakeholders.

- 4.1 Invest in Human Capital. Provide a supportive culture which includes training, professional development, recognition and competitive compensation and benefits that will retain and attract proficient employees.
- 4.2 Enhance Inter-agency Collaboration. Enhance communication, collaboration, and operational efficiencies in programs, services and activities through strategic partnerships.
- 4.3 Optimize Financial Strength. Ensure the financial stability and strength of the District by optimizing all business and financial planning functions in support of operations, programs, services, and sites.
Our Collective Impact

Conservation District staff are involved with numerous national, regional and local agencies and professional organizations to exchange ideas, provide expertise or consult on conservation, public administration and policy topics.

The Conservation District serves as a leader in collaborative conservation and public engagement efforts underway in our region from ecological restoration efforts, rare plant discoveries, scientific research, experiential educational programs, innovative management strategies, and wildlife reintroduction projects. Highlights include the development of a regional Biodiversity Recovery Plan, McHenry County Natural Areas Inventory and Chicago Wilderness Excellence in Ecological Restoration Site Accreditation Program.

These strategic affiliations help foster positive relationships, keep team members current on trends, environmental research, and best practices in the field and elevate awareness of the District’s leadership role in shaping large landscape conservation, protecting public open space, and connecting people with the natural world.

In 2016, the Conservation District launched the 1st McHenry County Conservation Congress that called together an assemblage of thoughtful community leaders and influencers to offer insight, opinion and solutions to critical issues of importance to conservation. Delegates reconvened again in 2018 to propose and advocate for actions that can be taken by the McHenry County Conservation District to protect natural resources and provide compatible education and recreational opportunities on public lands in McHenry County.
Sustaining the Dream

The Conservation District focuses its energies and human and financial resources in those areas where it can achieve the most impact, results and value for McHenry County. Key strategic initiatives are in the areas of land preservation, environmental education, outdoor recreation and organizational excellence.

Recent efforts focused on strategic land preservation partnerships, creative funding strategies and reaching an increased audience base through new programs and recreational amenities. Staff expanded self-guided learning opportunities to include more exhibits and interactive/interpretive trails; expanded wellness based programs that connect children and adults with the natural world; and additional innovative green solutions, technologies, and best practices were implemented. In addition, we have reached out to diverse human populations, enhanced ADA accessibility, opened new sites and trails.

Residents of McHenry County are fortunate to be able to travel throughout the county and still see vast landscapes of protected open space. The Conservation District takes pride in its mission, but none of its past accomplishments and successes could have been possible without the support from county residents and stakeholders. Looking ahead, the District will continue to provide a myriad of programs and activities that will protect our natural areas and offer opportunities to gain a greater appreciation for the great outdoors.