History of the area:

Preservation

Glacial Park — At 3,432 acres in size, Glacial Park features a diverse array of prairie, wetlands, savannas and delta kames. With the gradual addition of parcels over the years, land restoration has been vital to making Glacial Park a cohesive natural community.

District staff and volunteers have restored hundreds of acres of native communities by removing invasive plant species, conducting prescription burns, and re-creating wetlands. In 2000, 3.5 miles of Nippersink Creek was remediated to restore its natural path, preventing erosion, and improving the wetland habitat. In 2005, the Army Corps of Engineers began a 5-year restoration of another 3.5 miles of stream corridor.

The effects of land restoration on the wildlife and plant communities are evident at Glacial Park. Four hundred acres of state-designated nature preserve exist within its central core, providing habitat for over 41 species of state-endangered and threatened species. Species such as Blanding’s turtle, Blacillaria puncta, can also be found. A wetland restoration project at the site has provided habitat for over 41 species of state-endangered and threatened species. Species such as Blanding’s turtle, Blacillaria puncta, can also be found.

Natural communities at the site include savannas, prairies, wetlands, and forests. Savannas provide a beautiful backdrop of oaks and hickory trees interlaced with seasonal wildflowers like shooting stars, columbine, m Question 1: What is the main focus of the text regarding the history and preservation of Glacial Park? The main focus of the text is the history and preservation of Glacial Park, highlighting its natural communities, land restoration projects, and the variety of wildlife and plant species found there. It emphasizes the importance of preserving this natural area and the efforts made to restore its ecosystems over the years.

Education

Facilities

Glacial Park

Wiedrich Barn — Peter Wiedrich purchased roughly 560 acres from Samuel Walker in 1875 in what is now known as Glacial Park. He was the father of seven children and grandfather to the Wiedrich sisters Ethel, Laura, and Marian. Peter’s son, Frank, built the barn in 1902. He and his wife gathered the stones for the foundation from the fields and bought the lumber from a friend in McHenry. Electricity wasn’t installed on the farm until 1953. Each day the family would hand-milk up to 25 cows in the barn. They planted acres of oats, corn, hay, and wheat. The farm was also home to 15 heifers, four horses, hogs, chickens, guinea fowl, geese, and turkeys. In 1975, the Wiedrich sisters sold the 120 acres that remained of the family farm to the Conservation District.

Lost Valley Visitor Center — The original building was a home built by Frank Howard, who worked for the Hickory Creek Farms operation in the late 1950’s. From the late 1960’s until 1986 the property was private residence. In 1986, the parcel, along with 1,000 acres north of Glacial Park was purchased by Comdisco Corporation and opened as Tamarack Hunt Club and Lodge. During this period, the grounds and structures were renovated and expanded by Comdisco. They operated it as a company retreat center, which included 20 bedrooms, a kitchen, dining area, meeting rooms, lounge, sauna, and swimming pool. In 2003, the corporation added a large conference room to the east end with additional bedrooms on the second floor. During an economic downturn in the early 2000’s the hunt club and the lodge were sold to a development corporation. In 2006, the Conservation District acquired the former lodge and retreat center from the developer. Its location as a 34-acre inholding within Glacial Park, as well as the interconnected hydrologic systems and oak savannas, made it a long sought after acquisition.
Recreation

Canoing/Kayaking  Spend a day paddling the clear, tranquil waters of Nippersink Creek, a high-quality stream characterized by the numerous species of plant, fish, frogs and other aquatic creatures that live within its waters. Canoers and kayakers can enjoy the meandering water trail and scenic views by putting in at Keystone Road Landing or Pioneer Road Landing.

Fishing  Nippersink Creek is home to bass, bluegill, channel catfish, walleye, carp, bullhead, green sunfish and many others. Anglers can fish at Keystone Road Landing or Pioneer Road Landing.

Trails  Glacial Park has over eight miles of trails designated for hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. A portion of the 26.5-mile trail system is designated for hiking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and bicycle from one end of the county to the other, as Glacial Park has over eight miles of trails.

Education

Self-Guided Family Exploration Packs  Create your own adventure with the Conservation District's exploration packs. These backpacks are filled with materials your family or small group can borrow for use on the trails at Glacial Park. The packs contain seasonal activities in which everyone can participate. Adult supervision is required and a driver's license is a deposit during use.

Interpretive Nature Trail  A two-mile interpretive trail follows the Deepwater Trail loop and the circled numbers on the map correspond to different stops along the way. Guide books, located at the trail head look by the Visitor Center, interpret four different topics: “Plant Communities”, “Wildlife”, “History of the Land”, and “Geology”.

The Research Field Station conducts scientific research, coordinates ecological restoration, issues permits to coordinate research by scientists who work in collaboration with regional institutions and universities, and hosts a summer college intern program in which students get experience in ecological restoration land management, wildlife surveys, plant surveys, and research. The Weekend of Restoration program is also included in this field trip.

Research

Green Technologies  Another significant feature of the Lost Valley Visitor Center is its green technologies. When renovating the building, the District did its best to reduce the use of traditional energy sources, to preserve and protect the area’s clean water supply, and to reduce the use of the earth’s resources. From energy efficient lighting and geothermal heating and cooling to daylit harvesting and the installation of rain gardens, the District took every measure to achieve a deposit during use.

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Research Library  The focus of the collections is on the geology, soils, flora, and fauna of the area, as well as the history, practice, and science of ecological restoration. The collections include historical maps, a database of ecological surveys conducted in McHenry County, periodicals, books, and soil and wetland maps. The intended audience includes college students and land-management professionals. Scanning of documents is permissible; however, there is no scanner or copier available for visitor use. Access is by appointment only with use of materials on-site, contact Tom Simpson (815) 678-4532, ext. 8218.

The Lost Valley Visitor Center  To enhance the existing natural attractions at Glacial Park, the Conservation District opened the doors to the Lost Valley Visitor Center in 2010 to immerse guests in an even greater experience while on site. Nestled in the geographic center of the park, the visitor center is the gateway to a day’s adventure where guests can connect, learn, and discover the importance of preserving nature.

The Lost Valley Visitor Center includes classrooms for environmental education programs and workshops, a large conference room, exhibit area, and library with wireless internet access. The visitor center also hosts field trips for local school children, summer day camps, and weekend workshops for adults on a variety of environmentally-significant topics. A myriad of hikes and other public programs can be found within the District’s quarterly magazine, Landscapes and on the website.

The Weekend of Restoration program is also included in this field trip.

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Kames are large hills made primarily of gravel deposited by the glaciers over 10,000 years ago.

Bogs are wetland areas whose predominant vegetation is sphagnum moss. Known for their highly acidic soils, low oxygen levels and poor drainage, bogs are spongy, floating mats of vegetation.

A Kettle Marsh is a round depression formed on the landscape when chunks of ice broke away from a retreating glacier. A low-lying wetland was created where the roots of cattails and bulrushes grow in the muck and their stems rise four feet high.

Leatherleaf plant

Nippersink Canoe Trail

Keystone Road Landing/Nppersink Canoe Base/Pioneer Road Landing — These sites provide put-in/take-out points for canoes or kayaks coming down Nippersink Creek or continuing on to the Fox River or the Chain of Lakes. Paddlers can meander from two to six hours along the creek.

Lyle C. Thomas Memorial Park & Landing, Spring Grove (13 acres) Owned by the Village of Spring Grove, this site is managed by the Conservation District and serves as an excellent put-in/take-out location for trips along Nippersink Creek.