Financial Highlights 2018–2019

Our Strengths: The 5Rs of Sustainability —
McHenry County Conservation District prides itself in being both an innovator and early adopter in the region for both conservation and fiscal stewardship. We anticipate needs, take well-calculated risks and create synergistic relationships for local and regional conservation impact. We are responsive, responsible, resilient, resourceful and respected in all that we do.

Responsive
The Conservation District continues a long history of being responsive to the needs of our residents by holding ourselves fiscally accountable.

This has been accomplished through:

- **Property Tax Relief** General fund tax levies were frozen in four of the last seven years. From 2012 to 2018 the District levied $2.8 million dollars less in property taxes than what would have been statutorily available under PTELL, which is equivalent to 30% of the FY 2020 General Fund Budget.

- **Property Tax Reduction** Total property taxes levied by the District were reduced for four consecutive years from 2014 to 2017.

- **Property Tax Abatement** The 2017 tax levy increase as allowed under PTELL was permanently abated.

Sound Fiscal Management  In 2014, the Conservation District refinanced General Obligation Bonds for a $14 million-dollar savings over the life of the bonds—a direct savings to the tax payers.

High Value Services at Low Costs
For every dollar a resident pays in property taxes, approximately two cents go to fund the McHenry County Conservation District.

Responsible
The Conservation District fulfills a statutory mandate to steward public lands which represent McHenry County's natural and cultural heritage - the inheritance for current and future generations.

We can meet this obligation in the most responsible manner by:

- **Restoring Ecological Health** Restoring our natural areas, farmland, wetlands and waterways to ensure their future viability.

Preserving Iconic Places  We are the generation that has the opportunity and responsibility to preserve those places that clean our air and water, protect wildlife habitat, and add to our county’s natural beauty before they disappear forever.

Safeguarding Our Health  Nature is a source of food, potential medicines, and critical lands for outdoor recreation, relaxation and reflection. These same natural resources provide an opportunity to address human health concerns like obesity, mental illness, depression and cardiovascular disease. If we protect our land, we safeguard our health.

Creating Memorable Experiences
Conservation District sites provide local and accessible places for families, friends

Statement of Revenues & Expenditures
All Funds—Summarized, Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 2019*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>FY 18/19 Revenues</th>
<th>FY 18/19 Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenues:</strong> Tax Revenue</td>
<td>19,636,301</td>
<td><strong>Total Expenditures</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants</td>
<td>582,495</td>
<td><strong>Debt Service</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm &amp; Property Leases</td>
<td>1,183,847</td>
<td><strong>Operations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment Income</td>
<td>416,530</td>
<td><strong>Capital Outlays:</strong> Land Acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs &amp; Services</td>
<td>161,801</td>
<td>Sites &amp; Trails</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Revenues</td>
<td>221,554</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenues</strong></td>
<td>$22,202,528</td>
<td><strong>Total Other Sources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenditures:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Debt Service</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debt Service</td>
<td>11,947,000</td>
<td><strong>Operations</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operations</td>
<td>8,903,698</td>
<td><strong>Capital Outlays</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Outlays: Land Acquisition</td>
<td>222,305</td>
<td><strong>Programs &amp; Services</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sites &amp; Trails</td>
<td>1,103,157</td>
<td>Other Revenues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>171,540</td>
<td><strong>Investment Income</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditures</strong></td>
<td>$22,347,700</td>
<td><strong>Grants</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Financing Sources:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Revenue</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers in</td>
<td>432,523</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfers (out)</td>
<td>(432,523)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale of Capital Assets</td>
<td>19,934</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Other Sources</strong></td>
<td>$19,934</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net Change in Fund Balances</strong></td>
<td>$(125,238)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and neighbors to share and celebrate a love of the outdoors. Hiking, fishing, hunting, boating and camping traditions are passed from one generation to the next.

**Resilient**

Natural areas under protection by the Conservation District help to ensure that the County is prepared for natural and man-made disasters such as floods, drought, groundwater contamination, and pollution via the protection of our land, air and water.

**Resiliency is possible through:**

**Groundwater Protection** Natural areas, wetlands, and grasslands help filter pollutants from and help the quality of our drinking water. McHenry County is dependent upon this valuable resources and access to clean drinking water will become increasingly important as we move into the future.

**Clean Rivers & Streams** Grasslands and wetlands act as natural surface water filters preventing pollutants, pesticides and fertilizers [off lawns and farmlands] from running directly into local waterways.

**Healthy Productive Pollinators** Protecting and restoring natural areas is critical to the survival of insect pollinators which help to ensure productive crops vital for our food supply as well as healthy ecological systems throughout the county.

**Resourceful**

The Conservation District strives to produce the most cost effective and efficient budget possible while providing residents with the highest quality sites, services and experiences. The District actively pursues intergovernmental collaboration opportunities and innovative partnerships to maximize its effectiveness and plays a vital role in assisting the County to implement its long-range plans, including its GIV, Transportation Plan, Emergency Management Plan, Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan and Mobilizing for Action through Planning & Partnerships (MAPP).

**This strategy of resourcefulness allows the District to:**

**Promote a Shared Strategy for Conservation** Conservation groups throughout the county are working together to protect our land, air and water, with the Conservation District serving as the primary agency, to ensure large, connected natural areas are protected.

**Collaborate to Protect Additional Acres**

To remain a healthy, breathtaking and economically viable place to live and work in the decades to come, additional lands need to be protected in McHenry County that link existing preserves, safeguard agricultural production, protect water supplies and remain resilient in the face of growing climate variability. The District continues to collaborate with other agencies to meet this shared vision.

**Provide Exceptional Stewardship**

With a highly effective, exceptionally talented and dedicated staff, the Conservation District stewards more than 25,570+ acres, 34 public sites, 836,120 linear feet of trails and welcomes nearly 1 million visitors each year. These responsibilities are augmented by an equally committed and passionate volunteer workforce that contributes endless hours to the District’s overall mission.

**Respected**

The natural areas preserved and protected by the McHenry County Conservation District bring local, regional and national recognition to McHenry County, attract businesses and consumer spending, and are part of the way of life for people who choose McHenry County for its natural setting and outdoor recreational pursuits. We have earned the respect of McHenry County residents and partners through basing our land stewardship decisions on good science and financial decisions on sound fiscal stewardship.

**The District is recognized for its:**

**Environmental Stewardship and Scientific Expertise** From ecological restoration, rare plant discoveries, scientific research, innovative management strategies, wildlife reintroduction and experiential educational programs, the Conservation District is recognized locally, regionally and nationally as a leader in collaborative conservation and public engagement efforts underway in our region.

**National Leadership and Regional Collaboration** The District played a key leadership role in establishment of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge. The District is also a founding and active member of Chicago Wilderness, a regional alliance to preserve, improve and expand nature and quality of life in Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin and Michigan. The alliance connects leaders in conservation, health, business, sciences and beyond to tackle challenging issues to ensure a resilient region.

**Community and Business Partnerships**

By the very nature of providing recreational spaces for hiking, biking, paddling, camping, fishing, hunting and enjoying wildlife, the Conservation District is a big part of McHenry County’s local economy; whether it be a bike ride along the Prairie Trail or a paddle down Nippersink Creek, visitors often include a stop for lunch or refreshing drink at a local establishment. In addition, the District has many partnerships with local communities and businesses.

**Conservation Ethic Standards & Principle** The District champions a conservation ethic that inspires respect for the land; promotes sound environmental practices; provides quality experiences that promote green, healthy and balanced lifestyles; and moves McHenry County toward an ever more environmentally sound future.

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**Award Recognition**

Under the leadership of Director of Finance & Administration Andy Dylak, Accounting Supervisor Jean Gerstbrein and Accounting Assistant Linda Bryant, the Conservation District receives National Award for Financial Excellence in Financial Reporting for ninth consecutive year from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada. This Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of government accounting and financial reporting and recognizes agencies that go beyond the minimum requirements to prepare comprehensive annual financial reports that evidence the spirit of transparency and full disclosure. The Government Finance Officers Association is a nonprofit professional association serving approximately 17,500 government finance professionals.
Year in Review

Landscapes | Fall 2019

Scientific Studies & Research

- The District recorded a total of 757 individual Blanding’s turtle occurrences since 1994 and PIT-tagged a total of 656 individual turtles; 415 released from the ongoing Head Start program.
- Two Osprey platforms were installed in Glacial Park near Lost Valley March and Nippersink Creek with the assistance of ComED.
- Dr. Thomas Simpson published Oak Reproduction in Midwestern Savannas & Woods which outlined the results of several years of research into the problems of oak regeneration and acorn dispersal.
- A Freshwater Mussels Propagation Project was conducted with DuPage County Forest Preserve District involved searching Nippersink Creek for gravid freshwater mussels, transporting them to the Urban Stream Community Research Center where larvae were released in a controlled environment, cared for overwinter, and released back into Nippersink Creek to supplement existing populations.
- A water control structure was replaced at Sticky Run Conservation Area, a key to providing marsh habitat for native wildlife; funds provided by McHenry County Conservation Foundation.
- Two new survey techniques were introduced; the first, a Song Meter SM4, is a dual channel acoustic recorder capable of capturing a large amount of data in the field. The second technique was the development of a McHenry County Singing Insects Sonogram Guide to aid volunteers and citizen scientists in identifying these species in the field.

New Unusual Sightings & Rare Plant Monitoring:

- The federally endangered Rusty patched bumble bee was observed in Glacial Park. The protection and survival of this rare and important pollinator is critical to help sustain food sources and native plant species.
- Monitoring and hand pollination was completed on five subpopulations of the Eastern prairie fringed orchid at four District sites. Several non-pollinated flowers were plump, indicating a naturally occurring population of the Hermit sphinx moth in the area; the only confirmed pollinator of the species in Illinois.
- Glacial Park’s Bat Barn that housed 1,229 bats in 2014 saw a 96.2% decline by 2018 when just 47 were counted - most likely due to high mortality rates from White-nose Syndrome during winter months.

Hunting & Fishing:

The District’s recreational hunting program for white-tailed deer and waterfowl opportunities permitted 270 hunters on 21 sites, harvesting 144 deer. The District also maintains fishing opportunities; these include places to accommodate riparian, lake and pond fishing. Trout are stocked annually at two sites and a pond fish ecosystem is maintained at several ponds. The Lee Wulff Chapter of Trout Unlimited continued work to restore the scenic ponds at Fox Bluff Conservation Area and reintroduce brook trout.

Outdoor Recreation Amenities Completed

- Brookdale Equestrian Parking Lot
- Ridgefield Trace

Social Media Engagement & Outreach

Social Media efforts included developing content and strategies to increase followers and engagement, build traffic to our sites, and augment registrations and reservations.

Facebook—Reach: 253,231; Likes: 5,341
Audience Engagements: 113,483
Video Views: 84,223

Instagram—Followers: 1,063
Audience Engagements: 12,092

Twitter—Followers: 1,932;
Audience Engagements: 1,440

Snapchat Filters—
Nippersink: 856 uses /22k views;
Glacial Park: 579 uses /25.3k views
Enhanced and expanded Google listings.

TOTAL SITE USE VISITORS ...over one million!

1,040,963

Visitor Services  =  Total Guests Served

113 Wildlife Programs  =  3,365
112 Picnic Shelters Reserved  =  5,554
314 Education Programs & Events  =  6,162
690 Camp Sites Reserved  =  7,702
205 School Programs  =  9,008
173 Special Use Permits Issued  =  9,437

Volunteers Donated 9,444 hours — representing a value of $240,161
(based on the national average of $25.43 per volunteer hour.)

Awards & Recognition

- Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting—9th Consecutive Year
- Intergovernmental Collaboration Award:
  Ridgefield Trace—IAPD Best of the Best
- Tamarack Award—Friends of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge
- Community Partnership Award—Northern Illinois Special Recreation Association
- Northwest Herald Reader’s Choice Awards—Voted One of the Top Small Employers Under 100 to Work for in McHenry County; AND One of the Top Educational Institutions to work for in McHenry County
- Executive Director Elizabeth Kessler named Chair of the Chicago Wilderness Alliance
- Sergeant Ryan Stewart received Rising Shield Award from the Illinois Chief of Police Association
Grants & Contributors
IL Clean Energy Community Foundation Parcel Purchase ........ $169,046
IDOT Ridgefield Trace Bike Path/Oak Street Crossing ............... $59,288
IL Clean Energy Community Foundation Parcel Purchase ........ $55,092
USFWS YCC Grant ............................................. $19,000
Friends of Hackmatack Part of ICECF Grant ..................... $10,995
Urban & Community Forestry via Morton Arboretum ............ $5,000
IDNR Recreational Trails Program Equestrian Parking Lot .......... $2,851
IDNR Green Snake Grant ....................................... $1,546
NAI Education Play Station ..................................... $500

Donations:
General Donations Total ........................................ $9,484
MCCF Brush Mulcher ............................................ $26,831
MCCF Brookdale Multi Use Trail ................................ $23,235
MCCF Stickney Run Project .................................... $21,555
MCCF Close the Gap Ridgefield Trace ............................ $21,005
MCCF Funded by Tap into Your Wild Side—Fel-Pro RRR Disc Golf Course $8,281
Big Woods Reforestation Program ................................ $3,390
MCCF Funded by Tap into Your Wild Side—Boom Wick Applicator .... $2,445
MCCF Deer Fencing ............................................... $1,034
Miscellaneous ................................................................ $846
Wildlife Resource Center .......................................... $360

BIG WOODS Donations
Bellairs/Berkshire Hathaway via Randi & Bob Rewoldt
Bellairs/Berkshire Hathaway via John Oldenburg
Ernest Ghinna
Lara Dunbar
Brandie Dunn
Adam Gardner
Bryce Hopf
Stephen & June Keibler
David Miller
Robert & Mary Lou Nunanaker
Stephanie Olson
Christina Pershey
Nick Porcaro
John Raithel
Andrew Reback
Heidi Rechsteiner
Jack & Janet Wheeler
Jeffrey & Brianna Young

To Honor:
In honor of Kay & Jack Grossman
In honor of Susan Guenzel
The wedding of Bill & Karen Schmied

In Memory of Eva Louise Armes:
The Britt Family
Karen Gais
Francis Gotanco
Valerie Hendrickson
Leonard and Shelley Jones
Marcia & Brian McCloud

In Memory of Edward Gorka
Karlith Gorka

In Memory of Jeff Meyer:
AVOCA School District 37
Beth Dever
Denise Nash
John & Marko Sears
Michael O’Riley
Timothy & Nora Zeller

In Memory of Patricia McGuinness:
Mary & Paul Kozub

In Memory of Russ Rogers:
Russ Rogers Memorial Donations
Eliet & Brenda Berg
Craig Butler
Cross Roads Community Church
Debra Franzone
Forrest Hastings
Mary Jo Lucas Healy
Sarah Micheli
Cindy Rendl
Merle Smith

In Memory of Bob Tirk:
Travers & Larraine Smith

In Memory of Gordan Van Bergen:
Patricia Von Bergen

2018–2019 Special Event Sponsors
Festival of the Sugar Maples
AmeriGas Propane Exchange

2018 Seed Collection Results
9 Volunteers • 145 Native Species Collected
290 lbs of Seed Collected • 807 Collective hours
$68,218 Value and Savings to the Conservation District!

2nd Annual
Run Wild...
Race for Open Space 5K

2nd Annual
The Great Outdoors Beer Trail

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