



Pictured far left: Secretary Ken Salazar and McHenry County Conservation District Executive Director Elizabeth Kessler; Left: President Obama signs Presidential Memorandum for a report on America's Great Outdoors; Bottom: White House American Great Outdoors break out session.



America's Great Outdoors Initiative

On April 16, President Obama officially launched the America's Great Outdoors Initiative and signed a Presidential Memorandum seeking a report on America's Great Outdoors by November 15th. In his remarks, the president applauded the conservation work of America's 1,600 land trusts. The President called out the work of land trusts and affirming the importance of private lands in conserving our natural heritage.

Elizabeth Kessler, Executive Director of McHenry County Conservation District and President of the National Recreation and Park Association was among the invited guests of community leaders, State and local government leaders, conservationists, and business representatives who addressed the challenges, opportunities and innovations surrounding modern-day land conservation and the importance of reconnecting Americans and American families to the outdoors.

"Conservation, land protection and enjoying the outdoors plays a major role in the quality of life in McHenry County and it is an integral part of our local communities across the country," said Kessler. "Being a part of these discussions and exchange of ideas that could shape our future and affect our valuable natural resources was a great opportunity."

Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality, Ken Salazar, Secretary of the Interior, and Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture led discussions that focused on conservation opportunities in communities, the challenges facing them, and the innovative solutions they are crafting from the bottom up. The conference was an opportunity for participants to engage with each other, learn from past and ongoing efforts, communicate how the Federal Government can support these efforts, and identify new opportunities to work together to modernize our approach to conservation, and reinvigorate the national conversation about our outdoors. *(Continued on page 3.)*

Nature Preserve Status Sought for 95 acres

McHenry County Conservation District Board of Trustees and staff identified two areas within its existing sites where the diversity and health of the native plants that thrive there may qualify the areas to be dedicated as Illinois State Nature Preserves.

Conservation District staff is moving ahead in seeking preliminary approval from the Illinois State Nature Preserve Commission for dedication of 37.5 acres at Boger Bog Conservation Area in Bull Valley and 58 acres at Fel-Pro RRR in Cary.

Both sites are specifically identified on the Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI), the McHenry County Natural Areas Inventory (McNAI) and on the Advanced Identification of Wetland Resources (ADID).

If approved, these high-quality natural areas will be protected to the full extent available under the statutes of the State of Illinois. Confirmation of approval of preliminary dedication will be later this year.

Have You Seen this Board Member?

This year, the Conservation District's Board of Trustees is focusing on municipal outreach. Each board member is visiting a few village board meetings to introduce themselves, provide updates on local conservation projects and activities, and open up lines of communication. If you haven't had a visit yet and would like one, please call Executive Director Elizabeth Kessler at (815) 338-6223.



Back Row: Tom O'Donnell, Matthew Ewertowski, Kevin Ivers, David LaGue; Front Row: Nancy Williamson, Martha Carver and Bonnie Leahy.

McHenry County Conservation District

Our Mission

The 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.

Our Vision

By the year 2020, McHenry County Conservation District will be a premiere public agency in the country for preserving, protecting and managing open space. Residents will have developed a personal responsibility for their local environment, gained a greater appreciation for their natural world and invested into ensuring its future protection. Achieving this vision will:

- Inspire respect for the land;
- Promote sound environmental practices;
- Promote the long-term viability of the county's biodiversity;
- Provide opportunities for responsible use of the land in concert with natural resources;
- Promote environmental stewardship;
- Provide quality experiences that promote green, healthy and balanced lifestyles;
- Connect children to nature and;
- Foster public and private partnerships.

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McHenry County
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



On the

Drawing Board...

An update on recreational amenities throughout the District

Over the next 12 months, 18 District sites are earmarked for trail enhancements, ADA improvements, and/or public access. Of these, eight are brand new sites that will provide the public with access to new trails and new recreational amenities. **Check the website under What's New > Planning & Development for the most recent updates, master plans and scheduled openings.**

Trail Enhancements & ADA Improvements:

Nippersink Canoebase
Stone Mill Trail Connection, Harvard
Ridgefield Trace Phase II, Crystal Lake
Rush Creek, Harvard
The Hollows, Cary
Glacial Park, Ringwood
Coral Woods, Marengo
Harrison Benwell, Wonder Lake
Silver Creek, Crystal Lake
Pleasant Valley, Woodstock
Dufield Pond, north side, Woodstock

Brand New Conservation Areas:

Boone Creek, Bull Valley
Fel-Pro RRR Detrana Fen, Cary
Dufield Pond, south side, Woodstock
High Point, Alden
H.U.M. Trail Head
LITH Fen, Lake in the Hills
Winding Creek, Alden
Kishwaukee Headwaters, Woodstock

Gaining Ground: Land Acquisitions

The District protects over 23,742 acres

In April of 2007, the District successfully passed a \$73 million General Obligation Bond referendum of which \$62.5 million was earmarked toward land acquisition. To date, the District expended \$49.1 million to acquire an additional 793 acres of open space. The balance is \$13.4 million for land acquisitions, plus \$5.7 million of investment earnings.

Recent Highlights: The District recently purchased three smaller parcels along Nippersink Creek adjacent the existing 521 acre Nippersink Canoe Base Conservation Area in Burton Township. The three parcels are 3.3 acres, 5.8 acres and 6.5 acres which will assist in the management of the site.

In February, 34.5 acres was purchased in Hebron Township near the Winding Creek Conservation Area located south of Route 173, west of Johnson Road.

In March, the District closed on 83 acres in Marengo Township south of River Road, west of Route 23 and will be part of the existing 2,720 acre Kishwaukee Corridor Conservation Area.

District Receives Over \$2 million in Grants

The Conservation District continually looks for ways to help offset project and development costs. During fiscal year 2010 the District received grants assistance to fund significant land acquisition, trail development and restoration projects totaling \$2.1 million.

Grant Name	Agency	Amount
Geothermal HVAC installation at Lost Valley Visitor Center	Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation	\$74,993
Groomer Costs and Trail Signs	IDNR – Local Snowmobile Grant Program	\$10,000
Pleasant Valley Northwest Addition	IDNR – Open Space Lands Acquisition & Development Grant Program	\$750,000
Monteloma Springs Wetland Restoration	The Conservation Fund – Northeastern Illinois Wetlands Conservation Account	\$52,000
Small Waters Wetland Restoration	The Conservation Fund – Northeastern Illinois Wetlands Conservation Account	\$42,000
Ridgefield Trace (Oak St. to Veteran Acres)	Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning – Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality Improvement Funds	\$440,960
Lake in the Hills Fen Northwest	IDNR – Open Space Lands Acquisition & Development Grant Program	\$750,000



District Supports Hackmatack: Proposed Wildlife Refuge

In April, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced their decision to proceed with a study to determine the feasibility of establishing Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge in the bi-state region of southeastern

Wisconsin and northeastern Illinois. Long known as an ecological hotspot, the region is home to many rare bird, fish, freshwater mussel and plant species, as well as some of the world's most globally imperiled natural communities, including tall grass prairie and oak savanna.

Earlier this year the Conservation District joined 36 other organizations who endorse the proposal. The proposed Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge lies within a resource protection area that includes nearly 8,000 acres of public land owned by either the McHenry County Conservation District or the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and private lands protected in Illinois by The Land Conservancy of McHenry County.



Pictured: Steve Byers (IL Nature Preserves Commission), Evan Hirsch (National Assoc. of Wildlife Refuges), Mark Chase (US Fish & Wildlife), Elizabeth Kessler (Conservation District), Jim Kurth (US Fish & Wildlife), Greg Siekaniec (US Fish & Wildlife).

The study, which could take up to two years, will involve an extensive review of the available biological data for the area as well as public meetings with local citizens, business interests and outdoor recreational user groups such as hunters, fisherman, photographers, boaters and hikers who are familiar with the region.

Studies of this type typically involve large geographic areas that include the region's ecological systems, wildlife resources, cultural and economic context. If the results of the study highlight resources that are significant from a national perspective, the USFWS will identify areas where such resources are concentrated as potential sites for a national wildlife refuge.

This refuge design allows for an "urban" style refuges where people can engage in wildlife-related recreation and conservation education and involves partnerships that link existing public open space to refuge lands obtained through voluntary private lands conservation easements and strategic purchases from willing sellers to create a network of landscape conservation cooperatives.

To learn more about the proposed Hackmatack Wildlife Refuge

America's Great Outdoors Initiative (cont.)

Over the course of the next seven months land management agencies need to make the case that new tax incentives and funding for land trusts are critical elements of any federal strategy for landscape-scale conservation.

There are several ways you and your supporters can get involved:

Submit ideas and vote for ideas that support your work.

Share stories, photos and videos of conservation work.

Submit comments by e-mail to ago@ios.doi.gov

Get your members to attend a regional listening session. Tell them your organization's story and show how your roots in the community can help the federal government leverage its resources to achieve more than it could on its own.

Visit the official America's Great Outdoors website:
doi.gov/americasgreatoutdoors/



White House Conference AGO – Pictured above, Front Row: Chicago Park District's Tim Mitchell; New York City - Adrienne Benepe, and IDNR Marc Miller.

Second Row: City of Los Angeles Jon Kirk Mukri; McHenry County Conservation District Executive Director Elizabeth Kessler; NRPA CEO Barbara Tulipane; NRPA Public Policy Director Rich Dolesh.

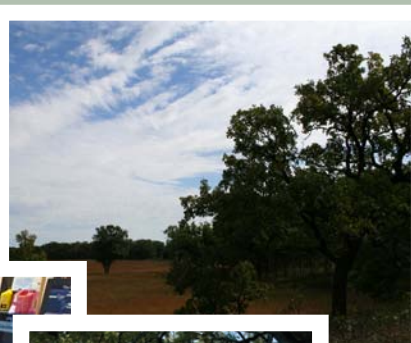
Municipal Resources

- **Natural Areas Impact Evaluation Policy** The District provides outreach to municipalities by completing a natural areas impact evaluation for sensitive areas slated for development. The District's role is to offer information on best conservation practices in an effort to enhance and protect the unique resources in the area.
- The District can also provide municipalities with copies of **McHenry County Natural Areas Inventory** which identifies where threatened and endangered species reside in the county.
- Check out the District's **Natural Areas Protection Plan** specifically describes the best of the last remaining natural areas, the existing threats to these areas, and a resource list of local protection agencies and organizations.
- Want to find out what's planned for a conservation site near you? Check out the online publication of the District's **Comprehensive Site Development and Public Access Plan**.

Celebrate the Grand Opening of McHenry County Conservation District's Lost Valley Visitor Center Glacial Park, Ringwood Saturday, August 14th 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Exhibits • Tours • Hikes • Informational Booths • and More!

Situated on the glacial moraine overlooking the Nippersink Creek Valley and the Lost Valley Marsh, the Lost Valley Visitor Center will serve as the gateway for the start of a day's adventure.



Learn about the natural history of the area and the importance of preserving our native habitats in the exhibit hall, while enjoying the grand vista of Glacial Park's 3,300 acres of prairie, wetlands and savanna.

Tour the conference center, research library, map room and multipurpose classrooms that will house environmental education opportunities for young and old alike.



Witness the many energy efficient and renewable technologies that are showcased in the building and on the landscape including rain gardens, daylight harvesting, permeable pavers and geothermal systems.



Explore the many trails, climb to the top of the kames, picnic under majestic oaks, sign up for a class, bike the regional trail, assist with a restoration project, register to become a volunteer, and spy the many wonders of nature... all in one location.

Adventures Await.

MCCD@MCCDistrict.org • 815.338.6223



McHenry County Conservation District manages over 23,700 acres with 28 sites and trails that are open to the public. These sites have a long standing history of providing safe and relaxing places for residents to enjoy outdoor activities. This spring the District's Police Department kicked off the implementation of a new safety watch program within all District sites. S.W.E.E.P. will ensure that the tradition of safety continues.

For the past ten years, the District has utilized the eyes and ears of Prairie Trail Safety Watch volunteers to monitor activity along the 26-mile Prairie Trail. In this case, the volunteers assist trail users with information, bike repair, first aid and other safety issues. But, they also relay suspicious behavior or property damage to Conservation District police officers.

"The District is now expanding this concept that has been successful along the Prairie Trail to be District wide. S.W.E.E.P., however, will not use a formalized volunteer group. Instead, the program is all inclusive and will rely on the assistance of everyone," said Police Chief Jeff Diedrick.

S.W.E.E.P. signs have been posted at several District sites, which encourage site users to call in any suspicious or unusual behavior.

"Similar to a neighborhood watch program, the District is seeking the eyes and ears of not only adjacent neighbors and residents, but also daily and regular site users to deter any undesirable behavior in our sites like graffiti or juvenile vandalism. This type of cooperation and community involvement ensures that all visitors to Conservation District sites have a safe and enjoyable experience," stated Officer Ben Wolfe.



What is S.W.E.E.P.?

The Safety Watch Education and Environmental Program is a safety watch program designed to prevent crime, alleviate suspicious activity, deter vandalism and promote public awareness for conservation and recreation in District sites.

The program encourages neighbors and regular site users to keep watch while at a conservation site and call in any unusual or suspicious behavior.

How does it Work?

Report any unusual or suspicious behavior. Do not hesitate to call the Conservation District Police Department.

Report Suspicious Activity: **815-338-6223**
If no answer Call: **815-338-2144**

Field Notes Recent Discoveries



Rare Gold-eye Lichen Discovered

In late February, contract lichenologist, Rich Hyerczyk discovered a rare lichen that has never been seen in McHenry County before. It is *Teloschistes chrysophthalmus*, the gold-eye lichen. It is a deep orange, shrubby shaped lichen and is found on the branches of trees and shrubs.

This lichen was known from Cook and Will Counties in 1896 by Calkins. It hadn't been found again until two years ago in Will County by our contract lichenologist, Rich Hyerczyk. More recently, it has been discovered in DuPage County by Wayne Lampa and Scott Kobal.

Before the District's Natural Resource Management Department started surveying District sites for lichens, 59 species were known to McHenry County. To date, there are 105 known species! It just goes to show that rare discoveries may still be found on District sites; we just have to look at the small and unnoticeable.



Rare Lead Plant Moth at Glacial Park

Thanks to the efforts of Conservation District Plant Ecologist Laurie Boldt and Cathy Pollack of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a rare prairie moth has been discovered at Glacial Park. The species the leadplant flower moth feeds on the native prairie legume lad plant and is considered extremely rare in Illinois.