

Referendum Update



Land Acquisition, Wildlife Habitat Preservation and Recreational Improvements made possible by the voters of McHenry County

2007 Bond Referendum At-A-Glance

- Total # of acres the District protects to date = 24,846 acres
- Total # of acres protected to date with the 2007 bond funds = 3,882.38 acres
- Of the \$62.5 million set aside for land acquisition \$62.5 million has been expended.
- \$3.6 million in interest remains unspent and is dedicated toward land acquisition.
- 200–600 additional acres may be acquired with bond funds.
- Of the \$2 million set aside for Wildlife Habitat preservation \$1.29 million has been expended.
- Of the \$8.5 million set aside for Recreational Improvements \$3.2 million has been expended.

Grand Openings for 2011

Dedication

Lake in the Hills Fen Conservation Area
1500 Jefferson St., Lake in the Hills
Saturday, April 16, 10–11:30 a.m.

Dedication & Woodland Hike

High Point Conservation Area
10250 Reese Road, Harvard
Saturday, May 7, 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Winding Creek Conservation Area

8415 Johnson Rd., Hebron
Saturday, June 4, 10 a.m.–Noon

Ridgefield Trace Phase II — Fall 2011

2 mile bike trail extension from Oak St. to Veteran Acres, Crystal Lake

When McHenry County Conservation District successfully passed, by voter approval, a \$73 million Bond Referendum in 2007, the goals were three-fold. The first was to purchase open space throughout the county and protect natural areas, significant wetlands, endangered and threatened species habitats and link existing sites. The second was to preserve and restore essential habitat for native plants and animals. The third goal was to make recreational improvements by opening up additional sites and trails, providing the public with access to natural areas and opportunities for passive recreation.

Today, the Conservation District protects 24,846 acres of open space throughout the county. Over the past three and half years, the District has acquired 3,882 acres, or 86.3% of the original goal of obtaining 4,500 additional acres. Parcels have been acquired throughout the county ranging in size from a few acres in size to a few hundred acres. The final amount of acres that will be protected once funds run out will depend largely upon on-going land acquisition decisions and strategies that may include land gifts, donations, easements, or grants. In essence, the acquisition of another 200–600 acres should be realized. Of the \$62.5 million allocated for land acquisition, all has been expended; however \$3.6 million in interest remains. (See all sites map on inside back cover.)

Habitat improvements and natural area restoration has occurred on over 7,000 acres since the approval of the 2007 bond referendum. Of the \$2 million designated for wildlife habitat preservation, approximately \$705,113 remains. Prescription burns, seeding, removing invasive plants, clearing brush and restoring hydrology are all components of creating healthy, sustainable ecosystems. The District actively manages 10,351 acres of natural areas. Projects such as restoring the hydrology to a 110-acre wetland complex at Nippersink Canoe Base, or a 116-acre habitat improvement project that restored wetlands,

improved water quality, and enhanced grassland bird breeding habitat are just two examples of restoration projects that affect the land, water and wildlife quality in these areas.

Recreational improvements have been made on numerous sites with the approved bond funds. Of the \$8.5 million earmarked for site improvements, approximately \$5.3 million remains, but has been designated for the completion of specific projects. Thus far the District has opened eight new sites to the public and six more will open in the next 18 months. These sites include: Boger Bog, Bull Valley; North Branch, Richmond; Kishwaukee Corridor County Line Road Access, Marengo; An improved Nippersink Canoe Base, Spring Grove; Kishwaukee Headwaters, Woodstock; and the H.U.M. Trailhead, Marengo. In addition two regional trails, the Stone Mill Trail (Harvard to Chemung) and Phase I of Ridgefield Trace (Woodstock to Crystal Lake) were added.

In 2011 the District will open Lake in the Hills Fen Conservation Area, LITH; High Point, Harvard; Winding Creek, Hebron and Phase II of Ridgefield Trace. In addition improvements are planned for Dufield Pond, Woodstock and Boone Creek, Bull Valley. Site improvements add numerous hiking/nature trails, picnic shelters, bike trails, ADA accessible trails and facilities, fishing access, fire rings, scenic outlooks, fishing piers, restrooms, and parking lots.

Having bond referendum funds available also allowed the District to seek grants that require matching dollars. Since 2007, the District has received an additional \$2.4 million in matching grant dollars for land acquisition. Additionally, another \$631,000 in matching grants were received for site and trail improvements, thus stretching the use of the monies, allowing the District to accomplish more.

A HISTORY OF Protecting Open Space

This year McHenry County Conservation District celebrates 40 years of passion, endurance, and commitment toward protecting our natural resources. Since its formation in 1971, the Conservation District has been a champion for protecting wetlands and watersheds, preserving critical wildlife habitat, and reconnecting remnant ecosystems.

Four decades after its creation, McHenry County Conservation District is building on its legacy of responsible stewardship and advancing environmental quality throughout the county for all residents. As we look to the future, the District will continue to make land preservation a priority, promote long-term viability of the county's biodiversity and responsible use of the land that is in concert with natural resources, and provide quality experiences that promote green, healthy, and balanced lifestyles.

Today the District relies on 76 full-time employees to coordinate the management of over 24,800 acres of protected land; present hundreds of environmental education programs and special events, and maintain 29 sites that contain 110 miles of hiking trails, over 50 miles of bike trails, 18 fishing locations, 20 picnic shelters and eight campgrounds.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- 1971 Voters of McHenry County support a referendum to create a Conservation District
- 1972 Ken Fiske selected as the first Executive Director (Served 1972–1985)
- 1973 First parcel purchased; 50 acres in Beck's Woods, Chemung
- 1973 Harrison Benwell, Wonder Lake is the first site open to the public.
- 1975 Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education project started
- 1976 1st publication of the District's public newsletter, *Landscapes*
- 1976 1st Land & Facility Ranger hired
- 1976 1st Interpretive Naturalist hired
- 1979 1st Festival of the Sugar Maples
- 1986 1st District prescription burn
- 1986 District Police Dept. formed
- 1987 Natural Resource Dept. formed
- 1989 1st Kames Rendezvous—now Trail of History
- 1993 Wild Turkeys are reintroduced
- 1993 Blanding's turtle research project begins
- 1995 Candlelight Ski program started
- 1996 Powers-Walker House restoration begins
- 1999 Dechannelization of Nippersink Creek
- 1999 McHenry County Conservation Foundation is chartered
- 1999 Communications Dept. formed
- 2001 Voters approve \$68.5 million referendum for land acquisition
- 2004 Camp Algonquin is purchased
- 2006 Land acquisition tops 20,000 acres
- 2007 Voters approve \$73 million referendum for land acquisition, wildlife habitat restoration and recreational improvements
- 2007 Comprehensive Site Development & Access Plan created
- 2007 Natural Areas Protection Guide presented to municipalities
- 2008 Preservation of Oak Ecosystem research data released
- 2008 Ecological Restoration Certificate Program created
- 2009 PDRMA (Park District Risk Management Association) accreditation
- 2010 District awarded nearly \$3 million in grants
- 2010 Framework for long range planning

SITES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- 1973 Harrison Benwell
- 1973 Beck's Woods
- 1974 Marengo Ridge
- 1974 Rush Creek
- 1975 Glacial Park
- 1981 Hickory Grove
- 1981 Nippersink Canoe Trail
- 1982 Thomas Woods Campground
- 1986 Piscasaw North
- 1987 The Hollows
- 1987 Prairie Trail South
- 1988 Prairie Trail North
- 1988 Coral Woods
- 1992 Wiedrich Education Center
- 1993 Wildlife Resource Center
- 1999 Entire 26-mile Prairie Trail
- 1999 Prairieview Education Center
- 2000 Stickney Run
- 2000 Exner Marsh
- 2000 Fel-Pro
- 2001 Silver Creek
- 2003 Hebron Trail
- 2003 Research Field Station
- 2004 Dufield Pond
- 2004 Marengo Ridge Campground
- 2004 Fox Bluff
- 2005 Pleasant Valley
- 2005 Elizabeth Lake west side
- 2006 H.U.M. Trail
- 2007 Elizabeth Lake east side
- 2007 County Line Road Access
- 2008 Boger Bog
- 2008 North Branch
- 2009 Stone Mill Trail
- 2009 Ridgefield Trace
- 2010 Nippersink Canoe Base improvements
- 2010 Kishwaukee Headwaters
- 2010 Lost Valley Visitor Center

LAND ACQUISITION

January 1980	=	2,610 acres
January 1990	=	4,946 acres
January 2000	=	12,879 acres
January 2010	=	23,757 acres
January 2011	=	24,846 acres