

# Referendum Recap

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

When McHenry County Conservation District successfully passed, by voter approval, a \$73 million Bond Referendum in 2007, the goals were to first purchase and protect natural areas, significant wetlands, endangered and threatened species habitats, and link existing sites. The second goal was to restore essential habitat and the third goal to make recreational improvements and open new sites and trails to provide the public with access to natural areas and opportunities for passive recreation.

The Conservation District now protects 25,021 acres of open space throughout the county. Over the past four years, the District has acquired 4,140 acres. The \$62.5 million of the bond proceeds principal, and an additional \$1.9 million of investment income has been expended on land acquisitions; \$2.8 million of investment income remains unexpended and is designated toward future land acquisitions. The final amount of acres that will be protected will depend largely upon on-going land acquisition decisions and strategies which may include land gifts, donations, easements, or grants. In essence, the acquisition of another 200–400 acres should be realized.

## Linking McHenry County's Last Great Places & Protecting the Best of the Last Remaining High-Quality Ecosystems

Reconnecting remnant ecosystems and creating larger parcels linked by greenway corridors are key tenets of land protection philosophy at the Conservation District. Recent land acquisition purchases and their ecological significance include:

- 13 acres in Wonder Lake. Significance: A high-quality, white oak dominated woodland. The site was protected from a slated subdivision development by a generous private donation. — *Acquired 2011*
- 248 acres in Woodstock were added to Brookdale Conservation Area; Significance: Protects 1/2 mile of the N. Branch of the Kishwaukee River and allows for the removal of a small impoundment, bringing this branch of the Kishwaukee River one step closer to being a free-flowing waterway, improving fishing opportunities and allowing rare mussels to reproduce. A fish passage study is being conducted at the final remaining dam located at the Brookdale pond. Oak woodlands and wetlands also exist on the site.— *Acquired 2010*
- 302 acres added to Pleasant Valley Conservation Area; Significance: The acquisition will make it possible to restore nearly 800 acres of a stream side marsh complex along the Kishwaukee River. — *Acquired 2010*
- 31.7 acres at Lake in the Hills Conservation Area; Significance: Protects the viewshed east of Randall Road and provides a buffer for the high-quality ecosystems within the site.— *Acquired 2009*
- 14.5 acres in Richmond; Significance: Connects the two parcels of Elizabeth Lake Nature Preserve Varga Archaeological Site to create one contiguous area of 345 acres.— *Acquired 2009*
- 58 acres added to Queen Anne Prairie; Significance: protects populations of a state endangered plant and several archeological sites and due to its high ecological quality of habitat, a portion has been submitted for approval as a buffer to the "Lind Forest" State Nature Preserve.— *Acquired 2009*
- 150 acres in Greenwood Township; Significance: protects populations of a federally threatened plant species and a large block of oak woodlands. It is now part of the Queen Anne Prairie and a portion has been proposed to create a new state nature preserve called Slough Creek Fen. — *Acquired 2008*
- 29 acres protected in Greenwood Township; Significance: Due to its high ecological quality of habitat, a portion has been submitted for approval as an addition to the "Barbara Fen" State Nature Preserve.— *Acquired 2008*
- 127 acres in Greenwood Township; Significance: Due to the high-quality ecological communities, including a 1/2 mile of Nippersink Creek which exists on site, a portion has been submitted for approval as an addition to the Illinois Nature Preserve, Lind Forest.— *Acquired 2008*
- 105 additional acres protected at North Branch Conservation Area; Significance: allowed for the cleanup and restoration of Monteloma Springs Fen.— *Acquired 2008*
- 57 acres in Cary; Significance: This was one of the last remaining unprotected high-quality natural areas in the heavily populated southeastern portion of McHenry County. It was slated for subdivision development. It is now part of the Fel-Pro RRR Conservation Area.— *Acquired 2007*

## 2007 Bond Referendum Status Report

- Total # of acres the District protects to date = 25,021 acres
- Total # of acres protected with the 2007 bond funds = 4,140 acres
- Of the \$62.5 million of the bond proceeds principal and an additional \$1.9 million of investment income has been expended on land acquisitions, while \$2.8 million of investment income remains unexpended and is designated toward future land acquisitions. An additional 200–400 additional acres may be acquired with bond funds.
- Of the \$2 million set aside for Wildlife Habitat Preservation \$1.66 million of the bond proceeds principal has been expended and \$331,178 of bond proceeds remain unexpended and are designated for future restoration projects.
- Of the \$8.5 million set aside for Recreational Improvements \$6.3 million has been expended and \$2.3 million remain unexpended. This includes an additional \$250,000 of investment income that has been designated for future site and trail improvements.



Pictured above clockwise: High Point Conservation Area, Harvard; new fire pit at Nippersink Canoe Base Conservation Area, Spring Grove; boardwalk at Kishwaukee Headwaters Conservation Area, Woodstock; and ribbon cutting at Kishwaukee Headwaters

## Site & Trails Improvements

Since 2007, recreational improvements have been made on numerous sites with the approved bond funds. Of the \$8.5 million set aside for Recreational Improvements \$6.3 million has been expended and \$2.3 million remain unexpended. This includes an additional \$250,000 of investment income that has been designated for future site & trail improvements. In addition, having bond referendum funds available allowed the District to seek grants that require matching dollars. Over \$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.

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. Thus far the District has opened nine new sites to the public and 3.5 miles of regional trails. 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; the H.U.M. Trailhead, Marengo; Lake in the Hills Fen Conservation Area, LITH; High Point, Harvard; and Winding Creek, Hebron.

In addition two regional trails, the Stone Mill Trail (Harvard to Chemung) and Phase I of Ridgefield Trace (Woodstock to Crystal Lake) were added. Phase II of Ridgefield Trace will open late this year.

Improvements are currently in progress at Fel-Pro RRR, Cary, Dufield Pond, Woodstock and Boone Creek, Bull Valley.



Pictured above: site tour at the Grand Opening of High Point Conservation Area, Harvard; biking on the Stone Mill Trail, Chemung



Left: Winding Creek Conservation Area, Hebron; fishing at the Grand Opening of Winding Creek