



AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 26, 2025

TO: Forest Preserve District Planning & Utilization Committee

FROM: Jennifer Rooks-Lopez, Director of Planning & Land Protection

SUBJECT: Presentation and Approval of a Contract with Wight & Company for Professional Design and Grant Assistance Services for a Wildlife Observation Platform at the Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Committee with information to consider the approval of a contract with Wight & Company of Darien, Illinois, for professional design and grant assistance services for wildlife observation platform at Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve in Hampshire.

BACKGROUND:

Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve contains the first wetland mitigation bank created by the District. The volume and diversity of birds that have returned to this wetland is unrivaled by any previous projects completed by the District. Multiple state and federal threatened and endangered species have been seen utilizing the site, and the word of this success is widespread amongst the “birding” community. As a result, birders have inundated the site hoping for glimpses of these rarities. This increase in visitors to the preserve has created issues with the establishment of the wetland plants required for the mitigation bank.

The proposed wildlife-observation platform was included as a key project for the 2024 Land Acquisition & Preserve Improvement Referendum. It includes the construction of a raised observation deck that would be installed close to the water. It would allow visitors of differing abilities access to view the birds and the wetland, without causing damage to the plant community and disturbing the birds’ activities. The District plans to seek funding assistance from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Open Space Land Acquisition & Development grant (OSLAD) which, if awarded, would reimburse up to \$600,000 for development. A successful OSLAD grant application will require a site plan as well as preliminary design and cost for the wildlife platform. To help with the design, permitting and grant assistance for this unique project, the District utilized a request for qualifications process to select a consultant. Six firms responded; Wight & Company was selected. A scope of work was developed and a total fee of \$26,000 was established. Additionally, \$1,000 shall be set aside as contingency to cover any unanticipated additional costs that may arise during design, for a total contract price not to exceed \$27,000.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Funds totaling \$50,000 were budgeted in the 2025/26 fiscal year for engineering, design, and grant assistance, in account # 03-35-35-7050, for this portion of the project.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of a contract with Wight & Company of Darien, Illinois, for professional design and grant assistance services in the amount of \$26,000, plus a contingency of \$1,000 to cover any unanticipated

additional costs that may arise, for an amount not to exceed \$27,000.

ATTACHMENTS:

Muirhead Springs Location Map

Muirhead Springs Site Map

Referendum Project Presentation

Proposal for Muirhead Springs Wildlife Observation Platform: Wight & Company.