



AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 28, 2024
TO: Forest Preserve District Planning and Utilization Committee
FROM: Patrick Chess, Director of Natural Resources
SUBJECT: Approval of Resolution an Agricultural Land Use Policy for the Forest Preserve District of Kane County

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Committee with information to consider the approval of the District's resolution to adopt an Agricultural Land Use Policy.

BACKGROUND:

The District currently owns 23,404 acres of land in Kane County and approximately 5,978 acres of farmland is under annual Farm License Agreements for the production of row crops and grass hay. About 36 local farmers have annual license agreements with the District. The interim land use of farming row crops and grass hay provides for the suppression of undesirable vegetation on the landscape that has the potential to be problematic for future restoration and development, sustains the farming culture of Kane County and provides an important revenue source for the District. The District has the responsibility of implementing best management practices and sound stewardship on all its holdings, including farmland.

Many institutional and public land owners have adopted conservation farming strategies to protect the current and long-term ecological health of their land and have enlisted a dedicated team member to implement these strategies. With the addition of a dedicated Agricultural Coordinator on staff at the District, efforts have been made to revise the current Farm License Agreement with contemporary agricultural practices and refreshed license language. This includes pesticide restrictions and implementing no-till and conservation tillage conditions to the Farm License Agreement.

The Policy that is being recommended shall govern the stewardship and licensing of agricultural lands, reflect a commitment to agricultural practices based on regenerative agriculture goals, soil health principals, conservation farming concepts, and provide for the history of this framework. The District will be a leading example and strong partner to other conservation organizations moving forward.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Committee approve the Agriculture Land Use Policy and revised Farm Program License Agreement.

ATTACHMENTS:

Agriculture Land Use Policy, Attachment A

Farm License Agreement Sample, Exhibit A

Lottery Letter Template, Exhibit B

Organic Farm Program License; Exhibit C

Farm Program Reporting Form, Exhibit D

Farm Parcels Map, Attachment B