



Planning & Land Protection Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director

FROM: Jennifer Rooks-Lopez, Director of Planning & Land Protection
Zach Tegge, Landscape Architect

RE: July 2026 Department Monthly Report

LAND ACQUISITION & PLANNING

Staff continues to work with the Land Acquisition Committee on the evaluation and acquisition of properties

GRANT PROJECTS

RTP GRANT LIMESTONE TRAIL RESURFACING AT FITCHIE CREEK FP

On September 24, 2024 the District was awarded a Recreational Trail Program (RTP) grant to assist in the restoration of the existing limestone trail at Fitchie Creek Forest Preserve. Sections of the trail, especially that section within the wooded area, experience significant washout and flooding. The project will include addressing known drainage issues and resurfacing of the limestone trail. The RTP grant, will fund 80% of the project costs up to \$200,000.00.



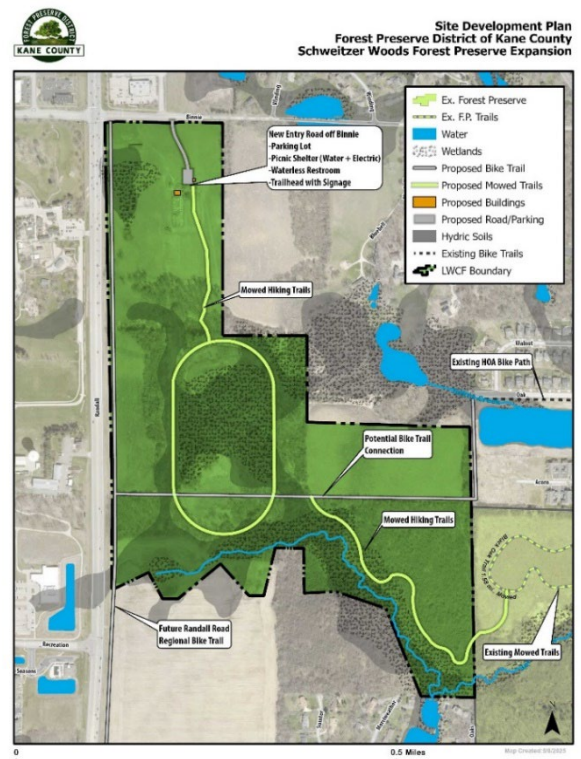
Project Updates:

- Pre-construction meeting held on July 10. Construction projected start is August 5th. Contractor is estimating the project can be completed in one week if good weather conditions exist.

GRANT APPLICATIONS

LWCF GRANT AND OSLAD GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR SCHWEITZER WOODS EXPANSION PROJECT

The Forest Preserve District of Kane County seeks funding assistance through the 2025 LWCF or OSLAD grant cycles to acquire an additional 122 acres of ecologically significant land adjacent to the existing Schweitzer Woods Forest Preserve. This expansion is aimed at protecting sensitive habitats, enhancing recreational opportunities, and ensuring long-term conservation of regional biodiversity. The proposed property lies immediately west of the current Schweitzer Woods Forest Preserve boundary and represents a rare opportunity to secure



contiguous natural land in a rapidly urbanizing area of northern Kane County. The land is primarily composed of upland oak-hickory woodlands, open meadow, and seasonal wetlands, consistent with the native ecological profile of the existing preserve. Acquisition of this land will not only preserve these important habitats but will also expand passive recreational access and trail continuity for the public.

Project Updates:

- On November 18th, the District received notification from Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) that our Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant application, submitted in May has been forwarded to the National Parks Service for review. We hope to hear something soon.

OSLAD GRANT WILDLIFE OBSERVATION PLATFORM AT MUIRHEAD SPRINGS FP

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. District was notified in January of 2026 that the Muirhead Springs Wildlife Observation Platform, is one of the 67 communities to receive \$600,000 in OSLAD funding.

Project Updates:

- The contract for engineering, construction documentation, and construction administration with Wight Inc. was approved by the board on July 14th. Engineering, design, and permitting will begin this summer with bidding for construction expected in early 2027.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

WETLAND/STREAM MITIGATION BANK PROJECT AT MUIRHEAD SPRINGS FP

In 2017, the District began planning to restore over 200 acres of wetland at Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve as part of a wetland mitigation bank. V3 Companies was chosen and approved to be the consultant for this project. Staff and V3 met on-site to review the site conditions.



NEWLY ACQUIRED FOREST PRESERVE IN HUNTLEY – ROUTE 47 ACCESS

In 2024, the District acquired 298 acres in Huntley, at the southwest intersection of Illinois Route 47 (IL-47) and Interstate 90 (I-90). The property includes old oaks, a never-plowed sedge meadow, and more than 25 acres of prime waterfowl habitat. During the acquisition process, it was discovered that the approved entrance to the property is located at the edge of the eastbound I-90 exit ramp and IL-47. As part of the acquisition, an access easement on IL-47 was granted to the District by the adjacent property owner and the Village of Huntley. However, before a new entrance can be constructed, the District must also seek approval from IDOT.

Project Updates:

- July 6th permit drawings for the access to route 47 were submitted to IDOT for review and approval.

GLENWOOD PARK FOREST PRESERVE

Glenwood Forest Preserve is an older preserve located on the eastern side of the Fox River in South Batavia. The property was purchased in 1976 and the existing shelter and parking lot were installed in 1984 (40-year lifespan) and then followed by the single-vault waterless restroom in 2002 (22-year lifespan). The entrance road, Fox River Trail crossing, and parking lot configuration will be reconfigured and resurfaced, bathroom facilities and existing shelter will be replaced. In late 2026-early 2027, Fox Valley Park District (owner of Lippold Park to the south of the site), will install a new pedestrian bridge that will link users to both sides of the Fox River and is expected to increase visitors at Glenwood Park Forest Preserve.



Project Updates:

- Pre-construction meeting held on July 9. Construction on hold until late August/early September when shelter and restroom kits are scheduled for delivery.

URBAN ECOLOGY FIELD STATION AT ARLENE SHOEMAKER FP

The proposed urban ecology field station at Arlene Shoemaker Forest Preserve in Aurora, was included as a key project for the 2024 Land Acquisition & Preserve Improvement Referendum. Patron data suggests that school groups, community groups and the general public in Kane County's urban centers, especially Aurora, need a nearby nature center that has programs, educational exhibits, and outdoor infrastructure relevant to their unique urban ecology. Arlene Shoemaker Forest Preserve, is situated within the heart of Aurora, with connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods and walking trails to a nearby elementary school. In addition, the Illinois Prairie Path Aurora Spur runs along the northern boundary of the preserve. An urban nature center here will allow the District to better reach under-served communities, at-risk youth, and low-income families that reside and attend school in Aurora. In addition, the urban ecology focus will fully support the District's mission.



The District plans to seek funding assistance from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Park and Recreation Facility Construction Grant (PARC) which, if awarded, could reimburse 75% of the project cost up to \$2,800,000. A successful PARC grant application will require a site plan as well as preliminary facility design and costs for the Urban Ecology Field Station. The District was contacted by Congressman Bill Foster that the Urban Ecology Field Station was selected by his office for funding under the Community Funding Program. The amount is still be determined.

Project Updates:

- Wight. Inc. provided a detailed site layout concept that considered staff comments from previous design meeting. The floor plan of the building was edited slightly, and staff was presented with different façade materials to choose from.

CHICAGO PREMIUM OUTLETS – WETLAND RESTORATION PROJECT

The Forest Preserve District manages a 75-acre complex of wetlands created as a mitigation effort following the creation of the Chicago Premium Outlet Mall. Originally designed and constructed in 2003 by V3, the wetland complex is comprised of a series of pools surrounding a re-meandered section of Indian Creek. Each pool is managed at a specific elevation through the use of water control structures and separated by a series of earthen berms. Extensive planting of native vegetation took place and V3 managed the site for several years until the Army Corps of Engineers signed off on the project in 2017. Upon sign off, the site was transferred to the District for long term maintenance.

The initial construction took place over 20 years ago and there has been a lot of wear and tear on the berms. A combination of wave action eroding soil and beavers plugging water control structures has resulted in a multitude of breaches and repairs over the years. Currently, there are several locations where the berms are failing, causing adjacent pools to sit at the same water level. This potentially

compromises the storm water capacity of the wetlands as well as threatens the plant communities present within the wetlands.

Project Updates:

- V3 completed concept plans for review and are currently working budget and construction drawings.

MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES

- July 2026: CS Turf continues to perform weekly inspections at Hughes Creek and Settler's Hill Golf Course to help monitor course conditions and offer suggestions for improvement. Planning staff attend the weekly inspections with CS Turf.
- July 2026: Planning staff continues to take drone photos of the 4 water monitoring stations within Muirhead Springs Wetland Mitigation Bank.
- July 13-17: Planning staff attended the 2026 ESRI User Conference in San Diego.
- July 17: Meeting with V3 consultants to review concept plans for improvements at Chicago Premium Outlets.
- July 20-23: Planning staff held first round of interviews for the Project Manager Position. 4 interviews were held, and an additional 2 more are scheduled for August 4th.
- July 20th: Urban Ecology meeting with Wight to review concept plans for the Urban Ecology Field Station at Arlene Shoemaker Forest Preserve.
- 7/21/26: District had an inter-departmental meeting at Red Gate Bridge to assess temporary measures to take for board replacement and protection.
- 7/22/26: Planning staff discussed with Kane County Water Resources on BMP-measures necessary for the Burlington Prairie parking lot project.
- 7/28/26: Staff finalized a maintenance agreement with Strafford Woods HOA (adjacent to Bliss Woods F.P.) on a 0.2-acre mowed area.