



AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 25, 2026

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 Final Design & Engineering Professional Services for the Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve Wildlife Overlook

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 final design & engineering professional services for the Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve Wildlife Overlook 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 fully accessible raised observation deck that will be installed close to the water. It will 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.

In 2025, the District selected Wight & Company to prepare preliminary design and grant assistance for the project. In January 2026, the District was awarded funding assistance from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) through the Open Space Land Acquisition & Development grant (OSLAD) which, will reimburse up to \$600,000 for development and engineering.

Wight and Company has a full understanding of the project and required permitting, as they are the design firm that completed the original concept and preliminary design that resulted in the OSLAD Grant award. A scope of services was developed, and Wight submitted a proposal for engineering, permitting and construction services for \$179,500. Additionally, \$18,000 shall be set aside as contingency to cover any unanticipated additional costs that may arise during design, permitting, and construction document creation for a total project amount of \$197,500.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Funds totaling \$2,100,000 were budgeted and are available in the 2026/27 fiscal year for engineering, design and construction document creation, in account # 03-35-35-5070 project 31028.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Committee approve the contract with Wight & Company of Darien, Illinois for final design, engineering, permitting and construction document creation in the amount of \$179,500, plus a contingency of \$18,000 to cover any unanticipated additional costs that may arise, for an amount not to exceed \$197,500.

ATTACHMENTS:

Muirhead Springs Location Map

Muirhead Springs Site Map

Concept Images

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