



AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 28, 2024
TO: Forest Preserve District Finance & Administration Committee
FROM: Patrick Chess, Director of Natural Resources
Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director
SUBJECT: Presentation and Approval of a Dark Sky 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 a Responsible Outdoor Lighting Policy.

BACKGROUND:

The mission of the Forest Preserve District states that the District "acquire, hold and maintain lands within Kane County that contribute to the conservation of natural and historic resources" and to "preserve such lands for the environmental education, recreation, pleasure and well-being of all its citizens." The natural and historic resources within Kane County are threatened by a number of different pressures, including the visibility of the night sky.

The effects of light pollution brightening the night sky has measurable negative impacts upon wildlife, human health, as well as our night sky heritage. Of particular importance to the District, as a conservation agency, are the impacts that nighttime light pollution can have on the ecosystems present within the preserves. Artificial lights can disrupt breeding habits of amphibians, confuse migratory birds that depend on moonlight and starlight to navigate, and create fatal attraction sources for rare insects drawn to light sources.

DarkSky International is a recognized worldwide authority combatting light pollution. They work to protect communities from the harmful effects of light pollution through outreach, advocacy, and conservation. Included in their efforts was the creation of a DarkSky Approved certification process for lighting elements focused on five lighting principles for responsible outdoor lighting. Those principles ensuring that lighting is useful, targeted, low level, controlled, and warm-colored.

In order to fulfill the District's mission and better preserve the night sky across the District's 23,000 acres, a policy was created to reflect the specifications set out by DarkSky International. These specifications would ensure that any future construction or replacement projects undertaken by the District adhere to the five principles of responsible outdoor lighting.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Staff will continue to operate under the direction of the District's procurement policy. Additionally, "Responsible Outdoor Lighting Policy"-compliant lights and fixtures are readily available at competitive prices. No appreciable financial impacts are expected from the implementation of this policy.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Committee approve the Responsible Outdoor Lighting Policy.

ATTACHMENTS:

Responsible Outdoor Lighting Policy