



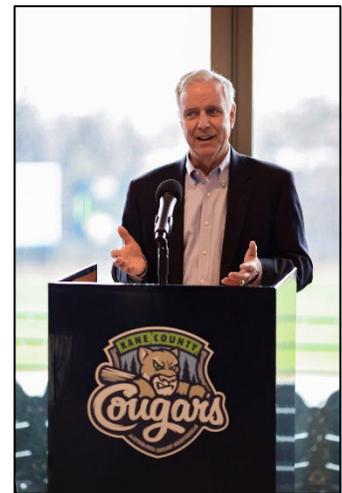
Community Engagement Department Memorandum

To: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director
From: Laurie Metanchuk, Community Engagement Director
Date: 5/13/2025
Re: April 2025 Report

Public Relations & Marketing

CONFERENCES, MEETINGS & TRAINING

Cougars Press Conference: On April 2, Director Metanchuk, Executive Director Ben Haberthur, and President Bill Lenert attended the press conference to announce the new ownership of the Kane County Cougars. Former owner Bob Froelich spoke about his time owning the team, after which Sean Decker, representing new owners REV Entertainment, talked about their commitment to baseball in Kane County. President Lenert provided remarks about the strength of the new partnership. All then fielded reporters' questions. During the event, both the Kane County Cougars and REV Entertainment announced they would donate \$10,000 each to the Kane Forest Preserve Foundation's Centennial Project at Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve, in honor of the District's 100th Birthday.



Questers Presentation: On April 10, Director Metanchuk gave a presentation for the Thornapple Questers. The Questers meet regularly to support preservation, restoration and the history of the St. Charles area. Director Metanchuk led the group of 10 on a tour of Creek Bend Nature Center and explained the history of the facility, and how it has changed since the District purchased the property. Highlights included showing the group a then-child's signature on the back of a cabinet, dating back to 1935, as well as the prairie exhibit inside the nature center.

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Earth Day: On April 26, the Forest Preserve District celebrated Earth Day. We hosted a shrub-planting event at Camp Tomo Chi-Chi Knolls in Gilberts. Close to 300 volunteers helped us plant 500 shrubs in less than 90 minutes. Thank you to all of the volunteers as well as State Senator Don DeWitte for their participation.

IAPD Legislative Conference: On April 29-30, Director Metanchuk along with Executive Director Haberthur, Director of Planning & Land Management Jennifer Rooks-Lopez, and President Lenert attended Parks Day at the Capitol and the Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD) Legislative Conference in Springfield. During the event, we were able to meet with State Senator Don DeWitte. We had plans to meet with State Representative Jeff Keicher, as well, though shifting legislative session times prevented that. It's important to meet with members of the legislature, especially because they advocate for our grant projects. In addition, Director Metanchuk will be following up with all members of the State Legislature who represent part of Kane County, to invite them to the forthcoming Centennial Celebration, June 8 at Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve.

PRESS RELEASES

The following items garnered press coverage, last month:

- Join us for an Earth Day Shrub Planting Extravaganza on April 26!, April 1
- Forest Preserve District of Kane County Campgrounds Open May 1, April 21
- Forest Preserve District offers free wood chips, May 4

MEDIA COVERAGE

Campgrounds Open

- Forest Preserve District of Kane County campgrounds open May 1, April 22, Shaw Local
- Kane County forest preserve campgrounds open May 1, April 24, Daily Herald

District Centennial

- 100 Years of Conservation: Honoring the Legacy of Kane County's Forest Preserve Leaders, April 2, Kane County Connects
- Trails and tribulations with the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, April 21, Shaw Local

Fabyan Forest Preserve

- Safeguarding the Historic Fabyan Windmill, Kane County Connects, April 28

Kane County Cougars

- 'The best partner we could get': Kane County Cougars introduce new ownership, Daily Herald, April 2

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Woodchips Available

- Forest Preserve District of Kane County offering free wood chips, April 26, Daily Herald

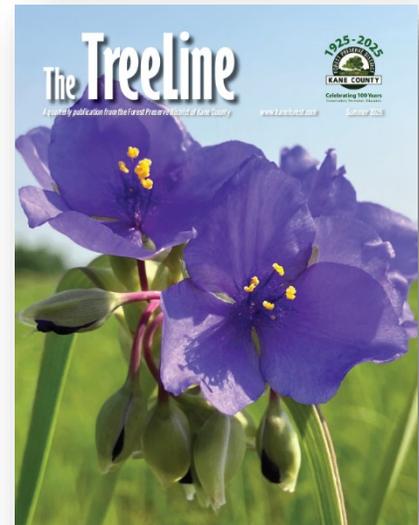
SOCIAL MEDIA

The District manages social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Threads, LinkedIn, TikTok & YouTube. Find us online by searching @forestpreserve.

TREELINE NEWSLETTER

The Summer 2025 edition of The TreeLine Newsletter is out. See District facilities for a copy, or you can find it online at <https://kaneforest.com/the-treeline-newsletter>.

Our current print subscribers total 5,399 (+1). Current email subscribers total 15,590 (+12), for a combined total of 20,989 subscribers (+13). As always, free subscriptions to *The TreeLine* newsletter are available at: http://bit.ly/ForestPreserve_Email.



Environmental Education

April Spotlight: Fly-Fishing Exhibit



Take a virtual tour of the exhibit: <https://www.facebook.com/forestpreserve/videos/2046484795855871>

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For the first time ever, Creek Bend Nature Center is hosting a traveling exhibit, and one that was specially curated in honor of the District’s Centennial. Environmental Education Manager Barb McKittrick worked with the American Museum of Fly Fishing in Vermont to custom-develop and install *Time Flies: A Centennial Celebration*. This exhibit showcases the heritage of fly fishing during the formative years of the District. Displays include fishing rods, reels, flies, artwork and videos from the year 1925. A family scavenger hunt, Trout Unlimited-led workshops in fly tying, and nature programs about river ecology round-out the immersive experience around the art and sport of fly fishing. Make sure to stop by Creek Bend to check out the exhibit before it leaves on June 9!

PROGRAM REACH & REVENUE GENERATION

Programs	Programs Completed (Monthly)	Attendance (Monthly)	Avg Attendance Per Program (Monthly)	Programs Completed (Total FY)	Attendance (Total FY)	Avg Attendance Per Program (Total FY)
Public	13	396	30	123	5562	45
School	12	487	41	75	2286	30
Scout	1	11	11	5	60	12
Community	7	111	16	44	1420	32
Outreach	6	290	48	40	2512	63
Learn from the Experts	2	81	41	20	528	26
Virtual Public*	1	n/a	n/a	7	n/a	n/a
Virtual School	0	0	0	1	125	125
Program Totals	42	1,376	34	315	12,493	41
Nature Center Visitors		923			9,275	
Total Attendance		2,299			21,768	
Revenues [^]	\$658					

*Note: Only webinars have live attendees ^Excludes LFE/KCCN partnership revenues.



“Amber [Naturalist Amber Ross] did a great job. She is clearly passionate about the subject matter and shared lots of interesting facts. Her energy was very positive and welcoming.”

— *“Spring Ephemeral LFE” participant*

“I enjoy all the walks through different Forest Preserves and usually learn something new. [Environmental Education Manager] Barb McKittrick did her usual great job of spending time with everyone along the trail and kept a good pace throughout. It’s a great way to learn about what is available in our community.”

— *“Trek with a Naturalist” participant*

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“The instructors from Trout Unlimited did a great job — diving right into a hands-on workshop, showing their passion and skill and knowledge! They not only provided technical know-how for newbies, but also discussed the food chain and proper fly selection depending on target fish species, time of year, etc. Very well done!”

— *Fly-tying workshop participant*

In-Person Programs

- **Public Programs** – As an extension of the new fly-fishing exhibit, we’ve worked with Trout Unlimited to offer four fly-tying workshops at Creek Bend Nature Center in St. Charles. The first two in April were hugely successful and at capacity. Under the guidance of expert anglers, attendees learned to design and create the perfect fly for their next fishing adventure.



Our partners from Trout Unlimited provided all the materials and instruction needed for patrons to make and take home their own flies.

Eleven young people joined Naturalist Ross for *EcoLab: Macromania Investigation* at Creek Bend Nature Center/LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. The group explored and caught inhabitants of the pond after learning about macroinvertebrates and watersheds. Naturalist Ross demonstrated how to use microscopes and identification sheets to identify and classify macroinvertebrates in order to assess waterway health.

Naturalist Erica Lemon welcomed 21 patrons to a *Phenology and Changes Through Time* program at Johnson’s Mound Forest Preserve in Elburn. She explained how to closely observe natural life cycles and to gather phenology data, as well as how to contribute observations to Nature’s Notebook, an online community science phenology project.

Naturalist Josh Libman’s monthly *Bird Watching Walks* continue to attract large crowds, with 42 folks joining in April, at Fox River Shores Forest Preserve in Carpentersville, to identify and learn about seasonal birds.

Our monthly series programs have been consistently successful.

- *Senior Stroll* is one of our longest-running public programs, and it draws a large and devoted group of active adults. This month, Naturalist Libman welcomed 45 attendees to Bliss Woods Forest Preserve in Sugar Grove for a stroll to listen for and learn about frogs, and to view ephemeral wildflowers.
- Naturalist Lemon’s monthly *Yarn Art* program drew 11 fiber artists to Creek Bend Nature Center for conversation over yarn art.
- For *StoryTime at Creek Bend Nature Center*, 53 patrons joined a librarian from the St. Charles Public Library for read-aloud stories, finger plays, and songs. After the program, attendees stayed to enjoy the interactive exhibits in the Nature Center.
- This month’s pre-school *Little Saplings* program, created and led by Naturalist Lisa O’Brien, focused on *Muskrat Mania*. Nine children and their caregivers enjoyed learning about muskrats, built a muskrat house out of cattails, hiked the Ephemeral Loop Trail at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. Attendees also created a muskrat book to take home.
- For a slightly older audience, Naturalist O’Brien led another monthly program for 12 adults at Kenyon Farm Forest Preserve in South Elgin – the *Nurtured by Nature* experience. She discussed lake ecology, identified emerging wildflowers and explained the importance of wetlands during the meditative stroll.
- During each monthly *Trek with a Naturalist*, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick designs and leads a program for those who like active hiking — all year long. We visit different preserves each month. April’s was at Muirhead Springs Forest Preserve in Hampshire. The 14 trekkers were thrilled to see a Bald Eagle right on the trail, devouring a recently caught meal.

Naturalists Lemon and Ross joined District colleagues for the District’s annual Earth Day Celebration. This year’s Earth Day celebration was at Camp Tomo Chi-Chi Knolls in Gilberts. They shared a pollinator pop-up station with the nearly 300 people in attendance, then led a nature walk at the end of the celebration.

- **Community & Outreach Programs** – A significant portion of the naturalist team’s efforts involve traveling to and educating community groups, school classes and partner library patrons. Community programs are given at or for private organizations like garden clubs, service organizations, church groups, private school/day care centers and senior centers; in April we served 111 community members in this way. Organizations visited included:
 - Wild Ones of Greater Kane County
 - St. Charles Environmental Commission
 - Northern Illinois Special Recreation Association
 - Messenger Public Library
 - Town & County Public Library, and,
 - Veterans of Edgewater Del Webb

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Outreach programs are given at public schools, day care centers and libraries. We presented to 290 county residents this month, including a tabling event at Wasco Nursery and *Traveling Naturalist (Wonderful World of Insects and Backyard Wilderness)* programs at 4 public schools in D300, D303, and Brightpoint Children’s Home and Aid.

- **School Programs** – Spring is a busy time for school groups to take field trips to our forest preserves and spend time learning from naturalists in the field. In April we hosted five school field trips for a total of 315 students. Schools visiting included Prairie View Elementary (D301), Parkview Elementary (D300) and Anderson Elementary (D303) and we hosted them at Tekakwitha Woods and LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserves in St. Charles, and Fitchie Creek Forest Preserve in Elgin. Field trip topics included *Discovery Hike, Rivers & Streams* and *Wonderful World of Insects*.



Parkview Elementary School students learn all about insects from Naturalist Ross.

Naturalist Libman welcomed over 110 homeschoolers from 5 different homeschool networks to *Homeschool Hikes* at Lone Grove, Tekakwitha, Grunwald Farms and Bliss Forest Preserves.

- **Learn from the Experts (LFE)/Kane County Certified Naturalist (KCCN) Programs** – We offered two LFE programs in April, with the first being Naturalist Ross’s *Spring Ephemerals of Kane County* class. The 26 attendees at Johnson’s Mound Forest Preserve in Elburn learned botanical identification techniques along with interesting historical uses of native woodland flowers.

After winning an Illinois Humanities speaker grant, we were able to welcome Illinois’ most pre-eminent bird man to recall the history of the Audubon Society and the evolution of bird watching, as it grew from a hobby to a scientific discipline. Internationally-acclaimed storyteller Brian “Fox” Ellis “became” Robert Ridgway in this one-man, first-person performance of Ridgway’s wilderness travels, his life-long work at the Smithsonian Institution, his birding trips into Central America, and his journey across Alaska with John Muir. Naturalist Libman hosted the 55 attendees at the Barbara Belding Lodge, then joined Brian for a bird watching walk at Tekakwitha Woods Forest Preserve.



After reverting back to his real-life role, Brian Ellis proved to be a knowledgeable and passionate birder, adept at co-leading (with Naturalist Libman) a large group along the trails.

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Nature, Virtually Everywhere! Online Programs

For patrons that can't come to the forest preserves, or choose not to gather in groups, the Environmental Education team continues its innovative work to bring high-quality nature programs to folks via live virtual hikes, videos, and webinars. In April, we released:

- **Fly Fishing Exhibit Grand Opening** – Get a behind-the-scenes glimpse of our new exhibit at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AY52HL8fyk>



Jim Schottenham, Curator of the American Fly-Fishing Museum in Vermont, shares the story behind custom-developing the exhibit now on display at Creek Bend Nature Center.

Continuing Education and Conferences

Environmental Education Manager McKittrick attended three continuing education classes:

- *Conserving and Restoring the Threatened Butternut Tree (*Juglans cinera*)*, Fermilab Winter Speaker Series at Fermilab
- *Food Forest Design Workshop*, Morton Arboretum
- *Deconstructing Origin Stories in Northern Illinois*, Kane-DuPage Regional Museum Association at Geneva History Museum
- She also traveled to Missoula, Montana for the National Association of Interpreters Heartland



The National Bison Range covers >18,000 acres at the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. After being federally operated since 1908, the Bison Range came fully under the control of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes in 2022. It is now home to roughly 350 bison.

Region Workshop and Conference: *Stories on the Landscape*. Sessions on bison ecology, indigenous relationships with the land, fundraising, urban ecology interpretation and inclusivity will be very helpful for development of leading-edge District nature programs and exhibits.

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Rental Facilities

Barbara Belding Lodge at Brewster Creek Forest Preserve

In April, the lodge hosted four meetings and one baby shower, totaling \$700.00.

Creek Bend Nature Center at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve

In April, Creek Bend hosted open house showings on Wednesdays. Potential renters came to view the facility. The Fly-Fishing Exhibit opened in the Meadow room for patrons to view during Nature Center hours.

Kane Forest Preserve Foundation

Centennial Grove Sponsorship

The Foundation continues to promote sponsorship of the Centennial Grove Project at Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve. Johnson's Mound was the District's first forest preserve, and the District is busy planning a celebration at the preserve in honor of its 100th anniversary. The Centennial Grove Project features:

- 800 trees, mostly oaks, but also hickories and maples.
- A new 23-acre prairie
- A public art piece called Guardians, by renowned local artist Mike Baur
- Benches to rest and reflect
- An ADA-accessible limestone path to the new amenities as well as a mowed trail
- Bronze plaques displayed on monuments, gratefully acknowledging sponsors

There's still limited time to sponsor a tree in the centennial grove! Community Sponsorships begin at \$100, while Corporate Sponsorships begin at \$5,000.

Visit <https://kaneforestpreservefoundation.org/centennial> for more information, and sponsor by June 1 to be recognized at the June 8 Centennial Celebration!