



Planning & Land Protection Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director

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

RE: October 2025 Department Monthly Report

LAND ACQUISITION & PLANNING

October 31, 2025: The District closed on an 84-acre addition to Freeman-Kame Meagher Forest Preserve that includes rare species including birds, turtles, insects and numerous plant species. It also is home to the largest protected, remnant oak woodland in Kane County. This land investment is the first after the successful passage of the 2024 Land Acquisition & Preserve Improvement Referendum and sound financial planning. Land that has never been plowed under, either for farming or other development, is referred to as a remnant. Remnant areas are an attractive investment for the Forest Preserve District because they typically contain a higher diversity of plant and animal species. The topography at Freeman Kame is distinctive, with glacial landforms known as kettle kame topography. The bumpy mounds (kames) and bowl-like depressions (kettles) were formed by retreating glaciers, comprised of gravel deposits that are covered in 200-year old oak trees. These are interspersed between depressional wetlands that contain remnant sedge meadow communities — wetland habitats made-up of sedges, grasses and wildflowers. The diversity, remnant communities, and ability to expand a large preserve add up to an important investment by the District. The District invested \$3.5 million for the 84.126-acre parcel. The new addition creates a 1,435-acre preserve. Total Forest Preserve District of Kane County holdings are now 24,043 acres.



Forest preserves over 1,000 acres are somewhat rare in Kane County. The average Kane County forest preserve is 238.05 acres. There are only five preserves topping 1,000 acres in the system: Freeman Kame-Meagher, Dick Young, Virgil, Muirhead Springs, and Big Rock Forest Preserve.

GRANT PROJECTS

MILL CREEK GREENWAY FOREST PRESERVE – OSLAD ARCHERY RANGE AND PRESERVE DEVELOPMENT

The District was awarded an Open space Land Acquisition Grant (OSLAD) in 2023 for improvements to the Mill Creek Greenway Forest Preserve. This project will develop the 62.5 acres purchased in 2016 with Land Water Conservation Funding (LWCF) by introducing resource-based recreation elements that include an outdoor archery range (first of the District's kind), interpretive nature trails, 60+ acres of prairie restoration, parking, restrooms, and design for a future linkage to a regional bike trail.



Project Updates:

- Black chain-link fence installed to separate the crossbow archery course from the main Olympic-sized archery field. The elevated shooting platform was installed that overlooks the smaller hunting archery field. Concrete and asphalt installed. Awaiting delivery of shelter building and cantilevered dugout shelters. ADA-accessible pavers installed in the crossbow range.

BIG ROCK FOREST PRESERVE – RTP LIMESTONE TRAIL RESURFACING

In 2023, the District was awarded a Recreational Trail Program (RTP) grant to provide a trail connection between the Deer Valley property and Big Rock campground and to assist with the resurfacing of 1.57 miles of limestone trails at Big Rock Forest Preserve. Installed in 2014, sections of the limestone trails, especially in the woodland area are experiencing erosion and are in need of significant resurfacing. The RTP grant, will fund 80% of the project costs up to \$200,000.00.



Project Updates:

- Project complete. Will work on reimbursement package for the IDNR. Will assess grass growth in spring 2026 in case Obsidian must revisit to spot-seed and blanket.

FITCHIE CREEK FOREST PRESERVE – RTP LIMESTONE TRAIL RESURFACING

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:

- Design and engineering are expected to begin in Fall. The project is expected to be bid in winter 2025/2026 with construction anticipated to begin in early summer 2026.



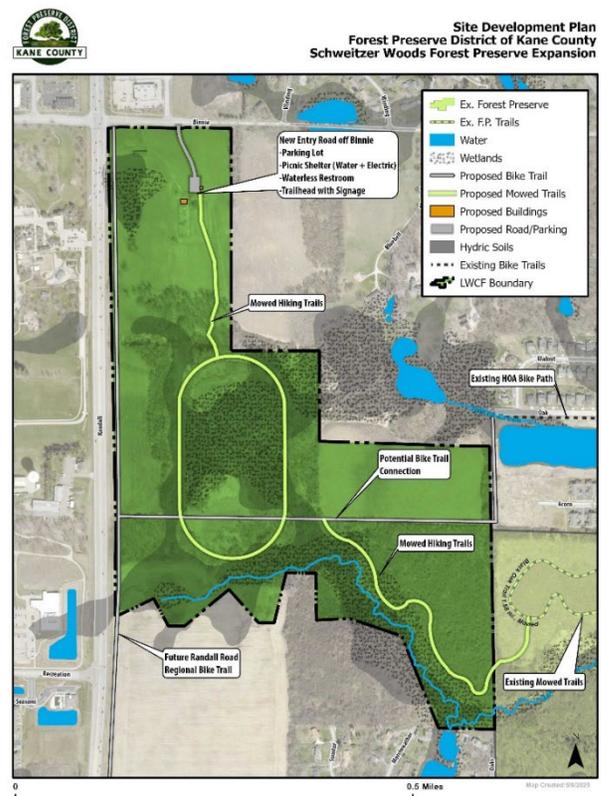
GRANT APPLICATIONS – PENDING

LAND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF) GRANT APPLICATION- SCHWEITZER WOODS EXPANSION PROJECT.

The Forest Preserve District of Kane County seeks funding assistance through the 2025 LWCF grant cycle 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:

- District applied for the OSLAD grant in September, awards are expected to be announced in January 2026.



MUIRHEAD SPRINGS FOREST PRESERVE - WILDLIFE OBSERVATION PLATFORM

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. The District plans to seek funding assistance from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Open Space Land Acquisition & Development grant (OSLAD) which, if awarded, would reimburse up to \$600,000 for development.

Project Updates:

- District applied for the OSLAD grant in September, awards are expected to be announced in January 2026.



CAPITAL PROJECTS

MUIRHEAD SPRINGS FOREST PRESERVE - WETLAND/STREAM MITIGATION BANK PROJECT

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.

Project Updates:

- V3 continues management of the plantings. Additional planting is expected in fall 2025.

BRUNNER FAMILY FOREST PRESERVE - TRAIL IMPROVEMENTS

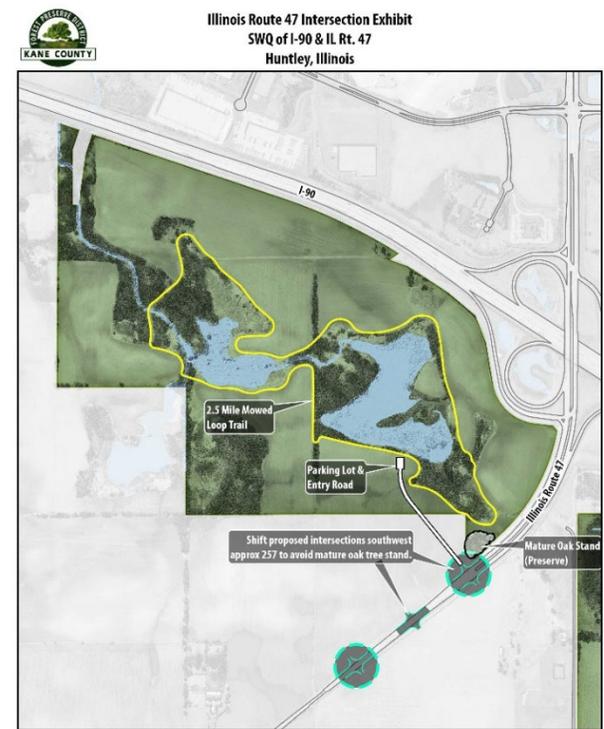
The Brunner Family (709.22 acres) and Buffalo Park (28.46 acres) Forest Preserves total 737.92 acres, and are located in the northeast corner of Kane County. In 2024, the District completed improvements at the far north end of the preserve. This included a new shelter, bathroom, and trail connection from the northerly parking lot to shelter/bathroom parking lot, and a new sled hill. Improvements proposed for 2025-2026 include grading and drainage improvements along the older section of limestone trail and resurfacing the section of asphalt trail.

Project Updates:

- Asphalt paths completed and restoration work 75% complete. Project will be completed in November.

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:

- Project kick-off meeting held on August 5th. CBRE is working on concept plans to submit to IDOT for approval in November.

RESURFACING OF HUGHES CREEK GOLF CLUB CART PATHS AND NEW CART PATH CONSTRUCTION AT SETTLER'S HILL GOLF COURSE

The existing cart paths at Hughes Creek Golf Club were installed in phases from the late 1990's to the early 2000's and are showing significant signs of deterioration and failure in large sections. Just recently, half of hole #4 and up to hole #9 green were resurfaced. This project will focus on pulverizing-in-place and resurfacing cart paths near the clubhouse, and from hole #1 to the bridge at hole #4. Minor path adjustments will be made additionally near the clubhouse and at green #1. The additional surface course will add approximately 3" of height to the path, and will be backfilled and seeded to maintain a smooth transition. In between holes #3 and #4, certain portions of the cart path will be converted from decomposed granite to either limestone or asphalt.

The existing numbered layout at Settler's Hill Golf Course was designed so that golfers would have the option to return to a potential new clubhouse near the new driving range, after holes 9 and 18. This project focuses on adding key cart path connections so that golfers can return to the existing clubhouse after holes 9 and 18. This will involve building a new path from the current tee box at #6 and connect to current tee box #15. A new split path will be built just west of the clubhouse to allow golfers to drive up to the new #10 tee and return down the same path after the new #18.

Project Updates:

- Pre-construction meeting held for both projects. Rough grading, silt fence and tree protection fence installed late October, early November.



RUTLAND FOREST PRESERVE – RELOCATION OF EAKIN CREEK CROSSING

Rutland Forest Preserve is a large preserve located just west of Elgin on Big Timber Road. The area of the preserve north of Big Timber Road has been improved with picnic areas, parking, and trails. The area south of Big Timber Road has some areas of wetland along Eakin Creek, which flows through the site, however a majority of the site is currently farmed in the District’s agriculture program. Currently, access to the agricultural field utilizes an easement with the adjacent land owner. The current crossing over the creek is very narrow for the wide farming equipment, and the supporting footings are beginning to fail. In 2017, WBK Engineering was retained by the District to review the existing conditions and recommend the best approach to address concerns. It was determined that the best long-term solution would be to abandon and remove the existing crossing, and construct a new wider structure further to the east. The new location would allow the District to eliminate the shared access easement with the adjacent land owner, to reduce risk and establish a future public access to the southern half of Rutland Forest Preserve. The wider crossing will be safer for the current farmer and District maintenance vehicles it and will be designed in such a way as to accommodate pedestrians when the area is restored.



Project Updates:

- October 2025 – Staff met with WBK engineering to review 75% plans prior to submitting for the required permits. The permitting process is expected to take a few months. The project is expected to bid in early Spring 2026 with construction in Summer 2026.

MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES

- October 1st – City of Elgin: Kimball/Chicago Street Stakeholder Meeting (Virtual)
- October 6-8th – Staff interviewed companies for the Urban Ecology Station at Arlene Shoemaker. Wight was selected to perform design services.
- October 9-13th – Zach attended the 2025 ASLA Conference in New Orleans.
- Staff continues to make updates to the website maps and edits to the GIS database.