



Planning & Land Protection Department Memorandum

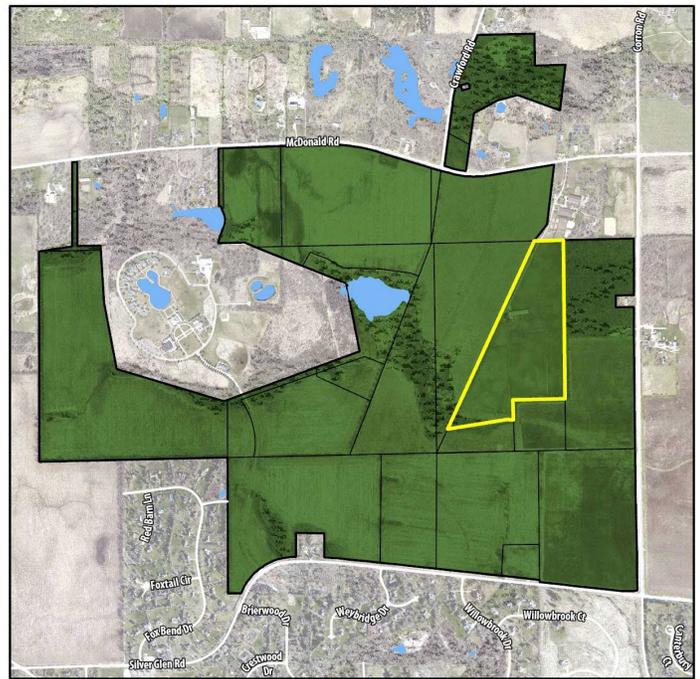
TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director

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

RE: January 2026 Department Monthly Report

LAND ACQUISITION & PLANNING

On January 13, 2026 the District closed on a 45 acre expansion to Meissner-Corrone Forest Preserve increasing the total preserve area to 665 acres. The acquisition fills in a triangular, wedge shaped section within the northeastern portion of the preserve. The 45 acres consists primarily of fenced horse pasture, an outbuilding for horses, and an access route for maintenance. The horses will remain onsite until their current lease ends in December 2026, afterward the District will begin prairie restoration. The purchase of this property was assisted with a grant of \$190,000.00 from the Prairie State Conservation Coalition (PSCC).



GRANT PROJECTS

OSLAD GRANT ARCHERY RANGE AND PRESERVE DEVELOPMENT AT MILL CREEK GREENWAY FP

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:

- Shelter and restroom combination building 75% complete. Dugout structures to be delivered and installed.

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:

- Topographic and drain tile survey began in January. The project is expected to be bid in winter 2025/2026 with construction anticipated to begin in early summer 2026.



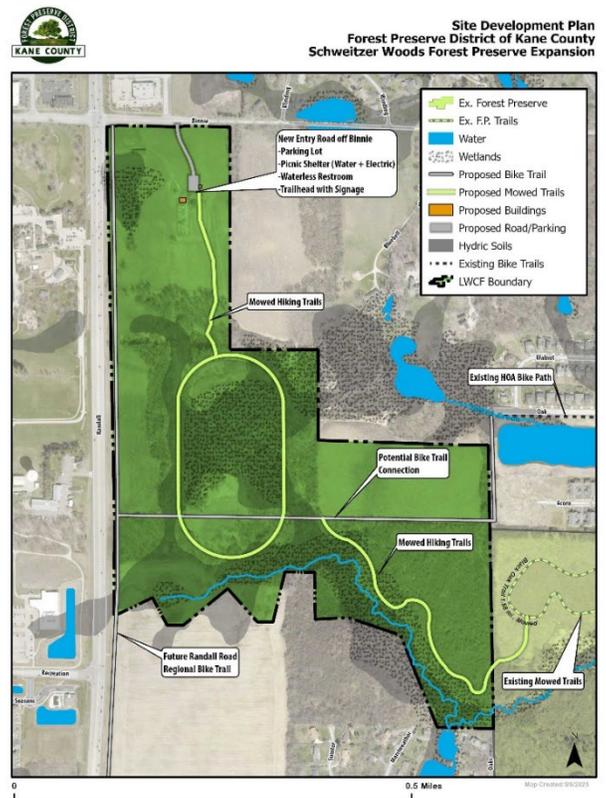
GRANT APPLICATIONS – PENDING

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.



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. 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:

- On January 14th the District was notified that the Muirhead Springs Wildlife Observation Platform, is one of the 67 communities to receive \$600,000 in OSLAD funding. Next steps include contracting with Wight Inc. for construction and permitting assistance. Construction is expected to begin in early Spring 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.

Project Updates:

- V3 continues management of the plantings.



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:

- Additional field work and survey is anticipated to begin in February. Formal engineering plans are anticipated to be ready for submittal in March.

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:

- Paving completed in November for both courses. Restoration along the sides of the cart paths was not completed before the 8" snow fall in late November and will now be completed in early Spring 2026.

RELOCATION OF EAKIN CREEK CROSSING AT RUTLAND FP

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:

- On January 26th permits were submitted to the Army Corp of Engineers for review.

URBAN ECOLOGY FIELD STATION: ARLENE SHOEMAKER

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.

- January: On January 8th District staff and Wight Inc. hosted a project kick-off meeting to discuss the overall plan and next steps for the Urban Ecology Field Station.

MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES

- 1/8/2026: Urban Ecology Field Station Kick-off meeting
- 1/13/2026: Planning staff attended a meeting with Kane County Department of Transportation and the Conservation Foundation to discuss future improvements along Randall Road including a possible pedestrian crossing at the property currently leased by the District at the intersection of Randall and Binnie Road.
- 1/14/2026: Attended the Northern Kane County Chamber Meeting
- 1/29-31/2026: Attended the Illinois IPRA/IAPD annual conference