



Community Engagement Memorandum

To: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director
From: Laurie Metanchuk, Community Engagement Director
Date: 11/12/2024
Re: October 2024 Report

Public Relations & Marketing

LAND ACQUISITION & PRESERVE IMPROVEMENT REFERENDUM

Community Engagement Director Laurie Metanchuk worked to provide the public with factual information on the Land Acquisition & Preserve Improvement Referendum:

Print Materials: Two printed pieces were created: a brochure and a postcard that both mailed in October.

Online Information: Details on the referendum were also posted on the District's website at <http://www.kaneforest.com/referendum> as well as on social media. Director Metanchuk answered questions and responded to comments on various posts.

Meetings: The leadership team met with various community groups, as requested, to provide information about the referendum, including:

- Oct. 1: Aurora Kiwanis, Prisco Community Center, Aurora (Ben & Laurie)
- Oct. 8: Geneva Garden Club, Persinger Center, Geneva (Pat)
- Oct. 9: League of Women Voters Forum, City Hall, Batavia (Ben, Dave & Laurie)
- Oct. 10: St. Charles Intergovernmental Meeting, Pottawatomie Community Center, St. Charles (Ben)
- Oct. 10: City of Aurora, Ward 4, New England Congregational Church, Aurora (Ben & Laurie)
- Oct. 17: The Conservation Foundation Online Meeting (Ben, Dave & Laurie)

PRESS RELEASES

We published the following press releases in October:

- Immerse Yourself in Nature on an Outdoor Scavenger Hunt, Oct. 3
- Discover the History of Native American Women in Illinois, Oct. 7
- Learn How to Become a Kane County Certified Naturalist, Oct. 14
- Forest Preserve District plans upcoming prescribed burns, Oct. 22
- Get Wild About Turkeys this Fall, Oct. 29

PRESS COVERAGE

The following items garnered press coverage Oct. 1 – Oct. 31, 2024

- **Carpentersville Dam**
 - Free flowing: Dam removal work in Carpentersville nearing completion, Oct. 12

- **Centennial Celebration**
 - Kane County Forest Preserve Commission approves sculpture for centennial celebration, Chicago Tribune, Oct. 10
 - Kane County Forest Preserve District to conduct prescribed burns for ecological health, Kane County Chronicle, Oct. 25
 - Controlled burns planned at many Kane County forest preserves, Chicago Tribune, Oct. 26
 - Kane County Forest Preserve District to conduct prescribed burns for ecological health, Shaw Local, Oct. 26

- **Land Acquisition & Preserve Improvement Referendum**
 - Nature is on the Ballot this Fall as Collar County Forest Preserve Districts Ask for Funds to Buy, Restore More Land, WTTW, Oct. 4
 - Kane County Forest Preserve Commission approves sculpture for centennial celebration, Chicago Tribune, Oct. 10
 - Kane County Forest Preserve District to conduct prescribed burns for ecological health, Kane County Chronicle, Oct. 25
 - Controlled burns planned at many Kane County forest preserves, Chicago Tribune, Oct. 26
 - Kane County Forest Preserve District to conduct prescribed burns for ecological health, Shaw Local, Oct. 26

- **Nature Programs**
 - Discover the history of Native American women in Illinois, Daily Herald, Oct. 7

- **Prescribed Burns**
 - Kane County Forest Preserve District to conduct prescribed burns for ecological health, Kane County Chronicle, Oct. 25
 - Controlled burns planned at many Kane County forest preserves, Chicago Tribune, Oct. 26

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- Kane County Forest Preserve District to conduct prescribed burns for ecological health, Shaw Local, Oct. 26

TREELINE NEWSLETTER

The Winter 2025 edition is out! Check the newsletter for the latest programs and information. Current print subscribers total 5,387 (+23). Current email subscribers total 14,209 (+830), for a combined total of 19,596 subscribers (+853). As always, free subscriptions to *The TreeLine* newsletter are available at: http://bit.ly/ForestPreserve_Email.

Environmental Education

October Spotlight

After working for nearly two years to secure a *Mighty Acorns* partner school, Naturalist Lisa O'Brien began the first season of *Mighty Acorns* with Sunny Hill Elementary School (Barrington D220), this month. *Mighty Acorns* is an environmental education program that connects 3rd-5th grade students to multiple, meaningful and sustained interactions with their local ecosystems. It is coordinated by The Field Museum, with support from Chicago Wilderness. *Mighty Acorns* schools participate in three classroom sessions and three field study trips throughout the year at local partners' natural area sites, with educational games and stewardship activities. Naturalist O'Brien taught the initial classroom program and worked with Restoration Ecologist Jason Johnson to develop and lead stewardship opportunities at Helm Woods Forest Preserve in Barrington Hills. With the support of senior leadership at Sunny Hill Elementary, she will continue to work with 5th graders throughout this school year, with plans to expand *Mighty Acorns* to 4th and 3rd graders, in coming years.



Naturalist O'Brien and colleagues from Natural Resources Management team-up to teach students about invasive species, before supervising their buckthorn-removal stewardship work.

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	11	191	17	54	1,493	28
School	17	756	44	31	1,028	33
Scout	1	15	15	3	42	14
Community	6	326	54	24	1,092	46
Outreach	2	165	83	7	394	56
Learn from the Experts	3	87	29	10	212	21
Virtual Public*	1	n/a	n/a	3	n/a	n/a
Virtual School	0	0	0	1	125	125
Program Totals	41	1,540	39	133	4,386	34
Nature Center Visitors		1,103			3,272	
Total Attendance		2,643			7,658	
Revenues[^]	\$2,491					

*Note: Only webinars have live attendees.

[^]Excludes LFE/KCCN partnership revenues.



“We are very thankful to you [Naturalist Lisa O’Brien], Carolyn, Maura, Amber and Jason for organizing today’s activities. I can assure you that from what I’ve heard the students loved it!

— 5th grade teacher enrolled as a “Mighty Acorns” partner school

“It was a beautiful night to look up at the stars, Saturn and it’s moon and our moon, too. Great collaboration with the Fox Valley Astronomical Club!”

— “Moon and Star Party” participant

“Great morning learning to identify trees. Barb [Environmental Education Manager Barb McKittrick] did a great job with teaching how to systematically go about identifying trees. Felt I learned a lot!”

— “Fall Tree Identification: Learn from the Experts” participant

In-Person Programs

- **Public Programs** – Environmental Education Manager Barb McKittrick welcomed nine of our Mushroom Monitors to the fall seasonal *Mushroom Foray* at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve in St. Charles. She was joined by consulting mycologist Crystal McAllister and Volunteer Coordinator Robb Cleave. All were thrilled to find and identify 18 species of mushrooms, despite the recent drought.

Naturalist Josh Libman led 28 patrons on the *Senior Stroll* at Johnson’s Mound Forest Preserve in Elburn. The Stroll focused on the beauty of changing leaves. In another recurring monthly program, Naturalist Lisa O’Brien led a meditative, *Nurtured by Nature* hike at Tekakwitha Forest Preserve in St. Charles for 14 participants. A Fall Family Scavenger Hunt, led by Naturalist Amber Ross, was enjoyed by 10 patrons.

Members of the Fox Valley Astronomical Society (FVAS) teamed up with Environmental Education Manager McKittrick to lead a *Moon and Star Party* at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. Ryan Dillman from the FVAS provided a very informative presentation about the Earth's Moon. Then, with a crystal-clear night, the 24 participants were treated to observations of the Moon and other celestial bodies through FVAS members' telescopes. We got to see Saturn and the Barbell Galaxy!

Naturalist Libman led a fall *Birding Hike* at Kenyon Farm Forest Preserve in South Elgin for 25 avid birders. While getting in their 10,000 steps, a group of 25 hikers joined Naturalist Libman for a *Trek with a Naturalist* at Campton Forest Preserve in Campton Hills. At a more leisurely pace, 24 patrons joined Naturalist Erica Lemon for a *Fall Color Hike* at Tekakwitha Woods Forest Preserve, all the while learning about the science behind leaf-color changes.

During the preschool “V” is for Vulture - *Little Saplings* program at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve, Naturalist O’Brien shared a book on vultures while teaching about the different adaptations and roles that vultures have in our local ecosystems. The little naturalists then painted pumpkins and went on a discovery hike to look for vultures.

Librarians from two local library districts welcomed a total of 46 young family members to *Storytime at Creek Bend Nature Center*. After the programs, patrons were invited to explore the nature center.



Collected mushroom species include several different sized Giant Puffballs (*Calvatia gigantea*.)

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Community, Outreach & Scout

Programs – As part of her tabling event focus, Naturalist Lemon took a *Local Wildlife* exhibit to the Gail Borden Library Youth Fair in Elgin. The event drew about 95 attendees, all of whom enjoyed learning about the types of animals that make their home in Kane County. Naturalist Lemon also went to Brightpoint Children’s Home & Aid — taxidermy owl in tow — to present a *Birds of Prey* Traveling Naturalist program to 70 pre-school children.



Naturalist Ross helped a group of 15 Girl Scouts earn their *Hiking Badge* at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve. At the opposite end of the age spectrum, she traveled to Edgewater of Del Webb for a presentation to 50 Veterans on the *Prairie Landscape of Illinois*, and the ways that *Bombus* species rely on prairie.

Naturalist Libman welcomed 25 patrons of the North Aurora Messenger Library to Dick Young Forest Preserve in Batavia for a *Bird Watching* hike. The group identified seasonal species, along the trail. On the same theme, he went to Sun City Huntley to share an indoor *Introduction to Bird Watching* presentation for 200 members of the Sunflower Garden Club.

For our special-needs patrons, Naturalist Ross joined 23 members of two regional Northern Illinois Special Recreation (NISRA) communities at Rutland Forest Preserve in Hampshire to teach the groups about *Bats!* She discussed the bat species found in Illinois, led hikes around the preserve, and helped patrons create a fun bat craft.

Teaming up with St. Charles Park District Outreach Ambassador Pam Otto, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick co-led a presentation on the *Science of Fermentation* for 40 members of the St. Charles Kiwanis Club. The two naturalists explained the science behind the fermentation of food, with a special focus on beer, kefir, sourdough and sauerkraut. Samples of kefir and sourdough were the perfect way to close-out the program.

School Programs – Naturalists Libman and Lemon welcomed 122 homeschooling members from five networks to *Homeschool Hike* programs at LeRoy Oakes, Jon J. Duerr (South Elgin), Buffalo Park (Algonquin), Barnes (Aurora) and Bliss Woods (Sugar Grove) Forest Preserves. Program themes included *Discovery Hikes* and *Fall Colors*.

On the public and private school front, the entire team of naturalists was busy leading 12 school field trips for a total of 634 students. Schools served included Westminster Christian School (Elgin),

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Glenoaks School (UChicago Advent Health), Mackeben Elementary School (D128), Wredling Middle School (D303), Prairie View Elementary School (D301), Gary D. Wright Elementary School (D300), Hanover Countryside Elementary School (D U46), Davis Elementary School (D3030) and Sunny Hill Elementary School (D220.) Themes included *Discovery Hike*, *The Marvelous Prairie*, *Trees and their Leaves*, and *Animal and Seasonal Adaptations*. These field trips were conducted at LeRoy Oakes, Johnson's Mound, Fitchie Creek (Elgin) and Helm Woods Forest Preserves.

Fifty students from Hanover Countryside Elementary School got a special treat when their field trip to LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve coincided with a prescribed burn set for that day. On the spur of the moment, our colleagues in Natural Resource Management volunteered to educate the students about prescribed burns while the students watched the fire in action.



Restoration Crew Leader Pete Dall explained the basics of fire ecology to Hanover Countryside Elementary School 4th graders.

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Sixty students from Davis Elementary School participated in a special *River Study Field Day*, customized by naturalists to fulfill teachers' requests. We planned several stations through which the two classes could rotate. Two naturalists led the students in a dip-netting exercise at the Creek Bend pond and within Ferson Creek. A third naturalist conducted a *Migration Headache* interactive game to teach students about seasonal migrations. We also provided *Tree Discovery Packs* for the classroom teachers to lead units on tree identification.

We also created customized curriculum for the GeoAdventure Club from Wredling Middle School. The 12 club members immersed themselves in the waters of Ferson Creek to conduct a macroinvertebrate analysis and a water-quality study.

- **Learn from the Experts (LFE)/KCCN Programs** – We conducted three high-level adult education *LFE* programs. Naturalist Josh Libman hosted local Native American Kim Sigafus for *Singing Bird and the Importance of Native American Women in Illinois History* at the Barbara Belding Lodge at Brewster Creek Forest Preserve in St. Charles. Kim's spoken-word presentation described the Native women's day-to-day lives and their role in the history of Illinois. She kept the program interactive by distributing drums and rain-sticks to the audience and encouraging their participation.



GeoAdventure Club explorers enjoyed getting their feet wet to observe macroinvertebrate biodiversity.

On a beautiful fall day, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick welcomed 12 patrons to Bliss Woods Forest Preserve for a *Fall Tree Identification* class. This 100%-field based program taught adults the botanical features used to describe trees in the fall, as well as how to use a dichotomous key to identify trees.

Along with KCCNer David Schoenknecht, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick co-led the 2nd annual *Glacial Lake Pingree Circle Tour*, a sold out (64 patrons) 5-hour bus tour of the geologic wonders of Kane County. Starting at Creek Bend Nature Center, attendees boarded a bus and proceeded to travel in and around the bed of the now-extinct, but once vast, Glacial Lake Pingree. KCCNer Schoenknecht and Environmental Education Manager McKittrick provided audio

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commentary and showed educational slides and video throughout the journey. Stops at eight forest preserves and a local regenerative agriculture farm highlighted the geologic features of this Ice Age wonder.



David Schoenknecht kicks off the Glacial Lake Pingree Circle Tour LFE at Creek Bend Nature Center.



Disembarking at Hampshire Forest Preserve, patrons enjoyed a picnic lunch before the 2nd half of the tour.

Nature, Virtually Everywhere! Online Programs

The Environmental Education team continues to bring high-quality nature programs to folks via live virtual hikes, videos, and webinars. In October, we re-released:

- ***Creatures of the Night*** – Learn about the nocturnal creatures of Kane County during our spooktacular video! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXGFlrC77UQ>

External Partnerships

Joining Director of Operations Jeremy Jensen, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick supported Preservation Partners of the Fox Valley at their 50th Anniversary Dinner Celebration in Geneva.

Along with Marketing Specialist Brittany Kovach, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick brainstormed with LVBrown Studio to progress graphic designs for the District's 100-year anniversary celebration.

Environmental Education Manager McKittrick hosted senior officials of the Izaak Walton League (Illinois Division President Garrit Struck and Elgin Chapter President Tom Stewart) to share best practices for designing, building, staffing and utilizing a nature center and environmental education programming. The IWL was recently donated a several-hundred-acre parcel in central Illinois from a waste

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management company and they intend to develop it into a conservation and environmental education hub.

Rental Facilities

Barbara Belding Lodge at Brewster Creek Forest Preserve

In October, the lodge hosted four meetings, one wedding, one baby shower and one celebration of life, totaling \$2,600 in rentals.

Creek Bend Nature Center at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve

In October, Creek Bend hosted a celebration of life, one wedding, and a birthday party, totaling \$2,050 in rentals.