



Community Engagement Department Memorandum

To: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director
From: Laurie Metanchuk, Community Engagement Director
Date: 8/11/2026
Re: July 2026 Report

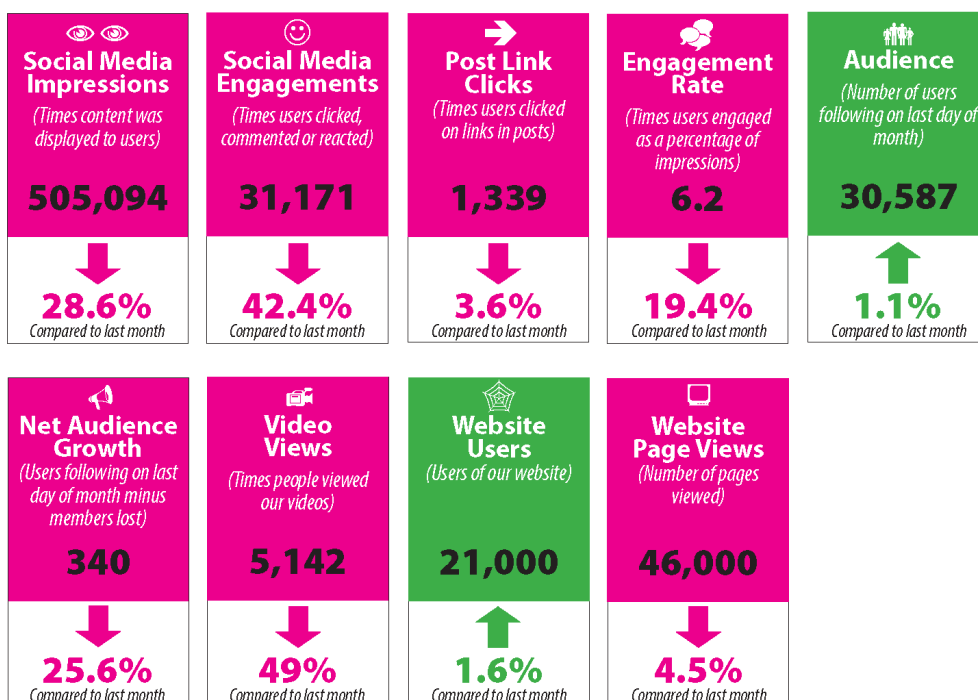
Executive Summary

The acquisition of 220 acres of high-quality wetlands and woodlands (the Hemmer parcels) generated significant public interest and media coverage, reinforcing the District's leadership in land conservation while reaching thousands of residents through traditional and digital media. Although social media impressions and engagements declined following last month's exceptionally high activity, audience growth remained positive and website traffic increased, demonstrating continued public interest in the District's work.

Environmental Education concluded a successful summer camp season while delivering 25 programs that served more than 1,400 participants and visitors. Participant testimonials highlighted the quality of the District's programming and its lasting impact on families, while recurring public programs, community outreach and partnerships continued to foster meaningful connections between residents and nature.

Communications & Marketing

Social media metrics for last month were as follows:



July 2026 Report

Top Posts on Facebook, last month:

By Reach (Unique Users Shown Post)

1. Hemmer acquisitions: 70,951 reached
2. Missing person search: 63,340 reached
3. Fabyan Windmill open: 17,235 reached
4. Volunteer Coordinator: 16,154 reached
5. Nest in truck: 13,863 reached

By Engagement (Clicks, Reactions, Shares)

1. Hemmer acquisitions: 11,900 engagements
2. Missing person search: 6,128 engagements
3. Volunteer Coordinator: 1,878 engagements
4. Nest in truck: 1,519 engagements
5. Rutland feedback: 1,484 engagements

Top Pages on the Website, last month:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. Home page – 5,705 views | 6. Careers – 1,830 views |
| 2. Paul Wolff Campground – 4,490 views | 7. Fabyan Windmill – 1,227 views |
| 3. Locations – 3,498 views | 8. Bids & Proposals – 973 views |
| 4. Big Rock Campground – 2,934 views | 9. Big Rock FP – 882 views |
| 5. Burlington Prairie FP – 1,904 views | 10. LeRoy Oakes FP – 772 views |

Press Release & Coverage

We published the following press releases in July:

- Arrowwood Point Archery Complex Now Open for Public Use in Elburn, July 2
- Forest Preserve District acquires 220 acres of Illinois' highest-quality wetlands and woodlands after 100+ years of protection by one family, July 2
- Open Fishing Clinics offered at Oakhurst Forest Preserve, July 7
- Harness the Power of the Sun at EcoLab, July 9
- Rusty Rodeo Returns to Help Round Up Invasive Crayfish, July 16

The District received the following coverage:

Kane Forest Preserve Foundation Golf Outing

- Register by June 30 for early-bird rate at Kane Forest Preserve Foundation golf outing, July 1

Land Acquisition

- Kane County Forest Preserve Acquires 220 Acres of Rare Natural Habitat, Kane County Connects, July 2
- Kane County Forest Preserve acquires 220 'quality' acres for \$3.14M near Hampshire, Daily Herald, July 4
- Kane Co. Forest Preserve Adds 220 Acres of Rare Wetlands, Woodlands, St. Charles Patch, July 10

July 2026 Report

Natural Resource Management

- Forest Preserve District Invests in Wetland Restoration Across Eight Preserves, Kane County Connects, July 20

Nature Programs

- Harness the power of the sun at Creek Bend Nature Center's EcoLab, Daily Herald, July 13
- Kane Forest Preserve District event designed to capture invasive crayfish, Chicago Tribune, July 18
- 'Rusty Rodeo' Returns to Fox River to Battle Invasive Crayfish, St. Charles Patch, July 18

Public Safety

- Gilberts man reported missing; Kane County forest preserve closed during search, Shaw Local, July 10
- West suburban forest preserve, campground closed as police help with missing person case, ABC7 Chicago, July 14

Conferences, Meetings & Training

7/1 – A **Kane Forest Preserve Foundation Board Retreat** was held at District headquarters, attended by Executive Director Haberthur, Community Engagement Director Metanchuk, and Assistant Director of Finance Melissa Carrano, as well as the Foundation Board.

7/8 – The District hosted a **Congressional Staffers' Delegation** at Burlington Prairie Forest Preserve. Staff met with representatives from U.S. Senators Tammy Duckworth and Dick Durbin's offices, as well as with staffers from U.S. Representatives Bill Foster and Robin Kelly. The goal of the meeting was to meet senior staff from both sides, discuss the bison project and other District initiatives, plus potential grant opportunities.

7/13 – Director Metanchuk participated in County's bimonthly, online, **Suicide Prevention Task Force**.

7/20 – Director Metanchuk, Environmental Education Manager McKittrick and other staffers participated in the **Urban Ecology Field Station planning session** with architect Wight & Co.

Environmental Education

July Spotlight

Capitalizing on themes like *Nature's Superheroes*, *Art in Nature*, *Summer Unplugged*, *Animal Adventures* and *Tracking & Survival*, July marked a triumphant end to our summer camp season. For 1st-8th grade campers, the entire naturalist team served up educational summer fun during five, week-long sessions. Camps were held at four forest preserves: LeRoy Oakes in St. Charles, Camp Tomo Chi-Chi Knolls in Gilberts, Jon Duerr in South Elgin, and Burnidge in Elgin.

Community Engagement Department Memorandum

July 2026 Report



Middle school camps, including Tracking & Survival Camp spearheaded by Naturalist Amber Ross, were full to capacity.



Naturalist Erica Lemon led the popular Nature's Superheroes Camp for grade school students.

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	10	172	17	10	172	17
School	3	45	15	3	45	15
Scout	2	43	22	2	43	22
Community	6	139	23	6	139	23
Outreach	3	155	52	3	155	52
Learn from the Experts	0	0	0	0	0	0
Virtual Public*	1	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	n/a
Virtual School	0	0	0	0	0	0
Program Totals	25	554	23	25	554	23
Nature Center Visitors		874			874	
Total Attendance		1,428			1,428	
Revenues^	\$5,695					

*Note: Only webinars have live attendees

^Excludes LFE/KCCN partnership revenues



"My kids attended several day camps around the area last summer (2025). This was their absolute favorite camp and the only one they insisted I register them for again this summer (2026). Ranger Josh is one-of-a-kind, and his enthusiasm makes the experience memorable for the kids. They love him and love learning from him.

— Parent of a "Week in the Woods" camper

July 2026 Report

"It was a very fun experience. The leaders were very attentive to everyone's needs getting in and out of the kayaks and making sure everyone was OK. Someone fell overboard and the leaders were right on it and also kept the others together. We felt very safe."

— "Kayaking the Fox" participant

Public Programs

Each season, the naturalist team curates timely new programs that interpret our local ecology, with the goal of inspiring connections with nature. Of the three offered, highlights this month were:

Kayaking the Fox River: Naturalist Libman teamed up with our partners from Rocktown Adventures to lead 15 patrons on a naturalist-guided tour of the Fox River. The group put in at Jon Duerr Forest Preserve after a land-based paddling skills refresher, then traveled about six miles downriver to Ferson Creek Park.

Open Fishing Clinic: Our friends from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) helped us introduce the art and sport of fishing to 30 anglers of all ages at Oakhurst Forest Preserve in Aurora. IDNR Urban and Community Fishing program leaders brought fishing gear and expertise, and Naturalist Libman hosted the program. For many, this was their first time fishing. Everyone had success pulling in a bluegill or two!

To attract return patrons and build a loyal following of citizen conservationists, we offer several series of programs that meet on a recurring basis. All are popular, and together, this suite of serial programs serves a wide range of target audiences:



Two thumbs up for spending time in nature and learning a new skill. These little anglers were happy with their catch!

- **Bird Watching Walks:** Naturalist Libman's monthly walks celebrate the changing seasons as he leads patrons on hikes to look and listen for birds and covers basic bird identification skills. In July, 20 attendees joined him at Freeman Kame Forest Preserve, a new site for many of them.
- **Nurtured by Nature:** Naturalist Lisa O'Brien invites adults to experience the healing effects of nature. During this monthly series, she incorporates gentle stretching, deep breathing and a focus on awareness during walks designed to nurture the mind, body and spirit. July's program, with 18 patrons, was at Hoscheit Woods Forest Preserve among the many beautiful prairie flowers in bloom.
- **Yarn Art:** Naturalist Erica Lemon invites crafters of all ages to bring their own yarn art project to work within a group of like-minded yarn enthusiasts at Creek Bend Nature Center.
- **StoryTime at Creek Bend Nature Center:** Our patrons join a librarian from the St. Charles Public Library for read-aloud stories, finger plays, and songs, staying to enjoy the interactive exhibits in

July 2026 Report

the Nature Center following the program. We welcomed 35 folks in July. Patrons were encouraged to visit a second story along the *StoryWalk*.

- **Twigs to Trees:** For children in kindergarten to 2nd grade, Naturalist O'Brien, extends our popular *Little Saplings* program. This month, nine children gathered at Creek Bend Nature Center for *Creek Walk* – exploring Ferson Creek for wildlife - mostly crayfish and clams.

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 July, we served 139 patrons in this fashion.

Outreach programs are given at public schools, day care centers and libraries. The three July outreach programs (led by Naturalists Libman, Ross and Lemon) included: *Traveling Naturalist: Nature's Superheroes* programs at Kensington Schools of Geneva and St. Charles and Brightpoint Academy in Carpentersville.

School Programs

Summer break is a slow time for school programs, but Naturalist Libman did one homeschool hike for 27 students of Adventure Club of St. Charles at Dick Young Forest Preserve in Batavia. The families enjoyed learning about, netting and examining *Insects*. Naturalist Ross traveled to the Fox Valley Montessori School to teach preschoolers about *Nature's Superheroes*. Naturalist Lisa O'Brien supported Sunny Hill Elementary School with a *Mighty Acorns Jumpstart program*, and taught the students about magnets and compasses and finishing with an orienteering course that led children to a popsicle treasure!

Scout Programs

Naturalists Lemon, Libman and Ross conducted two scout programs at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve – one *Fire Building* program for 15 Scouting America scouts and one *Prairie & Pond Ecosystems* program for 28 American Heritage Girls of Batavia/Geneva.

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 July, we released:

Keystone Species – Learn from Naturalist Intern Harriet Hutchison the meaning and impact of keystone species.

https://www.youtube.com/shorts/qgDeAgvA_pA



July 2026 Report

Rental Facilities

Barbara Belding Lodge at Brewster Creek Forest Preserve

In July, the lodge hosted four meetings and a baby shower, totaling \$1,100.

Creek Bend Nature Center at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve

In July, Creek Bend hosted a bridal shower, totaling \$500.

Kane Forest Preserve Foundation

Kane Forest Golf Outing

Get ready for 18 holes of fun for a great cause during the Kane Forest Preserve Foundation's annual Golf Outing, Thursday, Sept. 10. Proceeds go to support the second phase of a Nature Play Space Project at LeRoy Oakes for young children. **Thank you to the Commissioners who have already sponsored or registered for this event. To add your name to the list and register to golf, or sponsor, visit www.kaneforestpreservefoundation.org**



18 HOLES OF GOLF - CONTESTS - FOOD & FUN!

THURSDAY, SEPT. 10
HUGHES CREEK GOLF COURSE
1749 SPRING VALLEY DR., ELBURN

- Check-In at 9 a.m. - Breakfast sponsored by Chick-Fil-A Elgin
- Tee-Off at 10 a.m.
- Lunch & Drink Tickets
- Golf concludes around 3 p.m.
- Dinner, Raffles & Auction
- Chance to win a car! Hole-in-One sponsored by Bob Jass Chevrolet of Elburn

REGISTRATION

\$450 PER FOURSOME (EARLY-BIRD SPECIAL)
\$500 AFTER JULY 1ST

SCAN TO REGISTER!



GOLF FOR A GREAT CAUSE
Supporting Phase II of the Nature Play Space
at LeRoy Oakes Forest Preserve

www.kaneforestpreservefoundation.org

Sponsorships Available: KovachBrittany@kaneforest.com

