



Planning & Land Protection Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director

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

RE: April 2025 Department Monthly Report

LAND ACQUISITION & PLANNING

Staff continues to work with the Land Acquisition Committee on the evaluation and acquisition of properties.

- May 2nd the District closed on a half-acre parcel adjacent to Sleepy Hollow Ravine Forest Preserve in Dundee. This parcel will provide critical maintenance access to the north half of the Ravine.



GRANT PROJECTS

MILL CREEK GREENWAY

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:

- February 2025- Contractor working to secure required bonds and insurance.
- March 2025 – Contractor submitted signed bonds and insurance. Pre-construction meeting to be held in April.
- April 2025- Pre-construction meeting held to go over project team and schedule. Contractor delivered fill dirt to the site for use in the proposed subgrade.



BIG ROCK FOREST PRESERVE 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.

- February 2025- Contractor working to secure required bonds and insurance.
- March 2025 – Contractor submitted signed bonds and insurance. Pre-construction meeting to be held in April.
- April 2025 – Pre-construction meeting held to go over project team and schedule.



FITCHIE CREEK FOREST PRESERVE 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.

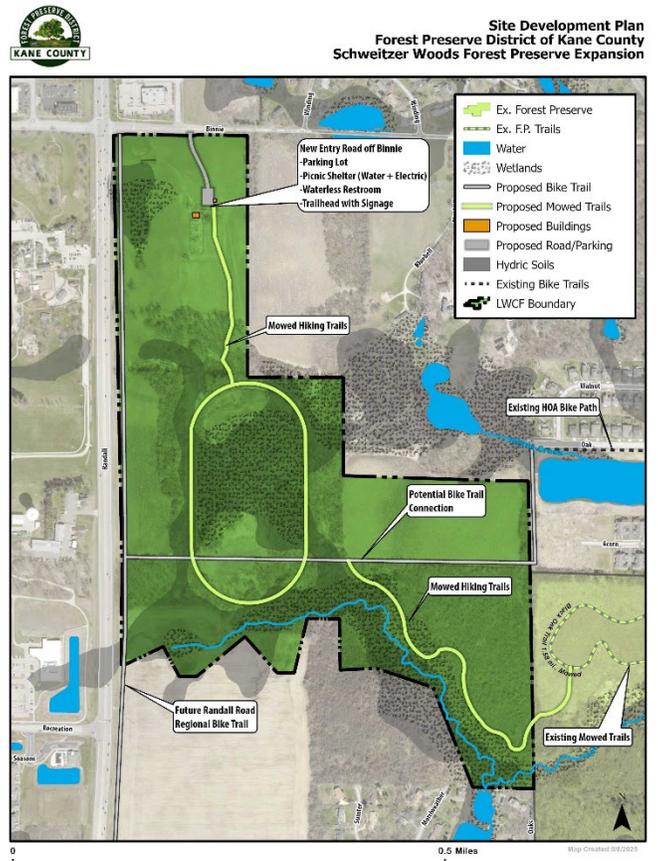
- January 2025- Staff began design development plans. Project expected to release for bid in April
- March 2025 – Staff working on development plans.
- April 2025 – Additional field research to identify erosion sources after rain events.

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.



- April 2025 – planning staff continue to work on the grant application due on May 9th. A condition of the application requires a public input meeting to show public support for the acquisition. On April 17 the District hosted a public input meeting at Schweitzer House. The meeting was well attended with 21 residents showing up on a cold and rainy spring evening to show their support and offer suggestions on the proposed improvements.

CAPITAL PROJECTS

MUIRHEAD SPRINGS 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:

- April 2025 – Staff, V3 and Davey Resource group met onsite to discuss spring plans. New data tracking monitors have been installed that will allow Davey to track hydrology on a daily basis versus visiting the site to download the data.



JOHNSONS MOUND CENTENNIAL IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT

On June 8, 2025, the District will celebrate its' 100-year anniversary preserving and restoring Kane County's natural areas. The first preserve acquired by the District was Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve in Blackberry Township. To celebrate 100 years of conservation, the District plans to expand Johnson's Mound Forest Preserve by restoring thirty-five (35) acres of agricultural land to forest and prairie. A key component to the centennial celebration will be the opportunity for the public to participate in the 12 acres woodland restoration and planting of 800 trees. Trees of various sizes will be offered for public donation that will include a commemorative plaque to recognize the generous donation. Revenue generated from the sale of trees is expected to be over \$170,000 and will be used to help offset the cost of the restoration and improvements at Johnson's Mound. Additional improvements planned include the following: 23 acres of prairie restoration, Volunteer/donor memorial / Sculpture, Additional limestone trails, Ribbon cutting/ceremony on anniversary date.

Project Updates:

- February 2025 – Bids for construction have been received and are expected to be awarded in March 2025.
- March 2025 – Obsidian Asphalt Paving, Inc. was chosen as the lowest and qualified bidder. Pre-construction meeting to be held in April.
- April 2025 – Base stone set for new trails and council ring. Footings for monuments and sculptures excavated. Mike Baur confirmed access path for his crane operator.



MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES

- April 1st – Planning, Operations and Dan Lobbes of the Conservation Foundation met at the Galvin property/Schweitzer Woods Forest Preserve Expansion for a site visit.
- April 7th – Planning staff met onsite at Johnson’s Mound for the pre-construction meeting with the contractor, Obsidian asphalt.
- April 8th – Planning staff met onsite at Mill Creek and Big Rock for pre-construction meetings with the contractor, Evans and Sons.
- April 11th – Planning staff visited the Eden stone quarry to select the stones that will become the donor monuments at Johnson’s Mound Centennial celebration.
- April 17th – Planning staff hosted a public input meeting at Schweitzer house for the planned acquisition as required by the LWCF grant application.
- April 24th – Director Rooks-Lopez attended the Conservation Foundation Earth Day Dinner
- April 29-30th – Director Rooks-Lopez attended Legislative conference in Springfield
- May 1st – Planning staff met with Wight & Company to discuss the 2 geotechnical borings to be done in preparation for the new pedestrian bridge crossing, connecting Les Arends to The Wilds at Red Oak.