



Planning & Land Protection Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director

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

RE: July 2025 Department Monthly Report

LAND ACQUISITION & PLANNING

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

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:

- May 2025 – Construction begins as Evans & Son shape the new entry roadway, parking lot and detention basin.
- June 2025 - Evans & Sons experienced staffing issues in June. As a result, construction progress has been much slower than expected. Staff is currently exploring all options to get the project back on track.
- July 2025 – District issued a notice of Contractor Default to the bonding company for Evans and Sons, Employers Mutual Casualty Co. The bonding company has agreed to pay the difference in contract price between Evans and Sons and the second lowest qualified bidder Earthwerks. Earthwerks has agreed to honor their previously bid pricing and will begin work in August pending board approval of the contract.



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.

- May 2025- Evans & Son delivered excavator to site. Project to break ground first week of June.
- June 2025 - Evans & Sons experienced staffing issues in June. As a result, construction progress has been much slower than expected. Staff is currently exploring all options to get the project back on track.
- July 2025 – District issued a notice of Contractor Default to the bonding company for Evans and Sons, Employers Mutual Casualty Co. The bonding company has agreed to pay the difference in contract price between Evans and Sons and the second lowest qualified bidder Obsidian Asphalt. Obsidian has agreed to honor their previously bid pricing and will begin work in August pending board approval of the contract.



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.

- Design and engineering are expected to begin in later summer. The project is expected to be bid in late fall of 2025/2026 with construction anticipated to begin in early summer 2026.

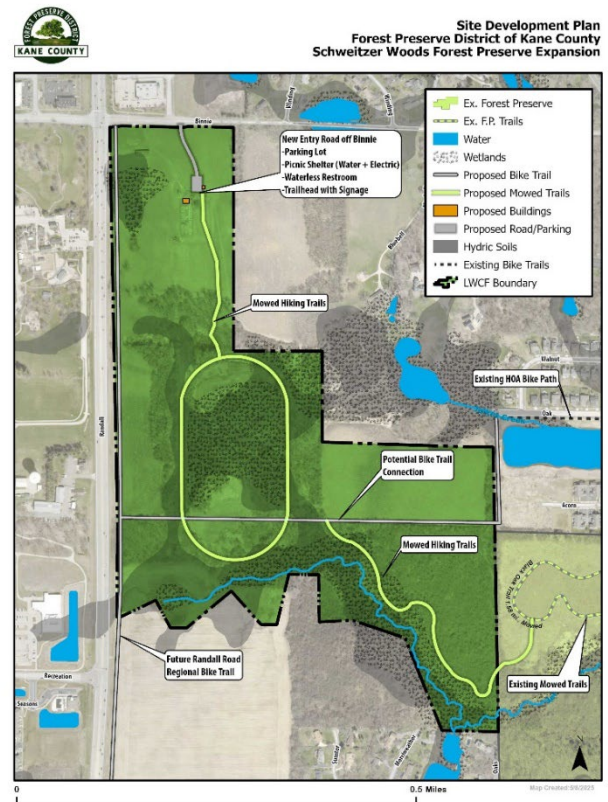


GRANT APPLICATIONS – PENDING

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.

- July 2025- Acquisition grants through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Open space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) opened in July. While the state will only award acquisition funds through either the LWCF or OSLAD grants they encourage agencies to apply for both grants. Planning staff have started the application process to apply for acquisition assistance for the Schweitzer Woods expansion project.



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.

- July 2025-Wight and District staff met on July 16th for an onsite project kick-off meeting. A second meeting to discuss concepts is scheduled for August 7th.



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.

- June 2025 – 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.

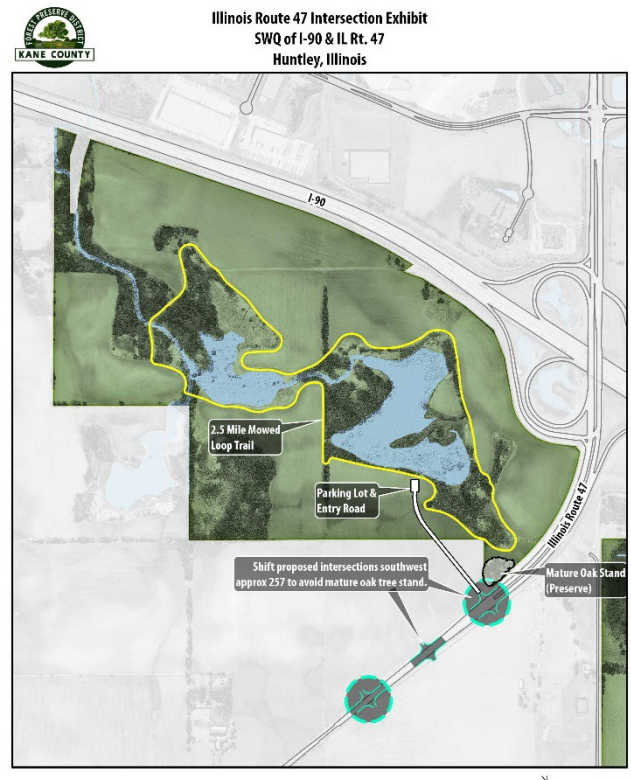
- July 2025 – Contract was officially awarded to Obsidian Asphalt and construction is expected to begin in early August. Pre-construction meeting slated for 8/6/25.



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.

- July 2025- The project was awarded to Christopher B. Burke Engineering. The project kick-off meeting is scheduled for August 5th.



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.

- July 2025- The project was awarded to WBK Engineering. The project kick-off meeting is scheduled for August 5th.



MISCELLANEOUS UPDATES

- July 2nd – Nature Play Space at LeRoy Oakes project coordination meeting
- July 9th – Planning staff attended the Fox River Ecosystem Partnership (FREPP) meeting at Oakhurst Forest Preserve.
- July 11th – Planning staff met with representatives of Earthwerks to discuss their bid for the Mill Creek Greenway Archery project
- July 14th - Planning staff met with representatives of Obsidian Asphalt to discuss their bid for Big Rock Limestone trail resurfacing.
- July 21st- Executive Director Haberthur, planning staff and representative from Wight met with members of Kane County Audubon to gather input and support for the Muirhead Springs Overlook project.
- July 24th - Executive Director Haberthur, and planning staff met with representatives from the City of St. Charles and St. Charles Park District to discuss the Union Pacific Railroad bike trail project.