

November 07, 2023

Memorandum

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Nina Carmichael, Leadership in Conservation Fellow

Re: November staff reports

Executive Management (Lorrie Pearson, Michael Daab)

- Michael, Kathryn, Mary, Bridgette, Lisa, and Lorrie attended relevant sessions of the IL Association of Park Districts' Legal Symposium on November 2nd via Zoom and learned about the latest labor and employment, liability, financial, and other laws affecting the operations of park and forest preserve districts.
- Lorrie helped to officially unveil the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail "Homer Park" Trail sign (S. Homer Lake Rd., off County Rd. 2700 E) on Friday, October 27. Thank you to Commissioner Knott and several other staff for supporting the event.
- Lorrie participated in the Chamber's Champaign County First advocacy trip to Springfield, visiting with DCEO, IDOT, IEPA, State Sen. Rose, State Rep. Ammons, and staff from U.S. Senators Duckworth and Durbin. Duckworth staff indicated they will try to arrange a meeting with railroad representatives to discuss the remaining KRT issues.
- Lorrie participated in the quarterly Central Illinois Directors' Roundtable meeting, hosted by Champaign Park District.



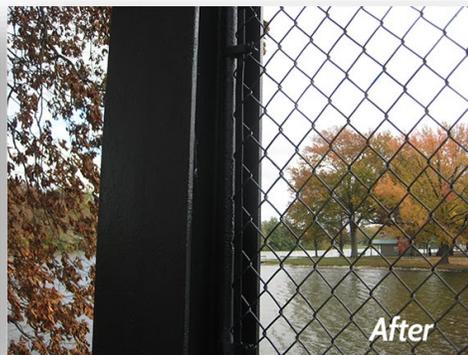
CCFPD Fellow (Nina Carmichael)

- Nina, Jacob Watson, and Skylar attended the concluding field day training (field day) to become certified type 2 wildland firefighters (FFT2). The 6-hour training was led by Tom Wilson of IDNR Forestry at the Douglas-Hart Nature Center in Mattoon, IL.
- Shadowed Selena's program *History through Gaming* at the Champaign Public Library.
- Assisted UIUC graduate students with bird banding at Homer Lake. Practiced mist net extraction, aging, and sexing birds with experts in the field of ornithology, Mike Avara, Janice Enos, and Tara Beveroth.
- Attended a conservation education training focused on birds of IL in Springfield through IDNR Entice.

Planning and Construction (Bridgette Moen)

- Bridgette participated in the IPRA Webinar, *Design/Build, the good, the bad, the ugly*. The Forest Preserves are now allowed to enter into design-build contracts (as opposed to more typical design-bid-build contracts); however, due to the complexity of this arrangement, IPRA recommends districts conduct a trial design-build contract with a small project before committing to using design-build on a large project.

- Sam passed the National Green Infrastructure Certification Program exam, the program for which he won a scholarship from the National Recreation and Parks Association earlier this year.
- Construction has primarily been painting the covered and suspension bridges at Lake of the Woods and completing small project requests on poor weather days.



- Planning, Lake of the Woods Operations, Construction, and Natural Resources met to review the Lake of the Woods stream-barb project, draft construction documents, and talking points regarding the impacts on visitors.
- Sam inventoried paved trail intersections at Lake of the Woods and the KRT to identify signage to be added to comply with the new Public Act 103-0386, requiring signs alerting trail users and motorists of a crossing.
- Sam continued drafting/editing text and figures for the Comprehensive Plan.
- Bridgette updated plans for the upcoming Elks Lake Pavilion renovation at Lake of the Woods.
- Planning and Lake of the Woods Operations met with Farnsworth Group to review a draft of the drawings for the Discovery Greenhouse.

Business and Finance (Carron Johnson)

- While onboarding a strong candidate for the Business and Finance Director position, the candidate decided to stay with her current employer and will no longer be joining us. The search continues!

- Our current Finance Consultant, Carron Johnson, will stay with us for a few more months until a new Business and Finance Director is brought up to speed. We are so very grateful for her diligence and expertise.
- We have begun recruiting for the vacant [Assistant Business and Finance Director position](#)
- We bid farewell to Tim Sullivan, who helped with both the Foundation and finance.
- The focus this month has been on the FY24 budget, levy, payables, and reporting.

Human Resources (Kathryn Glynn, Mary Beck)

- During October, HR processed 1 hire and 9 terminations.
- As of October 31st, our total headcount was 107 employees; including 49 FT, 19 PT, and 40 seasonal.
- There were two employee injuries in October, neither requiring medical attention.
- The Forest Preserves are receiving a \$500 reimbursement from PDRMA for a portion of the aerial lift rental fee via their ladder alternative subsidy program. The lift was needed for painting the covered bridge and the Little Golden Gate Bridge.
- Open Enrollment is quickly approaching and is planned to be held at the end of November through the beginning of December.
- HR is in the process of finalizing the implementation details for the upcoming Paid Leave for All Workers (PLAWA) law taking effect January 1, 2024.

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- Media this month included:
 - **This spooky tree at Sangamon River Forest Preserve has seen some things**
<https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/this-spooky-tree-at-sangamon-river-forest-preserve-has-seen-some-things/>
 - **Champaign County African American Heritage Trail expands into Homer, Illinois with two new sign unveilings**
<https://newschannel20.com/news/local/champaign-county-african-american-heritage-trail-expands-into-homer-illinois-with-two-new-sign-unveilings>
 - **Mahomet bike trail gets \$100,000 for enhancements**
<https://www.wcia.com/news/mahomet-bike-trail-gets-100000-for-enhancements/>
 - **Old Homer Park added to African American Heritage Trail**
<https://www.wcia.com/news/local-news/old-homer-park-added-to-african-american-heritage-trail/>
 - **Spend some time in nature on Indigenous Peoples Day**
<https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/spend-some-time-in-nature-on-indigenous-peoples-day/>
 - **Inside Out | Beyond the Caw: Exploring intelligence, adaptability of American crow**
https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/parks-recreation/inside-out-beyond-the-caw-exploring-intelligence-adaptability-of-american-crow/article_7565b692-f79b-53c3-83e8-801318d32115.html
- Social media followers update.

	FACEBOOK	+/-	INSTAGRAM	+/-
CCFPD	8,865	+218	3,657	+21
KRT	5,641	+67	174	+3
MGP	5,452	+22	1,355	+2
HLIC	3,699	+11		
GC	2,209	+8	369	+2
FPPF	699	+4		

- October Rental Info:

2023	2022	October		2023	2022
# Rentals	# Rentals	Preserve	Facility	\$	\$
11	9	HL	Salt Fork Center	\$2,650	\$3,800
1	1	HL	Walnut Hill Shelter	\$150	\$80
2	2	LOW	Botanical Garden Weddings	\$1,990	\$2,040
9	13	LOW	Elks Lake Pavilion	\$3,250	\$4,275
9	10	LOW	Izaak Walton Cabin	\$2,040	\$1,830
10	18*	LOW	Lake of the Woods Pavilion	\$3,070	\$2,950
0	1	LOW	Lakeview Shelter	\$0	\$80
2	3	LOW	Riverview Retreat Center	\$400	\$715
2	3	LOW	Rotary Hill Shelter	\$680	\$540
0	0	LOW	Sycamore Hollow Shelter	\$0	\$0
4	2	MF	Activity Center	\$1,400	\$700
0	0	RB	River Bend Shelter	\$0	\$0
50	44		TOTAL	\$15,630	\$17,010
* 11 are early voting					

- Lisa attended the Illinois Office of Tourism Statewide Listening Tour on Thursday, November 2 at the Traditions Club at the State Farm Center. The new Illinois Office of Tourism Director, Daniel Thomas, was in the area to hear from our local business owners, attractions, and stakeholders on their needs, thoughts, and concerns about tourism in our area and the support needed from the state.
- We worked with Sweet Lemonade Photography to take new employee headshots and stills of staff working that will be used in an employee recruitment campaign in 2024.
- Kristin developed the first employee recruitment video, featuring Mark Hanson: [Mark Hanson- Work Closer to Nature at Champaign County Forest Preserves - YouTube](#). This was posted to the Champaign County Forest Preserves LinkedIn and Indeed.
- Enjoy Illinois is including Middle Fork River Forest Preserve in their 2024 Illinois Tourism commercials which highlights the International Dark Sky Park. Film crews visited the preserve in late October and shot footage on Wednesday, November 8. The commercial will be featured in the 2024 Fall campaign.
- Kristin created and posted a video promoting the 16th Annual Lincoln Lecture Series: [Voices of Our Past- Lincoln Lecture Series - YouTube](#)

- In 2015, the governor of Illinois proclaimed that October would officially become OAKtober: Oak Awareness Month. Throughout the month, social media posts were made by Emily Williams, and photos from Botanical Garden and NR staff to explain the importance of the Oak as a keystone species and to describe some of the efforts that the forest preserves are taking to protect and restore Oak woodlands.



Picture and original idea courtesy of Jaymie Huffman and Michael Dale

- Kristin attended a webinar ‘Audience Identification & Marketing Plans - Unveiling Strategies for Success’ presented by Clanin Marketing.
- Updated online and print ads to reflect the upcoming Night Lights Event and Middle Fork River Forest Preserve International Dark Sky Park and Campground to raise awareness ahead of Giving Tuesday.

FPPF Social Media/Marketing/Meetings:

- Highlighted Forest Preserve Friends Foundation History: [75 Years of Champaign County Forest Preserves- 47 Years of Forest Preserve Friends Foundation - YouTube](#)
 - Kristin attended a webinar ‘From Invisible to Unforgettable: Your Nonprofit's Guide to Dominating Giving Tuesday’ to learn strategies to apply to this year’s Giving Tuesday Campaign.
 - Kristin coordinated with and video recorded a local Astrophotographer Gabe Difanis, who gave a video testimonial of the Middle Fork River Forest International Dark Sky Park and Campground. He, along with David Leake will both be featured in the

upcoming Giving Tuesday Campaign to continue to raise funds for the Dark Sky Park: Trail and Amenities Project.

- Highlighted the work on the suspension bridge and covered bridge at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve, thanking staff, donors, and the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation.

 **Forest Preserve Friends Foundation**
Published by Kristin Rose · October 24 at 1:54 PM · 🌐

We couldn't have said it better ourselves. The Forest Preserve Friends Foundation is proud to support the Champaign County Forest Preserves.



 **Champaign County Forest Preserve District**
October 24 at 1:53 PM · 🌐

Look at these fresh paint jobs! The hard work of our staff painting the covered bridge and suspension bridge at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve has really pai... See more

No insights to show ⓘ [Boost a post](#)

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Grants and Fundraising (Ryan Anderson)

- **Sleepy Creek Event** – Will be held on Wednesday, November 8, at Sleepy Creek Vineyard.
- **Three Rivers Society Party**-Will be held on Thursday, December 7, 6pm-8pm at the Salt Fork Center, Homer Lake Forest Preserve.
- We are asking for testimonials to be featured in the upcoming Giving Tuesday campaign. If you know someone who would like to be featured or would like to participate themselves, please contact Kristin krose@ccfpd.org for more information.

Fundraising Campaigns Progress as of 10/24/23:

Campaign	Raised	Left	Goal	%
Dark Sky Trail	\$ 37,651.20	\$ 62,348.80	\$ 100,000.00	38%
Timberdoodle Trail	\$ 4,523.00	\$ 2,477.00	\$ 7,000.00	65%
Homer Lake Boat Launch	\$ 5,580.00	\$ 14,420.00	\$ 20,000.00	28%

Fundraising Trends (as of 10/24/2023)

Donations 4-Year Summary

4-year totals:	2020	2021	2022	2023(ytd)
Total \$	\$164,219.10	\$209,832.74	\$207,053.66	\$133,448.28
Total \$ (adjusted)	\$111,738.24	\$174,725.10	\$175,731.78	\$107,136.38
# of donors (adjusted)	341	407	345	262
# of 1st time donors	134	165	87	104

"Adjusted" numbers have grants and bequests removed. Updates to Bloomerang have altered these figures:

Adjusted Revenue by Month (Jul-Oct)

	July	August	September	October
2020	\$ 4,361.14	\$1,615.92	\$3,356.50	\$4,330.77
2021	\$ 3,758.82	\$6,061.91	\$5,408.10	\$4,207.40
2022	\$ 2,515.53	\$4,799.53	\$16,357.80	\$9,057.12
2023	\$ 3,234.10	\$45,040.94	\$5,065.74	\$9,300.50

Volunteer Coordinator (Sue Gallo)

- Sue is grateful to staff for supporting so many volunteer service and learning opportunities this past month! (see NR, HL and LOW reports)

- After four months of coordinating, Lincoln’s Challenge Academy cadets got started removing honeysuckle along the KRT! Three Forest Preserve volunteers helped Sue work with the cadets, anticipating the volunteers eventually taking over this task.
- Hosted the monthly Champaign County Volunteer Coordinator working group meeting at the Izaak Walton Cabin. Attendees were wowed by the beauty of the site!



- Completed reworking of a powerful field in the database that had been poorly attributed when the database was originally set up. This will allow volunteer coordinators more flexibility and efficiency in organizing volunteers. Additionally, performed some database maintenance and cleanup.
- Met with Peter Goodspeed and Patrick Ahasic about the feasibility of developing formal service learning opportunities targeted specifically to high school environment clubs who have reached out to volunteer with the Forest Preserves. We created a rough proposal of opportunities.
- We’ve had 8 new volunteer applicants since last month.

Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Chris Edmondson & Joie Torres)

- Weather remained conducive to outdoor activities and numbers continued to be strong at the golf course in October. For the month, we had 3,094 players, which is above the 5-year average of 2,560.

- Revenue numbers also continued to be higher than average, with October totaling \$79,676, as compared to the 5-year average of \$61,780.
- Outings and events concluded for the 2023 golf season in October. Below is the total list of golf outings and tournaments held at the golf course this season, with comparison numbers to 2022. A nice increase across the board in events, player count, and revenues from golf outing fees and merchandise purchases.

Outing	# of Players	23 Total Rev	23 Actual Merch
Bulldog Gridiron Club	80	\$4,490.00	\$400.00
Mahomet Lions Club	100	\$6,025.00	\$525.00
Edelman Electric	72	\$4,715.00	\$360.00
Bulldog Open	152	\$10,426.89	\$1,620.44
Hildreth Reunion	79	\$2,844.00	\$285.00
Mahomet Rotary	48	\$2,443.00	\$340.00
Grasshoppers	38	\$1,064.00	\$0.00
MSHS Golf Team Fundraiser	96	\$5,257.52	\$480.00
St. Thomas More ABO	144	\$9,783.68	\$720.00
U of I Wrestling - RAINOUT	10	\$907.00	\$571.00
Smitley Memorial	100	\$5,186.00	\$500.00
Mahomet Community Foundation	92	\$6,994.20	\$759.20
Local #149	104	\$6,415.00	\$900.00
Champaign Rotary	72	\$4,765.00	\$805.00
Black & Gold Initiative	54	\$2,970.00	\$360.00
Girls HS County Tournament	32	\$660.00	\$0.00
Grasshoppers	27	\$756.00	\$0.00
Wells and Wells	23	\$1,342.23	\$327.00
CAUSBC	72	\$4,098.64	\$394.64
Boys County HS Tournament	42	\$1,260.00	\$0.00
Mahomet Chamber of Commerce	72	\$4,727.00	\$360.00
AMBUCS	108	\$6,049.00	\$540.00
Chandler Group	24	\$1,025.50	\$161.50
PAGO - Fink Group	29	\$1,044.00	\$0.00
McLean County Seniors	130	\$3,640.00	\$0.00
Yard Goats Baseball	104	\$5,586.00	\$520.00
2023 Totals	1904	\$104,474.66	\$10,928.78

2022 Totals	1512	\$96,132.32	\$9,640.25
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Difference	392	\$8,342.34	\$1,288.53
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Tournament	# of Players	23 Total Rev
Season Opener	124	\$9,300.00
Naughtin Open	48	\$3,360.00
Hartwell Match Play	31	\$775.00
Parent-Child	45	\$2,025.00

Junior Open	91	\$1,975.00
Club Championship	38	\$950.00
Better Ball	100	\$7,500.00
2023 Totals	477	\$25,885.00
2022 Totals	444	\$23,545.00

- Our season-ending “Hubie Cup” event was held the first weekend of October. This annual friendly competition named in honor of former Head Golf Professional Dave Huber, features the Top 24 most loyal players from the past season (those who played in leagues, tournaments, weekend events, etc.). These players are determined by points received for participation in these mentioned events throughout the year. We hold a pairings dinner on Friday evening and then 18-hole golf matches on Saturday and Sunday, with an awards celebration and lunch on Sunday following play. The chase for points has helped to increase play in our leagues and events each season.
- Seasonal staffing has started to decrease as we head toward the offseason. The snack and beverage carts are closed now. Pro Shop staff are in the process of preparing the Golf Course Clubhouse for the winter golf simulator season.

Golf Maintenance:

- We have been mowing once a week on greens, tees, and fairways. Early frost has slowed things down dramatically.
- The maintenance crew continues to mulch leaves and collect leaves from unwanted areas.
- We could not blow the irrigation this month, due to no compressor. We should have a compressor early next month.
- The course continues to be in great shape! We are so proud of the hard work the golf crew has done for us this season.

Museum and Education Department (Kamryn Suttinger)

Patrons Served

	In-Person Programming*	Online Programming*	Outreach**	MGP Visitation	HLIC Visitation	
Jan-23	78	302	423	Closed		40
Feb-23	286	92	35	Closed		79
Mar-23	246	150	90	707		167
Apr-23	1312	0	219	830		274
May-23	1559	0	0	1282		355
Jun-23	892	0	0	1616		239
Jul-23	1197	0	0	1578		136
Aug-23	984	0	465	1215		153
Sep-23	603	0	240	867		216
Oct-23	1253	0	57	829		194

YTD	8410	544	1529	8924	1853
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** Includes all youth and public program opportunities ** Includes loan kits and tabling events*

Collections and Exhibits:

- The fox snakes at the Interpretive Center are now prepared for the winter. Cathy installed radiant heat panels in both of their enclosures which will maintain safe temperatures inside their enclosures and these panels use very little electricity. Thank you to Roy for helping.
- Kamryn, Stacey, Pat, and Mark are conducting interviews for the Collections Coordinator position. We received 19 applications. The top five were selected for interviews. The top two or three candidates will then be offered a second interview based on a hands-on collections assessment activity.
- Mark has conducted a phone interview with a promising candidate for the custodian position. Kamryn, Stacey, Pat, and Mark will conduct an in-person interview as soon as possible. In the interim, we have needed to rely on a private cleaning service to keep the public areas welcoming to visitors.
- The Tool Wing exhibit renovation project is progressing. Mark has completed about 75% of the necessary historical research. Taylor Studios is advising on the graphic and physical design of the exhibit and conducted a workshop with the exhibit team on November 7th.

Youth Programs

- Staff created field trips for several local middle schools and high schools including University High School (Urbana), Urbana High School, and Unit 4 Middle School 7th graders (Champaign). These field trips will continue into the future.
- Marina Montez partnered with Natural Resources to provide a short program on the history of Indigenous Peoples' Day with Peter Goodspeed. This program was followed by seed collection at Buffalo Trace.

- Staff hosted a Unit 4 (Champaign) Teacher In-Service day at the Museum of the Grand Prairie. 18 teachers from the Champaign School District came out for a tour of the museum, an overview of cultural and environmental programs and ended



with a hike through Rayburn-Purnell Woods. We got a lot of great feedback from the

teachers and will be providing another in-service day at Homer Lake Forest Preserve in the spring.

- We received an amazing compliment from a relative of one of the students who attended our Hatchet program. They shared with us that their relative has dyslexia and has never liked reading because of this. The Hatchet program requires the students to read the book *Hatchet* by Gary Paulson before coming on the field trip. He shared how much he enjoyed reading the book and trying out orienteering, flint, and steel and shelter building at Homer Lake. He is super excited to read the next book in the series.

Public Programs and Visitor Services

- This marked our 11th year offering the weekend-long training *Wilderness Living Skills*. The workshop ran in partnership with Wild Nature Project out of Bloomington Indiana and was held at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. 17 people attended.
- Staff finalized the December-February public program schedule.
- In collaboration with Emily Williams of the Natural Resources Dept, Stacey and Jennifer helped coordinate a tree planting program with the public. 30 trees were planted in the North Peninsula area at Homer Lake Forest Preserve and made possible by a donation from a patron.
- Dept collaborated with Ops staff at both LOW & MF to host seasonal programming in October. “Harvest Fest” occurred in and around the museum complex at LOW and “Hoot ‘N Howl: Halloween Fun at Middle Fork” occurred near the campground at MF. Activities included pumpkin carving/painting, corn shelling, apple peeling, mask making, not-so spooky storytelling, and more. Ops staff at each site also provided hayrack rides for the public. Activities also featured items from the dept’s education collection as well as interpretive signage discussing harvest-related history associated with each activity.
- The Lincoln Lecture Series kicked off in October. The series' first program featured a first-person interpretation of Frederick Douglass, portrayed by Bob Davis of Springfield, IL. The theme for this year’s series is “Voices of Our Past” and will feature first-person interpretations of African-American historical figures present around the life and times of Abraham Lincoln. The series is also co-sponsored by the Champaign County African American Heritage Trail and Forest Preserve Friends Foundation.

Training and Development

- Selena attended a webinar called *Rethinking Native American History and Education in Today’s Classroom* presented by the Mitchell Museum of the American Museum.
- John is currently attending a workshop at Parkland College focused on using the graphic design software Canva. He hopes to use the knowledge he learns to improve visual aid offerings during public program presentations.

Natural Resources (Peter Goodspeed)

NR Volunteer Events & Programs

- 10/3/2023: NR staff hosted a seed collection event in the NW prairie at Homer Lake FP.
- 10/9/2023: Indigenous Peoples’ Day program at Lake of the Woods FP.

- The Natural Resources and Museum departments gave presentations that discussed the history of Indigenous People’s Day, native languages, and how First Nations peoples were stewards of the East-Central Illinois landscape.
- The presentation was followed by a volunteer seed collection event at Buffalo Trace.
- 17 volunteers attended the third annual event.

- 10/10/2023: NR staff hosted an event with a small group of dedicated volunteers to surgically cut and treat individual stems of American hazelnut, *Corylus Americana*, in Tomlinson Pioneer Cemetery. The proliferation of hazelnuts in Tomlinson is reducing the biodiversity of this remnant savanna and treating it requires very careful, precise control methods to not affect the surrounding vegetation.



- 10/14/2023 (weekend event): NR staff hosted a Natural Resources Open House at Lake of the Woods FP:

- The event celebrated 75 years of conservation and ecological restoration in the Forest Preserves.
- Peter gave a presentation in the Museum classroom summarizing the ecological restoration goals, successes, and methodologies of the NR department.
- The presentation was followed by a tour of NR’s storage facility where Emily and other NR team members showed attendees different pieces of equipment and summarized our seed milling and mixing process.



- 10/21/2023 (weekend event): Homer Lake tree education program.

- The Natural Resources and Environmental Education departments collaborated on a presentation that discussed the importance of trees.
- Following the presentation, volunteers planted, fenced, and mulched 30 container trees at North Peninsula at Homer Lake Forest Preserve.

- 10/4/2023 – 10/25/2023: Lincoln’s Challenge work days at Homer Lake FP

- Eric continued to oversee the removal of invasive bush honeysuckle by Lincoln's Challenge cadets.
- The cadets have been clearing, piling, and burning material in an area along the West Lake trail of Homer Lake FP.

NR Completed Field Tasks

- NR staff finished prepping restoration sites for fall/winter planting at Middle Fork River FP that included:
 - Boom spraying weeds in the ~7-acre Baermann Prairie site that was disturbed for the renovation of Willow Pond.
 - Boom spraying weeds in the ~2.7-acre Sugar Creek prairie site.
 - Boom spraying the ~0.5-acre turf conversion at Sugar Creek shelter that will be the 75th Anniversary Grove.
 - Removing 3 pine trees from the ~0.5-acre turf conversion at Sugar Creek shelter that will be the 75th Anniversary Grove.
- Staff mowed burn breaks in prairie restorations that are scheduled to be burned this fall and next spring.
- In addition to volunteer seed collection events, NR staff focused on collecting, drying, and milling native seed in October. The team has collected:
 - 322 lbs. of native seed.
 - From 71 different species.
- The NR team foliar sprayed re-sprouts of invasive woody plants throughout previously cleared areas or priority areas of Lake of the Woods FP, Homer Lake FP, and River Bend FP. Many of these areas were previously cleared by NR staff or volunteers and follow-up control is important in preventing re-infestation of these areas.
- NR staff picked up 173 native container trees and shrubs from Woody Warehouse to be planted by Preserve staff and volunteers in the following areas:
 - Memorial/honorary trees (10 trees) throughout all preserves.
 - Tree education program (30 trees/shrubs) at Homer Lake FP.
 - Landscaping trees (13 trees/shrubs) at Homer Lake FP.
 - 75th Anniversary Grove (75 trees/shrubs) at Middle Fork River FP.
 - Landscaping trees (43 trees/shrubs) at Middle Fork River FP.
 - Habitat trees (2 trees) at Lake of the Woods FP.



- Other miscellaneous field tasks completed include:
 - Burning brush piles created by NR staff and volunteers.
 - Planting collected and donated acorns, buckeyes, and spice bush seeds in reforestation projects.
 - Cleaning facilities and performing maintenance on equipment.

NR Administrative Projects (Peter)

- Completed and submitted a client project proposal with the University of Michigan School for Environment & Sustainability (SEAS). If the project is selected, a group of master's students and two faculty advisors will work with him on quantifying above and belowground carbon storage in all of the ecosystems within the preserves.
- Completed and submitted the Forest Preserves' open burn permit with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency for the legal combustion of material in prescribed burns, brush piles, and site burn piles.
- Completed CPR training.
- Gave a tour of Buffalo Trace to Bridgette's Planting Design Class with the University of Illinois.
- Finalized and submitted the Natural Resources Damage Assessment (NRDA) Homer Lake FP habitat restoration project documents. The documents included a project proposal and request for bids and require approval by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources before the project can proceed.
- Met with members of the planning, construction, and LOW operations departments to discuss the stream barb renovation project along the road north of the covered bridge.
- Met with Sue and Patrick to discuss doing a service learning program with a club from University Laboratory High School (Uni High).
- Buffalo Trace Smart Wetland Project
 - Met on-site with engineer Jill Kostel from the Wetlands Initiative (TWI) and four individuals from the Illinois Land Improvement Contractors Association to discuss drainage tile modification that could be done to lessen the cost of the project.

- Secured a \$60,000 commitment from the TWI to help cover the cost of constructing the ~\$120,000 smart wetland.
- Although TWI is still in the process of creating preliminary designs, the wetland will be a 6-acre tiered smart wetland that will clean agricultural runoff from 500 acres before it enters the creek in Buffalo Trace and ultimately the Sangamon River.
- Met with Oak Bros Tree Care to oversee the tree thinning project in Timberdoodle Woods at Homer Lake FP, which is now complete except for the combustion of burn piles.
- Presented on UIUC's campus to the Student Sustainability Committee and other participants about nature-based solutions to climate change and the Forest Preserves' environmental sustainability efforts.
- Interviewed and hired NR's fall/winter seasonal natural resources technician, Tegan Flowers.



A healthier, open oak woodland following the thinning project.

Lake of the Wood (Rust Maulding)

- Canna harvesting went well this fall. We had a great group of volunteers from Taylor Realty Associates who harvested a large portion of the cannas this year. As these are not cold hardy, after the bulbs are dug, the foliage is cut away and bulbs are cleaned and stored each fall for planting next spring.
- Night Lights preparation is well underway. Crews have taken advantage of some of the warmer weather in October to get a jumpstart on stringing lights. Finishing touches are now being made.
- All non-heated pavilions and restrooms have been winterized along with water fountains.
- Failing trees in turf areas have started to be felled as the temperatures have cooled. We have identified 22 trees in poor condition that will need to be removed. Some areas will be replanted next year, other areas will remain open depending on site-specific needs. Replanting will include a wide variety of species to best protect from invasive pests and diseases as well as provide interest in different seasons.



- Operations and Botanical Gardens staff assisted Construction with prepping the covered bridge for painting as well as clearing some branches for access to painting the suspension bridge.

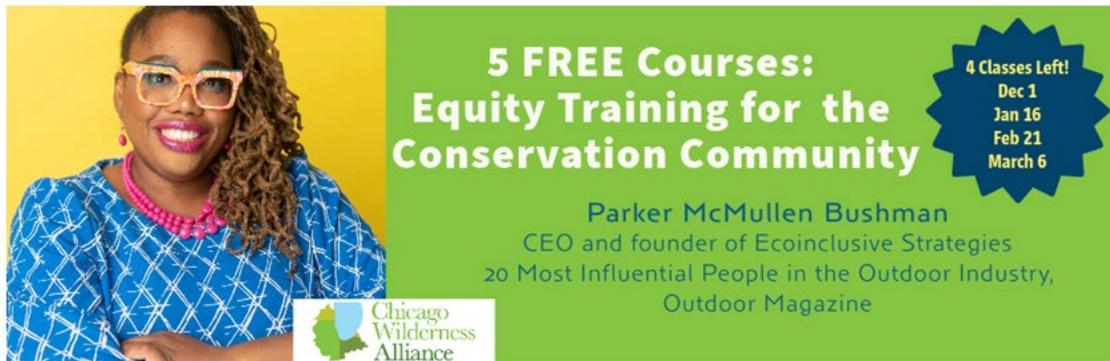
Homer Lake (Skylar Smith)

- A group of National Honor Society students from Saint Joseph High School volunteered by assisting Homer Lake operations staff with a trail widening project on the Oak Ridge trail. Students used saws and loppers to remove invasive shrubs from 750 feet of trail.
- Colton Carr, a 2-year employee of Homer Lake, left to pursue a career with the Champaign County Highway Department. We are thankful for all of Colton's hard work and wish him the best. A maintenance worker II position has been posted on the CCFPD website.
- Bridgette Moen, Ryan Anderson, and Skylar Smith met with potential donors to discuss the North Boat Launch improvement project. Several ideas were brought up for accessibility improvements and those ideas are actively being considered.
- A man lift was rented from Midwest Construction Rentals to assist Homer Lake operations with tree pruning and removal. The lift will also allow operations to safely complete the cleanup of hanging branches from the derecho this summer.
- As we transition into the colder months, operations have been working on routine winter preparations. The restrooms at the Walnut Hill Shelter have been closed to the public, the natural playscape stream has been shut down, and water fountains have been shut off.

Middle Fork (Matthew Kuntz)

- We thank our campground hosts for an incredible camping season this year! Our hosts did an exceptional job making the campground a welcoming and accessible place to visit. Their friendliness and willingness to accompany guests to prime dark sky viewing areas played an integral role in making this one of the best camping seasons with the highest visitation count yet.
- Thanks to Pat Cain and crew for hosting some Halloween festivities at the campground for the last weekend of the season. We received several compliments from our guests and I can't wait to see how this weekend can grow in the future.
- The campground has been winterized, the shower house shut down and water lines blown out.
- Near the end of October our main well pump gave out inside the preserve. We were able to get a new pump installed within a few days and finished the season at full capacity.
- Middle Fork staff is prepping for honeysuckle removal this fall. Several sections of the preserve have been mapped, mostly along timber edges and farm borders.

Equity in Action



**5 FREE Courses:
Equity Training for the
Conservation Community**

4 Classes Left!
Dec 1
Jan 16
Feb 21
March 6

Parker McMullen Bushman
CEO and founder of Ecoinclusive Strategies
20 Most Influential People in the Outdoor Industry,
Outdoor Magazine

Chicago
Wilderness
Alliance

- Catherine Schneider, Jeremy Cagle, Kathryn Glynn, Kristin Rose, Ryan Anderson, Nina Carmichael, Lisa Sprinkle, and Kamryn Suttinger attended the first of a 5-part training series specifically geared for the Conservation Community entitled *Why Diversity Equity and Inclusion is Vital to Conservation Goals*. The group fully participated during the 2-hour workshop followed by a 1 hour discussion on reflections and suggestions as it applies to our organization and community.
The board is welcome to attend future viewing and discussion sessions with staff at HQ or sign up to attend [remotely online!](#)

Session #2. Understanding Privilege and Microaggressions
December 1, 2023, 10:30 am-12:30 pm CST

Session # 3. Visioning for Effective Allyship
January 16, 2024, 10am-Noon CST

Session #4 Organization Review Lens
February 21, 2024, 10 am-12:30 p.m. CST

Session #5 Inclusive Leadership: Building Culturally Competent Organizations and Effectively Leading Diverse Teams
March 6, 2024, 10 am-12:30 pm CST