

# Forest Preserve Report

## October 2022

*By Connie Schmidt*

**Take a Hike program:** A weekly email is available for you to sign up for the [“Take a Hike Program”](#). This initiative to help improve health and get out into nature is co-sponsored with Edward’s Hospital.

**Scout Awards:** Two Eagle Scout programs completed projects to benefit St. James Farm and Seed Collection signage. [President Hebreard](#) recognized the scouts during the president’s remarks.

**McHenry County Conservation District for Freshwater Mussels:** Since 2016 the FPDDC has had a [mussel program at the research center in Blackwell Forest Preserve](#) and has raised and released 25,000 mussels in local streams and rivers. [McHenry County Conservation District](#) is the newest member of the network to join the mussel rearing program.

**Waterfall Glen Sawmill Creek Bridge:** In late February 2022, the 25-year-old pedestrian bridge that carries the main trail across Sawmill Creek in [Waterfall Glen Preserve](#) was washed away by high water conditions carrying huge slabs of ice. A new bridge is being designed and installed that will be higher so it will not be impacted by high water conditions. Construction is expected to begin in early 2023.

**Blackwell Cenacle Bridge:** The original bridge crossing the West Branch of the DuPage River where the Cenacle retreat center once stood was built in 1916. Estimates for rehabbing the bridge and for replacement were obtained and it was roughly half the price to just rehab the bridge and both offered a life span of 60 years. The rehab construction is anticipated to begin in early 2023.

**[York Woods South Shelter Repairs:](#)** Although there were 27 downloads for bids for this program only 2 bids were submitted and were significantly over the budgeted allotment for this project. A decision was made to hold the project until 2023 and the district may complete the project in-house.

**[Waterfall Glen Parking Lot Update:](#)** After much discussion, planning, and construction, the new parking lot at Waterfall Glen is completed! A celebration was held this month to commemorate it.

**Recreational Accessibility Plan Overview:** Stakeholders were interviewed from multiple community resources including educational and health service to identify goals and objectives to consider ways to make the preserve system inclusive to all people. Current accessibility was audited for programs and individual recreational opportunities. Easy to difficult accessibility including how to find information on websites was evaluated as well. In addition, stakeholders were asked what adaptive accommodations would be helpful, what are some of the barriers to preserves or programs. Communication was the most talked about issue, as well as what is offered and how to access it. Some of the goals determined are listed below:

- Improve internal and external communication of current accessible recreation opportunities, program offerings and accommodations.
- Equip forest preserve district staff and volunteers with training and tools needed to provide high-quality accessible recreational experiences for visitors of all abilities.

- Increase accessible recreational opportunities. (More adaptive equipment etc.)

**Clean Energy, Resiliency and Sustainability Plan:** An expert is being hired to do an analysis to identify areas where the district's carbon footprint can be reduced.

**Wayne DuPage Horse Trial Relationship:** The district has had a relationship with this group since 1992. In the past it has benefited both the forest preserve and the horse trial group. No clinics have been hosted since 2018. There are multiple features on the landscape including jump fencing and water features that are unused. The horse group partners have asked to amend the agreement to eliminate some of the horse features in that area not being used any more or they may be moved to the eastern area of the woods where horse activities are occurring. By removing the horse trial area, two high quality natural areas will be connected without interruption. This is a "Win-win" for both groups accomplishing each of their goals.

**Blackwell, Greene Valley, and Waterfall Glen Master Plans Progress Update:** Plans are revised based on the public feedback gained earlier this year. Another public comment period will take place and following that final plans will be brought forward in February 2023.

#### Blackwell:

- Continuing ecological resources and reverting turf grass areas into native plantings.
- Expand the interpretive opportunities of the Urban Stream Research Center.
- Signage plans, improve interpretive signage in areas such as McKee Marsh.
- In the off-leash dog area, In the gated vestibule, provide a better sense of control. Additional regulatory signage and no parking by the entrance for the dog park.
- Additional fishing piers and overlooks at Silver Lake.
- For the campground, look for improvement of firepits and picnic tables, also additional drinking water and restrooms in this area.
- Near the archery range, flush restrooms would be appreciated.
- A trail around Silver Lake was suggested.

#### Greene Valley:

- Keep Oak Cottage and Greene Valley Barn
- Improve residents' efforts to connect to the preserve, 75th Street Entrance.
- Traffic study will be done to look for an ideal location for safe access.
- Work with the county on speed control on Greene Rd.
- Increase alternative energy use.
- Increase interpretive signage.
- Outdoor gathers space such as a patio near the barn
- Documentation of the cottage history and condition to determine if a third party may come forward with a requested use and plan.
- River access for kayak and canoe use.

#### Waterfall Glen:

- For trail crossing, study for best location for pedestrian safety
- Drinking water at the southern trail head.
- Because the East Branch of the DuPage River was submitted as an Army Corp of Engineers project, realignment may impact some parts of the preserve.

- Requests to repair the Sawmill Creek bridge and more off street parking and additional restrooms are all being met with current projects.
- More wayfinding, direction and interpretive signage was requested.
- Cass Ave entrance has been recommended to be more efficient in design without changing the footprint.
- Bluff Road, some additional seating at the trailhead in the area where new parking is being planned.
- Add some overlook areas such as near “poverty prairie” along the trail.
- In order to increase safety on the trail for users, consider reminders of courtesy of other users such as bikes yielding to horses, announce “passing on the left” when approaching from behind.

Visit the [district website](#) to determine how to comment.

**Danada House:** The [Friends of Danada](#) is a support group for the Danada House and the model farm. Revenues generated from the house help to support the model farm. A 5-year agreement started in 2018, and now some repairs need to be made to the house and ground. Money from the Friends Group is being placed in a fund for improvement by the district. In 2024, the use of the property will be paused as improvements will be made. Improvements including updating to building code, infrastructure such as plumbing and electricity, interior design, energy efficiency with windows and insulation. Total cost could be as much as \$4.5 Million.

**Permitting Ordinance:** Back in the 1980s between permitting regulations were determined by DuPage County for building regulations on forest preserve projects. Since this began years ago, individual municipalities have set up their own building requirements. For a time both the municipal and county agencies required permits. The district is asking for an and those of a municipality when the project falls in their property. The municipality could ask the Forest Preserve District to use County requirements if that is better for them. Regular meetings are taking place between the county and forest preserve staff to establish a good policy.

**DuPage County Request:** This item covers specific requests for the two projects below, however it relates perfectly with an on-going effort to streamline building requirements. The two agencies are discussing waving administrative fees between each other which would save taxpayers money. As the largest landowner in DuPage there are a multitude of ordinances and intergovernmental agreements each year. The county staff and forest preserve staff have been working together to streamline permitting fees and processes, so residents are not paying for administrative fees on a project multiple times. Fees such as for trees to be replaced will continue.

There are two projects currently being requested to have fees waived by the County from old agreements back in the 1980s. The other is an antenna Tower in Hidden Lake Forest Preserve.

**West Branch Forest Preserve:** There is a subdivision north of the West Branch Forest Preserve that experiences flooding concerns. DuPage County has asked for an easement to discharge flood water into the West Branch of the DuPage River. The County has requested a pipe will be buried along an access drive. The county will perform restoration efforts in this area to the standards of the forest preserve as payment for the easement.

**Danada Forest Preserve:** A trail project known as the [Cromwell Connection trail](#) which began in 2017 is finally commencing. 1/3 falls in IDOT right of way along Butterfield Road. This permitting took over a year to obtain. A grant will cover over half of the expense, but it expires this year, so the project is being advanced swiftly. A portion of the trail is in the right of way to avoid wetlands and will be a safe distance from the roadway. This trail will connect folks north of Danada, through Danada and connect with existing trails to meet the trails on the west side of Danada into Herrick Lake Forest Preserve.