



# Friends NEWS

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Volume 16, Issue 1 • Cook County, Illinois • Spring 2016

## Volunteers revitalizing Busse Woods efforts



Dana Glys

A comprehensive plan for stewardship includes corporate involvement. Komatsu employees enjoy a day of team building and restoration work at Busse Woods, which they can see from their headquarters.

By Douglas Chien

Mark Krivchenia recalls attending the kick-off event at Deer Grove Forest Preserve in the fall of 2010.

“It was an inspiring event. Many folks shared the history of Deer Grove and a vision of how it was being restored to healthy wetlands, prairies, savannas, and woodlands. Volunteer help was needed to support contractor work. We walked the site with Stephen Packard — a pioneer in restoration work — and saw how we could make a difference. I was hooked.”

Over the course of five years, Mark has gone from a regular volunteer to an Apprentice Steward for Deer Grove East. When a leadership gap opened up at Busse Woods, due to Site Steward Matt Haas moving out of state, Mark saw an opportunity to share his positive experience with others.

Mark proposed a project for revitalizing the volunteer stewardship community and assembled a leadership team to see it through. Significantly, the leadership team included Kris DePra, a long time Busse volunteer who was recently hired by the Forest Preserves of Cook County as a stewardship aide. With the departure of Matt, Kris stepped up to run volunteer restoration workdays.

Supporting this project with a commitment of stewardship expertise, time, and advice are stewards from Deer Grove, Poplar Creek, and Spring Creek forest preserves. In addition, staff from Friends of the Forest Preserves, Audubon-Chicago Region, The Nature Conservancy, and the FPCC offer support.

The project kicked off on a beautiful afternoon in early March. Some 75 people attended, nearly half being brand new to volunteer stewardship. A common sentiment heard from newcomers was “I’ve walked/biked the paved trails for years, but I never knew what was beyond them. This is amazing.” Some came just to learn more about Busse Woods. But many also signed up to get their hands dirty and start contributing to the ongoing efforts.

The FPCC’s visionary Next Century Conservation Plan identified Busse Woods as an important preserve for conservation. With wetlands, oak woodlands, and savannas, as well as parts of it being designated as a National Natural Landmark and Illinois Nature Preserve, Busse offers a wealth of areas that would benefit from an invigorated volunteer stewardship community.

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Kris DePra

Wild leeks signal the beginning of spring in Busse Woods near Elk Grove Village. The revitalized volunteer stewardship project will work to ensure that native plants like these can thrive.



## News from around the District

### 1 Bird the preserves, compete for prizes

The Forest Preserves of Cook County is hosting a Big Year birding competition with a twist, because the preserves compete, rather than people. Running from March 1 to December 31, the 2016 Bird the Preserves Big Year competition has two main objectives: to see which preserve has the most birds; and which preserve team can engage the most new birders in their Big Year efforts. Prizes will be awarded to the top two teams with the most bird species and top two teams with the most new birders. To learn more visit [fpdcc.com](http://fpdcc.com).

### 2 Zip lines, dog parks added

Despite objections from the Friends community and other conservation organizations, the FPCC has moved ahead with installation of additional dog parks and a zip line park. The Friends community objects to these facilities because they convert conservation land and open space to an exclusive use. Forest preserves should be free and open to all to use and enjoy.

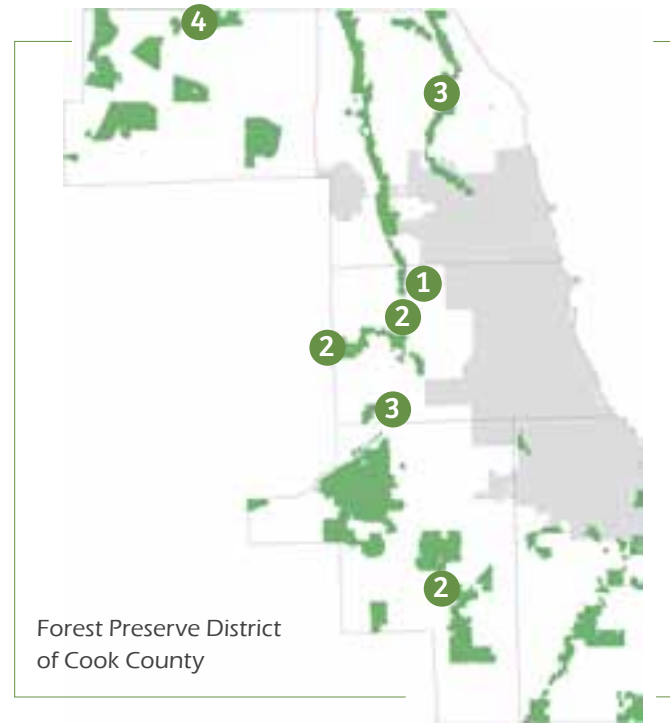
### 3 Friend donates benches, bike racks

A member of the Friends community has anonymously donated up to 21 benches and 14 bike racks to be placed along the very popular North Branch Trail, which runs from the northwest side of Chicago to the Chicago Botanic Gardens. The new amenities, which will be ADA accessible, will provide welcome resting places along the trail. The \$42,000 project is scheduled to be completed in June. Through separate funding garnered by the FPCC, nearly 3 miles of the trail are being extended to the southern tip of the North Branch preserves at Foster Avenue

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Friends is advocating for a comprehensive plan for stewardship; one that includes all the various resources such as FPCC contractors, volunteers of every stripe and skill level, corporations that are already engaged in stewardship through Friends' Corporate Team Building Program, and partner organizations. By taking a comprehensive approach to stewardship, the various proficiencies – and investments – can be leveraged and maximized for the largest benefit for Busse Woods.

Previously, volunteer stewardship had been limited to areas south of Higgins Road. But with the quantity of work to be done, declining dollars for hiring contractors, and the impetus of the Next Century Conservation Plan, the time is right for an all-inclusive and comprehensive approach for revitalizing stewardship at Busse Woods.



completing the trail through the entire stretch of the North Branch preserves from north to south.

### 4 First east, now west being restored

Openlands, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the FPCC are implementing a \$4.5 million restoration of Deer Grove West near Palatine – the site of the first forest preserve where 500 acres were purchased in 1916. The plan will improve the existing wetland and upland plant communities. This project follows on the partners' successful restoration of Deer Grove East and will help improve habitat for at least 13 threatened and endangered plant and animal species found at the site.

### Success: Busse Woods saved

After years of persistent advocacy the Friends community has won one of its longest battles yet – the Busse Woods dam has been rebuilt to protect both the preserve and the local community. After suffering severe flooding on numerous occasions, Elk Grove Village came to the Forest Preserves of Cook County asking to make the dam in the reservoir larger. The issue: a larger dam would have flooded and killed the rare nature found there. Friends brought together advocates, students, professionals, and elected officials to find a better solution. We should all be proud!

## Somme Salamanders: The Next Generation arrives?



Cecil Hynds - Riddle, a devoted volunteer, inspects a baby salamander for yellow spots in an effort to help preserve the salamander population in the forest preserves. Baby blue spotted salamanders are tiny, only 24 to 38 mm long snout to vent.

By Cecil Hynds - Riddle

I spent my spring and summer last year vigilantly investigating dried up ephemeral pools. The Somme preserves in Northbrook boast some of the healthiest and most enchanting ephemeral pools of the North Branch preserves. Despite some trouble with road salt in the winter of 2014/2015 (see Friends News, Summer 2015), Somme Woods seems to have a lot of blue spotted salamanders that make use of ephemeral pools, wetlands, and streams for breeding. Knowing that these salamanders often live 12 years in the wild, my biggest fear was that they've stopped reproducing and are therefore on the verge of a population crash. So, I focused my 2015 summer scrutiny on these two questions: Are Somme salamanders reproducing successfully? And what does a baby salamander look like anyway?

With the help of the extensive Jane and John Balaban natural history library, I read that juvenile blue-spotted salamanders have yellow spots in place of their permanent starry blue ones for just two weeks after they emerge from the water. Yellow spots! Plus they're super tiny, only 24-38 mm, snout to vent. I also discovered that newly metamorphosed salamanders emerge from the pools as late as September. Having just discovered this, I dashed out on my 30th birthday, August 25, to hunt for babies ... and I found them!

Since last August, we've found dozens of baby salamanders at Somme Woods, Somme Prairie Grove, and Chipilly Woods – alleviating my fears about the population dramatically collapsing as the adults reach their final years. I still haven't found any babies with yellow flecks. Clearly I missed the fleeting window on that, but rest assured, I'll be on the lookout again this summer.

The Shedd Aquarium and Somme Centennial Volunteers, came together and began ephemeral pool focused restoration, complete with water quality testing, strategic brush removal, broadcasting pond seeds, and a first-ever salamander monitoring program. The Forest Preserve District acted quickly to cordon off the Somme Woods parking lot from errant winter salting, and we're happy to report that the parking lot, a critical salamander migration path, stayed salt free this winter. Thanks to the dedication of so many people, we will protect our rare and treasured ephemeral pools and the creatures living in them for years to come. Stay tuned for more news on our 2016 baby salamander findings and whether we find yellow-flecked newbies this summer.



Salamanders like this blue spotted one, confirm that the population is thriving at Somme Woods despite initial fears of a population collapse.



# 7th Annual Photo Contest Winners

(Left page clockwise) **First Place:** Coyote, LaBagh Woods near Chicago, Steven Bayer; **Second Place:** Canoe or "Sit, relax, and enjoy the beauty of nature", Busse Lake near Elk Grove Village, Julio Guerrero; **Third Place:** Underwater leopard frog, Bluff Spring Fen near Elgin, Tina Onderdonk; and **Runner-up:** Monarch butterfly on rattlesnake master, Orland Grassland near Orland Park, Jeanne Mueller.

(Right page from top left) **Best Flora:** Cylindrical blazing star and flowering spurge, Shoe Factory Road Prairie near Hoffman Estates, Bob Callebert; **Best Fauna:** Bee or "Ambassador to the Chicago Botanic Garden", Chicago Botanic Garden near Glencoe, Edward Boe; **Best People in the Preserves:** "Hiking out after a workday", Galloping Hill Prairie in the Spring Creek forest preserve near Barrington, Jim Root; **Runners-up:** Prescribed Burn, McClaughry Spring Woods near Palos, Daiva Gylys; Common redpoll, Chicago Botanic Garden near Glencoe, Janet Haugen; Ducks dabbling in winter, Busse Woods dam near Elk Grove Village, Wes Iversen; and green heron, Busse Woods near Elk Grove Village, Shreeni Rao; and **People's Choice** (via vote on facebook.com/forestpreserves): Bridge or "Fall colors on a sunny morning", Busse Woods near Elk Grove Village, Dave Simmons.





## 21-week trail-only crew improves 6,000 feet of trail

By Zach Taylor

Last fall, the Friends community launched its first-ever trails-focused conservation corps crew.

The Forest Preserve Trail Corps focused on improving walking paths in the forest preserves. In the end, the crew improved an incredible 6,152 feet of trail in the forest preserves. During the 21-week program, they worked at eight different sites including Bluff Spring Fen, Blue Star Memorial Woods, Camp Sullivan, Dan Ryan Woods, Joe's Pond, Saganashkee Slough, Spears Woods, and Tinley Ravines.

To prepare for the work in the forest preserves the crew spent eight days training and working on the Appalachian Trail with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy in the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. For many of the participants this was their first experience with backcountry camping, building trails, and traveling to a National Park. Additional local training for job, life, and financial skills was provided by Friends staff, Forest Preserves of Cook County staff, and other local partners.

Once the crew got back to Chicago they were able to bring an array of new skills and knowledge to the forest



The Forest Preserve Trail Crew celebrates a board walk repair project at Bluff Spring Fen Nature Preserve near Elgin. The crew worked for 21 weeks on great projects, while gaining extensive skills.

Clare Longfellow

preserves. After the program ended in February several of the crew members went on to work for other environmentally focused organizations in similar work.

Many thanks to The Jobs Fund of McCaffery Interests, the FPCC, and the entire Friends community for the strong funding, partner, and community support that made this project possible. The funding also provided the opportunity to develop a training and tracking system for all of the Friends Conservation Corps crew members that will track skills, experience, and continuing education.

## 2 team members add support for Friends community



Office Manager Ann Touhy and Outreach Manager Ilana Federman are bringing whole new skill sets that will strengthen the Friends community.

Tyrone Murdo

Please welcome two new members to our community. Ilana Federman, Outreach Manager, developed a passion for volunteerism and advocacy at a young age, engaging with local and global organizations. Among her experi-

ences that informed her vision of an ethical world were traveling with Volunteers for Peace, serving as a City Year corps member, sitting on the board of the Inter-Cooperative Council, working for Planned Parenthood and the Chicago Park District, as well as studying (and enjoying) biodynamic wines. As the Outreach Manager, Ilana will work to strengthen member relations, expand social media communications, and faithfully share the mission and achievements of Friends.

Ann Touhy, Office Manager, has a degree in Business Administration-Management from St. Mary's University in Minnesota. Most recently she was with St. Xavier University and before that The Center in Palos Park. In both positions, Ann held administrative, office management roles. She will work with the staff to develop and streamline office procedures and policy, handle financials, and human resources work. Ann is still engaged in the The Center's mission and continues to volunteer there (for the record, The Center is adjacent to the forest preserves and is a pretty fun place).

## Crystal Leaf Gala smashing success

The Friends community came together to celebrate awardees Dean Fischer of West Monroe Partners and Forest Preserve Commissioner Larry Suffredin, enjoy camaraderie and good food and drink, and raise more than \$70,000 to support our mission work. Many thanks to our sponsors Dean Fischer, West Monroe Partners, Stantec, Commissioner Larry Suffredin, Charles and Marion Kierscht, Christopher B. Burke Engineering, Wolff Landscape Architecture, and Openlands.



Clockwise: Awardee Dean Fischer, executive chairman West Monroe Partners; Awardee Larry Suffredin, Forest Preserve Commissioner; raffle winners in their tent; and Marsha and Philip Dowd and Dawn Keller of Flint Creek Wildlife Rehabilitation.



## Mark your calendars and join your community!

Join us for a clean up, exhibit, ecological restoration, golf or bike event. They are all a great way to give back to the preserves and be even more involved with the Friends community.

### River Oaks Woods

River Cleanup – Sat. May 14, 9 am-1 pm; meet in the parking lot of River Oaks Golf Course, 1 Park Ave., Calumet City

### Bunker Hill North

Ecological Restoration Kick-Off – Sat. May 7, 10 am-1 pm; meet at Touhy Ave. and Harts Rd., Niles

### Swing for Sustainability

Golf Outing – Fri. Jun. 3, 12:30 pm registration, 2 pm shotgun start; best ball, \$125 per golfer; George W. Dunne National Golf Course, 16310 S. Central Ave., Oak Forest

### 7th Annual Photo Contest Exhibit

Exhibit – 6-8 pm, Fri. Jun. 17; free; beer, wine, light au d'oeuvres; Franklin Framing, 13019 S. Western Ave., Blue Island

### Busse Woods Night Ride

Bike ride, band, bonfire, and more – Sat. Sep. 10, 6-11 pm Busse Woods Boathouse, Elk Grove Village







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*And, if you already have renewed — THANK YOU!*



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## Swing for Sustainability

Please join Friends of the Forest Preserves for our annual golf outing. There is no better way to honor the great outdoors than to enjoy it!

Register today  
at [fotfp.org](http://fotfp.org)!

When: Friday, June 3, 2016  
Registration 12:30 pm, shotgun start 2 pm, best ball

Where: George W. Dunne National Golf Course  
16310 S. Central Ave., Oak Forest

Tickets: \$125.00 individual / \$500 foursome  
Buy tickets, donate in lieu of attendance, or sponsor at [www.fotfp.org](http://www.fotfp.org)  
All proceeds support Friends of the Forest Preserves  
For more information contact Ilana Federman at [ilana@fotfp.org](mailto:ilana@fotfp.org)

