

Centennial Campaign Plan

Developed to celebrate the Forest Preserves of Cook County's anniversary over a multi-year span (2013-2015)

June 2013

History of the Forest Preserves

One hundred years ago, environmental visionaries in Cook County created the first forest preserve in the nation in anticipation of population growth and a wave of urban development that would sprawl far beyond the city limits of Chicago and into the open prairies, forests, wetlands and farm fields. The Forest Preserves were created to maintain the natural character and sense of place, where city and suburbs could exist among vast expanses of open land following the natural mosaic of rivers, streams, prairies, marshes and woodlands that traverse Cook County.

Today, the Forest Preserves of Cook County, with nearly 69,000-acres, is one of the largest and oldest districts in the United States. It receives an estimated 40 million visits each year, providing an escape into a world teeming with wildlife and rich with outdoor recreation and environmental education opportunities.

This natural heritage offers something for everyone:

- Oak woodlands and savannas
- Tallgrass prairies
- Native wetlands
- Migratory fly-ways
- 22 sites with Illinois Nature Preserve status
- 40 managed lakes and ponds
- 7 major waterways
- 2 land and water reserves

Environmental education programming for all ages is offered at six nature centers and thousands of children visit the Forest Preserves each year through educational programs. Citizen scientists engage in a wide variety of plant and animal monitoring programs in collaboration with our ecologists.

Recreational opportunities abound as well with:

- 300 miles of marked trails for biking, horseback riding, cross country skiing, and snow shoeing
- 3 aquatic centers
- 2 youth camps
- 10 golf courses
- 4 driving ranges
- 5 boat and 16 canoe/kayak launches
- 5 snow mobile areas and many sledding hills
- 311 picnic groves that hosts thousands of people each year
- 9 model airplane flying fields
- 4 model boat areas
- 1 off leash dog area
- More than 2,000 acres of fishing water
- Hundreds of special events and programs

From its inception, the mission of the Forest Preserves has been to acquire and maintain lands in the natural state with the purpose of protecting and preserving the flora, fauna and scenic beauties for the education, pleasure and public recreation.

This plan for how the Forest Preserves intend to carry that mission forward in to the next hundred years was developed in June 2013. It is a working document. Many of these initiatives are underway or in planning. As our legacy projects are implemented during the course of our Centennial years (2013 to 2015), we will assess, evaluate and adapt the plan, following our strategic imperatives.

Our Purpose

The Centennial campaign of the Forest Preserves of Cook County is an opportunity to define a vision for the next hundred years and attract new audiences.

Like all forest preserve districts throughout Illinois, the Forest Preserves, at their core, are about protecting and preserving natural areas for plant and animal diversity and for the recreation, pleasure and education of all.

What makes the Forest Preserves of Cook County different? It was the first, set aside for us by visionaries. It is the largest, covering nearly 69,000 acres. Its lands are among the most geologically and biologically rich natural areas in the United States, with wooded wetlands, tall grass prairies, oak woodlands, savannas and more. It provides unparalleled benefits to people who live here, such as clean air and clean water – whether they ever set foot in the preserves or not.

The Forest Preserves of Cook County are about more than nature. They are about the people of this area. They successfully merge people in an urban environment with nature. The preserves provide a place to escape. A place to experience beauty. A place to become rejuvenated. A place to experience freedom. A place to experience quiet.

The Forest Preserves are important to Chicago's identity, economic viability and quality of life and should be as appreciated as our lakefront.

The Centennial campaign aims to inspire a sense of wonder. A passion for discovery. A reconnection to nature. All made possible by the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

Our Centennial Goals

We are focused on the following goals, aimed at reaching a diverse group of audiences and stakeholders. Our goals for the Centennial are to:

- Expand our commitment to natural areas by restoring ecological health and biodiversity
- Inspire new people and groups to visit the preserves
- Elevate partnerships with conservation, recreation and education groups
- Establish connections to residents from underserved communities
- Broaden ties to business, civic and community groups
- Strengthen our relationships to current preserve users
- Acquire additional land to reach our statutory goal of 75,000 acres

Strategic Imperatives

Make some noise.

Tell our story to raise awareness of Forest Preserve assets and our role among diverse audiences.

Elevate our brand.

Add the Forest Preserves to the lexicon of what's great about Chicagoland.

Open new doors.

Invite people from every corner of Cook County to the preserves. Expand the landscape of partnerships.

Lead the national discussion.

Like our founders in 1913, chart a forward-thinking course to establish leadership in conservation for the next century and beyond.

Leave a mark.

Realize legacy projects that live well beyond the 100th anniversary and leave our valuable natural areas thriving for future generations.

Approach to Creating a Lasting Legacy

Though much has changed since 1913, the principles then are exactly the same principles that are guiding this Centennial plan. What's new is our thinking about how to preserve nature in a drastically changed urban environment. With this in mind, Centennial legacy projects are intended to enhance preservation and the quality of what the Preserves offer to Cook County residents and the region, ultimately helping expand the way people experience nature.

The enclosed plan outlines the ways in which the Forest Preserves envisions accomplishing this goal. The legacy initiatives fall in to three categories:

- **Planning:** The Forest Preserves have undertaken concerted, strategic planning efforts that span land acquisition, recreation, camping, trails, and habitat restoration. Some of these have been completed, others are in the planning process, but all are designed to preserve our natural areas and introduce appropriate use of the Preserves to new audiences.
- **Places:** The initiatives in this category will leave a physical, lasting legacy that enhances the way people experience the Preserves.
- **Programs:** Education and define a leadership path for the Forest Preserves as we embark on our next 100 years is at the forefront of many Centennial efforts. We are accomplishing this by expanding existing education and leadership programs, and introducing new programs and programming to engage residents of Cook County in the protection and enjoyment of natural areas.

Supporting all of these initiatives is a **communications strategy** that aims to educate Cook County residents and turn them in to ambassadors for natural areas. This will be achieved through a drum beat of news and storytelling in various channels, through thought leadership that informs the national discussion, and through a combination of resources and partners, including aligning needs with the Forest Preserves Foundation.

Plan Components

Table of Contents

Planning

page

Next Century Conservation Plan

A vision for the next 100 years, made possible by The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust, with Openlands and Metropolis Strategies

9

Habitat Restoration Master Plan

Maximizing plant, animal and habitat diversity

9

Land Acquisition Plan

Prioritizing properties for strategic acquisition

9

Recreation Master Plan

Defining and designating recreation opportunities

9

Trail Master Plan

Enhancing the trail experience

9

Camp Master Plan

Reimagining the Preserves' campgrounds

9

Places

page

Gateways to Nature

Developing signature sites

12

Trail System Maps and Wayfinding Signage

Helping visitors navigate the Preserves

13

Native Plant Nursery

A collaboration with Chicago Botanic Garden

14

Signature Campgrounds

Reestablishing active camp sites for visitors

15

Overcoming Conservation Bottlenecks

A study of best management practices in restoration

16

Programs

page

Conservation Months

A call to conservation action

19

Wild About Nature

Developing the next generation of conservation leaders

20

Natural Wonders

Introducing an Ecosystem Interpretation Model

21

The Nature of Health

Partnering with the healthcare community

22

Forest Preserves at Your Fingertips

Technology challenge

23

Nature Day Camp

A collaboration with Chicago Zoological Society

24

Region-Wide Awareness Campaign

Employing advertising to raise awareness

25

Storytellers Series

Collecting a series of interviews with patrons

26

Documentary Film

Creating a lasting record of the Forest Preserves throughout each season

27

Signature Event

Creating an event that draws new visitors

28

Communications and Strategic Visibility (pages 29-33)

Communications and outreach • Informing the national discussion • Aligning resources and fostering partnerships

Planning

Plans

The Idea and How it Works:

The Forest Preserves are preparing for the next century by developing plans that provide thoughtful strategies on how to fulfill our mission of protecting nature and connecting people with the outdoors. In addition, successfully implementing these plans will complement other work being done to address the Forest Preserves' fundamental pillars of preservation, recreation and education. We will be marking milestones with these plans through concerted communications efforts. These plans include:

- **The Next Century Conservation Plan** – Conducted in collaboration with Openlands and Metropolis Strategies, and made possible by the generous support of The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust. The plan will create a series of principles and priorities to guide future policy and resource allocation. It will recommend innovative 21st century solutions, drawing on national best practices and creative new thinking to address big picture questions for the Preserves. *Plan in progress*, see www.nextcenturyconservationplan.org.
- **Habitat Restoration Master Plan** – The Plan will identify critical areas for conservation, future opportunities for restoration, and assess resource needs into the future. The goals of this plan are to maximize plant, animal, and habitat diversity. *Plan in progress*.
- **Land Acquisition Plan** – The plan provides important updated geographic information and policies that will help us identify, evaluate, acquire and manage strategic acquisition of properties that will fill in gaps and strengthen the Forest Preserves' system of protected land. *Completed; implementation in progress.**
- **Recreation Master Plan** – The plan was developed with public stakeholder input and will provide the Forest Preserves with a blueprint to enhance existing recreation opportunities and identify new ones compatible with our mission. Its goals are to get people active outdoors, create destinations, engage new users, and foster stewardship to promote healthy, active lifestyles, natural immersion and ecotourism. *Completed; implementation in progress.**
- **Trails Master Plan** – The plan will identify new trailhead locations, determine sites for bike rental and other concessions, and enhance trail signage. The project is supported with technical assistance from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. It will identify locations for amenities and a policy for assessing requests for improvement, as well as look at operations and safety. *In progress.**
- **Camp Master Plan** – The plan provides a conceptual framework for improvements in the Forest Preserves' campgrounds over the next 10-20 years. This plan was developed with public stakeholder and staff input to identify five priority sites for completion by 2015 and future opportunities for expanding our camping system. *Completed; implementation in progress.**

* See <http://fpdcc.com/preserves-and-trails/projects/> for full concept plans

Places

Places

Through all of our places initiatives as part of the Centennial campaign, the Forest Preserves seeks to create welcoming experiences that invite users in and address barriers to access, while engaging and educating visitors about all of the diverse experiences – whether educational, recreational or ecological experiences – that the Forest Preserves offer. These initiatives include:

- **Gateways to Nature:** Redesigning entrances and site details
- **Trail System Maps and Way-finding Signage:** Helping visitors navigate the Preserves
- **Native Plant Nursery:** Dedicated to producing high quality species for restoration, in partnership with the Chicago Botanic Garden
- **Signature Campgrounds:** Dedicated to reestablishing active camp sites for visitors
- **Overcoming Conservation Bottlenecks:** A study of best management practices

Gateways to Nature

Develop Signature Sites

The Idea and How it Works:

Gateways will be sites designed to be inviting and encourage people to enter into the Forest Preserves. The Gateways will be located at highly visible, high-traffic locations throughout Cook County. Gateways may include well-marked trailheads and trails, outdoor concessions, or technology that provides information on ways to engage with that site. A dedication marker or special feature (art installation, etc.) may also be incorporated. There will be an effort to engage volunteers in the restoration and preservation of the site to help galvanize the next generation of conservation minded citizens.

Component 1: Enhanced Signage at Entrances

Create a welcoming and friendly environment at the entrances to signature sites by installing new welcome signs. Distinguish the signs from current entrance signage by incorporating visual elements from the new Centennial brand.

Component 2: Enhanced Trail System Navigation

Signature site improvements may also include revitalized trail system signage, viewing platforms, interpretive elements, removal of buckthorn and other invasive species, and featured amenities like picnic groves or recreation areas (already in progress).

Component 3: Commissioned Art Installation at First Site Acquired by the Forest Preserves

Commemorate the Centennial celebration with a permanent art installation at Deer Grove. Work with a local artist to develop a public art installation to serve as a “dedication marker.”

Sites Under Consideration

- Busse Woods
- All Six Nature Centers
- Dan Ryan Woods
- Deer Grove
- Eggers Woods
- General Headquarters
- Maple Lake
- Poplar Creek
- Thatcher Woods
- Wolf Road Prairie

Forest Preserves to determine final sites.

Trail System Maps and Wayfinding Signage

In planning

Partnership Opportunity

The Idea and How it Works:

The Forest Preserves will upgrade trail maps and wayfinding systems, with an emphasis on downloadable and mobile optimized maps. These maps will showcase the extensive 300+ mile trail system and illustrate shared connections between preserves, and reflect wayfinding systems that are more friendly and inviting, informational and interactive. Site specific maps that are easily downloadable from the website will also be designed.

Our maps are an important and inspiring tool that helps to reconnect an urban population with nature. More than 250,000 of the current maps have been distributed, with countless others downloaded from our website so we know that there is a strong need. These redesigned maps will highlight connections to nearby transit options, nature centers, other activities, restrooms and food locations, and will be distributed both online, through outreach partners (such as libraries), and at special events.



Timing: Fall 2013 through Fall 2014

Native Plant Nursery

Dedicated conservation project with Chicago Botanic Garden

The Idea and How it Works:

The Forest Preserves are committed to restoring the nearly 55,000 acres of natural areas to health and resilience. These thousands of acres contain some of the most unique habitats on earth. Many of the native plants, and the insects, birds, and animals, that depend on them, face a growing number of threats, including invasive species, fragmentation, pollution, and the many impacts from people whom are disconnected from nature. In restoring these lands, one of the biggest challenges is having enough of the native plant material needed to reseed an area.

The Forest Preserves envision the opening of a Native Plant Nursery that complements, rather than competes with native seed suppliers, and that grows those plants most needed in restoration efforts. In addition to growing seed that ensures the genetic quality for our unique habitats, such a nursery would enable the District to expand restoration projects, and to better support the incredible efforts of volunteer stewards that are working to enhance the health of more than 20,000 acres.

The Native Plant Nursery will include important education, research, and job training components building on the programs that the Forest Preserves currently support. The main location for the Plant Nursery is envisioned to be at Salt Creek Forest Preserve. The Nursery will leverage the expertise of the Garden. **A potential partnership with the Chicago Botanic Garden is already being explored.**



Signature Campgrounds

The Idea and How it Works:

“Come to the woods, for here is rest. There is no repose like that of the green deep woods.” John Muir’s words continue to inspire the Forest Preserves’ ambitious plan to revitalize and enrich the menu of outdoor recreation opportunities for the people of this metropolitan region. A Camp Master Plan was completed in January 2013 and outlines a diverse portfolio of camping opportunities.

A wide range of camp sites have been identified that offer a variety of group, family, and individual camping and day camp experiences including:

- **Resource-based education** celebrates and interprets the natural or cultural resources available at a particular location. These experiences include educational programs and interpretive trails.
- **Nature immersion** is geared towards the camper who seeks an unstructured, un-programmed, overnight experience in nature – relaxation, hiking, and other passive activities are offered.
- **Adventure-based recreation** focuses on a particular outdoor recreation experience that relates to the site such as team building, ropes course, hiking, fishing, canoeing, or kayaking.
- **Specific use** sites include facilities that offer a particular amenity or experience that respond to a specialized recreational interest, such as equestrian camping.

Campgrounds will be located throughout Cook County and connect to natural amenities such as a river, lake, prairie, one of our six nature centers, or to outdoor recreation activities such as paddling, ropes courses and archery. We will incorporate a range of lodging options, including bunkhouses, cabins and tent sites to serve both beginner and experienced campers. The campgrounds would serve up to 1,200 overnight visitors per day. Additional facilities would be added as funding becomes available.

We may highlight a camping project completion as a milestone of the Centennial through:

- An overnight community camping event at first camp site complete with BBQ/camping food buffet, camp fire/presentation and a workshop session with various camping “stations” (camp recipes, how to pitch a tent, how to build camp fire, etc.).
- Inviting journalists and influential bloggers to participate in overnight camping event.
- Complimenting an event with a “30 day camping challenge” by selecting someone to spend a month camping in the preserves, documenting their experience online.

Overcoming Conservation Bottlenecks

Partnership Opportunity

A Study of Best Management Practices in Restoration

The Idea and How it Works:

The Forest Preserves have long been a leader and partner in scientific research projects ranging from wildlife studies to large-scale prairie restoration efforts. Our staff collaborates with academic research institutions throughout the region and across the country to monitor, study, and analyze the interactions between nature and the more than 5 million people whom live in Cook County.

Managing and restoring land has been a central tenet of the Forest Preserves' mission and as times change so do the challenges for land management. Perhaps not surprisingly for land agencies in the Midwest, much of the land that we acquire is, or has been, a former farm field. The acquisition of these former agricultural fields allows us to acquire relatively large – for such a densely populated metropolitan area - tracts of land, to add critical buffers, and to link parcels for important connections that benefit both people and animals. The restoration of these agricultural lands comes with its own set of unique challenges.

To address these challenges, the Forest Preserves, in partnership with research institutions, will conduct a long-term study to evaluate the effectiveness of current management practices for restoring and conserving biodiversity in the Chicago Wilderness region. The focus of the study will be on determining which management practices are proving most effective in returning agricultural fields to native habitat. The study will take a close look at soils that have been impacted by tilling, fertilizing, and compaction and examine methods that can be used to restore soils so they increase the likelihood that high quality plant populations can be established.

Such a study would benefit many land management agencies and conservation organizations in our region and allow us to be more strategic in the allocation of restoration dollars.

Timing: 2014-2015

Programs

Programs

Programs are an important part of this Centennial campaign, and in many instances, will be the most direct and significant way that the Forest Preserves' visitors will experience the centennial. In addition to bolstering the work outlined by the master plans, programs will offer new opportunities to conduct outreach to underserved communities, engage directly with the public, business and civic organizations, and provide opportunities for education and research. Centennial programs include:

- **Conservation Months:** A call to action to expanding our stewardship and volunteer force on behalf of nature
- **Wild About Nature:** Developing the next generation of conservation leaders
- **Natural Wonders:** Introducing an Ecosystem Interpretation Model
- **The Nature of Health:** A partnership with the healthcare community
- **Forest Preserves at Your Fingertips:** Issuing a technology challenge
- **Nature Day Camp, a Collaboration with the Chicago Zoological Society:** Expanding day camp program
- **Region-Wide Awareness Campaign:** Employing advertising to raise awareness of Forest Preserves
- **Storytellers Series:** A series of interviews with Forest Preserves patrons, friends
- **Documentary Film:** Creating a lasting record of the Forest Preserves throughout each season
- **Signature Event:** Creating an event that draws new visitors

Conservation Months: A Call to Action

In planning

Partnership Opportunity

The Idea and How it Works:

The Forest Preserves of Cook County have a long and proud history of engaging citizens to assist in the restoration, protection and preservation of our public lands. The lands face significant challenges, including habitat fragmentation, pollution, and, one of the biggest threats, invasive plant species. The encroachment of species such as garlic mustard, buckthorn, teasel, purple loosestrife and bush honeysuckle severely impact the health of our unique ecosystems, limit habitat for wildlife, and reduce outdoor recreational activities.

We will introduce key Conservation Months aimed at increasing the volunteer stewardship force that focuses on the eradication of invasive species. Increasing the number of site stewardship leaders allows us to expand the number of acres that are managed by volunteers. Our goal is to grow the number of stewardship leaders, as well as the number of volunteers who can work with us to restore our lands and become advocates for the Forest Preserves.



Wild About Nature

Developing the next generation of conservation leaders through educational programming for diverse audiences

The Idea and How it Works:

The Forest Preserves will expand current offerings for youth to engage in nature exploration and science education experiences. We know that when young people spend time in nature it has a positive impact on their physical, emotional, and intellectual development; we also know that it is critical to develop the next generation of conservation leaders. Through our programs, we will aim to educate youth on the importance of environmental stewardship and introduce them to potential careers in science, outdoor recreation and education.

Our current youth initiatives include:

- Mighty Acorns
- Citizen Scientists in Action
- Wild About Nature Science Fair Award
- Wild Indigo Nature Exploration
- Fishin' Buddies Youth Conservation Council
- Teens Outside program
- Internships such as the new Urban Environmental Education Internship

We see many opportunities for collaboration with this initiative and are excited about the possibility of cultivating new Forest Preserves leaders.



Natural Wonders

Introducing an Ecosystem Interpretation Model

The Idea and How it Works:

The Forest Preserves are committed to ensuring that visitors have a meaningful experience when they visit a restored habitat. Thousands of people visit the Preserves each year providing opportunities to communicate significant messages about the environment, and a chance to build an interest in becoming an advocate for nature.

In 2013, the Preserves, in partnership with Openlands, began the design and installation of an innovative interpretative plan for two key sites: Deer Grove, the District's very first acquisition, and Tinley Creek Forest Preserve. The interpretive elements that will be incorporated into these areas will:

- Stimulate feelings of wonder and care for nature by facilitating positive experiences that connect people to the earth.
- Communicate the value of stewardship.
- Promote the leadership role of the Forest Preserves in regional land conservation.

The interpretive elements may include innovative signage, artistic features, and incentives to take a walk and explore. Downloadable podcasts, apps, and other technology will also be used.



The Nature of Health

Partnership with health care community

The Idea and How it Works:

Partner with local health care providers like the Cook County Department of Health and Human Services, area hospitals, pharmacies, and health clubs to link health and wellness with the use of Forest Preserves by customers and residents. A partnership with pharmacies could create an in-store marketing program that reaches customers with information about nearby preserves, details on health benefits of walking and nature and upcoming Forest Preserves events in the form of kiosks placed near healthcare services. Extend kiosks to natural partners, like Cook County Health System facilities.

Create ongoing partnerships with hospitals and healthcare providers to promote the health giving qualities of nature, (i.e., Prescriptions for Nature).



Forest Preserves at Your Fingertips

Technology challenge

In planning

Partnership Opportunity

The Idea and How it Works:

We will challenge the Chicago tech community to submit a plan that puts the Forest Preserves “at your fingertips.” Participants will be asked to conceptualize a mobile experience that allows visitors to interact with information about the Preserves and also upload their own observations, notes, photos and videos. The winning entry will be awarded a grant to implement the solution. Partner with an IT think tank, emphasizing the need to create more than just a Forest Preserves mobile app. Participants should strive to create an entire virtual guide to the preserves that collects data across multiple locations and allows visitors to upload their own observations, notes, content, etc. directly to the system in real time.

Include GIS mapping data on invasive species, how to identify and eradicate them. May include a game component modeled after Angry Birds or Sim City (i.e., Angry Buckthorn).



Timing: September 2013

Nature Day Camp

A collaboration with the Chicago Zoological Society

The Idea and How it Works:

Continue to work with the Chicago Zoological Society to expand a Nature Day Camp program and build a partnership that brings Zoo Day Campers to Forest Preserves sites.

The Nature Day Camp would build on the zoo's existing educational programming that is based on the premise that children need to touch, explore, build, and do. Touching live animals, planting a garden, finger painting with mud, searching for bugs, and building animal homes are all in a day's play. The goal is to foster a connection with nature as kids have fun both at the zoo and at our nature centers and other Preserves sites.



Region-wide Awareness Campaign

Launch in-market advertising

In planning

Partnership Opportunity

The Idea and How it Works:

Support Centennial activities with an integrated advertising/marketing campaign and supporting materials.

- Digital: execute search engine optimization and paid search activities in addition to promoted social media advertising
- Out of home: execute transit advertising and direct mail activities, such as tax bill inserts
 - Explore opportunities for pro bono advertising through CTA and Metra, the city and media outlets.
- Print & radio: execute print and radio advertising activities in carefully selected media outlets
- Create special Centennial kiosks or exhibits that can be displayed at the Zoo, Gardens and in prominent locations in downtown Chicago.
- Revise the Ten City Escapes brochures that Friends of the Park and Friends of the Forest Preserves created that lists easy day trips on public transit to nearby Forest Preserves in Cook County.
- Engage with partners, such as the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning and the Active Transportation Alliance and others, to identify ways to improve public transportation access to the preserves.
- Create promotional collateral to distribute at key CTA train/bus stops, Metra and Pace stops, and other high traffic areas advertising directions, routes and ways to access preserves.



Timing:

Development summer fall 2013

Launch fall 2013

Continued campaign, 2014+

Storytellers Series

Digitally collect Forest Preserves stories/memories

In planning

Partnership Opportunity

The Idea and How it Works:

The Forest Preserves will collect interviews and user-generated content from Forest Preserves visitors and staff to help illustrate what the preserves mean to them and their favorite things about the preserves. The final product will serve as a multi-generational collection of memories, illustrating how things were and how they exist now.

The Forest Preserves StoryTellers program will serve as a way to engage a lot of different people and collect the examples and real-life stories the Forest Preserves can use throughout the Centennial years and beyond.

- Set up a dedicated micro-site that allows users to directly upload their content (videos, photos, written memories, etc.)
- Schedule special story collection days to allow visitors to submit their entries on-site.
- Edit stories in post-production.
- Package all entries into a multimedia presentation that will be featured on the website, social channels and on video screens at nature centers and signature sites.



Timing: Fall 2013+

Documentary Film

Partnership Opportunity

The Idea and How it Works:

A documentary film on the Forest Preserves with an engaging narrator. The film explores the creation and early years of the Forest Preserves and the people whom shaped it; the plants and animals that call the preserves home; the challenges that the forest preserve faces located within such a large metropolis (fragmentation, pollution, climate change, a population that is disconnected from nature, etc.); and the many benefits/ecological services that our natural lands provide.



Timing:

2014 – develop project
2015 – airing

Forest Preserves Signature Event

The Idea and How it Works:

Create a signature Forest Preserves event that engages a large and broad audience, and that becomes a recognizable, annual fundraising event for the Forest Preserves.

Ideas include:

- A Century Bike Ride, a bicycle ride of 100 miles.
- A passive triathlon that celebrates the unique activities that can be done in the Forest Preserves: yoga and meditation, birding, fishing.
- A recreation triathlon that includes paddling, biking and hiking.

Another alternative: because many county residents already utilize Forest Preserves locations for marathon and triathlon training, host a training fair offering bike tune-ups, training and exercise courses taught by area experts and opportunities for participants to purchase training gear.



Communications and Strategic Visibility

Communications Strategies

In addition to the region-wide awareness campaign and other programming aimed at communicating with our target audiences as outlined earlier in this plan, our communications strategy will also include the following:

- Plan external speaking and media visibility opportunities around news and events
 - Host a launch event
 - Establish a speakers bureau
 - Conduct targeted outreach to local, regional and national publications
 - Establish a “Drum Beat” news bureau and conduct desk-side briefings with reporters
- Ignite engagement with new and existing partners and inform the national discussion
 - Extend Center for Humans and Nature Partnership
 - Engage target audiences around Next Century Conservation Plan Release
 - Play a leading role in the Chicago Wilderness Conference
 - Align the Centennial priorities with those of the Forest Preserve Foundation
- Documenting our story
 - Tell the Forest Preserves story through a series of print and online communications pieces

External Speaking & Media Outreach

Gain visibility for the Centennial campaign and position the Forest Preserves as a thought leader in the naturalist community through a strategic combination of speaking engagements, national press opportunities and a steady, planned calendar of media announcements.

Launch Event

Introduce the Centennial campaign initiatives and goals to advocates, partners, business and civic leaders, and friends through a dedicated launch event (June 2013).

Speakers Bureau

Seek platforms to tell the 100 year story of the Forest Preserves and engage in a broader discussion on nature and urban environments. Repurpose speaking engagements into short white papers to share Forest Preserves perspectives and insights with the wider naturalist community.

Targeted Outreach to National Publications

Build upon speakers bureau activities by leveraging themes and ideas in conducting outreach to national publications, like *National Geographic*, *Sierra Magazine* and *Conservation Magazine*. Develop editorial calendar to plan specific timeline of media opportunities and storylines for national publications.

“Drum Beat” News Bureau & Desksides

Leverage initiatives already in planning and development through regular, consistent media outreach and announcements and highlight initiatives as evidence of the Forest Preserve’s commitment to the longevity of the land and its role in the county. Develop editorial calendar to plan specific timeline of media opportunities and storylines.

Extending Potential Visibility Opportunities

Three significant activities are already underway that have relevance to the Centennial. Highlighting these activities and initiatives will help raise additional visibility for the Forest Preserves as a whole and bolster other Centennial campaign activities.

Component 1: Extend Center for Humans and Nature Partnership

Partner with the Center for Humans and Nature on their next “Big Question” initiative by posing the question: How is nature critical to a 21st century urban ethic? Center for Humans and Nature philosophers, biologists, ecologists, lawyers, political scientists, anthropologists and economists would provide their perspective and generate thoughts on the topic. See www.humansandnature.org/centennial for more.

Component 2: Next Century Conservation Plan Release

In addition to unveiling the release to the naturalist community, coordinate with Openlands and Metropolis Strategies on the release the Next Century Conservation Plan.

Component 3: Chicago Wilderness Conference

Determine partnership opportunities for the next Chicago Wilderness Conference in the spring of 2014. Potential opportunity to gain visibility for Centennial campaign and to unveil Next Century Conservation Plan.

In addition, the Centennial will serve as an opportunity to align partnerships and resources. This includes alignment with the Forest Preserves of Cook County Foundation around fundraising priorities.

Documenting our Story

A series of print publications that highlight the unique biodiversity of the Forest Preserves and seek to help people of all ages connect with nature are envisioned. Though each individual material will have its own purpose depending on its format, purpose and target audience, we will establish overarching consistencies to adhere to for all materials. All materials aim to educate audiences and connect them with Centennial campaign activities, efforts and programs that are of interest them. These materials will supply partners, advocates and Forest Preserves staff with necessary resources to assist with outreach and education efforts.

- **Coffee table book:** The Forest Preserves may create a high quality coffee table book that captures the history, biodiversity, and beauty of the Forest Preserves in photos and essays. Essays could be written by renowned conservationists, as well as local stewardship stalwarts. The book can also be made available as an e-book.
- **Children's book:** A children's book (like a Badge Book and/or coloring book) could be created that serves as an entry point for children and young adults to the Forest Preserves.
- **Walking and Birding Guide:** The Forest Preserves offer some of the premier birding locations in the region with eight forest preserves declared Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The Forest Preserves may create a walking and birding guide that highlights these, and other, significant areas. The guide will be designed for both beginner and expert birders.
- **Fishing Guide:** The Forest Preserves' popular Fishing Guide will be reprinted.
- **Preserves Passport:** Create a "passport" to the best parts of the Preserves that includes nature challenges for young people. Stamp the passport for each accomplishment. One feature of this passport could include finding the location of the 100 oldest trees in the Preserves.

Centennial Timeline

Year 1: 2H 2013

Establish, Activate

followers, build ambassadors

Year 2: 2014

Engage

new audiences

Year 3: 2015

Inspire

amplify engagement

Planning and Implementation

▲ Next Century Conservation Plan Release

▲ Launch Event

*June 2013

Communications and Strategic Visibility Initiatives

Region-Wide Awareness Campaign

Gateways to Nature

Trail System Maps and Wayfinding Signage

Native Plant Nursery

Signature Campgrounds

Forest Preserves at Your Fingertips

Overcoming Conservation Bottlenecks

Conservation Months

Conservation Months

Wild About Nature

Natural Wonders

Zoo Day Camp

Storyteller Series

Signature Athletic Event

The Nature of Health

Documentary Film

Get Involved!

The Centennial comes at a time when the Forest Preserves are already underway with a capital improvement plan and several other ongoing programs. However, many of the legacy projects planned for the Centennial have been made with partners in mind.

Through the Centennial, we hope to engage new and existing partners. We invite you to join us in accomplishing our Centennial goals for the long-term protection, preservation and appreciation of natural areas. To provide input, or if you are interested in getting involved, please visit the website:

fpdcc.com/100

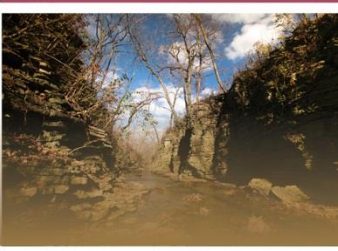
Thank You!

We would like to thank our many partners, who over the years have supported the Forest Preserves' efforts around preservation, education and recreation. We look forward to working with you throughout the next hundred years. These partners include, but are not limited to:

Active Transportation Alliance
Audubon – Chicago Region
BackYard Nature Center
Bartel Grassland Volunteers
Bird Conservation Network
Boy Scouts of America - Chicago Area Council
Bronzeville Historical Society
buildOn
Calumet Heritage Partnership
Calumet Stewardship Initiative
Calumet-Sag Greenway Trail Coalition
Center for Humans and Nature
Chicago Area Mountain Bikers Association
Chicago Botanic Garden
Chicago Cares
Chicago House
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Chicago Park District
Chicago Public Schools
Chicago Wilderness
Chicago Zoological Society
Citizens for Conservation
City of Chicago
Conservation Research Institute
Cook County
CSX
Deer Grove Natural Area Volunteers, West
DePaul University
DesPlaines River Valley Restoration Project
DuPage Birding Club
Evanston North Shore Bird Club
Faith in Place
Family Center Educational Agency, Inc.
Field Museum
Fishin' Buddies
Forest Preserve Foundation

Forest Preserve Foundation Working Group
Forest Preserves Volunteer Stewards
Friends of Bluff Spring Fen
Friends of Busse Woods
Friends of Chicago Portage
Friends of Deer Grove East
Friends of Morton Grove
Friends of Spring Creek
Friends of the Calumet-Sag Trail
Friends of the Chicago River
Friends of the Forest Preserves
Friends of the Parks
Friends of Wolf Road Prairie
Fuller Park Community Development
Greencorps Chicago
Grove Restoration Project
HandsOn Suburban Chicago
Hanover Township - Youth and Family Service
I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor - Civic Center Authority
Illinois Association of Conservation and Forest Preserve Districts
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
Illinois High School Association
Illinois Nature Preserves Commission
Illinois Paddling Council
Illinois Trail Riders
International Mountain Bikers Association
Lake/Cook Chapter Illinois Audubon Society
Lawrence Hall
Lincoln Park Zoo
Loyola University
Maria Luisa de Moreno International Foundation
Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation
Metropolis Strategies
Metropolitan Greenspace Alliance

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago
Morton Arboretum
The Nature Conservancy Illinois
NeighborSpace
North Branch Restoration Project
Ohio State University
OMNI Youth Services
Openlands
Orland Grassland Volunteers
Palos Hills Horsemen's Association
Palos Restoration Project
Partners for Parks and Wildlife
Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards
REI
Riding Club of Barrington Hills
Roosevelt University
Salt Creek Greenway Association
Save the Prairie Society
The Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust
Shedd Aquarium
Sierra Club
Somme Prairie Grove
Spring Creek Stewards
Thatcher Woods Savanna Restoration Project
Thorn Creek Ecosystem Partnership
TRIO Upward Bound - Northeastern University
University of Illinois Extension
University of Chicago
University of Illinois at Chicago
US Army Corps of Engineers
US Environmental Protection Agency
USDA Forest Service
US Fish and Wildlife Service
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services (Area 3)
USDI National Park Service
Volunteer Stewardship Network
Woodlawn Children's Promise Community
Youth Outreach Services



Centennial Campaign Plan

Developed to celebrate the Forest Preserves of Cook County's anniversary over a multi-year span (2013-2015)

June 2013