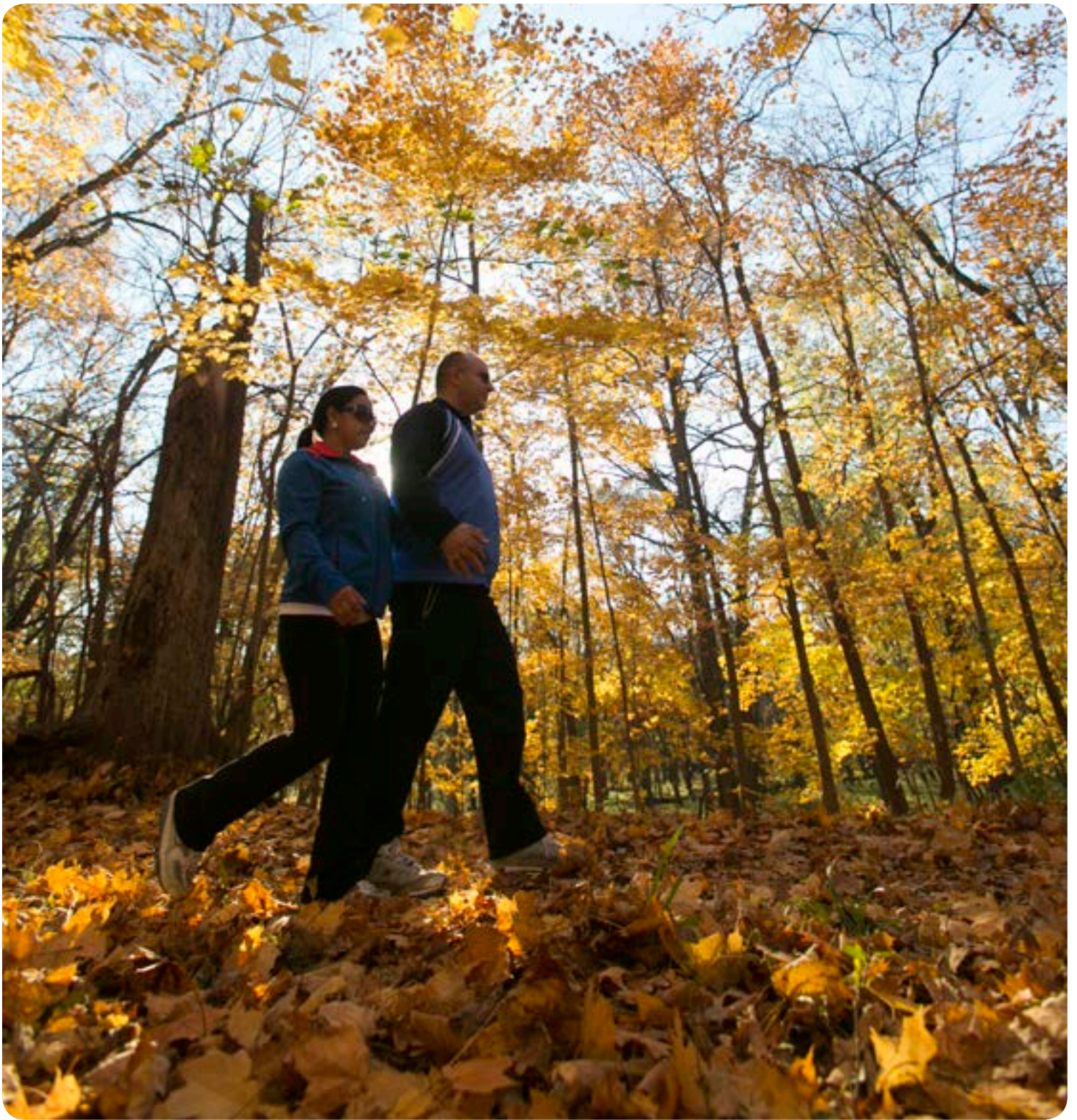


Forest Preserve District of Cook County



RECREATION MASTER PLAN MARCH 2013





Connecting People to Nature



Forest Preserve District of Cook County

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT

www.fpdcc.com

March 19, 2013

RE: Recreation Master Plan

Dear Commissioners,

In 1929, the District first established a plan and recommendations for allocating specific areas for camping, picnicking and playfields. The District's holdings and user population have increased tremendously since then. As the District approaches its 100th Anniversary, I am pleased to present this first official Recreation Master Plan to provide the District with a blueprint for the future. In addition to improving what we already have, a major goal is expanding outdoor recreation opportunities to introduce new people to the preserves.

The plan emphasized the District's long history of conservation and education and builds on our rich history of trails, picnicking and water recreation. Highlights from the plan include recommendations for improving trails, picnic areas and other traditional recreation areas as well as considering some new sites and activities to engage new users. The role of nature centers is elevated to include more outdoor recreation opportunities and connections and is a recommendation that the District can quickly implement. Lastly, ensuring fiscal responsibility is crucial to the success of this plan to protect our infrastructure for generations to come.

This plan was developed with extensive public outreach as well as advice from a Recreation Master Plan Advisory Committee. Special thanks to Commissioner Elizabeth Gorman for co-chairing this committee with me.

An electronic version of the Recreation Master Plan can be downloaded from the District's website or through this link: <http://fpdcc.com/recreation-master-plan>

We look forward to updating you on our implementation of this exciting plan.

Sincerely,

Arnold Randall
General Superintendent

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Purpose & Goals

As the Forest Preserve District of Cook County approaches its 100th anniversary in 2014, there is a lot to celebrate. The District encompasses more than 68,000 acres, which is approximately 11 percent of Cook County's land mass. Each year, it is estimated that there are more than 40 million visits by people each year to the forest preserves to enjoy nature, bicycle, hike, fish, cross-country ski, picnic, golf, canoe, or simply relax. However, many County residents are still unaware of what the forest preserves have to offer. At a time when 40 percent of children in suburban Cook County are overweight or obese, promoting the health benefits of outdoor recreation, along with cultivating a lifelong love of nature, is more important than ever.

The Recreation Master Plan provides a vision and strategies to guide the development of expanded outdoor recreation opportunities in response to evolving community trends, needs, and interests. The plan positions the Forest Preserve District of Cook County as a regional and national leader in outdoor recreation by integrating recreation and environmental education and incorporating best management practices. The plan includes decision-making tools to guide staff and leaders in making wise capital and operating investment decisions for recreational opportunities for the next 5-10 years.

This plan seeks to address the following **GOALS**:

- **INTRODUCE** new people to the forest preserves in order to develop a lifelong love of nature and outdoor recreation.
- **PROMOTE** the health benefits of outdoor recreation.
- **PROVIDE** a variety of quality outdoor recreational opportunities in collaboration with others.

History & Planning Context



The Forest Preserve District of Cook County was formed in 1914. Created by an act of the Illinois State Legislature, the District was the first county-wide unit of government dedicated to land conservation in Illinois. It was also one of the first in urban America.

The founders of the District predicted the explosive population growth and anticipated the wave of urban development that would sprawl far beyond

the city limits of Chicago into the open prairie, forest, wetland, and farm fields. They envisioned a region that preserved its natural character and sense of place, with vast expanses of open land following the natural mosaic of rivers, streams, prairies, marsh, and woodland that traverse Cook County.

Although picnicking and hiking or biking remain the most popular recreation activities, many take advantage of a range of other activities and facilities throughout the preserves including golf courses and driving ranges, nature centers, model airplane flying fields, and swimming pools.

Policy Framework

The debate about recreation within the Forest Preserve District of Cook County has been around for a long time. In 1929, a land use commission recommended that the District maintain an 80/20 balance in its land use, with 80 percent of the District's land to be kept in as natural a condition as possible, and 20 percent to be available for development for recreation that is compatible with the District's mission (including trails, picnic facilities, and nature centers). An assessment conducted as part of this plan shows that the District is currently under that 20 percent threshold by as much as five percent. This policy framework ensures that developed recreation does not exceed 20 percent of the forest preserve lands. Recommendations to continue to monitor the land use balance are included in Chapter 4 and Appendix E of this plan.



Planning Process

In May 2012, the District engaged the services of a team of consultants with national and local recreation planning experience (led by Colorado-based GreenPlay) to assist in developing this master plan. An Advisory Committee made up of a cross-section of stakeholders as well as a staff Project Team guided the planning process. The planning team assessed existing recreation facilities and services and new opportunities through research, site visits, and a comprehensive public engagement process. The consultant team reviewed recreation and demographic trends, explored best practices of peer agencies, and conducted market analysis of select new recreation services. Chapter 1 includes additional details about the planning process.



Recreation Vision & Guiding Principles

Based on the public and stakeholder input received throughout the planning process, the following vision and guiding principles were developed to provide a framework for outdoor recreation within the District.



Vision for Recreation

Cook County residents and visitors value and enjoy the forest preserves by engaging in diverse educational and recreational experiences that foster health, wellness, and a lifelong love of nature and outdoor activity.

Guiding Principles



- Outdoor recreation opportunities are provided to promote **HEALTHY** lifestyles and **CONNECT PEOPLE TO NATURE**.
- A **VARIETY** of **SAFE** and **ACCESSIBLE** outdoor recreational opportunities are offered that attract diverse communities.
- Environmental awareness, open space advocacy, and **STEWARDSHIP** messages are incorporated into what we do.
- Recreational uses are **SENSITIVE** to natural resources and not located where they would disturb high value ecologically-sensitive areas.
- Recreational opportunities are created using the District's 80/20 land use recommendation to ensure 80 percent of the District is **PROTECTED** and **UNDEVELOPED**.
- Visitors are educated on the **VALUE** of the natural resources in the District and how to **MINIMIZE THEIR IMPACT** when using the preserves.
- The **COMMUNITY** is engaged in the planning process.
- Environmental, social and financial **SUSTAINABILITY** guides planning and operations.



Compatible Recreation

There are two ways of thinking about compatible recreation:

1. Compatible with the District's mission, values, and vision
2. Compatible with the site

Evaluation criteria for future new recreation proposals are included in the Recreation Master Plan document and take into consideration the following.

1. Fit (mission, values, vision, and guiding principles)
2. Community Need and Demand
3. Site Planning
4. Implementation Options and Sustainability

Definition of Recreation

Something people do to relax or have fun: activities done for enjoyment.

-Merriam-Webster's Dictionary

As new or expanded recreational uses are considered, the evaluation criteria found in Chapter 1 can be used to assess compatible recreation proposals.

Key Findings

Public Engagement

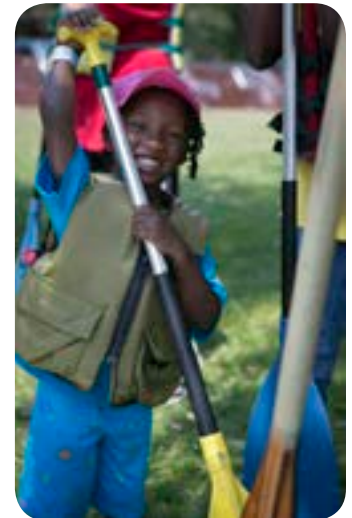
A series of 13 focus groups, 20 stakeholder interviews, and two public meetings resulted in these key findings.

- Get the word out and expand marketing efforts
- Grow what we have – trails, water recreation, picnicking, etc.
- Enhance nature-based programming and message
- Create new recreational opportunities
- Address access and safety concerns

Survey

A random, statistically-valid survey, as well as an open on-line survey yielded input from over 6,000 residents. The following survey conclusions provide understanding of usage patterns and recreation preferences, and help to establish priorities.

- The Forest Preserve District has a strong and frequent user base.
- Lack of awareness of services and amenities is a primary issue.
- Users tend to stay closer to home and do not regularly travel to other areas of the County for preserve activities.
- Arriving by car is the preferred method of transportation.
- Fixing up existing facilities is slightly more important than building new ones.



Key Findings, Continued



- Traditional forest preserve recreation activities such as trail use and picnicking are most desired.
- Water-based, nature education, winter-based, fitness, and camping recreation are viable additions to programs, activities, and facilities.
- Top interests in new recreation opportunities included winter activities, art and culture events, and nature play areas.
- Interest was also expressed in a variety of new outdoor recreation activities including adventure activities (ropes courses/zip lines and climbing walls), archery, and disc golf.

Analysis of Inventory & Services

The planning team conducted an analysis of existing facilities and services and identified the following key findings.

- The District's recreation focus is on picnicking and regional trails.
- There is growing participation in special events and cultural programming.
- There are opportunities to strengthen the connection between recreation and environmental education. (See Chapter 3 for more discussion.)
- While the District provides many of the same outdoor recreational opportunities as peer agencies, several of these peer agencies also provide a range of additional facilities not currently provided at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (e.g., disc golf, archery, challenge courses, and swimming beaches).



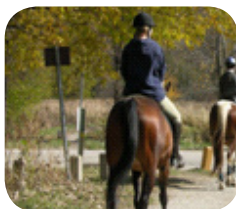
Summary of Recommendations

Highlights of recommendations by recreation type are summarized below.



Picnicking

- Connect picnicking with nearby recreation and nature activities
- Offer recreation rental options at picnic sites
- Diversify picnic area sizes



Trails

- Develop Trails Master Plan
- Add and clearly identify trailheads
- Consider adding bike rentals



Water Recreation

- Expand boat launches and rental opportunities
- Increase boating instruction and guided tours through partnerships
- Consider adding swimming beaches



Winter Recreation

- Enhance and expand winter recreation destinations
- Add cross country ski and snowshoe rental sites
- Consider expanding ice skating



Nature Education & Play

- Enhance nature play area at Crab Tree Nature Center and add new ones
- Expand engaging nature exploration programming, including birding
- Increase interpretive signage throughout the District



Arts, Culture, & Heritage

- Expand arts and cultural activities and events
- Identify art partnerships programming opportunities
- Protect and interpret historic features



Outdoor Adventure

- Explore partnership opportunities to add a challenge course/ropes course at select campground site(s)
- Consider the feasibility of adding a canopy tour
- Explore opportunities to expand mountain biking areas

Summary of Recommendations, Continued



Other Recreation

- Add new recreational opportunities including archery and disc golf
- Promote health, wellness, and fitness opportunities
- Equitably provide off-leash dog areas

Additional recommendations address enhancing best management practices such as developing a cost recovery policy and pricing policy. Strengthening internal and external collaborations and developing clear partnership policies are also proposed in Chapters 3-5. A Recommendations Summary/Action Plan is found in Chapter 6.

Opportunity Sites

A number of sites were identified as “opportunity sites” for recreational opportunities as part of the planning process for this Recreation Master Plan. Initial criteria for selecting these sites include the following.

- Existing Activity Areas
- Recent Acquisition
- Camp Day Use Site
- Previously Disturbed Site

The map on page 8 shows proposed recreational improvements at these sites.

Existing Activity Areas

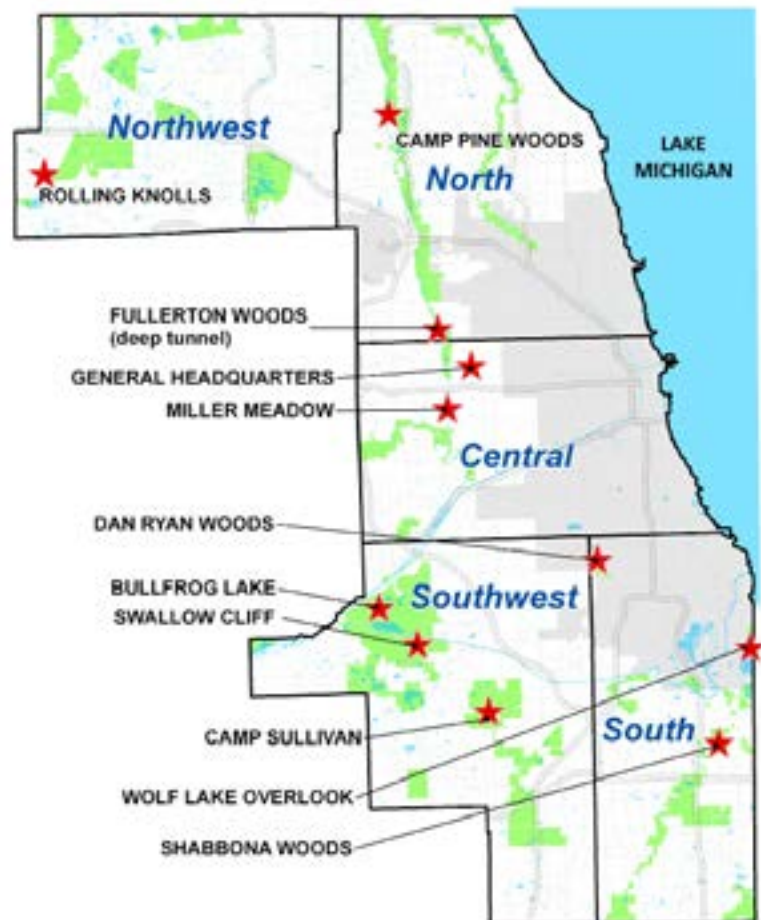
- Dan Ryan Woods
- General Headquarters
- Swallow Cliff

Recent Acquisition

- Rolling Knolls

Camp Day Use

- Bullfrog Lake
- Camp Pine Woods
- Camp Sullivan
- Shabbona Woods



Opportunity Sites, Continued

Previously Disturbed Site

- Fullerton Woods (deep tunnel)*
- Wolf Lake Overlook*
- Miller Meadow

**Fullerton Woods (deep tunnel site) and Wolf Lake Overlook, both previously disturbed sites with low ecological value, are identified as longer term projects and will require collaborative planning efforts. Improvements to these sites are not currently funded.*

Many of these sites, as well as others throughout the District, can serve as activity centers or hubs for multiple recreational activities. Co-locating outdoor recreational amenities in activity hubs helps:

- Create destinations with multiple recreational opportunities.
- Attract and engage users.
- Encourage repeat visits.
- Maximize use of existing infrastructure.
- Limit footprint of developed areas.
- Direct public enjoyment of the lands away from highly sensitive ecological resources.

The list of opportunity sites is not exhaustive, and additional opportunities will emerge as conditions change, such as new acquisitions, funding availability, and partnership opportunities. The District should be flexible and regularly review opportunities. The plan identifies criteria for evaluating specific compatible recreation proposals and should be used by staff as a tool for reviewing future opportunities.

Priority Sites

Of the opportunities sites, priority sites were identified for select recreational enhancements. In June 2012 the District issued General Obligation Bonds for the purpose of funding land acquisition and capital improvement projects. Of this funding, over \$3.5 million has been earmarked to fund priority projects identified in this Recreation Master Plan. All capital projects that are funded through these bonds must be designed and built by June 2015. Additional site planning will be needed to refine program elements and develop schematic plans for some of the priority sites.

In addition to the priority sites, recommended recreational enhancements are proposed for several other forest preserve locations. This plan provides a vision and guide for long-term planning efforts to expand recreational opportunities at specific opportunity sites.





















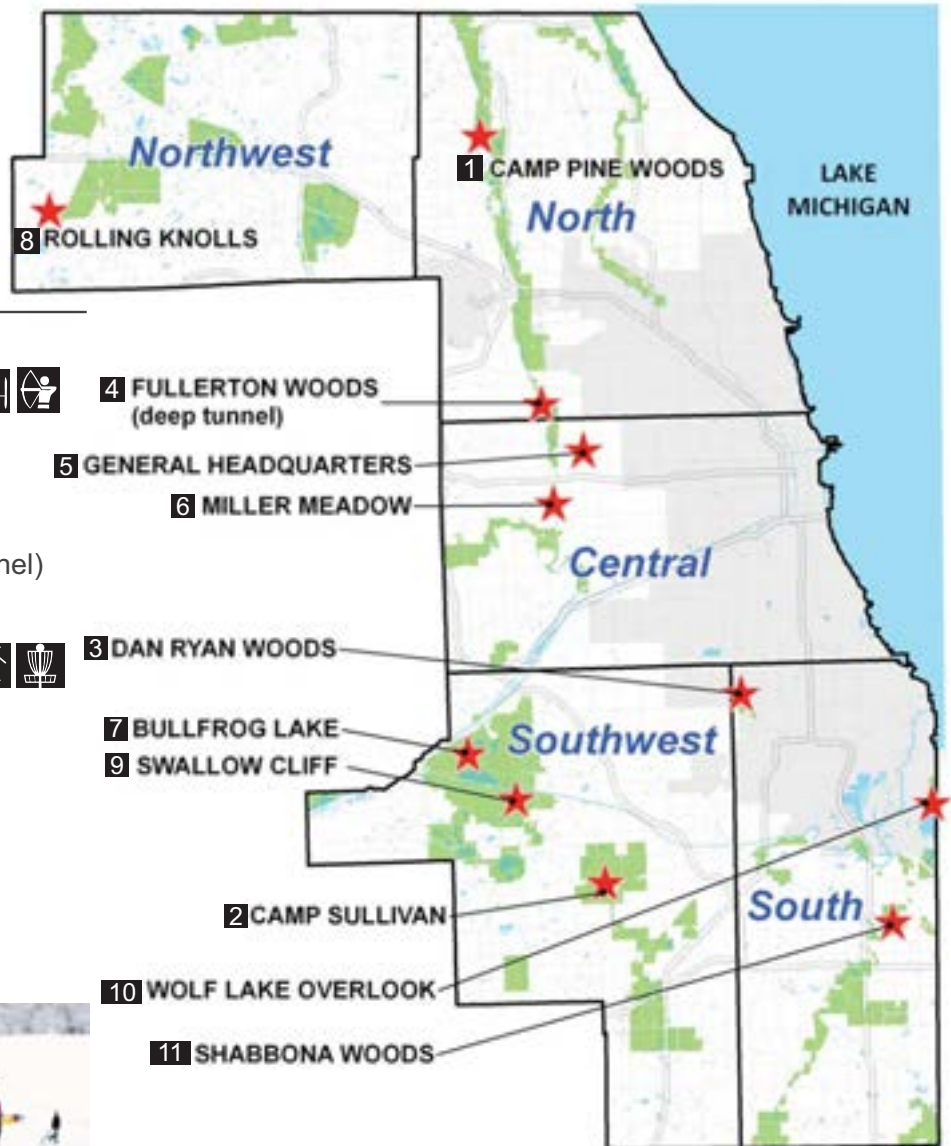
FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF COOK COUNTY

Vision:

Cook County residents and visitors value and enjoy the forest preserves by engaging in diverse educational and recreational experiences that foster health, wellness, and a lifelong love of nature and outdoor activity.

Opportunity Sites

1. Camp Pine Woods   
2. Camp Sullivan 
3. Dan Ryan Woods  
4. Fullerton Woods (deep tunnel)
5. General HQ 
6. Miller Meadow    
7. Bullfrog Lake  
8. Rolling Knolls   
9. Swallow Cliff 
10. Wolf Lake Overlook
11. Shabbona Woods 



Archery



Winter Recreation



Nature Play



Water Recreation

symbols



archery



challenge course



disc golf



expanded picnic grove



nature, art & culture



off leash dog park



water recreation



winter recreation

GOALS:



Introduce new people to the forest preserves in order to develop a lifelong love of nature and outdoor recreation.



Promote the health benefits of outdoor recreation.



Provide a variety of quality outdoor recreation opportunities in collaboration with others.

Service Delivery & Operations

With limited current staffing to support expanded recreational opportunities, a variety of service delivery approaches were reviewed as part of this plan. Some of the recommended improvements are self-directed, drop-in recreational uses that do not require supervision, such as a canoe/kayak landing or a walking loop. A range of approaches to other uses such as winter and water recreation may require different levels of staffing depending on the type of service.

District Staff

In this model, District staff take full responsibility for construction (as applicable), operations, maintenance, and program delivery for a given facility or service. Depending on the degree of service provided, different levels of staff support are needed. For example, winter recreation could be provided as a drop-in, self directed use or additional services could be provided such as a warming center with concessions and rentals. These enhanced services could be provided by District staff or a concessionaire.

Partnership

A partnership is a cooperative venture between two or more parties with a common goal, who combine complementary resources to complete a mutually beneficial project. Partnerships can take many forms including programming partnerships or operating partnerships.

In an operating partnership a written agreement is developed with an outside group to provide day-to-day management of a given facility and deliver programs. A partner could also contribute funds toward a capital improvement project. For any new facility development, it would be important to have the partner involved in the design process to ensure that the facilities are in line with their programmatic and operational needs. An operating partnership is recommended for the development of an outdoor archery range (currently proposed as a potential use at the Rolling Knolls site).

Contract/Concessionaire

This model relies on an outside organization to enter into a formal contract with the District to provide a service. It is best used when the District does not have the appropriate or adequate resources necessary to effectively operate and maintain the service or the superior technical skills needed for quality service delivery. This approach is recommended for expanded boat rental and potential new bike rental services. It is also a recommended approach for any potential canopy tour.

Future Opportunities & Funding Needs

Funding from General Obligation Bonds will help provide short-term funding (2013-2015) for priority projects identified in this Recreation Master Plan. Additional longer-term outdoor recreation facilities are proposed and funds will need to be identified to support additional improvements. Leveraging resources through partnerships and grants will be important to successful implementation of many of the plan's recommendations. In addition, the Recreation, Volunteer Resources, and Permits Department of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County currently generates income through fees for recreational uses including picnic rentals and aquatic center services. Future recreational opportunities should include an assessment of revenue generation potential to help fund expanded services, as appropriate.

Summary

Cook County is home to over five million diverse residents, some of whom are avid users of the forest preserves, and others who are not aware of what the forest preserve system has to offer. This Recreation Master Plan provides a vision and strategies to enhance popular outdoor recreational activities and add new ones to engage diverse communities. An “all hands on deck” approach is needed (among staff as well as stakeholders and partners) to embrace the plan vision and guiding principles. This master plan helps position the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to proactively plan for the future and ensure its legacy as a valued treasure for the next century and beyond.





Connecting People to Nature

1 *Planning Context*

- Purpose of this Plan
- History of District
- District Mission & Values
- Master Plan Vision & Principles
- Policy Framework
- Compatible Recreation Evaluation Criteria
- Relationship to Other Plans
- Methodology & Timeline of Planning Process

This chapter provides context for this Recreation Master Plan by highlighting the mission and values of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and presenting a vision and guiding principles for recreation within the District. Compatible recreation is discussed, and evaluation criteria are presented. The chapter concludes with an overview of other related plans and the methodology and timeline for this master planning process.

Purpose of this Plan

The Recreation Master Plan provides a vision and realistic strategies to guide the development of expanded outdoor recreation opportunities for the next 5-10 years in response to evolving community trends, needs, and interests.

This plan seeks to address the following goals:

- Introduce new people to the forest preserves in order to develop a lifelong love of nature and outdoor recreation.
- Promote the health benefits of outdoor recreation.
- Provide a variety of quality outdoor recreation opportunities in collaboration with others.

There are many things that the District does well, including collaborating with volunteers and stewards to restore ecologically sensitive areas, managing hundreds of picnic groves, nature center programs and activities, maintaining trails, and more. However, one area that the District has identified for improvement is attracting new users to the forest preserves, particularly in communities that have not traditionally been engaged. Through the planning process, robust community input opportunities were provided to better understand needs and opportunities to more effectively engage people in outdoor recreational experiences. This rich and valuable input has helped shape this plan.

History of District

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County was formed in 1914. The founders of the District envisioned a region that preserved its natural character and sense of place, with vast expanses of open land following the natural mosaic of rivers, streams, prairies, marsh, and woodland that traverse Cook County. However, recreational uses were not limited to specific areas during its first 15 years. People picnicked, camped, played baseball and other sports wherever they pleased. This prompted the District in the late 1920's to inventory its land uses, including recreation land, and establish new policies and regulations limiting the locations for recreational activities.

District Mission & Values

The District is guided by the following mission statement and core values, which provides an important framework for this Master Plan.

Mission

To acquire, restore, and manage lands for the purpose of protecting and preserving public open space with its natural wonders, significant prairies, forests, wetlands, rivers, streams, and other landscapes with all of its associated wildlife, in a natural state for the education, pleasure and recreation of the public now and in the future.

Core Values

Caring for Natural Resources

- Research
- Preservation
- Stewardship
- Sustainability

Working Together

- Integrity
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Excellence

Serving People

- Education
- Recreation
- Enrichment
- Safety

Master Plan Vision & Principles

Through the planning process for this Recreation Master Plan, the following vision and guiding principles were developed to provide a framework for outdoor recreation within the District. A vision is what the agency is striving to achieve. A guiding principle is an agreed upon method of operation that guides an organization over the long-term.

Vision for Recreation

Cook County residents and visitors value and enjoy the forest preserves by engaging in educational and recreational experiences that foster health, wellness, and a lifelong love of nature and outdoor activity.

Guiding Principles

- Outdoor recreation opportunities are provided to promote **healthy lifestyles** and **connect people to nature**.
- A **variety** of **safe** and **accessible** outdoor recreational opportunities are offered that attract diverse communities.
- Environmental awareness, open space advocacy, and **stewardship** messages are incorporated into what we do.
- Recreational uses are **sensitive** to natural resources and not located where they would disturb high value ecologically-sensitive areas.
- Recreational opportunities are created using the District's 80/20 land use recommendation to ensure that 80 percent of District land is **protected** and **undeveloped**.
- Visitors are educated on the **value** of the natural resources in the District and how to **minimize their impact** when using the preserves.
- The **community** is engaged in the planning process.
- Environmental, social, and financial **sustainability** guides planning and operations.

Policy Framework

The debate about recreation within the Forest Preserve District of Cook County has been around for a long time. In 1929, an Advisory Committee to the Board of Commissioners recommended that the District maintain an 80/20 balance in its land use, with 80 percent of the District's land to be kept in as natural a condition as possible, and 20 percent to be available for compatible recreation. An assessment conducted as part of this plan shows that the District is currently under that 20 percent threshold. This policy framework ensures that developed recreation does not exceed 20 percent of the forest preserve lands. This is one of the "givens" of the Recreation Master Plan.

To reduce the footprint of developed lands, efforts should be made to maximize and activate already developed areas within the forest preserves. One approach to achieve this that is central to this Recreation Master Plan is to concentrate outdoor recreation amenities in already developed activity hubs to:

- Create destinations with multiple recreational opportunities.
- Attract and engage users.
- Encourage repeat visits.
- Maximize use of existing infrastructure.
- Limit footprint of developed areas.
- Direct public enjoyment of the lands away from highly sensitive ecological resources.

Compatible Recreation Evaluation Criteria

WHAT IS COMPATIBLE RECREATION?

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines “compatible” as capable of existing together in harmony. What does compatible recreation mean within the context of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County? What recreational uses are compatible or able to exist together without conflict in the forest preserves?

Definition of Recreation
Something people do to relax or have fun: activities done for enjoyment.
Merriam-Webster Dictionary

There are two ways of thinking about compatible recreation:

1. Compatible with the District’s mission, values, and vision
2. Compatible with the site

Fit with the agency mission, values, and vision is the starting point. Next, assessing the context or site is needed to fully evaluate whether or not a particular recreational use is compatible with a given location. Another “given,” as identified in the guiding principles, is that recreational uses will not occur in high-value ecologically-sensitive areas.

EVALUATION CRITERIA & PROCESS

A creative, open-minded approach to exploring potential recreational uses within the forest preserves and avoiding the “we don’t do that” reaction is encouraged. With that said, the following evaluation criteria are proposed to help guide the exploration of proposals for new recreational uses at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.



Step 1: Determine Fit

- **Supports** the mission, values, and vision.
- Provides a **community benefit** (i.e., connects people with nature, improves health and well-being, etc.).
- **Environmental education** can be integrated into the use.

Step 2: Assess Need and Demand

- Meets a demonstrated **need**.
- **Attracts** and engages users.
- ***Unsanctioned uses** are occurring.

Step 3: Evaluate the Site

- Is **sensitive to site resources** (natural and cultural).
- **Does not conflict** with other site uses.
- **Activates** an existing developed area or previously disturbed site.
- **Does not duplicate** other services in the market area.
- Site is **accessible** and connected to trails and multi-modal transportation.

Step 4: Identify Implementation Options

- **Service delivery approach** is identified and deemed feasible (e.g., District staff, partnership, contract, etc.).
- **Financial resources** are identified (capital and operational).
- **Sustainability** is assessed.

**One consideration when evaluating a potential outdoor recreational use is an assessment of whether unsanctioned uses may already be occurring within forest preserve lands, such as off-trail mountain biking or off-leash dogs in environmentally sensitive areas. If unsanctioned uses are occurring, this shows a demand for a use that warrants additional management strategies that could include enforcement or creating areas where the use is allowed (e.g., additional designated mountain bike trails or areas where off-leash dogs may be permitted).*

As new or expanded recreational uses are considered in the future, this series of evaluation criteria can be used to assess compatible recreation proposals. As outcome of this planning process, the Recreation Enactment Committee (REC) was formed to further refine and develop the recommendations of this plan. This interdepartmental staff team will work together to refine and implement the Recreation Master Plan recommendations and review future proposals based on the criterion outlined above.

Relationship to Other Plans

This Recreation Master Plan is informed by and relates to a number of District plans as well as regional plans. Following are some key plans that help inform this plan.

Existing District Plans

- *Camp Master Plan, 2012* – Forest Preserve District of Cook County
- *Land Acquisition Plan, 2012* – Forest Preserve District of Cook County
- *Sustainability Doctrine of Forest Preserve District of Cook County, 2010* – Forest Preserve District of Cook County in partnership with University of Illinois Sustainability Team

Regional Plans & Resources

- *GO TO 2040*, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- *Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails Plans, 2009 Update* – Joint project of CMAP, IDNR, Illinois Department of Transportation
- *Northeastern Illinois Water Trails Map Summary*, February 2007 – Joint project of Openlands, Illinois Paddling Council, and Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)

Other District documents that were reviewed as part of the planning process include historical planning documents and annual budget reports.

Methodology & Timeline of Planning Process

This project has been guided by a Steering Committee made up of stakeholders and staff that met with the GreenPlay consultant team and provided input throughout the planning process. This collaborative effort fully utilizes the consultant's expertise and incorporates local knowledge and institutional history. The project consisted of the following phases and tasks.

PHASE 1: INFORMATION GATHERING

May – July 2012

Community & Stakeholder Input Process

1. Conducted public meeting, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews
2. Received guidance from Steering Committee

Survey

1. Conducted statistically-valid survey of Cook County residents
2. Provided additional open web-based survey

Inventory and Assessment of Existing Facilities and Services

1. Conducted inventory and analysis of facilities and services
2. Identified key issues and opportunities

Demographic, Trends, and Peer Agency Analysis

1. Analyzed County demographics and population projections
2. Identified outdoor recreation trends
3. Conducted peer agency comparison analysis

PHASE 2: FINDINGS & VISIONING

August – September 2012

1. Presented key findings to the Steering Committee and the public
2. Validated findings
3. Identified focus areas for recommendations

PHASE 3: PLAN DEVELOPMENT

October 2012 – February 2013

1. Held two webinars to provide Master Plan updates and solicit feedback
2. Held three public strategy sessions
3. Developed Draft Master Plan
4. Presented Draft Master Plan to Steering Committee and staff
5. Held two public Open House Meetings
6. Refined Plan based on feedback

PLAN COMPLETION

March 2013



Connecting People to Nature

2

Community Needs Assessment

- Community Profile & Demographics
- Community Survey Results
- Public & Stakeholder Input
- Outdoor Recreation Trends
- Peer Agency Comparisons
- Conclusion

Understanding community demographics and needs are important components of planning for future outdoor recreation services and facilities of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. This chapter of the Recreation Master Plan first provides a demographic overview of Cook County. It then highlights results of the statistically-valid survey and the public process. Next, outdoor recreation trends impacting the County are summarized. The chapter concludes with a summary of key findings.

Community Profile & Demographics

OVERVIEW

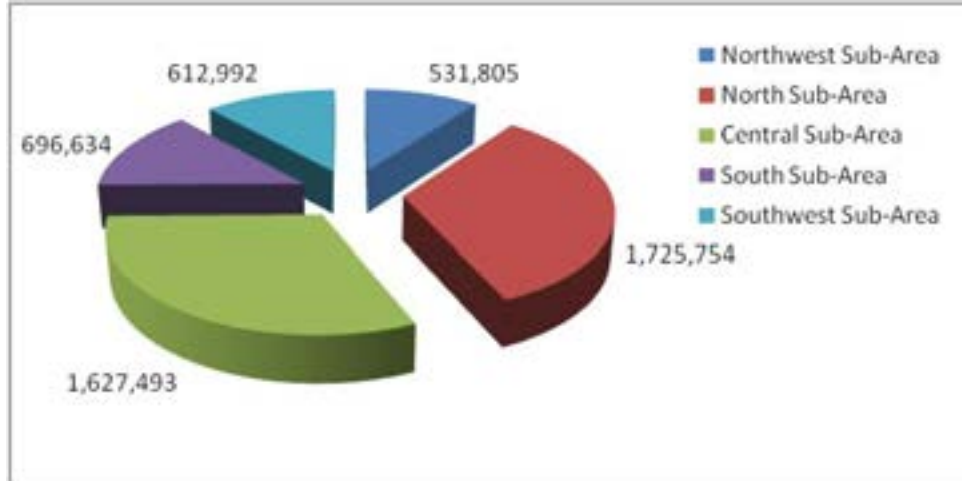
Key demographic trends to reference for future planning efforts in Cook County are summarized below.

- According to the U.S. Census, the population in 2010 was 5,194,675.
- The median age for the County in 2010 was 35.3, slightly lower than the median age (37.1) for the United States.
- According to the ESRI Business Information Solutions, the estimated 2011 median household income for Cook County residents was \$51,004.
- Population in Cook County is projected to increase by 17 percent to 6,182,487 by the year 2040.

DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Population Projections

According to the U.S. Census, the population in 2000 was 5,376,741, and in 2010 it was 5,194,675. A slight population decline is predicted to continue for Cook County over the next five years. The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) *2040 Forecast of Population, Households and Employment* projects that the County will reach 6,182,487 by 2040 – a **17% percent increase in the next thirty years from 2010 to 2040, adding over 987,800 new residents.** (This calculation is based on 2000 U.S. Census data.)

Figure 2: 2010 Cook County Subarea Populations

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2011.

The information in **Table 1** was collected for each subarea for: age distribution, median age, average household size, and median income. The subareas with the highest value of each characteristic are highlighted in blue.

Table 1: Subarea Demographic Overview

Cook County Subareas	Median Age (2010)	Average Household Size (2010)	Median Income (2011 forecast)	% of County Population (2010)
North	35.7	2.5	\$53,280	33%
Central	32.5	2.7	\$40,620	32%
South	36.7	2.8	\$41,820	13%
Southwest	39.2	2.7	\$60,145	12%
Northwest	38.0	2.6	\$72,185	10%

Source: 2010 U.S. Census, ESRI Business Information Solutions forecasts for 2011 Median Income.

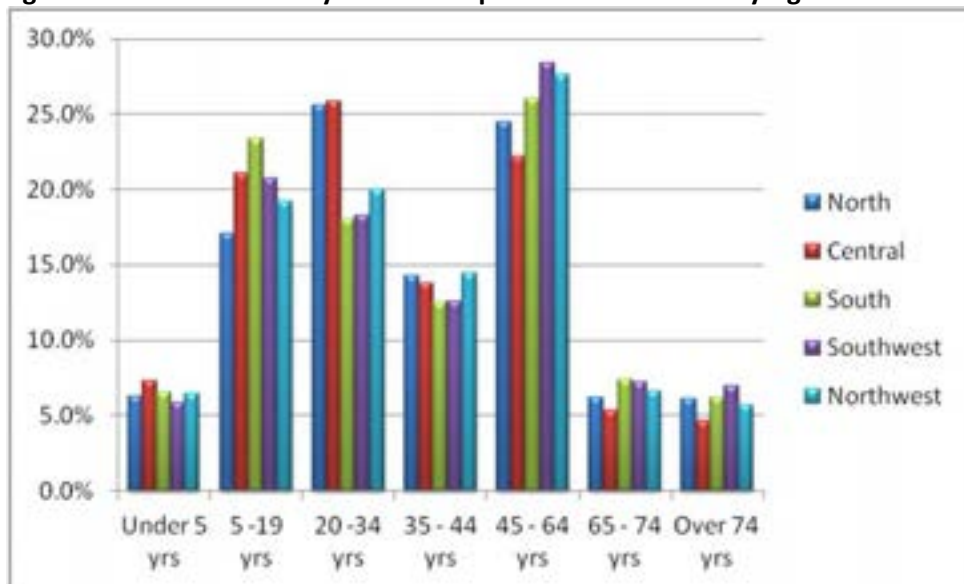
The median age in the five subareas ranges from 32.5 in the Central area to 39.2 in the Southwest area. The average household size is very close in comparison within the four planning areas. There is a difference of .3 between the North area, having the lowest average household size (2.5) and the South area with the highest average household size (2.8). The median income ranges have a greater span with the Central and South areas' median incomes being at just above \$40,000, while the Northwest area's (the highest median income) is \$72,185.

POPULATION, AGE RANGES, & FAMILY INFORMATION

Age Distribution

As part of the population trend analysis, it is important to understand age distribution in Cook County as a whole as well as in each of the planning subareas. According to the 2010 U.S. Census provided by ESRI Business Information Solutions, the median age for Cook County is 35.3. A comparison of the planning areas is illustrated in **Figure 3**. The North and Central subareas show the greatest number of residents of young adults (20-34 years of age), and the Southwest and Northwest areas show the greatest number in the 45-64 age cohort. The South area shows a greater number of residents of youth between the ages of 5-19 years.

Figure 3: 2010 Cook County Subarea Population Breakdown by Age



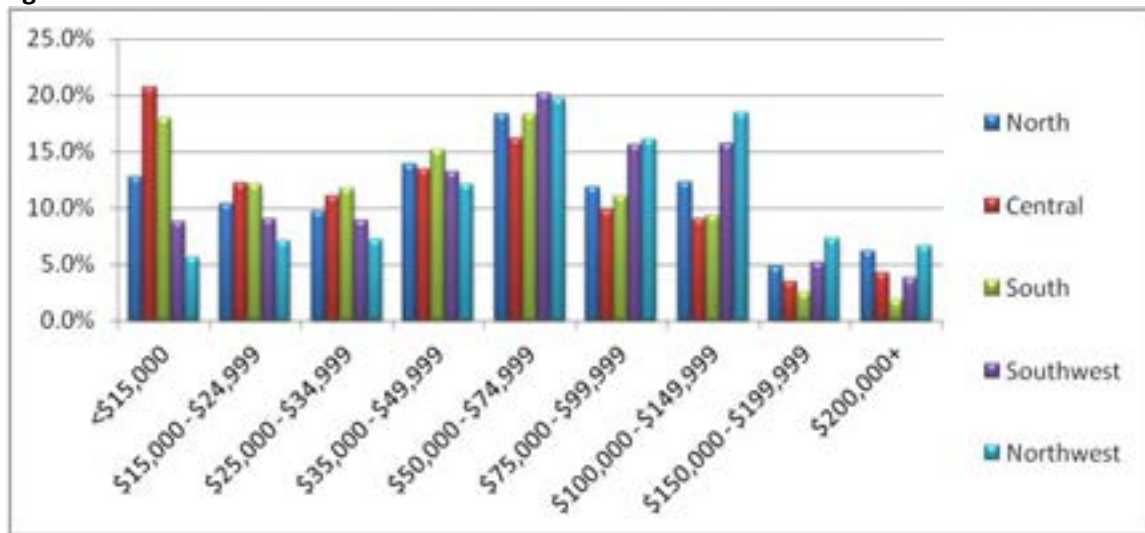
Source: 2010 U.S. Census, ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2011.

Household Income

According to ESRI Business Information Solutions (based on 2010 U.S. Census data), estimated median household income for Cook County residents was \$51,004 in 2011. The Northwest and Southwest areas show higher annual household income than the other three subareas. The median household income for the North area was estimated at \$72,185 with 32.3 percent of the total residents in this area earning over \$100,000 annually. The Southwest subarea's median household income was estimated at \$60,145, with 24.6 percent earning over \$100,000 annually. Data for the Central and South subareas shows similarities in income distribution, with the Central area showing the greatest percentage earning less than \$15,000 annually (20.7%).

Despite the time commitments of parenting, adults with children in the household participate in outdoor recreation at a higher rate than adults who do not have children.

Outdoor Recreation: Participation Report 2012, Outdoor Foundation

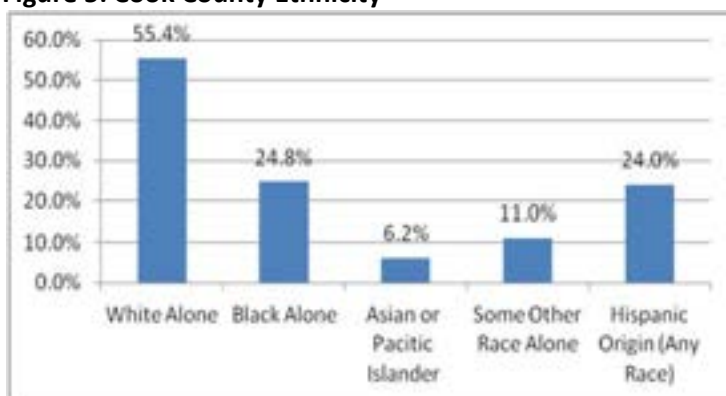
Figure 4: Subarea Annual Household Income Distribution

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2011.

According to the 2009 U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, 15.9 percent of Cook County residents lived in poverty in 2009 (up from 14.8% in 2008) and within the City of Chicago, the poverty rate reached 21.9 percent (compared to 20.6% in 2008). A major cause of this increase in the poverty rate is the recession and the accompanying record high unemployment rates (which reached 11.6% in Chicago in October 2009).

Race/Ethnicity

As shown in **Figure 5**, the current ethnic breakdown for the County shows that a high percentage (55.4%) of Cook County residents are White. The next highest ethnic cohort is Black or African American (24.8%) with those of Hispanic Origin making up a large ethnic minority (24.0%).

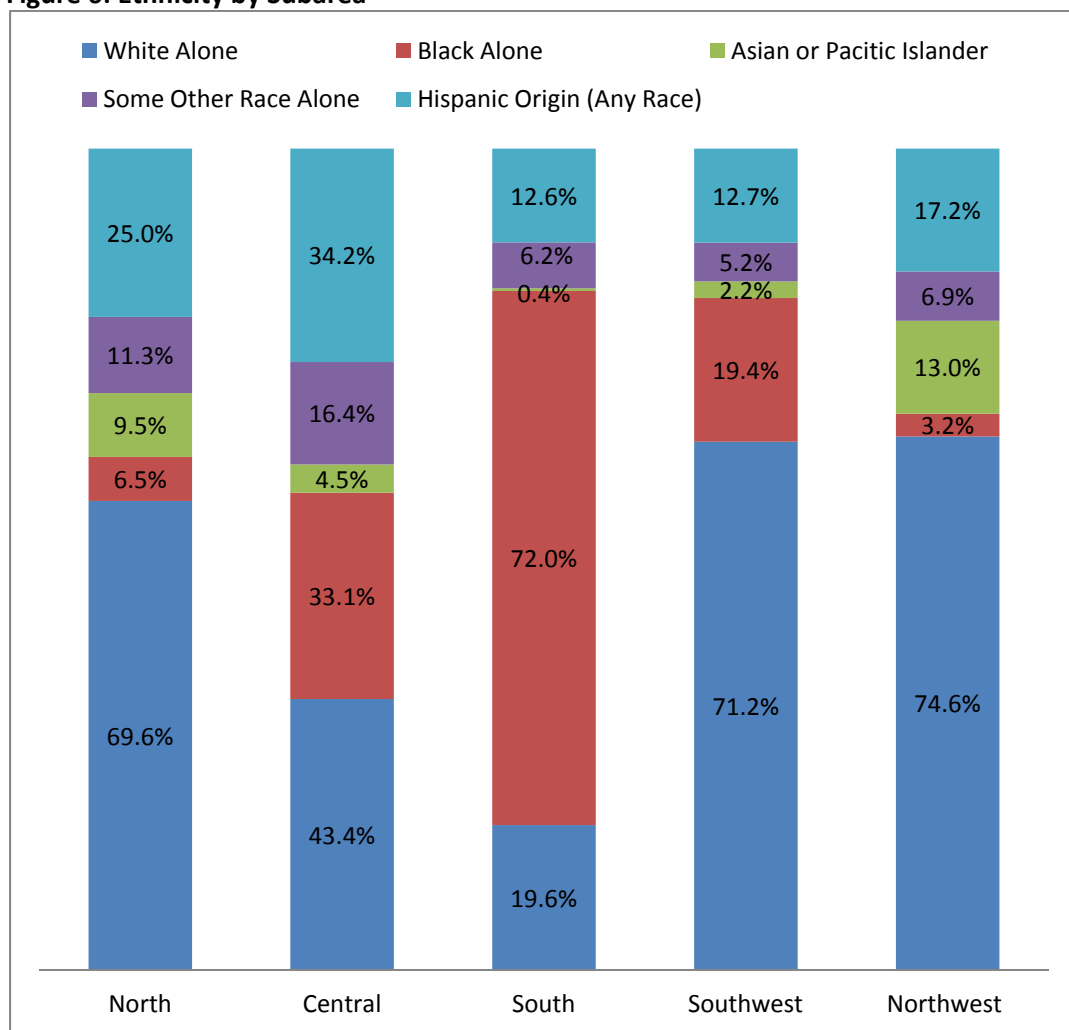
Figure 5: Cook County Ethnicity

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2011.

Despite lower participation rates, Hispanic participants get outdoors more frequently than other outdoor participants.

Outdoor Recreation: Participation Report 2012, Outdoor Foundation

Figure 6 shows greater diversity in the Central subarea, with Blacks making up the majority of the population in the South subarea and Whites the majority of the population in the North, Southwest, and Northwest subareas.

Figure 6: Ethnicity by Subarea

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions, 2011.

HEALTH

Both adult and childhood obesity remain significant health issues in the State of Illinois, and even more so in Cook County. The obesity level for adults in Illinois is reaching 2.8 million – 793,000 more adults than in 2001. (United Health Foundation, America's Health Rankings 2011.) The United Health Foundation Obesity Ranking compared the national obesity rate to that of Illinois in 2011.

Table 2: Obesity Ranking (U.S. and Illinois)

Obesity Ranking (% of population)	1990	2011
United States	11.6%	27.5%
Illinois	10.9%	28.7%

Source: United Health Foundation, American's Health Rankings, Illinois, 2011.

The Cook County Department of Public Health has determined that obesity is a significant epidemic facing Suburban Cook County, finding that, “obesity rates have doubled for adults and tripled for children over the past 20 years.” (Cook County Department of Public Health, “The State of Obesity in Suburban Cook County,” www.cookcountypublichealth.org, 2010.) This report states that **40 percent of children in Suburban Cook County are overweight or obese.**

According to the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children (CLOCC), young children in Chicago (3-7 years old) and Chicago teens (14-19) have considerably higher obesity rates than children of a comparable age in the United States and in Illinois. The Consortium also presented data showing that Chicago teens are overweight and obese at a higher rate than Illinois teens as a whole (Child Overweight and Obesity Prevalence Fact Sheet, www.clocc.net/coc/prevalence.html, 2012).

ACCESS / TRANSPORTATION

The Regional Transportation Authority of Northeastern Illinois (RTA) recently completed travel market analyses for the greater Chicago region and for Suburban Cook County. The RTA Travel Market Analysis Final Report, completed in September 2010, found that the propensity to use public transportation is closely related to a household’s socioeconomic make up. As the number of vehicles per household rises, the use of public transit decreases.

Thirty eight percent (38%) of households in the six-county region comprising the RTA are considered transit households, where at least one member uses transit at least once a week. Nearly 71 percent of households in the Chicago Central Business District (CBD) and 66 percent of households in the rest of Chicago are transit households. Mean vehicles per household in the CBD is 0.6. In the rest of Chicago, the mean is 1.1 vehicles per household, and in Suburban Cook County the mean is 1.8.

The *Suburban Cook County Travel Market Analysis Summary of Findings*, completed in 2012, reported that the RTA Travel Market Analysis showed that suburban Cook County has “high availability of transit service yet low utilization.” Chicago’s transit share (14.1%) is nearly seven times that of Suburban Cook County (2.6%). Suburban Cook County’s share is comparable to that of Lake County (1.9%), but Suburban Cook County has higher levels of transit service (frequency and service span) than Lake County.

How Users Get to the Forest Preserves

- Drive Car – 58%
- Bike – 16%
- Walk – 9%
- Public Transportation – 1%

Average Travel Time – A majority travel under 30 minutes

- Under 15 min. – 27%
- 15-30 min. – 25%
- Over 30 min. – 11%
(36% did not answer)

FPDCC Survey Results, 2012

Community Survey Results

INTRODUCTION

A Community Recreational Needs Survey was conducted as part of the Recreation Master Plan study during the summer of 2012. The purpose of the survey was to assist in establishing priorities for future capital improvements, programs, and services within the forest preserves in Cook County. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout Cook County.

The survey data was collected from four primary sources: mail, email, text, and telephone surveys. Email surveys were sent to all known addresses in Cook County. Mail surveys were sent to 4,500 randomly selected households on a proportionate distribution to the population of the County. Telephone surveys were administered to randomly selected households in areas where response rates were low in order to maintain an even distribution of responses throughout the County. Text surveys were administered from a database of existing cell phone numbers in Cook County.

A total of 4,047 responses were received, combining the four data gathering methodologies into one data set. Statistically, a sample of 4,047 households provides a margin of error of +/- three percent at a 95 percent confidence level that findings are representative of the sentiments of the residents of Cook County.

In addition to the random sample, an open on-line posting of the survey was available to the general public. There were a total of 2,348 respondents to the on-line survey. This second sample was not combined with the random sample, but was compared to the statistically valid results for additional insight into the survey findings.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey contained a series of questions that were designed to measure behavior as well as perceptions by residents of Cook County regarding the Forest Preserve District. Furthermore, there were several opportunities for participants to provide specific comments for “open ended” questions.

Usage of Forest Preserve & Amenities

The data shows that **74.5 percent of respondents said that they or a household member had visited a Cook County Forest Preserve** picnic grove, nature center, trail, golf course, or other amenity during the past year, and 25.5 percent said that they had not. These findings indicate a high percentage of usage of Forest Preserve District of Cook County preserves and other amenities, suggesting that the District has a large impact on residents of the county.



Respondents to the survey indicated a split between how many times they visited a forest preserve or amenity. The results show that only about five percent of the public uses the Forest Preserve District of Cook County preserves or amenities infrequently at one to two times per year. The findings also show that **over 20 percent of the respondents were frequent users at more than eight times a year**, supporting evidence of the importance of the District to public based on usage.

The five regions that define the geographic area of the County that were visited by respondents were relatively even, with the northern region being visited the most often. This data was further analyzed to the areas visited by residents within each specified region. The analysis clearly illustrated that many residents chose to stay within their region to utilize forest preserve programs and amenities.

Outdoor Participation in Recreational Activities

If respondents indicated that they had visited a forest preserve in Cook County during the past year, they were asked to identify outdoor activities in which they or someone in their households had participated. The following list provides a ranking order of the top five activities in terms of participation.

- Hiking or walking (37%)
- Bicycling (34%)
- Picnicking (24%)
- Running (12%)
- Golf (11%)

Reasons for Not Using

Respondents were asked for reasons that they had not used Forest Preserve District of Cook County programs or facilities. The list below provides a ranking order of the three reasons.

- Not aware of programs or facilities (28%)
- No time/other personal reasons (19%)
- Take advantage of other recreation opportunities (11%)

Communication

Respondents were asked how familiar they were with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. The survey responses follow.

- Very familiar (23%)
- Somewhat familiar (58%)
- Not at all familiar (17%)
- Not sure (2%)

Respondents were asked how they had heard of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and given the following choices: through local schools, newsletters, television, social media, event participation, the District website, forest preserve signage, advertisements, newspaper articles, program brochures, email, and radio. The responses for the top five communication methods are as follows.

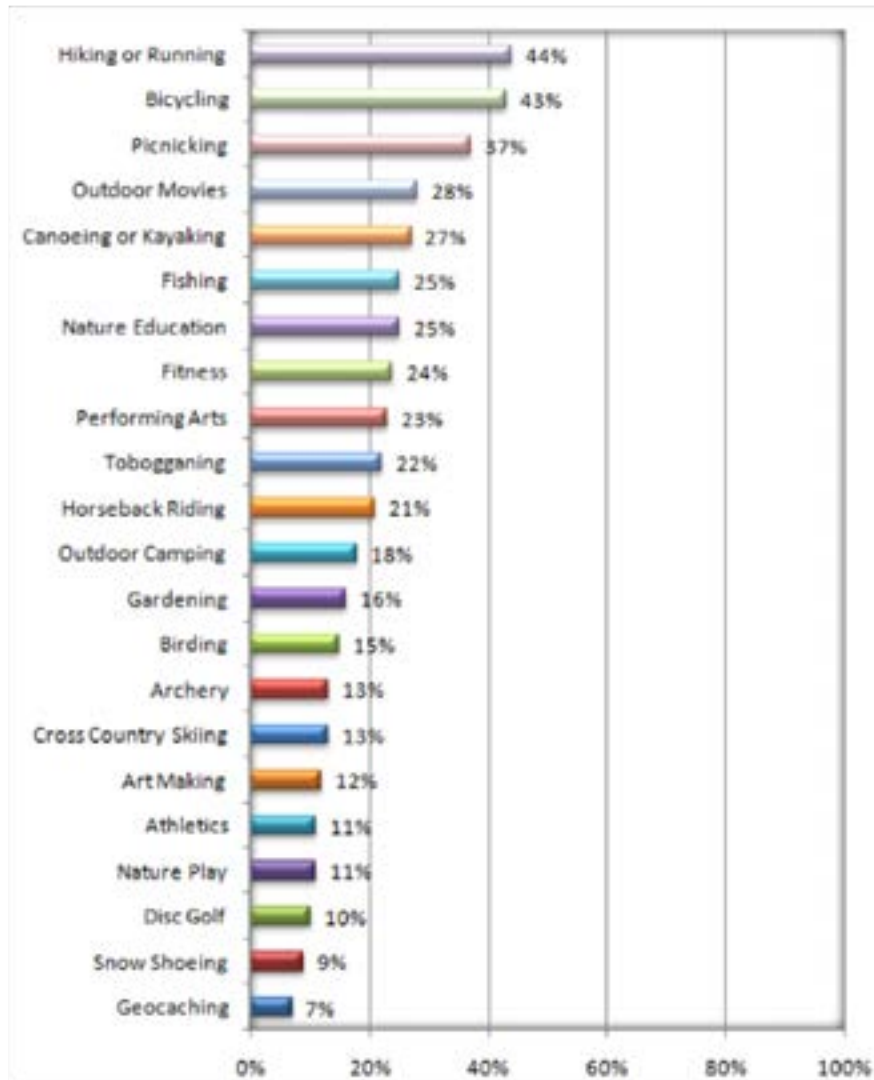
- Word of mouth (33%)
- Signage (33%)
- Newspaper (27%)
- Event participation (17%)
- Television (14%)

This suggests that the Forest Preserve District of Cook County should maintain and enhance its traditional media messaging. Printed material, including a greater presence in newspapers and television, would be helpful. When signage and word of mouth are an agency's leading media of communication, it is fairly difficult to gather support for initiatives or enhance participation in recreation program offerings. The use of electronic communication is currently low (10% for website, 6% for email, and 5% for social media); however, these methods are a growing trend. The District should to continue to expand the use of electronic communications as part of their strategic marketing efforts.

Outdoor Recreation Interest

Survey respondents were asked to select from a list of 23 outdoor recreation activities that they would be interested in using in the future. **Figure 7** shows that while hiking/running, bicycling, and picnicking rank as the top three, a wide range of interests are represented.

Figure 7: Survey Results – Outdoor Recreation Interest



Most Important Future Recreational Use

When respondents were asked to pick their top priorities from the list in **Figure 7**, fishing and fitness rose into the top five.

- Bicycling (13%)
- Hiking/running (13%)
- Picnicking (7%)
- Fishing (5%)
- Fitness (4%)

Respondents were allowed to write-in their own future outdoor recreation use that they felt was the most important. The most common write-in responses are as follows: dog parks, metal detecting, model aviation/rockets, mountain biking, and photography.

Most Important New Recreational Facility

Respondents were asked to select the most important new recreational facility out of a list of 12 choices. The top five uses selected were as follows.

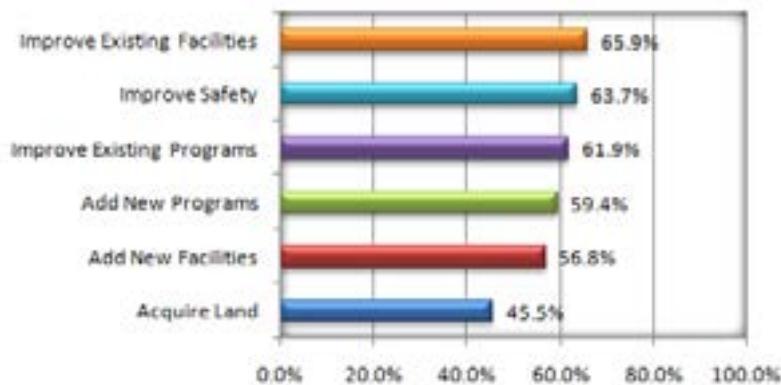
- Winter recreational areas (9%)
- Outdoor movies (9%)
- Toboggan/snow tube (9%)
- Amphitheatres (9%)
- Natural play areas (8%)

Respondents were allowed to write-in a recreation facility that they felt was the most important. A selection of the most common write-in responses are as follows: dog parks, campgrounds, canoe/kayak access, bike trails, and horseback riding trails/camping.

Priorities for the Future

The graph illustrates how improving existing programs and facilities are the highest priorities with acquiring land as the lowest. But in all cases, all priorities are favorably viewed.

Figure 8: Survey Results – Priorities



*Adding new activities
would make me and my
family use the facilities!*

Survey write-in comment

Survey Conclusions

The following conclusions can be made from this large data set to aid in the general understanding of usage patterns, recreation preferences, and the establishment of priorities for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

- The Forest Preserve District has a strong and frequent user base.
- Users tend to stay closer to home and do not regularly travel to other areas of the County for preserve activities.
- Arriving by car is the preferred method of transportation.
- Awareness of services and amenities and the ability to communicate is a primary issue.
- Fixing up existing facilities is slightly more important than building new ones, but a balance of building new and fixing up old would be a wise consideration.

- Traditional forest preserve recreation activities such as trail use and picnicking are most desired.
- Water-based, nature education, winter-based, and camping recreation are viable additions to programs, activities, and facilities.
- Top interests in new recreation opportunities included winter activities, art and culture events, and nature play areas.
- Interest was also expressed in a variety of new outdoor recreation activities including adventure activities (ropes courses/zip lines and climbing walls), archery, and disc golf.

Public and Stakeholder Input

OVERVIEW

In addition to the survey, several community and stakeholder input opportunities were provided resulting in rich input from over 300 people. The process that was undertaken included:

- 13 focus groups
- 20 stakeholder interviews
- Three public meetings (at various stages of the planning process)
- Three Steering Committee meetings
- Two webinars to provide updates on the Recreation Master Plan findings and preliminary recommendations
- Ongoing communications by District staff through the planning process

Following is an overview of themes from the community input, followed by input from staff.

COMMUNITY INPUT SUMMARY

Stakeholder interviews, focus group, and public meeting participants were asked a variety of questions regarding the Forest Preserve District of Cook County's facilities, programs, and services. The input garnered thoughtful ideas. Themes from the responses to questions about current strengths, issues/barrier, and opportunities are summarized in the following section.

Strengths

- Diversity of locations, space, and patrons
- Natural resources
- Well-maintained
- Trails
- Staff
- Variety of activities – canoeing, bird watching, biking, etc.
- Collaboration with other groups
- Volunteer network
- New leadership and improved communication

Issues & Barriers

- Lack of awareness
- Transportation and access
- Fear of the outdoors
- Safety perceptions
- Concerns about disturbing natural areas
- Lack of hook/interest to attract new users
- Being open to new ideas
- Nature deficit (see page 55)
- Lack of staff
- Maintain what you have

Ideas for New or Expanded Activities

- Expand activities – canoe/kayaking, nature programs/interpretation, camping, fishing, dog friendly areas, trails including mountain biking and equestrian uses, winter recreation, special events, arts and culture (photography, painting), golfing, portable recreation, historic site interpretation, races (fun runs, triathlons)
- Pursue new activities – archery, disc golf, nature play areas, challenge courses, climbing, ice skating, paddleboarding, geocaching, etc.
- Make activities attractive to youth and families
- Add more nature exploration programs and outreach
- Create year-round opportunities
- Provide concessions and rentals (bikes, canoe/kayaks, cross country skis/snowshoes, food)
- Offer guided tours (river, hiking) as well as self-guided tours (QR codes, GPS)
- Connect picnickers to educational and recreational opportunities

Opportunities for Improvement

- Market and promote existing amenities and programs – build awareness campaign
- Integrate environmental education into recreation activities
- Enhance trail connections, trailheads, and safe crossings
- Increase water access
- Outreach to underserved communities
- Incorporate sustainable practices
- Expand partnerships – schools and universities, volunteers, municipalities, businesses, youth organizations, environmental groups, user groups, art organizations, transportation groups, museums, community organizations, public health
- Add wayfinding and interpretive signage

STAFF INPUT

District staff members were also provided opportunities for input throughout the planning process. There were synergies between the input of staff and stakeholders with themes of enhancing core nature education and outdoor recreation activities and amenities. Staff members emphasized that the Forest Preserve District is not a park district and should not duplicate typical parks and recreation-type facilities like built playgrounds and athletic sports complexes. Most staff members were also open to ideas for new recreational opportunities, but did not want to lose sight of the need to integrate an environmental education message into all activities. When asked what recreational uses were not compatible with the District's mission, respondents identified motorized All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and paintball. There were also concerns expressed about other motorized uses like snowmobiling, but it was pointed out that it is only allowed in designated locations and that environmental impact is limited due to the requirement that at least four-inches or more of snow coverage be present on frozen turf.

Trends

The following are key behavioral trends related to outdoor recreation. These national trends are important to consider when planning for the future, along with regional use patterns and preferences expressed through the public input described above.

- Top Athletic Activities – Exercise walking, swimming, camping, bicycle riding, and hiking ranked among the top ten athletic activities by total participation in the U.S. according to data from the 2010 National Sporting Goods Association. All of these activities are available in the FPDCC.
- Trends reported in the Outdoor Foundation's *Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report 2012* include:
 - Outdoor recreation among Americans reached the highest level in the last five years, with nearly 50% of all Americans ages six and older participating in at least one outdoor activity.
 - For trail-related recreation activities, there is a positive three-year trend for hiking and mountain biking but a negative trend for road/surface trail bicycling. Participation in running, including trail running, is up significantly.
 - Mountain biking, and BMX biking have continued their upward trend, while inline skating and skateboarding have trended downward in popularity.
 - Among water recreation activities, kayaking has had the largest increase in participation in the past three years (a 31.9% increase for recreational kayaking). Canoeing has experienced a slight decrease in participation. Participation in fly fishing is up, while other fishing activities are down. Stand-up paddling is experiencing an increase in participation.
 - There was a three-year increase in participation in cross-country skiing (12.2%) and snowshoeing (40%) from 2009 to 2011.
- The *Outdoor Recreation Participation Report 2012* from the Outdoor Foundation provides additional trend information.
 - Biking, running, camping, and fishing are the most popular outdoor activities for all Americans, though each ethnic/racial group participates in each to varying degrees.
 - Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander youth cite lack of time as the top reason why they do not get outdoors more often. The top reason that African American and Caucasian youth give is that they are just not interested in outdoor activities.
 - Although participation rates among youth ages 6 to 17 are up, average annual outings are down.
 - Introducing outdoor recreation and physical activities early in life has a lasting effect. Adults who are current outdoor participants took part in outdoor activities (45%) and/or physical education classes (82%) when they were younger.



- Arts and Culture – The National Endowment for the Arts’ 2008 *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* report identified that public participation was highest for the following arts venues and events:
 - Historic sites
 - Art/craft fairs and festivals
 - Art museums/galleries
 - Performing arts festivals
 - Musical plays
- Service Delivery – National trends in the delivery of parks and recreation systems reflect more partnerships and contractual agreements to support specialized services.

See **Appendix A** for more detailed trends information.

Peer Agency Comparisons

OVERVIEW

As part of the master planning process, a comparative study of recreation facilities and programs of six peer agencies was conducted. The six agencies reviewed included two nearby Forest Preserve Districts in Illinois, two parks and open space agencies in the Midwest, and two on either coast. Information was collected through forms completed by agency staff, interviews with staff, and agency websites.

- Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio
- Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, Illinois (FPDDC)
- Forest Preserve District of Will County, Illinois (FPDWC)
- Riverside County Parks and Open Space District, California
- Three Rivers Park District, Minnesota
- Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission, South Carolina

Each peer agency’s mission includes a focus on land protection/conservation and outdoor recreation/education. All agencies serve county boundaries, except for the Three Rivers Park District, which serves parts of multiple counties in the western suburban Minneapolis and St. Paul area of Minnesota. **Table 3** provides a brief overview of the population size, land acreage, miles of trails, and land policies of peer agencies.

While each agency is unique, all of the agencies share some common areas of focus. A comparative analysis can help illuminate trends and opportunities for potential expansion of recreational offerings at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

Table 3: Peer Agency Overview

	Cook County FPD, IL	Riverside County, P & O-S District, CA	Cleveland Metro Parks, OH	Three Rivers Park District, MN	DuPage County FPD, IL	Will County FPD, IL	Charleston County PRC, SC
Service Area Population	5,195,000	2,190,000	1,300,000	1,000,000	923,222	678,000	665,000
Acreage of Parkland/Preserves	68,441	71,356	22,000	27,000	25,081	21,475	9,590
<i>Acreage/Thousand</i>	13.2	32.6	16.9	27.0	27.2	31.7	14.4
Miles of Trails	323	150	300	400	145	121	90
<i>Miles of Trails/Thousand</i>	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.1
Land Policy: Conservation/Developed Land	80/20	None	80/20	80/20	90/10	None	None

Source: Peer agency staff

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) is the oldest of the seven peer agencies (1914), with the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (1915) and Cleveland Metroparks (1917) following closely after. The Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission is the most recently established peer agency (1972).

The Forest Preserve Districts of DuPage and Will Counties are the most similar to the FPDCC in mission, each specifically seeking to protect and preserve land and to provide educational and recreational opportunities to the public. Cleveland Metroparks (OH) and Three Rivers Park District (MN) highly value the conservation of significant natural resources and environmental stewardship, as well as providing educational and recreational opportunities.

Four of the seven agencies have land policies regarding the amount of total agency land that must remain as natural areas. FPDCC and Cleveland Metroparks have 80/20 policies, where 80 percent of the land should remain natural and 20 percent can be developed. The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (FPDDC) has a higher percentage of undeveloped/natural areas at 90 percent. The Three Rivers Park District's 80/20 policy only applies to "park reserves" that are a minimum of 1,000 acres. (The Park District has seven park reserves totaling 19,484 acres.)

Most common outdoor recreation uses among peer agencies include:

- Trails
- Fishing and boating
- Camping

On the Atlantic Coast in South Carolina, the Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission's primary responsibility is to develop a county-wide park system with an emphasis on passive activities, outdoor recreation, environmental education, and public beach access. The Commission's mission includes acquisition and stewardship of parkland and open space. In California, the Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District seeks to acquire, protect, develop, manage, and interpret outstanding scenic, recreational, and historic "park related places" for the inspiration, use, and enjoyment of all people. (Riverside County is in southern California east of Orange County and includes the cities of Riverside and Palm Springs.)

FACILITIES

Each peer agency provided information about specifically listed recreational facilities, and some added information about facilities unique to their agency. All of the agencies provide boat launches/landings and boat rental opportunities. Each agency offers trails. Most have equestrian trails, and some offer designated mountain bike trails. The Three Rivers Park District also offers over 60 miles of special purpose cross country skiing trails, with one snowmaking facility specifically for cross country skiing. Hiking-only trails can also be found in a number of the parks.

Each peer agency also offers campgrounds with some providing greater and more diverse camping opportunities than others. For example, Three Rivers Park District provides a large number of group camping opportunities, and Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District provides three equestrian-only camping areas.

Most of the peer agencies, including FPDCC, offer one or more outdoor bandshells or amphitheaters and winter recreation facilities. Five of seven peer agencies offer dog parks, equestrian facilities, golf courses, historic museum/facilities, nature play areas, outdoor swimming facilities (beaches and/or aquatic facilities), and playgrounds. While FPDCC provides most of these facilities, it does not offer a historic museum/facility or any playground facilities. However, FPDCC is among four peer agencies offering athletic fields and disc golf facilities. (*Note: Disc golf is offered at one of the privately managed golf courses owned by the FPDCC.*)

Three agencies offer the following types of facilities: archery, bicycle rentals, fitness areas, flying fields, and outdoor tennis courts. FPDCC offers each except for bicycle rentals and fitness (except for the stairs at Swallow Cliff that are used for fitness walking/running). A partner group has used FPDCC land for some archery programs using portable equipment, although there are no designated archery facilities.

Less common offerings are climbing walls (1 each at Charleston County and Three Rivers District), mobile recreation (FPDCC-1, Charleston-3), community/recreation centers (Charleston-1, Three Rivers-6), ropes courses (Charleston-1, Three Rivers-1), snowmobiling areas (FPDCC-5, Three Rivers-6), remote control boats (FPDCC and FPDDC), a zip line (small one at Three Rivers and two as part of the challenge course in Charleston County), and a zoo (FPDCC-1, Cleveland Metroparks-1). The Three Rivers Park District is the only agency other than FPDCC offering snowmobiling, and this recreation use is only available on trails linking to state trails. FPDCC is the only agency with a formal botanic garden facility.

Unique Facilities

The Three Rivers Park District is unique in the number of single purpose trails provided for cross country skiing, hiking, and paved biking. In the winter, the District's multi-use trails are used for snowshoeing, dogsled training, winter mountain biking (special tires for snow), and skijoring (skier pulled by dog[s]). One cross country ski trail is kept open throughout the winter with snow-making. It also boasts the second largest tubing hill in the country.

Unique Facilities:

- Challenge course and climbing walls
- Chilled toboggan chute
- Equestrian barns
- Water park

Three Rivers offers a number of special facilities including an environmental art center (Silverwood Park) and a "rustic" lodge with eight cabins, a climbing wall, and surrounding trails (Baker Near Wilderness Settlement) that is billed as "offering guests a unique opportunity to reconnect with the natural world." The Forest Preserve District of Will County also offers a visitor/conference center for environmental learning (Four Rivers Environmental Education Center).

The Riverside County Regional Park and Open Space District offers one water park with a competitive pool (water polo), lazy river, water playground, surfing machine, wading pond, and splash park. Two additional splash parks and a lagoon are offered by the District, and an additional 50-meter competitive pool is pending construction. Charleston County offers three outdoor water parks, and FPDCC offers three outdoor aquatic centers.

Cleveland Metroparks, known for golf and equestrian uses, has three equestrian barns. It also has a climbing wall that is run by an affiliate and a chilled toboggan chute. The Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission offers a 50 ft. climbing wall and a bouldering cave as well as a large challenge/ropes course (at James Island County Park). The agency also offers a bird and butterfly garden area at the Ravenel Caw Caw Interpretive Center.

SERVICE DELIVERY

The peer agencies use a variety of program and service delivery methods: in-house staff, contracting, and partnerships. However, in-house staff is the most common service delivery method, in contrast to the FPDCC which has limited recreation staffing. Agency full-time staffing numbers involved in the provision of recreation programs and services generally range from in the 30s (Forest Preserve District of Will County, Charleston County, Three Rivers) to over 100. (Cleveland Metroparks reported 125 staff that includes zoo program staff and Riverside reported 103 full-time positions.) FPDCC, with 21 full-time employees in the Recreation, Volunteer Resources and Permits Department (as of 2012), is markedly lower than the peer agencies with regard to in-house recreation staffing levels. While the peer agencies primarily rely on in-house staff to deliver recreation services, some agencies do contract out some recreation services. Contracted-out services for some of the peer agencies follow a revenue splitting policy (70/30 at Riverside or 85/15 at Three Rivers) or are determined on a case-by-case basis.

All of the peer agencies offer concessions within their systems. While all of the FPDCC concessions are staffed by external concessionaires, most of the peer agencies staff their concessions either entirely with in-house staff (e.g., Three Rivers) or have both in-house and externally-staffed concessions (e.g., Cleveland Metroparks).

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

With regard to specific program areas of interest to FPDCC, all of the peer agencies offer volunteer opportunities. Most offer youth day camps, outdoor concerts, outdoor fitness opportunities, gardening, and art making programs. FPDCC does not offer art making or gardening programs at this time, except through the Chicago Botanic Garden that operates on its property. Along with FPDCC, the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission, Cleveland Metroparks, and Riverside County Regional Parks offer outdoor movies in their parks. Cleveland Metroparks offers “Dive In” movies at its water park, with tube rentals for the poolside movies. Fewer agencies offer swimming lessons, and some offer special events and programming that may include performing arts. For example, at Cleveland Metroparks, performing arts are integrated into some of the nature center program activities (such as storytelling, historical programs, musical activities, etc.). Riverside County Regional Parks is unique in its offering of an adaptive aquatics program (for those with physical and mental disabilities), and only the Forest Preserve District of Will County offers dog obedience and agility programming. The Three Rivers Park District has created a specific division which provides its outdoor recreation services. Five of the seven agencies allow geocaching (FPDCC and FPPDC do not allow this activity).

TRENDS

Programs or Facilities Added in the Last 2-3 Years

The following programs and facilities are trending up in popularity in the some of the peer agencies.

- Arts and cultural programs (movies/music in the park, Nature in art) have increased at FPDCC and FPDWC.
- FPDWC has experienced a participation increase in active/recreational programs with trail use up significantly and continued popularity of events with biking or running. Cleveland Metroparks has added bike rentals and has noticed an increase in mountain biking.
- Fitness races are very popular and in Charleston County, and the agency often partners with other entities to offer these events. Adventure recreation activities through their challenge course and portable climbing walls, available for rent, are also popular.
- FPDCC has expanded archery, fishing, and kayaking program offerings. Charleston County reports that stand up paddle boarding is very popular, with kayaking increasing in popularity and canoeing decreasing.
- The Three Rivers District has experienced a significant increase in summer camp popularity. The program is “exploding” in popularity, and the camps pay more than their way and subsidize other programs. Winter mountain biking is also extremely popular. The Three Rivers District has added an educational farm and an environmental arts center in recent years as well.
- Riverside County has seen an increased demand for aquatic and sports park facilities.
- Cleveland Metroparks has added zoo exhibits, a golf learning center, and a stewardship center.

Peer agency trends include:

- Trail-based recreation including races, bike rentals, and mountain biking
- Expanded kayaking programs

Divested/Decommissioned Programs or Facilities

Peer agencies offer the following perspectives on declining or shifting program interest:

- Charleston County is shifting to “non-personal” interpretation and updating paper guides into “cell phone tours” (QR code or cell phone number). This shift has been very well received by visitors.
- In general, Charleston County has noticed that with competition for leisure time, the County is working to create more drop-in experiences. For example, Charleston County is changing its summer camp offerings to add more variety and less commitment of time, including less overnight camping.
- Will County (FPDWC) has noticed a decline in participation in their more informational nature hikes and programs such as morning birding hikes, wildflower walks, and fall color walks – once the staple of its programming repertoire.
- DuPage County (FPDDC) has eliminated “Diva Days” (programs led by women for women), geocaching, cross country skiing, backpacking, and winter layering programs which were no longer garnering much interest.
- Cleveland Metroparks is considering consolidation of some of its nature centers.
- FPDCC has decommissioned some picnic groves to combat illicit activities at specific sites.

BUDGET AND REVENUE GENERATION

Most of the agencies have goals to increase cost recovery for their services and programs, although fewer have formal cost recovery policies with the exception of the Three Rivers Park District. Fee schedules and policies vary among the peer agencies. Most are reviewed annually.

The following agencies have “enterprise fund” type programs or services.

- Forest Preserve District of Cook County (dog parks and golf courses)
- Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (programs not specified)
- Charleston County (1. fishing piers, equestrian centers, marina, water parks, etc; 2. programming including special events, challenge course, climbing wall, holiday festival of lights; 3. cottages and campgrounds; 4. concessions and snack bars; and 5. facility rentals)
- Three Rivers (operated as “special revenue facilities” – Alpine ski /snowboard and golf programs)

- Most agencies have goals to increase revenue generation and cost recovery.
- All of the peer agencies, except for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, allow sponsorship opportunities.

The Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission’s general agency budget includes administrative services and some outdoor program activities including summer camps and youth programming, and interpretation and environmental education programming. The Forest Preserve District of Will County’s highest generating non-enterprise fund programs include: dog park permit fees, facility rental fees at Four Rivers Environmental Education Center, concessions revenue at Monee Reservoir, and picnic permits. The Riverside County Parks and Open Space District’s parks with camping and its aquatic complex generate the highest cost recovery. The Three Rivers Park District’s facility rentals and specialized lessons have the highest (non-enterprise fund) cost recovery.

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County has a significantly smaller number of recreation staff than peer agencies.

All of the peer agencies, except for FPDCC, allow sponsorship opportunities. Sponsorship policies vary from a comprehensive sponsorship program at Forest Preserve District of Will County (with a variety of levels and benefits including naming rights) to a “donations” policy, which serves as the sponsorship policy for Riverside County, outlining types of donations that may be accepted as well as the benefit the donor receives based on the value donated.

Other sources of revenue listed by the various peer agencies include: friends organizations and foundations, rentals, grants, endowments, and special events.

S U M M A R Y

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County compares favorably with its peer agencies in recreational facilities in many respects. It offers many of the core facilities and some programs offered by the other agencies, each of which shares the FPDCC’s core values of land protection/conservation and outdoor recreation/education.

With over 300 miles of trails, FPDCC’s trail coverage ranks among the top of its peers. Considering that FPDCC’s service area population is more than double that of any of the peer agencies and with an acreage second only to Riverside County Parks, the District has room to expand its trail coverage even more. (In terms of trails per thousand residents, it ranks in the lower tier.)



Three Rivers Park District offers the most linear miles of trails (400) of the peer agencies, in a park system with less than half of the acreage of FPDCC. Three Rivers also offers the largest number of single purpose trails of the peer agencies and has a significant number and variety of winter recreation opportunities. The Three Rivers Park District is a good model for the FPDCC to look to when considering enhancing winter recreation. Cleveland Metroparks also offers a unique chilled toboggan chute.

Most of the peer agencies have one or more historical museums/facilities in their park system, and most offer playground facilities. FPDCC may want to consider adding these types of facilities as well as bike rental and archery facilities, also offered by a number of its peer agencies. FPDCC may also want to consider offering gardening and art making programs, which many of its peer agencies offer to visitors.

Charleston County and the Three Rivers Park District offer the most adventure type opportunities of the peer agencies with ropes courses, zip lines, and climbing walls/bouldering caves.

All of the peer agencies offer concessions but FPDCC is alone in exclusively using external concessionaires. This operational decision is understandable when considering that FPDCC has a significantly smaller number of recreation staff than the peer agencies. FPDCC has done remarkably well with the variety of recreation offerings given its limited staffing and budget for recreation.

Conclusion

Cook County is home to over five million diverse residents spread out over 1,635 square miles, some of whom are avid users of the forest preserves, and others who are not aware of what the forest preserve system has to offer. The forest preserves make up 11 percent of land area of Cook County and offer an oasis of open space within a dense, highly-built environment. Its population is facing some serious health challenges including a childhood obesity epidemic. By enhancing popular outdoor recreational activities and adding new ones to engage diverse communities, more residents will be compelled to get outdoors to enjoy the forest preserves and echo this sentiment. Being responsive to new outdoor recreation trends and learning from the successes of peer agencies will position the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to proactively plan for the future and ensure its legacy as a valued treasure by residents for the next century and beyond.

3 *Programs & Services - Analysis & Recommendations*

- Overview of Existing Programs & Services
- Regulatory Framework
- Regional Providers
- Service Assessment Tool
- Summary of Key Findings
- Recommendations – Programs & Services
- Conclusion

This chapter first provides an overview of existing programs and services offered by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. Next, a framework for analyzing services and assessing issues and opportunities is reviewed. Key findings are then summarized and followed by recommendations. (Note: the recommendations in this chapter are general in nature. Recommendations related to specific recreational uses are included in Chapter 4: Inventory – Analysis and Recommendations.)

Overview of Existing Programs & Services

The Recreation, Volunteer Resources and Permits Department (RVP Department) of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County supports the Forest Preserve District's mission by connecting Cook County residents with the forest preserves through appropriate recreational activities, permitted picnics, special events, and volunteer experiences.

Guided by this mission, the RVP Department has supported activities and events within the District since the mid 1900s. Currently, this Department supports the following functional areas:

- Golf and Concession Management
- Permits and Revenue Collection
- Recreation
- Special Events
- Volunteer Resources

In 2012, the RVP Department consisted of 21 full-time employees. Projections for 2013 see a slight increase to 23 full-time employees. During the 2012 peak season, the employee count increased to 54 in support of aquatic centers, permitted events, and other activities. The number of seasonal or part-time employees is also projected to increase in 2013 from 24 to 30.

PERMITS AND REVENUE COLLECTION

Concession Management

The RVP Department monitors performance of Billy Casper Golf Management to ensure full compliance with all contractual obligations in the operation of the District's 10 golf courses and four driving ranges. The Department also monitors the Oak Park Tennis Club, and four boat concessions as well as three aquatic center concessions and ice cream vendors to ensure contract compliance.

The Billy Casper Golf Management program supports \$11 million (gross) of business a year. They operate 11 facilities – eight are 18-hole golf courses, two are 9-hole, and one driving range with 375,000 total rounds of golf played annually. The facilities are supported by 150 full-time employees. Staff increases to 350 during the peak season.

For over 85 years, the Oak Park Tennis Club (OPTC) has served the Cook County community. In 1924, after a series of planning meetings driven by a group of tennis enthusiasts, the Commissioners of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County agreed to develop the Cummings tract at the corner of Harlem Avenue and Lake Street in River Forest for tennis and recreational purposes. OPTC is a non-for-profit



organization working in collaboration with the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. It is committed to the upkeep and maintenance of the courts, clubhouse, and property, and provides the only recreational clay court tennis facility open to the public with no restrictions. OPTC utilizes volunteerism and promotes the game of tennis in the community. OPTC embraces the Forest Preserve District's mission to offer superior recreational facilities and opportunities that can be enjoyed by all members of the public of Cook County.

OPTC spends an average of \$94,000 per year to manage the facilities, and without using taxpayer dollars, is funded primarily through fundraising efforts and private donations, with the balance through annual season pass holder memberships and court usage fees. In 2012, the club's membership was approximately 200, with an individual season pass average price of \$580. Pay per use options are also available at \$10 (weekday) or \$15 (weekend) per hour.

In 2004, the Forest Preserve initiated a two-year lease with the Oak Park Tennis Club for \$3,000 a year. In 2006, a five year extension was approved by the Cook County Board of Commissioners, though records indicate that some of the annual lease payments from 2006-2010 were not received.

Boat rental concessions are available at Tampier Lake, Maple Lake, and Busse Lake. T&M, LLC is a contractual vendor for these three sites. They are responsible for renting kayaks and canoes to the general public, encouraging access and use of the lakes. They also facilitate small concessions at each site. Their annual fee to maintain this contract with the Forest Preserve District is \$14,000. There is also one kayak concessionaire which operates from the Skokie Lagoon.

The RVP Department also oversees three outdoor aquatic centers – Cermak, Whealan, and Green Lake – that include concessions.

Permits and Revenue Collection

The RVP Department issues all permits for use of the District lands and facilities including picnics, horse riding, dog friendly areas, snowmobiling, camping, soccer, and other activities. The Department performs oversight of all permit holders to ensure compliance with District requirements and insurance obligations. The Department also works with relevant District departments, the general public, and other government entities to develop and implement permit and recreation policies and procedures to promote more effective and efficient use of preserves and resources.

In 2011, the Department issued a total of 8,123 picnic permits generating \$648,601 in revenue, hosting just over 1,000,000 visitors through picnics alone. This number is slightly higher than the 2010 picnic permits issued (8,014). The number of picnic permits continues to increase in 2012 with 8,458 permits issued as of November 2012.

DIRECT SERVICE

Recreation and Aquatics

The Recreation, Volunteer Resources and Permits Department is responsible for the sale of individual and family yearly passes for all three aquatic centers – Whealan, Cermak, and Green Lake – and oversees the sale of daily passes, daily maintenance, and management of the three aquatic centers under their direct service. Recent steps have been taken to help establish a more efficient and effective aquatics program. In 2011, the Department was able to reduce aquatic staff overtime by 90 percent from the 2010 season. This reduction shifted the understanding of the District's involvement in managing aquatic centers. Prior to this significant reduction in overtime, the perception was that the District should not be in the aquatics management business. With this dramatic shift to a more manageable system without compromising quality of programming and customer satisfaction, the Department was able to show that they are capable of supporting this activity.

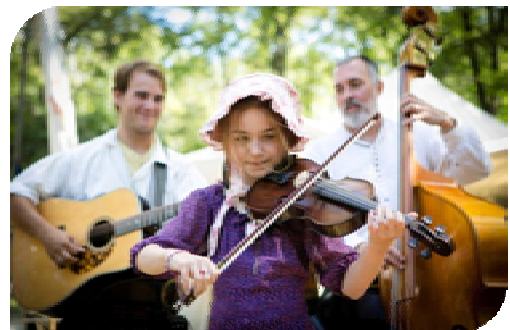


In 2012, the Department continued to focus on customer service and introduced a family and individual season pass policy and structure; opened all aquatic centers on Memorial Day Weekend; and successfully piloted a “learn to swim” program at Whealan Aquatic Center. Internally, an employee handbook was created for the aquatic centers, and a new point of sale system was implemented to gain tighter controls on cash management. New revenue generation was also introduced with a successful aquatic center party rental program being offered. In 2011 the Department hosted 81,125 participants at the three aquatic centers.

In addition to supporting aquatics centers, the Department also administers cooperative agreements with agencies, groups, and individuals to provide quality programs for youth, adults, and seniors. Programs include, but are not limited to, canoeing, camping, hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, and fishing derbies. An example of a cooperative agreement is the partnership with Fishing Buddies. The District provides \$30,000 annually to the Fishing Buddies in exchange for their facilitation of Youth Conservation Corps, a stewardship and summer employment program. The Fishing Buddies also hosts two fishing derbies a year.

Special Events

The District offers educational and recreational events produced through collaboration efforts internally and with partner organizations.



The District has a long tradition of hosting special events. Several significant regular special events are hosted by the nature centers, including the following.

- Maple Celebration (RTNC)
- Earth Day (3 – LRSH, RTNC, SRNC)
- Birds & Blooms (TM)
- International Migratory Bird Day (3 – CTNC, SELC, SRNC)
- Art in Nature (CTNC)
- Hummingbird Festival (SELC)
- Nature Is Accessible (for disabled and special needs) (LRSH)
- Annual Art Fair (LRSH)
- Archaeology Day Festival (SRNC)
- Fall Festival (RTNC)
- Settlers' Day Festival (SRNC)
- Christmas Past (SRNC)
- Ski Fest (SELC)
- Winter Solstice Bonfire (LRSH)

*CTNC = Crabtree Nature Center; LRSH = Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center; RTNC = River Trail Nature Center; SELC = Sagawau Environmental Learning Center; SRNC = Sand Ridge Nature Center; TM = Trailside Museum

In 2012, a concentrated effort to increase special events and activities with a focus on arts and culture activities prompted the hiring of a Director of Special Events to help facilitate thoughtful and strategic growth in this area. New special events in 2012 included the introduction of five “Films in the Forest” and two “Forest Jams,” programs using movies and music to draw audiences into the forest preserves. The District also hosted artist workshops for the staff and the public, and hosted an art exhibit at one of the nature centers. The “Art Outside” program was launched in the fall of 2012 to seek proposals from artists and arts groups who are interested in the District’s conservation and recreational goals and outdoor spaces; and who feel that their art work – performed or exhibited, taught, or observed would further those goals and/or augment the District’s outdoor environments. The District offers in-kind resources to support artists and arts programming through “Art Outside” including permitted outdoor space, limited indoor space, picnic tables and garbage cans, minimal security, marketing, and limited restroom facilities.

In addition to adding new events, the special event team increased its engagement with some of the existing special events. These partnerships resulted in additional amenities, marketing support, and increased overall financial support. Within the special event programming, recreational activities were more strongly integrated incorporating paddling (four new events), biking, and hiking.

Volunteer Resources

The Department supports ecosystem management by recruiting, training, and coordinating volunteer stewards. The program coordinates the District’s Keepers Corp Program consisting of high school students and citizens who assist in maintaining various trails, streams, lakeshores, and picnic areas throughout the forest preserves. The Matthew Bieszczat Volunteer Resource Center, located next to the Edgebrook Golf Course, serves as the headquarters for the District’s volunteer program.

Environmental Education & Nature Centers

The District's nature centers operate within the Resource Management Department and offer an array of direct educational programs and engage the public in a variety of ways.

The District operates six nature centers:

- Trailside
- Crabtree
- River Trail
- Sand Ridge
- Little Red Schoolhouse
- Sagawau

The nature centers are highly interactive, and in many cases, they are the introduction to the forest preserves for children, youth, and families within and around Cook County. The nature centers cater to a variety of groups (school, community, and scouts) and offer programs and events for youth, families, and adults.

Attendance patterns for the nature centers highlights that the most popular program is with school groups. While adult programs generate the lowest participation numbers, participation has grown from 2009-2011.

Table 4: Nature Program Attendance (2009-2011)

	School Programs	Community Groups	Scout Groups	Public Programs	Special Events	Kids Programs	Family Programs	Adult Programs
2009 (5 centers)	16,819	3,825	1,726	4,359	14,845	5,754	4,823	995
2010 (5 centers)	15,422	4,291	1,942	3,149	16,745	6,093	5,053	1,345
2011 (6 centers)	26,510	4,148	2,511	3,467	15,243	6,871	4,172	1,454

Of the six nature centers, in 2011 The Little Red Schoolhouse hosted the highest number of school, community, and scout groups, as well as adult-focused programs. Family programming is strongest at the Crabtree Nature Center.

Mighty Acorns

Mighty Acorns® is a program of Chicago Wilderness, a large coalition of conservation agencies and organizations that have pledged to work in concert to protect natural communities in the Chicago region and restore them to long-term viability. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County is a partner, working with schools throughout the year to train teachers and volunteers, coordinate field trips, and plan stewardship activities. In particular, the Sand Ridge Nature Center has taken the lead on this program from its inception and continues to lead the District in supporting this important, multi-partner program.

Through the District's outreach team, the Mighty Acorns Program is delivered to thousands of students throughout the County. This environmental education program for 4th, 5th, and 6th grades incorporates a three level curriculum in the classroom that is supplemented with three seasonal field trips to an assigned Forest Preserve District site during each year of the program. During each of the nine field trips that students experience during the three-year program, they participate in an educational activity, go on a free exploration hike, and get their hands dirty doing stewardship work. The program is free for the schools who participate. During the 2011-2012 school year, this program engaged 36 schools and served over 4,500 students.

Leave No Child Inside Initiative

Leave No Child Inside (LNCI) is a national initiative supported by regional efforts across the country. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County works closely with Chicago Wilderness on this and other initiatives. The District has been instrumental in developing the goals and objectives of the initiative, and District materials and sites regularly showcase LNCI resources and messages. For example, the LNCI logo is prominently displayed at several nature centers, and the LNCI message and logo are highlighted front and center at the District's first nature play area at Crabtree Nature Center.



Regulatory Framework

There has been a perception that the District has several regulations in place that are limiting recreational activities in the Forest Preserve District. Research on the existing ordinances that was conducted for this master plan concludes that only the following pose challenges to engaging in recreational activities.

2.4.1 Hours of Operation: *No person shall be or remain in any part of the District after sunset and before sunrise of any day; except, that persons and vehicles may pass through the District without stopping, on the most direct walk or roadway leading from point of entrance nearest to their point of destination. Any person violating any of the provisions of this Section shall be fined seventy-five dollars (\$75.00) for each offense.*

This ordinance presents barriers to opportunities for evening activities in the summer when the sun has set but it is still light out, or some activities in the winter. With an increased interest in utilizing the preserves during winter months, the window of daylight is small, and engaging in weekday activities prior to the sun setting is also challenging. This ordinance should change to reflect preserve hours encouraging participation within a meaningful window of time. At a minimum, special hours need to be assigned to camping areas and special events that may deliberately take place in the evening hours like movies in the park.

Regional Providers

As part of the planning process for this Recreation Master Plan, expanding current recreational uses and identifying potential new opportunities compatible with the agency's vision and values was explored. When considering adding new recreational facilities or services, it is important to understand the regional market. (What is the demand for a given service in a specific location or market?) The statistically valid survey helps identify interest in, or demand for, a given recreational activity. Many factors should be considered when locating a proposed new recreational amenity. One of those factors is an understanding of what other regional providers – whether they be public or private – exist in a given service area for a particular recreational activity.

For example, archery was identified as a potential recreational activity that could be expanded with the District. (*Note: the Illinois Department of Natural Resources has offered archery programs within the forest preserves in Cook County using portable equipment.*) Other providers of archery ranges and programs in the region were reviewed. It was determined that while there are many private or public/private indoor ranges, there are fewer outdoor ranges. This analysis shows that there are gaps in service for outdoor ranges in Cook County. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County has lands that could accommodate archery, a growing recreational activity, especially among teens. See **Appendix C** for additional analysis of select new recreational opportunities, including a review of other regional providers of archery, challenge courses, and disc golf facilities.

Service Assessment Tool

The Public Sector Service Assessment is a tool to help staff understand the services they provide and the strength or weakness of their position within that market. It also helps identify core services, alternative providers, and optional provision strategies. As a part of this planning process, a cross section of staff members from the Forest Preserve District of Cook County were introduced to the Services Assessment as a tool to review the services and programs they offer and consider potential new recreational services.

Adapted from the MacMillan Matrix for Competitive Analysis of Programs, the Services Assessment Matrix is a valuable tool that is specifically adapted to help public agencies assess their services. The Services Assessment Matrix is based on the assumption that duplication of existing comparable services (unnecessary competition) among public and non-profit organizations can fragment limited resources available, leaving all providers too weak to increase the quality and cost-effectiveness of customer services.

The Service Assessment helps organizations think about some very pragmatic questions.

- Is the service a good fit with the agency's mission, values, and vision?
- Is the agency the best or most appropriate organization to provide the service?
- Is the agency spreading its resources too thin without the capacity to sustain core services and the system in general?
- Are there opportunities to work with another organization to provide services more efficiently?

The Service Assessment uses a series of questions in four categories to analyze a given service.

- **Fit** – the degree to which a service aligns with the agency’s values and vision, reflecting the community’s interests.
- **Financial Capacity** – the degree to which a service (including a program, facility, or land asset) is currently or potentially attractive as an investment of current and future agency resources.
- **Market Position** – is the degree to which the organization has a stronger capability and potential to deliver the service than other agencies – a combination of the agency’s effectiveness, quality, credibility, and market share dominance.
- **Alternative Coverage** – the extent to which like or similar services are provided in the service area to meet customer demand and need.

Figure 9: Services Assessment Matrix

Services Assessment Matrix © 2009 GreenPlay LLC and GP RED		Financial Capacity Economically Viable		Financial Capacity Not Economically Viable	
		Alternative Coverage High	Alternative Coverage Low	Alternative Coverage High	Alternative Coverage Low
Good Fit	Strong Market Position	Affirm Market Position 1	Advance Market Position 2	Complementary Development 5	“Core Service” 6
	Weak Market Position	Divest 3	Invest, Collaborate or Divest 4	Collaborate or Divest 7	Collaborate or Divest 8
Poor Fit	Divest 9				

Note: The Service Assessment is based on MacMillan Matrix for Nonprofit Agencies from the Alliance for Nonprofit Management. Adapted by GreenPlay LLC and GP RED for Public Sector Agencies, April 2009.

The Service Assessment is a tool that District staff can use to assess current and potential programs and services. **Appendix D** provides more information on the Service Assessment Tool. In addition **Appendix C** includes additional analysis of select recreation services – archery, challenge courses, disc golf, and fitness stations.

Key Findings

In reviewing the wide range of recreational offerings within the Forest Preserve and highlighting the incredible opportunities that exist, some of the key findings and opportunities that became apparent include the following.

SHARED MISSION, VALUES, & VISION

The mission for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County was often quoted when those who were uncomfortable with the idea of increased recreational opportunities were being discussed. Although the language within the mission statement includes holding and maintaining public lands “for the purpose of education, pleasure, and recreation of the public,” other parts of the mission statement regarding the preservation of natural land raise potential conflicts with some recreational uses and facilities. This can cause disagreement on whether a proposed use is a fit with the District’s mission. During this master planning process, staff efforts were underway to further explore the mission of the District and develop organizational values to provide further clarity and direction. The organization’s mission, values, and vision should be embraced by employees and serve as a unifying platform by which the day to day work is guided.

LIMITED STAFFING

Currently, the Recreation, Volunteer Resources and Permits Department manages a very small number of staff. As the Department explores other opportunities for introducing new recreational services and activities, thinking creatively about service delivery models will help them execute program delivery. An opportunity would include more actively engaging contracts and partners; hiring seasonal staff across the organization that can wear multiple hats (programming, restoration, special event support, etc.); and thinking thoughtfully about where staffing is actually needed to help facilitate recreational opportunities. The RVP Department and Resource Management Department staff will need to work together to coordinate and deliver outdoor recreation programs. Staff development and collaboration between nature center and recreation staff should be a priority so sharing of resources, team work, and cross-training can occur as a daily practice.

EFFICIENCIES & DATA TRACKING

Every organization strives to maximize efficiencies, and the Forest Preserve District is no exception. Increasing data tracking and streamlining the permitting process are two areas where improvements are needed to better serve the public. Many efforts are already underway throughout the organization to tackle some of these issues. For example, in 2013, the RVP Department plans to implement a recreation software system that will provide tracking for permit reservation, class registration, room and campground reservation management, day pass management, point of sale processing, online registration, athletic field scheduling, donations, and scholarships. The Department also plans to institute athletic field permit policies and procedures to improve efficiencies. In addition, revisions to the Permitting Guidelines manual are on the horizon as a goal in 2013. Enhanced data tracking to better “tell the story” and quantify the services being provided by District staff as well as by partnership organizations is needed.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County has a long tradition of volunteerism to support ecological restoration work. There are many efforts to maximize volunteer contributions. For example, the RVP Department initiated a new Volunteer Management System in 2012 – a cloud-based volunteer website and database. Other accomplishments in 2012 included expanding group volunteer opportunities.

The core of dedicated volunteer stewards provides a valuable service and role. The commitment of these volunteers was evident in their participation in many of the public input opportunities as part of the planning process for the plan. As key stakeholders, volunteers have been part of a broader planning process for this master plan and have helped shape the shared vision around engaging users in recreational activities. They can play a key role in helping tie an environmental education message to recreational activities. Efforts to effectively harness the energy and talents of volunteers – linking environmental stewardship more closely with recreational activities – should continue to be a focus of the District.

PARTNERSHIPS, CONTRACTS, & LEASES

As noted previously, to deliver recreational services to engage users, staff resources are limited; therefore, collaborations are essential to expand these opportunities. To do this successfully, there is a need to formalize many of these efforts. Currently, there is inconsistency in many of the agreements with different groups that operate within the District. It is mutually beneficial for the District and the groups that it collaborates or does business with to have clear agreements. There is also a need to more clearly define partnerships, leases, and contracts. The District could benefit from efforts to ensure consistency in partnerships, contracts, and lease agreements. Since partnerships and contracts will continue to be critical elements of the District’s service delivery approach in the future, a strong foundation for managing these agreements is needed to ensure success for both parties.

Recommendations – Programs & Services

The programs and services recommendations in this chapter are general in nature and address the overall framework needed to help ensure successful programs and services in the future. Additional recommendations related to specific recreational uses and program efforts are included in *Chapter 4 Inventory – Analysis and Recommendations*.

SERVICE DELIVERY

1. Maximize recreational opportunities around activity “hubs” with amenities (e.g., parking, restrooms, boating access, camp facilities, etc.).

Layering outdoor experiences in certain key areas across the County will allow for increased participation from the public and a more efficient staff model. Combining support amenities like parking lots, restrooms, and water access with activities like well-defined trailheads, camping opportunities, boating opportunities, and nature centers will allow the user experience to be enhanced.

2. Explore how nature centers and the expanded functions of the Recreation Division within the RVP Department could be better aligned.
 - Identify strategies to enhance staff development and collaboration including sharing of resources and cross-training.

There are significant opportunities for both divisions (nature centers and recreation) within Resource Management and RVP Departments to combine functions and share resources (i.e., staff and programs) to serve County residents more efficiently. These departments will have to address the District culture of operating in silos so that cross departmental synergies can occur. Cross departmental synergy between the Resource Management Department and the RVP Department is increasing. The eagerness to share resources and for staff to work collaboratively was highlighted during 2012, and the belief is these efforts will continue enthusiastically. By improving the cross-department synergy with the nature centers and outdoor recreation functions, the District will not only be positioned to better “inform” the public but they will be able to engage the public on multiple levels.

3. Change the Hours of Operation ordinance to allow greater flexibility under defined conditions. This language prohibits casual recreational uses when the sun goes down or before sunrise unless special permission has been granted.
4. Continue to streamline the permitting and registration process and enhance customer service and data tracking to better deliver recreational and educational services.

Enhanced permitting and registration processes will improve the customer experience and create efficiencies for staff. Consistent data tracking of participation numbers is a best management practice that will assist staff and leadership in data-driven decisions. This data can be used to set measurable objectives for different program areas and be used as a tool to tailor programming efforts through the RVP Department and the nature centers.

5. Expand volunteer opportunities.
 - Continue efforts to enhance volunteer recruitment, recognition, and communication.
 - Consider developing a volunteer docent program to provide guided nature walking or paddling tours.
6. Ensure consistency in partnerships, contracts, and lease agreements.
 - Create consistent criteria for contracts and leases.
 - Refine partnership policies and develop partnership agreements with all existing and future partners and review annually.
 - Expand partnerships to deliver recreation programs (e.g., paddling, biking/hiking, camping, arts and cultural, nature education, etc.). See *Chapter 4* for more information.
 - Enhance recreational opportunities/experiences through concessions. Explore vendors for boat, bike, cross country ski and snowshoe rentals, and food/beverage concessions at high activity areas.

Conclusion

The Recreation, Volunteer Resources and Permitting Department and the District as a whole is charged with exploring ways to expand outdoor recreational opportunities and engage new users. It is essential that the whole organization is united around a common vision and goals to guide these efforts. It is also imperative that the District collaborates on an action plan to move forward. An “all hands on deck” approach is needed – among staff as well as stakeholders and partners – to embrace a common vision and guiding principles. Together, these groups, using this Recreation Master Plan as a guide, will shape and implement new, as well as tried and true, outdoor recreational opportunities. Focus areas of expanded programs and services for the coming years include camping, special events, water recreation, trail-based recreation, winter recreation, and new activities like archery.

- Introduction
- Inventory Assessment & Recommendations
- Opportunity Sites
- 80/20 Land Use Analysis
- Conclusion

This chapter of the Recreation Master Plan includes a comprehensive analysis of the facilities within Forest Preserve District of Cook County lands and the recreational activities that they support. Recommendations related to each facility or activity type follow the analysis. Next, potential opportunity sites within the District that would benefit from recreational enhancements are reviewed with a focus on three sites. Finally, the policy framework that guides the balance between natural areas and lands developed for recreational uses is discussed.

Introduction



A large number of sites were visited throughout the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) by District staff and members of the consulting team for the Recreation Master Plan. The visits took place across several days in June 2012. The purpose of the visits was to observe a representative sampling of the FPDCC's lands to gain a clear picture of the composition, condition, arrangement, and other characteristics of the lands and the physical features located within them. From this, and in combination with information from other sources such as focus groups and public meetings, the master planning team developed recommendations related to future uses and management and operation of these lands.

The information presented below is a summary of the team's assessment and supporting recommendations. It is organized by the various

types of facilities and recreational activities that occur within the lands of the FPDCC. For each of these, a description of the current conditions is given, followed by a general discussion of issues and opportunities associated with that particular activity, and concluded with recommendations. The recreation facilities and activities are not listed in any order of priority or importance.

An Integrated Approach

It is important to highlight that protecting natural areas is one of the primary purposes of the District. The balance between preservation/protection of natural areas and providing places for recreational use has been guided by the District 80/20 policy over the years – with 80 percent of the land being natural and up to 20 percent developed for recreation compatible with the District’s mission. (An analysis of this mix was conducted as part of this planning study. See the end of this chapter and **Appendix E** for more information.) However, it is understood that much of the 80 percent of the natural lands can also be enjoyed for resource-based recreational opportunities like birding and hiking on trails. A guiding principle for this Recreation Master Plan – that environmental awareness, open space advocacy, and stewardship messages are incorporated into what we do – as well as the other principles ensure a holistic, integrated approach that links nature awareness and outdoor recreation. (See guiding principles in the *Executive Summary* and *Chapter 1*.) This chapter highlights that the forest preserves offer inspiring natural lands full of unique opportunities to recreate in Cook County and connect to nature.

Inventory Assessment & Recommendations

ECOLOGICAL/NATURAL AREAS



Existing Conditions: Natural areas exist in various types and configurations within the preserves. These have been mapped for management purposes. Some of the natural areas have been designated as natural preserves by the state. (There are also areas that are neither developed nor natural. These include disturbed areas that have been left relatively unmanaged.)

Discussion: Protecting natural areas is one of the primary purposes of the District. The public can enjoy these natural areas through a variety of activities including environmental education programs, wildlife viewing activities like birding, paddling, and hiking on trails. A review of nature education and other outdoor recreation opportunities follow. While this Recreation Master Plan provides a framework for recreational

opportunities at the District, there is also a need to develop a master plan to guide conservation planning and management.

ECOLOGICAL/NATURAL AREAS RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a Conservation Master Plan to provide additional analysis and comprehensive delineation of managed natural areas.



NATURE EDUCATION

Nature Centers



Current Conditions: The District's six nature centers provide a gateway for the discovery of the natural diversity and beauty of Cook County. Each center offers programs and interpretive attractions about plants, animals, and natural communities of the region, has self-guided nature trails, and all but Sagawau Environmental Learning Center have live native animal exhibits. Naturalist-led programs to educate and excite visitors about all aspects of nature are offered throughout the year, for all ages. A number of major festivals and special events are held annually, to further connect residents with their forest preserve heritage.

Discussion: The nature centers play an important role in educating and informing the public about the natural environment that is interwoven with the urban environment of the Chicago area. There has been discussion about the addition of a nature/visitor center in Dan Ryan Woods located in the south part of Chicago. The recently renovated enclosed pavilion could serve as a support facility for nature education and other recreation activities. This site could play an important role in providing a portal from the urban environment into the natural world by introducing people to nature at that location and encouraging them to explore out beyond and into other areas of the forest preserve system. It could also allow exploration of the role of the natural environment within the city.

Interpretive Signage

Existing Conditions: Interpretive signs are not common throughout the preserve lands.

Discussion: Interpretive signs are a way in which educational opportunities can be provided throughout the preserves. This includes interpreting both the natural and cultural history of the lands within the FPDCC. However, there are considerations of cost, maintenance, and other issues to address when providing these. Opportunities to expand interpretive signage abound and are integrated throughout the recommendations in this plan (including the trails, arts and culture, and other recreation sections in this chapter).



www.americantrails.org

Interpretive Elements

Interpretive Elements, or trail interpretation stations, will be built in 2014 at Tinley Creek/Bartel Grassland and Deer Grove East as a part of the District's Centennial Celebration. The Interpretive Elements will enable visitors to "read" the landscape by making visible the hidden processes and features of the site such as water movement, wildlife, seasonal time, etc. The components will include signage, sculptures and functional pieces such as seating, elevated bridges and orientation structures.



Rendering commissioned by Openlands

NATURE EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Broaden the focus of nature centers to include promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities.
2. Utilize the recently renovated historic pavilions (Dan Ryan Woods and Thatcher Woods) as visitor centers to promote environmental education and recreation activities.
 - Develop an operations plan for these two pavilions that includes hours of operation for programs and rentals, staffing plans, etc.
3. Amplify the message of the Leave No Child Inside Initiative (LNCI).
 - Use LNCI logo and messages to develop district-wide outreach and engagement strategies.
 - Participate in regional public awareness campaigns.
 - Identify strategies to best engage ethnically diverse families in LNCI programs and activities. (For example, work to diversify staff and offer multi-lingual and cultural experiences.)
 - Incorporate signage to identify nature play areas as celebrating outdoor play and contributing to the regional effort to connect children with nature.
 - Brand specific recreation programs with the LNCI logo – particularly programs or experiences that serve to introduce families to the outdoors and build their level of comfort with nature play and exploration.
4. Develop a standardized youth nature day camp program at all nature centers.
5. Enhance marketing efforts and materials to publicize nature and recreation programs.
 - Consider developing a quarterly district-wide activity guide.
 - Cross-market with other agencies including tourism groups.
6. Promote eco-tourism through partnerships (e.g., birdwatching, camping, day camps, etc.).
7. Increase interpretive signage.
 - Develop guidelines and policies related to interpretive signage.
 - Utilize the Tinley Creek and Deer Grove Forest Preserve interpretive signage projects as a guide for future efforts.
 - Integrate historical and cultural interpretation in signage, as applicable. (Also see art and culture recommendations below.)
 - Expand the use of technology as an interpretative tool (e.g., apps, etc.)



PLAY

OVERVIEW

Inventory

- 1 nature play area (Crabtree Nature Center in NW)

Findings

- Interest expressed in survey
- Limited regional opportunities



Traditional Playgrounds

Existing Conditions: Traditional playgrounds are not found within the forest preserves.

Discussion: There is a general policy that traditional playgrounds are not appropriate within the FPDCC. The reasoning is that this type of amenity is more appropriate within a municipal park. (It should be noted, however, that play-type structures are incorporated into the aquatic centers.)

Nature Play

Existing Conditions: There is one nature play area at Crabtree Nature Center that opened in the spring of 2012. No other nature play areas are designated at this time. The Crabtree Nature Center nature play area was developed mostly by center staff and volunteers and has many unique and well-designed features.



Discussion: Nature play is a form of play that seems particularly appropriate within the forest preserve system. Nature play is one response to what has been identified as “Nature Deficit Syndrome.” The effects of this syndrome include a fear of the natural environment and a corresponding lack of stewardship and commitment to preserving nature as children become adults. Emotional and physical health issues are also being associated with nature deficit syndrome. By introducing children to the natural environment through play, they develop healthy attitudes towards land stewardship along with healthier minds and bodies.

The FPDCC is uniquely positioned to play a leadership role in a growing trend to engage kids through nature play. Nature play spaces are unique destinations that could attract new users into the forest preserve system. These play places would not look like a regular playground that would be found in a park. Instead, these are places where children of all ages and their caregivers are invited to engage with the natural environment in a way that is self-directed, exploratory, and interactive. See below for additional nature play description and resources.

NATURE PLAY SPACES

What are Nature Play Spaces?

A nature play space integrates natural components for structured and unstructured play and learning. The overall goal is to allow children to engage with nature on their terms, in order to understand and appreciate the importance of engaging in the stewardship of nature.

What are the Benefits?

Play is a healthy and important part of the social, emotional, and physical development of children. Nature play spaces can be valuable opportunities for kids to engage with nature by providing natural materials and other nature-themed elements that will capture their imaginations and begin a lifelong love of the outdoors. These activities allow children to develop a deeper understanding and affinity with the natural environment and a desire to protect and preserve it as they grow older.

What are Elements of Nature Play Spaces?

Nature play spaces could include logs and rocks that can be used as stepping stones or to build forts or designated digging and water play areas. Physical components include hiding places, plants, loose parts, varying terrain, pathway, water, seating, and signage. Activities include balancing, building, climbing, gardening, and digging – activities that encourage creativity, imagination, listening, and observing.

What are Potential Locations?

Nature Centers, campgrounds, and picnic groves all lend themselves as potential sites for natural play areas. These activity centers offer outdoor recreation opportunities for all ages and destinations for outings with families and friends. Placing a destination play area near a group picnic area could make it desirable for birthday parties and other events and celebrations.

Why is the FPDCC Uniquely Positioned?

Cook County is one of most densely populated areas in the country, and the Forest Preserve District offers a natural oasis and break from a heavily built environment for kids and families to connect with nature and have fun. Nature play is an extension of the work that the six nature centers are already doing.

Nature Play Resources:

Maryland Department of Natural Resources website: <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/cin/NPS/index.asp>
Forest Commission of England website: <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7LSEHW>

Spraygrounds/Splash Pad

Existing Conditions: A splash pad is an area for water play that has no standing water. There are none of these outside of the developed aquatic facilities in the FPDCC system at this time.

Discussion: Spraygrounds are growing in demand across the country and are being used as a lower-cost alternative to providing pools, since lifeguards are not required. Unless associated with the existing three aquatic centers, this type of facility does not appear to fit within the FPDCC system and is more appropriate for a municipal park agency. However, water play may be a desired element of a nature play environment, and could be as simple as providing access to a water pump.

PLAY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhance the current nature play area at the Crabtree Nature Center.
- Add nature play areas at select sites.
 - Identify locations in each of the five subareas for potential play areas where there are large group gatherings and a variety of activities for all ages such as nature centers, campgrounds, or picnic groves. (In addition to the existing nature play space at Crabtree Nature Center in the Northwest, Dan Ryan Woods is recommended as one of the sites in the South subarea.)
- Continue mobile nature exploration and play programming through nature centers and partnerships like the Mighty Acorns.



TRAILS & TRAILHEADS

OVERVIEW

Inventory

- 146 miles of paved trails
- 201 miles of unpaved trails

Opportunities

- Trailheads
- Regional connectivity
- Loop walks
- Interpretive signage
- Accommodate diverse uses
- Guided tours
- Safety and maintenance
- Trails Master Plan



<http://velonews.competitor.com>

Paved/Hard Surface Trails

Current Conditions: Based on current GIS data, the District has 347 miles of trails – 146 miles of trails are identified as paved, while 201 miles are shown as unpaved. These are linear in some areas where Preserve lands follow rivers and drainageways, such as along the Des Plaines River. In the Northwest trails tend to be loops, such as in Busse or Poplar Creek Preserves. The typical cross-section of hard surface trails is eight feet wide, with a cleared area on either side.



Discussion: Trails are one of the most popular and universally appreciated features of the preserves. In fact, Palos and Sag Valley Trail was recognized as “Trail of the Month” by *Runner’s World* magazine in January 2013.

Existing trails appear to be in good condition. In some places, continuity and safe crossings are lacking. Connectivity is an important aspect of trails. Providing loops of different lengths enhances the value of the system to users, who can choose from a variety of routes and experiences.

Connectivity to the regional trail system is something to consider and evaluate. GIS data for regional trails currently shows 1,059 miles of existing trails, 84 miles of future trails (possible trails for future consideration), 1,496 miles of planned trails (trails in a planning stage, most likely unfunded), and 74 miles of programmed trails (trails that have been funded and are being implemented).

Also, adding mileage markers and directional signage would enhance the usability of the trail system. The opportunity for shorter trail loops with expansion of environmental and cultural interpretation could greatly enhance the current system.

Unpaved/Soft Surface Trails



Current Conditions: Soft trails vary – some run parallel to hard surface trails in the preserves but are separated from them and some are independent. For example, along the Des Plaines River, hard surface trails run on one side of the river and soft surface ones on the other.

Discussion: While soft trails and hard trails often serve completely different users, connecting the two types together would offer more choices of routes for pedestrians and cyclists, who might choose a route that combines both trail types for a particular outing. Also, bringing the two trail types together where safe crossings are limited would allow one crossing to serve all users.

Mowed Trails

Current Conditions: Mowed trails are found in some locations, such as at nature centers, cross-country ski areas, and equestrian areas. These are typically about eight feet wide.



Discussion: These provide a very different experience from the hard and soft trails provided elsewhere. They probably do not need to be connected to the hard/soft network of trails other than for access purposes. These trails may be relatively easy to create and inexpensive to provide as long as the use is not enough to cause damage to the surface.

Equestrian



Current Conditions: Currently, the Northwest and Southwest areas of the District offer the most equestrian access to District trails. Eight private horse stables offer livery service on District property and Glen Grove Equestrian Center in the northwest offers riding lessons, seasonal camps, and pony rides.

Discussion: Equestrian use is fairly specialized, and ease of access to current equestrian users is key to extended longevity of current and future use. Opportunities may exist for future expansion of equestrian use not only for day use, but also special event type facility/facilities. A recommendation of the Camp Master Plan is to develop a campground at Camp Kiwanis in Pulaski Woods for equestrian recreation users. Day use and horse rentals/riding lessons through vendors or partnerships could also expand the equestrian use on Forest Preserve lands. Future sites in the Northwest area may be identified and appropriate for a future special event site. Size, access, connectivity, and cost are considerations.

Single-Track/Primitive Trails

Current Conditions: Pulaski Woods in the Southwest area currently offers a mountain bike staging area and popular single track mountain bike trails. It is likely that single track and/or “social trails” that are not formally planned or sanctioned occur unmapped throughout the preserves.

Discussion: Primitive trails serve both hikers and mountain bikers. If not formally created and managed, these will develop ad-hoc and not always in the best locations or configurations, leading to management issues.



Trailheads



Current Conditions: There are some designated trailheads or trail parking areas: Old Stover Trailhead, Poplar Creek Bicycle Lot, Poplar Creek Equestrian Parking, Camp Kiwanis Equestrian Staging Area, John Husar I&M Bicycle Trail Parking Lot, and Pulaski Woods South Mountain Bike Staging Area. Many other parking areas are likely to serve this purpose but are not specifically identified or signed as such. One example might be the parking lot in the southwest corner of Caldwell Woods. The assessment team observed quite a few people loading bikes on and off their cars here to use the trail. This was observed at Dunne Golf Course as well.

Discussion: There are no trailhead symbols on the current maps published by the District. Designating locations as trailheads and showing them with specific identification on maps and the website would encourage more people to bring bikes out and ride, or organize a group hike or ride that meets at the trailhead.

Because trails are one of the most desired and utilized features of the preserves, and because the preserves serve people on a regional rather than neighborhood basis, providing good trailheads is important. People are more likely to drive to a preserve to hike or bike rather than come directly from home on bike or foot. (The survey for this master plan showed that 58 percent of respondents drove to the forest preserves, while 17 percent rode their bikes, and 9 percent walked.)

Once they arrive, a basic set of amenities should be provided for them, such as a restroom, a place to fill their water bottle, etc. Changing facilities (such as in a restroom building) would allow riders to change from street clothes into riding gear. Tables and seating should be provided in a shaded or sheltered location where people can wait for other members of their group to arrive, and where they can arrange their gear before or after the ride rather than having to do all of this in the parking lot as they do now in most locations.

Examples of trailhead standards and design guidelines include developing a tiered system of trailheads, such as level 1, 2, and 3. Each trailhead would include design standards based on trail types and intensity of visitor usage. When planning a trailhead, it is important to consider circulation, landscaping, accessibility, signage, grading, and public services, as mentioned above.

In some places, bike rentals (much like the canoe rentals found elsewhere in the preserves) might be appropriate. This might even be combined with the canoe concessions and offer snacks, equipment, etc.

TRAIL & TRAILHEAD RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a Trails Master Plan. The plan should address the following.
 - Identify gaps in trail connectivity and places where safe crossings are lacking.
 - Develop trailhead standards and prototype designs and locations.
 - Designate additional areas as trailheads and upgrade those locations to meet the standards.
 - Show trailheads on trail map and provide signage to identify them.
 - Add mileage markers and directional signage would enhance the usability of the trail system.
 - Identify areas to add shorter trail loops.
 - Integration of environmental and cultural interpretative signage throughout the trail system. (Use Tinley Creek and Deer Grove interpretive signage pilot programs as a model for expanded efforts.)
 - Address multiple trail uses including walking, hiking, biking, equestrian, etc.
2. Identify opportunities to add bike rentals through partnerships or vendors. (This should be considered as part of the Trails Master Plan.)
3. Determine the role and current status of single track/primitive trails for mountain bike use in the preserves and develop a policy around these types of trails. (This should be considered as part of the Trails Master Plan.)

- Determine if certain trails should be specifically identified for mountain biking, and if mountain bikes should be prohibited on others.
 - Develop a strategy for identifying, mapping, signing, and managing mountain bike trails throughout the preserves.
 - Consider adding a new mountain bike-focused area like the one at Pulaski somewhere in the northern part of the District.
4. Expand organized trail-based activities in collaboration with others (e.g., guided tours including birding, races, etc.).
 5. Explore opportunities to expand equestrian uses and enhance amenities.
 - Work with horse stable vendors to expand day use and horse rentals/riding lesson opportunities.
 - Implement recommendation of the Camp Master Plan for a campground at Camp Kiwanis in Pulaski Woods for equestrian recreation users.
 - Consider future opportunities for a special event equestrian facility/arena. Size, access, connectivity, cost, and interested vendor or partners are considerations.



CAMPING



Current Conditions: Several locations where camping has traditionally occurred exist throughout the District. These range from campsites to more developed facilities with cabins, mess halls, and other structures. These sites have been available for organized youth group use. For the most part, these facilities have not been used for some time and are in various states of repair and condition.

Discussion: The 2012 FPDCC Camp Master Plan provides direction on enhancing camping within the forest preserves and establishes a long-range strategy for campground facilities and programs. This Recreation Master Plan interfaces with the Camp Master Plan related day-use recreation activities. (See **Appendix G** for Camp Master Plan Site Map.)

CAMPING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implement the Camp Master Plan.
2. Align recreation day use opportunities between the Recreation Master Plan and the Camp Master Plan. (Identified camp day use sites include Bullfrog Lake, Thatcher Woods, Camp Pine Woods, Shabbona Woods, and Camp Sullivan.)



P I C N I C K I N G

O V E R V I E W

Inventory

- 187 picnic shelters (stone and brick)
- 263 picnic groves

Opportunities

- Diversify shelter sizes
- Connect picnicking with recreation
- Offer recreation rental options



FPDCC is a primary provider of picnic facilities for group gatherings in the region. Recognizing that picnic permitting generates revenue, the District should look closely at its business plan for picnicking and develop a cost recovery strategy around it that leverages the unique qualities of the preserve system to create a business model that serves the broad needs of the public and provides a reasonable return on investment to the District. Primary elements of picnicking currently consist of stone shelters, brick shelters, and lawn event areas.

Stone Shelters



Current Conditions: The stone shelters found within the preserves are icons of the system. They have a unique character and appearance that can be readily identified with the FPDCC system. The shelters are located in attractive natural settings and are typically far enough apart that they “hold” a territory around them that can be identified with that shelter. Each shelter has access to parking nearby and has a trash dumpster, ash-disposal, and normally, a water source within a reasonable distance. Typically, restroom buildings or portable restrooms are located nearby.

The shelters are sized to accommodate a rather large group – typically at least 50 to 100 people. In addition, the land around them can accommodate additional tables, canopies, etc. that allow for much greater capacity – up to several hundred people.

Discussion: The stone shelters have a special appeal that is uniquely identified with the District’s properties. Ongoing efforts by the District to preserve and restore these shelters are to be commended. Consideration should be given to charging a premium for these shelters over that charged for others.

This could be further justified by adding other amenities, such as horseshoe or bocce courts, or additional landscaping at the stone shelters. These shelters could also come with services, such as rental of special equipment for weddings, etc. If positioned as an up-market location for special events, these shelters could serve as an identity element for the preserves and help with the cost recovery. The additional funds could be used to subsidize other shelters, or expand the range of offerings by building new shelters in a variety of sizes and configurations.

Brick Shelters

Current Conditions: The brick shelters are similar to the stone ones in size and placement within the preserves. However, they lack the uniqueness and character of the stone shelters.

Discussion: These could be improved with some additional distinguishing features. For example, the low walls that surround many of the stone shelters add a sense of enclosure that the brick shelters lack. On the other hand, the brick shelters could remain as-is and be offered at a different price point for rental than the stone shelters to keep affordable pricing available.

New shelters in a variety of sizes and configurations should be considered – there is currently a one-size-fits-all character to the District’s shelters. Small groups and families could benefit from a greater choice of facilities.

Lawn Event Spaces

Current Conditions: These are large open areas of mowed lawn available for drop-in use and that are rented out for large events. Other than access to parking, restrooms, and drinking water, these areas have no special amenities.



Discussion: Consideration might be given to adding amenities at some of these locations that would enhance their appeal for large gatherings, such as sand volleyball, nature play areas, etc. Alternatively, a “package” of portable amenities could be available for rental at these sites as part of the District’s cost recovery model.

P I C N I C K I N G R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

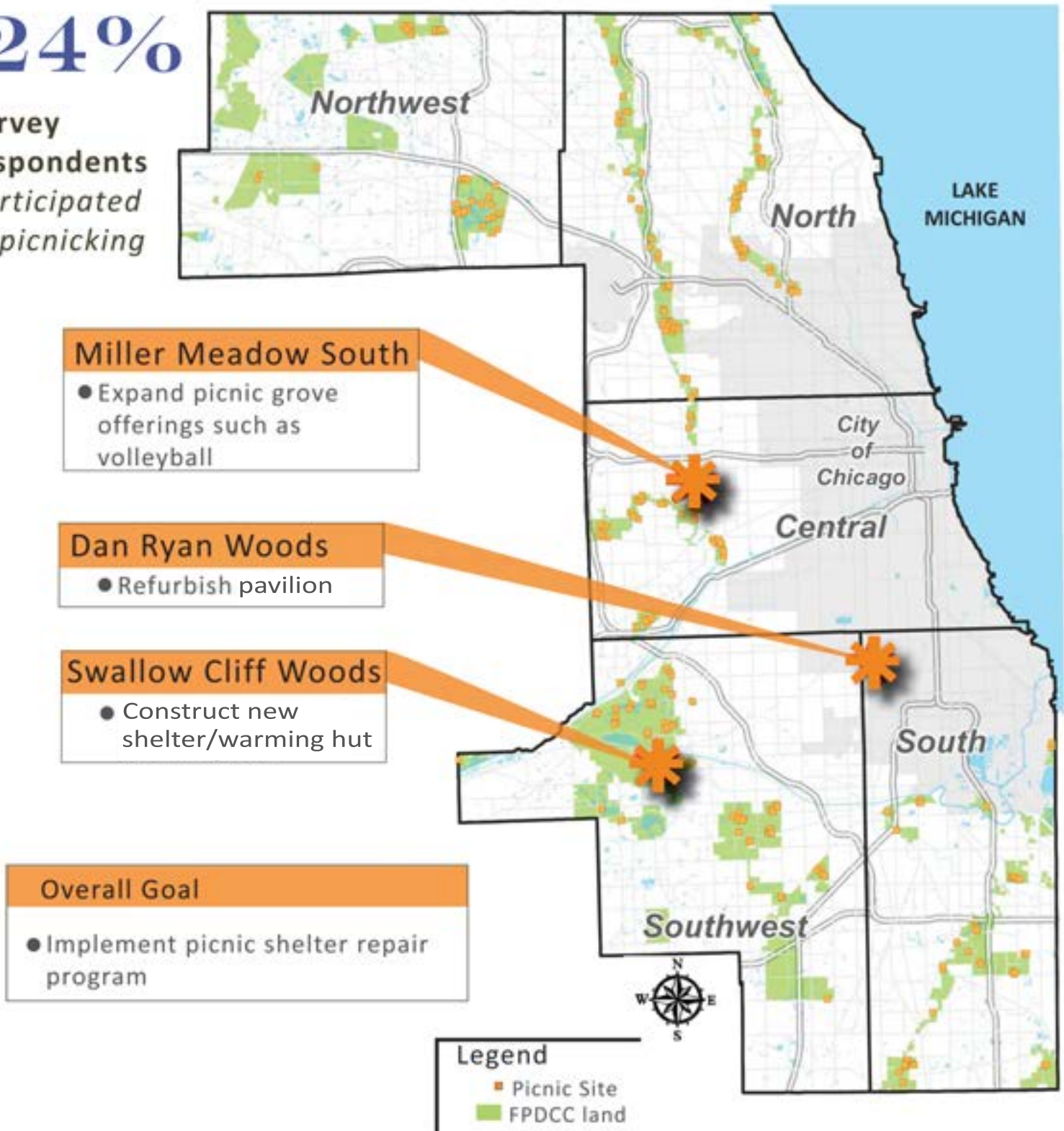
1. Develop a strategic approach to enhance existing picnic facilities, add new shelters, and repurpose underperforming facilities.
2. Consider diversifying picnic areas by adding smaller areas to accommodate families or smaller groups and non-reservation drop-in use.
3. Offer rental activity options through the picnic permit process (e.g., “rent a naturalist,” recreation activities like slacklines, volleyball, etc.).
4. Provide information about site recreational amenities through the picnic permit process and through signage.
5. Refine picnic business plan and cost recovery strategy.
 - Review the rental history and revenue generation for specific locations.
 - Consider modifications to the pricing structure for picnic shelters that would allow for differential pricing and the positioning of some shelters as premium ones.

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Current Facilities & Proposed Improvements

24%

survey
respondents
participated
in picnicking



picnicking



WATER RECREATION

OVERVIEW

Inventory

- 15 boat launches
- 4 boat rentals
- 5 model boating areas
- 42 fishing lakes
- 3 aquatic facilities



Opportunities

- Expand boat launches, rentals, partnerships and programs
- Capitalize on water trails
- Add boat house
- Consider adding swimming beaches



Fishing



Current Conditions: The following information about fishing is found at the FPDCC's website (<http://fpdcc.com/recreation/fishing/>).

Fishing in the lakes, ponds, and streams of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County is enjoyed by tens of thousands of people each year. The District manages over 40 lakes for recreational sport fishing. Some of the many species found within District waters include largemouth bass, walleye, muskie, northern pike, bluegill, crappie and channel catfish.

The District's Fisheries Section in cooperation with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources stock a number of the District's lakes with sport fish on an annual basis. Twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall, rainbow trout are stocked. A District Fishing Guide is available. The District receives hybrid sunfish and channel catfish through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Urban Fisheries Program, which also provides fishing instruction.

Some District waters allow the use of approved private watercraft while others offer boat concessions. Concessions also offer bait and food.

The Fishing Guide lists all fishing and boating regulations, locations and other fishing and boating information. Maps of the fishing lakes, ponds, quarries, reservoirs and sloughs within the Forest Preserve District of Cook County can also be found in the guide.

Discussion: Fishing ranked in the top third of recreation uses for current usage and future use in the survey conducted for this master plan. This popular activity should be supported.

Boating

Current Conditions: The fishing publication listed above provides information on where various types of boating is allowed. There are boat rentals at Skokie Lagoons, Busse Lake, Tampier Lake, and Maple Lake. These vary in character from a very rudimentary facility consisting of a portable storage building at Skokie Lagoons to the newly renovated boat rental area at Busse Lake. There are 15 boat launch sites throughout the preserves, ranging from developed boat ramps such as the one at Tampier Lake to the simple launch site at Bemis Woods North.



Discussion: The preserves serve a variety of boating types, from open water fishing to river kayaking and canoeing. Water-based recreation is one of the primary activities associated with the preserves. As such, it should be approached in a holistic manner, looking at the waters of the preserves as a system. This system consists of lakes (of varying sizes), streams, and rivers. Each of these offers a particular set of experiences, and access points should be located and designed to serve that set of experiences.

Information on the website regarding boat rentals is minimal and increased information on rental availability and details could greatly impact new users.

Swimming



Current Conditions: The FPDCC currently offers swimming in developed outdoor aquatics facilities at three locations, including Cermak Family Aquatic Center, Green Lake Family Aquatic Center, and Whealan Pool Aquatic Center. The Cermak Center was recently renovated.

There are currently no developed swim beaches on lakes, streams, or rivers within the FPDCC lands.

Discussion: The possibility of adding swim beaches as a recreation use in the FPDCC system has been discussed as part of this master plan process. Given the amount of water found in the system and interest in water recreation, this is an opportunity to explore further.

Model Boating

Current Conditions: There are five designated locations where model boating is allowed throughout the District. These areas are available for individuals and/or organizations on a first-come, first-served basis. Organizations may request permission to have model boat events with participants and/or spectators of 25 or more people.



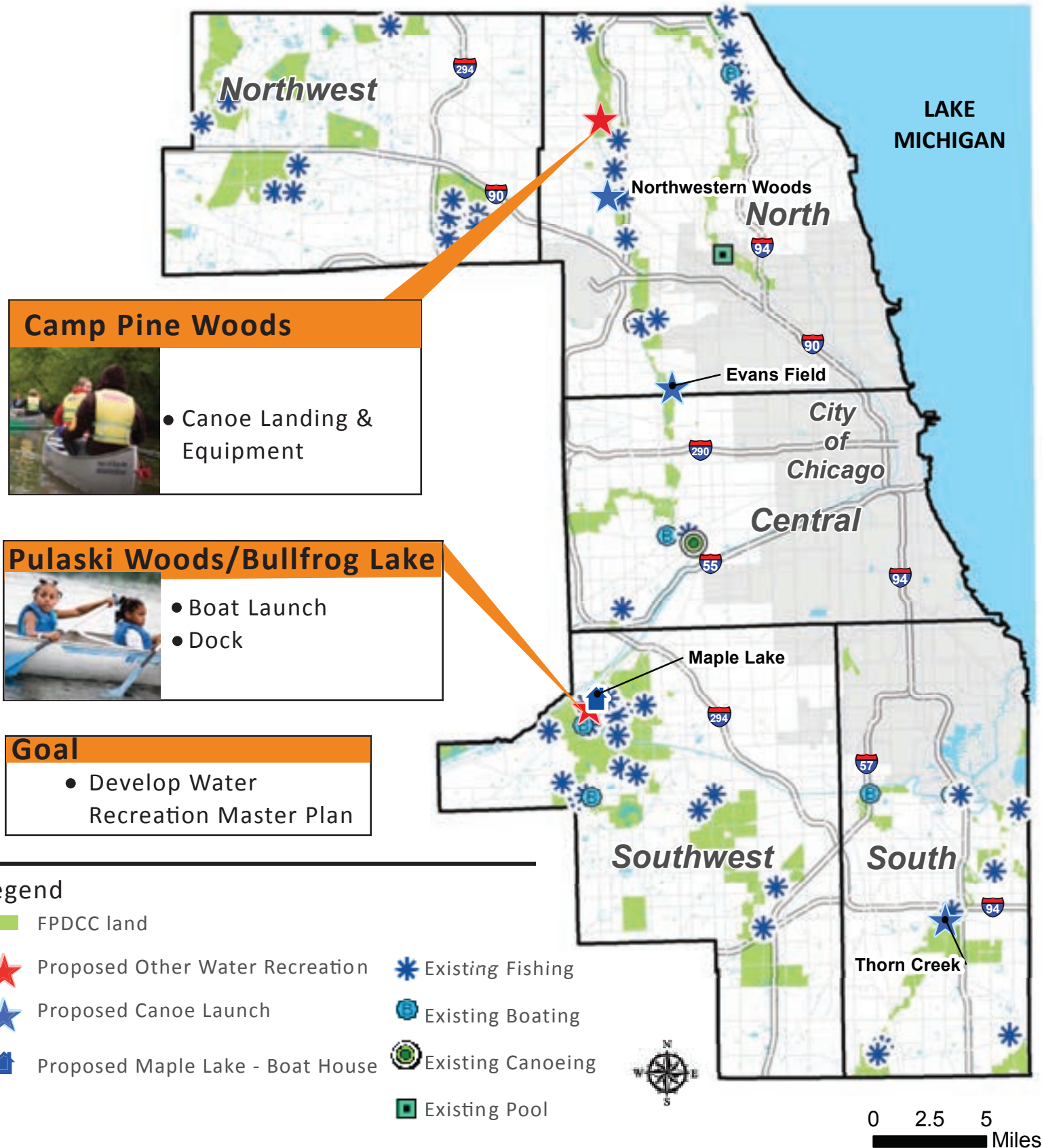
Discussion: While model boating occurs, it does not have permanent facilities. The planning process for this master plan did not identify any concerns or issues with this use; therefore, no changes are recommended in this plan.

W A T E R R E C R E A T I O N R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

1. Develop a Water Recreation Plan. (Build on the 1999 Northeastern Illinois Water Trail Map and use as a guide.)
 - Address each of the water recreation types – fishing, boating, swimming, and model boating.
 - Address points of connection between all types of water access and other activities within the preserve system, such as camping, picnicking, and group activities.
 - Identify locations for wayfinding and Point-of-Interest signage along water trails.
 - Identify locations for additional boat launches, boat rental, and amenities.
 - Incorporate environmental stewardship activities.
2. Expand boat rental and instruction opportunities.
 - Expand paddling instruction and tours through partnerships including the Illinois Paddling Council.
 - Provide information about boat rental and program opportunities on the FPDCC website.
3. Continue to publicize fishing and water recreation opportunities.
4. Consider adding swim beaches as a recreational use.
 - Identify a set of criteria that a swim beach would have to meet, such as size, capacity, availability of support features such as restrooms, etc. and use these criteria to identify appropriate locations for swim beaches.
 - Once one or more locations are found, prepare a strategy for developing beach swimming as an activity within the preserve system.

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Current Facilities & Proposed Improvements



water recreation



WINTER RECREATION

OVERVIEW

Inventory

- 1 cross country ski rental site
- 10 sledding hills
- 20 ice fishing sites
- 5 snowmobiling sites



Opportunities

- Enhance and expand winter recreation destinations
- Add cross country ski and snowshoe rental sites
- Expand sledding
- Consider expanding ice skating



www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk

Cross Country Skiing

Current Conditions: According to the District website, “Cross country skiing is fast becoming the most popular winter pastime in the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. Persons may cross country ski in all areas of the District (except certain special use areas – golf courses and nature centers) from 8 am to sunset.” All recognized trails are open for skiing, weather permitting. Trail maps are available online.



Sagawau Environmental Learning Center in the southwest part of the District offers a complete Nordic Ski Program, including lessons for all ability levels, nature ski tours, school group programs, and ski rentals.

Discussion: The Nordic Ski Program at Sagawau Environmental Learning Center could be a good model for other programs and activities. The success seems to be partly due to a passionate and dedicated group of staff and volunteers who run it. Through the planning process, considering winter recreation opportunities at the District’s 10 golf courses came up as an idea to further explore. In other parts of the country, some golf courses allow winter recreation opportunities such as snowshoeing and cross country skiing.

Ice Fishing

Current Conditions: Ice fishing is permitted during the winter season at 20 designated lakes and sloughs throughout the County. Hours for ice fishing are 8 am-sunset.

Ice fishing is permitted on the following listed lakes and sloughs only.

Arrowhead Lake	Flatfoot Lake	Saganashkee Slough
Axehead Lake	Green Lake	Sag Quarry – East
E. J. Beck Lake	Horsetail Lake	Sag Quarry – West
Belleau Lake	Ida Lake	Tampier Lake
Big Bend Lake	Maple Lake	Turtlehead Lake
Bode Lake – South only	Papoose Lake	Wampum Lake
Bullfrog Lake	Powderhorn Lake	
Busse Lake – Main Pool		
Busse Lake – South Pool		

Discussion: The survey identified interest in winter recreation and fishing uses, providing support to continue to offer permitted ice fishing at these designated sites.

Tobogganing

Current Conditions: The District historically offered toboggan areas, but they were closed due to high operational costs and lack of adequate snow conditions.

Discussion: This is a traditional activity that many throughout the public input process for this master plan (survey, focus groups, etc.) expressed interest in bringing back. These facilities have a historic appeal



www.clevelandmetroparks.com

that many value as well.

Sledding

Current Conditions: Sledding is provided at 10 designated areas. Five areas provide lighted conditions for use until 9 pm. The other five hills provide opportunities until sunset. Some of these areas have access and parking, and amenities such as restrooms and warming huts.

Discussion: Although warmer winters may continue to have a detrimental effect on sledding as an activity, when it is available, it could provide valuable recreational opportunities and revenue opportunities through rentals, concessions, etc.

Snowmobiling

Current Conditions: Snowmobiling is allowed at five designated locations in the District. Snowmobiles must be registered with both the State of Illinois and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (proof of insurance is required). Snowmobile areas are opened when a minimum four-inch snow base exists on frozen turf. Hours of snowmobiling are 10 am–10 pm. Snowmobiling is currently offered at the following locations.



South

Morrill Meadow

Turtlehead

North Creek Meadow

North

Ned Brown Meadow

Central

Miller Meadow

Discussion: The current use of motorized vehicles for winter recreation in specific areas of the preserve raises the question about other motorized outdoor recreation like All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) or Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV). Staff identified concerns about resource damage caused by ATV vehicles. Snowmobiling, due to the snow coverage, has a lower impact on the land, and has been deemed acceptable under the condition described above. However, upon discussion, it was determined that ATV use was not compatible use with the FPDCC.

Ice Skating

Current Conditions: Ice skating is allowed on designated on the following Forest Preserve lakes on a “skate at your own risk” basis.

Barrington Road Pond

Buffalo Woods Pond (groves #3 and #4)

Busse Reservoir North Pool

Crawdad Slough

Deer Grove Lake

Hidden Pond

The District does not monitor ice thickness, but recommends a minimum of four inches of solid ice over the entire lake for safety.

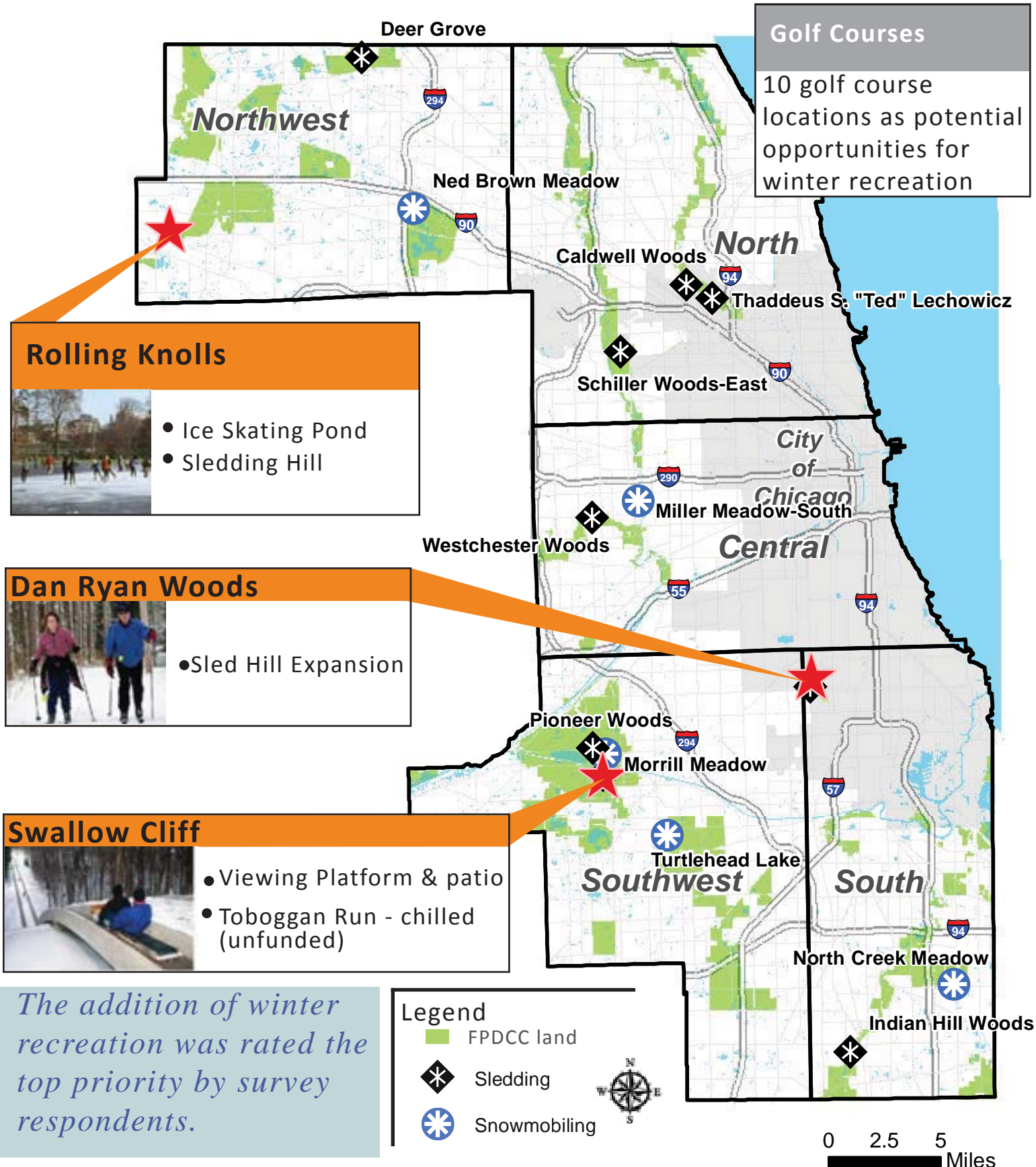
Discussion: Many agencies across the country, like the Forest Preserve District, allow for some lake ice skating under certain conditions (like Lake MetroParks, Ohio). Others provide groomed lake ice skating facilities (Edina, Minnesota and Evergreen, Colorado) that include a warming center with restrooms, ice skating rentals, and concessions. The District could consider whether to operate a groomed surface for lake skating.

W I N T E R R E C R E A T I O N R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

1. Explore opportunities to incorporate winter recreation activities into golf course sites.
 - Meet with golf course management company, Billy Casper, to explore site opportunities and guidelines for winter recreation including cross country skiing, snow shoeing, sledding, and ice skating. Make use of clubhouses as warming stations and for concessions. The FPDCC Volunteer Resource Center located adjacent to the Edgebrook Golf Course could be a good location for a warming center and site for rentals and concessions.
 - Determine a location for a golf course winter recreation pilot program.
2. Continue to promote the cross country skiing activities at Sagawau Environmental Learning Center.
3. Identify additional opportunities to provide cross country services similar to Sagawau Environmental Learning Center in other locations. (For example, this could be an appropriate activity at the Rolling Knolls site in the northwest part of the District, if the amount of use there would support it.)
4. Continue to publicize current ice fishing opportunities.
5. Expand sledding and coasting opportunities through promotion of existing locations and identification of additional sites.
 - Incorporate sledding into site improvements to Rolling Knolls, a recently acquired former golf course (also see Opportunity Site section later in this chapter).
 - Utilize the recently renovated indoor pavilion adjacent to the existing sledding hill at Dan Ryan Woods to support expanded winter recreation activities. Consider adding concessions and programs such as winter special events.
6. Consider developing a destination toboggan area(s) as part of a larger winter recreation strategy. (Consider former toboggan area locations, including Swallow Cliff. Consider adding one North and one South to reduce travel time and meet demand.)
 - Conduct a feasibility study and develop a business plan for the operations. FPDCC seasonal staff could operate the toboggan run with funds from fees and charges.
 - Use a refrigeration/chilling system to ensure maximum use (similar to Cleveland Metroparks, Ohio).
7. Consider expanding ice skating as a recreational use.
 - Research best practices of peer agencies.
 - Reevaluate policies and standards.
 - Evaluate ice skating locations.
 - Assess service delivery approach options (e.g., regulated/self directed, staffed, partnership, or contract).
 - Clearly communicate ice skating opportunities and regulations.
8. Provide a variety of winter recreation activities that are not dependant on snow and ice (e.g., nature hikes, etc.).

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Current Facilities & Proposed Improvements



winter recreation



GOLF

Traditional



Current Conditions: The District operates 10 golf courses that range from entry-level to high-level play.

Discussion: The survey results showed that golf had the fifth highest participation following trail-based activities (walking, bicycling, and running) and picnicking. The District should continue to monitor the golf management contract and

collaborate to ensure optimal functioning of the golf courses. As stated above, in other parts of the country, some golf courses allow winter recreation opportunities such as snowshoeing and cross country skiing.

Driving Range

Existing Conditions: The District has four driving ranges including one free-standing driving range that is not associated with a golf course.

Discussion: The presence of the free-standing driving range facility, along with the zoo and botanic garden, suggests that certain types of activities beyond the typical natural areas, trails, and picnic shelters can be justified within FPDCC properties. A range of activities and some specialized facilities are currently available within the preserve system.



Disc Golf & Miniature Golf



Current Conditions: In the North subarea, Harry H. Semrow Driving Range, offers an 18-hole mini-golf course.

There are no stand-alone disc golf courses in the preserves. However, the District operates a unique disc golf course at Edgebrook Golf Course which is in the North subarea of the District. Here, disc golfers pay a greens fee and play along the same course as traditional golfers.

They are provided a cart and allowed to play just as if they were using clubs and golf balls, only with their own set of holes.

Discussion: This unique fee-based disc golf course seems to be working well. However, the District should consider other opportunities for disc golf. While disc golf did not rank as a top priority in the survey conducted for this plan, there was interest expressed in a variety of recreational opportunities, including disc golf. This low cost improvement could attract new users to the forest preserves. There are a lot of large open areas within the preserves (particularly along the edges of open mowed areas) where these areas are adjacent to forest or prairie, and could accommodate disc golf courses. Disc golf is a growing recreation trend that many other peer agencies to the FPDCC offer. There are a number of disc golf courses in the Cook County region, and these should be considered when identifying an appropriate location within the forest preserves. (See additional analysis on disc golf in **Appendix C.**)

G O L F R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

1. Work with the golf management contractor to expand recreation opportunities to include winter recreation and expanded youth golf program to increase youth exposure to golf.
2. Consider expanding disc golf to other locations. There are many locations where adequate parking is available and large areas of mowed lawns abut natural areas. This kind of location would allow disc golf to be played without conflicting with other uses such as picnicking.



T U R F M E A D O W S (a n d p e r m i t t e d f i e l d s)

Current Conditions: Large, open, and relatively flat mowed lawn areas are found throughout the District. These are iconic elements of the preserve system and provide an aesthetically pleasing counterpart to the forests, prairies, and other landscape typologies that are common throughout the preserves. These places are often used for the play of sports such as soccer and lacrosse.



Discussion: While FPDCC does not consider the provision of facilities for organized sport leagues to be part a central part of its mission, there are many mowed turf areas suitable for a variety of organized sports such as soccer, kickball, ultimate frisbee, softball, etc. and which are currently being used for such, whether it is officially sanctioned by the District or not. The District does have 40 designated multi-purpose athletic fields that require a permit. *(Note: There are many mowed turf areas throughout the forest preserve system that could be evaluated to determine if some areas could be converted to natural plantings when appropriate.)*

There are two types of permits the District offers for use of these fields.

The first is a Special Activity “Field” permit, and they are issued for the use of District property for activities such as baseball, football, rugby, and soccer. This permit is issued for use for **multiple days** in designated fields. Permits are issued by seasons (spring, summer, and fall). A permit will only be issued for one weekend day and no more than three weekdays per location/field. Permit holders are responsible for the maintenance of the area including thorough cleanup before leaving the site. The permit holder can also stripe, mow, conduct light maintenance, and rolling of the field as long as they communicate with the Division Superintendent prior to doing so.

The second permit is a Special Activity “Event” permit that can be issued for use of District property for a **one time** (week day or weekend) event, including single day sporting events. Permit holders also have the opportunity to stripe, mow, and conduct light maintenance and rolling of the field, as long as they communicate with the Division Superintendent prior to doing so.

While there is not a formal policy specifically for use of turf meadows by organized sports groups, the permit policy is created to prevent the monopolization by one or two organizations constantly utilizing certain fields.

The District should be taking a pro-active course in managing organized activities, including sports, within its lands. Cost recovery goals should be incorporated into the management of such activities, to assure that these activities are paying their fair share of the cost of providing them.

Note: Permits can be revoked for abuses such as mowing more field area than permitted.

T U R F G R A S S M E A D O W R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

1. Based on the demand, explore opportunities to expand permitted turf areas for athletic field use, when appropriate.
2. Clarify cost recovery goals and refine policies and fees regarding athletic field permits.
3. Evaluate mowed areas to determine if some mowed areas are not necessary and can be reduced.



OUTDOOR ADVENTURE

O V E R V I E W

Findings

- The survey showed Interest in variety of outdoor recreation
- Activities like mountain biking and bouldering/climbing are growing in popularity
- High ropes/challenge courses and canopy tours are becoming increasingly popular



www.ebropes.com

Mountain Biking

Current Conditions: There is a mountain biking trailhead in Pulaski Woods preserve in the Southwest area of the County. While other locations exist where trails can be accessed, this site is popular because of the terrain. Signing it as a mountain bike trailhead added to its visibility and increased participation in the activity at this location.



Discussion: Interest was expressed in the public input process to expand single track mountain biking trails, perhaps in the North area of the County. A location with varied terrain would be desirable. In addition, there may be future opportunities to explore other biking activities, like a pump track.

Bouldering/Climbing/Rappelling



Current Conditions: Currently, no bouldering/climbing facilities exist on FPDCC property.

Discussion: These are activities that often occur in natural settings and on open space lands. Some agencies are accommodating them through partnerships or by providing facilities such as artificial climbing walls. Artificial walls can be of any size and configuration, and can be utilitarian in appearance or made to look natural. Climbing walls can be permanent or portable.

Ropes/Challenge Course

Current Conditions: No ropes or challenge courses exist on FPDCC property.

Discussion: Like other activities mentioned, ropes courses are typically associated with natural settings. They require supervision for their use, with higher levels of facilitation needed for high ropes courses. These activities promote team building, and the development of leadership and communication skills. (See **Appendix C** for additional analysis.)



Canopy Tour and/or Zip Line

Current Conditions: None at present.

Discussion: Canopy tours consist of elevated bridges and walkways between trees and can include a zip line element. Zip lines on their own provide a brief thrill, while canopy tours can provide a durational experience that reinforces the conservation message. There is interest among the public in this potential activity. (See **Appendix C** for additional analysis.)

Slack Line

Current Conditions: There are no formal facilities at this time.

Discussion: Slacklining is the practice of balancing along a narrow, flexible piece of webbing which is low to the ground and usually anchored between two trees. The dynamic nature of the slack line allows for tricks and stunts. This activity is growing in popularity among young adults and teens and is seen more frequently in public parks and open space areas. There is some concern that frequent use could cause damage to trees. Providing dedicated areas for slacklining with permanent anchors could be considered if use is heavy.



www.wikimedia.org

OUTDOOR ADVENTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to work with the Chicago Area Mountain Bikers (CAMBR) group in the creation of additional mountain bike trails, creating stronger connections and installing trailheads for mountain/off road biking. Promoting these trails through signage and maps would increase participation.
2. Incorporate climbing walls/bouldering areas. These could be portable or permanent.
3. Explore partnership opportunities to add ropes course(s) adjacent to select campground locations.
4. Consider the feasibility of a canopy tour and zip line.
 - Identify potential locations and service delivery approaches (e.g., contracting with a concessionaire, etc.).
5. Consider providing designated areas for slacklining if use is heavy to prevent damage to trees through unregulated use.



ART, CULTURE, & HERITAGE

OVERVIEW

Inventory

- 1 stage
- Portable stages and movie screens as needed

Findings

- Outdoor movies and amphitheatres ranked in top 5 recreation facilities to add
- Interest in art partnership opportunities expressed through public process



www.epiceap.com/seattle-outdoor-movies



Stage or Amphitheatre

Existing Conditions:

The FPDCC has one stage located at Cummins Square in River Forest in the western area of Cook County at the location of the FPDCC General Headquarter Office. Portable stages and movie screens are used to support special events throughout the District, such as the “Films in the Forest” and “Forest Jam” programs held in the summer of 2012.

Discussion: In the survey, outdoor movies and amphitheatres ranked in the top five recreation facilities or activities to add. Special events can be effective ways to get new users to visit the forest preserves and introduce them to the abundant number of opportunities to enjoy the forest preserves from nature hikes to winter recreation. Portable equipment to support these special events (if cost effective) allows for a broad reach to different parts of the County, and minimizes impact.

Several arts, culture, and heritage-related special events are held at the FPDCC including fall events like the Pow Wow at Busse Woods, the Little Red Schoolhouse Art Fair, and Settler’s Day at the Sand Ridge Nature Center. These special events may not need stages, but access to infrastructure like electricity, water, and restroom facilities are important.

Historic Structures

Existing Conditions: Historic structures and other artifacts can be found throughout the preserves. This includes things like stone picnic shelters, bridges, hydrologic structures, and buildings remaining from previous uses before the lands became part of the FPDCC inventory. Some of these are quite interesting and significant. Not all are buildings and utilitarian features. Some, like the stone aqueducts and other features in the Dan Ryan Woods, were constructed as landscape elements.

Discussion: Preservation of historic fabric should be a priority of the District. Restoration of structures like the pavilion at Thatcher Woods is to be commended and should be continued.

Public Art

Existing Conditions: Public art is not a common feature in the FPDCC. However, there are some public art pieces like the sculpture at the Portage National Historic Site.

Discussion: Public art takes many forms including temporary installation art, permanent sculptures, murals, and functional art-like benches, to name a few. Public art can help create a sense of place and contribute to interpretation of a site. There are boundless opportunities for the District to explore ways to integrate public art with a nature theme into the fabric of the preserve system that should be explored in the future.



www.artpropelled.blogspot.com

RECOMMENDATIONS – ARTS, CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

1. Provide equipment and infrastructure needed to support special events.
 - Utilize portable stages and movie screens to support special events as needed.
 - Renovate the stage at Cummins Square at the FPDCC General Headquarters location and collaborate to provide programming. (Coordinate with Oak Park and River Forest.)
 - Consider designating special event locations in each of the five planning subareas that meet criteria for larger gatherings (e.g., accessibility; adequate gathering spaces; and infrastructure like restrooms, electricity, restrooms, water, etc.).
2. Protect and interpret historic features.
 - Assess all historic features within the FPDCC system, including landscape and engineering features as well as buildings and structures.
 - Follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Historic Preservation to determine historic significance and preservation strategies for all historic elements.
 - Provide interpretation at select sites, as appropriate.
3. Explore opportunities to integrate public art that help interpret and explore nature and heritage.
 - Identify partnerships and funding opportunities to support temporary or permanent public art that engages the public and creates unique spaces.



OTHER RECREATION



www.azgfd.gov/i_e/archery.shtml

Findings – Other Recreation

- Archery is rising in participation among young people
- Many peer agencies offer archery, disc golf, and dog parks
- Interest was expressed in a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities in the survey

Archery

Current Conditions: Currently, there are no designated archery areas on FPDCC lands. However, archery programs using portable equipment have been offered on FPDCC lands through a program offered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Discussion: Archery is a growing in popularity, especially among teens. This sport is practiced outdoors, in a setting like the forest preserves, but is often practiced at indoor ranges. Archery is an activity traditionally associated with outdoor recreation and camp programs. Limited infrastructure is required for a designated archery range. In addition, portable archery equipment can be used for groups or special use in a controlled environment. Half (three of six) of the peer agencies reviewed as part of this planning study have archery facilities and another utilizes portable archery equipment. (See **Appendix C** for additional analysis and a review of other regional providers.)

Consider a variety of archery range configurations.

In addition to the standard range with targets lined up in a protected area, consider a range that is more of a circuit, with different shooting angles (uphill, downhill, etc.), much like a disc golf course. This would need to be carefully located and laid out so that safety is ensured, but it is possible to do so in a way that provides an experience of shooting in a natural environment. An ideal location for such a range would be an area that is relatively open, but with stands of trees and groves of shrubs and tall grasses through which the circuit can be laid out. A naturalized path could connect shooting stations, and the area between the shooting station and target would be designed to allow clear vision of any passers-by. The layout and landscape would also be configured to prevent people from wandering onto the circuit by accident.

Off-Leash Dog Areas



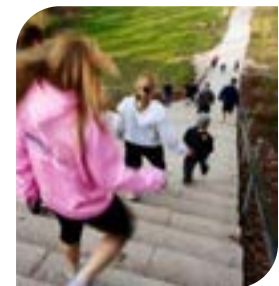
Current Conditions: There is an off-leash “dog-friendly” area at Beck Lake in the Northwest suburbs. It lacks amenities like shade and seating. Special amenities like dog skills course are also not included. The District recently added a second dog-friendly area at Bremen Grove in Oak Forest in the South.

Discussion: Special interest groups have approached the District with interest in expanding dog-friendly areas or dog parks. These areas can serve as more than just a place to exercise dogs. They can be places to meet and socialize with other dog owners and build a sense of community. Designated off-leash dog areas also present a valuable alternative to people letting their dogs run loose, where they could disturb sensitive habitats or nesting birds, or present safety hazards to forest preserve users, other wildlife, or pets. Four of the six peer agencies that were reviewed have dog parks as part of their system. The District can differentiate itself from other urban dog-friendly areas by offering unique natural outdoor settings and incorporating interpretive signage.

There are many ways besides a “dog park” that other agencies have used to address the needs of residents who desire to recreate with their dogs. Some agencies have designated non-fenced off-leash areas or hours. Other agencies have gone so far as to provide designated picnic shelters where dog owners can meet and have events where their dogs are welcome.

Fitness

Current Conditions: Formal facilities for fitness are not found within the preserves, but one location in particular has become an informal mecca for fitness seekers. This is the old toboggan run at Swallow Cliff located in the southern part of the County, where scores of people come regularly to climb the old stone staircase as part of their workout routine. It is affectionately known as “The Ultimate Stairmaster.”



Discussion: Fitness is an important tool in combating the national obesity epidemic. The fact that so many people are willing to make the special trip to Swallow Cliff for the opportunity to climb its staircase suggests that the FPDCC could expand its role in encouraging fitness as a pursuit within its lands.

Community Gardens

Existing Conditions: There are no formalized community gardens agreements within the FPDCC at this time.

Discussion: Community gardens are an activity that is growing across the country. In fact, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County provides funding to support the NeighborSpace community garden program and should continue to support it. There may be additional opportunities at a forest preserve where a partner exists that community gardens would be appropriate. Identification of a partner that has a vested interest in a site would be an important criteria (such as a scout group or a school or hospital adjacent to a forest preserve site). Formalizing a community garden project through a partnership agreement would be important. There are many types of community gardens (food, native plants, ornamental flowers, etc.), and the District should further study and develop policies around this potential use. Community gardening efforts to promote awareness of native plants and invasive species could be a good fit with the District's mission.

Model Airplanes

Current Conditions: Model airplane areas are provided in partnership with local enthusiasts. There are nine model airplane flying fields throughout the District. These areas typically occupy an open, mowed area away from other facilities and consist of pilot control stations, wind socks, seating for observation, parking, and restroom facilities. Some, but not all, have concrete runways.



Discussion: These areas serve a limited population of enthusiasts with a fairly specialized interest. Usage trends should be regularly evaluated to determine demand for these special use facilities. The District should review policies for special interest facilities and ensure consistency. Cost recovery should be considered in this evaluation.

Geocaching

Current Conditions: Geocaching is a free, real-world outdoor treasure hunt. Players try to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, using a smartphone or GPS. (Source: www.geocaching.com) The FPDCC currently does not have a formal policy on geocaching.

Discussion: This is a popular family activity associated with public lands. It can cause problems when people wander off established trails in sensitive areas and if caches are left behind. The District should follow the lead of other public land agencies and develop policies to manage this use in some areas and disallow it in others. Orienteering, a competitive activity that combines racing with navigation, is another use that occurs on public lands that could benefit from management as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS – OTHER RECREATION

1. Expand archery as a recreational use in the FPDCC.
 - Develop guidelines for archery use (e.g., location requirements, safety issues, etc.).
 - Identify partnerships for archery programming.
 - Identify a location(s) for an archery range (including Rolling Knolls).
 - Consider a variety of archery range configurations.
2. Provide off-leash dog areas equitably throughout the District.
 - Refine design guidelines for off-leash dog areas.
 - Collaborate with users to improve the existing dog park at Beck Lake.
 - Partner with community groups to add a dog park in the Central part of the District.

- Consider adding interpretive signage so that these dog areas can provide an opportunity to educate users on the surrounding lands, and inspire them to visit more of the FPDCC properties.
- 3. Promote health, wellness, and fitness opportunities.
 - Enhance opportunities for fitness at Swallow Cliff by adding other amenities such as outdoor fitness stations and an information kiosk with links to information on healthy living.
 - Consider adding fitness stations at other high use areas (areas where fitness running and activities are already taking place).
 - Promote healthy living and fitness by incorporating messages into marketing initiatives.
 - Explore opportunities to collaborate with recreation and health organizations to promote and offer “Get Outdoors” fitness and wellness activities (e.g., yoga in the preserves, volleyball, races, walkathons, etc.). Consider partnerships with fitness instructors to promote fitness activities.
- 4. Explore the feasibility of adding community gardens when a partner exists.
 - Formalize a community garden policy.
 - Develop community garden partnership guidelines that include a long-term maintenance plan.
 - Develop partnership agreements for any agreed upon community gardens.
- 5. Maintain model airplane flying fields based on usage and demand.
 - Monitor agreements and the cost to the District for providing flying fields and determine whether adjustments are needed in the way this service is provided.
 - Encourage partnerships between the model airplane group and neighboring community organizations.
 - If use is low, consider repurposing.
- 6. Develop a policy and use guidelines on geocaching and orienteering to manage these uses in order to prevent damage to District lands.



SPECIALTY VENUES

Brookfield Zoo

The zoo is a world-class facility on FPDCC property that offers a number of amenities and programs. This unique regional attraction is supported financially by the FPDCC. Only one out of the six peer agencies reviewed for this plan, Cleveland Metroparks in Ohio, has a zoo. The District is currently exploring opportunities for expanded partnerships with the Brookfield Zoo including program development, resource sharing, and staff development.



Chicago Botanic Garden

The botanic garden on FPDCC property is another world-class facility that offers a huge collection of plants as well as educational and support facilities. This popular destination is supported financially by the FPDCC as well. Only one out of the six peer agencies reviewed, Three Rivers Park District in Minnesota, has a botanic garden. The District is currently exploring opportunities for expanded partnerships with the Chicago Botanic Garden including program development, resource sharing, and staff development.

Sports Complex

Hap Bruno Field is on FPDCC property, and is operated by the Chicago Heights Park District. There are no other identified sports complexes in the FPDCC.

RECOMMENDATIONS – SPECIAL VENUES

1. Expand partnerships with Chicago Botanic Garden and Brookfield Zoo to support FPDCC nature education and recreation programming efforts.
 - Identify specific program partnerships (e.g., Brookfield Zoo and the FPDCC nature centers).
 - Collaborate on staff development (e.g., program development, outreach strategies, etc.).



SUPPORT AMENITIES

Parking

Existing Conditions: Ample paved parking is found throughout the FPDCC system. In some places parking appears to be more than is needed for the uses located there.

Discussion: Adequate parking where needed is critical to the success of FPDCC facilities, because if not available, people are likely to park in undesignated areas and cause destruction to the landscape and natural areas. On the other hand, if too much paved parking is provided, it reduces the amount of natural area that is preserved, and increases maintenance costs for re-paving and other upkeep.

Restrooms

Existing Conditions: Restroom buildings are located in some of the developed parts of the preserves. Portable restrooms are found throughout the preserve system as well.

Discussion: Restrooms are expensive to construct and maintain. Portable restrooms are a viable alternative, but where these are more or less permanent, the installation of screened enclosures should be considered to reduce the visual impact on the landscape.

Wayfinding/Signage

Existing Conditions: Some of the signage found in the FPDCC system is particularly effective. The large signs that identify picnic groves and their capacities are easy to read and useful. Signs that identify each picnic grove are also attractive and functional.

Discussion: A variety of sign types were seen throughout the system. One issue noted was that because the FPDCC system is not parcel-based in the Geographic Information System (GIS), it is often difficult to identify the boundaries and/or location of a particular place. Sometimes there are multiple signs that seem to identify a single place by two different names. This makes wayfinding difficult.

Drinking Water

Existing Conditions: Drinking water is available in most of the developed areas of the preserves. This typically consists of a well and pump.

Discussion: There is a need to determine if the present wells and pumps are meeting the needs of users and all current regulations, including water quality and ADA.

RECOMMENDATIONS – SUPPORT

1. Conduct a parking study to determine if surplus parking exists in some areas.
 - Develop a strategy to remove surplus parking and repurpose this land into other uses or convert it back to a natural condition.
2. Adopt a policy that before any parking lot is repaved, an assessment will be conducted to determine whether that parking is needed and if it is deemed not needed, it will be removed rather than repaved.
3. Add screened enclosure for portable restrooms, as appropriate.
 - Determine locations where screened enclosures for portable restrooms would be appropriate and develop a standard design for these.
 - Begin to install these in a phased manner throughout the FPDCC system.
4. Review signage standards and design guidelines to ensure consistency in wayfinding and interpretive signage and naming of sites.
5. Expand signage identifying trailhead locations. (Also see Trails recommendations.)
6. Determine if the present wells and pumps are meeting the needs of users and all current regulations (e.g., water quality, ADA) and develop strategy to address, as needed.

Opportunity Sites

A number of District sites were identified as “opportunity sites” as part of the planning process for this Recreation Master Plan. These are sites that may be appropriate for new or enhanced recreational opportunities. High quality natural areas were not included as recreation opportunity sites.

The planning process for this Recreation Master Plan identified some initial opportunity sites to be considered for recreation enhancements in the following categories.

- Existing Activity Areas
- Recent Acquisition
- Camp Day Use Site
- Previously Disturbed Site

Existing Activity Areas

- Dan Ryan Woods
- General Headquarters
- Swallow Cliff

Recent Acquisition

- Rolling Knolls

Camp Day Use

- Bullfrog Lake
- Camp Pine Woods
- Camp Sullivan
- Shabbona Woods

Previously Disturbed Site

- Fullerton Woods (deep tunnel)
- Wolf Lake Overlook



This list is not exhaustive, and additional opportunities will emerge as conditions change, such as new acquisitions, funding availability, and partnership opportunities. The District should be flexible and regularly review opportunities. Criteria for evaluating compatible recreation opportunities described in *Chapter 2 – Planning Context* should be used by staff as a tool for reviewing future opportunities.

Regional Activity Hubs

Many of these sites, as well as others throughout the District, could serve as activity centers or hubs for multiple recreational activities. There are many benefits to co-locating recreational activities – utilizing existing infrastructure like parking lots thereby limiting the footprint of recreational facilities and creating destinations for individuals, families, and organized groups. For example, one of the underlying ideas associated with the Camp Master Plan is to associate new or expanded recreational day use activities in close proximity to proposed overnight facilities. The campground study offers many suggestions for appropriate amenities ranging from ropes courses to water recreation. Attracting new forest preserve users for day use activities would help build repeat users in addition to creating many activities for groups using the proposed camping facilities.

Priority Sites

A closer look at three priority opportunity sites follows – Rolling Knolls, Miller Meadow, and Dan Ryan Woods. The following conceptual ideas for potential recreational uses are suggested. These are provided to illustrate options that will be refined. Site master plans and designs will be required for sites such as Rolling Knolls and Dan Ryan Woods and will involve engagement of the local stakeholders and community members. Initial community stakeholder planning sessions were held in January 2013 to get general input on options to enhance recreational opportunities at each of the three priority opportunity sites. Further refinement of these conceptual ideas is part of the master plan implementation steps.

ROLLING KNOLLS – OPPORTUNITY SITE



Sled Hill



Loop Trail



Ice Skating



Nature Play



- Walking Loop with Fitness Stations
- Archery (3 skill levels) (unfunded)
- Ice Skating Pond
- Sled Hill
- Nature Play/Climbing Area (unfunded)

The following are options for consideration for potential recreational uses at the Rolling Knolls site. Further planning, design, and stakeholder input to refine these concepts will occur in the implementation phase of this plan.

This site was a former golf course. As its name implies, it has rolling topography and a mix of vegetation. The site offers a lot of opportunity to accommodate some of the alternative uses identified in the assessment above.



For example, alternative recreation activities such as archery, climbing/bouldering areas, disc golf, and fitness stations could be accommodated at this site. Uses that currently exist in the FPDCC system, such as cross country skiing and sledding would also be appropriate here. A nature play area is also envisioned as a potential use at this site.

Ice skating on the existing small pond should also be considered as a potential new winter recreation use. The pond could be expanded in a way that incorporates channels and islands woven into the landscape that become skating pathways in the winter if the weather is cold enough. *Note: Any enhancements to the Rolling Knolls site should include protecting environmentally sensitive areas along the creek corridor south of the pond.*

The existing clubhouse structure on the site could be renovated and used by staff, partner organizations, or concessionaires to operate programs. The club house could also be rented out for events.



MILLER MEADOW – OPPORTUNITY SITE



Off Leash Dog Park



Disc Golf, 18 Hole



Canoe Launch



Volleyball



- Off Leash Dog Area
- Expanded Picnic Grove (horseshoes, volleyball)
- Disc Golf, 18 Hole
- Site Furnishings & Equipment
- Canoe Launch
- Walking/Fitness Trail

The following are options for consideration for potential recreational enhancements at the Miller Meadow site. Further planning, design, and stakeholder input to refine these concepts will occur in the implementation phase of this plan.

This site is centrally located in the District, making it accessible to a large number of residents. Existing infrastructure at the site includes parking, picnic areas, and a model airplane flying field.



Miller Meadow South offers the potential opportunity to add an 18-hole disc golf course, off-leash dog area, and expanded picnic grove, all in an area that was previously disturbed, yet retains a natural character. The river offers potential water recreational opportunities for kayaking and canoeing. Access for kayaks and canoes could be accommodated in a walk-in manner with vehicle parking nearby

An off-leash dog area could take advantage of the presence of water to enhance the appeal to dogs and their owners, although in the final design it would be recommended to divide the off-leash facility into “wet” and “dry” paddocks and give dog owners the choice of allowing their dog to have access to the water or not.

The disc golf course could run parallel to the fringe of the natural area on the eastern edge of the site, and offer a variety of views and vistas across the water.

A potential fitness/walking trail could benefit residents as well as employees and visitors of the Loyola Medical Center across the street.

An enhanced picnic grove with amenities not found at other District groves could be established here incorporating such things as volleyball and horseshoes.



<http://www.oscarseek.com>

Note: Design considerations should include studying the impact of any recreational uses on grassland birds on the site.

DAN RYAN WOODS – OPPORTUNITY SITE



Treehouse Structure



Nature/Water Play



Sled Hill Expansion



Event Space



- Sled Hill Expansion
- Amphitheatre and Stage
- Nature Play
- Treehouse Structure (unfunded)
- Site Furnishings & Equipment

The following are options for consideration for potential recreational enhancements at the Dan Ryan Woods. Further planning, design, and stakeholder input to refine these concepts will occur in the implementation phase of this plan.



Dan Ryan Woods offers some unique opportunities not found within such close proximity to the denser urban areas of Cook County. The current sledding hill offers an ideal layout for a large event space with parking, restrooms, and other infrastructure nearby. By placing a portable stage at the north edge of the lawn at the base of the sledding hill, the entire meadow becomes a large concert venue, and people could spread blankets on the hillside for a view of the stage. The recently restored historic pavilion adjacent to the sledding hill can provide support facilities, although portable restrooms, tent canopies, and other elements would need to be brought in for large events.

An ice skating trail has been suggested for this site, to add to its value as a winter activity destination. Such a trail would need to be located on a flat area, ideally woven in between trees to offer the sense of skating through the woods. While a flat area is available above the sledding hill and north of the existing parking lot, this area lacks a natural feel. Consideration should be given to how this area can be enhanced to offer the type of skating experience desired, and other locations for this type of amenity should be considered as well. Rolling Knolls could be a possibility, although it lacks the central location of the Dan Ryan Woods site. Further study of this potential use is recommended.

The existing stone “aqueduct” in the southern portion of the site is a unique artifact that may have some historical significance. Reminiscent of the work of Jens Jensen, this stylized version of nature suggests that this site could be a good place to interpret the link between the urban and natural environments, and could become a cohesive theme for other amenities in this location.

Other recreational amenities to consider for this site include a nature play area and perhaps a “treehouse.” Additional site planning and review of staffing implications are needed to further refine these concepts.

80/20 Land Use Analysis

As part of the Recreation Master Plan, an evaluation of the current ratio of land allocated to certain categories of use and management was conducted. The basis of this allocation lies within the history and mission of the District.

In 1929, an advisory committee put forward a recommendation for recreational development policy in the forest preserves based on a survey of current land use at the time:

- 75% of the forest land be kept in their natural state;
- 5% be maintained as water recreation areas in rivers and lakes, including marsh lands;
- 18% be developed for recreation uses, including playfields, parking areas and golf courses; and
- 2% for a zoological park and an arboretum.

This early recommendation is still used today as a guideline, but has been more loosely stated as an 80/20 policy: that 80 percent of the forest land should be kept in as natural a condition as possible, and 20 percent developed for recreational uses.

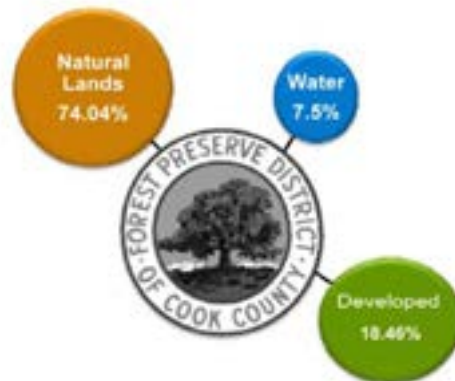
The FPDCC owns and/or manages over 68,000 acres of land. It was not feasible within the scope of the Recreation Master Plan to conduct a detailed field study and assessment of this amount of land, so an approach was developed that combines the use of existing data with detailed study of a representative sampling of lands to estimate the current proportions of land within each of the categories described above. The result provides an estimate of the ratios within a reasonable margin of error to be useful for the purposes of the Recreation Master Plan. It also provides a new GIS layer that can be updated over time and used for future calculations and decision-making.

The overall approach was to look closely at the District's existing GIS data to determine what information could be used to identify lands within each of the categories identified in the District's policies. Field visits to selected sites were also conducted as a way of ground-truthing the GIS information and gaining a better understanding of what the relationship was between the information in the GIS and the actual conditions in the field.

A series of locations within the District were identified and a team of District staff and consultants visited the sites over a period of several days in late spring and early summer of 2012. In all, more than 100 identified locations were visited, including golf courses, activity areas, trails, water bodies, nature centers, and aquatic centers.

The process above suggests that using the existing GIS, and making adjustments for parking areas, trails, structures, utilities, and athletic and recreation areas is a reasonable way to estimate the current proportion of land in each of the categories described. Doing so yields the following results:

- Water = 7.5%
- Natural Lands = 74.04%
- Developed = 18.46% (includes zoo and botanic gardens and 3.4% undetermined)



Comparing the percentages to the original policies of the District, it is seen that water covers slightly more than the five percent originally allocated, and Natural Lands cover slightly less than the original 75 percent allocation. The “developed” category is below the original 20 percent allocation. (A detailed report of this analysis can be found in **Appendix E.**)

The analysis shows that the District is likely within a reasonable range of meeting its stated policy at the current time. If a more precise measurement is needed, it will require a more elaborate and extensive study.

Conclusion

The lands of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County are a priceless asset for the residents of Cook County and the Chicago region. As this assessment shows, a wide variety of existing and potential activities, from conservation and passive recreation to active living and healthy lifestyles, can be facilitated by the District's lands and the features contained within them.



Connecting People to Nature

5

Operations & Oversight – Analysis & Recommendations

- District Overview
- Summary of Key Findings
- Recommendations
- Conclusion

All staff at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County play an important role in serving the residents of the County, including offering outdoor recreational opportunities. This chapter provides an organizational overview of the District. Next, key findings identified through this planning process related to financial, planning, customer service, and communication functions are highlighted. The chapter concludes with recommendations to address these issues and position the District to be a model for best management practices and more effective and efficient in delivering recreational and educational services.

District Overview

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County is a separate body and political subdivision of the State of Illinois. The District has independent taxing powers, and its boundaries are the same as those of Cook County. The District is governed by a President elected by Cook County voters and a Board of Commissioners elected by Cook County voters from seventeen districts within the County. The President and Commissioners are elected for four-year terms. The President and Commissioners also serve on the Cook County Board in the same capacities.

The Forest Preserve District is administered by a General Superintendent and Department Heads from each of ten departments. The departments of the District include the following.

- General Office
- Finance and Administration
- Human Resources
- Resource Management
- Facilities and Fleet Maintenance
- Landscape Maintenance
- Recreation, Volunteer Resources and Permits
- Law Enforcement
- Legal
- Planning and Development

The **General Office** contains the executive office including the General Superintendent, the Development Office, and the Public Information Office.

Finance and Administration is responsible for all financial and administrative functions including appropriations and expenditures, accounting, billing and collection, internal and external auditing, preparation of the annual budget, and purchasing.

Human Resources administers Cook County's Human Resource Ordinance and handles all personnel issues including applications for benefits, processing of resignations and terminations, and requests for family medical leave. It works with Cook County's Human Resources department in recruiting qualified individuals for District positions.

Resource Management manages the District's education programs, trails coordination, fisheries and wildlife management, resource ecology, land management, and nature centers.

Facilities and Fleet Maintenance provides a variety of routine maintenance, repairs, renovations, and services to help ensure properly maintained facilities, fleets, equipment, and infrastructure.

Landscape Maintenance oversees the upkeep of recreational areas including mowing, removing refuse, cleaning roadways, and maintenance of picnic groves and tables.

Maintenance is responsible for the care and maintenance of District facilities such as picnic areas, buildings, and trails. It also manages the central warehouse which stocks and provides supplies, operates the central garage which maintains and repairs District vehicles, manages vehicles and heavy equipment, performs scavenger services and mowing, and manages the maintenance shop which provides trades people for maintenance of infrastructure.

Recreation, Volunteer Resources and Permits issues permits for public use of District properties such as picnics, cabin rentals, camping, dog friendly areas, equestrian activities, model air planes, soccer, and baseball. It issues special use permits for tents, beer trucks, caterers, rides, amplified sound, and commercial photography. It also licenses concessions, operates aquatic facilities, and monitors the private management of the District's golf courses and driving ranges. The Department also coordinates special events and administers the volunteer resources program.

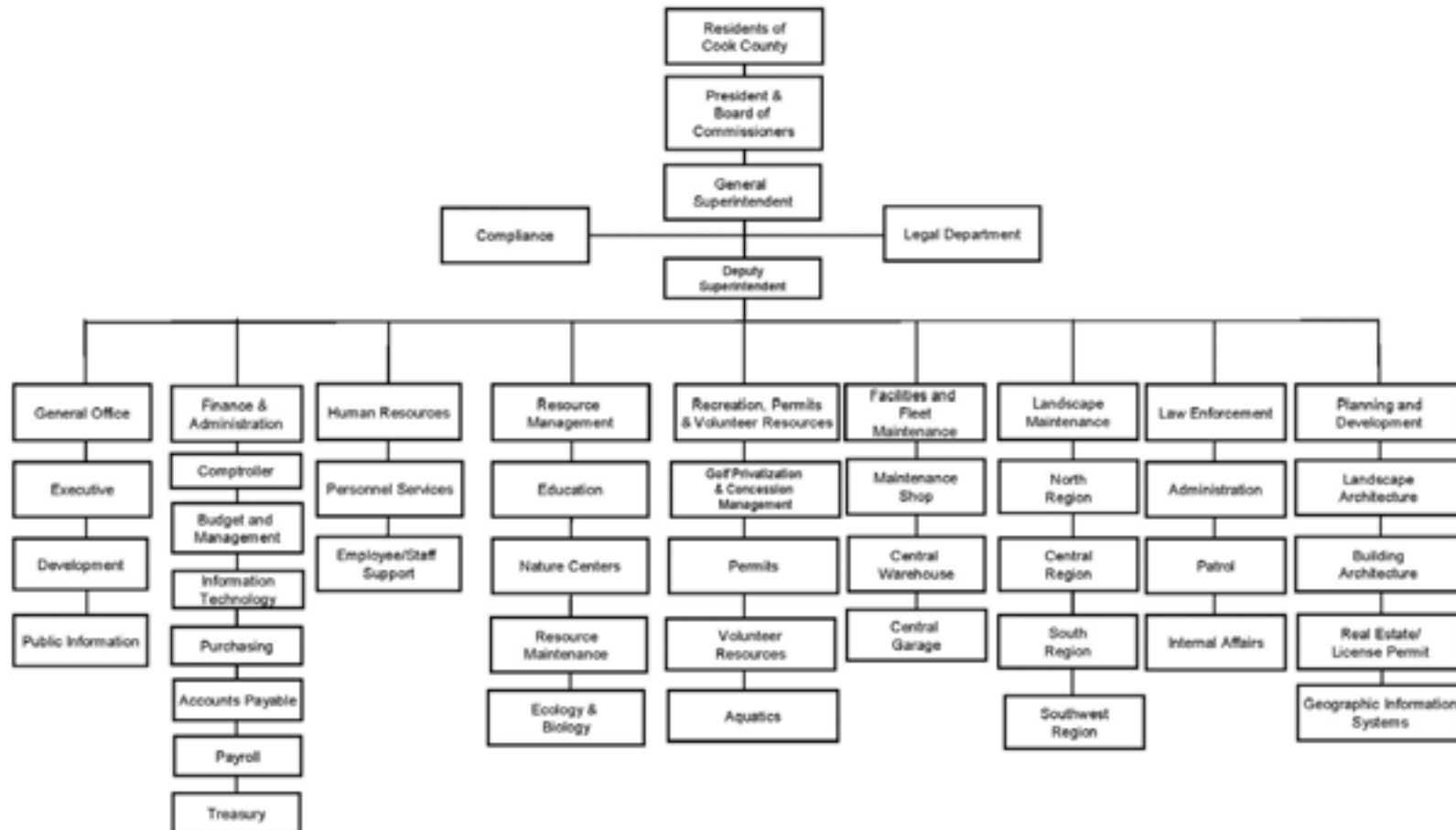
Law Enforcement patrols all District properties; enforces all state, county and District laws and ordinances to serve and protect patrons, property and natural lands of the District; and issues tickets and fines for violators.

Legal provides legal services to the District, either through District legal staff or supervision of outside counsel. It provides legal advice; drafts ordinances; handles land acquisition legal matters; interprets legal statutes affecting the District; and manages lawsuits. It handles employee matters which involve administrative bodies such as the EEOC, the Labor Board, and Civil Service Commission. It also responds to requests for information under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act, administers workers compensation claims, and oversees the District's land acquisition program.

Planning and Development plans, designs, and implements capital improvements and restoration programs to District sites. It is comprised of the following sections: landscape architecture, engineering and construction, building architecture, real estate and licensing, and geographic information systems.



Forest Preserve District of Cook County



Key Findings

The following findings were identified through the planning process for this plan from staff interviews, public input, research, and the consultant's professional expertise.

COST RECOVERY

Cost recovery for the District is a key issue that needs to be addressed to allow for future growth of recreational services within the District. Cost recovery is the degree to which the cost of facilities, services, and programs is supported by user fees or other alternative non-tax funding sources. Currently, overall cost recovery is less than five percent – on the low end when compared to peer agencies. The District needs to develop a cost recovery philosophy and set goals to guide these efforts.

"If the Forest Preserves were safer and offered more programs, we would use them more."

-survey write-in comment

The District also has an inconsistent fee structure and reluctance to charge or increase fees. Revenue generation can help create opportunities for desired new recreational programs and/or facilities. The District recognizes this importance as demonstrated by recent efforts of the Recreation, Volunteer Resources and Permits (RVP) Department in 2012 that resulted in increased room rental revenue. The RVP Department has a goal in 2013 to increase revenue through new services and fee increases.

Recognizing that the ability to pay for service varies greatly throughout the County, it is important to identify strategies to ensure that public programs are financially accessible to all. Currently, there is not a consistent scholarship program to allow all low income participants into District programs and facilities.

AWARENESS & CUSTOMER SERVICE

Increasing awareness about the recreational offerings is one area of focus identified in this plan. The survey results showed that lack of awareness was the top reason why respondents do not use District programs or facilities. In addition, there are also perceived safety concerns that keep some residents from visiting the forest preserves – 63.7 percent of survey respondents thought improving safety was very or somewhat important. The District police and the whole organization will combat this perception with continued proactive policing, activating spaces, and promoting the many positive and enriching recreational and educational opportunities within the forest preserves.

Another aspect of customer service is in how the lands and facilities are maintained. The survey results showed that improving existing facilities was very or somewhat important to 65.9 percent of respondents. Of note, there were many write-in comments from survey respondents expressing a need to keep the restrooms clean – an ongoing challenge for all parks and open space agencies.

SUSTAINABILITY

There are opportunities for the District to expand current efforts in sustainable design, development, management practices, and operations. The Sustainability Doctrine (2010) provides a framework to guide efforts to integrate sustainable approaches throughout the organization. Creating a comprehensive approach toward sustainability, training staff, and identifying needed resources to implement state-of-the-art “green” practices is needed. The strong environmental conservation mission of the District along with additional focus on social and financial sustainability components will drive efforts to more fully incorporate sustainable practices like recycling, use of alternative sources of energy, storm water management efforts, etc. These efforts will position the District as a national leader that effectively integrates outdoor recreation and environmental education.

PROACTIVE PLANNING

The Planning and Development Department works to engage many stakeholders and the public in the development of plans to guide future improvements. The many long-term planning efforts that took place in 2012 (this Recreation Master Plan, the Campground Master Plan, and the Land Acquisition Plan) demonstrate the District’s commitment to bring people together to envision future needs and interests and proactively plan for the future. Balancing multiple perspectives guided by a shared vision is both a challenge and an opportunity.



Planning areas of focus that were identified through this planning process include:

- Striving to equitably provide outdoor recreational opportunities throughout the County.
- Collaborating on regional planning efforts (e.g., land and water trails, etc.).
- Providing safe, assessable facilities (e.g., ADA accessibility, safe crossings, perceptions of safety, etc.).
- Incorporating best planning practices (e.g., sustainability criteria like the Sustainable Sites Initiatives and Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design or LEED).
- Developing site plans for key locations (e.g., see opportunities site discussion in *Chapter 4*).
- Providing ongoing opportunities for community input into planning efforts.
- Maintaining up-to-date inventory databases and mapping resources.
- Developing a conservation plan.
- Communicating with the public and providing input opportunities.

Recommendations – Operations & Oversight

AWARENESS & CUSTOMER SERVICE

1. Increase awareness of forest preserve opportunities for outdoor recreation and environmental education.
 - Continue to implement the Communications/Marketing plan and the Centennial campaign initiatives.
 - Expand strategic marketing efforts (e.g., enhance website; cross market; use social media, app's, videos, etc.) to raise awareness of recreational opportunities.
 - Increase wayfinding and interpretive signage, trail mile markers, etc. (Also see trails and nature education recommendations.)
 - Publicize human interest stories featuring positive recreational and educational activities occurring within the District to combat safety concern perceptions.
 - Develop strategies to engage diverse communities represented in Cook County.
2. Maintain safe, quality outdoor recreation amenities in the forest preserves.
 - Continue pro-active community policing efforts.
 - Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CTPED) principles in designs as appropriate.
 - Ensure quality standards and adequate maintenance routines for facilities, with a focus on restrooms and trails.

BEST MANAGEMENT & PLANNING PRACTICES

1. Implement sustainable planning, design, construction, and operational practices at all levels of the organization. (This recommendation is in support of and consistent with the 2010 FPDCC *Sustainability Doctrine* document and its recommendations.)
2. Provide ongoing opportunities for community input into planning efforts.
 - Continue to collaborate on regional outdoor recreation-related planning efforts (e.g., Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, etc.).
 - Continue to engage the public in major district-wide and site specific planning and development projects.
 - Develop a youth committee to foster more young people's involvement in outdoor recreation activities. (This is an identified 2013 goal of the Recreation, Volunteer Resources, and Permits Department.)
3. Provide safe, accessible facilities (e.g., ADA accessibility, safe crossings, public transportation, etc.).
 - Complete ADA facility assessment and implement Transition Plan.
 - Work with municipalities and transportation planners to enhance safe, multi-modal access to forest preserves (e.g., pedestrians, bikes, public transportation, and cars).
 - Publicize and enhance public transportation routes to forest preserve sites (as applicable).

4. Refine and implement the capital improvements identified in this Recreation Master Plan.
 - Develop site master plans for priority locations identified for recreational enhancements. (See opportunity site section in *Chapter 4*.)
 - Develop district-wide Master Plans for trails, water recreation, and conservation (as identified in *Chapter 4*).
 - Utilize criteria to evaluate future recreation proposals. (See compatible recreation evaluation criteria in *Chapter 2 – Planning Context*.)
 - Annually update inventory and GIS data.
 - Monitor the 80-20 land use percentages.
5. Develop operational plans for all new major programming initiatives and capital improvement projects identified in the Recreation Master Plan (e.g., program and maintenance resources need to maintain and operate the facility).
6. Enhance financial management policies and practices for recreational and educational services.
 - Develop a cost recovery philosophy and policy.
 - Clarify the direct costs to deliver services.
 - Set cost recovery goals both overall and per cost center, as appropriate (per facility such as aquatic centers, program areas, etc.).
 - Develop a fee policy and pricing strategy.
 - Work with the Forest Preserve Foundation to expand alternative funding including grants.
 - Develop a scholarship program. This could be operated through a foundation and funded donations (e.g., business community, individuals, etc.).
 - Clarify sponsorships policy and guidelines.
7. Identify opportunities to increase funding from alternative sources and revenue generation.
 - Identify existing and new opportunities for additional revenue generation. These include evaluating permitting fees, program fees, lease and contract amounts, etc.
 - Maximize alternative funding sources through grants, donations, “Friends” organizations, partnerships, etc.

Conclusion

The Recreation Master Plan positions the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to effectively plan for and manage the forest preserve system. Staff will continue to creatively provide quality services and manage the budget pressures to meet growing needs and evolving interests with limited resources. Further refinement of the District’s resource allocation philosophy and cost recovery policy will help staff better manage services. Clear planning policies and collaborative efforts between many stakeholder groups will result in enhancing Cook County as a place where people want to live, work, and play.



Connecting People to Nature

6

Recommendations Summary & Implementation

- Introduction
- Recommendations Summary & Action Plan
- Capital Improvement Cost Estimates
- Implementation Strategies
- Conclusion

The Recreation Master Plan recommendations from Chapters 3-5 are summarized in this chapter. These recommendations were shaped by extensive research and public and stakeholder input and will help guide the Forest Preserve District in planning for and managing programs, services, and facilities for the next 5 to 10 years.

Introduction

This Recreation Master Plan provides a guiding mechanism to meet existing and future community needs. The strength of this plan stems from extensive research, community involvement, analysis of needs, and public review that forms the basis for the recommendations it contains. The plan helps position the District to more effectively address the following goals identified at the start of this planning process:

- Introduce new people to the forest preserves in order to develop a lifelong love of nature and outdoor recreation.
- Promote the health benefits of outdoor recreation.
- Provide a variety of quality outdoor recreation opportunities in collaboration with others.

The plan is intended to be a tool that:

- Uses innovative ideas and methods to successfully meet challenges posed by budgetary, facility, and staffing limitations.
- Provides a system that benefits residents through diverse outdoor recreational opportunities for all ages.
- Fosters cooperation and partnerships by providing educational and recreational services and facilities.
- Guides a proactive planning and implementation process.

This plan is designed to serve as a decision-making tool for the District to help set priorities for implementation. The implementation plan is subject to further study and annual review, and should be part of the budget development and work plan each year. The plan is a living, dynamic document that will evolve as conditions change, including funding availability and partnership opportunities.

The recommendations that follow in the Action Plan Matrix are summarized from the previous plan chapters and organized in the following categories:

- Program & Service Delivery (from *Chapter 3*)
- Awareness & Customer Service (from *Chapter 5*)
- Recreation & Inventory (from *Chapter 4*)
- Best Management & Planning Practices (from *Chapter 5*)

Recommendations Summary & Action Plan

The following Action Plan Matrix summarizes the Recreation Master Plan recommendations from *Chapters 3-5*, and identifies responsibility, financial impact, and timing. This master plan is intended to focus on short and mid-term priorities in the next six years. Longer-term recommendations are also identified to guide planning efforts seven years and beyond.

- Short-term: 1-3 years (2013-2015)
- Mid-Term: 4-6 years (2016-2018)
- Long-term: 7 years and beyond (2019+)
- Ongoing

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County departments, using the following acronyms, are identified in the matrix to highlight the department(s) with the lead responsibility (listed first) for implementing a given recommendation. In many cases the recommendations require input from multiple departments even though they may not all be listed.

- General Office – GO
- Finance and Administration – FA
- Human Resources – HR
- Resource Management – RM
- Facilities and Fleet Maintenance – FFM
- Landscape Maintenance – LM
- Recreation, Volunteer Resources and Permits – RVP
- Law Enforcement – LE
- Legal – L
- Planning and Development – PD

In addition to the District departments, the following references are made in the matrix.

- Public Information Office (within the General Office) – PIO
- Board – Cook County Board of Commissioners

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
SERVICE DELIVERY			
1. Maximize recreational opportunities around activity “hubs” with amenities (e.g., parking, restrooms, boating access, camp facilities, etc.).	PD, RVP	Staff Time, Resources as Needed	Ongoing
2. Explore how nature centers and the expanded functions of the Recreation Division within the RVP Department could be better aligned. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify strategies to enhance staff development and collaboration including sharing of resources and cross-training. 	RVP, RM	Staff Time	Short-Term, Ongoing
3. Change the Hours of Operation ordinance to allow greater flexibility.	GO, Board (Policy Change)	Staff & Board Time	Mid-Term
4. Continue to streamline the permitting and registration process and enhance customer service and data tracking to better deliver recreational and educational services.	RVP, RM	Staff Time	Short-Term, Ongoing
5. Expand volunteer opportunities and provide strong management including clear roles and responsibilities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue efforts to enhance volunteer recruitment, recognition, and communication. Consider developing a volunteer docent program to provide guided nature walking or paddling tours. 	RVP	Staff & Volunteer Time, Program Funds	Short-Term, Ongoing
6. Ensure consistency in partnerships, contracts, and lease agreements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create consistent criteria for contracts and leases. Refine partnership policies and develop partnership agreements with all existing and future partners and review annually. Expand partnerships to deliver recreation programs (e.g., paddling, biking/hiking, camping, arts and cultural, nature education). Enhance recreational opportunities/experiences through concessions. Explore vendors for boat, bike, cross country ski and snowshoe rentals, and food/beverage concessions at high activity areas. 	RVP, GO, L	Staff Time	Short-Term, Ongoing

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
AWARENESS & CUSTOMER SERVICE			
1. Increase awareness of forest preserve opportunities for outdoor recreation and environmental education. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Continue to implement the Communications/Marketing plan and the Centennial campaign initiatives – Expand strategic marketing efforts (e.g., enhance website; cross market; use social media, app's, videos, etc.) to raise awareness of recreational opportunities. – Increase wayfinding and interpretive signage, trail mile markers, etc. (Also see trails and nature education recommendations.) – Publicize human interest stories featuring positive recreational and educational activities occurring within the District to combat safety concern perceptions. – Develop strategies to engage diverse communities represented in Cook County. 	Public Information Office (PIO) in GO	Staff Time, Marketing & Signage Budget	Short-Term, Ongoing
2. Maintain safe, quality outdoor recreation amenities in the forest preserves. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Continue pro-active community policing efforts. – Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CTPED) principles in designs as appropriate. – Ensure quality standards and adequate maintenance routines for facilities, with a focus on restrooms and trails. 	LE, GM, PD	Staff Time, Maintenance Budget	Ongoing
RECREATION (FACILITIES)			
Picnicking			
1. Develop a strategic approach to enhance existing picnic facilities, add new shelters, and repurpose underperforming facilities.	PD, RVP	Staff Time, CIP Funds	Short-Term, Ongoing
2. Consider diversifying picnic areas by adding smaller areas to accommodate families or smaller groups and non-reservation drop-in use.	PD, RVP	Staff Time, CIP Funds	Short to Mid-Term
3. Offer rental activity options through the picnic permit process (e.g., "rent a naturalist," recreation activities like slacklines, volleyball, etc.).	RVP	Staff Time, Equipment Budget	Short-Term, Ongoing

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
4. Provide information about site recreational amenities through the picnic permit process and through signage.	RVP	Staff Time, Signage Budget	Short-Term, Ongoing
5. Refine picnic business plan and cost recovery strategy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Review the rental history and revenue generation for specific locations. – Consider modifications to the pricing structure for picnic shelters that would allow for differential pricing and the positioning of some shelters as premium ones. 	RVP, FA	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term
Trails	PD with input from RM, RVP, LM, FFM	Staff Time, Consultant Fee	Short-Term
1. Develop a Trails Master Plan.			
2. Identify opportunities to add bike rentals through partnerships or vendors. (This should be considered as part of the Trails Master Plan.)	RVP, PD	Staff Time	Short-Term
3. Determine the role and current status of single track/primitive trails for mountain bike use and develop a policy around these types of trails. (This should be considered as part of the Trails Master Plan.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Determine if certain trails should be identified specifically for mountain biking, and if mountain bikes should be prohibited on others. – Develop a strategy for identifying, mapping, signing, and managing mountain bike trails throughout the preserves. – Consider adding a new mountain bike-focused area like the one at Pulaski somewhere in the northern part of the County. 	PD with input from RM, RVP, LM, FFM	Staff Time	Short-Term
4. Expand organized trail-based activities in collaboration with others (e.g., guided tours including birding, races, etc.).	RVP, RM (with Partners)	Staff and Partner Time	Ongoing
5. Explore opportunities to expand equestrian uses and enhance amenities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Work with horse stable vendors to expand day use and horse rentals/riding lesson opportunities. – Implement recommendation of the Camp Master Plan for a campground at Camp Kiwanis in Pulaski Woods for equestrian recreation users. – Consider future opportunities for a special event equestrian facility/arena. 	RVP, RM	Staff Time, Funding (as applicable)	Ongoing

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
Water Recreation			
1. Develop a Water Recreation Plan. (Build on the 1999 Northeastern Illinois Water Trail Map and use as a guide.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Address each of the water recreation types – fishing, boating, swimming, and model boating. – Address points of connection between all types of water access and other activities within the preserve system, such as camping, picnicking, and group activities. – Incorporate environmental stewardship activities. – Identify locations for wayfinding and Point-of-Interest signage along water trails. – Identify locations for additional boat launches, boat rental, and amenities. 	PD with input from RVP, RM, Partners	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term
2. Expand boat rental and instruction opportunities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expand paddling instruction and tours through partnerships including the Illinois Paddling Council. – Provide information about boat rental and program opportunities on the FPDCC website. 	RVP (with Vendors and Partners), PIO	Staff Time	Ongoing
3. Continue to publicize fishing and water recreation opportunities.	PIO	Staff Time	Ongoing
4. Consider adding swim beaches as a recreational use. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify a set of criteria that a swim beach would have to meet, such as size, capacity, availability of support features such as restrooms, etc. and use these criteria to identify appropriate locations for swim beaches. – Once one or more locations are found, prepare a strategy for developing beach swimming as an activity within the preserve system. 	PD, RVP, RM, L	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term
Camping			
1. Implement the Camp Master Plan.	PD, RVP, RM	Staff Time & Budget	Ongoing
2. Align recreation day use opportunities between the Recreation Master Plan and the Camp Master Plan. (Identified camp day use sites include Bullfrog Lake, Thatcher Woods, Camp Pine Woods, Shabbona Woods, and Camp Sullivan.)	PD, RVP, RM	Staff Time	Ongoing

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
Winter Recreation			
1. Explore opportunities to incorporate winter recreation activities into golf course sites. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Meet with golf course management company, Billy Casper, to explore site opportunities and guidelines for winter recreation including cross country skiing, snow shoeing, sledding, and ice skating. Make use of clubhouses as warming stations and for concessions. The FPDCC Volunteer Resource Center located adjacent to the Edgebrook Golf Course could be a good location for a warming center and site for rentals and concessions. – Determine a location for a golf course winter recreation pilot program. 	RVP	Staff Time	Short Term
2. Continue to promote the cross country skiing activities at Sagawau Environmental Learning Center.	PIO, RM	Marketing Budget	Ongoing
3. Identify additional opportunities to provide cross country services similar to Sagawau Environmental Learning Center in other locations.	PD with input from RVP, RM	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term
4. Continue to publicize current ice fishing opportunities.	PIO	Marketing Budget	Ongoing
5. Expand sledding and coasting opportunities through promotion of existing locations and identification of additional sites. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Incorporate sledding into site improvements to Rolling Knolls, a recently acquired former golf course. – Utilize the recently renovated indoor pavilion adjacent the existing sledding hill at Dan Ryan Woods to support expanded winter recreation activities. Consider adding concessions and programs such as winter special events. 	PD, RVP, PIO	Staff Time, Budget (as applicable)	Short to Mid-Term
6. Consider developing a destination toboggan area(s) as part of a larger winter recreation strategy. (Consider former toboggan area locations, including Swallow Cliff. Consider adding one North and one South to reduce travel time and meet demand.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conduct a feasibility study and develop a business plan for the operations. FPDCC seasonal staff could be hired to operate the toboggan run with funds from fees and charges. – Use a refrigeration/chilling system to ensure maximum use (similar to Cleveland Metroparks, OH). 	PD, RVP	Staff Time (or Consultant Fee)	Mid-Term

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
7. Consider expanding ice skating as a recreation use. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Research best practices of peer agencies. – Reevaluate policies and standards. – Identify appropriate ice skating locations. – Identify a service delivery approach (e.g., regulated/self directed, staffed, partnership, or contract). – Clearly communicate ice skating opportunities and regulations. 	RVP with input from L, PD, RM	Staff Time	Short-Term
Golf			
1. Work with the golf management contractor to expand recreational opportunities to include winter recreation and expanded youth golf program to increase youth exposure to golf.	RVP	Staff Time	Short-Term, Ongoing
2. Consider expanding disc golf to other locations. (Miller Meadow has been identified as one potential location.)	PD, RVP	Staff Time	Short-Term
Turf Grass Meadows			
1. Based on the demand, explore opportunities to expand permitted turf areas for athletic field use, when appropriate.	RVP	Staff Time	Ongoing
2. Clarify cost recovery goals and refine policies and fees regarding athletic field permits.	RVP	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term
3. Evaluate mowed areas to determine if some are not necessary and can be reduced.	PD with input from RM, RVP, GM	Staff Time	Mid-Term
Outdoor Adventure			
1. Continue to work with the Chicago Area Mountain Bike club in the creation of additional mountain bike trails, creating stronger connections and installing trailheads for mountain/off road biking.	PD, RVP, RM	Staff Time	Ongoing
2. Incorporate climbing walls/bouldering areas. These could be portable or permanent.	RVP, PD, RM	Staff Time, Budget (as applicable)	Ongoing
3. Explore partnership opportunities to add ropes course(s) adjacent to select campground locations.	RVP, PD, RM	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term
4. Consider the feasibility of a canopy tour and zip line. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify potential locations and service delivery approaches (e.g., contracting with a concessionaire, etc.). 	RVP, PD with input from RM	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term
5. Consider providing designated areas for slacklining if use is heavy to prevent damage to trees through unregulated use.	PD, RM	Staff Time, Budget (as applicable)	As Needed

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
Ecological/Natural Areas 1. Develop a Conservation Master Plan to provide additional analysis and comprehensive delineation of managed natural areas.	PD, RM	Staff Time, Consultant Fee	Short to Mid-Term
Nature Education 1. Broaden the focus of nature centers to include promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities.	RM, RVP, PIO (District-wide effort)	Staff Time, Marketing Materials (as applicable)	Short-Term, Ongoing
2. Utilize the recently renovated historic pavilions (Dan Ryan Woods and Thatcher Woods) as visitor centers to promote environmental education and recreation activities. – Develop an operations plan for these two pavilions that includes hours of operation for programs and rentals, staffing plans, etc.	RVP, RM	Staff Time	Short-Term
3. Amplify the message of the Leave No Child Inside initiative (LNCI). – Use LNCI logo and messages to develop a district-wide outreach and engagement strategies. – Participate in regional public awareness campaigns. – Identify strategies to best engage ethnically diverse families in LNCI programs and activities. – Incorporate signage to identify nature play areas as celebrating outdoor play and contributing to the regional effort to connect children with nature. – Brand specific recreation programs with the LNCI logo – particularly programs or experiences that serve to introduce families to the outdoors and build their level of comfort with nature play and exploration.	RM, RVP, PIO	Staff Time	Ongoing
4. Develop a standardized youth nature day camp program at all nature centers.	RM, RVP	Staff Time, Program Budget	Short to Mid-Term
5. Enhance marketing efforts and materials to publicize nature and recreation programs. – Consider developing a quarterly district-wide activity guide. – Cross-market with other agencies including tourism groups.	PIO	Staff Time, Marketing Budget	Short-Term, Ongoing
6. Promote eco-tourism through partnerships (e.g., birdwatching, camping, day camps, etc.).	RVP, RM, GO	Staff Time	Ongoing

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
<p>7. Increase interpretive signage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop guidelines and policies related to interpretive signage. – Utilize the Tinley Creek and Deer Grove Forest Preserve interpretive signage projects as a guide for future efforts. – Integrate historical and cultural interpretation in signage, as applicable. (Also see art and culture recommendations below.) – Expand the use of technology as an interpretative tool (e.g., apps, etc.). 	PD, RM	Staff Time, Consultant Fee (as applicable)	Short to Mid-Term
Play			
1. Enhance the current nature play area at the Crabtree Nature Center.	PD, RM	Staff Time, Resources (as needed)	Short-Term
<p>2. Add nature play areas at select sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify locations in each of the five subareas for potential play areas where there are large group gatherings and a variety of activities for all ages such as nature centers, campgrounds, or picnic groves. (Dan Ryan Woods is recommended as one of the sites in the South subarea.) 	PD, RM, RVP, LM	Staff Time, CIP Budgets	Ongoing
3. Continue mobile nature exploration and play programming through nature centers and partnerships like the Mighty Acorns.	RM, Partners	Staff Time, Program Budgets	Ongoing
Art, Culture, & Heritage			
<p>1. Provide equipment and infrastructure needed to support special events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Utilize portable stages and movie screens to support special events as needed. – Renovate the stage at Cummins Square at the FPDCC General Headquarters location and collaborate to provide programming. (Coordinate with Oak Park and River Forest.) – Consider designating special event locations in each of the five planning subareas that meet criteria for larger gatherings (e.g., accessibility; adequate gathering spaces; and infrastructure like restrooms, electricity, restrooms, water, etc.). 	PD, RVP	Staff Time, Program Budget	Short-Term, Ongoing

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
2. Protect and interpret historic features. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assess all historic features within the FPDCC system, including landscape and engineering features as well as buildings and structures. – Follow the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Historic Preservation to determine historic significance and preservation strategies for all historic elements. – Provide interpretation at select sites, as appropriate. 	PD	Staff Time, Budgets (as applicable)	Ongoing
3. Explore opportunities to integrate public art that helps interpret and explore nature and heritage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify partnerships and funding opportunities to support temporary or permanent public art that engages the public and create unique spaces. 	PD, RVP, Partners	Staff Time	Ongoing
Other Recreation 1. Expand archery as a recreational use in the FPDCC. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop guidelines for archery use (e.g., location requirements, safety issues, etc.). – Identify partnerships for archery programming. – Identify a location(s) for an archery range (including Rolling Knolls). – Consider a variety of archery range configurations. 	RVP, PD, RM	Staff Time, CIP Budget (as applicable)	Short to Mid-Term
2. Provide off-leash dog areas equitably throughout the District. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Refine design guidelines for off-leash dog areas. – Collaborate with users to improve the existing dog park at Beck Lake. – Partner with community groups to add a dog park in the Central part of the District. – Consider adding interpretive signage so that these dog areas can provide an opportunity to educate users on the surrounding lands, and inspire them to visit more of the FPDCC properties. 	PD, GO with input from RVP, RM, LM, LE	Staff Time, CIP Budget	Short to Mid-Term

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
<p>3. Promote health, wellness, and fitness opportunities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enhance opportunities for fitness at Swallow Cliff by adding other amenities such as outdoor fitness stations and an information kiosk with links to information on healthy living. – Consider adding fitness stations at other high use areas (areas where fitness running and activities are already taking place). – Promote healthy living and fitness by incorporating messages into marketing initiatives. – Explore opportunities to collaborate with recreation and health organizations to promote and offer “Get Outdoors” fitness and wellness activities (e.g., yoga in the preserves, volleyball, races, walkathons, etc.). Consider partnerships with fitness instructors to promote fitness activities. 	PD, RVP, PIO	Staff Time, CIP Budget	Short to Mid-Term, Ongoing
<p>4. Explore the feasibility of adding community gardens when a partner exists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Formalize a community garden policy. – Develop community garden partnership guidelines that include a long-term maintenance plan. – Develop partnership agreements for any agreed upon community gardens. 	PD, RVP, RM, GO	Staff Time	Short to Mid-Term
<p>5. Maintain model airplane flying fields based on usage and demand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Monitor agreements and the cost to the District for providing flying fields and determine whether adjustments are needed in the way this service is provided. – Encourage partnerships between the model airplane group and neighboring community organizations. – If use is low, consider repurposing. 	PD, RVP	Staff Time	Ongoing
<p>6. Develop a policy and use guidelines on geocaching and orienteering to manage these uses to prevent damage to District lands.</p>	RVP, RM	Staff Time	Short-Term
<p>Special Venues</p> <p>1. Expand partnerships with Chicago Botanic Garden and Brookfield Zoo to support FPDCC nature education and recreation programming efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify specific program partnerships (e.g., Brookfield Zoo and the FPDCC nature centers). – Collaborate on staff development (e.g., program development, outreach strategies, etc.). 	RVP, RM, GO	Staff Time	Ongoing

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
Support Amenities			
1. Conduct a parking study to determine if surplus parking exists in some areas. – Develop a strategy to remove surplus parking and repurpose this land into other uses or convert it back to a natural condition.	PD	Staff Time	Mid-Term
2. Adopt a policy that before any parking lot is repaved, an assessment will be conducted first to determine whether that parking is needed and if it is deemed not needed, it will be removed rather than repaved.	PD	Staff Time	Short-Term
3. Add screened enclosure for portable restrooms, as appropriate. – Determine locations where screened enclosures for portable restrooms would be appropriate and develop a standard design for these. – Begin to install these in a phased manner throughout the FPDCC system.	PD	Staff Time, CIP Budget	Mid-Term
4. Review signage standards and design guidelines to ensure consistency in wayfinding and interpretive signage and naming of sites.	PD, GO	Staff Time	Short-Term
5. Expand signage identifying trailhead locations. (Also see Trails recommendations.)	PD	CIP Budget	Short to Mid-Term
6. Determine if the present wells and pumps are meeting the needs of users and all current regulations (e.g., water quality, ADA) and develop strategy to address, as needed.	PD	Staff Time	Short-Term
BEST MANAGEMENT & PLANNING PRACTICES			
1. Implement sustainable planning, design, construction, and operational practices at all levels of the organization. (This recommendation is in support of and consistent with the 2010 FPDCC <i>Sustainability Doctrine</i> document and its recommendations.)	PD (district-wide effort)	Staff Time, Resources (as applicable)	Ongoing

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
<p>2. Provide ongoing opportunities for community input into planning efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Continue to collaborate on regional outdoor recreation-related planning efforts (e.g., Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, etc.). – Continue to engage the public in major district-wide and site specific planning and development projects. – Develop a youth committee to foster more young people’s involvement in outdoor recreation activities. (This is an identified 2013 goal of the Recreation, Volunteer Resources and Permits Department.) 	PD, RVP, RM, GO	Staff Time	Ongoing
<p>3. Provide safe, accessible facilities (e.g., ADA accessibility, safe crossings, public transportation, etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Complete ADA facility assessment and implement Transition Plan. – Work with municipalities and transportation planners to enhance safe, multi-modal access to forest preserves (e.g., pedestrians, bikes, public transportation, and cars). – Publicize and enhance public transportation routes to forest preserve sites (as applicable). 	PD (in coordination with others)	Staff Time, CIP Budget (as applicable)	Short-Term, Ongoing
<p>4. Refine and implement the capital improvements identified in this Recreation Master Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop site master plans for priority locations identified for recreational enhancements. (See opportunity site section in <i>Chapter 4</i>.) – Develop district-wide Master Plans for trails, water recreation, and conservation (as identified in <i>Chapter 4</i>). – Utilize criteria to evaluate future recreation proposals. (See compatible recreation evaluation criteria in <i>Chapter 2 – Planning Context</i>.) – Annually update inventory and GIS data. – Monitor the 80-20 land use percentages. 	PD	Staff Time, CIP Budget	Short-Term
<p>5. Develop operational plans for all new major programming initiatives and capital improvement projects identified in the Recreation Master Plan (e.g., program and maintenance resources need to maintain and operate the facility).</p>	District-wide effort	Staff Time	Short-Term, Ongoing

Recommendations	Responsibility	Financial Impact	Timing
<p>6. Enhance financial management policies and practices for recreational and educational services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Develop a cost recovery philosophy and policy. – Clarify the direct costs to deliver services. – Set cost recovery goals both overall and per cost center, as appropriate (per facility such as aquatic centers, program areas, etc.). – Develop a fee policy and pricing strategy. – Work with the Forest Preserve Foundation to expand alternative funding including grants. – Develop a scholarship program. – Clarify sponsorships policy and guidelines. 	District-wide effort	Staff Time, Funding for Scholarship Program	Short to Mid-Term
<p>7. Identify opportunities to increase funding from alternative sources and revenue generation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identify existing and new opportunities for additional revenue generation. These include evaluating permitting fees, program fees, lease and contract amounts, etc. – Maximize alternative funding sources through grants, donations, “Friends” organizations, partnerships, etc. 	District-wide Effort	Staff Time	Ongoing

Capital Improvement Cost Estimates

Funding from General Obligation Bonds of approximately \$3.5 million will help provide short-term support (2013-2015) for priority projects identified in this Recreation Master Plan. Additional longer-term outdoor recreation facilities are proposed, and funds will need to be identified to support other identified improvements of over \$5 million. Leveraging resources through partnerships and grants will be important for successful implementation of many of the plan's recommendations.

Following are preliminary cost estimates for recommended site improvements for opportunity sites as well as general district-wide improvements. These cost estimates are in 2012 dollars and are subject to change based on more detailed site planning efforts.

See Opportunity Site Map in the *Executive Summary* for locations of proposed priority site improvements. Note: These capital improvement recommendations are subject to further refinement based on specific site planning and design.

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See Opportunity Site Map in the *Executive Summary* for locations of proposed priority site improvements. *Note: These capital improvement recommendations are subject to further refinement based on specific site planning and design.*

A. Specific Site Improvements - Preliminary Cost Estimates				
	Recreation Master Plan Priority Sites			
	= Unfunded projects			
			Short-Term	Long-Term
	Subarea	Preliminary Estimate	Funded	Unfunded
Camp Pine Woods				
<i>Coordinate with Camp Master Plan</i>	N			
Canoe landing & Equipment		\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	
Low ropes course		\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	
Archery		\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	
High Ropes		\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00	
Site furnishings & Misc Equip w/ storage		\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditure</i>		\$245,000.00	\$245,000.00	
Camp Sullivan & Falcon				
<i>Coordinate with Camp Master Plan</i>	SW			
Low ropes course		\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	
Garden construction		\$125,000.00		\$125,000.00
Site furnishings & Misc Equip w/ storage		\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditure</i>		\$175,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$125,000.00
Dan Ryan Woods				
<i>Nature and Culture Focus</i>	S			
Sled hill expansion construction		\$12,500.00	\$12,500.00	
Amphitheatre and stage		\$110,000.00	\$110,000.00	
Nature play		\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00	
Treehouse structure		\$125,000.00	\$125,000.00	
Site furnishings & equipment		\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditure</i>		\$427,500.00	\$427,500.00	

	Sub Area	Preliminary Estimate	Funded	Unfunded
General Headquarters (River Forest)				
<i>Urban Site in Need of Restoration</i>	C			
Stage renovation		\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	
Nature walk and interpretive panels		\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	
Garden construction		\$125,000.00		\$125,000.00
Site furnishings		\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditure</i>		\$200,000.00	\$75,000.00	\$125,000.00
Miller Meadow South				
<i>Strategic Underdeveloped Preserve</i>	C			
Off leash dog area		\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	
Expanded picnic grove (horseshoes, volleyball)		\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00	
18 hole Frisbee golf		\$12,500.00	\$12,500.00	
Site furnishings & Equipment		\$30,000.00	\$30,000.00	
Canoe Launch		\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditure</i>		\$267,500.00	\$267,500.00	
Pulaski Woods/Bullfrog Lake				
<i>Coordinate with Camp Master Plan</i>	SW			
Tree canopy walk - 500 feet		\$500,000.00		\$500,000.00
Low ropes course		\$15,000.00		\$15,000.00
Zip Line - Basic skill level		\$300,000.00		\$300,000.00
High ropes course - 12 static elements		\$85,000.00		\$85,000.00
Recreation TBD per on site plan		\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00	
Boat launch & dock**		\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditure</i>		\$985,000.00	\$85,000.00	\$900,000.00
Rolling Knolls				
<i>New Preserve</i>	NW			
Walking loop with fitness stations		\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00	
Archery (3 skill levels)		\$50,000.00		\$50,000.00
Ice skating pond		\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	
Sled hill		\$7,500.00	\$7,500.00	
Nature play/climbing area		\$75,000.00		\$75,000.00
Other Recreation TBD		\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditure</i>		\$507,500.00	\$382,500.00	\$125,000.00

	Sub Area	Preliminary Estimate	Funded	Unfunded
Swallow Cliff				
<i>Fitness & Winter Recreation</i>	SW			
Viewing platform and patio		\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00	
Warming Shelter/Concession/ Restroom Building		\$900,000.00	\$900,000.00	
Exercise fitness stations - 7 station design		\$35,000.00	\$35,000.00	
Information kiosk		\$8,500.00	\$8,500.00	
Toboggan run - chilled		\$1,500,000.00		\$1,500,000.00
<i>Total Cost Expenditures</i>		\$2,643,500.00	\$1,143,500.00	\$1,500,000.00
Shabbona Woods				
<i>Camp Day Use</i>				
Program Shelter		\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00	
Site furnishings & Equipment		\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditures</i>		\$200,000.00	\$200,000.00	
Thatcher Woods				
<i>Camp Day Use</i>				
Canoe Launch		\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	
Site furnishings & Equipment		\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditures</i>		\$75,000.00	\$75,000.00	
B. District-wide Improvements				
General Consulting Services				
Trail Master Plan consulting		In house		
Misc. architectural, engineering, and design services		\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditures</i>		\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	
Walks, Shelters and Ramps				
Picnic Shelter Repair Program (5 years @ \$120,000/yr)		\$120,000.00	\$120,000.00	
Canoe launches at Thorn Creek, Evans Field and two other locations		\$250,000.00	\$250,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditures</i>		\$370,000.00	\$370,000.00	

	Sub Area	Preliminary Estimate	Funded	Unfunded
Nature Play				
Enhance Nature Play at Crabtree		\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	
<i>Nature Play Total Cost Expenditures</i>		\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	
Site Identification – Signage				
Trailheads (15 NEW @ \$50,000/each)		\$750,000.00		\$750,000.00
<i>Total Cost Expenditures</i>		\$750,000.00		\$750,000.00
Flying Field Improvements				
General Flying Field Improvements		\$40,000.00	\$40,000.00	
Other Flying Field Needs		\$60,000.00		\$60,000.00
<i>Total Cost Expenditures</i>		\$100,000.00	\$40,000.00	\$60,000.00
Boat Facilities				
New boat house at Maple Lake		\$1,000,000.00	\$1,000,000.00	
Upgrades at Tampier Lake		\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditures</i>		\$1,100,000.00	\$1,100,000.00	
Recreation Equipment				
Recreation Equipment		\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditures</i>		\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	
Off Leash Dog Areas				
Beck Lake		\$50,000.00	\$50,000.00	
Other Locations (See above Miller Meadow)		\$100,000.00	\$100,000.00	
<i>Total Cost Expenditures</i>		\$150,000.00	\$150,000.00	
GAND TOTAL		\$8,611,000.00	\$3,531,000.00	\$5,070,000.00

Implementation Strategies

SERVICE DELIVERY APPROACHES

Approaches

With current limited staffing to support expanded recreational opportunities, a variety of service delivery approaches were reviewed as part of this plan with a focus on proposed new uses. Some of the recommended improvements are self-directed, drop-in recreational uses that do not require supervision, such as a canoe/kayak launch area or a walking loop. A range of approaches to other uses such as winter recreation and water recreation may require different levels of staffing depending on the type of service. Yet, other uses require a higher level of supervision such as a ropes/challenge course.

Self Directed/Unsupervised

In this approach, a given recreational use is allowed at designated locations but is regulated by a set of rules. For example, snowmobiling is currently allowed at five sites under certain snow conditions. Ice fishing is another example of this type of use.

Staffing impacts for these services are primarily operations/maintenance and policing. If a permit is issued for a given use, additional staff resources are dedicated to managing the permitting process. Some examples of proposed new recreation uses that could fit in this category are ice skating and swimming beaches, as is the practice with some other peer agencies.

District Staff

In this model, District staff take full responsibility for construction (as applicable), operations, maintenance, and program delivery for a given facility or service. Depending on the degree of service provided, different levels of staff support are needed. For example, winter recreation could be provided as a drop-in, self directed use or additional services could be provided such as a warming center with concessions and rentals. These enhanced services could be provided by District staff or a concessionaire. Currently, the District has limited recreation staff and revenue generation potential would need to be determined for a given activity.

Partnership

A partnership is a cooperative venture between two or more parties with a common goal, who combine complementary resources to complete a mutually beneficial project. Partnerships can take many forms including programming partnerships or operating partnerships and should involve written agreements.

In an operating partnership, a written agreement is developed with an outside group to provide day-to-day management of a given facility and delivery of programs. A partner could also contribute funds toward a capital improvement project. For any new facility development, it would be important to involve the partner in the design process to ensure that the facilities are in line with their programmatic and operational needs. An operative partnership should be considered for the development of an outdoor archery range (currently proposed as a potential use at the Rolling Knolls site).

Contract/Concessionaire

This model relies on an outside organization to enter into a formal contract with the District to provide a service. It is best used when the District does not have the appropriate or adequate resources necessary to effectively operate and maintain the service or the superior technical skills needed for quality service delivery. This approach is recommended for expanded boat rental and potential new bike rental services. It is also a recommended approach for any potential challenge course or canopy tour.

Operational Analysis

Additional analysis was conducted of the operational impacts of select new recreation uses being considered as part of this Recreation Master Plan, especially those that may require some supervision. Depending on the degree of service provided, different service delivery models are considered. The following chart reviews the following recreational uses: archery, swimming beaches, and a variety of winter recreation and outdoor adventure activities.

OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS OF SELECT RECREATION COMPONENTS							
Facility	Amenity Options	Revenue Generation Potential	Service Delivery Options	Preferred Option	Staffing & Operational Impact (if FPDCC operated)	Funding Strategies	Peer Agency Comparisons
Archery Range	Pro shop for sale of merchandise, rental of equipment, concessions, etc.	Moderate - potentially can cover direct costs if market rate prices are charged	FPDCC Operated or Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out	Public/Private Partnership	1 seasonal/part-time staff on duty during non-peak times and 2 during peak times	Partnership	Chicago Archery - Carol Stream, Schaumburg, Palatine, and Downers Grove. Lincoln Park Archery Club & World Sport Chicago - Chicago Park District
Swimming Beach	Admissions desk, shower rooms, family shower rooms, concessions, fencing, floating docks or buoys	Moderate - potentially can cover direct costs if market rate aquatic center prices are charged	FPDCC Operated or Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out or Self Directed/Regulated	FPDCC Operated or Self Directed/Regulated	Dependent on size of beach particularly the amount of waterfront and amenities	CIP and Admissions Fees, Season Passes	Lake MetroParks - OH Jackson County Parks and Recreation Dept. - MO
Winter Recreation:	All of these winter recreation amenities (below) could add to the synergy by being in co-located and sharing a warming house						
Ice Skating	Warming house for concessions, sale of merchandise, rental of skates, etc.	Very Low - based on the high cost of keeping smooth ice and typically free or low fee activity	FPDCC Operated or Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out or Self Directed/Regulated	Public/Private Partnership or Self Directed/Regulated	1 seasonal/part-time staff on duty during non-peak times and 2 during peak times	CIP and User Fees	Lake MetroParks - OH Forest Preserve District of DuPage County - IL (both unsupervised)
Toboggan Run	Warming house for concessions, sale of merchandise, etc.	Moderate - (40-60% cost recovery)	FPDCC Operated or Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out	Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out	Dependent on length and complexity of toboggan run. Min. of 3 staff	CIP and User Fees	Cleveland Metroparks - OH Oakland County Parks - MI

Facility	Amenity Options	Revenue Generation Potential	Service Delivery Options	Preferred Option	Staffing & Operational Impact (if FPDCC operated)	Funding Strategies	Peer Agency Comparisons
Cross Country Skiing/ Snowshoeing	Warming house for concessions, sale of merchandise, rental of equipment, etc.	Very Low - typically a self directed, free activity or an amenity in a winter complex	FPDCC Operated or Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out	FPDCC Operated or Contracted out	1 seasonal/part-time staff on duty during non-peak times and 2 during peak times	General Fund	Lake MetroParks - OH Three Rivers Park District, MN
Sledding Hill	Concessions opportunity	Extremely Low - typically a self directed, free activity or an amenity in a winter complex	FPDCC Operated or Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out or Self Directed/ Regulated	FPDCC Operated or Self Directed/ Regulated	1 seasonal/part-time staff on duty during non-peak times and 2 during peak times	General Fund	Lake MetroParks - OH Three Rivers Park District, MN
Adventure:							
Ropes/Challenge Course	Storage, covered amenity for meetings/meals. If year-round, should be enclosed, bathrooms	Moderate - can potentially cover direct costs with marketing	FPDCC Operated or Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out	Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out	n/a	Partnership	Charleston County Parks and Recreation Commission, SC Homewood-Flossmoor Park District, Iron Oaks, IL
Canopy Tour	Small office for check in, gear, bathrooms	Moderate to High - revenue generation potential	FPDCC Operated or Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out	Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out	n/a	Partnership/Concession	Red Mountain Park Commission, Birmingham, AL
Zip Line (could be incorporated into either of above)	Small office for check in, gear, bathrooms	Moderate - as a standalone amenity	FPDCC Operated or Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out	Public/Private Partnership or Contracted out	n/a	Partnership/Concession	Tacoma Metro Park at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, WA

FUNDING STRATEGIES

Leveraging District Funding

Funding from general obligation bonds will help provide short-term funding (2013-2015) for priority projects identified in this Recreation Master Plan. Additional longer-term outdoor recreation facilities are proposed, and funds will need to be identified to support additional improvements. Leveraging resources through partnerships and grants will be important to successful implementation of many of the plan's recommendations.

Grants

There are numerous potential grants opportunities for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to explore to help support many of the recommendations in the Recreation Master Plan. These opportunities will need to be further evaluated by the District to identify projects that pose the best match for different projects. The following highlights a short list of opportunities to review for potential projects.

A good source for natural resource related grant opportunities is the Illinois Department of Natural Resources webpage – <http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/>. The site provides more detailed information and links to each of the funders' webpages. In addition, there are numerous U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grants that appear to be worth investigating. A link to that website is <http://www.fws.gov/grants>. Some of these grants could be considered for outdoor recreational improvements. Other grants provide funds for open space preservation and habitat restoration. These grants would support maintaining habitat for wildlife and recreational activities like wildlife viewing and nature photography.

Potential Grant Sources

Annie E. Casey Foundation

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=241>

Fund for Wild Nature

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=286>

Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=136>

Grand Victoria Foundation

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=128>

Great Lakes Program

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=50>

Great Lakes Watershed Restoration Program

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=268>

Habitat Conservation

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=70>

Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation – Natural Area

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=105>

Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=186>

Joyce Foundation – Environmental Grants

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=202>

Lucent corporate contributions

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=157>

Motorola Foundation

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=159>

Open Land Trust Program

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=120>

Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD)/Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=118>

Partners for Conservation

<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/conservation/pfc/Pages/default.aspx>

Recreational Trails Program

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=199>

State Wetlands Protection Grants

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=210>

The Field Foundation of Illinois

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=164>

Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=73>

Walgreens Community Grants

<http://www.dnr.state.il.us/orep/pfc/grants/proginfo.asp?id=144>

Conclusion

Cook County is home to over five million diverse residents, some of whom are avid users of the forest preserves, and others who are not aware of what the forest preserve system has to offer. This Recreation Master Plan provides a vision and strategies to enhance popular outdoor recreational activities and add new ones to engage diverse communities. An “all hands on deck” approach is needed (among staff as well as stakeholders and partners) to embrace the plan vision and guiding principles. This master plan helps position the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to proactively plan for the future and ensure its legacy as a valued treasure for the next century and beyond.





Connecting People to Nature

Appendix A – Recreation Trends

With its joint mission of conservation and connecting the Cook County community to outdoor recreation and nature, it is a challenge for the Forest Preserve District to continue to understand and respond to the changing recreation interests of those it serves. In this fast-paced society it is important to stay on top of current trends impacting outdoor and nature-based recreation. The following information highlights relevant national

outdoor recreation trends from various sources that may influence the Forest Preserve District of Cook County for the next ten years.

The largest age cohorts in Cook County are 5-19, 29-34, and 45-64. Planning for the next ten years suggests a growing demand for programs and services for youth, young adults, and baby boomers.

OUTDOOR ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

The 2011 survey on outdoor athletic participation by the National Sporting Goods Association, (NSGA) ranked the top athletic activities by total participation included: exercise walking, swimming, and camping. **Table 5** outlines the top outdoor athletic activities ranked by total participation in 2011 and the percent change from 2010.

Table 5: Top Ten Outdoor Athletic Activities Ranked by Total Participation 2011 (7 years of age or older)

Sport	Total	% Change*
Exercise Walking	95.8	2.6%
Swimming	51.9	3.4%
Camping (vacation/overnight)	44.7	-12.0%
Bicycle Riding	39.8	4.3%
Hiking	37.7	10.9%
Running/Jogging	35.5	10.3%
Fishing	33.8	2.8%
Boating, Motor/Power	20.0	-16.2%
Target Shooting (net)	19.8	0.3%
Hunting with Firearms	16.3	-13.5%

*Percent Change is from 2010

Source: NSGA 2011

Additionally, in recent years extreme sports like mountain biking and BMX biking have continued their upward trend, while inline skating and skateboarding have trended downward in popularity. (*Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report 2012.*)

OUTDOOR RECREATION

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County is focused on conservation and connecting Cook County residents to outdoor recreation and nature. Therefore, in addition to trends for outdoor sports activities, it is important to look at trends in all outdoor activities.

The Outdoor Foundation reports that in 2011, outdoor recreation among Americans reached the highest level in the last five years, with nearly 50% of all Americans ages six and older participating in at least one outdoor activity. (*Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report*, 2012.) The top outdoor activities in 2011 were running, bicycling, camping, fishing, and hiking.

Outdoor recreation trends are also a frequent topic of study by the United States Forest Service through the Internet Research Information Series (IRIS). An IRIS report dated January 2012 provides the following recent nature-based outdoor recreation trends:

- Participation in walking for pleasure and family gatherings outdoors were the two most popular activities for the U.S. population as a whole in 2010-2011.
- These outdoor activities were followed closely in popularity: viewing/ photographing wildlife, boating, fishing, snow/ice activities, and swimming.
- There has been a growing momentum in participation in sightseeing, birding, and wildlife watching in recent years.

The 2012 Forest Preserve District of Cook County Survey ranked hiking/walking (37%), bicycling (34%), and picnicking (24%) as the top three activities participated in by survey respondents, followed by running (12%), golf (11%), fishing (10%), and special events (9%).

According to a U.S. Forest Service report entitled, “Outdoor Recreation Trends and Futures” by Ken Cordell (2010), one area of activity that has been showing growth in the first decade of the 21st century is nature-based recreation. Between 2000 and 2009, the number of people who participated in nature-based outdoor recreation grew by 7.1 percent, and the number of activity days grew about 40 percent. The clear growth area was within the overall group of activities oriented toward viewing and photographing nature. The top five growing activities in terms of growth of number of participants are developed skiing, other skiing, challenge activities, equestrian activities, and motorized water activities.

Archery is a growing trend, especially among teens. According to the National Sporting Goods Association, national participation (seven years of age or older) in archery has grown 34 percent from 2001 to 2011. The 2012 Summer Olympics and several recent movies featuring young archer heroines have raised the profile of archery. It should also be noted that 50 percent of archery participants also take part in camping according to the 2010 Archery Participation Report by the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association (which was recently renamed as the Sports and Fitness Industry Association).

Water Recreation

The *Outdoor Recreation Participation Topline Report* 2012 includes nation-wide trends for various outdoor activities, including the following water recreation activities: canoeing, fishing, kayaking, sailing, and stand-up paddling. Among water recreation activities, kayaking has had the largest increase in participation in the past three years (31.9% increase for recreational kayaking). Canoeing has experienced a slight decrease in participation. Participation in fly fishing is up while other fishing activities are down. Stand-up paddling is experiencing an increase in participation, while participation in sailing is down significantly.

Table 6: Water Recreation Participation by Activity (in thousands) (6 years of age or older)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	3 Year Change
Canoeing	9,154	9,797	9,935	10,058	10,553	9,787	-1.5%
Fishing (Fly)	6,071	5,756	5,941	5,568	5,478	5,360	9.8%
Fishing (Freshwater/Other)	43,100	43,859	40,331	40,961	38,860	39,071	-3.1%
Kayaking (Recreational)	4,134	5,070	6,240	6,212	6,465	8,229	31.9%
Kayaking (White Water)	828	1,207	1,242	1,369	1,842	1,546	24.5%
Sailing	3,390	4,056	4,226	4,342	3,869	3,725	-11.9%
Stand Up Paddling	no data	no data	no data	no data	1,050	1,242	no data

Source: Outdoor Foundation 2012.

According to the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA), swimming ranked second in terms of participation in 2011. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County offers three outdoor aquatic centers. The District does not currently offer swimming in any of lakes.

Trail Recreation

For trail-related recreation activities such as hiking, bicycling, and running, the 2012 *Outdoor Recreation Topline Report* indicates a positive three-year trend for hiking (6.1%) and mountain biking (5.9 %) but a negative trend for road/surface trail bicycling (-10.2%). Participation in running, including trail running, is up significantly.

Table 7: Trail Recreation Participation by Activity (in thousands) (6 years of age or older)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	3 Year Change
Bicycling (Mountain/Non-Paved Surface)	6,751	6,892	7,592	7,142	7,161	6,816	5.9%
Bicycling (Road/Paved Surface)	38,457	38,940	38,114	40,140	39,320	40,349	-10.2%
Hiking (Day)	29,863	29,965	32,511	32,572	32,496	34,491	6.1%
Running/Jogging	38,559	41,064	41,130	43,892	49,408	50,713	23.3%
Trail Running	4,558	4,216	4,857	4,833	5,136	5,610	15.5%

Source: Outdoor Foundation 2012.

The Outdoor Recreation Participation Report for 2011 reports a slightly downward trend nation-wide for equestrian participation from 2006 – 2010 (from a high of 4.4% in 2007 to a low of 3.5% participation in 2009 and 2010).

Winter Recreation

In a 2012 report, Snow Sports Industries America (SIA) uncovered the following snow sports participation habits:

- Six-point-nine percent (6.9%) of the total U.S. population (+6 years old) participates in at least one snow sport.
- Alpine skiers (44%) and snowboarders (31%) make-up three-fourths of all participants.
- Snow sports are becoming more diverse; minority ethnic groups make up over twenty-five percent (25%) of all participants.



The Outdoor Foundation's *Topline Outdoor Recreation Report* for 2012 reflects a three-year increase in participation (from 2009 to 2011) in cross country skiing (12.2%) and snowshoeing (40%). Additional winter sports to consider are extreme sledding (all the rage in Minnesota) as well as the new winter sports trends such as speed riding (skiing while attached to a paraglider), equestrian skijoring (skier pulled along by a pony), and dog sledding.

According to Global Industry Analysts, Inc., the snowmobiling industry has recovered from the recession and registered positive growth in 2011. GIA predicts the market will grow in coming years, "expected to be driven by the increased popularity of outdoor recreation, growing health consciousness, [and] the fun and adventure element of snowmobiling."

Adventure Parks & Zip Lines

According to a story by National Public Radio on August 28, 2012, zip line tours and aerial adventure parks are growing in the Northwest United States. At least a dozen commercial zip line attractions have opened in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, plus an equal number in Alaska and British Columbia.

Tacoma, Washington's public park district, Metro Parks Tacoma, recently opened a publicly-run zip line at its Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, looking to set itself apart from other local recreational opportunities and seeking to attract a different demographic. Municipal park departments around the country are looking at this booming trend and the potential revenue stream it can bring and are adding zip line attractions and aerial adventure parks to their public park offerings. Examples to consider are "Flagstaff Extreme Adventure Course" in Arizona (<http://www.flagstaffextreme.com>), the "Red Ore Zip Tour" at Red Mountain Park in Birmingham, Alabama (<http://www.redmountainpark.org/zip-line-trips>), and "The Beanstalk Journey Zip Line and Canopy Tour" at Catawba Meadows Park in Morganton, North Carolina (<http://www.redmountainpark.org/zip-line-trips>).

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION & CONSERVATION

Nature Programming

Noted as early as 2003 in *Recreation Management* magazine, park districts have been seeing an increase in interest in environmental-oriented “back to nature” programs. In 2007, the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) sent out a survey to member agencies in order to learn more about the programs and facilities that public park and recreation agencies provide to connect children and their families with nature. A summary of the results follow:

- Sixty-eight (68%) percent of public parks and recreation agencies offer nature-based programming and 61% have nature-based facilities.
- The most common programs include nature hikes, nature-oriented arts and crafts, fishing-related events, and nature-based education in cooperation with local schools.
- When asked to describe the elements that directly contribute to their most successful programs, agencies listed staff training as most important followed by program content and number of staff/staff training.
- When asked what resources would be needed most to expand programming, additional staff was most important followed by funding.
- Of the agencies that do not currently offer nature-based programming, 90 percent indicated that they want to in the future.
- The most common facilities include: nature parks/preserves, self-guided nature trails, outdoor classrooms, and nature centers.
- When asked to describe the elements that directly contribute to their most successful facilities, agencies listed funding as most important followed by presence of wildlife and community support.

“There’s a direct link between a lack of exposure to nature and higher rates of attention-deficit disorder, obesity, and depression.” In essence, parks and recreation agencies can and are becoming the ‘preferred provider’ for offering this preventative healthcare.”

Fran P. Mainella, former director of the National Park Service and Instructor at Clemson University.

In his book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Children from Nature Deficit Disorder*, Richard Louv introduced the concept of the restorative nature for both children and adults of being out in nature. This concept, and research in support of it, has led to a growing movement promoting connections with nature in daily life. One manifestation of this is the development of Nature Explore Classrooms in parks and open space areas. Nature Explore is a collaborative program of the Arbor Day Foundation and the non-profit organization, Dimensions Educational Research Foundation, with a mission of helping children and families develop a profound engagement with the natural world, where nature is an integral, joyful part of children’s daily learning. Nature Explore works to support efforts to connect children with nature.

Nature Play

As part of the national movement to connect kids to nature, there is a trend to create nature play spaces. In fact, efforts have been underway in Europe for many years. The Forestry Commission of England offers many resources through its website (<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/INFD-7LSEHW>). Nature play spaces can be valuable opportunities for urban kids to engage with nature by providing natural materials and other nature-themed elements that will capture their imaginations and begin a lifelong love of the outdoors.

ECONOMIC & HEALTH BENEFITS OF PARKS & OPEN SPACE

There are numerous economic and health benefits of parks and open space.

- A National Association of Realtors survey indicates that trails, parks, and playgrounds are among the five most important community amenities considered when selecting a home.
- Alliance for Community Trees Executive Director, Ewen Walker, highlights research from the University of Illinois showing that trees, parks, and green spaces have a profound impact on people's health and mental outlook.
- Fifty percent (50%) of Americans regard outdoor activities as their main source of exercise.

The Trust for Public Land published a report titled: "The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space." The report makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental, and social benefits of parks and open space:

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks and open space.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and physiological health.
- Residential and commercial property values increase.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners.
- Trees assist with storm water control and erosion.
- Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.
- Stable neighborhoods and strong communities are created.

BABY BOOMERS – PLANNING FOR THE DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT

Baby boomers are those born between 1946 and 1964, as stated in [Leisure Programming for Baby Boomers](#), in 2009. They are a generation that consists of nearly 76 million Americans. Beginning in 2011, this influential population began their transition out of the workforce. As baby boomers enter retirement, they will be looking for opportunities in fitness, sports, outdoors, arts and cultural events, and other activities that suit their lifestyles. With their varied life experiences, values, and expectations, baby boomers are predicted to redefine the meaning of recreation and leisure programming for mature adults.

In the leisure profession, this generation's devotion to exercise and fitness is an example of their influence on society. When boomers entered elementary school, President John Kennedy initiated the President's Council on Physical Fitness; physical education and recreation became a key component of public education. As boomers matured and moved into the workplace, they took their desire for exercise and fitness with them. Now as the oldest boomers are nearing 70, park and recreation professionals are faced with new approaches to provide both passive and active programming for older adults.

Boomer Basics

Jeffrey Ziegler, a past president of the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association identified "Boomer Basics" in his article, "Recreating Retirement: How Will Baby Boomers Reshape Leisure in Their 60s?" in *Parks and Recreation* magazine, published in 2002. Highlights are summarized below.

Boomers are known to work hard, play hard, and spend hard. They have always been fixated with all things youthful. Boomers typically respond that they feel 10 years younger than their chronological age. Swimming pools have become less of a social setting and much more of an extension of boomers' health and wellness programs. Because boomers in general have a high education level, they will likely continue to pursue education as adults and into retirement.

Boomers will look to park and recreation professionals to give them opportunities to enjoy many life-long hobbies and sports. When programming for this age group, a customized experience to cater to their need for self-fulfillment, healthy pleasure, nostalgic youthfulness, and individual escapes will be important. Recreation trends will shift from games and activities that boomers associate with senior citizens. Ziegler suggests activities such as bingo, bridge, and shuffleboard will likely be avoided because boomers relate these activities to being old. Boomers will reinvent what being a 65-year-old means. Parks and recreation agencies need to adapt programming to these trends.

HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

The health care issue is front and center. Park and recreation departments are finding that they are in a position to be a catalyst in creating healthy lifestyles in communities. Steps such as assessments, policy creation, financial analysis, and management process are occurring around the country to create and validate a method for building healthy communities and gaining credibility as a public health provider.

According to a study published in the *Journal of Environmental Science and Technology* in February of 2011, research indicates that outdoor exercise may be healthier than gym workouts: "Compared with exercising indoors, exercising in natural environments was associated with greater feelings of revitalization and positive engagement, decreases in tension, confusion, anger, and depression, and increased energy." This aligns with the trend of adult fitness playgrounds that are popping up all over the world. There is also a link between health and the built environment that continues to grow as a trend for local governments. Communities are increasingly incorporating active living and physical activity into daily routines.

ARTS AND CULTURE

The National Endowment for the Arts' 2008 *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* report identified the following trends and analysis of arts participation.

- Public participation was highest for the following arts venues and events:
 - Historic sites
 - Art/craft fairs and festivals
 - Art museums/galleries
 - Performing arts festivals
 - Musical plays
- Arts activity rises with educational level.
- Performing arts attendees are increasingly older than the average U.S. adult.

Given the economic recession, arts participation overall has declined. However, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County has an opportunity through free to low-cost arts and special event programming to provide unique programs in a natural setting.

Some additional trends for festivals and art activities provided by FairsandFestivals.net, an online festival resource, are listed below.

- In 2011, people are expected to be more comfortable spending their money at craft shows, fairs, and festivals.
- The trends are pointing toward an emphasis on holidays and specific events.
- A variety of art offerings such as music, cultural arts, scrapbooking, jewelry, and digital art, are trends to watch.

The City of Chicago Cultural Plan 2012 is another resource for additional information about local cultural needs, recommendations, and initiatives.

(http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dca/supp_info/cultural_plan.html)

PUBLIC RECREATION ADMINISTRATION

Public recreation service delivery systems have changed and more alternative methods of delivering services are emerging. Certain services are being contracted out and cooperative agreements with non-profit groups and other public institutions are being developed.

Newer partners include the health system, social services, justice system, education, the corporate sector, and community service agencies. These partnerships reflect both a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation agencies and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues. The relationship with health agencies is vital in promoting wellness. The relationship with education is evolving into cooperative planning and programming aimed at addressing youth inactivity levels and community needs.

Listed below are additional administrative national trends:

- Level of subsidy for programs is lessening and more “enterprise” activities are being developed, thereby allowing subsidy to be used where deemed appropriate.
- Information technology allows for better tracking and reporting.
- Pricing is often determined by peak, off-peak, and off-season rates.
- More agencies are partnering with private, public, and non-profit groups.

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Appendix B – Peer Agency Comparison Charts

Programs - Peer Agency Comparison

Fall 2012

Prepared for Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Recreation Master Plan

SELECT PROGRAMS	Cook County, IL	DuPage County, IL	Will County, IL	Charleston County, SC	Cleveland Metroparks, OH	Riverside County, CA	Three Rivers District, MN
Geocaching			X	X	X	X	X
Outdoor movies	X			X	X	X	
Outdoor concerts	X		X	X	X	X	
Gardening			X	X	X		X
Fitness			X		X	X	X
Volunteer	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Trips/excursions			X	X	X		
Swimming lessons	X				X	X	
Art making		X		X	X	X	X
Performing arts					X		
Youth day camps	X		X	X	X	X	X
OTHER							
Adaptive Aquatics Program						X	
Dog Obedience and Agility			X				
Outdoor Recreation Services							X

Note: Blank spaces indicate that the agency does not currently offer the program.

Facilities - Peer Agency Comparison

Fall 2012

FACILITIES	PEER AGENCIES							COMMENTS
	Cook County Forest Preserve District, IL	DuPage County Forest Preserve District, IL	Will County Forest Preserve District, IL	Charleston County, SC - Parks & Rec. Commission	Cleveland Metroparks, OH	Riverside County Park and Open Space District, CA	Three Rivers Park District, MN	
Amphitheatre or Stage	1	0	3	1	7	1	2	Cleveland Metroparks has 4 formal and 2 informal amphitheatres; Cook County has one small permanent stage
Archery	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	Portable archery is used in Cook County and Charleston County; Cleveland Metroparks' archery range is run by a club
Athletic fields	40	0	0	3	2	15	0	Cook County's fields are undeveloped/ permitted; Charleston County has 3 sports complexes
Bicycle Rentals	0	0	0	3	1	3	0	
Boating facilities	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Cleveland Metroparks' marina is contracted out
Boat launch/landings	10	9	2	19	3	2	10	
Boat house	1	0	1	0	2	1	0	
Boat rentals	2	2	1	2	3	2	Y	
Botanic Garden	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Campground	3	1	5	1	5	18	9	Three Rivers offers 3 plus 26 group camps
Climbing Walls	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	Cleveland Metroparks' is run by an affiliate
Community gardens	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	

FACILITIES	PEER AGENCIES							COMMENTS
	Cook County Forest Preserve District, IL	DuPage County Forest Preserve District, IL	Will County Forest Preserve District, IL	Charleston County, SC - Parks & Rec. Commission	Cleveland Metroparks, OH	Riverside County Park and Open Space District, CA	Three Rivers Park District, MN	
Community/recreation center	0	0	0	1	0	0		Recreation centers include a sports/fitness components and may also include multipurpose rooms that could also be available for rent or other community uses
Disc golf	1	0	0	2	0	1		Cook County's disc golf course is operated by the golf contractor for a fee
Dog Park	2	6	3	3	0	0		
Equestrian Facilities	1	1	0	1	3	Y		Cleveland Metroparks has three equestrian stables; Cook County's stable is privately operated
Event Facilities (e.g., rentals, etc.)	1	5	1	3	6	Y		
Fishing	42	42	23	4	25	4	10	Charleston County has 2 piers and 2 parks with fishing
Fitness areas	1		0	0	8	0		Cleveland Metroparks are all along trails
Flying Fields	9	5	0	1	0	0		
Golf course	10	3	0	0	8	1		Cook County's golf courses are managed by private contractor; *Riverside has one mini-golf course
Historic museum/facility	0	0	1	1	6	3		
Mobile Recreation	Y	0	0	Y	0	0		Cook County rents portable stages; Charleston County has a portable climbing wall
Nature center	6	5	1	1	6	4		
Nature play area	1	0	1	0	2	1		
Picnic facilities/shelters	187	24	32	816	45	25	16	
Playgrounds	0	0	2	5	53	10	10	Cook County has one nature play area
Remote Control Boats	5	1	0	0	0	0		
Ropes course	0	0	0	1	0	0		

FACILITIES	PEER AGENCIES							COMMENTS
	Cook County Forest Preserve District, IL	DuPage County Forest Preserve District, IL	Will County Forest Preserve District, IL	Charleston County, SC - Parks & Rec. Commission	Cleveland Metroparks, OH	Riverside County Park and Open Space District, CA	Three Rivers Park District, MN	
Snowmobiling	5	0	0	N/A	0	0		
Swimming facilities	Y	0	0	Y	Y	Y		
Beach	0	0	0	4	1	0		Charleston County has 4 lifeguarded beaches; Three Rivers has 2 lifeguarded beaches and 7 unguarded beaches where swimming is allowed
Outdoor aquatic facility	3	0	0	3	3	2		
Tennis	Y	0	0	Y	0	0	0	
Outdoor courts	1	0	0	7	0	0		Charleston County has 5 adult and 2 youth courts; Cook County leases land to a tennis club
Trails	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		
Multipurpose trails	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Three Rivers has 60 miles of paved trail in 15 locations plus 10 regional trails
Equestrian trails	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Three Rivers has 75 miles in 6 locations; Cleveland Metroparks has 120 miles in 8 locations
Mountain biking trails (single-track, dedicated)	0	0	0	Y	Y	0		It is common for mountain bikes to be allowed on multi-use trails. However, dedicated mountain-bike trails are less frequent. Cleveland Metroparks, Charleston County, and Three Rivers District have single-track trails specifically designed for mountain biking; Three Rivers has 26 miles of single track trails in 3 locations and has 1 snow mountain biking trail (4 miles); Cook County also has one single-track, multi-purpose trail location with a strong partnership with a mountain bike organization
Pump track/BMX	0	0	0	0	0	0		No agencies currently have BMX-type facilities

FACILITIES	PEER AGENCIES							COMMENTS
	Cook County Forest Preserve District, IL	DuPage County Forest Preserve District, IL	Will County Forest Preserve District, IL	Charleston County, SC - Parks & Rec. Commission	Cleveland Metroparks, OH	Riverside County Park and Open Space District, CA	Three Rivers Park District, MN	
Winter Recreation (tobogganing, tubing, sledding, etc.)	10	Y	2	N/A	7	1		Three River Park District has the second largest snow tubing hill in the country (rent out tubes); Cleveland Metroparks has 1 refrigerated toboggan run and 6 sledding hills.
Zip line	0	0	0	1	0	0		Charleston County has 2 as part of challenge/ropes course, and they are looking into another zip line
Zoo	1	0	0	0	1	0		

Note: Yes (Y) may indicate specific facility numbers were not provided.



Connecting People to Nature

Appendix C – Select Recreational Services Analysis & Review of Regional Providers

ARCHERY

Archery is a growing trend, especially among teens. Given the relatively high number of indoor archery ranges in the Chicago and neighboring areas and relatively few outdoor ranges, there appears to be enough demand to sustain an outdoor archery range at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. (See map of other regional providers of archery facilities and/or programs.)

There are several active archery clubs in Chicago and a couple statewide organizations with offices located in the Chicagoland area. With the exception of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (that opened a range in the fall of 2012) and the Chicago Park District's Lincoln Park site, surrounding forest preserves and park districts have not invested in archery facilities.

There are several examples of public/private partnerships. For example, Chicago Archery, a private organization, offers archery instruction using portable equipment at five Cook County suburban park districts in Carol Stream, Schaumburg, Palatine, and Downers Grove. In addition the Chicago Park District (CPD) has a long standing relationship with the Lincoln Park Archery Club that uses a designated area in Lincoln Park. They have a storage shed that they use for their portable equipment. In addition, the CPD recently began a partnership with World Sport Chicago to offer fee-based archery programs at Pulaski Park.

According to the Sports and Fitness Association 2010 *Archery Participation Report*, 50 percent of archery participants also take part in camping. Providing archery programs and/or an archery range near a campground site should be taken in consideration by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

Options range from identifying areas appropriate for portable archery equipment and programs to creating designated archery range site(s). A destination archery range could provide a unique outdoor recreation opportunity. It could be branded as an "Olympic style range in the unique setting of a forest preserve." A variety of archery elements – traditional range, 3D targets, and obstacles – could be incorporated into the site.

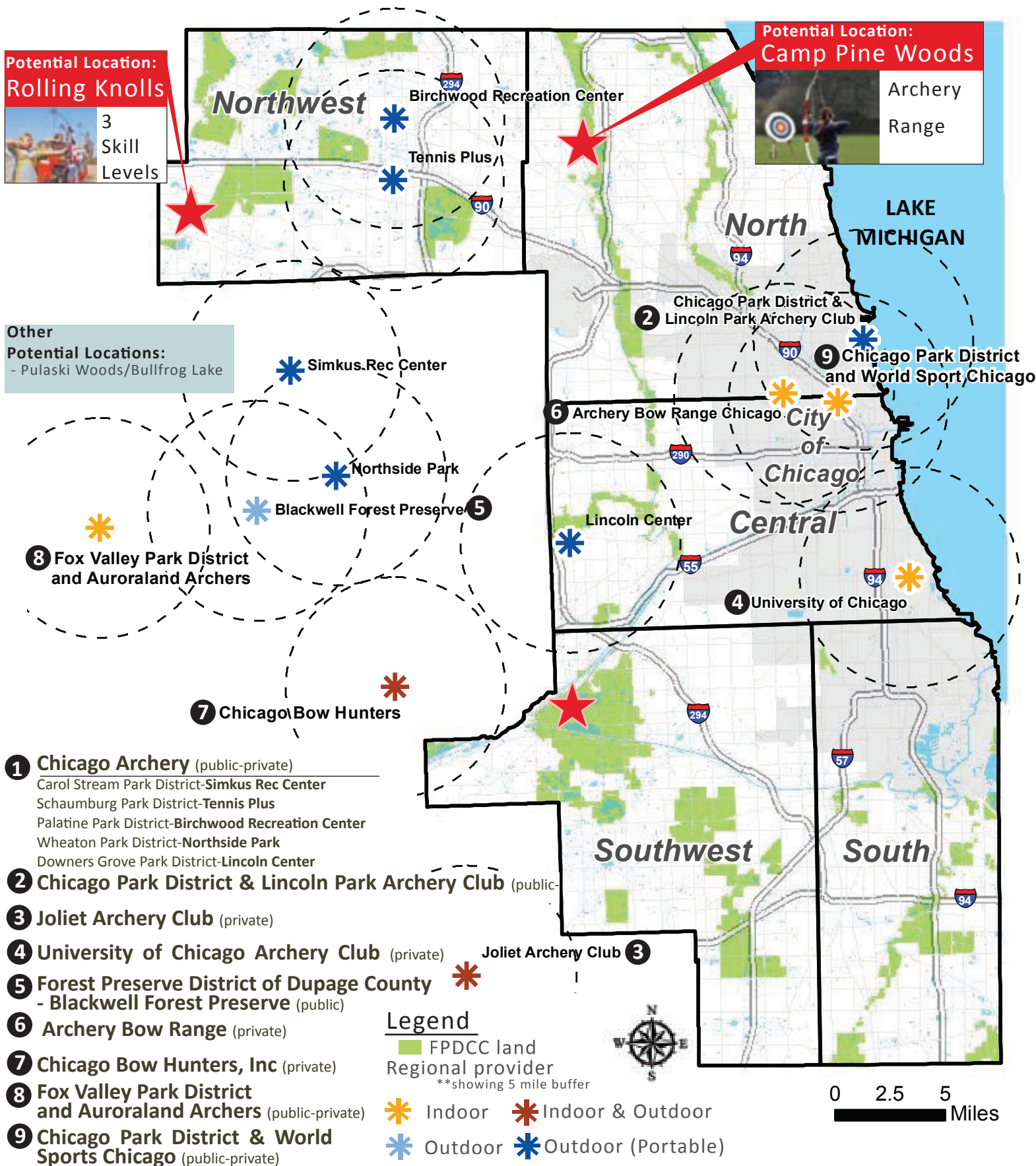
There are several private organizations in the Cook County area offering archery programs and partnership opportunities for the District to explore. Public/private partnerships for archery programs are common in the Cook County area.

Ideally, an archery range would have a rental station, for those that do not have their own equipment. Users could rent equipment and targets. A membership program could be considered, like the Lincoln Park Archery Club. (The range is open to the public, but to take part in the social events and trainings, membership in the club is required.) Partnerships could create opportunities to host major archery tournaments to generate revenue and to get more people to the forest preserves.

Sites being considered for archery use include Rolling Knolls in the Northwest, Camp Pine Woods (a proposed campground site) in the North, and Bullfrog Lake (proposed campground site) in the Southwest.

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Current Facilities & Proposed Improvements



archery

CHALLENGE COURSES, CANOPY TOURS, AND ZIP LINES

Challenge Course

Overview

Often used as a teambuilding tool, challenge courses in the United States have been in use by outdoor, leisure, and human service programs since the early 1960s (Attarain, A. (2005) The Research and Literature on Challenge Courses: An Annotated Bibliography, 2nd Edition). There are two ways in which a challenge course can be utilized. One is purely a recreational event. In this case, the challenge course is treated as a climbing opportunity, and the participants are engaged in the act of going through the course with the goal of completion. The other activity is more focused on teambuilding and is facilitated by a professional facilitator. In this scenario the challenge course becomes a tool by which the team begins to learn and explore risk taking, leadership, communication, problem solving, and coaching.

The results from the survey conducted for this plan indicate that 24 percent of the respondents would like to see zip lines added at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, 21 percent would like climbing walls, and 15 percent expressed interested in adding ropes courses.

In considering the introduction of such an amenity into the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, a challenge course is defined as a collection or series of events or obstacles suspended from trees, utility poles, and other structures; and/or activities that provide participants with unique problem solving opportunities for self-discovery, physical challenge, risk-taking, and group support. Synonymous terms include high ropes course, low ropes course, initiatives, group initiatives, and team-building activities. Ropes courses usually include a combination of low and high elements. The range of activities these different types of elements offer enable participants to grow at both the team and individual levels. The challenges allow participants to expand their comfort zones and recognize fears that may block personal achievement.

While the experience of engaging in the low and high elements is inherently fun, safety is always the first priority. Whether the use is recreational in nature or more of an experiential education course, trained and certified staff is needed to support safe use. The challenges call upon every member of the group to participate and the course can present an unending opportunity for self-discovery and team growth (Adventure Associates website, <http://www.adventureassociates.net>).

Recommendation

If the District chooses to build a challenge course, they should consider a facilitated experience. This experience would involve organized groups (i.e., employees from a certain company/organization, school groups, training participants, etc.) and a professional facilitator that not only knows the course but can also identify the specific needs of the group. In addition to the facilitator at least one other trained facilitator is usually on site to support the activity. A number of studies have been completed that focus on the effectiveness of a challenge course experience as it encourages or enhances the characteristics associated with highly functioning teams. For the District to offer this type of opportunity, it should further review the market and the other challenge courses in the Chicagoland area to determine the need for this additional amenity.

If the District does choose to pursue building a challenge course, the recommendation would be to engage a concessionaire to manage the course. This would include maintenance, scheduling, marketing, and facilitating groups. This agreement could be modeled after other lease agreements currently in place with the District.

CANOPY AND ZIP LINE TOURS

Overview

According to the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT), canopy/zip line tours were originally an outgrowth of techniques developed by biologists seeking to study the ecosystems of the Tropical Rainforest. By using a variety of approaches to access the upper reaches of the forest while minimizing their impact upon its ecology, about 30 years ago, researchers began to observe and catalog the animals and plants that flourished there.

Though zip lines and canopy tours began as a tool for research and inquiry, they have evolved into a means of showcasing the forest and other natural features to the general public. Many courses are now designed to specifically offer thrills and excitement.

In its current iteration, observation posts and transportation routes through the canopy are established by several means including Tyrolean traverses and zip lines, rope ascension devices, towers and cranes, and suspension bridges. While many of the tours in place still honor the historical roots of a canopy tour, many others now operate primarily as vehicles for recreation and amusement – the thrill of the ride being the principal attraction. Courses typically feature an interconnected series of traverses and crossings over a route that runs above a forest floor, valley, ravine, or canyon. They are designed to enable a user propelled by gravity to traverse from the top to the bottom of the inclined cable (usually made of stainless steel) by holding on or attaching to a freely moving pulley. Entry and exit to the tour may be achieved by ground level platforms or by stairways, ladders, and rappel stations. According to the ACCT, fall protection is provided through harnesses, lanyards, clips, and trolleys. Riders are often required to wear helmets.

Staffing a canopy tour requires a multitude of skills including client screening and management, equipment distribution, fitting, and inspection; course inspection and maintenance, high angle rescue and course evacuation; belaying; and effective communication skills.

From a definition standpoint, canopy tours and zip line tours are often used synonymously. The installation of such courses has become a big business opportunity often generating revenue for those facilities hosting the tours. Ziplines come in many forms. A course may include short and low opportunities intended for child's play and longer and higher vantage points to see remote areas.

Recommendation

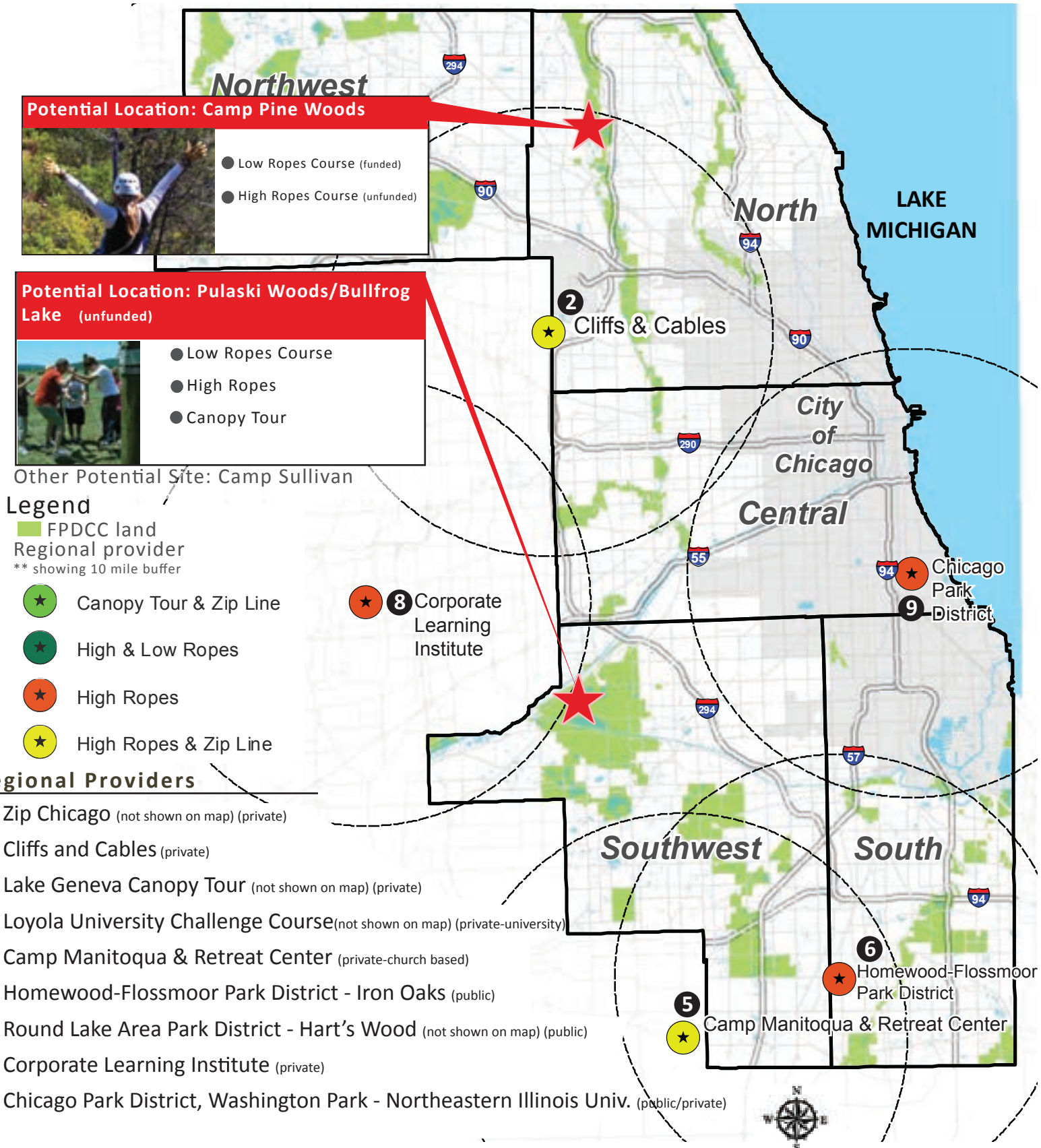
The District should strongly consider the installation of a canopy tour. As a recreational feature, this tour would be best situated near other recreational offerings yet separate enough to offer its own unique experience. Locating a canopy tour near a group camping facility for example would add an additional layer of activity for those already engaged in an outdoor experience. The canopy tour would also be a strong attraction for participants who may not be looking to go camping but once entering the forest preserve and seeing the opportunity, this could spark new interests. Design considerations include ecological costs and impacts.

If the District were to decide to move forward with a canopy tour, it is recommended that it be run by an outside concessionaire. An agreement with the District and a concessionaire would offer a revenue generating opportunity for the District and engage a local business to facilitate the operations of the canopy tour. There are two other canopy tour opportunities in the area. Understanding their course area, pricing model, and accessibility to the public will help create a course that adds to the overall experience for participants versus duplicating what is already in place.



The Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Current Facilities & Proposed Improvements



challenge courses

DISC GOLF

There are no stand-alone disc golf courses in the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. However, there is a disc golf course at the Edgebrook Golf Course which is in the North subarea of the District. At this course, disc golfers pay a greens fee and play along the same course as traditional golfers. They are provided a cart and allowed to play.

This unique fee-based disc golf course seems to be working well. However, the District should consider other opportunities for disc golf. There are a lot of large, open areas within the preserves, particularly along the edges of open mowed areas where these abut forest or prairie, that could accommodate disc golf courses.

Disc golf is a growing recreation trend that many other peer agencies offer. There are a number of disc golf courses in the Cook County region and these should be considered when identifying an appropriate location within the forest preserves. (See disc golf map.)

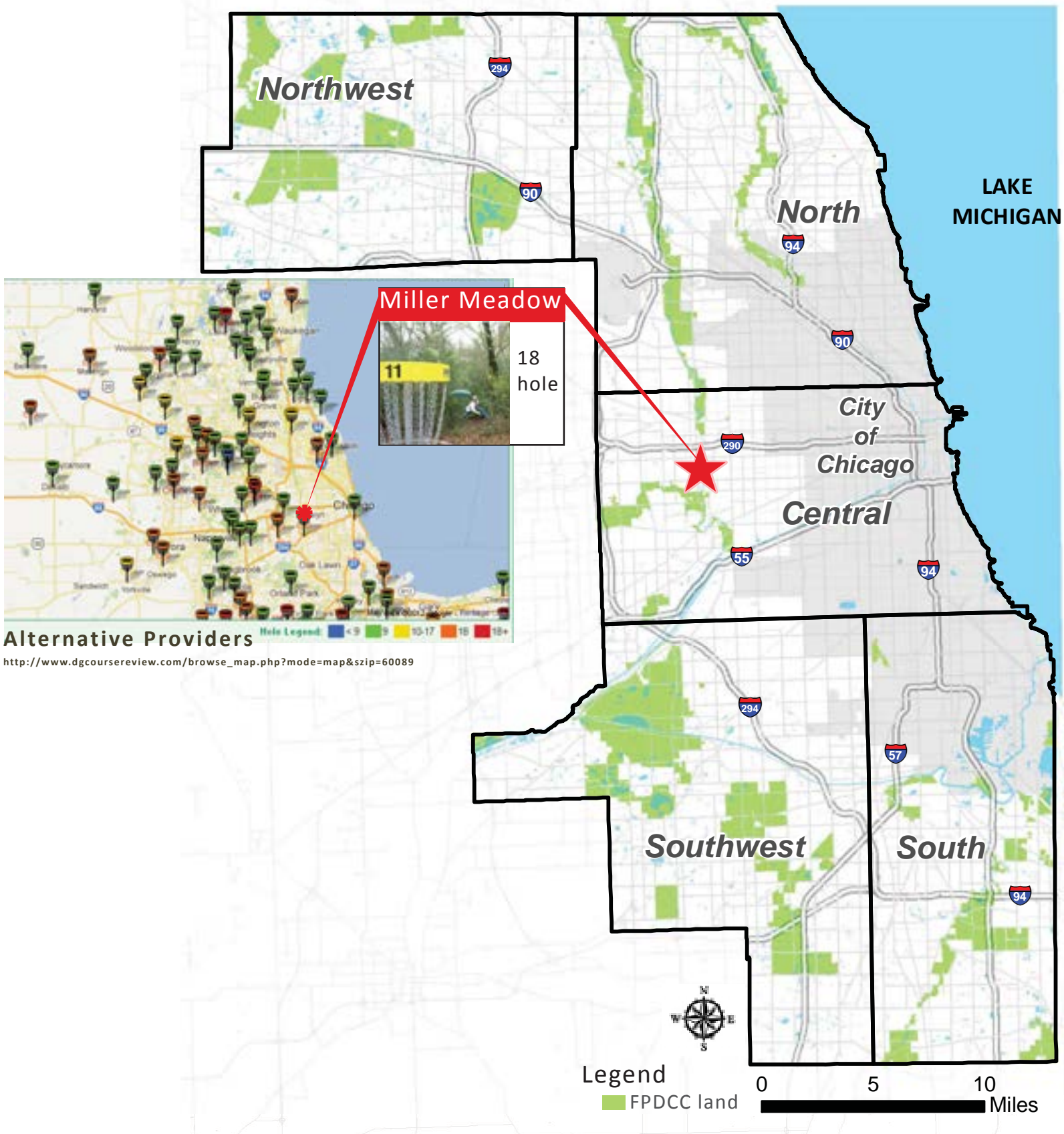
The results from the survey conducted for this plan indicate that 11 percent of the respondents would like to see disc golf added at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. While this is lower than some other recreational uses, it shows that there is interest in a variety of outdoor recreational activities.

The inset map shows other disc golf locations in the Cook County area. While there are many on the fringes and outside of Cook County, few courses are located within the County. Miller Meadow in the Central subarea is a proposed location for a disc golf course and is centrally located to serve large areas of the County. There are also many other potential locations within the forest preserves that could be appropriate for this use.

Typically, disc golf courses are offered for free. However, there are examples of fee-based courses, and the District could consider requiring fee-based permits for use of a disc golf course.

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Current Facilities & Proposed Improvements



disc golf

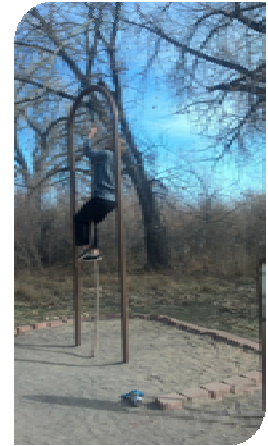
FITNESS

Community wellness is becoming a concern of land management agencies across the country as the links between the outdoors and public health are being made known. As the steward of 11 percent of land in Cook County in the nation's second most populous county, this issue is of great importance to the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC).

Blending the public health imperative with the District's land stewardship mandate is a natural fit. The lands of the FPDCC are highly suited for activities associated with active living, such as hiking, running, and bicycling. Some residents are taking that even further and using the preserves as their regular location for fitness by going there to work out in various ways. The most notable example is found at Swallow Cliff, where hundreds of people show up daily to incorporate the hillside stairway into their workout. Although fitness activity does not need to be limited to this location – it can be encouraged throughout the preserve system by raising awareness and providing features that facilitate exercise.

One of the traditional means of doing this is to provide fitness stations along trail routes. While these have been around for decades and have been taken for granted in many cases, the value of their actual effectiveness might be questioned, along with their appropriateness in the natural environment of the preserves.

Natural areas along trails in greenway corridors are traditionally the preferred location for these amenities. Early fitness stations tended to be constructed of wood and other natural materials that do not hold up well over time and in the long run, often becoming neglected and unused. Equipment manufacturers are now making new versions of these types of features out of metal posts and other more durable materials; however, these often end up looking like playground equipment or something more appropriate for urban parks. This is not always the case though, and versions of these features can be obtained in natural colors that blend into the environment (see photo example).



The amount of use that these features get even when new and in prime condition is questionable as well. The popularity of the stairway at Swallow Cliff may suggest some alternative ways to think about fitness in public spaces that can guide the FPDCC in becoming a leader in pioneering new approaches to outdoor fitness.

One reason for the popularity of the Swallow Cliff location as a fitness destination could be that it is just that – a destination for people who want to exercise. The fact that there are other people working out at this location makes it comfortable for individuals to go there for their own exercise sessions. People like to be a part of something and not stand out. One problem with placing fitness stations along trails is that they are spread out and isolated in such a way that when an individual is using them, they are “on display” for trail users and may feel uncomfortable. A better alternative might be to group these features in a location where they can be used by multiple people who are conducting their fitness workout simultaneously.

Such a facility would not need to look like a playground with steel equipment placed on a concrete pad out in the open. Instead, placing these elements in a wooded setting, spread out enough to leave a comfortable distance between them but still in view of one another and with a sense of a singular place or destination might make them much more popular. Providing support amenities, like parking, restrooms, drinking water, benches, tables, and perhaps even a sign kiosk where information on fitness and active living could be posted, would be a wonderful addition. Making the location a wifi “hotspot” could be a good addition, as many people utilize internet applications to track their fitness activities and access other information.

These outdoor fitness destinations should be located in places that are highly visible, yet separated from the main flow of traffic. Access to the system of trails is highly desired.

Placing the first of these fitness destinations at the Swallow Cliff site would make a great deal of sense, given that it is already drawing a core group of participants who would use this kind of facility. Some limitations of the location, such as a lack of potable water, would need to be addressed, but do not seem insurmountable.

Once the concept has been tested at Swallow Cliff, it can be applied in other locations. Each location should offer something unique – not all preserves have the topography found at Swallow Cliff. However, adding staircases specifically intended for fitness in places that do have hillsides (Dan Ryan comes to mind) might be a worthwhile idea. In flat areas, other themes could be offered; a bouldering wall for climbing and a measured walking circuit for distance are possible ideas. Involving the community in coming up with other ideas would be a good way to generate interest and investment from the community.

Speaking of community investment, this concept is likely to be one that lends itself to partnerships. For example, local gyms and fitness centers could conduct fitness classes at these locations, and local hospitals and wellness agencies could possibly provide funding for installation and maintenance.

Another concept worth consideration is the use of Smartphone app’s to help support fitness activities. For example, one company is promoting fitness along the trails using signage with QR code links to fitness routines (qrfittrail.com).

Bringing a creative approach to the community health imperative could put FPDCC in the lead as a national innovator. These are just a few ideas for how this could happen.

Note: Many parks and recreation agencies in the Cook County area have fitness stations within their park systems. However, specific information on regional providers was not readily available.

QRFIT TRAIL
Fitness Trail
FITNESS ON YOUR PHONE

You will need a QR Code Reader to access trail exercises.
Using your phone, visit your cell phone's application market / world or qrfittrail.com to download a FREE QR Reader.
*Requires cell phone with camera video apps.

Station 1

For Blackberry or Android:

CORE BODY	FLEXIBILITY	LOWER BODY	UPPER BODY
[QR Code]	[QR Code]	[QR Code]	[QR Code]

For Apple Products:

CORE BODY	FLEXIBILITY	LOWER BODY	UPPER BODY
[QR Code]	[QR Code]	[QR Code]	[QR Code]

Can't view videos on your phone?
Scan the QR Code to the right to view the exercises on your web browser.

Technology provided by:
QRFIT TRAIL

Follow us on [Twitter](#) for trail & exercise updates.
Find out more about us at: www.qrfittrail.com

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Appendix D – Service Assessment Overview

PUBLIC SECTOR AGENCY SERVICE ASSESSMENT

*Based on MacMillan Matrix for Nonprofit agencies from the Alliance for Nonprofit Management.
Adapted by GreenPlay LLC and GP RED for Public Sector Agencies. April 2009.*

Public agencies have not traditionally been thought of as organizations needing to be competitively oriented. Unlike private and commercial enterprises which compete for customers and whose very survival depends on satisfying paying customers, many public and non-profit organizations operate in a non-market, or grants economy – one in which services may not be commercially viable. In other words, the marketplace may not supply sufficient and adequate resources.

In the public sector, our customers (taxpayers) do not decide how funding is allocated and which service gets adequate, ongoing funding. (In fact, many public agencies and non-profits can be considered "sole-source," the only place to get a service, so there is little to no market saturation and therefore, potential for apathetic service enhancement and improvement). Consequently, public and non-profit organizations have not necessarily had an incentive to question the status quo, to assess whether customer needs were being met, or to examine the cost-effectiveness or quality of available services.

The public sector and market environments have changed, funders and customers alike are beginning to demand more accountability, and both traditional (taxes and mandatory fees) and alternative funding (grants and contributions) are getting harder to come by, even as need and demand increase. This increasing demand for a smaller pool of resources requires today's public and non-profit agencies to rethink how they do business, to provide services where appropriate, to avoid duplicating existing comparable services, and to increase collaboration, when possible. In addition, organizations are leveraging all available resources where possible.

An assessment of a **Public Sector Agency Services** is an intensive review of organizational services including activities, facilities, and parklands that leads to the development of an agency's **Service Portfolio**. Additional results indicate whether the service is **"core to the organization's values and vision,"** and provides recommended provision strategies that can include, but are not limited to enhancement of service, reduction of service, collaboration, advancing or affirming market position. This assessment begins to provide a nexus relative to which services are central to the organization's purpose. The process includes an analysis of: each service's relevance to the organization's values and vision; the organization's market position in the community relative to market; other service providers in the service area including quantity and quality of provider; and the economic viability of the service.

Based on the **MacMillan Matrix for Competitive Analysis of Programs**¹, the Public Sector Services Assessment Matrix is a valuable tool that is specifically adapted to help public agencies assess their services. The MacMillan Matrix realized significant success in the non-profit environment and has led to application in the public sector. The **Public Sector Agency Services Assessment Matrix** is based on the assumption that duplication of existing comparable services (unnecessary competition) among public and non-profit organizations can fragment limited resources available, leaving all providers too weak to increase the quality and cost-effectiveness of customer services. This is also true for public agencies.

The **Public Sector Agency Service Assessment Matrix** assumes that trying to be all things to all people can result in mediocre or low-quality service. Instead, agencies should focus on delivering higher-quality service in a more focused (and perhaps limited) way. The Matrix helps organizations think about some very pragmatic questions.

Q: Is the agency the best or most appropriate organization to provide the service?

Q: Is the agency spreading its resources too thin without the capacity to sustain core services and the system in general?

Q: Are there opportunities to work with another organization to provide services in a more efficient and responsible manner?

Services Assessment Matrix <small>© 2009 GreenPlay LLC and GP RED</small>		Financial Capacity Economically Viable		Financial Capacity Not Economically Viable	
		Alternative Coverage High	Alternative Coverage Low	Alternative Coverage High	Alternative Coverage Low
Good Fit	Strong Market Position	Affirm Market Position 1	Advance Market Position 2	Complementary Development 5	"Core Service" 6
	Weak Market Position	Divest 3	Invest, Collaborate or Divest 4	Collaborate or Divest 7	Collaborate or Divest 8
Poor Fit	Divest 9				

Based on MacMillan Matrix for Nonprofit agencies from the Alliance for Nonprofit Management. Adapted by GreenPlay LLC and GP RED for Public Sector Agencies. April 2009.

¹ Alliance for Nonprofit Management

Fit

Fit is the degree to which a service aligns with the agency's values and vision, reflecting the community's interests. If a service aligns with the agency's values and vision, and contributes to the overall enhancement of the community, it is classified as "good fit," if not, the service is considered a "poor fit."

- Does the service align with agency values and vision?
- Does the service provide community-wide return on investment (i.e. community, individual, environmental, or economic benefits and outcomes that align with agency values such as crime prevention, improved health and well-being, enhancement of property values)?

Financial Capacity

Financial Capacity is the degree to which a service (including a program, facility, or land asset) is currently or potentially attractive as an investment of current and future resources to an agency from an economic perspective.

No program should be classified as "highly attractive" unless it is ranked as attractive on a substantial majority of the criteria below.

- Does the service have the capacity to sustain itself (break even) independent of General Fund or taxpayer subsidy/support?
- Can the service reasonably generate at least XXXXX% (TBD) from fees and charges?
- Can the service reasonably generate excess revenues over direct expenditures through the assessment of fees and charges?
- Are there consistent and stable alternative funding sources such as donations, sponsorships, grants, and/or volunteer contributions for this service?
- Can the service reasonably generate at least XXXXX% (TBD) of the costs of service from alternative funding sources?
- Is there demand for this service from a significant/large portion of the service's target market?
- Can the user self-direct or operate/maintain the service without agency support?

Market Position

Market Position is the degree to which the organization has a stronger capability and potential to deliver the service than other agencies – a combination of the agency’s effectiveness, quality, credibility, and market share dominance. No service should be classified as being in a “strong market position” unless it has some clear basis for declaring superiority over all providers in that service category, and is ranked as affirmative on a substantial majority of the criteria below.

- Does the agency have the adequate resources necessary to effectively operate and maintain the service?
- Is the service provided at a convenient or good location in relation to the target market?
- Does the agency have a superior track record of quality service delivery?
- Does the agency currently own a large share of the target market currently served?
- Is the agency currently gaining momentum or growing its customer base in relation to other providers? (e.g., "Is there a consistent waiting list for the service?")
- Can you clearly define the community, individual, environmental and/or economic benefits realized as a result of the service
- Does agency staff have superior technical skills needed for quality service delivery?
- Does the agency have the ability to conduct necessary research, pre and post participation assessments, and/or properly monitor and evaluate service performance therefore justifying the agency’s continued provision of the service? (Benchmarking performance or impact to community issues, values, or vision)
- Are marketing efforts and resources effective in reaching and engaging the target market?

Alternative Coverage

Alternative Coverage is the extent to which like or similar services are provided in the service area to meet customer demand and need. If there are no other large (significant), or very few small agencies producing or providing comparable services in the same region or service area, the service should be classified as "low coverage." Otherwise, coverage is "high."

Unfair Competition

It has become somewhat challenging to draw a line of demarcation between those services that are recognized to be the prerogative of the private sector and those thought to be the responsibility of the public sector. Overlap of service production and provision are common. A continuing problem today is the lack of clarification between what sector should be producing or providing which services, therefore, developing boundaries. What is needed is the reshaping of how public and private sector agencies work independent of each other or together in a more effective way, becoming complementary rather than duplicative.

Service lines are blurred due to a variety of factors. Whether it is due to the emergence of new services, in response to customer demand, or reduced availability of public funds and therefore greater dependence on revenue generation, these blurred lines sometimes result in charges that the public sector engages in unfair competition practices by offering similar or like services to those of the private sector. These charges result from the resource advantages that the public sector has over the private sector including, but not limited to, immunity from taxation and the ability to charge lower fees for similar or like services due to receipt of subsidy dollars.

Recommended Provision Strategies – Defined (numbers refer to graphic above)

Affirm Market Position (1) – a number (or one significant) of *alternative provider(s)* exists, yet the service has *financial capacity* and the agency is in a *strong market position* to provide the service to customers or the community. **Affirming market position** includes efforts to capture more of the market and investigating the merits of competitive pricing strategies. This includes investment of resources to realize a financial return on investment. Typically, these services have the ability to generate excess revenue.

Advance Market Position (2) – a smaller number of or no alternative providers exist to provide the service, the service has *financial capacity*, and the agency is in a *strong market position* to provide the service. Primarily due to the fact that there are fewer if any alternative providers, **advancing market position** of the service is a logical operational strategy. This includes efforts to capture more of the market, investigating the merits of market pricing, and various outreach efforts. Also, this service may be an excess revenue generator by increasing volume.

Divestment (3,4,7,8,9) – the agency has determined that the service does not fit with the agency's values and vision, and/or the agency has determined it is in a *weak market position* with little or no opportunity to strengthen its position. Further, the agency deems the service to be contrary to the agency's interest in the responsible use of resources, therefore, the agency is positioned to consider **divestment** of the service.

Investment (4) – **investment** of resources is the agency's best course of action as the service is a *good fit* with values and vision, and an opportunity exists to strengthen the agency's current *weak market position* in the marketplace.

Complementary Development (5) – the service is a *good fit*, a number of or one significant *alternative provider(s)* exists which provide the service, the agency is in a *strong market position* to provide the service, yet it does not have *financially capacity* to the agency. “**Complementary development**” encourages planning efforts that lead to complementary service development rather than duplication, broadening the reach of all providers. Although there may be perceived market saturation for the service due to the number or like services of alternative providers, demand and need exists justifying the service’s continued place in the market.

Collaboration (4,7,8) – the agency determines that the service can be enhanced or improved through the development of a collaborative effort as the agency’s current *market position is weak*.

Collaborations (e.g., partnerships) with other service providers (internal or external) that minimize or eliminate duplication of services while most responsibly utilizing agency resources are recommended.

Core Service (6) – these services *fit* with the agency’s values and vision, there are few if any *alternative providers*, yet the agency is in a *strong market position* to provide the service. However, the agency does not have the *financial capacity* to sustain the service outside of General Fund support and the service is deemed to not be economically viable. These services are “**core**” to **satisfying the agency’s values and vision** typically benefiting all community members, or are seen as essential to the lives of under-served populations.

Glossary

Ability – the quality or state of being able; power to perform; competence in doing

Adequate – sufficient for a specific requirement; reasonably sufficient

Capacity – the potential or suitability for accommodating; the maximum amount or number that can be contained or accommodated; the facility or power to produce, perform, or deploy; capability

Quality – meeting or exceeding expectations; degree of excellence; superiority in kind

Superior – of higher rank, quality, or importance; excellent of its kind

Target market – the specific market of a service (e.g., age, sex, race/ethnicity, education level, ability level, residence)

This **Services Assessment Methodology** Outline is provided by:



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Appendix E – 80/20 Analysis of Forest Preserve Lands

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Recreation Master Plan, an evaluation of the current ratio of land allocated to certain categories of use and management was conducted. The basis of this allocation lies within the history and mission of the District. As stated in the Request for Proposals for the project:

In 1929, an advisory committee put forward a recommendation for recreational development policy in the forest preserves based on a survey of current land use at the time:

- *75% of the forest land be kept in their natural state;*
- *5% be maintained as water recreation areas in rivers and lakes, including marsh lands;*
- *18% be developed for recreation uses, including playfields, parking areas and golf courses; and*
- *2% for a zoological park and an arboretum.*

This early recommendation is still used today as a guideline, but has been more loosely stated as an 80-20 policy: that 80 percent of the forest land should be kept in as natural a condition as possible, and 20 percent developed for recreational uses. Based on cursory analysis conducted several years ago, it is likely that the holdings developed for recreational uses likely fall well below 20 percent of total preserve land.

The FPDCC owns and/or manages over 68,000 acres of land. It was not feasible within the scope and budget of the Recreation Master Plan to conduct a detailed field study and assessment of this amount of land, so an approach was developed that combines the use of existing data with detailed study of a representative sampling of lands to estimate the current proportions of land within each of the categories described above. The result provides an estimate of the ratios within a reasonable margin of error to be useful for the purposes of the Recreation Master Plan. It also provides a new GIS layer that can be updated over time and used for future calculations and decision-making.

The overall approach was to look closely at the District's existing GIS data to determine what information could be used to identify lands within each of the categories identified in the District's policies. Field visits to selected sites were also conducted as a way of ground-truthing the GIS information and gaining a better understanding of what the relationship was between the information in the GIS and the actual conditions in the field.

A series of locations within the District were identified and a team of District staff and consultants visited the sites over a period of several days in late spring and early summer of 2012. In all, more than 100 identified locations were visited, including golf courses, activity areas, trails, water bodies, nature centers, and aquatic centers.

GIS METHODOLOGY

The District's current GIS data was the starting point for the process. The GIS did not have layers that matched the categories of land identified in the District's policies, so existing GIS layers were examined to see how they might be used to arrive at the desired land categories. Within the data are several layers that appeared to be useful. These layers included *tree cover*, *natural communities*, *parking lots*, *trail centerlines*, and supporting data associated with them. The final data was clipped to match the boundary of the FPDCC boundary GIS layer.

Developed Lands

The GIS did not have a category of land classified as "developed," so it was not possible to simply measure the amount of developed land identified as such in the GIS. The District also lacks an adopted definition of what the term "developed" refers to, and there is some difference of opinion on what should or should not be included in the definition. However, the GIS does have within it a *natural community* layer that identifies a category of lands that are "managed as natural communities" and labeled as "managed," and which also includes a category of land called "unmanaged." The definition of this unmanaged category is as follows:

"Unmanaged" areas are those not exhibiting a natural community and which in the vast majority of cases were being used for some type of recreational usage and/or built infrastructure such as a mowed play area, the Chicago Botanic Garden, the Brookfield zoo, picnic groves, and golf courses.

By comparing lands identified as unmanaged with aerial photographs, it appeared that lands identified in the GIS as being within the unmanaged category tended to be developed lands. Comparing this with observations from the field visits confirmed this assumption to be generally true. Therefore, the lands identified in the GIS as "unmanaged" could be considered "developed" for the purposes of this study.

However, there were lands outside the "unmanaged" category that should also be considered "developed." These include roads, parking lots, structures, utilities, athletic and recreation areas and trails. To account for these, all parking lot acreage within the "managed" lands was measured and counted as "developed." Also, trails within managed areas were assigned a buffer of 15 feet either side of the trail centerline (total 30' wide corridor) and where this corridor lies within managed lands it was counted as developed. Structures were buffered 100 feet and utilities were buffered 60 feet. Athletic and recreation acreage was counted as developed and not buffered.

Based on this, a calculation of the amount of land considered to be "developed" could be made.

Developed land was calculated as follows:

1. Total developed or unmanaged acreage + total parking lot acreage + total trail buffer acreage + structure buffer acreage + utility buffer acreage + athletic and recreation acreage = **Total Developed Land**

2. GIS layers used:

- a. Trails
- b. Natural Communities FPDCC
- c. Parking
- d. FINAL_FPDCC_Buildings
- e. Athletic and other recreation
- f. License_Electric, and the other following utility layers: pipeline, sanitary_sewer, stoRm sewer, telephone, cable, gas, water main

Certain lands are not included in any category in the GIS, and it can be assumed that some of those unclassified lands fit the definition of developed land, and should be added to the calculation. This will be discussed later.

Natural Lands

Natural Lands were defined as any land shown in the GIS to be managed as a natural community. To align with the FPDCC policies, water bodies, including lakes, ponds, and rivers were calculated separately.

Water

Water bodies that lie within the District's boundary were used to calculate total water acreage. It should be noted that for the most part, streams are not included in this calculation. Water was calculated separately from developed and undeveloped lands – i.e., it is not included in the calculations for those categories. The GIS layer: "hydropoly" was used.

Undetermined

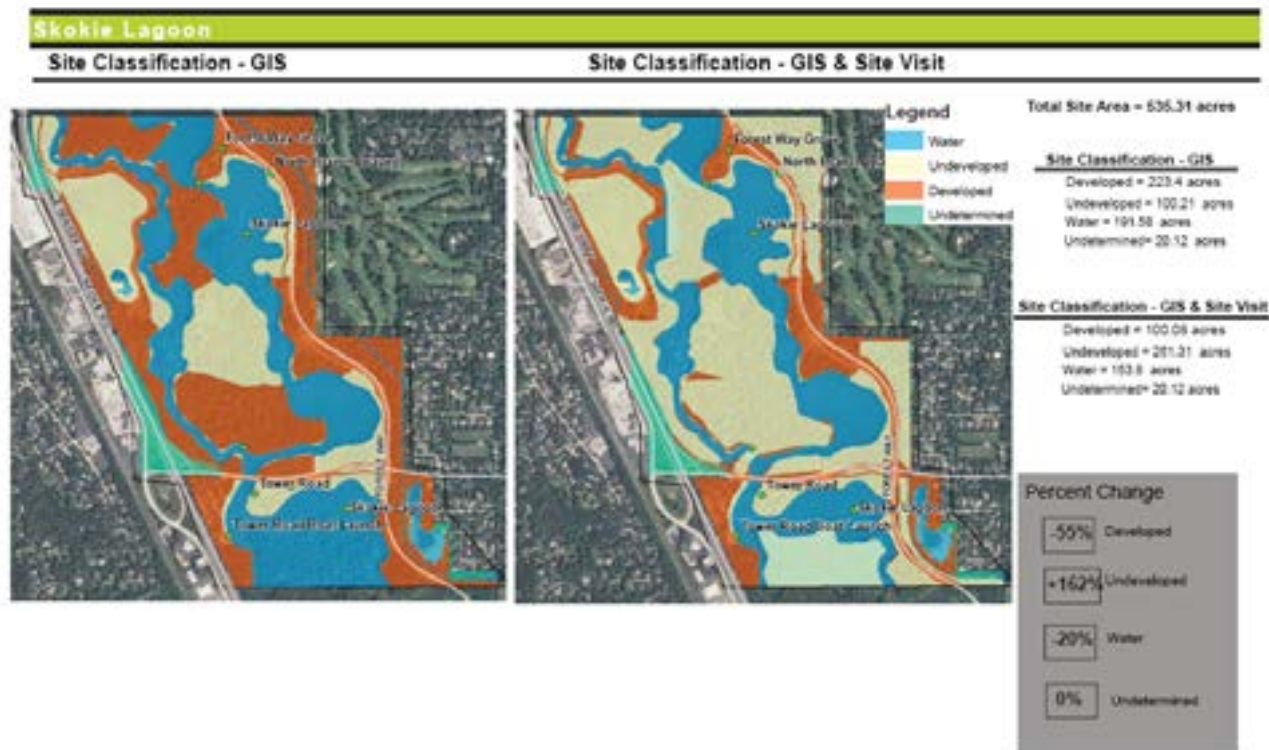
In performing the operations described above, it was found that some lands within the FPDCC boundaries do not fall within any of the layers used to perform the calculations described above. More specifically, all of the classifications used in the calculations are found within the natural community GIS layer. When this layer is displayed along with the FPDCC boundary layer, some lands fall within the boundary layer but outside of the natural community layer. For this study, any land not included in the natural community GIS layer, but found to be included in the FPDCC boundary GIS layer is categorized as undetermined.

Site Visits and Map Adjustments

Maps generated using the GIS layers described above were taken into the field to ground-truth the above methodology. Each pre-determined site was visited and the actual site conditions were compared to the field map. A sample field map is shown below.



After visiting all of the pre-determined sites, several sites were selected as representative samples to be used to further evaluate the accuracy of the above methodology. For each of the sample sites, the categories in the GIS were adjusted to match what the field team observed to be the ground conditions and the difference in acreages between the original GIS and this modified mapping was calculated. An example of one of the sites is shown below. Note that the area classified as “undetermined” was not modified in this exercise. There are a number of ways to address those lands which will be discussed later.



The results of these adjustments for each of the sample sites are shown in the attached document and summarized in the table below.

Site	Total Acreage	Net Change - Developed	Net Change - Undeveloped	Net Change - Water
Miller Meadow	332.70	87.90	-87.90	0.00
Dan Ryan	232.91	0.00	0.00	0.00
Busse	3637.62	0.00	0.00	0.00
Skokie Lagoon	535.31	123.32	-161.10	37.76
Bunker Hill	235.09	4.43	-4.43	0.00
Bode Lake	46.20	-5.25	5.25	0.00
George Dunne Golf Course	633.64	73.70	-73.70	0.00
Tampier	319.97	0.00	0.00	0.00
Totals	5973.44	284.1	-321.88	37.76

Although the sample sites represent a small percentage (0.87%) of the District's total acreage, they contain a good cross-section of the types of sites contained within it. In this way, they give an indication of what might happen if all lands throughout the District were similarly reviewed. The following table shows what the change was as a percentage of the total land from all of the sample sites combined. It indicates that the percentage of land considered "developed" went up and the "undeveloped" percentage went down. The percentage classified as "water" changed by less than one percent.

	Developed	Undeveloped	Water
Percent of Total Before	25.56%	55.31%	6.94%
Percent of Total After	20.80%	60.70%	6.30%
Percentage Change	4.76%	-5.39%	0.63%

CONCLUSIONS

The process above suggests that using the existing GIS, and making the adjustments for parking areas and trails only is a reasonable way to estimate the current proportion of land in each of the categories described. Doing that yields the following results:

- Water = 7.5%
- Managed Natural Lands = 74.04%
- “Developed” Lands = 15.05%
- Undetermined = 3.41%

Out of 66,920.69 GIS acres, water covers 5,016.28 acres, natural lands covers 49,547.62 acres, developed lands covers 10,073.39, acres (including acreage for the Chicago Botanic Garden at 385 acres and the Brookfield Zoo at 216 acres) and undetermined covers 2283.4 acres.

	Acres	Percent of Total Acres
Water	5,016	7.50%
Natural Lands	49,548	74.04%
Developed Lands	10,073	15.05%
Undetermined	2,283	3.41%
Total Acres	66,921	

Comparing the percentages to the original policies of the District, it is seen that water covers slightly more than the 5% originally allocated (7.5%), and Natural Lands cover slightly more than the original 75% allocation (74%). The “developed” category (15%) is significantly below the original 20% allocation (which includes the Brookfield Zoo and Chicago Botanic Garden). If the entire water category is counted as “undeveloped” then the total percentage of undeveloped is 81.5% of the total. Counting all of the water as undeveloped seems reasonable.

When the more detailed study of sample sites is considered, it suggests that if the entire FPDCC system was looked at in more detail, it is possible that the allocation for “developed” lands might increase while the “undeveloped” lands decreased. However, the amount of such changes is difficult to predict from this small sample size.

Also, consideration needs to be given as to how the “undetermined” lands should be treated. There are several possibilities:

- Use the GIS to merge these with the land classification adjacent to them.
- Allocate the total acres on a proportional basis to each of the other categories (i.e., allocate 74% of the undetermined land to undeveloped, 15% to developed, and 7.5% to water).
- Allocate the undetermined acres in some other proportional way to the other categories.
- Examine each of the undetermined polygons in aerial photographs and assign each of these areas according to their apparent conditions.
- Conduct field visits to verify the actual classification of these lands.

Some of these are more expensive and elaborate than others. The final determination should be made based on the District’s needs.

The conclusion from this analysis is that the District is likely within a reasonable range of meeting its stated policy at the current time, depending on the level of precision on which that determination is to be made. If a more precise measurement is needed, it will require a more elaborate and extensive study.

NEXT STEPS

The results of the study outlined above should be adequate to assure the District that it does not need to make significant changes in the use of its current lands to meet its goals for the 80-20 policy. However, as new uses are incorporated, or as new parcels are acquired, adjustments may need to be made.

It is the recommendation of this study that any new lands that are acquired be managed to maintain the current proportions. For example, if a very large natural area is acquired, a portion of it should be dedicated to developed recreation, or if it is kept undeveloped, then some portion of the District’s existing lands, as appropriate, should be allowed to change from “undeveloped” to “developed.” It may not be necessary to physically alter existing lands to justify a re-classification of them. The lack of precision in the current GIS mapping suggests that areas can be found within each classification that might be better classified in a different category. If, for example, an area is found that would be suitable for a new recreation element but that area is currently classified in the GIS as “undeveloped”, it may be justifiable to re-classify it as “developed” and look for a similarly-sized area in the “developed” area that could justifiably be re-classified as “undeveloped” upon a more precise evaluation. In this way, the balance is maintained without the need to conduct a precise evaluation of the entire 68,000 acres of FPDCC land.

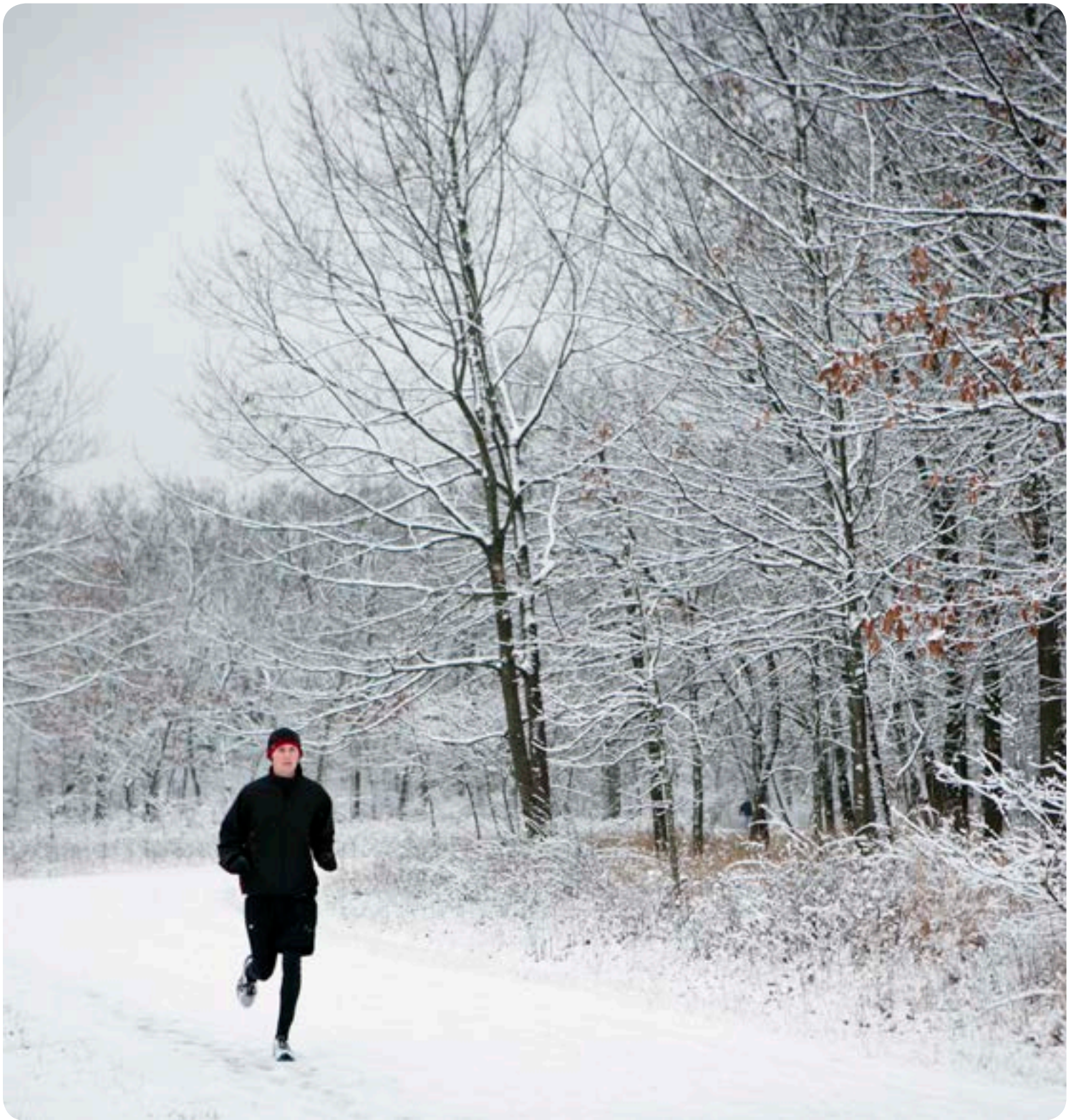
Moving forward, staff should refine the new “developed” GIS layer that was created by this study to better represent existing and changing ground conditions. The final GIS layer includes four categories: water, managed natural lands, developed lands, and undetermined.

It is suggested that GIS staff or an intern be assigned to compare the final GIS layer to aerial photographs and adjust polygons and attributes accordingly. If a site warrants further investigation, it is suggested that it be placed on a list of sites to ground-truth field conditions. Once a site is visited it can be adjusted in the final GIS layer. Future steps also include working with GIS staff on procedures to update the GIS layer as ground conditions change.



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Appendix F – Recreation Analysis Component Chart



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Recreation Component Analysis Chart

1-Feb-13

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Recommendation options Include: add, maintain, reduce, remove/divest, further study required

Recreation Use/Component	Current Number	Recommendation	# Proposed New (min.)	*Rationale	Comments
Adventure/ Alternative				Select appropriate activities below (based on site opportunities and constraints)	
Archery (see Appendix C)	0	Add as part of activity center/adventure recreation hub	1 to 3	Growing trend, peer comparison, supports adventure rec/day use per Camp Master Plan	Develop policies and regulations. Pursue mobile and permanent options.
Bouldering /climbing	0	Add as part of activity center/adventure recreation hub	3	Growing trend, peer comparison, supports adventure rec/day use per Camp Master Plan	Will need security and supervision possibly by vendor/partner
Mountain biking (also see trails section below)	1 (not exclusive-use trail)	Add so that distribution is Northern, Central, and Southern (current staging areas located in Southwest)	2	Distribute and diversify recreation opportunities, demand, growth in national participation	Work with area mountain bike group in not only planning but in education and enforcement of mountain bike trails and useage
Ropes/challenge course (see Appendix C)	0	Add - locate near select campground sites or add as part of activity center/adventure recreation hub	2	Peer comparison, growing trend, diversify recreation opportunities	Would provide destination experience at activity hubs. Will need security and supervision possibly by vendor/partner
Slack line	0	Allow use - develop guidelines, consider including as mobile recreation option	varies	Growing trend, diversify recreation opportunities	Facilitate and promote mobile temporary use at events/gatherings
Zip line/canopy course (see Appendix C)	0	Consider feasibility of offering one destination site; incorporate zip line into challenge course or canopy route	1	Diversify recreation, create destination, trends	Contract service
Pump track/bike course	0	Consider adding; further study needed	1 to 2	Diversify recreation, growing trend	Identify appropriate location(s)
Stage or Amphitheatre	1	Activate current stage and utilize portable stages	Use portable stages	Rated high in survey	1 exists at Cumming Square, River Forest. Activate by expanding cultural offerings through use of stage

Athletic fields (permitted meadows)	40	Consider adding based on demand	Varies	Activate underutilized turf areas as appropriate, generate revenue	If demand and appropriate locations are identified
**Camping	*	Expand	*	Diversify recreation opportunities, growing trend, peer comparison	See Camp Master Plan
Community/ Education gardens	0	Consider adding - in association with Nature Center programs or a partner	Varies	Trends, education opportunity	Identify partnership opportunities with Chicago Botanic Gardens and others
Disc golf (see Appendix C)	1	Expand	2	Diversify recreation opportunities, growing trend	Low cost and popularity make this an attractive expansion of current offering. Consider adding entry level facilities
Off-leash dog areas	2 (1 N, 1 SW)	Equitably provide - Add one in Central area; refine standards; enhance existing	1 to 3	Growing trend; peer comparison	Identify partnership opportunities
Education					
Nature centers	6	Maintain facilities and expand programming including mobile programs	0	Core service and community support	Expand focus as visitor center to promote recreation and education
Interpretive signage	Varies	Add and expand	Varies	Fits with goal to integrate nature message throughout District	Expand Tinley Creek and Deer Grove interpretative pilot project to all 5 subareas
Fitness	0	Formalize and add additional infrastructure and education elements	1 to 3	National trends of healthy lifestyles and fitness, survey results	Pilot project at Swallow Cliff
Golf	10 courses, 4 driving ranges	Work with golf contractor to develop long-term plan; partner to expand winter rec uses, etc.	N/A	Examples of partnerships (Denver)	Work with contractor to add winter recreation uses a golf courses. May require some clubhouse upgrades or renovations
Historic structures		Develop specific plans and standards for use; provide interpretation	N/A	Preservation and expanded service opportunities	Historic structures are part of the character of the FPDCC
Model airplane fields	9	Monitor usage	0	Possible decrease in popularity	Continue to monitor use and demand for these types of facilities
Picnic Areas					
Picnic groves	263	Create mobile recreation opportunities	varies	Expand recreation opportunities, large number of visitors	Activate spaces
Picnic shelters	187	Consider adding a larger variety of sizes	varies	Survey, capture additional users	Diversity and location of shelters could attract new users

Play					
Traditional playgrounds	0	Focus on nature play areas	0	Provided by others	Continue to watch trends and peers as play changes and adapts
Nature play	1	Expand - Start with Dan Ryan (in short term) - phase others	5 to 10	Growing trend, peer comparison	Nature play fits well in the mission of introducing children to the forest preserve and nature
Spraygrounds/splash parks	0	Consider expanded service for existing aquatic facilities		Growing trend	Could be added to aquatic facilities to keep interest and financial sustainability of facilities
Special Venues					
Chicago Botanic Garden	1	Expand partnership	NA	Opportunities to share resources	
Brookfield Zoo	1	Expand partnership	NA	Opportunities to share resources	
Sports Complex	1	Maintain current lease	NA		Managed by Chicago Heights; ensure consistency with other leases
Tennis	1	Maintain, but reevaluate lease	NA	Review for consistency with other leases	FPDCC land in River Forest is leased to Oak Park Tennis Club
Trails		Complete Trails Master Plan and develop management plan		Survey, trends, peers	Plan to address trailheads, access, and standards; maintain GIS data on on trails and surface types
Paved/hard surface	146	Add	Varies	Survey, trends, peers	"
Unpaved/soft surface	201	Add	Varies	"	"
Equestrian trails	Multi-use	Add	Varies	Diversity of trails and user groups	"
Equestrian stable (private)	1	Develop partnerships with private stables and expanded public equestrian opportunities	Varies	Unique position/niche of FPDCC	"
Single-track/primitive	1 (Palos)	Work with CAMBr and other interest groups to expand mountain bike trails	1 to 3	Diversity of trails and user groups, trends	"
Trailheads	6	Formalize and add. Currently lack consistency and mapping. Not user friendly	15	Trail amenities (restrooms, drinking fountains) desired by public per survey comments	Pilot project could be done at Whealan in conjunction with expanded use of warming hut, possible concession/bike rentals
Bike rental facilities	0	Add	Varies	Concessions could bring new users to the system	Identify concessionaire or partner

Water Recreation					
Fishing lakes	42	Maintain current number		Trends, survey	
Boat launch	15	Add - Develop Water Recreation Master Plan	4-5+	Survey, trends, public input, synergy with Camp Master Plan	CIP identifies 4-5
Boat house	1	Add	1 to 3	Trends, survey	Conduct feasibility study including market analysis
Boat rental	3	Expand	3+	Trends, survey	Identify locations as part of Water Recreation Plan
Swimming beach	0	Evaluate feasibility of adding	Varies	Trends	Service delivery options - regulated/ non-supervised or supervised
Aquatic center (outdoor)	3	Maintain	0	Trends	
Model boating (permitted)	5	Maintain	0	Current use	
Winter Recreation		Consider feasibility study of snow making, refrigerated toboggan runs, ice skating. Become the leader in winter recreation		Winter recreation rated high in survey	Explore partnership with golf course; develop communications/ marketing plan
Cross country skiing areas	1 groomed	Expand	Varies	Growth in national participation	Identify partnerships
Cross country skiing - rental	1 (SW)	Add	2 (N & C)	Winter rec rated high in survey	Identify provider/vendor
Other rentals (sleds)	0	Add		Winter rec rated high in survey, trend	"
Ice fishing	20	Maintain	0	Current use	
Sledding hills	10	Maintain and add	3+	High survey response to winter recreation opportunities, current use	Could consider snow making (potential pilot project at Whealan using warming house and restrooms); explore adding ice skating
Snowmobiling areas	5	Maintain	0	Current use - continue to regulate to minimize impact	Need to re-evaluate policy/criteria around motorized vehicle use
Ice skating	6	Expand and consider adding amenities	3	Winter recreation rated high in survey	Revisit regulations and designated areas; co-locating with other winter recreation is desired

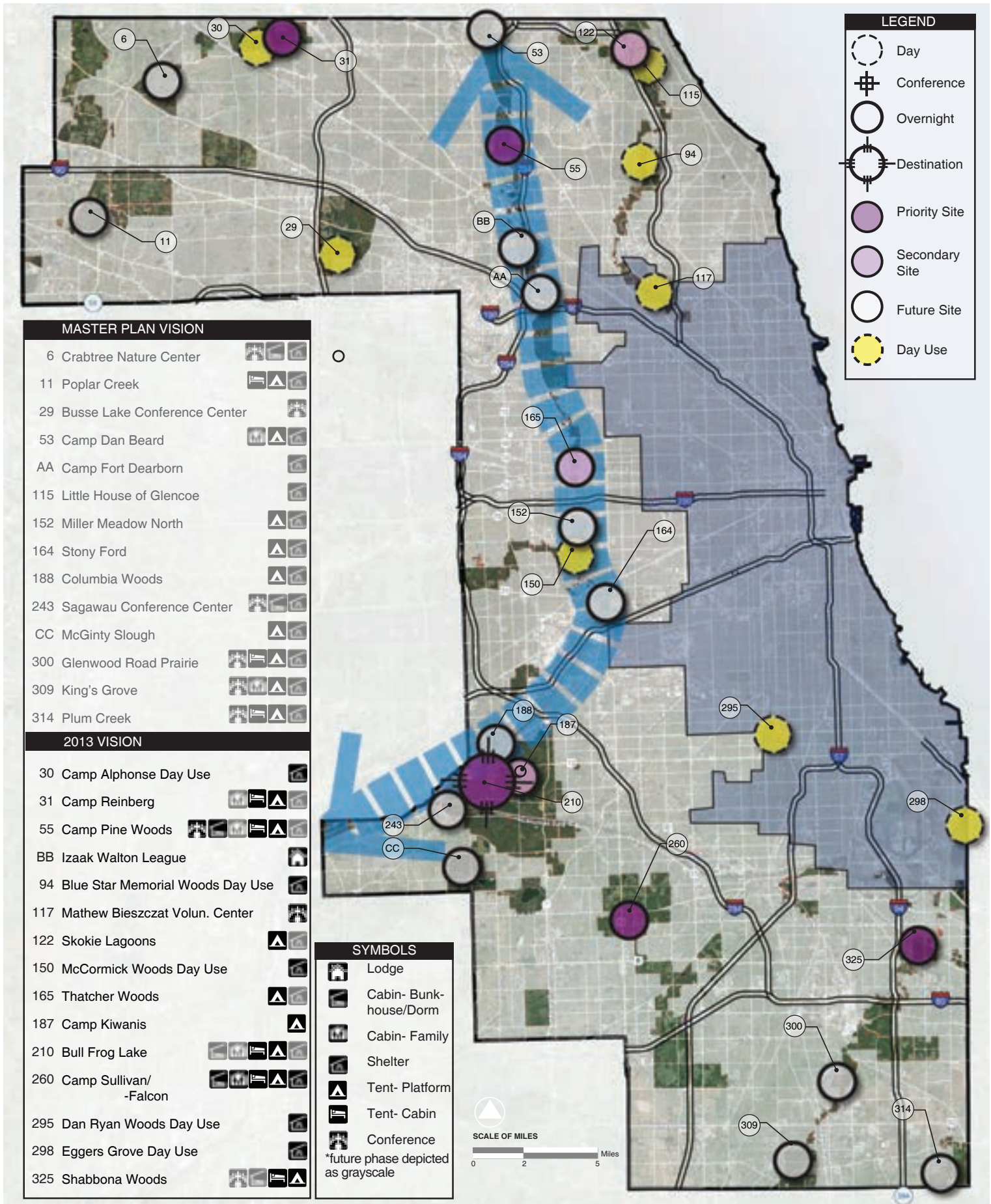
*See Evaluation Criteria in Chapter 1; Survey & Peer Agency Comparison in Chapter 2; Inventory Assessment in Chapter 4; and Appendices: A-Trends, B-Peer Agency Charts, and D-Service Assessment.

**See Camp Master Plan for specific camping recommendations and Appendix G-Camp Master Plan Site Map

Appendix G – Camp Master Plan Site Map



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Acknowledgements

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County gratefully acknowledges the contributions of staff, multiple stakeholder groups, and individuals who offered their input, concerns, and creative ideas. This input has helped shape this master plan and made a lasting impact on the future outdoor recreational opportunities.

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About the Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Established in 1914, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County is the oldest forest preserve system in the nation, maintaining more than 68,000 acres of open land for the education, pleasure and recreation of the public. The District strives to protect and restore the county's diverse ecosystems, so all our unique native plants and animals can live and thrive. Each year, millions of people use these lands and facilities to enjoy or study nature, bicycle, hike, fish, cross-country ski, picnic, golf, canoe or simply relax in a large preserve that leaves urban life behind.



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John A. Fritchey, 12th District
Larry Suffredin, 13th District
Gregg Goslin, 14th District
Timothy O. Schneider, 15th District
Jeffrey R. Tobolski, 16th District
Elizabeth "Liz" Doody Gorman, 17th District