



5 Year Implementation Strategy

**(2016 to 2020) for the
Next Century Conservation Plan**

2018 Update



**FOREST
PRESERVES**
of Cook County

feel free

5 YEAR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY (2016 to 2020) FOR THE NEXT CENTURY CONSERVATION PLAN

2018 Update

Forest Preserves of Cook County

Approved by the Conservation & Policy Council on November 6, 2017

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C&PC members Sylvia Jenkins and Robert Castaneda



C&PC site visit at Deer Grove



C&PC member Terry Guen, collecting seeds with Deer Grove Stewards Pete Jackson and Sue Gorr

In 2014, President Toni Preckwinkle and the Forest Preserves of Cook County Board of Commissioners adopted an ambitious plan to restore the Forest Preserves to health and sustain them as a world-class treasure for the people of Cook County. The Next Century Conservation Plan (NCCP) lays out a set of bold actions to make Cook County a national leader in urban/regional conservation and calls for a massive commitment to restore habitat, acquire and protect more land, and make the preserves more inviting and accessible to all Cook County residents.

committees have taken important steps to advance these goals. In 2015, more than forty partner six priority programs and projects which could move forward in the next few years. In 2016, the Civic Consulting Alliance (CCA) refined cost estimates for major elements of the plan and analyzed dozens of initiatives to reduce costs or raise non-tax revenue sources—including options which may be unpopular and highly controversial. The CCA's analysis clarified that successful implementation of the NCCP will require more public resources than the Forest Preserves currently receives.

Research conducted by the Trust for Public Land in 2017 indicates that voters trust the Forest Preserves and support the NCCP goals, but do not support sufficiently an increase in taxes to support these goals at this time. While there may be an opportunity to secure additional public resources in future years, there is no guarantee when, or even if, this will happen.

In 2018, the FPCC and its partners will continue to explore options to leverage limited public resources and prepare for difficult choices which may become necessary in future years. We will also continue efforts to grow awareness and build support for the resources needed to implement the NCCP fully.

NCCP SUPPORTERS



North American river otter (*Lontra canadensis*)



White wild indigo (*Baptisia alba*)

Thank you to our funders. With your support, the Forest Preserves and our Partners continue to advance the goals of the ambitious Next Century Conservation Plan.

- AmeriCorps/ServeIllinois
- Arcelor Mittal
- Bobolink Foundation
- Caerus Foundation
- CBS EcoMedia
- Cook County Department of Public Health (Center for Disease Control Funds)
- Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways/Invest in Cook
- Donnelley Foundation
- Ford Motor Company Fund
- Forest Preserve Foundation
- Forest Preserve Foundation
- Friends of the Parks (Arcelor Mittal Funds)
- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
- Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Funds)
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources (Recreational Trails Program)
- Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
- Landmarks Illinois/Barbara C. and Thomas E. Donnelley II Preservation Fund for Illinois
- Morton Arboretum (USDA Forest Service Funds)
- Nazarus Foundation
- Sally Mead Hands Foundation
- Sustain Our Great Lakes (in partnership with The Nature Conservancy)
- USDA National Resources Conservation Service
- USDI Fish & Wildlife Service

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Prescribed burning

"It is not very often that a plan is taken so seriously--that an actual implementation strategy is launched and maintained and course corrections are made along the way."

Laurel Ross
Conservation & Policy Council

The five-year implementation strategy is designed to advance the long-term goals of the *Next Century Conservation Plan*, including:

- Restore 30,000 acres to ecological health. (By the end of 2018 an estimated 9,400 acres will be under restoration or active maintenance.)
- Expand the forest preserves from 69,000 to 90,000 acres.
- Make the Forest Preserves accessible and welcoming to all the people of Cook County.

To achieve these ambitious goals, the implementation strategy focuses on seven operational priorities as follows:

- | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. scaling up, | 4. leveraging resources, | 7. raising new resources, and |
| 2. using resources effectively and efficiently, | 5. changing organizational culture, | ensuring continuity |
| 3. building partnerships, | 6. communicating | |

Each year the NCCP Steering Committee offers a frank assessment of these operational priorities, acknowledging both the important progress which has been made, as well as the very difficult challenges which remain. The committee's assessment is presented on page 5. As indicated, one of the most important achievements to date is a series of structural and cultural changes which represent a fundamental shift in the way the FPCC conducts business.

Similarly, the NCCP implementation committees conduct an annual review of the priority actions (programs, projects, etc.) for the current year's work plan and assess progress towards the NCCP goals. This progress assessment represents the main focus of this report. As indicated, 83% of phase 1 priority actions have been completed or are moving forward, though some are not moving forward at the rate needed to meet 2020 targets.



Volunteer restoration work

Each of these achievements is an important step forward, but the massive scaling up required to meet the NCCP goals has not yet occurred. While most priority actions are advancing, many are not on target to meet 2020 milestones. Furthermore, the pressures of addressing the FPCC's structural operating deficit, the district's backlog of deferred maintenance, its on-going pension deficit and other rising costs will continue to constrain the availability of public resources to support restoration, acquisition, accessibility improvements and other NCCP goals. As described in the Annual Report of the Conservation and Policy Council, the proposed 2018 budget begins to address some, but not all, of these challenges.

This updated implementation strategy also begins to explore how new approaches to restoration, acquisition, and accessibility can be used to continue making modest progress towards the NCCP goals even if no new financial resources are available in the near future. During 2018, the FPCC and its partners will continue to develop these ideas as follows:

- **Restoration.** The FPCC is working with partners and stewards to explore how to maintain restored sites and expand restoration if no new financial resources become available. Ideas under consideration include engaging more volunteers, certifying more key stewards, expanding prescribed fire operations, and increasing the strategic deployment of in-house personnel resources.
- **Acquisition.** Land acquisition is, by far, the most costly NCCP goal. The estimated cost of acquiring 21,000 acres is \$1.7 billion, or 85% of the total \$2 billion cost to implement major NCCP goals. This dwarfs all other resource needs, and, in a time of limited resources, can be overwhelming. How, then, do we continue to acquire new land even as we struggle to raise financial resources for restoration and other NCCP goals? Do we focus on low-cost acquisition strategies such as lease-backs, life-estates and other donations? If an important site becomes available, can a conservation advocate purchase and hold the site for five or more years until the FPCC secures resources to acquire it? Should we consider a limited bond referendum to acquire and restore a limited number of key sites? The FPCC will work with conservation advocates to explore these questions.



Trailside Spring Festival 2017

- **Making the preserves welcoming and accessible to all.** The FPCC is exploring four cost-saving strategies to connect more people to nature. First, the FPCC has piloted and is now replicating a model to engage community leaders and train them on how to access and utilize the resources and assets of the preserves. For example, a community leader attends a course on camping, then teaches members of his/her organization to enjoy camping at a FPCC campground. Secondly, the district is working with partners who can present programs at the preserves without significant help or financial resources from the FPCC. For example, the Palos Park District has sponsored concerts and other events at nearby FPCC sites with limited financial and staff support from the FPCC. Third, internal ADA working groups and an external ADA advisory group are prioritizing programmatic changes and physical improvements needed to make the preserves more accessible and several low-cost changes (such as the use of mobi-mats to provide site access to people in wheelchairs) are already being implemented. Finally, smaller FPCC programs throughout the preserves may be consolidated into larger and more cost-effective regional programs.



Palos Park District sponsored concert at Swallow Cliff

Progress to Date – Operational Priorities

On August 8, 2017, the NCCP Steering Committee reviewed seven operational priorities which are critical to successful implementation of the plan. For each priority, the committee considered where we started, the challenges that have arisen, and any additional changes still needed. The committee then assessed overall progress to date and assigned a grade of *Excellent*, *Satisfactory*, or *Needs Improvement*. An overview of the Steering Committee's evaluation is presented in this executive summary.

Operational Priority 1: Scaling Up

The Forest Preserves and its partners have launched many successful programs and projects which address priority goals, but to achieve the level of impact envisioned by the plan, massive replication and scaling up



Ohio Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohioensis*)

“The bar is to show the region and the nation how it is done. I think you are well on your way.”

Bob Megquier
Openlands

is required. A major focus of the first five years will be to evaluate promising programs (both existing and new pilot programs) and explore the potential for replication and scaling up.

and its partners continue to do the best they can with existing resources. Overall progress is mixed. Restoration is holding steady. Strategic land acquisition has occurred, but available funding will soon be depleted. Promising programs piloted in 2016 have become models for collaboration and partnership and are being replicated. Some progress has been made developing metrics, but more work is needed to measure and document success.

Progress to date:

☐

Excellent



Satisfactory

☐

Needs Improvement

Operational Priority 2: Using Resources Effectively and Efficiently

We expect it to take at least five years to scale up the capacity and resources required for successful implementation. However, it is critical that the Forest Preserves position itself during these start-up years so that it is able to move quickly to respond to opportunities that may be presented.

Excellent progress continues. The FPCC is incorporating best practices and implementing various initiatives to reduce costs and/or use resources more efficiently and effectively. Operation of the aquatic centers has been outsourced. Vehicles across the district are being converted to propane. A cost-benefit analysis of services and fees resulted in adjustments to permit fees. A concession master plan was completed to identify opportunities for earned revenue, and various assets across the district (such as picnic groves and trails) are being marketed for corporate sponsorships. Internal working groups and an external advisory group are prioritizing access and other improvements to make the Forest Preserves more accessible to persons with disabilities. As new resources become available in future years, top priority improvements will be teed up and ready to proceed.

Progress to date:



Excellent

☐

Satisfactory

☐

Needs Improvement



Chicago Park District at LaBagh Woods IMBD Event



Accessible garden at Little Red Schoolhouse

Operational Priority 3: Building Partnerships and Leveraging Resources

The success of this effort depends on strong partnerships. Partners, including government agencies, non-profit advocates and cultural and research institutions, and volunteers, have long supported conservation efforts, and it is crucial for the Forest Preserves to figure out how to best leverage their investment of time, talent and financial resources. Documenting the impact of these efforts over time is critical to making the case that public resources are being invested efficiently and effectively.

and asking partners to help develop strategies for implementing NCCCP goals. As indicated below, more than forty organizations agreed to partner on dozens of projects and programs. However, only a handful offered to lead specific strategies and initiatives. Most partners were unable to do so—either due to a lack of resources or because it was not clear how this would advance their work.

In 2017, the FPCC staff began to articulate specific needs and work closely with partners to identify where and how their work aligns with the NCCP. This represents important progress that should lead to more partners leading more initiatives in 2018 and beyond.

Finally, the hours and resources invested by partners and volunteers is extensive, but it is difficult to document this investment and measure its impact. Documenting and measuring the impact of partners and volunteers is an on-going challenge.

Progress to date:

☐

Excellent



Satisfactory

☐

Needs Improvement

Implementation Partners

29th U.S. Colored Troops Volunteer Regiment Alliance
for Healthy and Active Communities
American Birding Association
American Indian Center
Audubon Great Lakes
Barrington Area Conservation Trust
Barrington Natural History Society
Billy Casper Recreation

Friends of the Chicago River
Friends of the Forest Preserves
Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
Go Ape
Hines VA
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Illinois Ornithological Society
Illinois Natural History Survey



Adler Planetarium at Party for the Preserves



C&PC member Laurel Ross representing the Field Museum at LaBagh Woods IMBD event

Bird Conservation Network
 Boy Scouts of America – Chicago Area
 Central States SER
 Chicago Audubon Society
 Chicago Botanic Garden
 Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
 Chicago Department of Transportation –
 Greencorps Chicago
 Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
 Chicago Ornithological Society
 Chicago Park District
 Chicago Wilderness
 Chicago Zoological Society/Brookfield Zoo
 Citizens for Conservation
 City of Dolton
 City of Elgin
 Cook County Economic Development
 Cook County Environmental Control
 Cook County Housing Authority
 Cook County Juvenile Probation
 Cook County Public Health Department
 Conservation Foundation
 El Valor
 Elk Grove Village
 Environmentalists of Color
 Evanston North Short Bird Club
 Faith In Place
 Field Museum
 Fishin’ Buddies
 Forest Preserve District of Will County
 Forest Preserves Foundation
 Fort Dearborn Audubon

Illinois Nature Preserve Commission
 Illinois Sustainable Technology Center
 I&M Canal Authority
 Lake County Forest Preserves
 Local schools across Cook County
 Mary Crane Center
 Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of
 Greater Chicago
 Metropolitan YMCA
 Moraine Valley College
 Mujeres Latinas En Acccion
 NeighborSpace
 Northwestern University
 Openlands
 Orland Grassland Volunteers
 Outdoor Afro
 Outdoor Empowered Network
 Proviso Partners for Health
 Sand Ridge Audubon
 The Nature Conservancy
 Thorn Creek Audubon
 Trust for Public Land
 University of Chicago
 University of Illinois at Chicago
 University of Illinois Extension
 US Army Corps of Engineers
 USDA Fish & Wildlife Service
 Village of Palos Park Rec & Park Department
 Wild Birds Unlimited
 WTTW (Nature Cat)
 WYCC PBS Chicago

“Our organizational culture is different today. There are always pockets to work on, but we are in a much better place.”

Arnold Randall
Forest Preserves of Cook County

“Nothing we do in conservation is sustainable unless people are totally behind it. So anything that gets the public to appreciate and care is key to sustaining this work—not just for the next 25 years, but for another 25 years and another.”

Stuart Strahl
Chicago Zoological Society

Operational Priority 4: Changing Organizational Culture

The challenges we face require new and creative approaches. We must be open to new ideas and opportunities. We will measure the results and be frank about what is working, and what isn’t.

Progress to date has been excellent. A new way of doing business has been embraced and promoted by President Preckwinkle and Superintendent Arnold Randall and is being embedded throughout the entire district. Goals tied to NCCP implementation have been incorporated into performance management metrics for each FPCC department. The senior team meets quarterly with individual departments to understand what is working and what is not, review overall progress towards goals, and explore alternative approaches as needed. Inter-department cooperation is strong and senior leadership at the FPCC is working as a team to address on-going budget challenges.

Progress to date:



Excellent



Satisfactory



Needs Improvement

Operational Priority 5: Communicating

Building the community of support needed to back the ambitious Next Century Conservation Plan will require an expanded investment in outreach, education, and marketing. Partners like the Chicago Zoological Society and the Chicago Botanic Garden can help spread the word via their large networks, and social media can activate the networks of advocates and other partners. Open communication between the FPCC and the network of partners working to implement the plan is also critical.

Progress is being made, but more work is needed to reach target audiences. In 2016 and 2017, new communications strategies such as billboard advertisements, a radio campaign, and a documentary on the history of the preserves reached hundreds of thousands of people. A communications strategy and tagline were developed in 2017, and collaborations with the Zoo and Garden are helping promote the preserves to a network of like-minded residents. Recent market research has helped the FPCC understand the attitudes and behaviors of those most likely to visit and/or support the Forest Preserves



Chicago Botanic Garden Facebook post

“On the surface, the biggest obstacle is funding. But in terms of process, the biggest obstacle is a clear philosophy that drives how decisions are made.”

Rob Castaneda
Conservation & Policy Council

and what messages are most important to them. The FPCC is providing more materials in multiple languages. All of this represents important progress, but there is still a need to better target communities and audiences. There is also a need for additional resources for communications and outreach.

Progress to date:

☐

Excellent



Satisfactory

☐

Needs Improvement

Operational Priority 6: Raising New Resources

In Cook County and throughout the country, an intense debate over the proper level of public funding for services and programs continues. As we assess the gap between resources we need and resources available to implement the plan, the Forest Preserves will seek to fill the gap through a combination of non-financial resources (such as increased volunteers) and non-tax revenues (such as public-private partnerships, corporate sponsorships, expanded concessions, outsourcing and other operational efficiencies.)

2016, the Civic Consulting Alliance concluded that a broad range of initiatives to raise non-tax revenue and other resources for the preserves will prove inadequate to fully fund the NCCP goals (though they can provide resources for key projects and programs). In 2017, market research conducted by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) indicated that voters support the NCCP goals but do not support an increase in property taxes to support these goals at this time. The FPCC will work with the Conservation and Policy Council, partners and advocates to raise awareness of the NCCP goals and build support for public resources needed. The FPCC will also continue to explore non-tax revenue initiatives and be prepared to make difficult choices as needed to address future budget challenges.

Progress to date:

☐

Excellent

☐

Satisfactory



Needs Improvement



Burr Oak bark

Operational Priority 7: Ensuring Continuity

The level of change envisioned in this plan cannot occur without a long term, sustained effort. The Conservation and Policy Council, advocates, and partners will each play a key role in guiding our efforts and ensuring continuity over time.

The Steering Committee concluded that the role of the Conservation and Policy Council is critical, but the Council is still in the start-up phase and continuity is not ensured. As a result, much of the progress made to date could be lost. (Note: The “Needs Improvement” grade is not meant to characterize participation or commitment of the Council, which the Steering Committee considers to be very strong. The Committee acknowledges the important role the Council has played to date and wants to ensure the Council continues its work in the future.)

Progress to date:

☐

Excellent

☐

Satisfactory

☒

Needs Improvement



C&PC tour of Bluff Spring Fen

Progress to Date – Priority Initiatives and Programs

To advance the ambitious goals of the Next Century Conservation Plan, the NCCP implementation committees identified 66 initiatives and programs to be completed in the first five years. At the end of each year, the committees assess each priority initiative and document ensure needed resources are included in the FPCC annual budget and in department work plans. Finally, the committees will identify partner resources and resources leveraged from other sources to be invested in the upcoming year.

The committees’ assessment of progress made to date is incorporated into this updated report. As indicated, 83% of the phase one initiatives (55 out of 66) have been completed or continue to move forward, though some of these are not moving forward at a pace to meet 2020 milestones. Nonetheless, for a plan of this complexity and ambition, this represents a substantial



North Branch Restoration Project seed sorting



Nature Cat at Eggers Grove Nature Block Party event

achievement. With any plan of this scale, however, some initiatives will change over time and some will not succeed. During 2016 and 2017, five initiatives were re-directed to address a challenge or to seize a new opportunity, and six initiatives hit major roadblocks and failed to advance.

Projects which have been redirected represent the both the need and the ability to adapt to lessons learned and/or to respond to new challenges or opportunities. These projects include:

- The FPCC is re-evaluating the native seed nursery project and exploring lower cost alternatives such as partnering with local colleges to generate native seeds. (See 1.1.3.)
- A pilot passport program initially targeting picnickers was modified to take advantage of an opportunity to partner with WTTW's Nature Cat, an animated television series which encourages kids to explore nature. Children who visit ten Forest Preserves sites earn a "tree cookie." (See 2.2.5.)
- As Chicago Wilderness transitions to an all-volunteer organization, they are no longer able to lead efforts to create a site-specific model using highly localized data to estimate the annual economic value provided by the Forest Preserves ecosystems. However, analysis completed by CMAP in 2015 for this purpose incorporates all localized data available and relies on national data sets where necessary. The FPCC will utilize the CMAP analysis which estimates the forest preserves contributes \$469 million in economic value to the region each year through flood control, groundwater recharge, water purification, and carbon storage. (See 3.1.1.)
- The FPCC will make visitor data and other information available to local municipalities, but will not play a lead role in business recruitment for business districts adjacent to Forest Preserves. (See 3.2.1.)
- While it is important to document progress toward implementing the plan, resources are not available to undertake a comprehensive evaluation of every NCCP initiative. However, tracking systems and metrics are in place for many initiatives. Broader efforts, such as the annual evaluation presented in this report, will supplement these metrics to document and communicate overall progress. (See 4.1.1.)

Six projects are stalled due to a lack of funds or staff capacity. These include: creation of an on-line, interactive mapping system to track resources invested at various restoration sites (1.2.3);



River Trail Nature Center

tracking post-program success of those who graduate from the Conservation Corps (1.2.5); a \$7 million evaluation of restoration/conservation management practices (1.4.2); expansion of cultural events (2.2.8); an analysis of the impact to local property values for homes near forest preserves (3.1.5); and expansion of a pilot program to collect socio-economic data at selected FPCC sites (# of events, # of visitors, etc.) and within adjacent communities (major employers, household income, etc.) (3.1.6).

For the most part, we believe this reflects a healthy balance of steady progress, adaptability, and risk taking. However, the growing number of projects which have stalled and the inability to scale up to meet 2020 mileposts are cause for concern.



Black-capped chickadee (*Poecile atricapillus*)



Goal 1: Nature

Native landscapes will thrive for generations



FOREST
PRESERVES
of Cook County

feel free

Goal 1/NATURE: Native landscapes will thrive for generations.

- Core idea** The mission of the Forest Preserves is to preserve and protect native flora, fauna and ecosystems for current and future generations. Its nearly 70,000 acres contain some of the most unique habitats on earth, but these lands have deteriorated after decades-long challenges like habitat fragmentation, pollution and runoff, competition from invasive species and climate change. In an urban setting, nature requires outside help to remain healthy and diverse, and humans play an important role in bringing damaged natural areas back to thriving conditions. Increased investment in restoration and stewardship is needed to reestablish and maintain the ecological health and diversity of the forest preserves. Together the Forest Preserves, its partners and the citizens of Cook County can restore harmony, diversity and balance with nature.
- Why** Historically, a total of 184 federally or state-protected threatened and endangered species were reported from Cook County; today as many as 69 of these have disappeared from our region. For those that remain, the preserves are the last best hope. In a sea of built landscape, the preserves are a refuge where native plants and animals can thrive and reproduce. To ensure no more species are lost, we must further protect, restore and nurture the native plant and animal communities and enable them to thrive for the next 100 years and beyond.

Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

- Data** The updated land acquisition plan was completed in 2012, and land parcels identified for acquisition have been ranked and prioritized by Forest Preserves' staff. In 2015, a Conservation Corps expansion strategy was developed and implemented. Completion of the Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan—identifying priority management units and baseline data about ecological health—was a major 2015 achievement. In 2016, the FPCC identified significant cultural/archaeological sites, completed the natural area prioritization, and developed assessment protocols to track progress toward restoring and actively managing 30,000 acres of ecologically-diverse habitat. In 2017, staff and volunteers were trained to monitor change using protocol developed by the Prairie Research Institute. A new seed policy was launched and the FPCC met with volunteer stewardship groups across the preserves to assess how current practices are meeting seed need and to develop strategies for augmentation. Also in 2017, the FPCC and the Chicago

Botanic Garden hosted a Science and Research Symposium to present the newly published ***Flora of the Chicago Region: A Floristic and Ecological Synthesis***, co-authored by FPCC staff.

Culture

The FPCC leadership is committed to incorporating sustainability and biodiversity-conservation priorities into the daily operations of all departments. Staff throughout the Forest Preserves understand this, but more work is needed to ensure the new approach is embraced and all staff are actively supporting and participating in the effort. In addition, the FPCC must transform, systematize and grow relationships with volunteers, partners, and other constituencies who are critical to fulfilling its mission.

Partners

Partners, including government agencies, non-profit advocates and cultural and research institutions, have long supported conservation efforts. Many are stepping up to implement a variety of management actions to help conserve biological diversity. For example, Audubon established a contingent of volunteer bird monitors and secured funding to restore approximately 800 acres of priority grassland habitat at Bartel Grasslands, Spring Creek, Poplar Creek, and Schaumburg Road Grasslands. Friends of the Forest Preserves launched the Forest Preserves Experience program, a summer youth employment program providing conservation and job skills training for high-school aged youth from underserved communities throughout Cook County. Friends of Chicago River installed bat houses at suitable locations along the Chicago and Calumet Rivers. Openlands secured \$3 million in mitigation funds from O'Hare airport expansion to expanded restoration from Deer Grove East to Deer Grove West. The Millennium Reserve Compact—a collaboration between the Forest Preserves, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Chicago Park District, The Nature Conservancy, and Illinois Nature Preserves Commission—is leveraging resources and increasing conservation impacts for 6,000 acres of wetlands, prairies and oak savannas.

“The fact that I know what the priorities are feels very significant. We have a lot of the foundational pieces at our disposal now, like the Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan and various reports from the Prairie Research Institute. We sometimes underestimate the power of these reports—they focus you.”

*Justin Pepper
Bobolink Foundation*

Resource Needs

In 2012, the Forest Preserves began transferring money from its reserve fund to increase investment in restoration at Cranberry Slough nature preserve, Deer Grove, Portwine and other priority sites. This investment represents a

substantial increase over historical spending, yet it is insufficient to reach the ambitious goals of the Next Century Conservation Plan. Furthermore, the reserve fund will soon be tapped to address the FPCC's pension deficit and other growing costs and is not a sustainable funding source for restoration work. In 2018, the FPCC will take another step forward by incorporating \$3.9 million for restoration funding into its annual operating budget and ending its reliance on reserve funds for this important work. To continue restoring the land, new strategies and new funding sources are needed, and growing the volunteer force to support and maintain restored sites will become increasingly important.

Measures of Success by 2020

Priority 1.1 Invest in Restoration and Stewardship

Actions*


Restore and actively manage 30,000 acres of natural area in ecological condition recognized by the highest level of designation and protection.



Mileposts & Measures of Success

1.1.1 The number of acres under active restoration management will increase from 7,000 in 2015 to 12,000 acres by 2020. The additional 5,000 acres which are identified as top priority areas in the Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan (NCRMP) will be tracked to determine progress towards achieving high quality ecological condition (Grade B, suitable for nature preserve status). The portion of the 7,000 acres already under management that are identified in the NCRMP as priorities will be assessed for quality change. By 2020, the NCRMP will be in active use as an operating plan, and the next five years of restoration targets will be clearly articulated and budgeted.


Lead Responsibility	FPCC Resource Management (RM)
Partner(s)	Audubon Chicago Region, Citizens for Conservation, Field Museum, Friends of the Forest Preserves, GreenCorps Chicago, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Openlands, Prairie Research Institute, Stewards & Volunteers, US Fish & Wildlife Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, Friends of the Chicago River

Progress to Date  In progress	From 2016 to 2017, the FPCC invested nearly \$8 million to continue major restoration projects already underway and to maintain restored sites. By November of 2017, 9000 acres have been restored and are under active maintenance. However, the 2020 goal of 12,000 acres restored will not be achieved without additional resources.
2018 Goal(s)	Restoration work will hold steady in 2018. By the end of the year, an estimated 9,400 acres will be under restoration or active maintenance. The FPCC will utilize data collected in 2017 from 42 reference sites (in accordance with the vegetation monitoring protocol established through the NCRMP) to assess quality change and to perform interim assessments at ongoing restoration sites. The FPCC and partners will also explore options for continuing to make progress toward restoration goals even if future funding for restoration decreases.
2018 Cost	\$3,900,000 (FPCC), and \$1,400,000 (staff time)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$26.5M (includes maintenance, new restoration projects, staff time)



Harms Flatwoods



1.1.2 By 2016, the Forest Preserves will have in place a list of priority sites for Illinois Nature Preserve and/or Illinois Land and Water Reserve designation and a proposed schedule to attain sufficient quality to justify applications for designation. By 2020, applications will be submitted for all priority sites and a schedule for submitting nominations will be in place.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC RM
Partner(s)	Illinois Nature Preserve Commission, Prairie Research Institute
Progress to Date  Completed	The FPCC has identified 7 priority sites and is submitting applications. In 2016, applications were submitted for Harms Flatwoods and Jens Jensen Grassland and Woodland (Deer Grove East). In 2017, an application was submitted for Bobolink Meadow.



2018 Goal(s)	Submit applications for two additional sites based on archaeological merit.
2018 Cost	\$50,000 (PRI staff time); \$15,000 (FPCC staff time)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$200,000 (PRI staff time for applications)

1.1.3 In 2016, a scientifically sound seed policy will be adopted for Forest Preserves' restoration projects. By 2020 the native seed nursery project, which will be guided by this policy, will be implemented with the first yield collected from seed producing plants.


Lead Responsibility	FPCC RM
Partner(s)	Chicago Botanic Garden, Prairie Research Institute, Citizens for Conservation, Moraine Valley College, other local colleges, stewards (Note: Local high schools may become future partners.)
Progress to Date	The seed policy was adopted by the FPCC in 2016. In 2017, FPCC staff met with site stewards to clarify seed sourcing on a site-by-site basis, assess how current practices are meeting seed need, and develop strategies for augmentation.
 Completed	
 Redirected	Based upon cost estimates and budget constraints, the FPCC is re-evaluating the native seed nursery project and exploring lower cost alternatives such as collecting more seed from FPCC sites, partnering with the Chicago Botanic Garden, Moraine Valley College and other local colleges to generate native seeds, and establishing small seed production areas in fallow/disturbed areas that will be co-managed by staff and volunteers.
2018 Goal(s)	Develop strategies for practically acquiring seed material in accordance with the seed policy.
2018 Cost	\$15,000 staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

1.1.4 By 2018, a field inventory will be completed for all currently identified high-priority archaeological sites and long-term management strategies will be developed to protect and



Artifact found by the Illinois State Archeological Survey

preserve these sites and archaeologically sensitive landforms. We must also develop strategies to educate local students and other residents about this rich, natural history.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC RM
Partner(s)	Prairie Research Institute
Progress to Date  Completed	In 2016 and 2017, field surveys were completed for 18 separate FPCC parcels comprising 600 acres located on moderate and high archaeologically sensitive landforms. Archaeological sites investigated include nine sites listed as <i>Priority Protection Recommended</i> and twenty previously recorded sites listed as <i>Further Investigation Needed</i> . Additionally, twenty previously unknown sites were identified and recorded – some of which are now listed as <i>Priority Protection Recommended</i> . All Capital Improvement and Habitat Restoration projects scheduled for 2017 were reviewed for potential impact to archaeological sites. Field investigations were completed and long-term management strategies have been developed for all currently identified <i>Priority Protection Recommended</i> sites.
2018 Goal(s)	Complete research and documentation to recommend two major, late prehistoric and early historic village sites within the Illinois Nature Preserves program. Continue review of Capital Improvement and Habitat Restoration projects scheduled through 2018 to assess potential impact to archaeological sites.
2018 Cost	\$100,000 (FPCC for consultant)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$1,500,000 (consultant)

Priority 1.2 Mobilize people to heal and nurture the land

Actions*

Dramatically increase volunteer engagement by partnering with community leaders and organizations.

Mileposts & Measures of Success

The Preserves will increase the number of acres in active restoration management through a combination of contractors, volunteers and a conservation corps. While Forest Preserves' staff and contractors contribute to county-wide restoration efforts, volunteers have the crucial role


of providing valuable fine-scale stewardship work. This collaborative approach advances the Preserves' ecological goals of improving our native landscapes. We recognize the important role volunteers play in the Preserves' restoration activities, but also acknowledge the challenges of quantifying their contributions. We must determine the best way to measure volunteer investment in the Forest Preserves as it relates to restoration management, and set goals and targets for future years. In addition, we must refine estimates for the total number of volunteer stewards needed to maintain 30,000 acres of restored land. For example, historical experience at Harms Woods can be extrapolated to create a ballpark estimate as follows:

Harms Woods (maintain 100 acres)		Extrapolated to NCCP Restoration Goal (maintain 30,000 acres)
2 stewards + 20 experienced volunteers + a few school groups	=	600 stewards + 6000 experienced volunteers + hundreds of school groups

To achieve this magnitude of growth in volunteer stewardship will require new strategies and resources.

1.2.1 In the next few years, we will continue to engage new volunteers and strengthen current relationships by:

- Increasing the number of active volunteers from 2,500 contributing 77,000 hours in 2014 to 5,000 contributing 200,000 hours by 2020.
- Increasing the number of certified volunteer stewards and workday leaders from 89 in 2015 to 200 in 2020.


Lead Responsibility	FPCC Volunteer Resources (VR), FPCC RM
Partner(s)	Key Stewards, The Nature Conservancy, Field Museum, Audubon Chicago Region
Progress to Date  In progress	In 2016, 4560 volunteers contributed 59,242 hours (as of 9.30.16). As of August 2017, 5226 volunteers have created on-line profiles and 4538 of them contributed time. Today there are 74 site stewards and 47 workday leaders. Progress was made in determining the best way to measure volunteer investment, but additional work is needed.





Volunteer site steward Barbara Birmingham received the 2017 Illinois Association of Park District's Best of the Best Outstanding Citizen Volunteer award

2018 Goal(s)	To remain on track to meet 2020 mileposts, increase number of volunteer hours to 159,000 and the number of stewards to 156.
2018 Cost	\$100,000 (program expenses) and \$560,000 (payroll)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$1,300,000

1.2.2 The Forest Preserves continues to work with partners and volunteers to improve its volunteer training program by pursuing new and innovative training opportunities. The number of volunteer training courses offered will increase from 8 courses with 40 sessions and 350 participants in 2016 to 13 courses with 60 sessions and 600 participants in 2020.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC OGS, FPCC RM
Partner(s)	Key Stewards, The Nature Conservancy, Field Museum, Great Lakes Audubon, Friends of the Forest Preserves
Progress to Date	A robust training program is established and partners and staff continue to develop new classes and training opportunities for volunteers. In 2016 two new classes were added to existing offerings which include Practical Herbicide and Chainsaw Maintenance, and 78 volunteers participated in two <i>Path to Stewardship Immersion Camps</i> convened by Audubon Great Lakes. As of August 2017, 422 volunteer participated in classes focused on recruiting volunteers, working with youth, native plants, and wetlands restoration theory.
 Completed	
2018 Goal(s)	To address key barriers to expanding stewardship (including recruitment, training and mentoring), the FPCC will recruit stewards to co-teach volunteers and expand on-line training. An on-line training component will be launched in 2018.
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

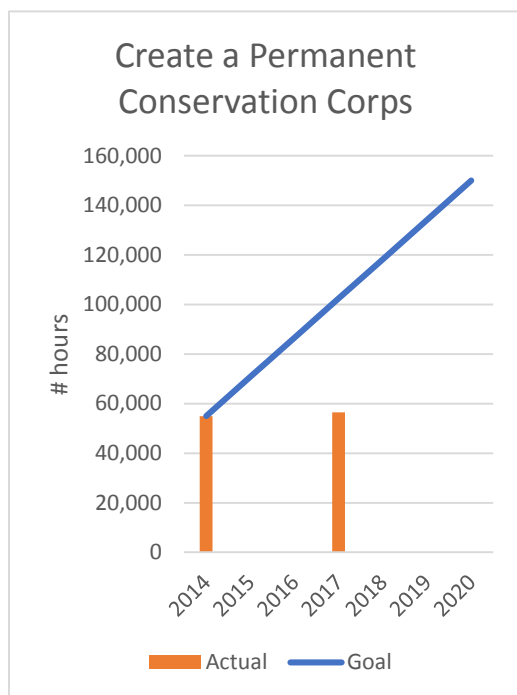
1.2.3 By 2020, the Forest Preserves will establish baselines, assess several case studies, identify best practices, and develop models for: (1) scaling up our volunteer stewards program, and (2) building relationships with communities near the Forest Preserves to involve these residents in the long term process as stewards and advocates.


Lead Responsibility	FPCC RM, FPCC PCV, FPCC Conservation and Experiential Programs (CEP)
Partner(s)	Key Stewards, Friends of the Forest Preserves, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation, Citizens for Conservation
Progress to Date  Completed	In 2016, maps and spreadsheets documenting resources being invested and resources needed for Calumet were completed to help partners identify where work is being done and where work is needed and to pursue grants and other resources. Funders can also use the data to guide investment. (For example, the Donnelley Foundation uses the Calumet map to ensure grants advance the NCCP goals.)
 Stalled	In 2017, maps and spreadsheets documenting investments at the Palos and Northwest regions were started, but not completed. Efforts to convert the maps to digital, on-line formats are on hold, but could proceed at a future date if grant funding or pro-bono assistance becomes available.
2018 Goal(s)	Continue to seek grant funding or partner with a university to convert maps to interactive, digital formats and make them accessible via the FPCC website
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

Create a permanent Conservation Corps in partnership with conservation organizations, as well as workforce, justice system and community agencies.

1.2.4 The number of Conservation Corps service hours performed will increase from 55,000 (965 acres) in 2014 to 150,000 by 2020, enabling the restoration management of an additional 1,666 acres by 2020 (2,631 total acres) and every year thereafter.


Lead Responsibility	FPCC RM
Partner(s)	Friends of the Forest Preserves, Audubon Chicago Region, Greencorps Chicago, Student Conservation Association, Central States SER, Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, Housing Authority of Cook County
Progress to Date	In 2016 and 2017, 507 Conservation Corps participants contributed 113,000 restoration hours and treated 2,318 acres for invasive




 In progress	<p>species. A new Forest Preserves Experience program served 150 youth and young adults in 2016-2017. Overall service hours have declined due to an increase in the Chicago minimum wage. The contracts with the existing pool of partners who have traditionally taken part in the Corps programs expire at the end of 2017. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued to seek a new pool of vendors, and re-evaluate program strategies and costs. The RFP process is scheduled to be completed 10/24/17.</p> <p>The 2020 goals assume new resources will be invested by the FPCC and other funders. Additional resources have not become available to date, and we are not on track to meet these goals.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	In 2018, the FPCC will hold steady with the Conservation Corps, pending the results of the RFP process. The FPCC will also continue working with partners to seek new resources and grant opportunities to supplement and grow the Corps program and to develop strategies for the possibility of reduced FPCC funding in future years.
2018 Cost	\$750,000 (FPCC for Conservation Corps) + \$50,000 (FPCC for Forest Preserves Experience) + \$450,000 (Bobolink/FoFP for Conservation Corps) + \$190,000 to \$390,000 (New funding sought to expand the Forest Preserves Experience)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$10,980,000 (for 2016-2019, \$5,600,000 from the FPCC and \$5,300,000 in additional funds needed). This budget would enable the engagement of 1,098 participants and contribute 491,000 service hours.

1.2.5 Evaluation initiated in 2016 and continued annually will document increases in Corps members' knowledge of nature, interest in serving as ambassadors for the preserves in their communities, and placement in jobs or post-secondary education. By 2020, a system will be in place to track graduates through their first placement and beyond to assess the effectiveness of the Conservation Corps model in terms of employment or pursuit of a college degree in a conservation related field.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC RM
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Partner(s)	Friends of the Forest Preserves, Audubon Chicago Region, Greencorps Chicago, Student Conservation Association, Central States SER, Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership
Progress to Date  Stalled	Currently tracking 90 days post program for adult programs. All programs administer a pre- and post-employment survey to assess participants' knowledge of the Preserves. In some cases, partners track this information, but further efforts are on hold pending additional staff or financial resources.
2018 Goal(s)	Connect with partners to establish data sharing for post-employment tracking.
2018 Cost	Staff time (included in Conservation Corps budget but excludes costs associated with tracking participants post-program)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$306,000-\$350,000

1.2.6 By 2020 conservation organizations and workforce development partners will put a robust program in place that connects Corps members to potential employment including: 1) Conservation Corps partners will be engaged in curriculum development, mock interviews, mentoring and connecting Corps members to other possible internships and apprenticeships; 2) The Preserves will hold an annual conservation job fair targeting Corps members and others; and 3) Annual goals will be established and met for the number of graduates employed and for the number with conservation-related jobs.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC RM and FPCC Finance
Partner(s)	Contractors and Conservation Corps partners
Progress to Date  Completed	A robust system is now in place to connect Corps members to potential employment. In 2016 and 2017, 80 Corps members per year participated in annual career fairs held at Brookfield Zoo. An annual Conservation Corps Conference introduced 100 Corps members to prominent local figures in the conservation community, and the FPCC hosted a Conservation Corps Celebration and Networking event for participants from all programs to come together and connect with their peers.

2018 Goal(s)	Continue to host annual career fairs and the annual Conservation Corps Conference to provide opportunities for professional development and networking.
2018 Cost	\$3,000 plus staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	\$15,000 plus staff time

Priority 1.3 Connect the Preserves to a wider wilderness

Actions*

Expand the preserves through a targeted land acquisition strategy up to 90,000 acres.

Mileposts & Measures of Success


1.3.1 By 2016, the FPCC will collaborate with expert partners to identify potential conservation easement opportunities, develop conservation easement incentives, develop an outreach strategy to appropriate land owners and determine measurable outcomes for 2020.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC Planning & Development (P&D)
Partner(s)	Openlands, Trust for Public Land, The Nature Conservancy, Citizens for Conservation, other local land trusts, local municipalities
Progress to Date	In 2016, the FPCC met with the Cook County Land Bank and the Land Conservancy of Will County and reached out to the South Suburban Land Bank and Development Authority and the Barrington Area Conservation Trust. In 2017, the FPCC met with four new potential partners (a Lemont Quarry association, the Village of Lansing, the Village of Richton Park, and the Northfield park district. While no conservation easement opportunities were identified, other potential land acquisition opportunities were explored.
2018 Goal(s)	Complete 3 new outreaches and identify measurable outcomes for 2020.
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD




1.3.2 By 2017, a list of quality third party or other conservation real-estate organizations will be identified to facilitate the purchase of priority acquisition sites when direct purchasing by the Forest Preserves in the short-term is not an option.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC P&D
Partner(s)	FPCC Legal and FPCC F&A

Progress to Date  In progress	Staff continues to research and conduct outreach to conservation real-estate organizations.
2018 Goal(s)	Continue to identify third party or other conservation real-estate organizations, develop interview questions regarding third party land acquisition and conduct interviews with the organizations identified.
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD


Note: An acreage measure cannot be determined due to the variability of the real estate market. The goal is to acquire 100% of all priority properties outlined in the Forest Preserves' 2012 Land Acquisition Plan as they become available at an appropriate price.

1.3.4 By 2020, strategic plans for regional acquisition areas and priority sites will be developed involving partners, other landholding agencies and municipalities.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC P&D
Partner(s)	PRI, Openlands
Progress to Date  In progress	Scope of work has been drafted for a strategic acquisition plan for the Southeast region; PRI and Openlands should complete strategic acquisition plan in early 2018.
2018 Goal(s)	Complete strategic land acquisition plan for the Southeast region by the end of 2018.
2018 Cost	\$50,000 (FPCC, for consultant)
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

Support ecosystem, greenway and trail connections.


1.3.5 By 2020, the priority greenway connector projects/land purchases identified in 2016 will either be completed or in the process of implementation.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC P&D
Partner(s)	TBD
Progress to Date  Completed	Three greenway connector projects were purchased in 2016 including: Spring Creek/Horizon Farms Greenway, Powderhorn/Wolf Lake Greenway, and Tampier Greenway (although litigation on some parcels is ongoing.)
2017 Goal(s)	Identify additional greenway connectors.
2017 Cost	TBD
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

Expand innovative partner-ships to protect land and engage people.

1.3.6 In 2017, launch a Conservation@Home program to encourage community gardeners and other Cook County residents to develop native plant gardens providing habitat for birds, butterflies and other beneficial wildlife. Certified homes will receive yard signs which will help educate others about the importance of native habitats at home and throughout the Forest Preserves.

Note: The Conservation@Home program evolved from 2016 initiatives intended to: (a) enhance NeighborSpace sites as native gardens and showcase them as demonstration sites, (b) develop a native plant, community gardeners' manual, and (c) convene a native plants training and idea exchange (originally listed under initiative 1.4.)

Lead Responsibility	UIE, FPCC CEP
Partner(s)	Barrington Area Conservation Trust, The Conservation Foundation, Audubon, Chicago Botanic Garden, Field Museum
Progress to Date  Institutionalized	Developed a checklist and process for Conservation@Home gardens. Tested the pilot checklist at FPCC nature centers and volunteer gardens. In 2017, over 60 Conservation@Home memberships and certifications were issued. The partnership expanded to include the Field Museum's Urban Monarch Project. A Community Leadership Workshop was convened specifically for community gardeners of NeighborSpace to introduce them to the FPCC and explore using natural elements for play.
2018 Goal(s)	Work with UIE to expand C@H program to churches, businesses, and schools. Increase marketing for C@H through garden walks and community events.

2018 Cost	Staff time and materials for signage; additional funds support C@H through UIE contract.
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD Based on pilot success

Priority 1.4 Learn from and adapt to a changing environment

Actions*

Advance scientific knowledge of habitat in a changing climate.

Mileposts & Measures of Success

1.4.1 In 2017, host a science and research symposium for 300 to 500 attendees, showcasing the work of Forest Preserves scientists and other national and local researchers and sharing best practices across the field.

Lead Responsibility FPCC RM Wildlife Division/FPCC OGS

Partner(s) Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden, Researchers

Progress to Date In 2017, the FPCC and the Chicago Botanic Garden hosted a Science Symposium in recognition of the release of *Flora of the Chicago Region* co-authored by FPCC biologist, Laura Rericha Anchor, with approximately 300 people in attendance.



Completed

1.4.2 In 2016 we will develop a strategy to secure \$7 million in funding for a long-term study to evaluate the effectiveness of current management practices for restoring and conserving biodiversity in the Chicago Wilderness Region in a changing climate. Ultimately there will be an adaptive management framework for ecological effectiveness.

Lead Responsibility FPCC RM

Partner(s) Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Zoological Society, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Research institutions - TBD,

Progress to Date While this remains an important project for guiding future restoration work, funding has not been secured.



Stalled


2018 Goal(s) Continue to explore a phased in or scaled down option, including seeking university partners to study parts of this issue.

2018 Cost Staff time


Total 5 Year Cost \$7,000,000

Be a leader in using sustainable practices within the Forest Preserves.


1.4.3 By 2020, an internal and external recycling program will be established. The projected amount of recycled product which can be obtained from FPCC's current waste stream is 24%. Also by 2020, Sustainability Plans will be in place for the Forest Preserves, Chicago Zoological Society and the Chicago Botanic Garden, to direct and coordinate efforts to conserve natural resources throughout the forest preserves.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC Facilities & Fleet (F&F), FPCC Landscape Maintenance (LM)
Partner(s)	Illinois Sustainable Technology Center, Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden
Progress to Date 	In 2016, the FPCC established a baseline measurement for the percentage of waste diverted from landfills and focused recycling efforts at manned public and internal sites including nature centers, campgrounds and aquatic centers. The FPCC issued a request for proposals (RFP) for single stream recycling but received no viable bids. A revised RFP was issued and a contract awarded to collect recycled materials from campgrounds, nature centers, aquatic centers, and FPCC offices. In 2017, six tons of refuse have been recycled.
2018 Goal(s)	The FPCC will continue to look for ways to increase its recycling and waste diversion including developing a guide encouraging picnickers to divert waste.
2018 Cost	Annual cost is approximately \$310,000 (for 2015-2018 contract)
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD


1.4.4 In 2016, the Forest Preserves will prioritize and develop a budget to implement facility audit recommendations for energy efficiency. By 2020, a comprehensive staff education and training program on water and energy conservation will be implemented with 100% of staff receiving training.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC F&F, FPCC LM, FPCC RM
Partner(s)	Friends of the Chicago River
Progress to Date 	In 2016, the FPCC completed an energy audit for the Facilities and Fleet compound and converted all interior and exterior lights to low-energy LED lights. In 2017, we installed POE cameras, a solar powered comfort station, converted additional locations to LED lighting, and applied for SEDAC (Smart Energy Design Assistance Center) energy audits with 360 Energy.
2018 Goal(s)	Complete audit of eleven sites with rooftop units.
2018 Cost	Seeking grant
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD


1.4.5 By 2020, all new gasoline powered vehicles purchased will be evaluated for conversion to propane with the goal of converting 100 qualifying vehicles and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 10% from 2015 to 2020. The FPCC will continue to consider other alternative fuels and vehicles (hybrids, electric) as technology and pricing evolves and improves.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC F&F
Partner(s)	TBD
Progress to Date  In progress	32 mowers converted to propane in 2014-2015. In 2016, installation was completed for 11 propane fueling stations. In 2017, the FPCC converted another 9 mowers to propane to bring the total fleet to 41 propane mowers. The FPCC also converted 20 fleet vehicles (15 police SUVs/5 vans) to bio-fuel.
2018 Goal(s)	Purchase and convert 10 new police SUV's to a propane bi-fuel system and continue to explore alternative fuel opportunities. Purchase an Altec Jems Hybrid bucket truck.
2018 Cost	\$60,000 (FPCC); \$60,000 (Seeking IEPA/Federal grant)
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

1.4.6 In 2016, the Forest Preserves developed criteria for identifying alternative/reduced mowing areas. Alternative uses could include native landscaping and sustainable turf. Criteria include sites not suitable for permitted events, infrequent public usage, and flooded areas.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC LM
Partner(s)	FPCC RM
Progress to Date  In progress	In 2016, the FPCC implemented a no mow pilot area and reduced mowing by 116 acres of land. In 2017 no mow/low mow areas were Increase by 11% to 129 acres total.
2018 Goal(s)	Increase acreage total to 145 acres
2018 Cost	Total cost saved by no mow/low mow areas is \$14,500 (2016 to 2017)
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD


1.4.7 To reduce impact to habitat and emissions from operating equipment, a salt and snow plowing reduction plan and pilot program will be introduced during the 2015/2016 winter season with various options studied. By 2020, an official policy on reduced salt and snow plowing will be developed and a public marketing campaign will be launched.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC LM, FPCC F&F
Partner(s)	FPCC RM
Progress to Date 	Staff from the Landscape Maintenance Department attended trainings on salt reduction and salt impact on trees and natural areas. They created and implemented a winter snow removal deployment plan with priority A and B sites in an effort to be more efficient with the use of gas and salt. In 2017, the FPCC worked with the Cook County Highway Department to evaluate the cost and sourcing of brine and initiated a pilot for the use of liquid brine at Swallow Cliff stairs and sidewalks, our General Headquarters, and at Dan Ryan Visitor Center.
2018 Goal(s)	Research ongoing best practices in salt reduction and snow removal with other forest preserves. Create a winter operations policy that includes further reductions in salt usage and snow plowing. Identify and close sections within parking lots to reduce salt application and emissions.
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

Expand relationships to repurpose buffer properties for habitat and native landscapingⁱ

Note: The native plants training and idea exchange has been incorporated into Priority 1.3.7, “Expand innovative partnerships to protect land and engage people.”

1.4.8 Native landscaping will be used at gateways, site entrances, and throughout the Forest Preserves. In 2017, the FPCC will work with UIE to pilot native landscaping for FPCC Landscape Maintenance facilities and train key staff in native landscaping management, including soil testing and seeding. By 2018 the success of the pilot will be evaluated and expansion to other sites will be determined. By 2020, native landscaping will be in place at all maintenance facilities and a staff training program will be in place.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC LM, FPCC RM, FPCC P&D
Partner(s)	University of Illinois Extension, Chicago Botanic Garden
Progress to Date 	In 2016 Landscape Maintenance worked with UIE to develop a pilot program to test the success of native landscaping at maintenance facilities. In 2017, key staff were trained and native landscaping was installed at four maintenance buildings.
2018 Goal(s)	Continue to partner with U of I and CBG to further develop field staff expertise in the area of Turf Management and Landscape beautification. Expand our native landscaping at District pools and Thatcher Pavilion.
2018 Cost	TBD
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD



Goal 2: People

Everyone in Cook County will feel welcome
at the Forest Preserves and will seek them
out for discovery, renewal and fun



FOREST
PRESERVES
of Cook County

feel free

**Goal 2/PEOPLE: Everyone in Cook County will feel welcome at the Forest Preserves
and will seek them out for discovery, renewal and fun.**

- Core idea** The Forest Preserves was originally created for the purpose of protecting and preserving flora and fauna and for “the education, pleasure and recreation of the public.” The founders’ intent was to get people out of the city and into a surrounding greenbelt of nature. Today, the Forest Preserves offers educational and recreational programming and other opportunities for engagement with nature. There are many opportunities for active recreation such as cycling, running, hiking, walking and horseback riding; the preserves also provide opportunities for passive recreation such as reflection.
- Why** While the Forest Preserves offers many opportunities for people to experience our natural areas, the preserves may feel remote and inaccessible for many communities. Others are simply unaware of all that the Forest Preserves have to offer. The Forest Preserves and partners must ensure that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy, learn and benefit from this great inheritance.

Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

- Data** Historical data collection on visits to the Forest Preserves is limited and dispersed, but since 2015, tracking the number of users and participants in the Forest Preserves has gotten stronger. Clearer definitions of what we count and how we count are filtered into one database and used by the FPCC to track progress and manage the NCCP implementation. The FPCC now tracks the number of picnic permits issued, visits to nature centers and attendance at programs and events. Surveys to assess our visitors’ experience are being incorporated into new programs, such as camping, as well as existing programs. Although the Forest Preserves have hundreds of entry points, making a full count of all visitors impossible, counting systems are being installed at various gateways and trails to collect baseline information and track users at key entry points. Partner time and dollars invested is also very important, but extremely challenging to track. New outreach efforts are underway to demonstrate how the Forest Preserves is leveraging investment in education and outreach through its partners.
- Culture** There is a great opportunity to connect more people to nature by collaborating with community organizations throughout the county—particularly in communities which currently have limited engagement with the Forest Preserves. In addition, more than one million people visit the Forest Preserves’ picnic groves, nature centers,

campgrounds and aquatic centers each year, and over three million people each year visit FPCC partners the Brookfield Zoo and Chicago Botanic Garden. Yet many do not know about FPCC programs, trails and facilities nearby. To address this, the FPCC's Department of Conservation and Experiential Programming (CEP) has reorganized staff to focus on a zone-based public engagement model. Each zone leader oversees a geographical area of the county with the goal of providing programming, connecting and building relationships with community members/organizations, and creating a FPCC presence in the defined zone area. Within one zone, a nature-based community campus linking Sand Ridge Nature Center, Camp Shabonna and Green Lake aquatic center is being developed to link visitors to more programs and services by capitalizing on existing infrastructure and utilizing existing staffing.

The Forest Preserves is also exploring new strategies for communicating with visitors. Historically, much of the signage throughout the preserves focused on correcting behavior. A shift is underway to provide clearer way-finding, more nature interpretation and more multi-lingual and culturally sensitive materials to help all visitors feel welcome, safe and willing to explore. In 2016, the FPCC installed welcome signs in four languages (English, Spanish, Polish, and Russian), and created Spanish-language bird guides, trail maps, wellness brochures, and children's activity books. In 2017, a message house was created to provide clear, concise messages through verbal and written signage. Also in 2017, the CEP Department developed an interpretation plan to help set programming priorities and ensure consistent messaging for FPCC nature centers, recreation and outreach teams. The Interpretation Plan identifies processes, guidelines, standards, and recommendations for creating new programs, signage, and exhibits consistent with the FPCC's new communications strategy.

Challenges

Since the inception of the NCCP plan, there has been great support from partner organizations. Over 45 partner organizations participated in the People Committee in its first year. In 2016, the People Committee transitioned from monthly meetings to quarterly meetings. While quite a few partners stopped attending the meetings, there was a core group--mostly those connected to the Forest Preserves through contractual agreements--who remained active. In 2017, the committee continued to evolve to include one-on-one meetings between the FPCC staff and individual partner organizations. The one-on-one meetings allow for a deeper conversation and are helping staff and partners to capitalize on one another's resources and areas of focus to move the plan forward. The one-on-one meetings will continue throughout 2018 with the full committee convening twice during the year.

The People Committee is actively looking for new community groups to participate in the NCCP and Forest Preserves activities--especially from organizations who do not currently receive support from the FPCC. Many of these community organizations, however, are struggling with funding reductions from the state and federal government and, as a result,

are not able to expand beyond their primary mission. Many consider the Forest Preserves an added benefit to their organizations, but not essential to their primary mission. It will take time and continued effort to develop these relationships and to make apparent the added value the Forest Preserves contributes to the health and wellbeing of families and communities these organizations serve. The FPCC's CEP Department will use its new zone model, the nature campus concept, and continued community leadership workshops to demonstrate value to community based organizations and make an impact in communities throughout Cook County.

Partners

Multiple partners use and benefit from the Forest Preserves, and collaboration between the FPCC and these partners is growing. Educational and interpretive partners such as the Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden, Audubon Great Lakes, The Nature Conservancy, The Field Museum, University of Illinois Extension (UIE), Friends of the Forest Preserves, Fishin' Buddies, Faith in Place, El Valor, Mary Crane Center, Eden Place Nature Center and community based organizations throughout the county are helping the FPCC reach a larger and more diverse audience. In 2016, twenty partner organizations participated in Bird the Preserves which drew approximately 2,300 visitors to the Forest Preserves, including 750 new birders. Since then, Bird the Preserves has become an institutionalized as part of the Forest Preserves' annual programming. Staff continue building relationships with the partnered birding organizations to attract new audiences to the Forest Preserves.

In 2017, other programs which rely on partners' support have also become institutionalized in the FPCC's annual programming, including Conservation@Home, Community Leadership Workshops, and Camping Immersion Leadership Courses. These programs are examples of a model the FPCC is using to show partners how to use the preserves, connect them to key staff, and encourage them to bring their members out to visit the preserves. The goal is to create an on-going process for partners to work with the FPCC, and for the FPCC to support those partners so they can keep coming out and using the preserves.

Resource Needs

A fundraising plan has been developed to tap opportunities for corporate sponsorship and other philanthropic support for specific site improvements and program expansions that respect the mission and values of the Forest Preserves. As described above, the FPCC is also exploring options to connect more people to nature without additional resources.

Measures of Success by 2020

Priority 2.1 Provide programs in the Forest Preserves that emphasize health benefits

Actions*

Partner with health care providers to encourage people to spend time outdoors and create health guides to promote trail use and nature visits.




Mileposts & Measures of Success

2.1.1 By 2020, 200 representatives of community-based organizations will participate in health and nature workshops and will follow up with field trips generating 2,000 additional visits to the forest preserves.


Lead Responsibility	FPCC CEP
Partner(s)	University of Illinois Extension, Northwestern University' Chicago Botanic Gardens, Chicago Zoological Society, Field Museum
Progress to Date	In 2016, 67 community leaders participated in four workshops; twenty of these leaders then brought 200 participants to programs in the preserves. As of August 2017, 41 community leaders participated in workshops. More workshops are planned for this fall with a goal of reaching 80 more leaders.
2018 Goal(s)	Continue expanding workshops for veteran providers and other targeted community leaders. A minimum of 6 workshops will be offered.
2018 Cost	\$8,000 (FPCC); \$4,000 (corporate/philanthropic sponsor)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$20,000 (FPCC); \$20,000 (corporate sponsor)

2.1.2 In 2016, publish a multilingual health & nature brochure with facts about the benefits of spending time in nature and recommending healthy outdoor activities for various audiences.


Lead Responsibility	Marketing and design consultant, FPCC Communications/OGS, FPCC CEP
Partner(s)	Cook County Department of Public Health, Alliance for Healthy and Active Communities,
Progress to Date	70,000 brochures were published in English and Spanish and distributed to 300 health centers and community health partners throughout the county. The brochure aligns with the Forest

	<p>Preserves' Wellness in the Woods initiative and Cook County Department of Public Health's Healthy Hotspot initiative. Language and icons from the Wellness in the Woods brochure are being incorporated into motivational signage.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	Continue to distribute Wellness in the Woods Brochures at tabling events in communities throughout Cook County.
2018 Cost	Staff time (and additional \$ if brochure is reprinted)
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

2.1.3 In conjunction with Wellness in the Woods, an initiative that promotes the health benefits of spending time in nature, the FPCC will work with community partners to offer eight programs each year. An accompanying website that will provide health and nature information and a listing of FPCC health and wellness events. The initiative aligns with the messaging of the Wellness in the Woods brochure.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC CEP
Partner(s)	Moraine Valley Community College, fitness vendors
<p>Progress to Date</p> 	<p>In 2016, 400+ residents participated in "Wellness in the Woods" events held at Swallow Cliff, Moraine Valley College, and other locations. The FPCC joined the Let's Move! Outside initiative and is working with Metro YMCA to direct families to FPCC events. In 2017, the wellness series was restructured to create a traveling program which resulted in 6 health focused activities both on FPCC property and at community locations.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	Wellness in the Woods will be incorporated into on-going zone programming. Programs will be identified as Wellness in the Woods in program brochures and online.
2018 Cost	\$2000 (FPCC)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$10,000

2.1.4 In 2016, a pilot study conducted at the Forest Preserves will document the benefits of nature on health. The results will compare psychological and physiological responses to walking in nature vs. in a built environment leading to evidence that being in nature provides improvements to human health and well-being in Cook County.

Lead Responsibility	Northwestern University and University of Chicago
Partner(s)	FPCC CEP
Progress to Date  Completed	After a delay in securing funding necessary to increase compensation to study participants, the study has now been initiated and will be completed by the end of 2017.
2018 Goal(s)	Publish results, and utilize information in all communications
2018 Cost	staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	\$69,017 (\$59,017 from Northwestern University and University of Chicago, \$5,000 provided by the FPCC through NCCP 2015 seed funding, \$5,000 from other sources.)

Priority 2.2 Invite, excite and engage diverse visitors from all walks of life.

Actions*

Engage new audiences with innovative recreation and nature discovery.


Mileposts & Measures of Success

2.2.1 By 2020, ten new or enhanced areas will open at Forest Preserves sites (including Trailside, Crabtree, Little Red School House, Rolling Knolls, Dan Ryan, and Thatcher), at the Chicago Botanic Garden's Regenstein Center, and at sites of other FPCC partners (such as El Valor and Mary Crane Center).


Lead Responsibility	FPCC P&D, FPCC CEP
Partner(s)	Chicago Zoological Society, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Cook County Public Health, El Valor, Mary Crane Center, Chicago Botanic Garden, Forest Preserve Foundation, NeighborSpace
Progress to Date	In 2016, nature play areas were installed at Camp Shabonna, Camp Reinberg, the Chicago Botanic Garden, and at El Valor.



Logan Square Neighborhood Association at Trailside nature play


 In progress	<p>A nature play best practices guide will be completed by end of 2017. This process included a workshop with Robin Moore from the Natural Learning Institute for the FPCC staff and partners. The FPCC was awarded \$20,000 from the Forest Preserves Foundation for a nature play area at Camp Bullfrog. Trailside Nature Museum expanded their nature play area.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	<p>A new nature play area will be created at Camp Bullfrog using the best practices guidelines.</p>
2018 Cost	<p>On-going maintenance for current nature play areas are included in operational budget for 2018. New funding is needed for additional sites and upgrades. The FPCC has applied for grants through KABOOM, CLIF Foundation, Disney, and the Aetna Foundation, but no grant funds were awarded. The FPCC has explored corporate sponsorship for nature play areas, but opportunities are limited.</p>
Total 5 Year Cost	<p>\$160,000(FPCC); \$325,000 (IDNR); \$300,000 (corporate sponsors)</p>

2.2.2 In 2016, baselines will be established for the number of visits to the Forest Preserves campgrounds, and goals set for increasing visits to campgrounds in upcoming years. Goals will also be established for campground scholarships to be awarded to youth and families from communities which currently have limited engagement with the Forest Preserves, and for 60 people to be certified in the Camping Leadership Immersion Course (CLIC).

Lead Responsibility	<p>FPCC CEP, Billy Casper Recreation</p>
Partner(s)	<p>Outdoors Empowered Network, Chicago Park District</p>
Progress to Date  Completed	<p>Nearly 100,000 people camped at FPCC campgrounds since they opened in 2015. To date, the FPCC's Camping Leadership Immersion Course (CLIC) has trained over 100 leaders. In 2017, over 350 campers representing 25 organizations camped using CLIC. Camping 101, and family campouts, and other outreach programs continue to attract a broader, more diverse audience to the camps. In 2017 a tour of campgrounds for events planners</p>

	was convened to encourage the use of campgrounds for corporate retreats and other events during off-peak (mid-week) days.
2018 Goal(s)	Continue to offer CLIC three times a year. Offer four Family Campout programs. Camperships will continue to be available. Increase campground use during off-peak (mid-week) days, off season, and for special events.
2018 Cost	\$800,000 (FPCC)
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

2.2.3 By 2020, a new tree top adventure courses and zipline will draw nearly 100,000 visitors to the Forest Preserves.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC PRC
Partner(s)	Go Ape
Progress to Date  In progress	By the end of 2017, the course will attract an estimated 20,000 visitors. Educational signs profiling plants and wildlife native to Cook County will be added by the end of 2017. In 2017, a Junior Course was opened.
2018 Goal(s)	Expand FPCC specific signage to the junior course.
2018 Cost	TBD
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

2.2.4 During 2016 and 2017, residents from communities which currently have limited engagement with the Forest Preserves will participate in *Bird the Preserves* initiatives which will include updated online resources, marketing materials and programming for new birders, people with disabilities and Spanish speaking people. In 2018, we will continue the Bird the Preserves initiative and promote bird walks, events and programs.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC CEP, Chicago Ornithological Society
Partner(s)	Birding organizations (too many to list), U.S. Fish & Wildlife Audubon Chicago Region, Chicago Audubon Society, Openlands; Field Museum



Bird the Preserves bird walk

Progress to Date



In 2016, over 1,500 people participated in 220 events and bird walks throughout the preserves; 40% were first time birders and 40% had never birded in the preserves. The Chicago Audubon Society and the Field Museum produced a Spanish language field guide. Birding organizations, the Zoo and the Garden produced a very successful marketing effort.

In 2017 a process was developed to sustain the initiative into future years, including connecting Bird the Preserves participants to restoration work days, orchestrating a 'Big Month' in October, and hosting an International Migratory Bird Day Festival at LaBagh Woods with over 200 participants. The Chicago Audubon Society (CAS) utilized citizen science bird data to develop a conservation-focused document to supplement the Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan. During two CAS Bird Blitzes in the Palos Preserves, over 100 species were recorded by 66 participants.

2018 Goal(s)

Institutionalize Bird the Preserves with partners and volunteers. Develop a reporting system for partners/volunteers to submit program information and attendance.

2018 Cost

\$20,000 (FPCC staff time, printing); \$25,000 (Forest Preserve Foundation); \$20,000 (US Fish & Wildlife Service); \$5,000 for CAS work (Bobolink Foundation)

Total 5 Year Cost

TBD



2.2.5 In 2017, various communication touch points will be developed to inform picnickers, swimmers and campers about the FPCC nature centers, special events, and other FPCC outdoor assets.

Lead Responsibility

FPCC CEP & PRC

Partner(s)


Chicago Zoological Society, WTTW Nature Cat, Chicago Botanic Garden

<p>Progress to Date</p> <div>  Redirected </div> <div>  In progress </div>	<p>In 2016, the passport program evolved to target families with young children through a partnership between the FPCC, the Zoo, and WTTW's Nature Cat (an animated television series which encourages kids to explore nature.) Families with young children who visit ten FPCC sites and/or participate in ten FPCC programs earn a "tree cookie." In 2017, the FPCC continued to provide the Nature Cat passport and Nature Cat visited two FPCC sites. In 2017, the FPCC began providing to picnic permit holders information regarding nearby FPCC sites, programs and special events. Permit holders are also opted in to receive the <i>Forest Way</i>, the FPCC's monthly e-newsletter. The FPCC now distributes seasonal brochures to aquatic centers, campgrounds, and golf course.</p>
<p>2018 Goal(s)</p>	<p>Use ActiveNet, the FPCC's on-line permit system, to communicate with permit holders about the upcoming events/programs located near the place they are picnicking. Incorporate this action in the community engagement plan for each zone so that it becomes an ongoing way to offer picnickers additional opportunities to connect to nature.</p>
<p>2018 Cost</p>	<p>Staff time</p>
<p>Total 5 Year Cost</p>	<p>TBD</p>


Expand and commit to long-term community partnerships to engage underserved communities. Create programs with cultural competence.

2.2.6 In 2016 a working group of Forest Preserves staff and partners collaboratively developed a Nature Ambassador program to create a network of volunteers working within their communities through educational institutions and community organizations, to teach children and adults about nature and promote the value of the forest preserves. Parts of the program will be piloted in 2017 and baseline metrics established.

<p>Lead Responsibility</p>	<p>FPCC CEP, FPCC PCV</p>
<p>Partner(s)</p>	<p>Friends of the Forest Preserves, The Nature Conservancy, The Field Museum, Great Lakes Audubon, and the Chicago Botanic Garden.</p>


Progress to Date  In progress	In 2016, three levels of Nature Ambassador were defined (supporter, outreach, docent). In 2017, the Supporter and Outreach positions were completed and are scheduled to launch by the end of the year. A docent program is on hold until these other positions are established and additional funding is secured.
2018 Goal(s)	The Supporter and Outreach Nature Ambassador positions will be piloted in 2018. Baseline metrics will be established.
2018 Cost	Staff time

2.2.7 A relationship map will identify communities which currently have limited engagement with the Forest Preserves. The Forest Preserves' community outreach coordinator will meet with 50 organizations in these communities to better understand why these communities are less engaged, and will establish 20 new or expanded partnerships which will result in 1,000 additional people from throughout the county visiting Forest Preserves' sites and/or participating in FPCC programs. The FPCC will also work with a wide range of partners to introduce communities to nature. In 2016 we will work with the Chicago Botanic Garden, the Chicago Zoological Society and other partners to share information about and promote each other's events and activities.


Lead Responsibility	FPCC CEP
Partner(s)	The list of partners is extensive.
Progress to Date  In progress	In 2016, relationship mapping was completed for communities adjacent to Whistler, Rolling Knolls, Kickapoo, Whealan, Caldwell, Crabtree, Reinberg, Shabbona and Sand Ridge and used to identify partners to lead programming in the preserves. In 2017, FPCC staff attended World Environment Day, Biking at the Garden, and Earthday at Chicago Botanic Garden. The FPCC staff also attended Freeze Day at the Zoo. Party for the Preserve signs were posted at the Zoo. <i>Keep Growing</i> , Chicago Botanic Garden's monthly magazine, featured two articles about FPCC programs. As of July 2017, partners supported 114 program opportunities at FPCC sites. As of August 2017, the FPCC developed relationships

	<p>with 62 partners who now know who to contact at the FPCC and how to prepare members of their communities to use the preserves.</p> <p>Also in 2017, a zone model was created to allow CEP teams to focus on specific communities within the county and create connections, partnerships, and programming within each zone.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	The FPCC will work with the National Park Service to develop a community outreach process for each zone and for the nature campus.
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

2.2.8 By 2020, twenty culturally focused events (such as Day of the Dead, Pow Wow, etc.) in the Forest Preserves will reflect the diversity of Cook County. The Forest Preserves will lead ten events and will seek a lead agency to partner with ethnic, cultural and community based organizations to organize ten additional events.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC CEP, other lead agencies to be identified
Partner(s)	American Indian Center, 29 th United States Colored Troops Volunteer Regiment, The Krew, IM Canal Authority
Progress to Date 	In 2016, the FPCC and partners offered the Pow Wow (with the American Indian Center), and Rendezvous (with the IM Canal Authority). In 2017, budget constraints did not allow an expansion of cultural programming.
2018 Goal(s)	Use Nature Ambassadors to reach out to potential partners to host Day of the Dead, Settlers' Day, Juneteenth, or other cultural programs at FPCC sites. The priority will be to incorporate cultural components into current programming, not add new programs.
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

2.2.9 Portions of the Forest Preserves' website and selected signage, maps and other materials will be translated into Spanish, Polish and possibly Chinese.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC Communications
Partner(s)	Chicago Audubon Region, Field Museum
Progress to Date 	In 2016, the FPCC installed welcome signs in four languages (English, Spanish, Polish, and Russian), and created Spanish-language bird guides, trail maps, and children's activity books. In 2017, the FPCC added multi-lingual event listings to fpdcc.com, select press releases were translated to accommodate multi-lingual media and Public Service Announcements were produced in Spanish and aired on Spanish broadcast radio and television stations.
2018 Goal(s)	Add auto-translate feature to fpdcc.com via Google
2018 Cost	\$2-4,000 in translation services and recordings
Total 5 Year Cost	Up to \$20,000

Priority 2.3 Make the Forest Preserves accessible to all

Actions*


Ensure increased access through public transportation, biking or walking.

Mileposts & Measures of Success

Public transportation, biking and pedestrian access to the preserves and key sites will be addressed through recommendations in the Gateway Master Plan and piloted through the implementation of individual site plans for eleven gateway locations. (See Priority 2.4.1.)


2.3.1 In 2017 the Forest Preserves will develop a Trail Capital Improvement Plan that will serve as the Forest Preserves' comprehensive document to prioritize trail related projects for new construction, maintenance, or feasibility studies. It will further define the existing and future trail network by inventorying the location and condition of paved and unpaved trails. This data will be used to evaluate system needs and prioritize trail improvements through a systematic project selection process.

Input will be gathered through working groups which will include peer resource agencies and have potential for public input as well. By 2020 priority trail projects and improvements identified through the Plan will be planned, initiated, or completed.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC P&D
Partner(s)	All other departments
Progress to Date  In progress	In 2016, four working groups were created: Regional Trails, Local Trails and Connections, Safety, and Maintenance. In 2017, the FPCC began a Trail Capital Improvement Plan to be completed in 2018.
2018 Goal(s)	Complete Trail Capital Improvement Plan
2018 Cost	Staff time, TBD
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD


Increase accessibility for people with disabilities.

2.3.2 A technical advisor will be hired to coordinate an internal accessibility working group, and an external advisory group will be convened to guide Forest Preserves efforts to: (1) prioritize facility and site improvements, and (2) establish accessibility policies and procedures related to all disabilities (as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act). (See below). Additional measurable outcomes will be identified in 2018 following the prioritization of accessibility plans and establishment of policies and procedures.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC OGS, FPCC P&D
Partner(s)	Potential partners include Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (RIC), Access Living, Cook County Special Recreation Districts, Great Lakes ADA Center, Equip for Equality, Access Living, Progress Center for Independent Living and Dare 2 Tri.
Progress to Date  Completed	A technical advisor was hired, and an internal working group and an external advisory group convened to guide Forest Preserves efforts to: (1) prioritize facility and site improvements, and (2) establish accessibility policies and procedures related to all disabilities (as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act). A comprehensive

	review and prioritization of accessibility improvements was completed. Three accessible canoe and kayak launches were installed. Mobi-mats are being used to provide access to people in wheelchairs.
2018 Goal(s)	Launch external accessibility advisor group. Identify measurable outcomes. Develop funding strategies for physical improvements to picnic groves and other sites.
2018 Cost	\$150,000 FPCC (ADA repairs); \$45,000 FPCC (for ADA consultant)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$2.3M (including \$800,000 for picnic grove access drainage & accessibility improvements in 2017, \$1.2M for building upgrades, \$300,000 for three new ADA canoe/kayak launches).

2.3.3 All Forest Preserves staff will complete training on accessibility and customer service issues related to disabilities, and a process will be in place to request reasonable accommodations for any Forest Preserves program—including availability of adaptive equipment.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC CEP, FPCC Human Resources (HR)
Partner(s)	Cook County Accessibility Officer, Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, Chicago Park District, Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden
Progress to Date  Completed	In 2016, the FPCC staff participated in ADA training at Zoo and established a process for requesting adaptive assistance. In 2017, all FPCC staff completed customer service training related to working with persons with disabilities.
2018 Goal(s)	Provide adaptive assistance as needed.
2018 Cost	\$10,000 (FPCC for sign interpreters, adaptive assistance aides)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$55,000 (\$50,000 from FPCC; \$5,000 from Zoo)

Priority 2.4 Educate visitors and the community about the Forest Preserves' natural treasures.


Actions*

Increase on-site information to help people understand where they are.

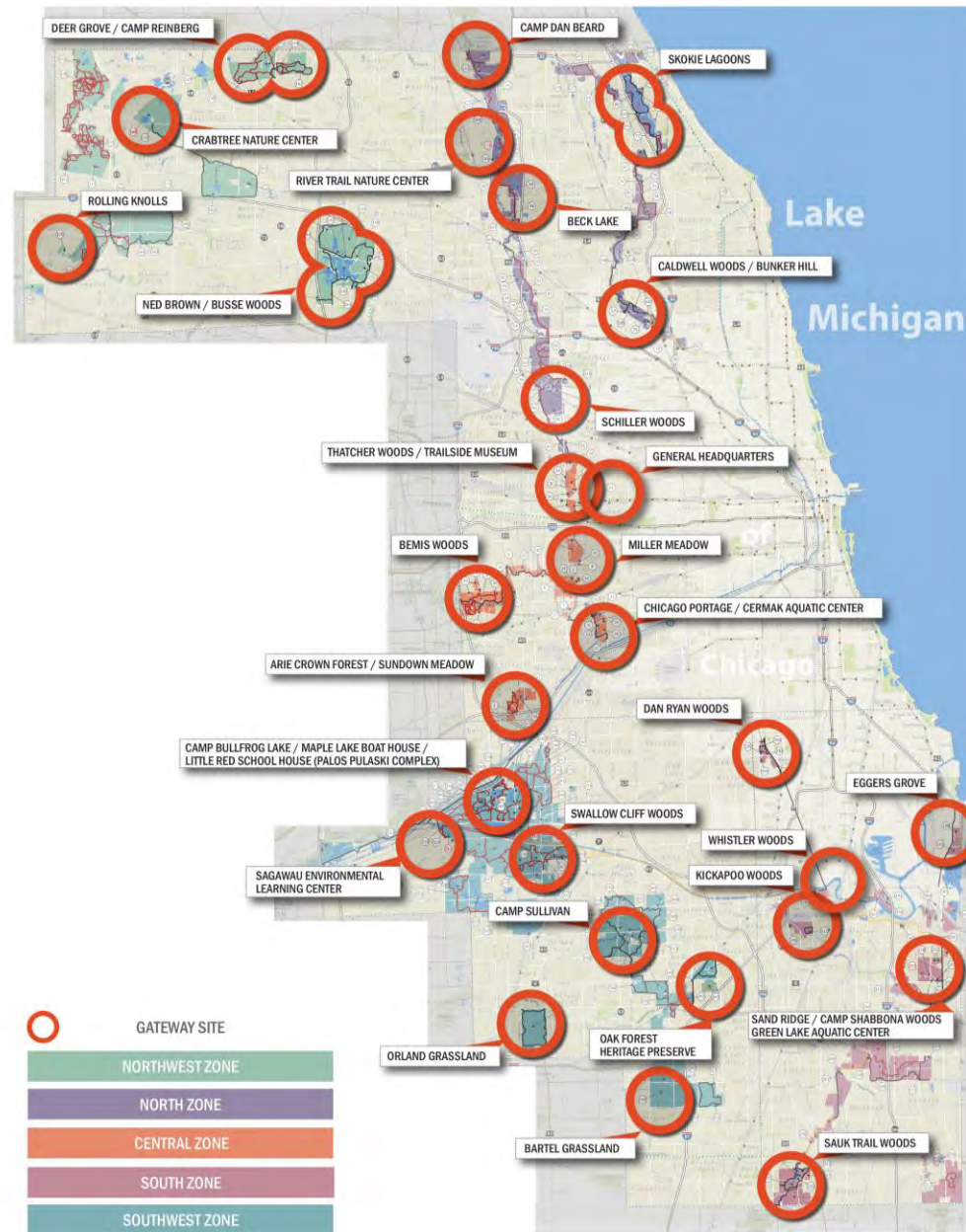


Mileposts & Measures of Success

2.4.1 Twelve priority sites have been selected around Cook County based on the recommendations of a comprehensive Gateway Master Plan, developed in 2015. 'Gateways' are signature sites at high visibility locations which will serve as hubs of activity, providing access to both nature and recreational opportunities. (See map on following page). Gateways will be revitalized through landscaping, interpretive signage, way-finding, seating, art and other interpretive elements. In 2016 we will begin establishing baselines for numbers of visitors to these sites and by 2020 visitor counters will reflect a 25% increase in users to each gateway site.


Lead Responsibility	FPCC P&D, FPCC OGS/Communications
Partner(s)	Cook County Department of Public Health
Progress to Date 	In 2016, the FPCC completed plans for 12 gateway sites (Deer Grove, Busse Woods, Skokie Lagoons, Caldwell Woods/Bunker Hill, Thatcher Woods, Bemis Woods, Palos Preserves, Oak Forest Heritage Preserve, Sand Ridge/Shabbona Woods, Sauk Trail Woods, Dan Ryan Woods, and Eggers Grove.) The FPCC installed signage and wayfinding at Skokie Lagoons. In 2017, gateway elements will be installed Dan Ryan Woods, Palos Preserves, Thatcher Woods and Bemis Woods.
2018 Goal(s)	Signs to be installed at 3 more gateway sites (Caldwell Woods/Bunker Hill, Eggers Woods and Sand Ridge/Shabbona Woods) in 2018.
2018 Cost	\$450,000 subject to modest 2018 capital bond issue
Total 5 Year Cost	\$900,000 (approximately \$60,000 per site for basic improvements for 15 sites total, 5 in each zone), additional funds needed for specialized improvements (the FPCC is seeking corporatesponsorships)

GATEWAY SITES




Support and leverage existing education and recreation partnerships to expand offerings.

2.4.2 Increase number of education and recreation partnerships and participants (via the CEP Department).


Lead Responsibility	FPCC CEP
Partner(s)	Various partners/organizations throughout Cook County
Progress to Date 	<p>In 2016, 29,850 students and others participated in FPCC education programs, 10,936 participated in Mighty Acorns and summer field trip activities, and 72,707 participated in non-school programs.</p> <p>Through June 2017, 14,190 students and others participated in FPCC education programs, 4,751 participated in Mighty Acorns and other school programs, and 30,207 participated in non-school programs.</p> <p>In 2017, the CEP Department began tracking the number of partners who participated in program opportunities by facilitated activities or tabling at FPCC events and bringing out participants to events. 114 partners participated in program opportunities.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	Develop strategy for sustaining and increasing program participation and partnership programming using the zone model, and a training, gear lending model.
2018 Cost	\$577,000 (FPCC – bussing, program supplies & equipment); Does not include payment to Zoo, Garden and UIE.
Total 5 Year Cost	Total 5 Year Cost \$2,885,000 (FPCC bussing, Program supplies and equipment)

2.4.3 By 2020, partnerships with local education institutions will expand service learning projects from 8,800 high school students in 2015 to 10,000 students by 2020. Informal partnerships with organizations which bring students to the Forest Preserves will continue to grow.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC CEP and OGS
Partner(s)	Local schools, Openlands, Citizens for Conservation

Progress to Date  In progress	In 2016, 4,380 students participated in volunteer workdays coordinated by Volunteer Resources and Stewards. While it is difficult to document and track, dozens of informal partners continue to bring hundreds of additional students to the Forest Preserves each year.
2018 Goal(s)	5,000 high school aged youth will participate in service learning projects (which includes habitat restoration and preserve cleanups). Informal partners will continue to bring hundreds of additional students to the Forest Preserves.
2018 Cost	\$15,000 (bus transportation)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$75,000 (bus transportation)

2.4.4 To inspire the next generation of people committed to understanding natural sciences, the FPCC will present the annual *Wild About Nature* award to local middle and high school students who complete winning science fair projects that are relevant to natural habitats and species found in the forest preserves or Cook County.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC CEP
Partner(s)	Local schools
Progress to Date  In progress	In 2016, the FPCC partnered with 5 local teachers to develop a science/nature program. In 2017, a Your Living Classroom brochure was created that is geared towards teachers. Also, by the end of 2017, 2 Community Leadership Workshops focusing on science and nature will be offered to teachers.
2018 Goal(s)	The new Wild About Science plan will be introduced to 25 schools in 2017/18 school year.
2018 Cost	FPCC staff time, \$6,000
Total 5 Year Cost	\$30,000



Goal 3: Economy

Communities will value the economic
benefits of protected land



FOREST
PRESERVES
of Cook County

feel free

Goal 3/ECONOMY: Communities will value the economic benefits of protected land.

- Core idea** The Forest Preserves staff and partners should help communities and businesses recognize and build on the economic advantages of having protected nature as a unique asset for Cook County. This will help develop a foundation of understanding and support for the long-term restoration and acquisition vision of the *Next Century Conservation Plan*.
- Why** Government officials, business leaders and taxpayers who recognize the economic value of the preserves and appreciate their impact to the quality of life in the Chicago region are more likely to support investment in restoration, to encourage access and to partner actively to keep the preserves vibrant and healthy.

Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

- Data** Building an economic case requires documenting and monetizing the value of the Forest Preserves derived from economic development and ecosystem services. Information about the benefits of ecosystem services can be extrapolated for a relatively low cost from national studies, but completing community-specific longitudinal research is costly and time consuming. Similarly, collecting and tracking data about property value increases, job creation and business attraction is outside of the core competency of the Forest Preserves and will require partnership with economic development experts.
- Culture** The Forest Preserves' core mission is to protect nature and to educate and welcome the public. Analyzing the economic benefits of the Forest Preserves is a new approach that will require new capacity. And educating the public about the economic and other benefits of the preserves will require a robust marketing campaign—an investment that is not traditionally part of the Forest Preserves' corporate culture and budget. Finally, recruiting nature-related businesses is also outside the expertise of the Forest Preserves; such efforts must be led by partners.
- Partners** Several partners have accepted the challenge to help us meet this goal, but all have limited resources.
-
- "Initially, it seemed overwhelming. We still have a long way to go, but when you look back, you realize how much we have done. The Economics Committee has had so much participation and interest from partners; this has been really great."*
- Chris Adas, co-chair
NCCP Economics Committee*
-

Resource**Needs**

Comparisons to peer agencies indicate the FPCC devotes insufficient funds to marketing. Resources for economic analysis and marketing through staff or consultants should be increased at an estimated cost of \$6 million over five years.

Measures of Success by 2020



Priority 3.1 Build the Economic Case for Nature

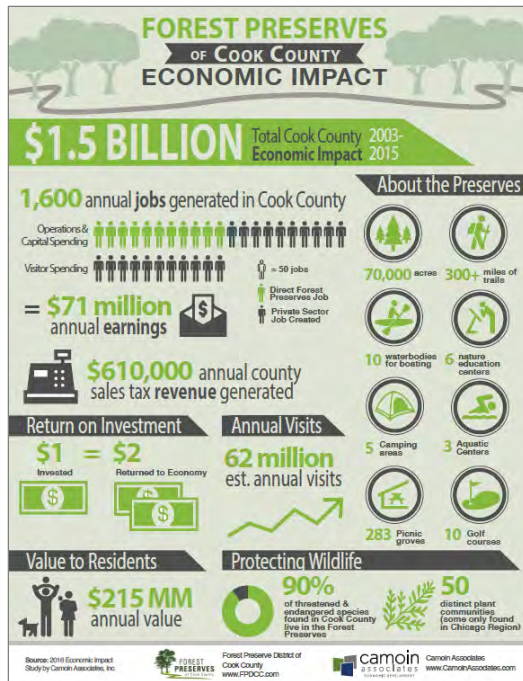
Actions*

Document and publicize nature's benefits.

Mileposts & Measures of Success

3.1.1 The Forest Preserves and partners will continue to compile and publicize evidence of more than \$450 million in avoided costs due to ecosystem services such as flood reduction and water purification provided by the Preserves. The Forest Preserves and partners will develop and track indicators to demonstrate the economic value of nature's benefits provided by the forest preserves and other natural areas in the region. Results will be shared with key stakeholders to promote investment of physical, technical, and financial resources to support a range of conservation-related activities.


Lead Responsibility	CMAP, FPCC
Partner(s)	MWRD
 Redirected	As Chicago Wilderness transitions to an all-volunteer organization, efforts to create a site-specific model with highly localized data failed. However, analysis completed by CMAP in 2015 incorporates all localized data available and relies on national data sets where necessary.
 Completed	The FPCC will utilize the CMAP analysis which estimates the forest preserves contributes \$469 million in economic value to the region each year through flood control, groundwater recharge, water purification, and carbon storage.
2018 Goal(s)	Promote results of CMAP analysis
2018 Cost	Staff time



Total 5 Year Cost	\$15,000 (FPCC)
3.1.2	The Forest Preserves, the Chicago Botanic Garden, and the Chicago Zoological Society will compile and publicize evidence of more than \$1 billion in economic development impact provided by the Preserves and its sister agencies. Key findings will be incorporated into consistent messaging to be used by the FPCC, the Garden and the Zoo.
Lead Responsibility	FPCC
Partner(s)	Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Zoological Society
Progress to Date	The FPCC economic impact study was completed in 2016. Previous studies were completed by the Zoo and the Garden.
2018 Goal(s)	Create brochure/info-graphic to summarize combined economic & social impact of the FPCC, Zoo and Garden.
2018 Cost	Staff time; minimal printing costs
Total 5 Year Cost	\$18,000 (FPCC), \$15,000 (CBG), \$15,000 (CZS)

3.1.3 As data becomes available through the work of partner organizations like Openlands and CMAP, the Forest Preserves will integrate the economic value of ecosystem services and economic development impact provided by the Preserves into marketing strategies targeted to three primary audiences: government officials, business and philanthropic leaders and taxpayers.

By 2020, policy experts will demonstrate recognition of this value by including this information in at least three local plans and the CMAP regional plan update. Businesses, and local and regional economic development and promotional agencies such as Choose Chicago (may also include organizations such World Business Chicago, Chicago Council on Global Affairs, Chambers of Commerce, etc.), will demonstrate their understanding of the preserves' value in marketing materials and press releases. These campaigns will increase the number of media impressions by at least 5% annually (*baseline to be established in 2016*).


Lead Responsibility	FPCC
Partner(s)	Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Wilderness
Progress to Date 	Established a baseline of media impressions. FPCC staff have met with WBC, Cook County Planning and Development, and the Chicago branch of the Federal Reserve Bank to share results of the economic impact study and identify target audiences. WBC added information highlighting key aspects of the FPCC to a slide deck used for meetings with business leaders considering a relocation to the Chicago region. Choose Chicago is focused on Chicago-centric tourism and is not a good match for this effort. Instead, we will work with local municipalities and villages to promote nearby forest preserves as a quality of life asset for residents.
2018 Goal(s)	Reach out to all Cook County municipalities that do not currently promote FPCC sites on their websites and encourage them to do so.
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	(Included in 3.3 below.)

Demonstrate value of restored habitats for erosion control and flood prevention.

3.1.4 By 2020, methodology will be in place to assess benefits of restoration and will be applied to at least two restoration sites. The following steps will take place to accomplish this:

1. In 2016, Openlands will retain consultants to identify a methodology to assess the benefits of restoration extrapolating from existing data.
2. By 2017, the Forest Preserves in partnership with Chicago Wilderness, Openlands and/or other partners will have a plan in place to test this methodology on at least two restoration sites.
3. By 2018, funding and partnerships will be in place to assess benefits of restoration at these two sites.

By 2020, a comprehensive report will demonstrate incremental growth in the dollar value of ecosystem services benefits as the Preserves are expanded with land acquisition and improved through restoration (*appropriate measure to be identified by 2020*).


Lead Responsibility	Openlands
Partner(s)	MWRD, FPCC RM
Progress to Date 	A consultant has been retained, a methodology developed, and the first pilot study completed at Deer Grove East. In 2017, Openlands conducted meander surveys of the site's native plant communities to assess restoration progress and monitored grassland bird populations to determine what plant communities and structures (height, density) they prefer.
2018 Goal(s)	Complete second pilot study at Tinley.
2018 Cost	\$20,000 (Stantec via Openlands), \$5,000 (Openlands), \$5,000 (FPCC)
Total 5 Year Cost	\$80,000 = \$30k (Stantec via Openlands), \$25k (Openlands), \$25k (FPCC)

Understand and market advantage of proximity to protected land.


3.1.5 In 2016, the Forest Preserves will work with the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development to identify three municipalities, economic development organizations or business schools in areas adjacent to restoration; or improvement projects such as gateway development, where a pilot can be implemented to identify how local property values increase when preserves are restored or otherwise improved. By 2020 initial data will be in place from the pilot studies, and a plan will be in place to expand strategically.

Between 2016 and 2020 there will be at least five articles or features published or broadcast annually focused on the economic benefits of the Forest Preserves to surrounding communities (including both property values and ecosystem services).

Market research conducted in 2020 will demonstrate increased support for investment in the restoration and expansion of the preserves among Cook County residents compared with research completed in 2015.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC P&D
Partner(s)	Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, Academic Institutions-TBD
Progress to Date  Stalled	Funding is not available to proceed with the pilot studies. Research assistance has been requested from the University of Chicago and other local academic institutions.
2018 Goal(s)	Continue seeking pro bono assistance via an academic partner.
2018 Cost	\$0
Total 5 Year Cost	\$15,000 (FPCC)

3.1.6 In 2016, the Forest Preserves will work with the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development to identify two municipalities neighboring the preserves to implement a pilot program for economic data collection and to identify, evaluate and implement mutually beneficial investment. By 2020, data will be in place from the pilot studies and can be applied county-wide.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC P&D
Partner(s)	Cook County Bureau of Economic Development; Elk Grove Village; other municipality TBD
Progress to Date  Stalled	Compiled empirical data for Busse Woods (including #events, # visitors) and surrounding community (major employers, household income, etc.) and shared with Elk Grove Village. The Village promotes Busse as an asset in newsletters and at an annual trade show. The Village sees high value in connecting with nearby office employees and is working with the FPCC to identify five businesses for partnerships.
2018 Goal(s)	Until the pilot demonstrates clear value, it is unclear whether the data collection efforts should be extended district-wide.
2018 Cost	\$0
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

Priority 3.2 Encourage nature compatible business development


Actions*

Work with communities to identify opportunities, create markets and track benefits of investment.ⁱⁱ

Mileposts & Measures of Success

3.2.1 By 2020, there will be at least two new nature-compatible businesses (e.g. bike rental, picnic related retail, etc.) on property adjacent to the preserves, and the Preserves will work with local partners to develop a system for tracking how these investments benefit municipalities and taxpayers. They will be developed as a result of the following activities:

1. Forest Preserves and local economic development officials will collaborate to promote and track the economic impact of at least one new nature-compatible business near one of the three preserves that see the greatest number of permit-based picnics: Dan Ryan Woods (81,926 picnickers); Busse Woods (110,909 picnickers); Schiller Woods (58,761 picnickers).
2. Forest Preserves and local economic development officials will collaborate to promote and track the economic impact of at least one new nature-compatible business near the preserves in a community located along a heavily used trail such as the North Branch Trail.


Lead Responsibility	FPCC
Partner(s)	Municipalities adjacent to gateway sites
Progress to Date 	<p>No local partners have been identified to lead business attraction efforts. Business recruitment is not an area of expertise for the FPCC, nor does it advance the district's primary mission. Therefore, the FPCC will make visitor data and other information available to local municipalities, but if no local partners are willing to lead efforts to attract nature-compatible business development, this action will not be advanced.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	Share visitor counts with municipalities adjacent to gateways.
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

Increase habitat adjacent to the Preserves through collaborative partnerships.

This priority is incorporated in priority 1.3, "Connect the Preserves to a wider wilderness."

Proactive information and policy sharing.

3.2.2 In 2016 the Forest Preserves will incorporate land use policies and related information about how partners and neighboring communities can interact with the preserves in its District website.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC OGS, FPCC P&D
Partner(s)	Cook County Bureau of Economic Development
Progress to Date  Completed	In 2017, land use and related policies were added to FPCC's website. update Land Use policies and information has been embedded in the District website.
2018 Goal(s)	Track visits to land use links and related links
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	Staff time


Priority 3.3 Market the Forest Preserves as an iconic element of metropolitan Chicago

Actions*

Capitalize on shared marketing opportunities with the Zoo and Garden, tie to tourism opportunities at major Chicago sites, and package visitor opportunities.

Mileposts & Measures of Success

3.3.1 By 2016, the Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden and Forest Preserves of Cook County will have in place memoranda of agreement to share resources to implement a cooperative marketing plan in order to leverage state tourism and other dollars, and will work together to track visitor growth.


Lead Responsibility	FPCC, Zoo, Garden
Progress to Date  Completed	Memoranda are completed.

Focus on consumer marketing to expand the knowledge, interest and commitment of the residents of Cook County. (Note this is a recommended new action step.)

3.3.2 By 2016, previous surveys conducted as part of the 2014 Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan and the 2012 Recreation Master will be supplemented with market research conducted by Openlands in 2015 to provide information regarding levels of public knowledge of, interest in, and commitment to the Forest Preserves.

By 2016, the Forest Preserves will have a communications plan in place that identifies targets for increased awareness, visitation and commitment as measured by market research.

By 2020, earned and paid media will generate millions of unique impressions and market research will demonstrate increased levels of awareness, perception of safety, regular use and support for investment, especially among Forest Preserves visitors.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC OGS/Communications
Partner(s)	Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden
Progress to Date 	<p>In 2016, the FPCC used partners' communication platforms to leverage "like-minded" audiences. Specifically, the Garden actively promoted #BirdthePreserves (along with the Zoo and other partners) as well as biking along the North Branch Trail and regularly features the FPCC in <i>Keep Growing</i> magazine. The Zoo and the FPCC attracted national media attention for their joint otter tracking program. and The Zoo also displays the FPCC's logo on its paid billboards, direct mail and on-site signage.</p> <p>In 2017, the FPCC developed a new communications strategy and tag line, launched its first ever PSA television ads, continued its billboard and radio campaign, and introduced a new interactive web map. The FPCC and the Garden also and launched <i>Postcards from the North Branch Trail</i>, an initiative which encourages visitors to share trail experiences via social media.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	Continue partnerships which leverage like-minded audiences, implement Communications & Outreach Strategy around 5 Gateway sites (Skokie, Bunker/Caldwell, Dan Ryan, Eggers, Sandridge/Shabonna) and partner with sister organizations to tap into built-in audiences (CCDPH, CCHA, etc.)
2018 Cost	Staff time + portions of 2018 FPCC Communications Budget
Total 5 Year Cost	\$3,500,000 (FPCC and leveraged promotion/outreach from partners)



Goal 4: Leadership

Visionary conservation leaders will safeguard,
expand and bring increased resources to
the Forest Preserves



FOREST
PRESERVES
of Cook County

feel free

Goal 4/LEADERSHIP: Visionary conservation leaders will safeguard, expand and bring increased resources to the Forest Preserves.

- Core idea** Fully engaging the public and restoring the preserves to ecological health require long term investment and expert conservation leadership.
- Why** On-going expert conservation leadership, as well as transparent, accountable and efficient management, will build public confidence that will help to increase investment in the Preserves.

Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

- Data** The current form of the line item budget does not correspond to the program outlined in the *Next Century Conservation Plan*, making it difficult to evaluate spending priorities. To determine which accounts are being used to fund the NCCP programs and initiatives, in 2016 the Preserves added lines to budget forms submitted by each department to demonstrate current spending levels in the six categories that better reflect the NCCP: Land Acquisition; Restoration; Conservation Corps; Programs and Outreach; Capital Improvements & ADA Transition; and Maintenance and Operations.
- Culture** Creation of the Conservation and Policy Council was a major step toward guiding implementation of the *Next Century Conservation Plan*. Council members have visited preserves throughout the County and are deeply committed to learning about the Preserves, understanding the full cost of implementing the NCCP, and developing sufficient sources of financial and other resources and/or re-directing resources as needed. This five-year plan implementation strategy will be updated each year and is intended to evolve over time in order to respond to lessons learned, seize new opportunities, and address challenges that arise. In addition, efforts will be required to sustain the enthusiasm for this effort over time, as is true with all change programs.
- Partners** The ambitious *Next Century Conservation Plan* cannot be completed by the Preserves alone. Engaging partners as co-chairs and members of committees to operationalize the Plan's four goals was a great first step. Although partners want to play a greater role in supporting and leading the NCCP projects, they have limited capacity to take on new work. It is critically important, therefore, that we figure out how to align the work these partners are already doing with the NCCP goals.

Marketing This is a critical time to increase awareness of the Preserves’ value and to continue building public confidence in the Preserves’ management excellence.

**Resource
Needs**

In 2016, the FPCC worked with the Civic Consulting Alliance (CCA) to refine cost estimates for major elements of the plan and to analyze a viable path towards implementation. The CCA analyzed dozens of initiatives to reduce costs or raise non-tax revenue sources—including options which may be unpopular and highly controversial. To help visualize different models for what the next century could look like, the CCA developed a scenario-planning framework by identifying forest preserves across the country facing similar challenges and used the scenario-planning framework to facilitate a workshop for the Conservation and Policy Council. The CCA’s external perspective added a new level of rigor and depth to the Council's discussion and clarified that successful implementation of the NCCP will require more resources than the Forest Preserves currently receives.

Research conducted by the Trust for Public Land in 2017 indicates that voters trust the Forest Preserves and support the NCCP goals, but do not support sufficiently an increases in taxes to fund these goals at this time. While there may be an opportunity to secure additional public resources in future years, there is no guarantee when, or even if, this will happen.

Moving forward, we must build support for additional public resources to implement the plan fully. We must also continue to explore options to leverage limited resources and prepare for difficult choices which may become necessary.

Measures of Success by 2020

Priority 4.1 Manage with excellence, transparency and sound financial practice



Actions*	Mileposts & Measures of Success
Maximize operational efficiency by using metrics, evaluation, and informing plans with market analysis.	<p>4.1.1 The FPCC’s performance metrics system and operational efficiency measures will be evaluated to determine alignment with the goals and program categories of the Plan.</p> <p>By 2017, a financial plan will be in place and regularly updated to set direction for implementing the <i>Next Century Conservation Plan</i>.</p>

2017 FPCC Performance Metrics

GOAL 1 - NATURE		Dept	2017 Target	2017 YTD Target
A. INVEST IN RESTORATION AND STEWARDSHIP				
1	# of reference sites monitored using new protocol	RM	15	N/A
2	# of new restoration acres	RM	350	N/A
3	# of follow-up restoration acres	RM	9500	N/A
4	# of animals sampled for zoonotic disease study	RM	750	N/A
5	# of birds banded	RM	250	N/A
6	# of lakes treated for nuisance vegetation	RM	17	17
7	# of lake surveys/fish inventories completed	RM	25	16
B. MOBILIZE PEOPLE TO HEAL & NURTURE THE LAND				
1	# of new volunteer profiles	VR	1600	1067
2	% of volunteer profiles placed in an opportunity	VR	85%	85%
3	# of volunteers entering hours (within the last year)	VR	1000	1000
4	% of volunteers entering hours	VR	40%	40%
5	# of volunteer work days	VR	1600	1067
6	# of restoration volunteer hours	VR	65000	43333
7	# of non-restoration volunteer hours	VR	30000	20000
8	# of volunteer group visits	VR	350	233
9	# of new volunteer groups	VR	40	27
10	# of training, orientation, and enrichment classes offered	VR	55	37
11	# of training, orientation, and enrichment class	VR	675	450
12	# of new workday leaders and stewards	VR	25	17
13	# of Adopt-a-site visits per month	VR	Baseline	N/A
14	# of Conservation Corps participants	RM	265	N/A
15	# of Conservation Corps intern service hours	RM	45700	30467
16	# of training hours provided to Conservation Corps interns	RM	14000	9333
C. CONNECT THE PRESERVES TO A WIDER WILDERNESS				
	# of land acquisition opportunities reviewed and ranked			
1	by Land Acquisition Committee	P&D	16	8
2	# of land acquisition opportunities closed on	P&D	4	2
3	# of outreach meetings regarding donations/easements	P&D	4	2
D. LEARN FROM & ADAPT TO A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT				
1	# of bags of recyclables	LM	500	N/A
2	# of tons of refuse recycled (including blue bins)	LM	10	N/A
3	% of refuse diverted from landfills (recycling)	LM	3%	N/A
4	# of acres of low-mow designation	LM	10	N/A
5	# of gallons of unleaded fuel consumed	F&F	180000	120000
6	# of gallons of diesel consumed	F&F	95000	63333
7	# of gallons of propane consumed	F&F	30000	20000
8	% of District-Wide idling	F&F	0	0

Capitalize on partnerships with the Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden and Cook County government.

By 2018, Tracking systems and metrics will be in place for all *Next Century Conservation Plan* goals – for example visitor counting systems, stakeholder feedback systems, and habitat improvement monitoring systems.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC
Partner(s)	N/A
Progress to Date	Performance metrics are now aligned to the NCCP goals and published on FPCC's website. Various tracking systems have been implemented, including counters at gateway sites and customer service surveys. Cost analysis for picnics and other permits has been completed and cost recovery guidelines recommended. The FPCC is now tracking permits by district, program attendance, and camping participation.
 Completed	
 Redirected	It is not feasible at this point in time to track every NCCP goal, but the FPCC will continue to implement tracking systems for selected goals.
2018 Goal(s)	Continue refining metrics and tracking results.
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD


4.1.2 Memoranda of understanding will be adopted with the Chicago Zoological Society and Chicago Botanic Garden, including, but not limited to,

- By 2016 staff interpretive and customer service training;
- By 2017, marketing and outreach (see Economics goal); health and nature programming; operation of a seed nursery (CBG only, see Nature goal).
- By 2017 identify five (5) projects for which we can jointly fundraise
- In 2017 co-hosted Science Symposium: Flora of the Chicago Region with CBG

Collaborative programs and systems will maximize operational efficiencies with Cook County, including but not limited to


- By 2016, Bureau of Economic Development (see Economics Goal).
- By 2017, Bureau of Technology;

- By 2018, Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and other law enforcement agencies.

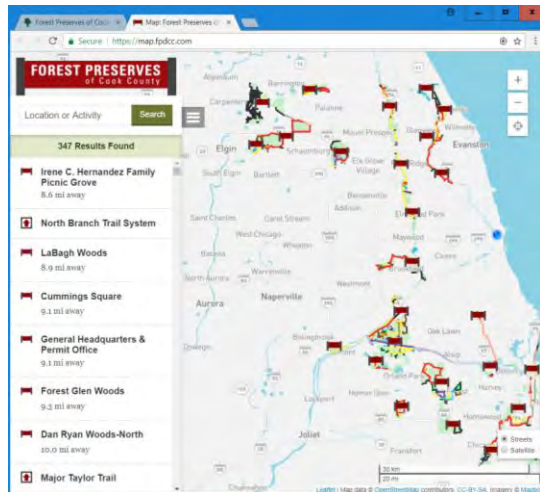
Lead Responsibility	FPCC
Partner(s)	Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden, DHSEM
Progress to Date  Completed	Close collaboration between partner agencies is underway, including implementation of Plants of Concern, advising on Seed Policy and seed collection, initiating the NatureStart program, advising on the CEP Interpretive Plan, installing signage encouraging guests to visit natural habitats found in the Preserves, and collaborating on wildlife research studies.

Create a culture of customer service.

4.1.3 Starting in 2016, all Forest Preserves employees will receive customer service training. By 2016, customer service will be included in staff performance evaluation for all positions. By 2020, consumer research will demonstrate improved customer satisfaction and an increased sense that the preserves are welcoming and inviting.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC
Partner(s)	Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden
Progress to Date  Completed	<p>In 2016 and 2017, hundreds of permit holders were surveyed and the results show high satisfaction with FPCC customer service. (However, customers identified a number of concerns related to the on-line permit system.)</p> <p>All FPCC police officers were trained to deal with individuals experiencing mental health issues, and all FPCC employees received customer service training related to working with persons with disabilities.</p> <p>Customer Service is currently evaluated in the annual performance evaluation for FPCC staff.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	Survey results will be used to (1) improve the “pain points” in the system such as difficulty utilizing the online reservation system and insurance requirements, and (2) address concerns related to cleanliness of port-o-lets.
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

Make information and data easily available to the public.



4.1.4 A new mobile-friendly version of the Forest Preserves website will allow visitors to more easily access information about the Forest Preserves on their computer, tablet or mobile device and an interactive web map will improve a visitor's ability to plan trips and navigate preserves and trails. Website traffic continues to increase and is projected to reach nearly two million visits per year by 2020.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC-OGS/Communications
Partner(s)	Smart Chicago Collaborative
Progress to Date  In progress	<p>A new interactive web map developed in partnership with Smart Chicago Collaborative was launched in 2017 and allows visitors to search based on location or activity, view amenities and activities available at each location, and access additional information including preserve and trail descriptions. Since launching the web map in late March 2017, website visitors have accessed the map nearly 10,000 times per month, resulting in over 520,000 individual location or trail page visits through September 2017.</p> <p>A new website is currently being built using the interactive web map as a foundation, and will be more user friendly and easy to access. A new website is needed to support the increased traffic to the Forest Preserves website and provide a better user experience. In 2016, the FPCC had 1,232,501 visits to the website compared to only 948,562 visits in 2015. As of August 2017 there were 923,820 visits.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	Launch new website.
2018 Cost	\$75,000 (FPCC for contractor to complete coding); Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	\$100,000 (FPCC); \$50,000 (PICH grant)

Priority 4.2 Provide enduring, focused conservation leadership and increased accountability.

Actions*

Create a Forest Preserves Conservation Council.

"The biggest success to date is the creation of the Conservation and Policy Council. We now have a group of civic leaders taking responsibility for the forest preserves; that is a big change and a crucial step towards a more sustainable model."

Rebecca Sanders
Audubon Great Lakes

Mileposts & Measures of Success

4.2.1 The Council will create a process to annually update its five year strategic and operating plan with increasingly specific metrics and measures of success.

Lead Responsibility

FPCC OGS

Partner(s)

Conservation and Policy Council

Progress to Date



In 2016 the Council organized its meetings around strategic issues related to plan implementation. For each strategic issue, one to two Council members served on a working group and led discussions at a Council meeting. This process continued in 2017. In 2017 the Council completed a self-assessment and recommended improvements to its systems for educating and engaging Council members.

A nominating committee convenes annually to make recommendations to fill vacancies on the Council and a Council briefing binder has been developed to smoothly integrate new Council members.

A process is in place to annually update the 5-year implementation strategy and to submit an annual report to the President and Board.

Agendas and minutes for each Council meeting are posted on the FPCC website.

2018 Goal(s)

The Council will work with the nominating committee to identify a pool of future candidates and develop a succession strategy for the Council.

2018 Cost

Staff time


Total 5 Year Cost

TBD


4.2.2 Implementation committees comprised of Forest Preserves staff and partner organizations will continue to work effectively with the Council to advance the *Next Century Conservation Plan*.

Lead Responsibility

FPCC

Partner(s)	Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden, Friends of the Forest Preserves, Openlands
Progress to Date  Completed	<p>Each year the NCCP Steering Committee, which includes co-chairs for all implementation committees, evaluates progress to date for each of seven operational priorities. The NCCP implementation committee co-chairs also conduct an annual evaluation of progress to date for all current year priorities.</p> <p>In 2016, one-on-one interviews were completed with all committee co-chairs and with representatives of the Conservation and Policy Council, volunteer stewards, FPCC staff, and partner organizations. Additional interviews were conducted in 2017.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	<p>Continue to adapt committee structure and process to use staff and partner time as effectively as possible.</p> <p>Begin to rotate committee chairs as appropriate, seek new partners and retain existing partners.</p>
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	TBD

4.2.3 The Forest Preserves President and Board of Commissioners will meet annually with the Council to discuss progress toward implementing the *Next Century Conservation Plan*.

Lead Responsibility	FPCC OGS
Partner(s)	Conservation and Policy Council
Progress to Date  In progress	<p>The Council chair presents an annual report and update to the President and the Board.</p>
2018 Goal(s)	<p>Present annual report and update to the President and Board and engage Board members in site visits and direct discussions with the Council.</p>
2018 Cost	Staff time
Total 5 Year Cost	Staff time

Priority 4.3 Maximize public and private resources and use them wisely to achieve the vision for future growth and restoration.

Actions*

Expand non-tax financial resources through innovative enterprise operations, market based fees for special purpose uses (e.g., facility rentals), public-private partnerships, sponsorships, and donations in collaboration with the Forest Preserve Foundation.

Mileposts & Measures of Success

4.3.1 Double non-tax revenue from innovative enterprise operations, fees, facility rentals, major gifts from private individuals, etc., from \$4.3 million in 2015 to \$8.6 million in 2020.
Note: Analysis to refine numeric targets is on-going.

Lead Responsibility

FPCC OGS

Partner(s)

Conservation and Policy Council, Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Zoological Society, Openlands

Progress to Date



A district-wide, concessions master plan to identify opportunities for revenue growth was completed in 2016. The FPCC has also identified opportunities for various forms of earned revenue from cell towers, billboards, and corporate sponsorships and adopted guidelines consistent with the Forest Preserves' Mission.

2018 Goal(s)

Put in place a plan with specific targets for increasing revenue from these sources. Explore the feasibility of establishing an endowment to fund the NCCP goals.

2018 Cost

\$20,000 to \$40,000 (various feasibility studies); Staff time

Total 5 Year Cost

TBD

Aggressively pursue regional, state and federal government grants.

4.3.2 In 2017, the FPCC analyzed existing grants and identified numeric targets for increasing grants based on past performance and future opportunities. Due to state and federal budget constraints, few opportunities for new grant revenue are presently available. While regional, state and federal grants are difficult to secure at this time, we will continue to explore this option.

Issue new bonds to fund well-planned capital expenditures for new acquisitions and restoration. Capture the full value of statutorily allowed property tax resources.

4.3.3 In 2016, the FPCC worked with the Civic Consulting Alliance (CCA) to refine cost estimates for major elements of the plan and to analyze the gap between revenues available through all non-tax sources and resources needed to complete the plan. In 2018, the FPCC will utilize existing debt capacity to issue a modest bond (\$7 million) to fund deferred maintenance and urgent capital needs over the next three years.

ⁱ In September 2016 the Nature Committee recommended deleting local food production as a priority action from the plan. The Conservation & Policy Council approved the revision on October 27, 2016.

ⁱⁱ In June 2016 FPCC staff and the Economics Committee reported to the Conservation & Policy Council that no local partners have been identified to lead business attraction efforts. The Council agreed that business recruitment is not an area of expertise for the FPCC, nor does it advance the district's primary mission, and, therefore, the district's role should be to make visitor data and other information available to local chambers of commerce or other agencies. If it no local partners are willing to lead efforts to attract nature-compatible business development, this action will not be advanced.