



5 YEAR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT CENTURY CONSERVATION PLAN



Forest Preserves of Cook County • October 28, 2015



5 YEAR IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR THE NEXT CENTURY CONSERVATION PLAN

Forest Preserves of Cook County ▪ October 28, 2015



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2014, President Toni Preckwinkle and the Forest Preserves of Cook County Board 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* lays out a set of bold actions to make Cook County a national leader in urban 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.

Upon completion of the plan, President Preckwinkle appointed the inaugural members of the Forest Preserves' Conservation and Policy Council to guide its implementation and ensure the Forest Preserves remain true to our conservation mission. Each year the council will present to the President and the board an updated five year implementation strategy; this report represents the first submittal. The council will also review the Forest Preserves' annual budget request and ensure it is aligned with the implementation strategy presented in this report.

The purpose of this five year implementation strategy is to:

1. Connect the broad, long-term goals of the *Next Century Conservation Plan* to operations of the Forest Preserves
2. Set priorities to ensure limited resources are spent effectively and efficiently
3. Serve as an internal and external communications and management tool for implementing the plan

The priority projects and programs presented in this report are designed to advance the goals of the *Next Century Conservation Plan*. These long term goals are mutually dependent and aligned to:

- Restore 30,000 acres to ecological health. (Today 5,000 acres are considered to be in healthy condition.)
- 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.

Rising to the Challenge

Implementing this ambitious plan will require a new and very different approach. Successful programs and practices must be replicated and massively scaled up. This will require operational efficiencies, leveraged resources and new resources. Every dollar

and hour invested must be spent as efficiently and effectively as possible. Existing partnerships must be strengthened and new partnerships built to leverage and coordinate resources. And, over time, significant new funds must be raised.

We must also change culture, improve external and internal communications and ensure efforts to implement this plan over time. The Conservation and Policy Council, advocates and partners will each play a key role both in guiding our efforts and ensuring continuity.

To address these challenges, we will focus on seven operational priorities:

- 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 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. For example, in 2016 we will pilot a program to better connect a target audience to nature. We will establish a forest preserves passport program, similar to the national parks passport program, challenging picnickers to visit our nature centers, hike a trail, or attend a special event. Each visit will earn a “stamp” tracking the visits and points which can then be redeemed for a free picnic permit, zoo pass, etc. We will work with professional evaluators to document and evaluate the pilot programs, and to continue developing appropriate metrics for evaluating the success of the overall plan.
- 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. For example, while we have limited resources available in 2016 for capital improvements, we will convene an external advisory group to help prioritize access and other improvements to make the forest preserves more accessible to persons with disabilities. As new resources become available in future year, top priority improvements will be teed up and ready to proceed. We will also explore several outsourcing opportunities, including operation of the pools and a call center which would provide one on one help for people navigating the on-line permit system.

“What has been helpful to me about this process is the broadening of thinking. Having to think about how this fits over the entire forest preserves has been very good for people.”

Jane Balaban
Nature Committee Co-chair

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 resources are being invested efficiently and effectively.

Being an effective partner also requires investment of staff time in outreach, clear communications and policies that enable, rather than inhibit, collaborative work toward the same goal. Clear articulation of goals through the *Next Century Conservation Plan* and this strategic plan helps partners know what is needed to be effective in finding solutions.

Building relationships takes time, but significant changes are already occurring. Thirty-eight organizations have agreed to partner on dozens of projects and programs. Several have offered to lead projects which the Forest Preserves does not have the capacity to take on at this time. As we continue to implement the plan, it is our hope that many more partners will lead and support projects and programs. Below are some examples of current partnerships that are advancing the goals of the *Next Century Conservation Plan*; the Forest Preserves’ partnerships extend beyond those on this list.

“The biggest challenge is the sheer scope of the work. We invited to the table people and organizations with a broad range of missions; now we must figure out how to activate that. For most folks, this is not their primary mission, so how do we keep them engaged? Through our working groups they can help shape our goals for 2020 and make them relevant to these partners. We must make this shift in culture to be more relevant going forward.”

Rebecca Sanders
People Committee Co-chair

Implementation Partners

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Audubon Chicago Region | Chicago Department of Transportation – Greencorps Chicago | Forest Preserve Foundation |
| Boy Scouts of America – Chicago Area | Citizens for Conservation | Lake County Forest Preserves |
| Chicago Zoological Society/Brookfield Zoo | Cook County Economic Development | Forest Preserve District of Will County |
| Central States SER | Cook County Environmental Control | Friends of the Chicago River |
| Chicago Botanic Garden | Elk Grove Village | Friends of the Forest Preserves |
| Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership | El Valor | Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation |
| Chicago Wilderness | Field Museum | Illinois Department of Natural Resources |
| Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning | | Illinois Natural History Survey |

Implementation Partners (continued)

| | | |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Illinois Nature Preserve Commission | Northwestern University | Trust for Public Land |
| Illinois Sustainable Technology Center | Openlands | University of Illinois at Chicago |
| Local schools | Prairie Research Institute (PRI) | University of Illinois Extension |
| Mary Crane Center | Rails to Trails | US Army Corps of Engineers |
| Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago | Stewards & Volunteers | USDI Fish & Wildlife Service |
| NeighborSpace | Student Conservation Association | |
| | The Nature Conservancy | |

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. Changing the culture of an organization is difficult, but significant changes are being made and we will continue to evolve over time.

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. The Forest Preserves' Communications team has limited resources and operates on a small budget, and though many partner organizations help to market the Forest Preserves, their own marketing resources are limited too. Partners like the Chicago Zoological Society and the Chicago Botanic Garden can help, but have their own priorities and mandates to fulfill. Market research now underway will help the Forest Preserves understand the attitudes and behaviors of those most likely to visit and/or support the preserves, what messages are important and the best methods for delivering those messages. The Forest Preserves will use this information to develop an integrated and comprehensive marketing campaign to include extensive use of social media ads in multiple languages in targeted media (including print, radio, and tv), a redesign of the Forest Preserves website, new mobile applications and billboards. Educating the public about the economic and other benefits of the Preserves will also require a robust marketing campaign--an investment that is not traditionally part of the District's corporate culture and budget.

"I appreciate that everyone has been so willing to speak openly and honestly about the challenges we face, and to look for creative solutions."

*Lenore Beyer-Clow
Leadership Committee
Co-chair*

- 6. Raising New Resources.** In Cook County, Illinois, 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, we will seek to fill the gap through non-tax revenues including public-private partnerships, corporate sponsorships, expanded concessions, operational efficiencies and all other mechanisms described throughout this report. It is highly likely that increased contributions from FPCC, partners, volunteers, and others will be necessary as well to provide the resources needed to achieve the plan.

- 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.



Goal 1: Nature

Native landscapes will thrive for generations



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 69,000 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** Rich biodiversity has value for its own sake, enhances the quality of human life, and contributes to the economic success of a region. We must further protect, restore and nurture the native plant and animal communities of the Forest Preserves of Cook County to ensure these invaluable resources thrive for the next 100 years and beyond.

Challenges and Opportunities Identified in 2014-15

- 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, we will identify significant cultural/archaeological sites, and we will complete the natural area prioritization that will include developing a monitoring system that can track progress toward restoring and actively managing 30,000 acres of ecologically-diverse habitat.
- Culture** The Forest Preserves' core mission is to protect nature while providing opportunities for education and compatible recreation. Efforts are underway to build an organizational culture that incorporates sustainability and biodiversity-conservation priorities into daily operations of all departments. In addition, we must transform, systematize and grow relationships with volunteers who are critical to fulfilling our 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. Partnering allows the Forest Preserves to leverage resources and increase conservation impacts through strengthened community connections, additional expertise, expanded fundraising opportunities and advocacy on nature-related issues.

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.

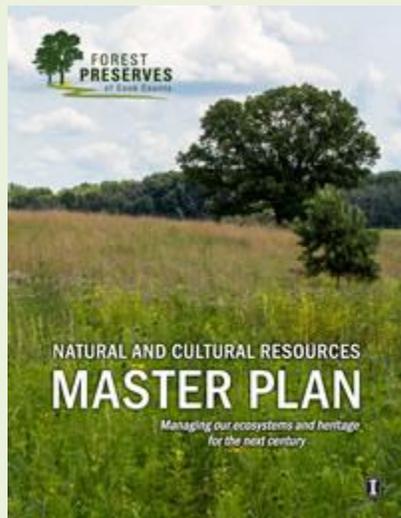
Mileposts & Measures of Success

By 2020, the number of acres under active restoration management will increase from 7,000 in 2015 to 12,000 acres in 2020. By 2020, the additional 5,000, which are identified as top priority areas in the Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan (NCRMP), will be tracked to determine quality change toward a high 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 Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan 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, 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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$12,400,000, which is comprised of \$5,000,000 (maintenance for 7,000 acres), \$6,000,000 (new restoration projects), and \$1,400,000 (staff time) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$70,000,000 (includes maintenance, new restoration projects and staff time, factoring in cost increases over time) |

* Actions are condensed from Next Century Conservation Plan

Guiding Restoration Efforts: The Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan



The costs of restoring and maintaining natural areas, protecting cultural resources, and acquiring new sites are significant. To ensure we use all our resources—staff, contractors, volunteers, grants and other funding—as efficiently and effectively as possible, we must have a clear and rational framework for prioritizing efforts. By establishing this framework, the NCRMP provides an invaluable tool.

By 2016, to 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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$40,000 (PRI staff time for applications) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$200,000 (PRI staff time for applications) |

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 |
| 2016 Cost | TBD (reviewing options with partners) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD based on nursery manager’s assessment & recommendation |

By 2018, field inventory will be completed for all currently identified high-priority archaeological sites and long-term management strategies will be developed to protect and preserve these sites as well as archaeologically sensitive landforms.

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC RM |
| Partner(s) | Prairie Research Institute |
| 2016 Cost | \$300,000 (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.

“If volunteers are given opportunities to form groups, bond with local places, and given responsibility, they will respond with huge amounts of highly motivated effort.”

Kent Fuller, Key Steward

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. Our goal for 2015 is to 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 the meantime 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 Permits Concessions Volunteers (PCV), FPCC RM |
| Partner(s) | Key Stewards, The Nature Conservancy, Field Museum, Audubon Chicago Region |
| 2016 Cost | \$182,000 (FPCC) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$1,300,000 |

A robust volunteer training program will be established and will offer a variety of training options. The number of volunteer training courses offered will increase from 8 courses with 40 sessions in 2016 to 13 courses with 60 sessions in 2020.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC PCV, FPCC RM |
| Partner(s) | Key Stewards, The Nature Conservancy, Field Museum, Audubon Chicago Region, Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden |
| 2016 Cost | |
| Total 5 Year Cost | |

By 2020, 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 forest preserve sites 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 |
| 2016 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.

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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$2,330,000 (\$786,000 from FPCC, \$1,520,000 in additional funds needed to expand hours from 55,000 in 2014 to 88,000 in 2016) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$10,980,000 (for 2016-2019, \$5,600,000 from 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. |

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 |
| Partner(s) | Friends of the Forest Preserves, Audubon Chicago Region, Greencorps Chicago, Student Conservation Association, Central States SER, Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership |
| 2016 Cost | Staff time (included in Conservation Corps budget but excludes tracking participants post-program) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$306,000-\$350,000 |

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; 3) An annual goal 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 |
| 2016 Cost | Staff time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

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.

Acquiring Land with High Ecological Value



Within the highly developed Chicago region, each year there are fewer opportunities to acquire large tracts of undeveloped, ecologically rich land. One such site— the 164 acre Holy Family Villa site in Palos Park—had been on FPCC’s radar for 20 years. When the owner recently expressed interest in selling the site, FPCC seized the opportunity.

Located just north of McGinty Slough, the site offers immediate proximity to existing high quality forest preserves and represents one of our premier natural resource acquisitions in recent times.

Mileposts & Measures of Success

By 2016, 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, other local land trusts |
| 2016 Cost | Staff time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

By 2017, a prequalified pool of conservation real-estate organizations will be established in order 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 |
| 2016 Cost | Staff time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD (consultant may be needed in 2017) |

Note: An acreage measure cannot be determined due to the variability of the real estate market. Our 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.

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) | TBD |
| 2016 Cost | Staff time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

* Actions are condensed from Next Century Conservation Plan

Support ecosystem, greenway and trail connections.

By 2020, the top three greenway connector projects identified in 2016 will either be completed or in the process of implementation.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC P&D |
| Partner(s) | TBD, but may include Openlands, Forest Preserves of Lake and Will Counties (depending on location), Rails to Trails |
| 2016 Cost | Staff time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

Expand innovative partnerships to protect land and engage people.

By 2020, enhance five (5) NeighborSpace, native garden sites and showcase them as “Native Plant Garden – Demonstration Sites” (the sites will include various scales and configurations). In 2016; develop a native plant, community gardener’s manual, which will include work-plans and design, and; produce, install, and evaluate the effectiveness of interpretive signage at two sites to help make connections to the preserves.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC P&D, FPCC RM |
| Partner(s) | NeighborSpace, University of Illinois Extension, Chicago Botanic Garden, Openlands |
| 2016 Cost | \$20,000 (funding needed for design contractor) |
| 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

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 |
| Partner(s) | Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden, Researchers |
| 2016 Cost | Staff time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$50,000 (to plan for 2017 conference) |

* Actions are condensed from Next Century Conservation Plan

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, |
| 2016 Cost | Staff time to secure funding |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$7,000,000 |

To inspire the next generation of people committed to understanding natural sciences, Forest Preserves 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 |
| 2016 Cost | Staff time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | |

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

By 2020, an internal and external recycling program will be established. The projected amount of recycled product we can obtain from our current waste stream is 24%. In 2016, we will establish a baseline measurement for the percentage of waste diverted from landfills and determine a big goal to reach in 2020 to increase our diversion rate. Implementation will start in 2017 or before. 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 |
| 2016 Cost | Estimated \$ (Re-releasing RFP in October 2015 for single stream collection) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

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 |
| 2016 Cost | Staff Time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

In 2015, 11 propane fueling stations were installed. 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. We 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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$800,000 |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

In 2016, a study will be implemented to measure the environmental impacts from alternative/reduced mowing areas. Alternative uses could include native landscaping, no mow areas and sustainable turf. The study will develop guidelines to evaluate potential alternative/reduced mowing areas. Evaluation criteria could include reduction in emissions, energy conservation and new habitat creation. By 2017 metrics will be in place and implementation will begin. By 2020, these guidelines will be fully implemented and measurement of environmental impacts will be underway.

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC LM |
| Partner(s) | FPCC RM, Chicago Botanic Garden |
| 2016 Cost | Staff time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

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 |
| 2016 Cost | Staff time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

Expand relationships to repurpose buffer properties for habitat, native landscaping and local food.

In 2016 a native plants training and idea exchange will be provided for NeighborSpace Gardeners and the Chicago Community Garden Association (up to 500 gardeners). The training will provide an overview of the importance of native plants to wildlife (e.g. milkweed to monarchs), guidance on incorporating native plants into food and flower gardens and technical assistance including a list of wildlife friendly plants. After participating in the workshop at least 100 city community gardeners will incorporate native plants into their gardens (at minimum milkweed) and will understand their potential, collective impact to conserving nature. (Reference: Doug Tallamy: Bringing Nature Home). NeighborSpace and the Forest Preserves will coordinate a field trip to the preserves with at least 30 people representing 30 city gardens. The field trip will include a workshop that introduces participants to the Forest Preserves, its connection to native plant gardens, and the benefits of being in nature to human health.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC CEP, NeighborSpace |
| Partner(s) | University of Illinois Extension, Openlands, Chicago Botanic Garden |
| 2016 Cost | \$8,000 (Books, Plants, Meeting Fees, Field Trip to the Preserves) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD based on pilot success |

In 2016, we will develop a native landscaping plan for all developed Forest Preserves’ sites (e.g., picnic areas, golf course, pools, and maintenance facilities), as well as a curriculum for a native plant management certification and training program for staff. By 2017, metrics for measuring the success of the plan will be in place and integrated into the STAR performance system. By 2020, the native landscaping plan and staff training program will be in place with implementation underway.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC LM, FPCC RM, FPCC P&D |
| Partner(s) | University of Illinois Extension, Chicago Botanic Garden |
| 2016 Cost | \$50,000 (FPCC for consultant to develop curriculum), Staff time |
| 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



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 Forest Preserves provides a place for residents and visitors to explore, learn, play, exercise and improve their health and wellbeing. 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. The Forest Preserves offers educational and recreational programming and other opportunities.
- 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 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.

Challenges and Opportunities Identified in 2014-15

- Data** Historical data collection on visits to the forest preserves is limited and dispersed, but in recent years we began tracking the number of picnic permits issued, visits to nature centers and attendance at programs and events. Surveys to assess our visitors’ experience will be incorporated into new programs, such as camping, as well as existing programs. However, the forest preserves have hundreds of entry points, making a full count of all visitors impossible. Instead, we will collect baseline information and track users by installing counting systems at key gateways and trails. Furthermore, partner time and dollars invested is 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 and aquatic centers

each year, and over three million visit the Brookfield Zoo and Chicago Botanic Garden. Yet many do not know about other programs, trails and facilities nearby. New market research exploring residents' perceptions of safety, access and other issues will be used to develop new strategies to better target these audiences. 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 wayfinding, more nature interpretation and more multi-lingual and culturally sensitive materials to help all visitors feel welcome, safe and willing to explore.

Partners

Multiple partners use and benefit from the Forest Preserves, and there is great potential to expand collaboration with educational and interpretive partners such as the Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden, Audubon Chicago Region, The Nature Conservancy, The Field Museum, , University of Illinois Extension, 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 to reach a larger and more diverse audience. The Forest Preserves' partnership with NeighborSpace offers an opportunity to increase the Forest Preserves' presence in urban communities.

Resource

Needs

Resources are needed to increase the capacity for outreach and programs via staff, partners or volunteers. A fundraising plan will be developed and implemented to access 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.

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

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 Garden |
| 2016 Cost | \$4,000 (FPCC); \$4,000 (corporate sponsor) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$20,000 (FPCC); \$20,000 (corporate sponsor) |

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, |
| 2016 Cost | \$10,000 (Federal grant from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention via the Cook County Department of Public Health) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | n/a |

* Actions are condensed from Next Century Conservation Plan

In 2016, a pilot study conducted at the Forest Preserves will document the benefits of nature on health.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lead Responsibility | Northwestern University and University of Chicago |
| Partner(s) | FPCC CEP |
| 2016 Cost | \$69,017 (\$59,017 from Northwestern University and University of Chicago, \$5,000 provided by FPCC through NCCP 2015 seed funding, \$5,000 additional funds needed) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | n/a |

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

By 2020, ten new or enhanced nature play 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, El Valor, Mary Crane Center |
| Partner(s) | Chicago Zoological Society, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) |
| 2016 Cost | \$20,000 (Funding needed for Trailside Museum) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$160,000(FPCC); \$325,000 (IDNR)**; \$300,000 (corporate sponsors) |

***Funding dependent on the state budget*

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

* Actions are condensed from Next Century Conservation Plan

Connecting Families to Nature



For the first time in decades, individuals and families can camp at five different forest preserves in Cook County: Shabbona Woods in South Holland, Camp Sullivan in Tinley Park, Camp Reinberg in Palatine, Bullfrog Lake in Willow Springs and Camp Dan Beard in Northbrook.

Camping Leadership Immersion Course (CLIC).

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC CEP |
| Partner(s) | Billy Casper Golf, Outdoors Empowered Network |
| 2016 Cost | \$600,000 (FPCC); \$100,000 (FP Foundation); \$40,000 (Columbia); \$75,000 (in-kind from Outdoor Empowerment Network); \$100,000 (other corporate sponsorship) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

By 2020, zipline and canopy tours will draw 15,000 new visitors and 5,000 repeat visitors to the Forest Preserves.

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC PCV; FPCC P&D |
| Partner(s) | Go Ape |
| 2016 Cost | \$400,000 (FPCC); \$600,000 (Go Ape) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | |

During 2016 and 2017, residents from communities which currently have limited engagement with the Forest Preserves will participate in *Birding in the Preserves* initiatives which will include updated online resources, marketing materials and programming for new birders, people with disabilities and Spanish speaking people. The *Birds In My Neighborhood* program will expand from 20 schools to 30 schools.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC CEP, Audubon Chicago Region, Chicago Audubon Society, Openlands |
| Partner(s) | Birding organizations (too many to list), U.S. Fish & Wildlife |
| 2016 Cost | \$20,000 (FPCC); \$40,000 (U.S. Fish & Wildlife) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | |

Four events will be convened at Swallow Cliff each year to connect fitness to nature and promote the benefits of nature.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC CEP |
| Partner(s) | Moraine Valley Community College, fitness vendors |

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| 2016 Cost | \$2,000 (FPCC) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$10,000 |

In 2016, we will pilot a program challenging picnickers and others to visit nature centers and attend special events. Each completed visit will earn points which can be redeemed for a free picnic permit, zoo pass, etc. By 2020, 30% of surveyed visitors to campgrounds, aquatic centers, ziplines and picnic groves will report that they have visited or plan to visit other Forest Preserves sites, and 10% of surveyed zoo visitors will report they have visited or plan to visit other Forest Preserves sites.

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC CEP |
| Partner(s) | Chicago Zoological Society |
| 2016 Cost | \$10,000 (FPCC) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | n/a |

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

The Forest Preserves will continue to expand and create new opportunities for Cook County residents to volunteer in the forest preserves, including Trail Watch, Water Trail Keepers, Nature Center Events and Programming, and Off Leash Dog Areas. In 2016 we will evaluate and prioritize new opportunities for volunteering in a variety of areas. We will work with partners to collaboratively develop and formalize 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. Once these programs are created we will establish baseline numbers and create goals and targets for future years.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC CEP, FPCC PCV |
| Partner(s) | Forest Preserves Police, Friends of the Forest Preserves, The Nature Conservancy, The Field Museum, Audubon Chicago Region, Fr the Chicago River, Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Zoological Societ |
| 2016 Cost | Staff Time |

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 our programs. We 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 establish a baseline to determine the number of people that have been introduced to the forest preserves through their efforts.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC CEP |
| Partner(s) | Friends of the Forest Preserves, Audubon Chicago Region, Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Zoological Society |
| 2016 Cost | Staff Time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | n/a |

By 2020, 20 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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$20,000 (FPCC); \$10,000 (American Indian Center); \$10,000 (corporate sponsors, other) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$100,000 (FPCC); \$50,000 (American Indian Center and other event partners); \$50,000 (corporate sponsors) |

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) | |
| 2016 Cost | \$10,000 (FPCC) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD (depending upon additional translation needed) |

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 the 11 gateway locations (see Priority 2.4).

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC P&D, FPCC Office of the General Superintendent (OGS) |
| Partner(s) | Cook County Department of Public Health |
| 2016 Cost | N/A |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

Increase accessibility for people with disabilities.

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 2016 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. |
| 2016 Cost | \$20,000 (FPCC for technical assistance), \$5,000,000 (FPCC for capital projects which include ADA improvements) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | An additional \$12 million to \$15 million by 2020 for capital projects which include ADA improvements. |

* Actions are condensed from Next Century Conservation Plan

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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$5,000 (FPCC – for training); \$5,000 (FPCC – for reasonable accommodations & adaptive equipment); \$5,000 (Chicago Zoological Society); \$50,000 (other sponsor) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | |

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

Actions*

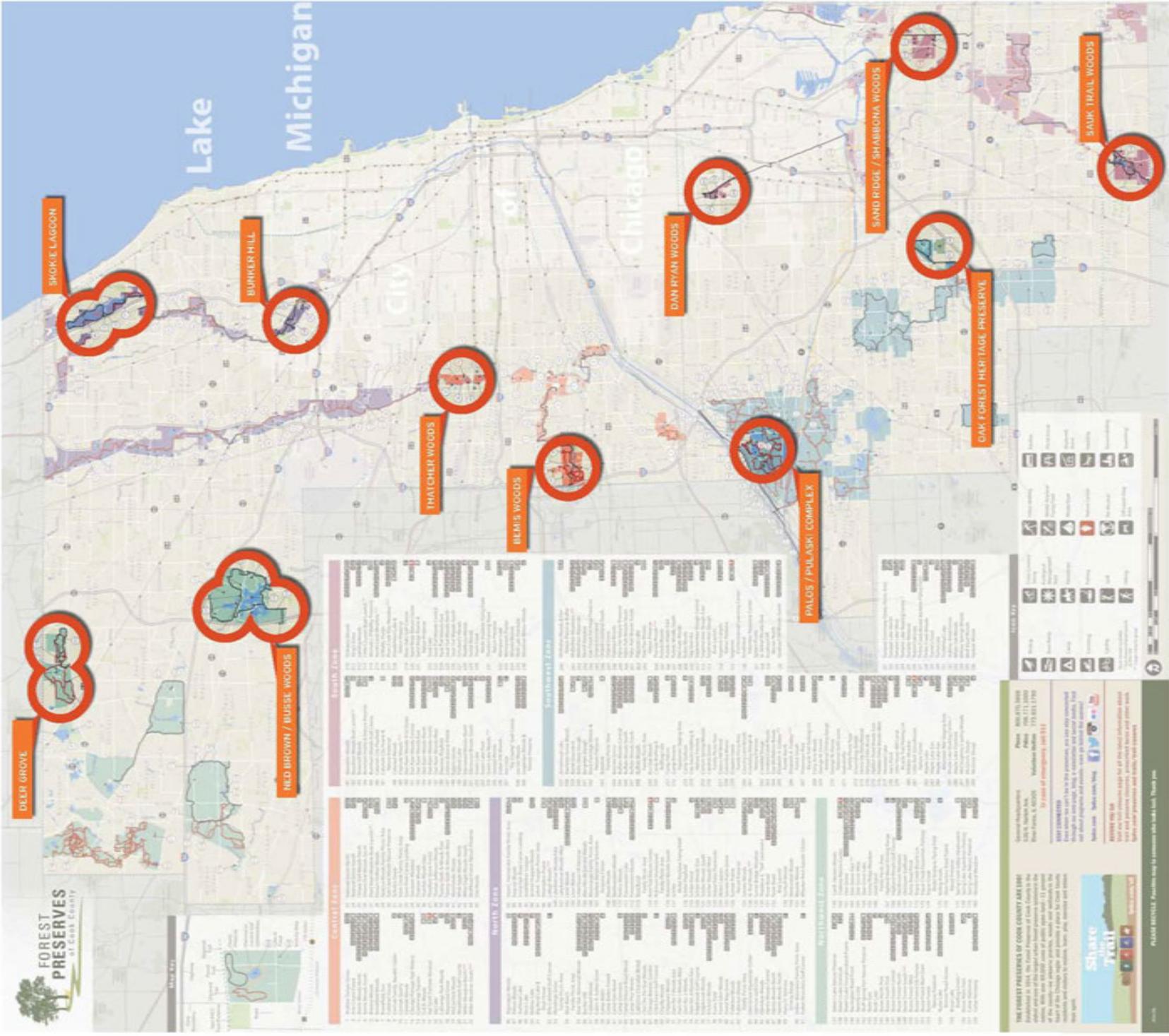
Increase on-site information to help people understand where they are.

Mileposts & Measures of Success

Eleven 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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$202,000 for site plans (\$175,000 from Federal grant from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention via the Cook County Department of Public Health, \$27,000 additional funds needed) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$1,100,000 (approximately \$100,000 per site for basic improvements), additional funds needed for specialized improvements (corporate sponsorships) |

* Actions are condensed from Next Century Conservation Plan



**FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY
GATEWAY MASTER PLAN AND DESIGN GUIDELINES
OVERALL DISTRICT MAP**

JUNE 4, 2015



Support and leverage existing education partnerships to expand offerings.

Increase number of education partnerships and participants (via Mighty Acorns, Citizen Scientists, Nature Center interpretive programming, etc.) from 7,015 outreach program attendees in 2015 to 10,000 in 2020; from 15,557 attendees at school programs in 2015 to 20,000 in 2020; and 22,562 attendees at non-school programs in 2015 to 20,000 in 2020 (*numbers for 2015 are from January-July*).

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC CEP |
| Partner(s) | Field Museum, Chicago Wilderness, Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden, University of Illinois Extension, other school and community organizations |
| 2016 Cost | \$40,000 (FPCC – staff time, bussing, supplies); \$60,000 (in-kind from Zoo, Garden, UIE) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | |

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.

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC CEP and PCV |
| Partner(s) | |
| 2016 Cost | \$50,000 (bus transportation) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$325,000 (bus transportation) |



Goal 3: Economy

People will understand the benefits of protected land



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.

Challenges and Opportunities Identified in 2014-15

- 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 will be 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.
- Partners** Several partners have accepted the challenge to help us meet this goal, but all have limited resources.
- Resource Needs** Increased capacity for economic analysis and marketing through staff or consultants 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

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.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lead Responsibility | Chicago Wilderness |
| Partner(s) | MWRD, CMAP, FPCC |
| 2016 Cost | \$20,000 (FPCC), \$50,000 (Chicago Wilderness) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$60,000 (FPCC), \$350,000 (Chicago Wilderness) |

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.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC |
| Partner(s) | Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Zoological Society |
| 2016 Cost | \$18,000 (FPCC) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$18,000 (FPCC), \$15,000 (CBG), \$15,000 (CZS) |

As data becomes available through the work of partner organizations like Openlands and Chicago Wilderness, 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 as the World

* Actions are condensed from Next Century Conservation Plan

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 Communications |
| Partner(s) | Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Wilderness |
| 2016 Cost | (Included in 3.3 below.) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | (Included in 3.3 below.) |

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

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.
4. By 2020, preliminary findings will be reviewed and next steps to scale up, publicize and or reassess will be identified.

By 2020, a tracking system 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 |
| 2016 Cost | TBD (Openlands); \$7,000 (FPCC staff time); \$7,000 (MWRD staff time) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$250,000 (FPCC) |

Understand and market advantage of proximity to protected land.

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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$5,000 (FPCC) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$15,000 (FPCC) |

Collect empirical data on neighboring municipalities to the forest preserve to identify mutually beneficial investments.

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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$5,000 (FPCC) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$100,000 (FPCC) |

Priority 3.2 Encourage nature compatible business development

Actions*

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

Mileposts & Measures of Success

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 | TBD (local chamber of commerce or other economic development agency) |
| Partner(s) | Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, FPCC Permits/Concessions / Volunteers |
| 2016 Cost | TBD |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

Increase habitat adjacent to the Preserves through collaborative partnerships.

This is not a priority under the Economy goal for the first five years of plan implementation. See Nature goal for related activities.

* Actions are condensed from Next Century Conservation Plan

Proactive information and policy sharing.

In 2016 the Forest Preserves will publish a land use guide designed to compile all policies and related information about how partners and neighboring communities can interact with the preserves.

By 2020, at least 20 representatives of municipalities throughout the County will report that they find the Forest Preserves’ land use guide a valuable source of clear and easily accessible information regarding Forest Preserves’ policies.

By 2020, there will be at least 100 downloads of the land use guide from the website.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC OGS, FPCC P&D |
| Partner(s) | Cook County Bureau of Economic Development |
| 2016 Cost | \$10,000 (FPCC staff time) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

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

Actions*

Mileposts & Measures of Success

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

By 2016, the Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden and Forest Preserves of Cook County will have in place memorandums 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.

See People goal for related educational activities.

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.)*

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 preliminary market research conducted by Openlands in 2015 to provide information regarding levels of public knowledge of, interest in and commitment to the Forest Preserves.

* Actions are condensed from Next Century Conservation Plan

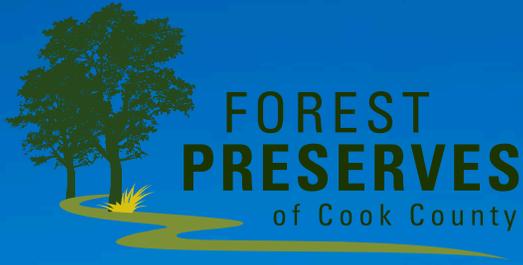
“We need to communicate relevant information to each stakeholder, and there are so many stakeholders.”

*Rich Gamble
Economics Committee Co-chair*

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 Preserve visitors.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC OGS/Communications |
| Partner(s) | Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden |
| 2016 Cost | \$200,000 (FPCC), \$50,000 (in-kind CZS and CBG) |
| 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



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.

Challenges and Opportunities Identified in 2014-15

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. In 2015, the Preserves will realign its 2015 Appropriation Ordinance to demonstrate current spending levels in the six categories that better reflect the Plan: 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 initial step toward guiding implementation of the *Next Century Conservation Plan*. Council members are engaged in learning about the Preserves. The ambitious task of creating a five-year plan will be iterative allowing opportunities to refine and update it annually. The Forest Preserves is making strides toward operating with performance management standards and is building a foundation for continuing to improve efficiency, transparency and data-driven decision making. A significant need is to educate the Council and Board of Commissioners of the full extent of the cost of the *Next Century Conservation Plan* and to develop sufficient and acceptable sources of financial and other resources. 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 is a great first step. However, staffing these committees is a challenge because of limited time and resources – both for Preserves staff and outside partners. Creating clear agreements for collaborative partnerships which benefit all partners requires considerable

Next Century Conservation – Five Year Strategic Plan

investment of time building relationships. Sustaining the level of commitment and work beyond the first year may require additional staff and outside support.

Marketing This is a critical time increasing awareness of the Preserves' value to the people and environment of Cook County and to build public confidence in the Preserves' management excellence. Although research around strategies for increasing all sources of revenue is in process, initial efforts will focus on increasing non-tax revenue and creating operating efficiencies.

Resource

Needs The plan will require more resources than the Preserves have had in the recent past. Research is underway to determine ways of funding future work. The revenue needs and the recommended strategies will be determined by November 2016.

Measures of Success by 2020

Priority 4.1 Manage with excellence, transparency and sound financial practice

Actions*

Maximize operational efficiency by using metrics, evaluation, and informing plans with market analysis.

Mileposts & Measures of Success

The Forest Preserves star performance metrics system and operational efficiency measures will be evaluated to determine alignment with the goals and program categories of the Plan.

By 2017, a financial plan will be in place and regularly updated to set direction for implementing the *Next Century Conservation Plan*.

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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$5,000 in staff time (FPCC) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$5,000 (FPCC) |

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

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).

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;

* Actions are condensed from *Next Century Conservation Plan*

Next Century Conservation – Five Year Strategic Plan

- 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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$5,000 in staff time (FPCC) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

Create a culture of customer service.

- Starting in 2016, All Forest Preserve 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 |
| 2016 Cost | \$5,000 (FPCC), \$5,000 (in-kind CZS and CBG) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

Make information and data easily available to the public.

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. Website traffic will reach millions of visits per year by 2020.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC-OGS/Communications |
| Partner(s) | Smart Chicago Collaborative |
| 2016 Cost | \$ 5,000(FPCC), \$50,000 (PICH grant), \$25,000 (in-kind Smart Chicago), Staff time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | \$100,000 (FPCC) |

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

Actions*

Create a Forest Preserves Conservation Council.



General Superintendent Arnold Randall (far left) and Forest Preserves President Toni Preckwinkle (in blue) welcome inaugural Conservation and Policy Council Members (left to right) Robert Castaneda, Laurel Ross, Falona Joy, Linda Mastandrea, Terry Guen and Michael DeSantiago. Not pictured: Peter Ellis, Sylvia Jenkins, Wendy Paulson, Commissioner Robert Steele, Mark Templeton.

The level of change envisioned in the *Next Century Conservation Plan* cannot occur without a long term, sustained effort. The Conservation and Policy Council guides efforts to implement the plan and will play a key role in ensuring continuity over time.

Mileposts & Measures of Success

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

- In 2016 the Council will organize its meetings and possible sub-committees around strategic issues raised by the 5-year planning process
- By 2016 all Council members will be engaged in reviewing in detail at least one of the Strategic Plan goal areas and leading discussion at a Council meeting
- By 2017 the Council will conduct a self-evaluation and recommend improvements to its systems for educating and engaging Council members
- By 2017 a Council training system/materials will be in place to smoothly integrate any new Council members

| | |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC OGS |
| Partner(s) | Conservation and Policy Council |
| 2016 Cost | \$5,000 (FPCC for consultant) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

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

- By the end of 2016, the Forest Preserves and Committees will create a self-evaluation of progress, including evaluation of partner engagement
- By 2017 an intentional program will be in place to rotate committee chairs as appropriate, seek new partners and retain existing partners

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC |
| Partner(s) | Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden, Friends of the Forest Preserves, Openlands |
| 2016 Cost | \$5,000 (FPCC for consultant) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

* Actions are condensed from *Next Century Conservation Plan*

The Forest Preserves District 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 |
| 2016 Cost | FPCC staff time |
| Total 5 Year Cost | n/a |

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

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.*

- In 2016, complete a district-wide, concessions master plan to identify opportunities for revenue growth
- In 2016, analyze existing grants and identify numeric targets for increasing grants based on past performance and future opportunities
- By 2016 identify opportunities for Corporate sponsorships and adopt guidelines consistent with the Forest Preserves’ Mission
- By 2017 put in place a plan with specific targets for increasing revenue from these sources.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC OGS |
| Partner(s) | Conservation and Policy Council, Chicago Botanic Garden, Chicago Zoological Society, Openlands |
| 2016 Cost | \$20,000 (FPCC) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |

* Actions are condensed from Next Century Conservation Plan

Next Century Conservation – Five Year Strategic Plan

Aggressively pursue regional, state and federal government grants.

While regional, state and federal grants are difficult to secure at this time, we will continue to explore this option. Similarly, bonds and other tax-funded options are difficult, but we will continue to explore all options.

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

By 2017, studies will have analyzed the gap between revenues available through all non-tax sources and resources needed to complete the plan. Specific plans and actions as well as benchmarks to meet that gap over 5 years will be set at that time.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Lead Responsibility | FPCC OGS |
| Partner(s) | Chicago Zoological Society, Chicago Botanic Garden, Openlands |
| 2016 Cost | \$50,000 (FPCC) |
| Total 5 Year Cost | TBD |