

Our Mission

The McHenry County Conservation District exists to preserve, restore and manage natural areas and open spaces for their intrinsic value and for the benefits to present and future generations.

Our Vision

McHenry County Conservation District will be a premier public agency in the country for preserving, protecting and managing open space. Residents will have developed a personal responsibility for their local environment, gained a greater appreciation for their natural world and invested into ensuring its future protection. Achieving this vision will:

- Inspire respect for the land;
- Promote sound environmental practices;
- Promote the long-term viability of the county's biodiversity;
- Provide opportunities for responsible use of the land in concert with natural resources;
- Promote environmental stewardship;
- Provide quality experiences that promote green, healthy and balanced lifestyles;
- Connect children to nature and;
- Foster public and private partnerships.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Upcoming Board Meetings

Public Session varies, check website.
Agendas posted at MCCDistrict.org.

Brookdale Administrative Offices
18410 US Hwy. 14, Woodstock

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McHenry County
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



From the Board President—

At the end of June, I will have completed my term as a board member of the McHenry County Conservation District. I would like to share just a few of the highlights over the last five years. I have had the opportunity to meet and work with some great people at the District, County Board, McHenry County Conservation Foundation (MCCF), McHenry Council of Governments (MCCG) and citizens of McHenry County.

I was able to participate in a variety of activities and events that gave me the opportunity to better understand the mission of the district. I want to thank the directors and their organizations for the time they allowed me to attend their staff meetings, work with their team in the field, and have discussions about the district's future.

I was fortunate to be able to participate in the study of the propagation of the Green Snake, in our prairies; checked the water quality of our streams and mussel populations; and visited our Wildlife Resource Center to understand how we help assist the next generation of endangered species including the Blanding's Turtle and those animals that can't be returned to the wild. I drove along with our Police Department to witness firsthand how they protect our citizens and District properties. Accompanied staff who take care of our trails and sites throughout the year. Met with our financial staff to better understand the district's finances and municipal accounting practices. Participated in an interpretive ride, created by the education staff, through Glacial Park on horseback. Worked with MCCF in planning the annual Pedal, Paddle & Saddle Event and established a new funding process for district projects.

I also attended MCCG meetings to understand how the district partners with local governments within the county and met with County Board members to insure the district's budget was in alignment with the county's financial direction. Listened to individual citizens or organizations that appeared before the Board asking for change or modification of District policies.

I would like to thank the Board Members I have work with over the past five years for their dedication and time they have spent and will continue to spend in the years to come.

See you on the trail,

Vern Scacci — Board President



Landscapes is a FREE publication. To subscribe or update your contact info: email MCCD@MCCDistrict.org or call (815) 338-6223. The publication can also be read online at MCCDistrict.org.

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www.MCCDistrict.org



McHenry County Conservation Foundation was established to help promote the goals

and objectives of the Conservation District in the area of land protection, management, conservation education, and research. The foundation plays a role in protecting and preserving our natural heritage through grant support, fund raising and membership development.

The Foundation welcomes charitable gifts and memberships to assist in their goal to protect the quality of life, property values, air and water quality, and open space throughout the county.

Visit mchenryconservation.org to find out how you can help.

McHenry County Conservation Foundation is a recognized not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

McHenry County Conservation Foundation —
Lost Valley Visitor Center, 7210 Keystone Rd., Richmond, IL 60071
(815) 678-4532, ext. 8204



Chief King Elected as 3rd Vice President of the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police

McHenry County Conservation District Chief Laura King has been elected 3rd Vice President of the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police (ILACP). She is the first woman to serve on the Board of Officers in the association's 79-year history. In addition, Chief King is now in line to become ILACP's first woman to serve as president for the 2023-2024 term.

ILACP was established in 1941 and represents over 1,200 members working in over 450 agencies throughout the State. The association acts as the "Illinois voice of professional law enforcement" by demonstrating a proactive role and impact on legislation and public policies that affect policing and public safety; promotes professional and personal development of their members through innovative services and training; and demonstrates successful outreach to members, partners in law enforcement, and Illinois citizens to foster safer communities, optimal police-community relations, and respect for diversity.



In Memory—

It is with great sadness that we said goodbye to a friend and Trustee Emeritus Kent Krautstrunk who passed away last December after battling cancer.

Trustee Krautstrunk had a strong passion for nature, conservation and the District. He served on the Board of Trustees for five years and as a liaison to the McHenry County Conservation Foundation. Trustee Krautstrunk was a park and recreation professional, and served as the Executive Director of the Prospect Heights Park District before he retired from the field.

We remember Kent fondly, hosting the Wall of Wines at the Foundation's *Tap Into your Wild Side* fundraising event. He always reflected a positive attitude, a warm hello and a friendly smile.



American with Disabilities Act

McHenry County Conservation District welcomes the participation of all individuals in our programs, including those with disabilities. We are fully committed to complying with the ADA and providing reasonable accommodations to facilitate participation in our programs.

It is the responsibility of participants, parents/guardians to contact the District to make arrangements for any accommodation at the time of registration; no later than two weeks prior to the start of a program or special event.

Safety is a Priority

Safety is a top priority to all who visit our sites and facilities. If, while on a Conservation District site, you see or witness something that appears to be unsafe, please call the Conservation District and let us know (815) 338-6223.

Behavior Code of Conduct

1. Show respect to other participants, staff and volunteers.
2. Follow instructions by staff and volunteers and show proper group behavior at all times.
3. Show respect to the environment, facilities and supplies.
4. Use appropriate language at all times.

Photography

Participants in McHenry County Conservation District programs and visitors at our sites may be photographed, videotaped or filmed for use in District publications, promotions, and on the District web site or social media channels. All photos taken on District property are the sole property of the District.

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COVID-19

Summer Activities in the Conservation Areas—

We want to look ahead and beyond, but the reality is we will continue with our new normal this summer. The Conservation District is taking extra precautions and safety measures to help visitors stay healthy while on our sites, whether it be for casual visits, DIY adventures, or small group and well-thought out activities with social and physical distancing measures in place. Special events, *First Friday Concerts*, *The Great Outdoors Beer Trail* and day camps have been canceled this year. Campgrounds will be offered as exclusive use at a reduced rate. We are cautiously and optimistically moving forward with some summer programs, but they will be kept small and intimate.

This issue of *Landscapes* includes many ideas for individuals, couples and families to get out and appreciate nature. In addition, a variety of E-Learning activities, webinars, activity sheets and environmental education at home can be found on our website. Check our website MCCDistrict.org for the most up-to-date information and follow us on social media @DiscoverMCCD.



IMPACT OF NATURE – HEALING BENEFITS OF OPEN SPACE

Conservation Areas are ESSENTIAL to the physical and mental health of our communities.

We will come through this together!



Go. Be Healthy. Be Safe.

Since the first stay-at-home order was issued getting outdoors was deemed a necessity, a requirement to

relieve stress—good for the head, good for the heart and good for the soul. And we did. But many used the sites like normal. Everything is not normal.

While our favorite conservation areas will continue to be our solace and our refuge to cure our cabin fever, awaken our spring spirit, and be a place for our summer adventures, we will need to continue to tread cautiously and take mindful behavior modifications to adjust to our new normal of physical distancing.

So how can we get outdoors, get some exercise, breath nature in and do so responsibly? Part of the challenge is that the top five favorite sites are also the most populated and it seems as temperatures warms, everyone has the same idea, let's go for a hike at Glacial Park—or by noon on Saturday cyclists along the Prairie Trail are in mass. So this summer let's take the road less traveled and the time less typical.

We love a good challenge. And together we got this! Because as bad as things are, we can't imagine what our life would be like without the ability to appreciate our sites, trails and wide open spaces!

So let's Keep on Keepin' on doing those top 6 physical distancing measures to keep us safe:

Keep 6 Feet Apart between people or family groups—while hiking, biking and at launches.

No Group Gatherings. Follow physical distancing protocols.

Yield to Others. Walk single-file where trails narrow.

Wash Your Hands. Often. And clean touched surfaces.

Wear a Face Mask. Protect yourself and others.

Stay Home. If you are sick.

Save Lives.

Nature Beckons Us to Take Notice

Nature kept on. It went on about it business. Spring ephemerals burst through the forest floor in their array of beauty. Spring migration didn't get canceled. They came in waves. We watched from our windows. The flocks of robins, bluebirds, and warblers arrived to remind us of not the day of the week so much, but that time of year. And that first warm April day after seriously being cooped up inside, we opened the doors and windows and let the sounds of spring fill our houses instead of the daily state and federal briefs. Oh, I do believe the sounds were amplified with less vehicle and airplane traffic, because never had the trill of the red-winged blackbirds sound so clear, or the chorus frogs sing so enchantingly, and don't even get me started on that oh so welcoming bugle call of the Sandhill cranes! Hello friends—welcome back! Nests are being built, courtships a flutter, squirrels chattering to each other from multiple tree stands and that fat rabbit is eying my garden sprouts.

The maple trees still shared their liquid gold in the form of sap and maple syrup was made; the spring's rain came and streams babbled and gushed and poured out into the wetlands like it was just another day on the job. Those large stand of protected oaks and hickory trees budded out and set up shop as usual to help purify the air, provide homes for wildlife and offer a shaded canopy to hike beneath. No one told Mother Nature there was a pandemic going on. She just got busy doing her normal spring activities. (Still questioning Her choice for those late snow showers, but we'll let those slide.)

So what was so different this year? Typically most of us humans are too busy to stop and take in. We were forced to stay close to home. Made to slow down. To pause. We have seen the pictures of the reduced smog around Los Angeles, and the clearer waters in the canals of Venice. It makes you wonder the impact that will be seen in nature locally. Will there be more grassland birds because they were able to nest quietly undisturbed? Will more snakes, turtles and lizards live another day because they made it across the road due to less unaware motorists?

As we endure this pandemic, we will remember fondly it was our treasured Conservation Areas that helped to make it bearable and gave us moments of relief. Ideally, individuals and families who now have the time to get out and responsibly hike a conservation District trail have found a greater connection and appreciation for their natural world. And in the months and years ahead—we welcome you to visit again and again! Be safe. Be well.

— Wendy Kummerer, Director of Marketing & Education



Marty Hackl

Project Updates:

Prairie Trail Project—Old Town Algonquin

The Village of Algonquin in partnership with the McHenry County Conservation District are making improvements to the Prairie Trail from approximately South Main Street to La Fox River Drive. Construction began in April and will continue thru July 2020. Project Improvements Include: resurfacing, lighting, bicycle repair station, new La Fox River Drive pedestrian/ bicycle bridge, water foundations, benches, picnic table, trail signage, gathering space with pergola and space for community art. A construction detour is in place. The temporary ramp will route users to La Fox River Drive onto local streets where they can safely reconnect to the Prairie Trail through Towne Park. *Note: Please park in the public lots along Washington Street at Jefferson and Harrison Streets and not in the construction zone.* Also as an important reminder, during COVID-19 we ask that trail users not stop and congregate on the trail and use social distancing when waiting at intersections. Follow the construction progress online at <http://oldtownalgonquin.org/old-town-prairie-trail.html>.



Work to Protect and Restore District Lands Continue— County wide Oak Tree Plantings

Over the past two weeks the Conservation District planted 60 bur oak trees, 2" inch diameter, at eight (8) different conservation sites throughout the county: Boone Creek, Dufield Pond (McConnell), Elizabeth Lake (Lakeview), Fel-Pro RRR (West), Harrison Benwell, Kishwaukee Headwaters, Marengo Ridge Group Campground and North Branch Conservation Areas. These plantings were funded by a tree replacement program through McHenry County Department of Transportation. Most of these 4-6' saplings will grow into majestic oaks as part of our native landscape planting plans, while others, like those planted at the Marengo Ridge Group Campground replaced significant trees that died due to disease or old age. We can't replace all the trees lost, so staff is very strategic replacing those in the most critical locations.



Glacial Park 5-Acre Prairie Restoration Continues

In early May, 390 Trees and associated shrubs were planted on the 5-acre field south of the intersection of Harts Rd and the entrance drive to the Lost Valley Visitor Center. This is part of an ongoing restoration project to convert a former agriculture field to prairie restoration. The plantings were to be apart of the *Weekend of Restoration* activities, but the program was canceled, so staff worked in multiple shifts, so social-distancing could be adhered to, and got the spring planting done!



Brookdale Multi-use Trail Enhancement Project 2.0— 1.5 mile Trail Extension to Open

As a result of a partnership between a County-wide Equestrian Coalition, the District and the Conservation Foundation, in March 2016, the McHenry County Conservation District was the recipient of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) - Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grant. Funded through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the project enabled staff to improve an existing multi-use trail and design to construct a new horse trailer parking lot within the Brookdale Conservation Area in Woodstock, IL. The trail and new parking lot were opened to the public in the summer of 2019.

Since that time, District staff have continued to evaluate the remaining land within the Brookdale Conservation Area for additional recreational trail compatibility. Between Farm Leases, State and County Roads/ Highways bisecting the lands, high quality wetlands and the North Branch of the Kishwaukee River, it has been a challenge. However, last fall, plans were approved by the McHenry County Department of Transportation allowing the District to install a safe, ADA compliant, pedestrian crossing of Deep Cut Road. With this new crossing the existing 4 miles of multi-use trail will connect to an additional 1.5 mile loop/extension, set to open summer of 2020.

The Next 9 Holes—Fel Pro Disc Golf Course Expansion

Disc golf enthusiasts will soon have an 18-hole new course to tackle once the Conservation District completes the addition of nine-holes to the existing course at Fel-Pro RRR in Cary. The District's Sites & Fleet and Planning teams have been busy working on expanding our Disc Golf course. In April the course route was seeded. While we know visitors are very curious about what is going on here, please refrain from stepping in the freshly seeded area in order to let the grass grow. We hope to open the new holes in late summer/early fall for use. Check the website or watch for social media posts for updates: [MCCD.me/DiscGolf](https://mccd.me/DiscGolf)



New to disc golf? The holes are actually chain baskets or catchers for the flying discs. Just like with golf, there are different discs that players can use for different types of shots. However, unlike golf, a casual game on a blue sky afternoon, set in the backdrop of protected open space, disc golf courses are free. While the sport has been around since the late 1970's it's popularity has increased over the past eight years. The Conservation District inherited the course when they purchased the property in 1999. In 2016 staff began exploring the idea of expanding the disc golf course and completed the work in-house.