

Get to Know Our Volunteers



Walter Boettcher, third from left at a seed collection foray

Walt Boettcher —
Natural Resources Volunteer
by Volunteer Coordinator Bob Menard

“It’s not just about volunteering, it’s socializing! When I started with seed collecting I enjoyed the company of other volunteers.”

Conservation District volunteers engage in a wide range of activities at conservation areas throughout McHenry County. They restore habitat, preserve ecological diversity, educate people about nature, promote public safety and keep history alive.

Like many volunteers, when Walt Boettcher retired from his job as a mechanic with the Post office in 2017, he wanted to keep busy. As a 32-year resident of McHenry County, living close to Glacial Park, Walt has always been a big fan of the Conservation District, so deciding to become a volunteer seemed like a natural fit.

“It’s not just about volunteering, it’s socializing! When I started with the seed collection volunteers I really enjoyed the company of the other volunteers,” said Walt who finds volunteering with the District to be both enjoyable and fulfilling.

Over the past three seed collection seasons, Walt donated 100 hours of his time towards native seed collection! “His contributions have helped the Land Preservation & Natural Resources Division reach their annual goals for seed harvests on our sites. Thank you Walt!” stated Plant Ecologist Laurie Ryan.

Walt also became a consistent volunteer at Stickney Run Conservation Area Habitat Restoration Days. “Walt is quite a guy. He is very helpful and friendly and has become one of the familiar

faces at our workdays. We’ve made good progress at Stickney and he is a big reason for our success!” added Volunteer Site Steward Pete Jackson.

Every few years the District gets involved in a really special and somewhat unique restoration project like the School Springs Steam and Wetland Project, located on the east side of Glacial Park. Walt had the opportunity to assist with this unique project. “Walt put in a tremendous number of hours volunteering with the District last year. He’s been to most of the trainings, which led to his helping with chainsaw projects, and many days at School Springs seeding the new stream floodplain, placing erosion matting on the newly constructed stream banks, raking, and constructing riffles. His efforts along with many other dedicated volunteer helped us complete this project in a timely manner



Constructing riffles at the School Springs project.

under really difficult weather conditions. He is a fun guy to be around, friendly and talkative to everyone he meets,” said Natural Resources Manager Brad Woodson.

In addition, Walt finds time to assist as a blue bird monitor. From early April until late August, he monitors bluebird activities, records their observations, and properly monitors nesting boxes. Walt also likes to fish and thus, volunteered with the District’s Police Department last year at the annual “Get Hooked on Fishing” program teaching kids and families how to fish.

Not only does Walt volunteer with the Conservation District, he still finds time and energy to be an active member/ volunteer with the McHenry Library, McHenry County Farm Bureau, McHenry County Historical Society and the McHenry County Antique Tractor Club!

Over the years he has taken his children and now grandchildren to Glacial Park to hike and fish. Keystone Landing is one of his favorite fishing spots. His daughter was married at Rush Creek Conservation Area in Harvard, where she also celebrated her 10th anniversary. When asked about other favorite outdoor places that he enjoys, outside of McHenry County, Walt says “I enjoy traveling around the open roads of Wisconsin riding my motorcycle, oftentimes with my fishing gear along to fish my favorite fishing holes or to discover new ones.” 

Work performed by volunteers on behalf of the natural areas of McHenry County is vital to the success of the District’s mission. Volunteers who do restoration and preservation work do so within the parameters set forth and as directed by the Land Preservation and Natural Resources Division (LPNR) staff. The purpose of LPNR is to implement land management and habitat restoration through the removal of invasive species, reforestation, reintroduction of native plant populations, biological inventories, prescribed burning and GIS mapping. Volunteers are essential to the success of LPNR’s land management efforts.

Interested in volunteering? Contact Volunteer Coordinator Bob Menard at (815) 338-6223 x1201 or Volunteers@MCCDistrict.org.