



## 2020 Community Attitude & Interest Survey — Visitors Greatly Appreciate Conservation District Sites & Trails

Prior to the pandemic, the Conservation District contracted with aQity Research & Insights of Evanston, IL to complete a Community Attitude and Interest Survey that occurred between February 7 and March 10, 2020. The survey concluded what hundreds of thousands of visitors have certainly realized over the past six months, McHenry County’s conservation areas are loved and appreciated.

The survey results revealed that in terms of overall esteem, the Conservation District received favorable ratings from two-thirds (66%) of respondents, where notably 30% who hold the Conservation District in the highest regard. The goal of the survey was to receive at least 400 completed responses. Instead, the survey generated a much higher response rate than expected. The final count of 666 respondents came in roughly 67% higher than the target quota.

The public’s response to preserve open space, protect wildlife habitat and restore natural areas received overwhelming support from site users. The overall satisfaction of conservation areas ranked high, whereby 88% of respondents indicated they were “very to completely satisfied” with their experiences they had with McHenry County Conservation District. Visitors also gave high marks (8.2 on a 10 point scale) to accessibility, cleanliness and upkeep, and overall safety. No age group rates the District unfavorably.

The survey further identified and prioritized the most important goals for the District to focus on. These were (in order of importance): maintain existing sites, trails and facilities; preserve and restore wildlife habitat; protect watersheds (quality and flood control); provide outdoor classrooms; purchase and protect open space; and provide trails, fishing access and other outdoor recreational opportunities.

Of the Conservation District’s 35 sites that are open to the public, survey respondent’s favored sites come as no surprise, citing Glacial Park, The Hollows, and the Prairie Trail, followed by the Nippersink Canoe Trail as their top destinations. By far, the biggest barrier to visiting a conservation area was indicated as due to lack of time (cited by 48% of non-users). Perhaps in the past several

months, one positive from the pandemic is that our residents have taken the opportunity to change that statistic and visit and appreciate their local natural areas and wide open spaces for play and restorative healing effects, as staff has witnessed triple the amount of typically use of Conservation District sites.

As the Conservation District approaches its 50th anniversary, we applaud the foresight of our founding members and the McHenry County voters who made it a priority to invest in parks, and regional trails, which is proving to be an invaluable investment that is paying off in dividends. McHenry County Conservation District is in the business of improving lives and hopefully, this pandemic will awaken each of us to reaffirm our commitment to be guardians and stewards of our natural world.

To review the 2020 Community Attitude and Interest Survey in its entirety, as well as cross comparisons to previous surveys and the newly approved FY 2021-FY 2023 Strategic Plan, visit the District’s website at [MCCDistrict.org/CommunitySurvey](https://MCCDistrict.org/CommunitySurvey)



# 2020 Survey Results Compared to Previous Surveys

## Top 3 Issues Facing McHenry County

2006	2012	2020
Property Taxes	Property Taxes	Property Taxes
Traffic/Congestion	Economic Growth/jobs	Illegal Drug Use
Improving Education	Control Govt. Spending	Traffic/ Congestion

## Overall Safety Satisfaction

2006	2012	2020
82%	94%	87%

## Sites Most Visited

2006	2012	2020
Glacial Park	Glacial Park	Glacial Park
The Hollows	The Hollows	The Hollows
Prairie Trail	Prairie Trail	Prairie Trail
Marengo Ridge	Marengo Ridge	Nippersink Canoe Trail

## Overall Satisfaction of Cleanliness and Upkeep of Conservation Sites: 89% indicated "Completely Satisfied"

## Historic Comparisons Resource Allocation

The most important goals for the respondents had several parallels over the years; however, the priority of the ranking has changed.

Most Important Goals	2000	2006	2007	2012	2020
Maintain existing sites, trails & facilities	na	na	1	1	1
Protect watersheds (quality and flood control)	3	3	na	2	3
Provide trails, fishing access and other outdoor recreational opportunities	4	4	4	3	9*
Preserve and restore wildlife habitat	1	2	3	4	2
Purchase and protect open space	3	1	2	5	7
Provide Outdoor classrooms	2	na	na	na	5

\*Question asked about water opportunities only



NO SURPRISE: OF THE 34 SITES OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, RESPONDENTS FAVORED GLACIAL PARK, THE HOLLOWES, THE PRAIRIE TRAIL, AND THE NIPPERSINK CANOE TRAIL



ACCESSIBILITY, CLEANLINESS/UPKEEP, AND OVERALL SAFETY OF CONSERVATION AREAS RECEIVED AN 8.2 OUT OF 10 RATING.