

illinois

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PARKS AND RECREATION

The magazine of the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Park and Recreation Association



going green

with a spotlight on forest preserves

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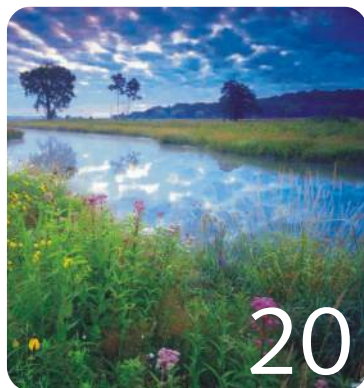
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FROM THE EDITOR



In this issue of *IP&R* magazine, we look at how forest preserves, conservation districts and other agencies are going green. Sustainability is something we should all think about in regard to our personal lives, not just our agencies. In the past few years I have done some remodeling to my home. In doing so, I tried to keep in mind the environment and made choices that were not only green but also cost effective. I had an energy efficient air conditioning and furnace unit installed, I used energy efficient windows sealed with argon gasses along with caulking and insulation to prevent the loss of air to keep the house warm in the winter and cool in the summer. I also installed a pond which serves as a rainwater reservoir in addition to a habitat for some beautiful koi which are surrounded by native plants. Going green is a decision and staying green is a commitment. Please share your agency stories on making your agency greener and more sustainable.

You will also get the latest news on the Soaring to New Heights Conference Awards Luncheon winners. Congratulations to all those who won awards at the luncheon. We have such a wonderful group of legislators, agency staff, board members as well as citizen volunteers who won awards this year!

Congratulations also to all of the "Give Us Your Best Shot" photo contest winners. We had over 350 amazing entries this year! The decisions were difficult and the results are in.

Enjoy this edition on going green and think about ways you or your agency can go green too!

Rachel Laier

— Rachel Laier, Editor



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Peter M. Murphy
IAPD President and CEO

Welcome Aboard: Onboarding that Creates and Inspires Excellence

With the election upon us, it is the perfect opportunity for your agency to make sure that newly elected commissioners are brought up to speed as quickly as possible.

A friend of mine who serves on a not-for-profit board with me recently achieved her lifelong dream of piloting a sailboat in the British Virgin Islands. An accomplished sailor in her own right with a captain's license, she described her experience when she first came aboard the boat. That experience, in many ways, reflects the actions that high achieving park boards follow when welcoming new board members to the district.

Although my friend is an accomplished sailor, her onboarding experience started broadly, but also thoroughly covered the important "need to know" items. It may very well be that your new board members have either served in voluntary capacities for other organizations or on other not-for-profit boards, but, like sailing different boats, no two experiences are exactly alike. Experience helps, but it's the "need to know" information that is key to true performance. My friend's experience should be like that of new board members which, at first, is a broad overview of the district including its facilities, park locations and other amenities.

While the barren winter landscape of the Midwest may not immediately lend itself to an onsite tour of the various physical locations in your district, it is recommended that this take place as soon as spring breaks. I have found many times that new board members are reluctant to admit a lack of complete knowledge of the various facilities, areas and grounds of a park district.

The next step should be to take the time to walk each new board member through the information which forms the basis of your organization. I would suggest that you first share those "need to know" documents which command your board's closest attention.

Share the **bylaws** that clarify the big picture for the board, including its main policies and organizational structure.

Explain how your **individual policies** paraphrase a law, explain a procedure, clarify a principle, or interpret a particular bylaw. They are the protocol to follow and help eliminate embarrassing situations, improper behavior and ineffective decision making. A park district usually has board related policies as well as personnel, and financial policies, and while the chief executive is responsible for personnel policies and office procedures, the board should ensure that they are reviewed and adequate to meet the needs of the district.

Job descriptions for board members and the chief executive save the board from a multitude of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. Listing the expectations for individual board members and officers is a reminder for current and new members of their role and responsibilities. Committee descriptions define what these groups are expected to accomplish as defined by the full board and help keep the committee work on track.

Explain how **agendas** for board meetings, retreats or committee meetings help keep the board focused on issues that belong to it, rather than on operational matters. Board meeting agendas guide the board's official business when its members get together to make governance decisions.

Meeting minutes are proof that the agenda got accomplished. They record what occurred in your meeting. Each board member needs to read the draft and approve the contents in the next meeting. Be sure to explain the executive session procedure and process, and how minutes that relate to it are reviewed.

Your **board manual** is the compilation of documents that new and current board members use to refresh their memory or to learn how to fit into your board culture. No law demands that you have a manual, but it is a good practice as it provides your members with easy access to your documents. Making your manual available electronically is a great option for the emerging use of tablets by board members.

For a quick start, review:

- The agency's history
- The district's organizational chart
- The meeting minutes from the past year
- The past six months financial reports
- Last year's annual audit; and
- The board policy manual

On laws affecting board service, review initially and annually thereafter:

- The Open Meetings Act
- The Public Officials Prohibited Activities Act
- Rules regarding Incompatibility of Office
- The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) for its impact on board communications
- Law governing interference with public contracting
- Time off for official meetings; and
- The Truth in Taxation Act

Provide answers to the following questions:

- What are the board members' fiduciary responsibilities including ways they can avoid conflicts of interest or perceptions of conflicts of interest?
- What are board members' responsibilities regarding meetings (before, during and after)?
- What are board members' responsibilities regarding relationships with staff?
- How does the board expect members to interact with the public during meetings, agency events or in general?
- What other general expectations does the board have of members?

I have found that it is helpful to use examples with the answers to each of these questions. For a new board member, it provides context for them about the agency.

Share the **Board Member Code of Ethics** which can be found on the back of their new IAPD membership card as follows.

As a member of the board, I will:

- Represent the interests of all people in my community. I will not favor any particular special interests.
- Not use my service on this board for my own personal advantage or for the advantage of my friends or supporters.
- Keep privileged information confidential.
- Approach all board issues with an open mind, prepared to make the best decisions for everyone involved.
- Do nothing to violate the trust of those who elected or appointed me to the board or of those we serve.
- Focus my efforts on the mission of the agency and not on my personal goals.
- Never exercise authority as a board member except when acting in a meeting with the full board or as I am delegated by the board.

Finally, it is important to have a conversation about the board's culture so that new board members have an understanding of the expectations that the board will have of them as well as the expectations they should have of the board. Every board has a unique culture and it is advantageous to good board governance that this culture be shared as quickly as possible.

A well thought out and effective onboarding process will make for smooth sailing for your district. For more ideas on this and other good governance topics, visit the IAPD website at www.ILparks.org

Don't miss the outstanding content provided by IAPD's Commissioner Boot Camps for New and Seasoned Commissioners.

Wednesday, May 27, 2015
Lockport Township Park District

Prairie Bluff Public Golf Club
1943 Renwick Road, Crest Hill, IL 60403
6:00-6:30pm: Registration/Light Refreshments
6:30-9:00pm: Boot Camp

Thursday, May 28, 2015
Morton Park District

Freedom Hall
349 W. Birchwood, Morton, IL 61550
6:00-6:30pm: Registration/Light Refreshments
6:30-9:00pm: Boot Camp

Saturday, May 30, 2015
Rolling Meadows Park District

Central Banquet Hall
3000 Central Road, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008
9:00-9:30am: Registration/Light Refreshments
9:30am-12:00pm: Boot Camp

Wednesday, June 3, 2015
Gurnee Park District

Viking Park Community Center
4337 Old Grand Avenue, Gurnee, IL 60031
6:00-6:30pm: Registration/Light Refreshments
6:30-9:00pm: Boot Camp

Thursday, June 4, 2015
Carol Stream Park District

Fountain View Recreation Center
910 N. Gary Avenue, Carol Stream, IL 60188
6:00-6:30pm: Registration/Light Refreshments
6:30-9:00pm: Boot Camp

2015 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April-May, 2015
Flying for Kids Month
Statewide Kite Fly

Tuesday, April 28, 2015
Parks Day at the Capitol
Illinois State Capitol

Tuesday, April 28, 2015
Legislative Reception
Illini Country Club

Wednesday, April 29, 2015
Legislative Conference
Crowne Plaza, Springfield

Monday, May 18, 2015
IAPD Summer Golf Tour #1
Bittersweet Golf Club, Gurnee
GolfVisions Management, Inc.

Thursday, June 25, 2015
IAPD Summer Golf Tour #2
Deerfield Golf Club, Deerfield
Park District

Thursday, July 16, 2015
Joint Legislative Awareness Golf Outing
White Pines Golf Club,
Bensenville Park District

Monday, August 17, 2015
IAPD Summer Golf Tour #3
Inwood Golf Course
Joliet Park District

Saturday, August 22, 2015
Park District Conservation Day
IL State Fairgrounds,
Springfield

Saturday, August 29, 2015
Legislative Awareness Picnic
Inwood Park, Joliet Park District

September 15-17, 2015
NRPA Congress
Las Vegas, NV

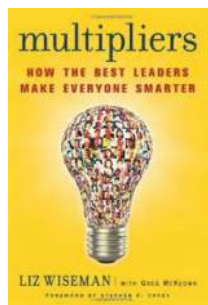
Monday, September 28
IAPD Summer Golf Tour #4
Glenview Park Golf Club
Glenview Park District

Friday, October 2, 2015
IAPD Best of the Best Awards Gala
Chevy Chase Country Club,
Wheeling Park District

Thursday, October 29, 2015
IAPD Legal Symposium
McDonald's University/Hyatt
Lodge

January 28-30, 2016
IAPD/IPRA Soaring to New Heights Conference
Hyatt Regency Chicago

For the most up-to-date Calendar of Events, please visit the IAPD website at www.ILparks.org.



RECOMMENDED READING

Multipliers How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter

This engrossing book examines two different types of leaders. One type of leader is the energy drainer, the idea destroyer and sees themselves as the smartest one in the group. The other type of leader strengthens the skills and talents of those around them and leads in a way that is not only inspirational but leads to effective problem solving. These are the multipliers.

Liz Wiseman and Greg McKeown examine these two leadership styles, showing how multipliers can have an exceptionally positive and impactful effect on organizations, harnessing and growing talent, achieving more and capturing new ideas. The multipliers drive organizational improvement. This book explains how to do just that and become an effective leader utilizing all the positive energy around you to achieve organizational goals and objectives.



By Debbie Trueblood
IPRA Executive Director

IPRA Plans for 2015-2019

As I write this, snow is still with us and roads are still icy, but what a wonderful time of year to talk about “going green” and reminding us that spring will soon be here!

“Going green” can have so many meanings in parks and recreation - from an office that “goes green” by utilizing less paper and recycling more, to the Washington Park District who are still replanting trees in the community that were lost in the recent tornado. It includes agencies that are doing more outdoor education, community gardening and conservation. This issue is dedicated to all things “greener.” It is a time to be green in both the parks and recreation side of our professional community.

For us, it is also a time to think about the future. We adapted our rolling five year plan to ensure we have a plan all the way through 2019. Each fall, we will review our plan, extend it where appropriate and clarify and edit based on our successes and challenges. We will continue in the direction started last year. Additionally, we have a work plan annually based on that year of the strategic plan which helps us accomplish our goals. The work plan is reported to the board on a monthly basis to ensure ongoing accountability.

In 2015, with our new board in place, and new Chair Rick Hanetho at the helm, we are ready to start to tackle our new goals. Below is a summarized list of items you can expect to see us working on throughout 2015 as part of this new plan:

- Reach new target audiences for membership and events.
- Further develop our relationships with other state associations to provide joint education to better serve professionals in the area, adding to the members' networking opportunities, and elevating IPRA's image.
- Pursue new areas of revenue growth to support our mission, including grants and sponsorships.
- Pursue new ways to support our members and this will help us grow.
- Streamline the scholarship process for students and professionals through the foundation.
- Roll out our new online communities.
- Partner with schools to create stronger connections with students.

- Educate the public about the value of parks and recreation.
- Actively pursue improvements to our conference.
- Elevate IPRA's image in the media and the public, which will allow us to be more effective in educating the public about parks and recreation.
- Develop our reputation with donors.
- Actively benchmark ourselves related to diversity and inclusion, creating strategies to develop a diverse membership and conference attendance base.

In 2015, with our new board in place and new Chair Rick Hanetho at the helm, we are ready to start to tackle our new goals.



- Implement programs to support our young professional (under 40) members.
- Identify services which may specifically benefit people in the Central and Southern regions.
- Create a Volunteer Career Path to allow for members to get more involved with IPRA, making room for new leaders to gain experience.
- Develop our board through an annual board evaluation and ongoing board governance education.
- Develop research collaborations and funding opportunities.
- Develop new ways that we can gather and distribute information to our members, including through networking.
- Continue the ProConnect mentoring program and continue to build on it.
- Diversify our revenue streams so that we are less dependent on any one area of funding, protecting our financial base.

As Chair Rick Hanetho often says, we should always start with the “why.” And the “why” behind this plan is the same as when it was designed in the summer of 2013. We want to compete with ourselves first, to be the best the association for you, our members. We want to provide quality services to you in an accessible way and we want to continue to identify new ways to serve you through new programs. A key piece in our strategic plan is rolling out our public education campaign, “Unplug Illinois” and this is to help you do your jobs better by raising an interest in your local communities and helping to bring people to your programs through our Community Calendar and the consumer website that we plan to roll out in 2015. To do this, we have to manage our expansions by finding ways to pay for them and that comes with sponsorship, grants, and revenue development. When we put it all together, the “why” is because we believe we can listen to our members needs and always strive to serve you better. With that in mind, I hope you will join us in these new programs and the exciting year ahead of us!

Speaking of exciting, one thing that makes this current year exciting is that IPRA's new Chair-Elect, Mary Jeanne Hutchison is from southern Illinois (O'Fallon). This means that when she becomes Chair in 2016, she will be the third IPRA Chair ever from southern Illinois. While she is Chair Elect, Chair, and Past Chair, that means we will have two of our nine board members from southern Illinois. I expect this may create a cultural change in IPRA and help us to do even more to serve a statewide audience of professionals all over Illinois. We are excited for this news! In the meantime, the IPRA board will continue to host our meetings in each of our four geographic regions; Chicago Metro, Northwest IL, Central IL, and southern IL, each time we meet we will invite local VIPs and affiliate groups to join us for a small reception to allow our board to get to know people throughout the state. Additionally, our board will continue to pursue at least one governance educational topic per year as a board. This year the topics will be streamlining IPRA in March and fundraising later in the year.

In the coming months, watch for our two new big programs. Unplug Illinois, our public education campaign about the value of parks and recreation, and our online communities to allow members in every section and every region to communicate in a more efficient manner. Get your questions ready and get set to be able to quickly find answers from other professionals.

In 2015, we will also continue with our successful mentoring program, ProConnect. We will be accepting applications again this summer, so don't miss out! We will also continue our premier program, the Leadership Academy, and will also be accepting applications this summer.

In the meantime, we hope you will enjoy this issue about going green and will find useful ideas to serve your community even better.

IPRA Calendar of Events

March 19, 2015

**Skills Development Webinar
Series: Youth Engagement**

April 8 & 16, 2015

**Skills Development Webinar
Series: Stay in Tune with our
Aging Future**

April 9, 2015

**A&F Section: HR Committee
Meeting & Education: Electronic
HR Records & Illinois Record
Keeping Laws**

April 9, 2015

**Diversity Section Meeting &
Education: Developing Effective
Intercultural Communication
Skills**

April 10, 2015

**IPRA Board Meeting/Southern
Region**

April 21-23, 2015

**Certified Playground Safety
Inspector Course (CPSI) - SAVE
THE DATE!**

April 23, 2015

**C&M Meeting & Workshop: The
Essentials for Effective Content
Marketing**

May 7, 2015

**Therapeutic Recreation Section
Meeting and Workshop**

May 7, 2015

9th Annual Park Pursuit



For more a complete list of upcoming events, and to register, visit ILipra.org



Jason Anselment
Legal/Legislative Counsel

New Beginnings, Familiar Issues at the Capitol

The 2015 Spring Session marks several new beginnings at the Capitol. As this issue goes to press, the new 99th General Assembly has just gotten underway and thousands of new pieces of legislation have been filed. Meanwhile, new Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner has completed his first full month in office and delivered his State of the State and Budget Address where he laid out several new proposals of his own to a joint session of the House and Senate.

While there are many new faces in both the executive and legislative branches with new ideas that will be discussed throughout the spring session, it is already apparent that we will also confront many familiar issues from recent General Assemblies as well. The State's budget will continue to dominate discussions in Springfield as in recent years. At the same time, as illustrated by a number of the new bill introductions below, other issues from the past several legislative sessions such as proposed property tax freezes, local government consolidation, increases to the minimum wage and unfunded mandates have already made their way into proposed legislation.

With all these new proposals, this promises to be another very busy and exciting legislative session. As always, you can count on IAPD to keep you updated through timely Legislative Updates and Alerts, and you can visit the Public Policy webpage at ILparks.org to check the status of all the bills we are tracking. Additionally, you will not want to miss this year's IAPD Legislative Conference on April 29th in Springfield. Visit ILparks.org today to register.

While it is much too early in the Spring Session to know which bills will have the necessary support to move forward, below are examples of legislation that we will be closely tracking.

IAPD Platform Bills

In just the past two General Assemblies, IAPD has passed 14 platform bills that help our member agencies operate more efficiently and save taxpayer dollars. This year's IAPD Legislative Platform continues that theme. For example, **HB 417 (Walsh, L.) / SB 1271 (McGuire, P.)** would align the bidding requirements under the Park District Code, Downstate Forest Preserve District Act and the Conservation District Act with other statutes such as the School Code and the Local Government Professional Services Selection Act by adjusting the bid limit threshold from \$20,000 to \$25,000. **HB 405 (Sandack, R.)** will help clarify the procedures for the sale of park district property that is less than three acres while **HB 1363 (Fine, L.)** provides clarification under the Park District Code with respect to intergovernmental agreements for joint programming.

Legislation Threatening Local Revenues

Several bills have been reintroduced which threaten the ability of local governments to provide services and programs to their communities.

HB 137 (Sandack, R.) would change the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) to prevent taxing districts subject to tax caps from capturing the CPI-increase to their extension limitation if the district's total EAV is less than the previous levy year. **HB 136 (Sandack, R.)** contains similar concepts but uses a three-year average for the EAV calculation. Members will recall that we have worked to defeat identical proposals during the past few years by educating legislators on the impact of this proposed change and reminding them that PTELL's small CPI-adjustment simply allows local governments to cover inflationary increases in their operating costs and does not increase their bottom line.

HB 177 (McSweeney, D.) would freeze tax levies for taxing districts that are subject to tax caps until 2017 unless voters approve an increase by referendum. This legislation would have a similar impact to the bills referenced above but would apply to all taxing districts in tax capped counties rather than just those where the total EAV is declining. **SB 656 (Murphy, M.)** would similarly cap tax levies at their current level until 2017 by providing that the total amount due on an individual property tax bill in each taxable year may not exceed the total amount due for that property in taxable year 2014.

Local Government Consolidation

More bills related to local government consolidation have also been introduced again this session.

HB 228 (Franks, J.) is a reintroduction of HB 3251 that passed the House during the 98th General Assembly and would prohibit the General Assembly from enacting any law creating any new unit of local government for the next 4 years unless the new unit of local government arises from the consolidation of 2 or more pre-existing units of local government.

HB 229 (Franks, J.) is identical to HB 5786 from the 98th General Assembly and would allow county boards to dissolve units of local government that have appointed board members. The legislation effectively expands the pilot program that was approved for DuPage County two years ago to all other 101 Illinois counties.

HB 174 (McSweeney, D.) is a new proposal that would create the Local Government Dissolution Act to allow a small number of citizens to file a referendum petition asking voters to dissolve any non-home rule unit of local government by a three-fifths vote at a general election.

Minimum Wage

Minimum wage will also continue to be a topic of discussion throughout the Spring Session. **SB 11 (Lightford, K.)** is nearly identical to HB 4733 that the Senate passed during the final week of the 98th General Assembly's Fall Veto Session and would raise the minimum wage to \$9 per hour on July 1, 2015 and to \$11 per hour over the next 4 years. In his State of the State address, Governor Rauner proposed increasing the minimum wage to \$10 per hour over the next 7 years.

HB 432 (Guzzardi, W.) would require employers to pay overtime to any employee who earns less than \$69,000 per year or the weekly or monthly equivalent.

Open Meetings Act

The following measures propose to amend the Open Meetings Act to add new requirements and exceptions.

HB 175 (McSweeney, D.) would allow a citizen to file a request for review with the Attorney General up to 60 days after he or she discovers an alleged Open Meetings Act violation. Current law sets the limitations period at 60 days from the date of the alleged violation regardless of discovery.

HB 248 (Kay, D.) would allow a court to declare any action taken by a public body at an open meeting to be null and void if the court finds the public body's action violated the Open Meetings Act.

HB 1323 (Yingling, S.) would require a public body with a website to post meeting notices, agenda and minutes to its website regardless of whether the website is maintained by the public body's full-time staff.

HB 2687 (Breen, P.) provides that the existing provisions of the Act granting persons the right to record the proceedings at an open meeting also includes the right to record public officials before and after the meeting if they are within 100 feet of the property where the meeting takes place.

Additional or Duplicative Disclosure of Public Records

HB 2717 (Ives, J.) would require units of local government with an annual budget of \$1 million or more to maintain an Internet website with information such as meeting materials, procedures for requesting information, the annual budget, operation ordinances, permit application procedures, financial reports and audits, employee compensation, contracts with lobbying firms, taxes and fees imposed, rules governing the award of contracts, bids and contracts worth \$25,000 or more, campaign contributions made by vendors, debt disclosure reports and all public notices. All of these records would be required to be kept on-line in perpetuity. Even more onerous, each local government would be required to create and maintain a searchable expenditure and revenue database. **SB 857 / SB 858 / SB 859 (McConnaughay, K.)** contain similar concepts related to website postings but would apply to local governments and school districts in counties with a population of 100,000 or more. **HB 435 (Sullivan, Jr., E.)** also contain similar concepts but would apply to any unit of local government serving a population of 5,000 or more.

SB 26 (Morrison, J.) would require all units of local government and school boards with websites to post on those websites all legal notices, agenda, records, or material that is required to be published in a newspaper. **SB 792 (Bush, M.)** would similarly require taxing districts with websites to post Truth in Taxation notices on those websites in addition to publishing the "black box" notice in the newspaper.

HB 1419 (Fortner, M.) would require local election officials to post all objectors' petitions online.

Pensions

HB 1334 (Franks, J.) would amend the Illinois Pension Code to place restrictions on the amount a retiree could earn if returning to work in a position in which he or she is eligible to accrue service credit or creditable service under any public pension system.

SB 104 (Murphy, M.) would affect future employees of most public pension systems, including IMRF, by prohibiting payments for unused sick or vacation time from being used to calculate pensionable earnings or to establish pension service credit. This same provision was previously signed into law as part of the statewide pension reform legislation that is currently pending before the Supreme Court on a constitutional challenge.

Other

HB 261 (Sosnowski, J.) provides that whenever a governmental unit is required to provide notice by publication in a newspaper by law, order of court, or contract, the governmental unit may publish the notice on an official government website instead of in a newspaper.

HB 303 (McDermed, M.) would prohibit the use of confidentiality clauses in severance agreements that are funded by public moneys or which release a claim against a public body unless it is necessary to protect a trade secret, proprietary information, or information that is otherwise exempt from disclosure under FOIA.

SB 714 (Barickman, J.) would amend the Prevailing Wage Act to provide that a prevailing wage determined at the time of bid submission would continue for the duration of a public works contract.

HB 1434 (Franks, J.) would make all elected and appointed public offices incompatible meaning that an elected official could not hold more than one public office simultaneously.

HB 135 (Sandack, R.) would subject all contracts of \$250,000 or more between the State and its political subdivisions to the provisions of the Illinois Procurement Code.

HB 187 (Drury, S.) would, among other things, amend the Lobbyist Registration Act to expand the definition of lobbying to include communications with government employees and attempts to persuade local government officials.

HB 1368 (Cassidy, K.) would create the Employee Paid Health Care Time Act and require employers to provide employees with accrued paid health care time at a rate of not less than one hour for every 22 hours worked for an employer with 50 or more employees and at a rate of one hour for every 40 hours worked for an employer with fewer than 50 employees.



2015
IAPD/IPRA
SOARING to
NEW HEIGHTS
CONFERENCE AWARDS

IAPD and IPRA honored legislators and leaders in the park, recreation and conservation industry at the Soaring to New Heights awards luncheon on Friday, January 23th at the Hyatt Regency Chicago.



**IAPD Legislator of the Year -
Senator Pamela Althoff**

Throughout her career, Senator Althoff has been a leading advocate for park, recreation and conservation issues both on the front lines and behind the scenes. When the integrity of the OSLAD grant program has been threatened in the past, Senator Althoff helped IAPD lead the charge against a sweep of the fund. This past year, she not only sponsored Senate Bill 3341, but marshaled it through the legislative process. This important legislation ensures the McHenry County Conservation District can continue to preserve and protect open space while maintaining its existing facilities. Senator Althoff has always stood up for IAPD's concerns and her dedication to parks and recreation has been outstanding.



**IAPD Legislator of the Year -
House Minority Leader Jim Durkin**

For nearly 20 years, House Minority Leader Jim Durkin has been a dedicated and reliable supporter of the Illinois Association of Park Districts and its member agencies. Time and again we have counted on his support in helping to pass IAPD platform initiatives. Representative Durkin is a staunch advocate for grant funding for park districts and recreation agencies. Despite his busy schedule, Representative Durkin has always been very gracious with his time, and he has attended numerous IAPD events throughout the years. Leader Durkin's unwavering support of Illinois park and recreation agencies has been tremendous.



**IAPD Legislator of the Year -
Assistant Majority Leader Al Riley**

Since joining the General Assembly in 2007, Assistant Majority Leader Al Riley has been one of IAPD's strongest allies. As a member of both of the committees that handle government matters for the House, Leader Riley has been a consistent and reliable voice on issues that affect park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies. During the 97th General Assembly, Representative Riley sponsored House Bill 4562, an IAPD platform initiative that granted park districts the authority to appoint assistant officers. Leader Riley's dedication and service as one of IAPD's great supporters has been remarkable.

Photo credit: Neringa Ridges, NeriPhoto

Forest Preserve District of Cook County Celebrates Centennial

President Toni Preckwinkle and General Superintendent Arnold Randall accepted a Resolution commemorating the Forest Preserve District of Cook County's Centennial. One hundred years ago, the Forest Preserves of Cook County were set aside by visionaries. A century later, it is now the oldest and largest forest preserve district in the United States, protecting more than 69,000 acres. These preserves represent more than 11% of all the land in Cook County and are among the most geologically and biologically rich natural areas in the U.S. These areas contain wetlands, tallgrass prairies, oak woodlands, savannas and much more. Because of the Forest Preserve District's leadership throughout the past one hundred years, these vital lands have been preserved, protected and restored for the public's use and enjoyment.



IPRA Young Professional of the Year - Jennifer Porrevecchio, Lisle Park District

This year's winner of the IPRA Young Professional of the Year award was Jennifer Porrevecchio from the Lisle Park District. Jennifer has been with the Lisle Park District for eight years and in that time, she has made tremendous improvements in the district's revenue stream. As the facility manager of both Sea Lion Park and the Community Park Fitness Center, she has managed to turn both facilities from losing money to being revenue positive. Her passion extends past the district into the community where she serves on the Village of Lisle Coalition with an overall goal of reinforcing the positive choices of teens. Her commitment to the Lisle Park District and her community is extraordinary.



IPRA Professional - Amy Charlesworth, Rolling Meadows Park District

Amy Charlesworth, with the Rolling Meadows Park District was the winner of the IPRA Professional award. After graduating from college, Amy joined the Rolling Meadows Park District as the zamboni driver and quickly moved through the ranks to executive director. Amy has been instrumental in providing financial stability to the district. Under Amy's leadership, the district has received sixteen grants totaling over \$4.5 million. Amy is also very involved in the community of Rolling Meadows in Rotary, Salvation Army and the Chamber of Commerce. Amy Charlesworth embodies the spirit of a true IPRA Professional.



IAPD Rising Star - Adriane Johnson, Buffalo Grove Park District

The IAPD Rising Star award was presented to Adriane Johnson from the Buffalo Grove Park District. Adriane was appointed to the IAPD Board of Directors in November of 2011. She is truly involved in her park district and her community. Adriane is fully invested in learning how to constantly improve as a board member, and she completed her certification as a Master Board Member. She was the catalyst to encourage her fellow board members to obtain their certifications as well, and as a result, Buffalo Grove is the first agency in Illinois to have 100% of its board obtain Master Board Member status. Adriane's leadership is certainly an example of which to be followed.



**IAPD Honored Professional -
Larry Piekarz, Park District of Forest Park**

This year's Honored Professional award went to Larry Piekarz from the Park District of Forest Park. Larry has dedicated his time and talents to growing parks and recreation in Illinois for decades, and was named executive director of the Park District of Forest Park in 2007. Throughout the last 26 years, he has worked for Forest Park in many capacities, and has had a hand in many major projects at the district. Larry has a strong relationship with members of the state legislature, and last year, he worked with the Illinois General Assembly to get a bill passed allowing his park district to complete the purchase of a large parcel of land. Larry Piekarz's leadership and professionalism are exceptional.



**IPRA Advocacy -
Dan Wagner, Office of Government Affairs at the Inland Real Estate Group of Companies**

Dan Wagner with the Inland Real Estate Group received the IPRA Advocacy award. Dan is an accomplished citizen advocate for the park and recreation industry. He is the father of four children, so he understands the profound impact parks and recreation have in every community. Dan advocates for park districts, recreation, special recreation and conservation agencies by sharing the therapeutic benefits they provide for all families. He passionately volunteers and lends his expertise to individuals, teams, agencies, elected officials and business owners. Dan Wagner's tenacious determination to demonstrate the value of this industry is unmatched.

**IAPD Mike Cassidy Commissioner Community Service -
Patrick Nevins, Homewood-Flossmoor Park District**

This year's Mike Cassidy Commissioner Community Service award went to Patrick Nevins from the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District. In 1989, Patrick joined the Homewood-Flossmoor Park District's Leisure Services Advisory committee. In 1997, he was elected to the park board where he served in many capacities. In addition to his service with the district, Patrick volunteers for numerous community organizations including the South Suburban Special Recreation Association, St. Joe's Church and the Cancer Support Center in Homewood. Patrick Nevins gives back to his park district and his community in a very genuine and selfless way.



**IPRA Community Impact -
Rob Sperl, Wheaton Park District**

Rob Sperl from the Wheaton Park District received the IPRA Community Impact award. Rob has been at the Wheaton Park District for sixteen years and in that time, he has worked on a myriad of significant projects. These projects have improved the lives of the residents in Wheaton, both behind the scenes and in very obvious ways. Rob took the lead on projects including the Sensory Garden Playground, the Central Athletic Center, a permeable paver installation, a synthetic turf application and an overpass that creates a safe place for children to cross dangerous railroad tracks. Rob Sperl's passion for his community is unsurpassed.

PASSING THE GAVEL



IAPD Commissioner of the Year - John Hoscheit, Forest Preserve District of Kane County

The IAPD Commissioner of the Year award was given to John Hoscheit from the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. John was elected to the forest preserve district in 1996 and now serves as president. Throughout the years, he has been instrumental in helping the forest preserve acquire thousands of acres of land. He took the lead on many projects including the River Bend Community Park at Tekakwitha Woods Forest Preserve, the Creek Bend Nature Center and the Bruner Family Forest Preserve. John Hoscheit has been a part of several projects that will serve the residents of Kane County for years to come.



IPRA Robert Artz Lifetime Achievement Award - Cheryl Deom

Cheryl Deom won the IPRA Robert Artz Lifetime Achievement award. Cheryl has been with the Glenview Park District for thirty-eight years and has worked with both the recreation and facilities divisions. She administers two golf courses, an indoor tennis club and an ice center with a combined revenue of over \$5.5 million. She has directed more than \$10 million in capital projects for the district. Cheryl is a leader who knows the importance of developing her employees and future leaders in our field. She was instrumental in the IPRA Pro-Connect Mentoring program. Cheryl Deom has a talent and passion for parks and recreation that is exemplary.

People's Choice – Wilmette Park District

This year's Agency Showcase once again featured a "People's Choice" award. All attendees were given the opportunity to vote for their favorite display of parks, recreation and conservation marketing and communications materials. This year's winner was the Wilmette Park District.



2015 Chairman of the IAPD Board of Trustees Diane Main

Diane Main will serve as the chairman of the 2015 IAPD Board of Trustees. Diane has been a commissioner of the Westmont Park District since 1978. She enjoys working with local government on community events including the Taste of Westmont, Holly Days and Independence Day celebrations. She has worked with Village Trustees to acquire park land including Ty Warner Park, Westmont Skate Park,

Twin Lakes Woods and Twin Lakes Golf Course. She is an advocate for government bodies working together for the benefit of residents. Volunteering has always been a part of her life. She has been a Girl Scout leader, vice-president of the school's Athletic Association and vice-president of the Homeowners' Association. Diane attends and volunteers at numerous IAPD events including the state conference, Park District Conservation Day, Legislative Conference, Legal Symposium, Best of the Best Awards Gala and the Legislative Awareness Picnic. Diane also attends national conferences as well as the Legislative Forum in Washington, D.C. Diane succeeds Joe Petry, president of the Champaign Park District.

2015 Chairman of the IPRA Board of Directors Rick Hanetho

Rick Hanetho will serve as the chairman of the 2015 IPRA Board of Directors. Rick has over 29 years of experience in the parks and recreation industry. He is currently the executive director of the Northbrook Park District. Prior to Northbrook, Rick served two other Gold Medal winning organizations- as deputy director of the the Carol Stream Park District (2001-2008) and at the Schaumburg Park District as division manager of special programs (1993-2001) and other capacities with that district. He has a proven track record in strategic planning, financial and environmental stewardship, community outreach and engagement and creating meaningful partnerships. Rick is a Certified Parks and Recreation Professional. He graduated from Southern Illinois University with a bachelor's degree in parks and recreation administration in 1986. He currently lives in Schaumburg with his wife and three children. Rick succeeds Jan Peterson Hincapie, director of parks and recreation for the Village of Lincolnwood.



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By Don Parker, Forest Preserves of Cook County

Green Since 1915

AND GOING GREENER

THE FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY HAS ALWAYS HAD SUSTAINABILITY AT THE CORE OF ITS MISSION, BUT FOR ITS CENTENNIAL IT'S TAKING A FRESH LOOK.



When the Forest Preserve District of Cook County held its first meeting of commissioners in February 1915, it was at the vanguard of the nationwide movement to protect natural land, the same progressive wave that saw the creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 and the founding of the National Park Service in 1916.

Over the next 100 years, the Forest Preserves acquired a vast system of holdings—more than 69,000 acres—preserving oak woodlands, fens, savannas, prairies, a canyon and all manner of other natural wonders within easy reach of the bustling metropolis of Chicago.

These preserves sustain habitat for countless species of plants, animals and other organisms. Covering 11

percent of the county footprint, they also provide critical “ecosystem services,” everything from preventing flood damage, filtering storm water and cooling the air to capturing carbon dioxide and producing oxygen.

So when the Forest Preserves recently took a fresh look at its green practices, reestablishing its Green Team, the agency felt it had a pretty good head start.

“Being green is really our core mission—it’s what we’re all about,” said Forest Preserves President Toni Preckwinkle. “As we celebrate our centennial, we’re taking a step back to get the long view of the preserves. We want to practice stewardship in as broad a sense as possible. Being green is not just about the work we do, but how we do that work.”

"IN OUR SECOND CENTURY, WE WILL DO EVEN MORE TO PLAY OUR ROLE, HERE IN OUR SMALL CORNER OF THE WORLD, TO CONTRIBUTE TO A THRIVING PLANET."

"We've implemented many progressive green initiatives," said Forest Preserves General Superintendent Arnold Randall, "but with more than 500 staff members, hundreds of buildings, a large fleet of vehicles and millions of visitors every year, we still have many opportunities to improve our operations." The Forest Preserves manages a land area about half the size of the city of Chicago, spread across about 60 miles. Maintaining all that land requires a lot of equipment—and a lot of energy.

The agency maintains a fleet of 500 vehicles, including garbage trucks to collect trash, police cruisers to keep the preserves safe and snowplows to keep parking lots open through the winter. To mow the lawns in picnic groves and along roadsides, the agency owns 60 large riding mowers, 43 push mowers and 180 line trimmers, all in heavy use from April through October.

Among its recent green initiatives, the Forest Preserves has converted 32 new gasoline-fueled 72-inch large riding lawn mowers to propane power. The factory conversion to propane has significantly lowered the environmental impact of grove maintenance. Twenty-five police vehicles will be converted to propane this year, and the Forest Preserves is halfway through construction on 11 propane fueling stations across the county.

The Forest Preserves' 594 buildings, many several decades old, represent another greening opportunity. The agency has been working to assess all of its buildings, many of which were inherited during land acquisitions, and has removed many that no longer serve a purpose. Such demolitions have reclaimed land for nature and reduced the energy needed to heat and maintain these buildings.

In 2010, to better accommodate visitors, the Forest Preserves constructed two new interpretive centers at the Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center in Willow Springs and at the Sagawau Environmental Learning Center in Lemont. Both buildings are LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certified, for features including passive solar and geothermal heating, on-site waste treatment and low-flow water fixtures.

To keep all its buildings clean, the Forest Preserves' central warehouse recently made the switch to bulk green cleaning supplies. Not only has the change reduced the use of harmful compounds to clean facilities, it is also saving the organization hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Several Forest Preserves facilities have also been opened as collection sites for electronic waste. Drop-off areas at the Little Red Schoolhouse and Sagawau allow the public to responsibly dispose of their computers, printers, cell phones and other e-waste. The waste is shipped to contractors' facilities for recycling.

Even the way nature is restored can be improved. A sedge meadow restoration currently underway in the Forest Preserves' Dam #1 Woods requires the removal of trees and brush over 259 acres. For the first time, the Forest Preserves will be using most of the wood removed for restoration to produce lumber and firewood. (It is typically either burned or chipped onsite.) This will save approximately \$235,000 over the course of the project and allow the wood to have a higher final use.

The Forest Preserves' Green Team is investigating a long list of additional opportunities, including improving recycling of its own electronic and office waste, repurposing wooden pallets for compost bins, making its new campgrounds sustainable, adding electric vehicles and charging stations, converting facilities to LED lighting and educating Forest Preserve employees and visitors in environmentally friendly habits. The Prairie Research Institute recently conducted a "Zero Waste Study" of more than 800 pounds of picnickers' garbage. The waste was collected from multiple forest preserve locations to identify opportunities to improve recycling and composting practices.

Ultimately, though, the Forest Preserves will "go green" most effectively by succeeding in its core mission, and achieving the goals set forth in its recent Next Century Conservation Plan, commissioned by President Preckwinkle. "Because of our role as a conservation and landholding agency, we're in a unique position to contribute to the overall health of our planet," said Superintendent Randall. "Without a doubt, restoring our land and growing our holdings is where we're going to have the most impact."

Over the last half-century, large portions of the forest preserves have become overrun by invasive plant species. Recent administrations have increasingly recognized the need to actively restore them. The Next Century Conservation Plan calls for restoring the Forest Preserves' extensive natural landscapes, beginning with bringing 30,000 acres back to health in the next 25 years. The plan also calls for increasing protected lands from 69,000 to 90,000 acres with continued acquisition. By achieving these ambitious goals, the Forest Preserves of Cook County will not only increase the acreage of prairies, woods and wetlands for wildlife habitat and people's enjoyment, it will also increase the portion of the county that can deliver vital ecosystem services to the five million residents of Cook County.

Leaders have identified the need to better quantify the benefits that these natural lands provide. Over the next five years, the Forest Preserves is seeking to partner with public and private agencies to study the value of ecosystem services, as well as to quantify the difference between services provided by a healthy natural area versus one degraded by invasive species and altered natural processes.

"The Forest Preserves of Cook County is a leader in urban conservation," said Superintendent Randall. "In our second century, we will do even more to play our role, here in our small corner of the world, to contribute to a thriving planet."



McHenry County Conservation District's Banking on a “GREEN” future... Nippersink Creek Aquatic Restoration

By Wendy Kummerer, *McHenry County Conservation District*

Being entrusted as the guardians of the wide open spaces in McHenry County can be a daunting task when competing with urban sprawl, the expansion of transportation corridors and a developer's dream of the next best sports complex. But we persevere. As an open space agency, McHenry County Conservation District promotes stewardship and sound environmental practices, protects over 25,000 acres of land, and provides experiences that promote green, healthy and balanced lifestyles. GREEN is what we do.

This past December, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) kicked off a five-year, \$7.6 million stream restoration project on 3.5 miles of Nippersink Creek that encapsulates the green vision the Conservation District possesses so dearly and has ecologists, kayakers and residents alike banking on nature. The \$7.6 million dollar project is being funded by a \$4.9 million U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 206 grant, with the remaining 35% match from the district being covered by the value of past land purchases within Glacial Park that lie within the project area. The footprint of the project area covers 507 acres. Once completed, 25% of this 27 mile long creek will have undergone restoration, thereby improving the ecological integrity of the entire watershed.

Nippersink Creek is the largest tributary to the Fox River, draining 137 square miles in Illinois and about 50 square miles

in Wisconsin. From its headwaters in northwest Alden Township, Nippersink Creek flows generally to the southeast to Wonder Lake, and then east towards the Fox River/Chain O' Lakes.

While some sections of the stream are ranked among the highest quality in Illinois, supporting at least 21 animals and 30 plants listed as Illinois endangered or threatened species, other sections have been severely impacted by the effects of over 50 years of stream channelization, overgrazing by livestock, and the draining of wetlands. Subsequently, there was a significant loss of biodiversity with such side effects as increased-flooding and a decrease in water quality. Ecologically altered hydrology, invasive species and decades of fire suppression have degraded many of the rich wetlands, savannas and prairies that occurred in close association with the stream. The current condition of the creek due to these alterations has resulted in sections of the stream experiencing massive erosion and channel incision. This has created high undercut stream banks dominated by canary grass, common reed, cattails and European buckthorn.

The brush removal occurring this past winter is the culmination of more than a decade of work to bring this project from the conceptual stage to the implementation stage. The efforts began in 2001 just as the Conservation District completed the monumental task of re-meandering and returning the first 3.5 mile section of Nippersink Creek from a straight drainage ditch back into its original meandering course.

The hope at the time was a quick grant award, a year or two of planning and design and prompt in the field work for restoring another four miles of the stream in Glacial Park. The grant award arrived fairly quickly, however due to various circumstances, the federal allotment of money designated for 206 projects wound up being used elsewhere over the next decade. It was not until 2010, however, when USACE staff was able to secure additional funds that the project began to move in a steady march towards today.

The 206 Nippersink Creek Restoration Project builds on that success on the 2001 project where the re-born stream became home to game fish, silt intolerant mussels, and ospreys. And during large rain events, the restored wetlands around the stream would hold tens of millions of gallons of water that once impacted downstream communities with extensive flooding.

Nippersink Creek is also a valued recreational amenity well known as one of the most popular and well-traveled canoe trails in northeastern Illinois.

"The current project not only offers the promise of an even healthier stream capable of supporting a full array of aquatic biodiversity, but also ready to build paddling and fishing memories for generations to come. That in turn translates to more fish caught by eight-year-old boys, more steady flows for kayaks and canoes, more places to look for herons, and clearer water for ospreys to drop out of the sky and pluck a meal from the water," stated Ed Collins, director of Land Preservation and Natural Resources for McHenry County.



Paddlers will notice significant changes to some sections of the stream bank as steep overcut banks are removed and graded to a gentle slope. The more gentle slopes will also provide stable ground for vegetation to become established and floodwaters to naturally access or "spill over" into a floodplain area, thereby reducing stream energy, erosion and future channel incision, while reducing downstream flooding impacts.

The most visible change in the project area is the extensive brush removal along the banks of dead ash, box elder, Asian honeysuckle and European buckthorn, most being completed during winter months when floodplain soils are frozen and access is easier. As acres of invasive brush are removed, streamside wetlands and prairies will take their place. Paddlers will experience a more open stretch of stream, free of overhanging branches and snags. Line of site into Glacial Park and long vistas will become visible and improve as work progresses.

"One of the hallmarks of McHenry County, one of those sculpture's features that set it apart from other places, is the vistas that have survived intact among the modern suburban sprawl. Such long views are nature's eye candy to a biologist, for still embedded within them are the ghosts of an older and now vanished world. When a vista is buried under invasive brush it loses depth, distance and texture. Standing on the bridge over Nippersink Creek now, one is immersed in all three. Below is the stream itself, sinuous and living, like a blue-green dragon winding its way across a valley that was once the bottom of a now extinct glacial lake. In every direction stretch horizons, some filled with long sweeps of grass and wetlands, others feeding the eye with 20th century barns and 19th century Greek revival farm houses, and still others wall to wall oaks," cited Collins.

As work is completed, paddlers should witness an increase in wildlife sightings as birds, mammals and reptiles rediscover formerly inaccessible stream bank areas. These same areas will also provide long stretches of areas suitable for a brief lunch or short rest break along the stream bank. Down creek, into more wooded sections of the Glacial Park, older oak groves will be freed of exotic brush and opened up. Young oaks will be replanted to expand the existing tree cover into areas cleared of oaks decades ago.

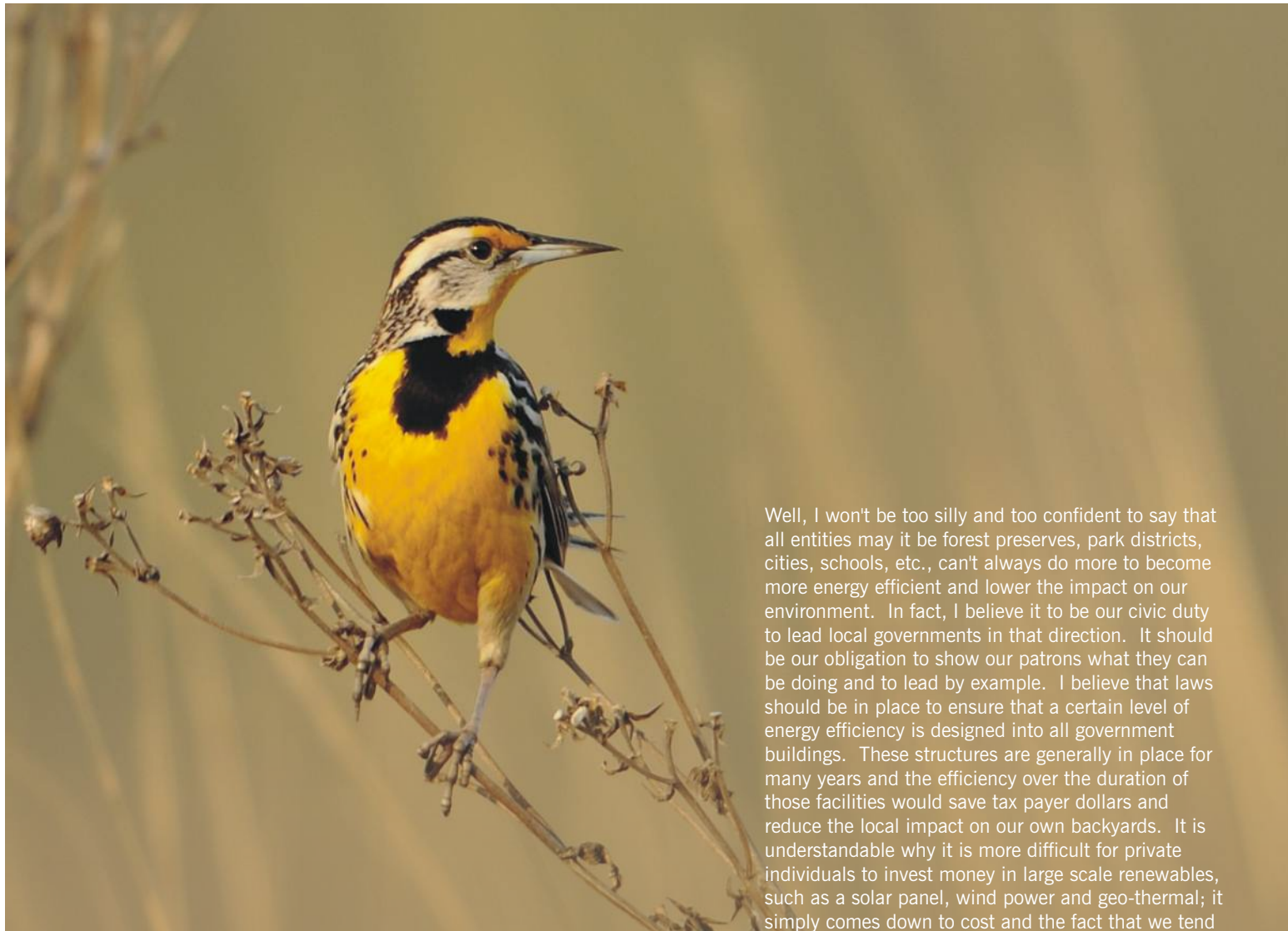
The installation of 4-5 cobble riffles made from gravel and boulders will be placed within the stream channel to help return natural streambed elevation, transport fine sediments, oxygenate the stream and provide habitat for silt intolerant fish like smallmouth bass, freshwater mussels and various macroinvertebrae species. The removal of non-native species will open up a plethora of foraging and breeding habitat for large river fish, amphibians and reptiles like the western chorus frog, northern water snake and painted turtle, as well as the state endangered Blanding's turtle.

A final but equally significant benefit will be to millions of migrating song birds. Nippersink Creek resides within the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge and a regional band of protected open space that is a crucial part of the Fox River flyway, an important migration route for many songbirds. During March to May and September to October it is believed that more than five million song birds' transverse the Fox River and nearby Lake Michigan flyway. Improvements of both the riparian and floodplain habitat at Nippersink Creek would provide additional foraging habitat along this migratory route.

It is easy to persevere with a green vision when a project such as this that offers so many benefits toward a healthier and more sustainable future for the land, water and those species which reside within its reaches. But there is persistence of two kinds that are in play here.

"There is the persistence of human beings who bring talent, skill and personal commitment to an idea and eventually overcome the obstacles and roadblocks that inevitably crop up in all endeavors. The staff members of the USACE in the Chicago Office who work on the 206 program are such people. The shared belief among the Corps and district staff that this was a good project created a dogged persistence that eventually led to the 2014 start date. There is, however, a less evident and very different kind of persistence that flows from the stream itself. Over the 180 years since settlement began here, the Nippersink has persisted through a myriad of changes, some minor and some large, some that have affected the stream positively and others that have been devastating. But through it all the stream has persistently and against the odds held onto its character and to the biological diversity that has lived under and around its waters since the stream first found life in the melt waters of the Wisconsin ice sheet a millennia ago. Mussel diversity remains incredibly high for the northeastern portion of the state as does the fish community. Areas of silt intolerant macro invertebrates can be found and on good days one can stand on a bridge and watch those fish swim by under two feet of water. Otters are periodic visitors and bald eagles have become a common sight in spring and fall along the banks. Persistence; and maybe a bit of patience as well. If I had one message I could impart to the stream on the first day the project began it would be this...Thanks for waiting for us," Collins stated.

Updates and news about the Nippersink Creek project can be followed on McHenry County Conservation District's website <http://www.mccdDistrict.org/rccms/index.php/nippersink-206-project/> and Ed Collins Blog <http://www.mccdDistrict.org/rccms/index.php/nippersink-206-project/nippersink-206-project-blog/>.



Forest Preserves Going Green? What? Been Green!!!

By Todd Tucker, Byron Forest Preserve District

Well, I won't be too silly and too confident to say that all entities may it be forest preserves, park districts, cities, schools, etc., can't always do more to become more energy efficient and lower the impact on our environment. In fact, I believe it to be our civic duty to lead local governments in that direction. It should be our obligation to show our patrons what they can be doing and to lead by example. I believe that laws should be in place to ensure that a certain level of energy efficiency is designed into all government buildings. These structures are generally in place for many years and the efficiency over the duration of those facilities would save tax payer dollars and reduce the local impact on our own backyards. It is understandable why it is more difficult for private individuals to invest money in large scale renewables, such as a solar panel, wind power and geo-thermal; it simply comes down to cost and the fact that we tend to move on an average between 5-7 years. However, government buildings are cornerstones of our communities and will reap the cost savings and rewards over the life of those structures.

The Byron Forest Preserve District (BFPD) is one of the smaller districts, yet we try to still have and do large scale green initiatives. Every year, the staff and I try to develop new ideas that will lower costs and increase our "greenness" in many areas of operation. Matt Henkel, our golf superintendent for PrairieView Golf Club, has decreased his fertilizer usage by 10 % over the last 5 years. Water usage on the course has decreased by 25% in the last five years as well. They have done this by using stringent hand-watering practices on the greens and the desire for firmer fairway conditions has led the way. By the end of the 2015 season, we will have converted an additional 15 acres of the golf course into native prairie plantings. The reduction in area mowed that has been returned to native grasses reduces labor costs and the carbon footprint of those mowers. In fact, the course will be adding an 80 cart fleet of electric carts this year. These carts will reduce noise, air pollution, the need for fossil fuels and costs.



Four years ago, we implemented the use of iPads for all key staff and commissioners to lower our paper consumption and we use DropBox for information distribution instead of endless piles of paper copies. Our printing of the budget is now a fraction of what it once was because all drafts are simply in thin air and not printed until the final copies are approved. Last year we also decided to stop printing our newsletter/brochure that was 24 to 36 pages and make it available for online use. We distributed the publication to 11,000 households and now we send out a postcard reminding them to go to the website. We still print approximately 1000 hard copies for businesses and people who do not have the internet or just simply request a mailed copy. The overall postage and paper cost savings is a little more than \$20,000, which we all know could go to many other needed areas of BFPD's operation.

BFPD also is now part of the **Prairie State Conservation Coalition's Prairie State Hike App**. This new 99 cent smart phone app will guide you through trails located in the Byron Forest Preserve District and Nature Conservancy's Nachusa Grasslands. The app has many other locations that you can visit and uses text, audio, photographs and video to describe and explain about the many plants, flowers, trees, wildlife and landscape that you may encounter on your hike.

BFPD also boasts one of the best preschools in Illinois. Our preschool serves 85 children, ages three to five each year and gives them a blend of high tech and outdoor education to ready them for kindergarten. The program is housed in the Keller Education Center, a state of the art teaching and learning center that uses a SmartBoard and iPads to educate within a highly diverse natural surrounding. Not many education centers can brag about the quality high tech learning mixed into a 300 acre nature preserve as an added outdoor learning environment. The Keller Center itself is a Platinum LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified building, that is recognized by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) in Washington D.C. The certification, announced in December 2013 by the USGBC, recognizes the Byron Forest Preserve District's strong commitment to the environment and its leadership in sustainability from start to finish in construction.

The Keller Education Center not only houses BFPD's preschool education classes, but is also used for children's summer education programs and is used as a teaching tool regarding green building design.

The Platinum Award is the highest possible rating given by the USGBC and recognizes the building's many energy efficient design features. Some of these include: 3Kw solar panel, 3Kw wind turbine, geothermal ground source heat pump, recycled barn wood cabinets, recycled rubber flooring, recycled glass and concrete countertops, improved indoor air quality through the use of low volatile organic compound paints, low flow toilets and faucets in addition to many other features.

The Keller Education Center is one of only three Platinum LEED certified educational buildings in the State of Illinois. The building is also the first and only Platinum LEED certified building in Ogle County.

The Jarrett Prairie Center which is the location of our administration headquarters and natural history museum was fitted with our first solar panel over ten years ago. The 5Kw photovoltaic system reduced the energy consumption by over \$3,000 annually. Therefore, we have saved \$30k in the last ten years and the system total cost was \$24k with half of that being rebated from a government program grant. We would like to start to fit three of our larger maintenance facilities with 5Kw or 10Kw solar panels over the next couple of years further reducing our budgets and decreasing our energy footprint. The district in cooperation with the Ogle County Solid Waste Department houses the highest used community recycling center in the county.

Our education department offers ecology and recycling education programs for our preschool students, home school classes, scout groups, and all of our many public school visitors. One of the BFPD's prize programs is the EarthKeepers outdoor educational program. EarthKeepers is a three day program for fourth and fifth graders that teach the cycling of materials, movement of energy through ecosystems, connections between living and non-living things and change over time. At each point, it's emphasized that the students are a part of these things and not just learning about a distant concept. EarthKeepers also includes an aspect called "waste watchers," in which we weigh garbage at the end of lunch each day and discuss ways of reducing waste, how compost works and the benefits of reusable containers. When we put the concepts together, students begin to understand how introducing contaminants affect habitats, how much energy goes into food chains, including ours, and that what they do personally can have a positive or negative impact. When they return to school, students have a month to finish the program and complete activities—they choose one way to use less energy and one way to use fewer materials, and have their parents help monitor this at home. The EarthKeepers program has been offered in our district for over twenty years.

The district's ability to continue to be more energy efficient and to educate the public on all types of ways to reduce, re-use, and recycle ultimately stems from our staff and support and vision from the board. I can say that the staff here at the Byron Forest Preserve District is truly our best resource. Every department contributes to the overall mission of the district, may it be on the golf course or the dedicated prairie restoration crew that tirelessly works to restore our beautiful natural areas to their pre-settlement condition, the staff is always encouraged to be a pro-active component and liaison for the environment no matter how big or small.

Photos by Gary Gullett, Adventure Safari Network

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Habitats, Health and Happiness: Why Green Just Keeps on Giving

By Jayne Bohner, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

Last year, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County embarked on an agency first: a countywide strategic planning process to help commissioners and administrators formulate a plan on how to lead the agency into its second 100 years.

Part of the process included a survey of the general population, and many respondents' comments expressed ideas that we'd hoped to hear. The majority placed preserving and protecting natural areas for the future at the top of their priority lists. They felt that forest preserve land should protect natural habitats and wildlife and help to improve air and water quality. As a result of comments like these, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County made certain to add sustainability to its revised guiding principles, stating that on every level we would ensure the preservation and use of lands, waterways, plant and animal life for residents today and tomorrow.



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Lake Michigan Beach Transformation Creates Educational, Recreational Oasis

By Gary Silbar, Highland Park Park District



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The 2014 IP&R Magazine Photo Contest Awards

The Illinois Association of Park Districts and Illinois Park and Recreation Association are proud of the high caliber of content that our readers submit to *Illinois Parks & Recreation* magazine.

We are especially grateful to those in the field who have an eye for capturing the beauty of the parks, the wonder of nature and the smiles on the faces of young and old alike, who have participated in the programs offered by Illinois' outstanding park districts, forest preserves, conservation, recreation and special recreation agencies.

Congratulations to our 2014 Give Us Your Best Shot photo contest winners!



RECREATION/PEOPLE AT PLAY



1st Place

Stacy Proper
Frankfort Park District
"Short Run 5K"

2nd Place

Nathan McDonald
Rockford Park District
"You Found Me!"



SPORTS



1st Place

Joy Stuart
Northbrook Park District
"Start Your Engines"

2nd Place

Arturo Ordoñez
Waukegan Park District
"Running Down the Field"



WILDLIFE



1st Place

Mike Frankowski
St. Charles Park District
"Ruby Throated
Hummingbird Slurping
Nectar at Hickory Knolls
Natural Area"

2nd Place

Sharon Richardson
Bourbonnias Township
Park District
"Ducks at Willowhaven"

NATURE/LANDSCAPE



1st Place

Greg Wooley
Oak Brook Park District
"Snow in Color"

2nd Place

Tom Jungen
Freeport Park District
"Light Through the Willow"

A heartfelt thanks to everyone who submitted a photo in 2014.

And, as always, we thank the judge who made the tough decisions. He reviewed more than 350 outstanding photos.

Photo Judge

Steve Hinrichs,
11 Acre Studio



PEOPLE & PLACES



Marcia Greenslate Retires from the Lincoln Park District

After 34 years of dedicated service to the Lincoln Park District, **Marcia Greenslate** retired on January 30th. Marcia started with the park district as the ceramics instructor and found her desire to stay involved with the park district for many years to come. She served in several roles

including program director until she was promoted to executive director in 1995. One of Marcia's many accomplishments has been the building of the new swimming facility, set to open in the summer of 2015. Marcia worked with the Board of Commissioners, applied and received a state grant and began building the new swimming facility which will include a lap pool, a zero-depth pool with water features and a plunge pool with two slides. Marcia has been a staple in the community and an active Rotarian. She is looking forward to retirement.



Beardstown Community Park District Hires Jason Brockschmidt as Director of Parks and Recreation

Jason Brockschmidt is the new director of parks and recreation for Beardstown Community Park District. Jason took over in January after the retirement of Steve Megginson. He is a Beardstown native

who worked for the park district for several years and after working for a Beardstown bank, Jason returns to the park district in his new role. Jason will oversee all of the district facilities, shelters and parks. He has a bachelor's degree in business administration from Monmouth College. He is also active in the local Exchange Club, Tiger Nation Booster Club and many park district youth activities. Jason has been in charge of the T-ball, baseball, youth football and youth basketball programs for the park district over the years. Jason's initial focus will be on a new pool project for the district for which a \$2.5 million PARC grant will be used.

The Illinois Association of Park Districts Places Two Outstanding Executives at Member Park Districts Through Its Director Search Service



Lincoln Park District Names Dawn Schaefer as Executive Director

The Illinois Association of Park Districts assisted the board of commissioners of the Lincoln Park District in hiring **Dawn Schaefer** to lead the agency. She began employment in January 2015. Dawn has more than 15 years of experience in the park and recreation field. She served as the director of Champaign-Urbana Special Recreation

for five years. She has also held positions with the Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association and the Northeast DuPage Special Recreation Association.

Dawn holds a master's degree in recreation administration from Aurora University and a bachelor's degree from St. Louis University. She has experience in developing staff, expanding inclusion services and ensuring quality comprehensive recreation services are available for all constituents.



Western Springs Park District Welcomes John Robinson as Executive Director

After working extensively with the Illinois Association of Park Districts, the Board of Commissioners of the Western Springs Park District has hired **John Robinson** to serve as its next executive director. He began his employment on March 2, 2015.

John worked for the past 24 years at the Arlington Heights Park District, most recently serving as the superintendent of recreation. He was responsible for athletics, golf operations and maintenance, before and after school programs, pre-school and day camps, as well as the operations at Lake Arlington.

He has a bachelor's degree in recreation and park administration from the University of Wisconsin—LaCrosse. John serves on the IAPD/IPRA Joint Conference Committee as the operations co-chair.

Want to Read More?

Keep up with the latest milestones, new hires, promotions and award winners in the Illinois park and recreation industry online. Visit our website, www.ILparks.org, and click on the Publications tab on the left. Select IP&R Magazine and then People and Places.

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E-mail information and jpegs to editorialdept@ILparks.org. Jpegs should be 300 dpi at about 2 inches tall.

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