

Rules for use of forest land may face changes

Chicago Sun-Times, May 5, 2004, by Abdon M. Pallasch

A century ago, Cook County Board members set aside thousands of acres of forest and did not mean for the land to become signpost backdrops or parking lots or even baseball fields, board member Michael Quigley believes.

With Friends of the Parks, Friends of the Forest Preserves, the Nature Conservancy and the Sierra Club, Quigley and six other board members today will propose an overhaul of the Cook County Forest Preserve land use policy.

The new language would declare preserve land protected from other governments' attempts to use "eminent domain" to seize the land.

It would also revive the Forest Preserve Advisory Committee that has been dormant since the controversy when the district voted 13-4 to sell preserve land to Rosemont to expand the town's convention center.

"Even though we have 68,000 acres of land, thousands of acres are used for golf courses, parking lots, driving ranges," Quigley said.

"Thousands of acres of land are degraded. We need it for flood plans and to clean our air and our water and to provide habitat for endangered species."