



Tollway project sets bad precedent

By Benjamin Cox

Forest Preserve Commissioners approved a permit allowing the Illinois Tollway to construct bioswales for stormwater management on 16 acres of Forest Preserve of Cook County land despite Friends of the Forest Preserves' strong recommendation against the move.

The bioswales are ditches planted with native plants that will line stretches of I-294 and are intended to collect and filter runoff and contaminants.

According to the enabling legislation for the District, forest preserve land is set aside in perpetuity with the exception of essential highway and utility easements. The Tollway has admitted publicly that this use is not essential. Therefore this giveaway sets a dangerous precedent.

Friends is also concerned that forest

preserve land is being used for the experimental application of unproven methods. In addition, no standards have been set for quantifying whether or not the swales actually work or for how long they will be monitored.

Moreover, Friends believes that the Board of Commissioners should not have moved to approve the permit until the details of the proposal had been worked out.

Executive Director Benjamin Cox and Volunteer Consultant Jean Sellar have been working with District and Tollway staff to improve the bioswale design in order to ensure that the bioswales actually improve water quality. While the Tollway has not been receptive to all of the recommendations made by Friends and its allies, many have been incorporated. Friends is committed to continuing to work with District and Tollway staff to improve this project.

Commissioner voting record on giving Tollway permit for 16 acres

commissioner	vote
Earlean Collins (D, 1st)	absent
Robert Steele (D, 2nd)	yes
Jerry "Iceman" Butler (D, 3rd)	yes
William Beavers (D, 4th)	yes
Deborah Sims (D, 5th)	yes
Joan Patricia Murphy (D, 6th)	yes
Joseph Mario Moreno (D, 7th)	yes
Roberto Maldonado (D, 8th)	no
Peter N. Silvestri (R, 9th)	yes
Mike Quigley (D, 10th)	no
John P. Daley (D, 11th)	yes
Forrest Claypool (D, 12th)	no
Larry Suffredin (D, 13th)	yes
Gregg Goslin (R, 14th)	yes
Tim Schneider (R, 15th)	yes
Anthony J. Peraica (R, 16th)	no
Elizabeth A. Doody Gorman (R, 17th)	no

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Friends is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and a member of the Chicago Wilderness consortium.

Welcome to 700 new members!

By Kathryn Callaghan

Friends of the Forest Preserves works to help restore the forest preserves to health, to protect them from abuse, transfer and sale, and to promote good government. More than 700 new members have chosen to stand with us this year.

Friends' board of directors and staff deeply appreciate the donations and the words of encouragement sent along with the membership forms; comments ranged from "Thank you for doing all that you do" to "Go get 'em!" and "It's about time!"

Thank you to all who have supported Friends' mission through membership, contributions, company matching funds, memorial donations and volunteering.

We look forward to meeting you on a



Kathryn Callaghan

New members Michele Grimes, John Schmidt and Yvonne Gregwor joined Friends for the Powderhorn Prairie Tour on July 21.

preserve tour, at our fall event, Ignite the Night, on October 6, or at our annual Holiday Party on December 6.

Friends helps District take action on stormwater

By Benjamin Cox

As Cook County is built out, the forest preserves come under increasing pressure to accept stormwater runoff from neighbors. When stormwater is introduced improperly, great harm can be done to ecosystems that harbor native Illinois flora and fauna.

The situation that Friends helped to resolve at Ted Stone Preserve in Hodgkins, where an erosion gully threatened a rare dolomite prairie, was one example, but poor stormwater management is a growing problem throughout the District.

Benjamin Cox, Friends Executive Director, and Jean Sellar, Friends volunteer Hydrological Consultant, are working with the Forest Preserve District and its consultants to create



Kathryn Callaghan

Failed pipes, erosion, and decreased water quality can result when stormwater is improperly introduced into the preserves.

a comprehensive stormwater policy. Friends has participated in numerous field trips and meetings, and has reviewed the initial draft of the policy. The policy is still being developed and will have to be reviewed by District staff and other non-profits before being presented to the Forest Preserve Board for review.

Friends commends the District for taking a proactive role in defending its holdings.

Busse boondoggle on hold?

By Benjamin Cox

It appears that for now Friends has stopped DuPage County's proposal to raise the dam at Ned Brown Preserve which would increase the frequency of flooding and the amount of time that flood water is held on site.

Friends' research raised concerns that DuPage's proposal threatens populations of nine Threatened and Endangered plant species as well as wood frogs and blue-spotted salamanders found in the 440-acre Busse Woods Nature Preserve that lies within Ned Brown.

The Nature Preserve was acquired with federal funds which restricts any changes from being made to the preserve without federal approval. Approval is very difficult to obtain according to Friends' communications with the United States Department of the Interior. Friends communicated its

findings to District authorities and DuPage representatives. Discussion about the proposal has not resumed for many months. Friends will continue to monitor the situation, because, as it is often said, "in politics and government, no bad idea ever really goes away."

The Busse Woods Nature Preserve is a U.S. Congress National Natural Landmark. Salt Creek was dammed in the '70s at the request of DuPage development interests and parts of Busse were destroyed when a poorly designed and/or maintained berm caused accumulated water to kill a large section of the ancient oak forest.

Large numbers of T&E plant species would likely be killed by any further increase in flooding, which would occur when they are in bloom or setting seed. Wood frog and blue-spotted salamander populations, rare in Cook County, would most likely be damaged by the increase of polluted waters.

President Stroger: what happened to transition team report?

By Benjamin Cox

Even though the Transition Team report focusing on the Forest Preserve District was submitted months ago, the report has yet to be publicly released or discussed by Forest Preserve District Board President Todd Stroger or his staff.

Friends' Executive Director and three board members were pleased and honored to be part of the team. Normally transition reports are released and acted upon quickly, but this one seems to have gotten bogged down.

Friends has great hopes for this process because of the tone of reform that President Stroger and his staff set at the outset.

Friends is committed to continue pursuing dialogue and reform with President Stroger and Commissioners.

The team's objective was to explore the challenges facing the District and make recommendations for reform. Friends helped interview some 20 District department heads and staffers, detailing concerns and recommendations and reporting back to President Stroger.

Friends was able to learn about many issues within the District by participating and has subsequently met one-on-one with President Stroger to discuss these issues. Friends believes that these efforts resulted in qualified candidates being placed in key staff positions that matter most to conservation in the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

Friends is committed to pursuing dialogue and reform with President Stroger and Commissioners.

Meet the frogs of Cook County

Diana Krug, Friends member, Palos Restoration Project Steward at McClaughry Springs, and S. Cook County Frog Monitor, shares her knowledge and observations. To get involved visit www.fpdccvolunteers.org or www.habitatproject.org.

It was eye-opening becoming a frog monitor for the Chicago Wilderness Calling Frog Survey (habitatproject.org) and learning about native frog species, some of which cling to survival in our remaining natural areas. Land preserved from development sustains these remaining populations – these areas are crucial.

On frog safaris I've seen incredible habitat: sunny wetlands; thick and green with native sedges and aquatic plants, frogs leaping into the shallow margins; fens kept moist by rainwater trickling from steep hillsides into depressions filled with bright



Diana Krug

A Peep basks on a Prairie Dock leaf at Hidden Pond Prairie in the Palos Preserves.

yellow marsh marigolds and big leafy green skunk cabbage, frogs singing into the night; little kettles in the woods lined with buttonbush and its dangling round white balls, the water surface green with tiny duckweed and abuzz with dragonflies; a long pond in the midst of an industrial

zone, bright waterlilies floating, cricket frogs clacking; a rare bog, spongy with moss, eating blueberries along the floating trail draped with poison sumac and spotted turtles avoiding paparazzi.

When I look to a wetland I think of how each plant and creature, including the lowly mosquito, interacts to create this fantastic unique chain of life. Frogs and toads have been an important link in this chain since the Jurassic Period. Thirteen species inhabit this region.

Although the frog monitoring season is over for this year, I will be watching. And come late winter I will be longing to hear the frogs sing and watch the woodlands and prairies slowly awaken again.

If your local frog species curiosity is piqued, check out the Illinois Natural History Survey Amphibian and Reptile Collection at www.inhs.uiuc.edu.



Diana Krug

Wood Frog, Mink River Estuary, Door County 2006

in potential breeding sites and move on to find a pond without them.

Peepers and Chorus Frogs, the species most commonly associated with the coming of spring, are gone from the city and most of the suburbs, but still doing well in limited preserved areas. These small early breeders are often only heard. The camouflage nature of their coloring helps them hide. **Frog ID:** Back markings are tell-tale: Peepers have a small X. Chorus frogs have three lines.

American Toads, with their bumpy dry skin, are more landlubber-ish, requiring wet spots for breeding only. Making use of habitats from corporate ponds (check window wells) to preserves, they are fairly common. **Frog Fact:** American Toads detect the presence of

Wood Frog tadpoles, which eat their offspring, and move off to alternative pools.

Northern Leopard Frogs, sporting spots, require grassy or forested upland habitat in addition to breeding wetland. This species unfortunately is sometimes sought by poachers. It is easy to understand that all our native species survive best in natural habitat.



Diana Krug

Leopard Frog 2007

Removing any species without special permission from the forest preserve district not only increases mortality, but is illegal.

Treefrogs, yes, bright little Treefrogs exist in the area, calling from up high during their mating season. Two species are found here, so similar only specialists can detect the difference by chromosome number and mating call: Eastern Gray Tree Frog and Cope's Gray Tree Frog (faster trill rate). **Treefrog Fact:** they are remarkable for their ability to change color. **Frog ID:** the underside of the thighs is bright yellow or orange but the back body and legs may be various shades of brown, gray or green, almost lichen textured.



Roger Keller

Tree Frog, Hidden Pond Prairie 2007

Blanchard's Northern Cricket Frog, our tiniest and once prolific species, hangs on only in small isolated spots. Former use of DDT and PCB in combination with drought and the cricket frog's short lifespan are suspected causes of decline, but there are hopeful signs of return.

Bullfrog, the most common and toughest, may be the last species on the block in urbanized landscapes due to its voraciousness and tolerance for lower quality habitat and disturbance. Bullfrogs populations have been observed overtaking other species in some wetlands; these prolific breeders eat just about anything they can fit in their mouths.

Green Frogs, similar to Bullfrogs in appearance and habits, but not as common, Green Frogs are less tolerant of pollution and habitat disturbance. **Frog ID:** green upper jaw, larger tympanum (the circular ear behind the eyes), and a dorsal ridge along each side.

Three more species that are very rare in our area include the plains leopard frog, the pickerel frog and the fowlers toad.

Kathryn's back!

By Benjamin Cox

Members who joined Friends or who renewed their memberships this spring have already received a note signed by Kathryn Callaghan, who took over the position of Constituency Director from Alice Brandon in April. (Alice is now Friends' Conservation Director.)

Members who have been with Friends for several years may remember Kathryn. As a volunteer, she created our membership database and established our membership systems in 2004.

A University of Chicago graduate, Kathryn previously managed membership programming at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Upon returning to the Chicago area, she was eager to get involved in the movement to protect and restore the region's natural areas.



Kathryn Callaghan

"In 2004, I found Friends of the Forest Preserves' website," Kathryn said. "I downloaded the reports that Friends published on the state of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. I read the reports in a single day and I took them as a call to action.

"They explain what went wrong with Cook County's forest preserves, and what has to be done to get them back on track. I'd encourage anyone who really wants to understand the issues to read them. It's encouraging that so many of the recommendations Friends made in 2002 have already been implemented and that things are getting better."

Members are welcome to contact Kathryn with questions, concerns, suggestions, or for information about volunteering. She can be reached at (312) 356-9990 or kathrync@fotfp.org.

Beautiful natural events calendar available now

By Kathryn Callaghan

When should you travel to your favorite forest preserve to look for the season's first spring beauties and rue anemones? When will the neotropical songbirds arrive in Cook County from points south? When do autumn leaves reach their peak of color?

Friends' new Natural Events Calendar answers these questions and allows you to record your own observations. Designed to hang next to your regular calendar, the Natural Events Calendar can be used year after year to keep track of recurring annual events such as birthdays, anniversaries and your favorite natural events.

Creating the calendar was a collaborative effort, with local experts providing information about the timing of natural phenomena. John Elliott of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Stephen Packard of Audubon-Chicago Region, Alan Resetar of The Field Museum, Doug Taron of the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, Consultant and Restoration Program Director Jean Sellar and entomologist Ron Panzer all contributed to the project.

Friends is grateful to Forest Park botanical artist Kathleen Garness for donating her time and effort to create the calendar, which she wonderfully illustrated with linoleum block prints. The illustrations were specially created to coincide with natural events occurring each month. The artwork was inspired by the creations of Michigan artist Gwen Frostic and was designed to be reminiscent of early 20th century woodcuts.

Calendars are being given as thanks for donations of \$136 or more. If you have already renewed your membership and would like to upgrade to the \$136 level, please contact Kathryn Callaghan at 312-356-9990 or kathrync@fotfp.org. If you have suggestions for additions to future editions, please send them in.



Illustrations by Kathleen Garness

\$79,000 to restore wetlands

By Alice Brandon

Friends is beginning a new chapter of its history by expanding its work to include ecological management of forest preserve lands. Friends is bringing more than \$79,000 to the Forest Preserve District for projects at Beaubien Woods and Orland Grassland.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Conservation Fund granted Friends more than \$39,000 to enhance 8.3 acres of wet prairie at Beaubien Woods, located in southeast Chicago near Lake Calumet. The funds will be used to hire contractors who will remove invasive trees that are too large to be handled by the site's volunteers and conduct prescribed burns in the prairies. Both activities are needed to ensure the survival of rare native prairie plants and the wildlife that depends on this habitat. Friends is working on the project in partnership with Laurel Ross, Environmental and Conservation Director for The Field Museum and Site Steward for Beaubien Woods, and the site's volunteers who are providing essential in-kind match.

Friends' 6-acre Orland Grassland project is made possible by \$40,000 in mitigation funds through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These funds are collected from developers to help mitigate for the destruction of vital wetlands within a



Benjamin Cox

Friends of Dan Ryan Woods volunteers visit Beaubien Woods, where Friends has received a grant of more than \$39,000 to do restoration work.

watershed. Friends will enhance wetland habitat along Marley Creek in Orland Grassland. Invasive reed canary grass will be controlled and native seed mixes will subsequently be planted. Prescribed burns are also a part of this project. Friends staffers are working with Site Steward Pat Hayes and local volunteers at Orland.

Survey says: more fire, fewer deer, more trail patrol

By Alice Brandon

Volunteer stewards are the unpaid staff of the Forest Preserve District, donating time and expertise to further its core mission: "... to restore, restock, protect and preserve the natural forests and such lands together with their flora and fauna ... for the purpose of the education, pleasure, and recreation of the public ..."

Restoration and protection of the high quality natural areas within the forest preserves are among Friends' highest priorities. Volunteer Site Stewards play a crucial role in managing these areas and are the leading experts on what is happening at these sites. Without management, forest preserve health now rapidly declines under an onslaught of stresses including invasive species, fire suppression, overbrowsing, and human misuses.

Friends asked stewards about many aspects of their work including the occurrence and type of illegal activities at their sites, volunteer needs, ecological threats, District Staff response to requests, and preserves that need but do not currently have

Most stewards consistently noted that invasive plants, deer overpopulation, and lack of prescribed burning were the most critical ecological threats to the long-term health of the forest preserves.

stewards. The survey was also used to learn more about what Friends can do to help facilitate stewardship work. Almost 60 percent (33 out of 56) of stewards surveyed graciously filled out and returned the survey.

Survey results indicated that most sites and stewards face similar issues

and challenges. Illegal trail creation and use was cited as the most serious illegal activity occurring in natural areas. Another serious illegal activity often noted was poaching, mostly of wild plants. One steward stated that they had seen wild leek from forest preserves being sold illegally at local markets.

The greatest volunteer need identified by stewards was for more adult volunteers. Of lesser need was for more tools and supplies to be provided by the District. In fact, Jim Wagner, a staffer with Volunteer Resources, was given high marks for his timely response to tool requests.

Most stewards consistently noted that invasive plants, deer overpopulation, and lack of prescribed burning were the most critical ecological threats to the long-term health of the forest preserves. *(please continue on the next page)*

Experience Cook County's natural areas

Join Friends for an upcoming members' program.

New Members' Tour Saturday, October 13, 10 to noon

Friends members new and old are invited to join Steve Packard, Friends founding board member and master steward, on a free tour of Somme Prairie Grove in Northbrook – one of the region's best restorations. Learn about the challenges facing Cook County's forest preserves, how restoration has led to a resurgence of native wildlife, and what the lessons of Somme Prairie mean for our county's natural areas.

Free for members, \$10 for non-members.

Harms Woods Fall Hike Saturday, October 20, 3 to 5 p.m.

Enjoy the fall colors as we hike this 160-acre oak woods located along the North Branch of the Chicago River in Glenview.

\$5 members, \$10 non-members.

Reservations are required for all tours. Please purchase tickets online at www.fotfp.org or RSVP at (312) 356-9990.



Above and below: Friends explore the Dolomite Canyon at Camp Sagawau near Lemont on a tour graciously led by Nature Center Director Mike Konrath. Bottom left: Conservation Director Alice Brandon leads members on a tour of Powderhorn Prairie on Chicago's southeast side.



Kathryn Callaghan



Photos above by Mike MacDonald / ChicagoNature.com

(Steward survey continued)

Many stewards asked Friends to take the lead in helping to facilitate volunteer burn crews for the preserves that would work in partnership with the District to get more acres burned. Friends is currently working with the District to streamline coordination between volunteer burn crews and District crews.

Stewards also consistently indicated that Friends should play a key role in facilitating better communication between the District and stewards. Many expressed frustration that the

District often conducts site projects without first communicating with stewards or finding out where rare or sensitive plants and animals reside.

Another bone of contention for stewards was the very slow turnaround time for Master Steward Certification with one steward waiting more than two years for the formal notification granting permission to conduct ecological management activities at their site.

Most stewards liked the new volunteer website (www.fpdccvolunteers.org) that Friends developed in partnership with

the Forest Preserve District. A few had good suggestions for improving the website, which will be used to make it more useful for stewards and volunteers. Some stewards also provided critical information on sites needing stewardship work.

Friends thanks all the stewards who participated in the survey. This information will help Friends to prioritize work and will be used to advocate more effectively for stewardship work when speaking with District Staff and while participating in the District budget process this year.

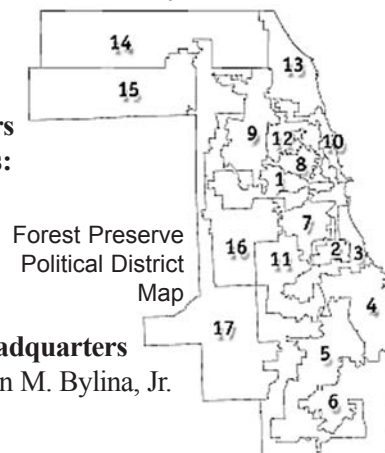
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Contact your officials

If you have kudos or concerns, please send them to your Forest Preserve District of Cook County Commissioner. *They enjoy hearing from you!*

Call or email us if you don't know who your commissioner is, we can check. You may write President Todd Stroger and all of the Commissioners at their downtown address:

118 N. Clark St., Room 567
Chicago, IL 60602
phone: (312) 603-6400
fax: (312) 603-4397



Forest Preserve
Political District
Map

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OF THE FOREST PRESERVES

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SAVE THE DATE

The leaves are turning, the days are shorter and the forest preserves close their gates at sundown. But on this one night, you are invited to come out and howl at the moon ...

Ignite the Night

Help Friends of the Forest Preserves conjure October spirits with a wild night of live music and dancing around a blazing bonfire.

- ❖ Live music by Devil in a Woodpile
- ❖ Bonfire
- ❖ Cookout (beer and wine included)
- ❖ Flashlight tours
- ❖ Twilight wagon rides
- ❖ Stargazing and nature walks

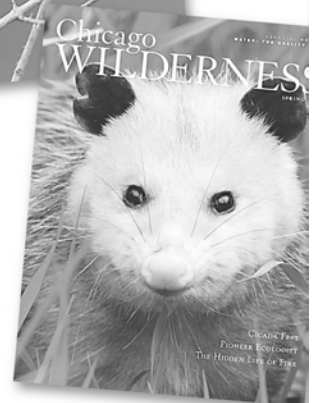
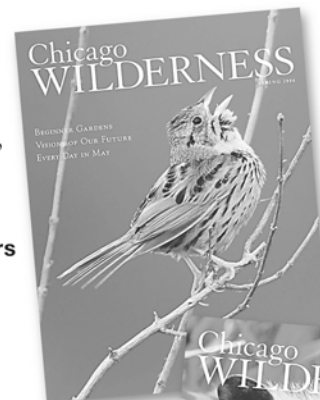
Saturday Oct. 6, 5 to 10 p.m. (sunset 6:27 p.m.)
Spring Creek Forest Preserve, Barrington Hills
Cost: \$45, \$60 at the door, children 12 and under \$5
Tickets available online at www.fotfp.org
or call (312) 356-9990.

Event free for volunteers, please contact Kathryn at (312) 356-9990.

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