

Restoration funding cut by 35% in 2017 FPCC budget

Each fall staff, board members, and volunteers from the Friends community review the Forest Preserves of Cook County's proposed budget and make a statement to the Board of Commissioners. The Friends community was born out of advocacy for improving the management of the Forest Preserve District, restoring and maintaining healthy nature in the preserves, and ensuring outdoor recreational opportunities are available to everyone in Cook County.

Friends of the Forest Preserves is the voice of a diverse community inspiring and organizing people to protect, restore, and expand the forest preserves in Cook County. We represent more than 2,000 members and thousands of forest preserve users and dedicated volunteers.

We appreciate and understand the difficult fiscal situation that the District and County are in at this time. We firmly believe that forest preserve management, planning, and operations have dramatically improved under the leadership of President Toni Preckwinkle, General Superintendent Arnold Randall, and his staff. The excellent relationship that Friends has with the FPCC is recognized and prized.

However, we must say in no uncertain terms that the proposed 35 percent (\$2.1 million) cut in ecological restoration funding and the lack of any increased funding for land acquisition are at odds with achieving the goals of the Next Century Conservation Plan (a 25-year plan for the preserves released in early 2014). It is very unfortunate other non-personnel cuts of 12 percent (\$1.2 million) have to be proposed for want of revenue sources as well.

It is painfully apparent that an increase in revenue for

The lack of long-term care that preceded this administration has led to this unfortunate situation.

the FPCC is essential to meeting the goals of the excellent NCCP. It is our belief that a property tax increase is the best way to solve the District's immediate financial challenges and ensure stability in the long term. We also are painfully aware that a property tax increase has not been approved for the preserves in decades and that there are no Commis-



Chris Weber

Centennial volunteers Joann Altenbach and Carolyn Smith spread wood reed seeds at Kickapoo Woods. This program, a partnership between four non-profits and the FPCC, aims to recruit volunteers to lead restoration work at sites in the Calumet Region and along the North Branch of the Chicago River.

sioners in favor of an increase currently.

We appreciate the alternative plan to seek a voter-approved referendum in the coming years and will actively work to pass a referendum to support an increase. When the time comes we will encourage Cook County residents to ask their Commissioners to support such an effort.

The lack of long-term care that preceded this administration has led to this unfortunate situation. It is also what led us, together with The Civic Federation, to call for a separately elected Board of Commissioners for the FPCC prior to the tenure of the current administration.

As the smallest item on the tax bill (the average Chicago home valued at \$200,000 pays about \$32 per year), the forest preserves deliver an excellent rate of return. Improved facilities, recreational opportunities, and healthier nature all make for a great investment in this unparalleled asset. The preserves are a tremendous part of what makes Cook County an excellent place to call home and makes it more attractive to businesses and other investors from outside the County. We must do what it takes to support this precious jewel and ensure it is here for future generations.

News from around the District

1 Dan Ryan Woods visitors center now open

Dan Ryan Woods Calumet Visitor's Center is now open in a renovated service building at 87th and Western on Chicago's southwest side. The center offers another place for visitors to get information and a permit, which were previously only available at the Forest Preserve District headquarters in River Forest or online.

2 Swimming pools privatized

The FPCC privatized operations of its three aquatic centers this year with the goal of making them more profitable and better managed. The winning bidder is also conducting marketing support and offering new programs.

3 More than 3 acres added to south preserves

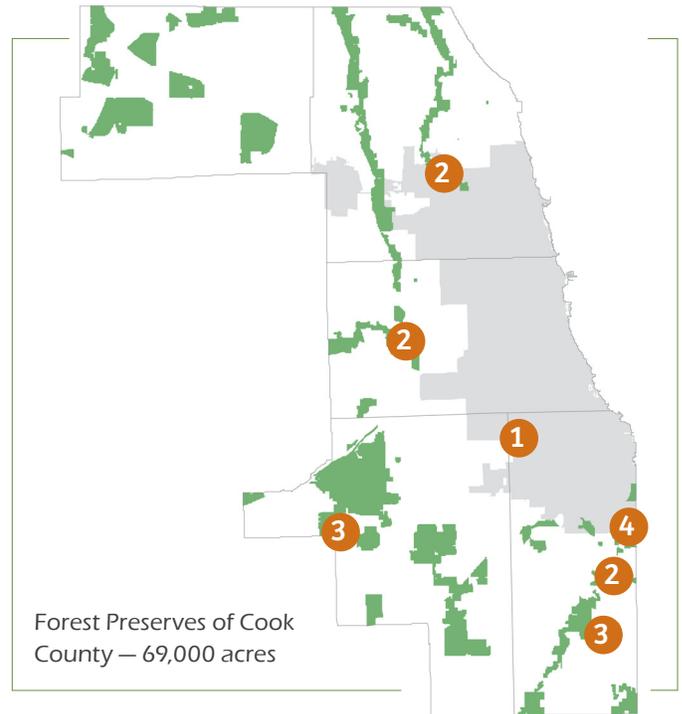
The District paid \$295,000 for a 1.6 acre inholding near Tampier Lake in the Palos Preserves, expanding the more than 14,000 acres of Palos/Sag Valley forest preserves. Another 1.7 acres were added near North Creek Meadow in the southeast for a cost of \$95,000.

4 Friends wins grant for Powderhorn Prairie

Friends and the FPCC will be conducting invasive tree removal at Powderhorn Prairie and Marsh Nature Preserve on the southeast side of Chicago. More than \$40,000 will be used to improve 5-acres of rare sand prairie and savanna communities at the site.

5 FPCC film receives EMMY award

The documentary "Chicago's True Nature: the Forest Preserves of Cook County" won an EMMY for best docu-



mentary in informational/instructional programming. The one-hour documentary, produced via a partnership between the FPCC and WYCC Public Television, focuses on the history, offerings, centennial milestone and rare nature of the largest and oldest forest preserve district.

6 District promoting outdoor recreation

In order to better promote the preserves, the FPCC is offering complimentary certificates to individuals and organizations for swimming, camping and climbing, picnics, naturalist walks, zip line tours, golf, and boating. In addition, the District is partnering with REI and L.L. Bean to offer environmental education and outdoor recreation for activities including hiking, biking, camping, archery, and snowshoeing.

Thank you Chuck - Friends Board Chair retires

After 8 years of service, the Friends community says thank you and goodbye to our Board Chair Chuck Kierscht who chose to retire in September. He will be missed.

Chuck's service is punctuated by generosity of time, talent, and treasure. He was always there to help solve any challenge with an even-keeled demeanor, wise council, and a strong knowledge of non-profit governance and operations.

Chuck and his wife, Marion, live in Hinsdale. After serving in the U.S. Navy, Chuck went on to a successful, 30-year career with Kemper Financial Services, where he served as chairman and CEO before retiring to practice law. Chuck has served many charitable organizations, including as chair of the Grant Park Orchestral Association, and for nearly three decades on the University of Iowa Foundation Board of Directors and the Iowa Law School Foundation Board.



Fun, frivolity, fundraising bring Friends together



Ann Tourhy

Swing for Sustainability was blessed with great weather and raised over \$10,000 to support our restoration and advocacy efforts.

Riding in the dark allowed at Busse Woods Night Ride

Being in the forest preserves at night is a big no no. But for the past two years in early September nearly 200 people have gathered in Busse Woods after dark.

In partnership with the Forest Preserves of Cook County and Friends of Cycling Elk Grove, the Busse Woods Night Ride is a new annual tradition that gives riders a rare opportunity to bike the preserves at night. The 8-mile ride reveals the beauty of Busse Woods, winding through woods and meadows and along the reservoir.

This year riders had more biking choices including a sunset ride and an extended ride that took them on a 16-mile trip. Tacos, beer, bonfires, s'mores, falcons and a live band met riders at the end of the course for more nighttime revelry while raising over \$6,000. Look for next year's ride to take place in late summer of 2017.

Friends of the Forest Preserves knows how to have fun and this year's events offered something for everyone. From golfing, bicycling, and free tours in the preserves, to partying in downtown Chicago, the Friends community came together throughout the year to celebrate and enjoy the preserves.

Swing for Sustainability kicks off event season

On a brilliantly sunny and seasonably warm day this past June, 55 golfers gathered at George W. Dunne National Golf Course in Oak Forest to play for a great cause. Now in its sixth year, Swing for Sustainability is an annual fundraiser that showcases a world class golf course. Players enjoyed 18 holes, drinks, dinner, and skill prizes, all while raising over \$10,000 for Friends. The 2017 outing will be on June 9.



Dave Simmons

Cyclists line up to begin the sunset ride at this year's Busse Woods Night Ride. Nearly 200 people gathered in the woods for this rare opportunity to ride after dark in the preserves.

Friends community gathers to honor founding members

Opting for fun over formality, the Crystal Leaf Awards Reception on November 16 treated guests to a night of energetic games and world class entertainment at Hilton Chicago. But the night wasn't just about frivolous fun. We gathered to honor two founding members of Friends Debra Shore, Metropolitan Water Reclamation Commissioner, and Stephen Packard, conservationist, as we raised close to \$14,000 for Friends difficult-to-fund advocacy work.

They spoke to the crowd about our roots as an organization of active volunteers and engaged citizens, and reminded us that volunteering and advocacy is where our strength still lies. With proposed budget cuts of 35 percent to restoration programs by the District, this was an important and hopeful message. Thank you to all our dedicated members and volunteers who continue to work hard to protect, restore and expand the forest preserves in Cook County.



Lynn Renee Photography

Friends founders Debra Shore (left) and Stephen Packard (second from right) share a laugh with Friends President Benjamin Cox (second from left) and Forest Preserve Commissioner Larry Suffredin after receiving the Crystal Leaf Awards at this year's reception on November 16.

Volunteers learn that transforming the pres

By *Lindsay Foreman*

As a child I always enjoyed being outside and I was raised to be resourceful and environmentally conscious. As an adult I have become even more aware of how my daily choices impact the environment.

With that in mind I strive to do what I can to take care of the Earth. So naturally this past April when my mother suggested that our family join the Friends of the Forest Preserves for a special guided hike on Earth Day weekend I thought that was a great idea. It was there that I first met Doug Chien, Friends' Advocates' Network Manager, and began to appreciate that the forest preserves in Cook County are a great treasure that need protection and preservation.

In addition to Doug I have met many other wonderful people who volunteer their time to remove invasive species as part of the Palos Restoration Project (a group of volunteers working across the 14,000 acres of Palos Preserves). They are warm, inviting, down-to-earth, and clearly very passionate about the work they are doing. After our Earth Day hike I immediately wanted to get involved and I have been joining them every available Saturday morning ever since.

Some of the activities I have been a part of include pulling garlic mustard and clipping different types of thistles and other invasive species that threaten the integrity of the native forest. I learn something new every day that I'm there including how to identify many types of plants and wildflowers.

Before volunteering with Friends, I never dared to "wander off the beaten path" and really go deep into the woods. Now I am experiencing Mother Nature and her wildlife in a much more intimate way. It is a most peaceful and beautiful way to spend a Saturday morning and the company is equally as lovely.

There are new people to meet every week and I look forward to seeing the familiar faces of those who are becom-



Lindsay Foreman

Eriko Kojima planted Trillium (a spring flower) at Blue Star Memorial Woods in Glenview last fall. Eriko has been a volunteer for one year and is on her way to becoming a site steward.

ing good friends. Of course, there is also the great sense of satisfaction knowing that the time and effort I am putting in is helping to improve the condition of the forest and its wildlife. I am happy to give back to this Earth that has always been giving so much to me.

I have been trying to spread the word to friends and family in my life so that more people become involved and I highly recommend it to anyone reading this. I look forward to more adventures with Friends and the Palos Restoration Project and hope to see some of you out there one day very soon!

Join a volunteer community today

Volunteers meet every weekend, and often times during the week, at preserves throughout Cook County. Many are long-standing volunteer groups, like the North Branch Restoration Project, Palos Restoration Project, and Calumet Stewardship Initiative. They all always need more help with spreading seeds, and cutting and burning brush.

To join a volunteer group in the Palos Preserves in the southwest part of the county, along the North Branch of the Chicago River, or in the Calumet preserves in the south, please visit fotfp.org/volunteer or contact Douglas Chien at (312) 356-9990 or douglas@fotfp.org.



Bob Schwamm

Preserves, transforms their lives

By Eriko Kojima

“Black cherry is an easy-to-learn tree ... the bark looks like burned potato chips,” said our tour leader, pointing to a dark trunk in Blue Star Memorial Woods.

My husband Nehru and I were taking it in, intrigued. A week before, the Village of Glenview e-newsletter had advertised a walk led by Josh Coles, Field Organizer for the Centennial Volunteers Project. That was a year ago, the end of June 2015. It changed our lives.

We had purposely bought a home near Harms Woods. We walked trails most mornings. “What is this purple flower?” we would wonder. “What are these speckled butterflies?”

Then Josh told us that volunteers can learn to care for these woods under the guidance of experienced stewards. Everyone is welcome to take part.

Yes, we were interested.

In July my 11-year-old daughter and I went to our first ecological restoration workday. Masumi stayed in the pavilion with the seed-processing team.

I learned about seeds and loaded seed heads into big brown grocery bags. It was a thrill to go off the trail into the beautiful vegetation – are we allowed to do that? Yes, it’s allowed. I gathered big heads of cow parsnip. The vegetation was almost as tall as me, and damp. My bags got wet, and the bottom fell out. I picked up the precious seed and put them in my other bag, which also looked ready to tear.

Then I looked up and I was alone. Dappled sun sparkled on the lush, diverse plants. But which way led back to the trail and the others? Suddenly, a deer bounced by, up close. I was startled. But after a short walk I saw the pavilion in the distance. I quickly joined the seed-processing group and did my best to look calm and self confident.



Josh Coles

Eriko Kojima planted Trillium (a spring flower) at Blue Star Memorial Woods in Glenview last fall. Eriko has been a volunteer for one year and is on her way to becoming a site steward.

Masumi had gloves on. With another volunteer she was massaging Dudley’s Rush through a screen, the seeds falling into a black tub.

Our family started to volunteer occasionally. Summer turned to autumn – I picked seed regularly with volunteers from the North Branch Restoration Project (a group that volunteers along the North Branch of the Chicago River). I gained skills. I started to lead seed collecting when regular leaders were not available. I took on special projects between workdays.

That winter I learned how European Buckthorn encroached into our woods and shaded out all of the other plants. Often in below-freezing weather, I joined the group that entered dense woods to cut and burn brush. I would stay late to clean up, watching bonfires burn down to embers. Experienced volunteers had said, “You will never be cold this winter,” and it was true.

A year after my first encounter at Blue Star Memorial Woods, I am seeing, for the first time, the blossoms of plants whose seed I picked last summer and fall.

Since May, I’ve been a “rookie” apprentice steward with the North Branch Restoration Project. Just a few weeks ago, the Forest Preserves of Cook County authorized me as stewardship workday leader. Almost every day, you can find me working on something important and fun. I am full of wonderment, that my life could be transformed like this in just one year. Can it happen to you?



Since becoming active with the North Branch Restoration Project through the Centennial Volunteers Program, Eriko Kojima (center) and her family have become part of the Friends community.

Lynn Renee Photography

Friends of the Forest Preserves 2015 Annual Report



A letter from Board Chair Chuck Kierscht and President Benjamin Cox – we apologize for the lateness of this report, but would still like to share our reflections on 2015.

The most under-reported story of 2015 for the Friends community was one of our biggest wins ever! After years of persistent advocacy, the Busse Woods dam was rebuilt to protect both the preserve and the local community.

Suffering regular and severe flooding events for years, Elk Grove Village approached the Forest Preserve District about making the dam in the reservoir larger to hold back more water. The danger was that this would have killed trees and animals in the preserve.

For years the FPCC just said no. The problem with that approach is that without a resolution, folks will just keep asking. We knew we had to find a better solution.

We brought together elected officials, advocates, students, and partner organizations to find a solution that worked – an adjustable dam that holds back water to protect the village, but doesn't flood the preserve.

That is what our community is all about – we're not just watchdogs barking at the door, we are friends to the Forest Preserve District that are will-

ing to provide tough advice, while also bringing resources to the table.

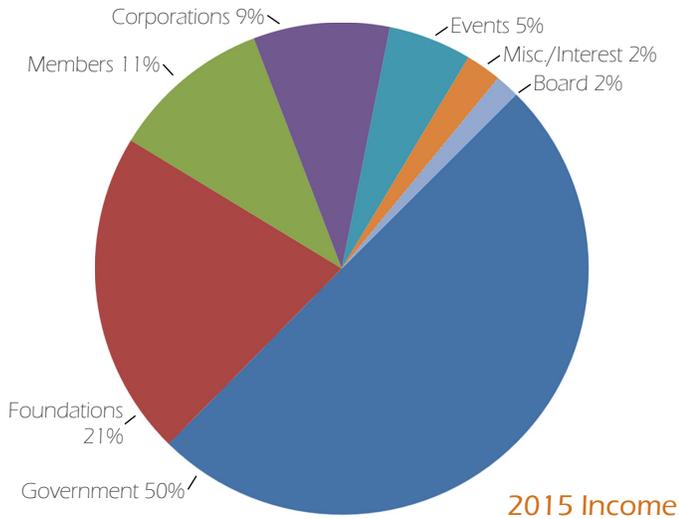
We've done the same with our Centennial Volunteers program, which contributed 21,282 hours from 6,898 youth and adults over 126 acres. Our community came together with Friends of the Chicago River, Audubon-Chicago Region, and the FPCC to work at preserves along the North Branch of the Chicago River and the Calumet Rivers to the south to help boost volunteering, find and coach leaders, and ultimately improve the preserves for the long term.

And we did it with our conservation corps programs with over 20,000 hours of service from more than 90 members. Two year-round adult crews, one in the Calumet and one that worked at sites throughout the preserves, removed brush, treated weeds, spread seeds, and participated in controlled burns. A third adult crew improved 6,152 feet of trail. And our summer program for high school students hosted another 72 members that contributed more than 12,000 hours of service.

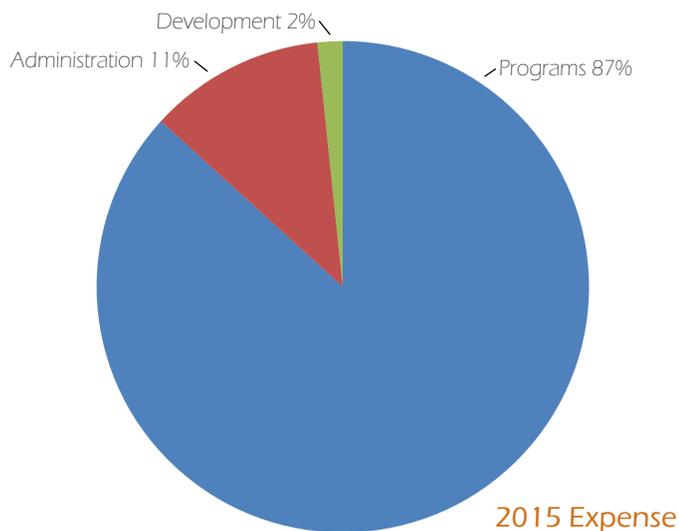
Our community is known for getting things done. You, and each and every one of us, is a vital part of making sure that our community continues to do just that.



Friends of the Forest Preserves 2015 Annual Report



2015 Income



2015 Expense

Income	2014	2015
Government	640,739	858,193
Foundations	182,843	367,260
Members	150,100	180,726
Corporations	22,570	153,643
Events	62,822	93,724
Misc./Interest	1,615	40,187
Board	45,715	27,187
Total	\$1,106,404	\$1,720,948

Expense	2014	2015
Programs	856,189	1,289,055
Administration	210,751	172,082
Development	11,437	24,588
Total	\$1,078,377	\$1,485,725

Assets	2014	2015
Net Assets at beginning year	305,666	333,693
Net Assets at end year	333,693	568,916
Change in Net Assets	\$28,027	\$235,223

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 Ed Woodbury, Vice President—President, McCaffery Interests, Inc.
 Matt Haas, Treasurer—Dir. of Business Operations, Pegasus Partners Ltd.
 Margaret Frisbie, Secretary—Exec. Dir., Friends of the Chicago River
 Barbara Birmingham—Co-Steward, Theodore Stone Forest Preserve
 Susan E. Brice—Environmental Attorney and Partner, Bryan Cave LLP.
 Walter Burlack—Dir. of Partnerships, Renewable Manufacturing Gateway
 José Colón—Senior Associate, Jameson Real Estate
 Dr. Charles Dillon—Asst. Professor of Medicine, Northwestern U.,
 Attending Physician, Northwestern Memorial Hospital
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 Douglas Chien—Advocates' Network Manager
 Josh Coles—Centennial Volunteers Field Organizer
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 Ilana Federman—Outreach Manager
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Become a Best Friend

Join our Monthly Giving Program today!

Help our community by Becoming a Best Friend as a member of our monthly giving program and support our work to improve the preserves all year round.

The forest preserves are there for you in every season and now you can be there for them by making automatic monthly gifts, offering year-round support.

Your contribution will:

- ♦ employ Conservation Corps crew members
- ♦ offer summer jobs to high school students
- ♦ provide free tours and recreational outings
- ♦ advocate for the preserves by giving a voice to the plants and animals who need our help!

It's easy to get started, set up your monthly giving at www.fotfp.org or contact Ilana at (312) 356-9990 or ilana@fotfp.org. *Become a Best Friend today!*

