

Teaching Children

- Hundreds of students from a number of different grades and area schools have visited us at the McDonald Farm. The farm provides a wide variety of outdoor experiences, ranging from outdoor play areas, to wetland and prairie restoration areas, to renewable energy installations, to the farm and gardens.



- We are now able to partner with the Naperville Park District at their new Knoch Knolls Nature Center, a LEED-certified facility literally across the road from the McDonald Farm. In addition to a formal play area, the Nature Center provides interactive and informational exhibits relating to water, especially the adjacent DuPage River.

- We were pleased for a new opportunity to run our Mighty Acorns® program weekly at the Boys & Girls Club in Elgin from September through May. Most of the programs were held

at the Boys & Girls Club headquarters, but once per month we ran extended programs for the kids on school days off at the Hawthorne Hill Nature Center. Funding for the Boys & Girls Club program has remained elusive, however, and we will not be able to sustain our partnership with them.

- As part of our Mighty Acorns® work with the Hawthorne Hill facility, we mentored their staff so that they can lead the Mighty Acorns® program with Elgin's Hillcrest School next year. The City of Elgin, which supports the Mighty Acorns® program at Hillcrest School, is interested in increasing the number of classes next year.

Broadening Our Circles

- Our annual Earth Day Benefit Dinner, held on April 23 at Bobak's Signature Events in Woodridge, achieved record attendance when more than 550 guests joined us to celebrate our successes. The event has grown in popularity each year, and it provides significant financial support for our operating expenses. The event raised \$150,000 in support of The Conservation Foundation's programs and operations.
- We held our first ever Strengthening Our Foundation annual fundraising luncheon at Cantigny Park in Wheaton. The event raised more than \$250,000 in commitments to support the work of The Conservation Foundation.
- The Conservation Foundation planted a Pollinator Garden at Naperville's City Hall. We are encouraging residents to start planting native plants to attract butterflies and bees to help increase their dwindling populations.

We save land.

We save rivers.



2014-15 Progress Report

(July 2014 – June 2015)

Preserving Land

- **Welcome Fox River Bluffs!** This new forest preserve in Kendall County is strategically located along the Fox River between Silver Springs State Park and Hoover Forest Preserve near Yorkville and contains bluff land, ravines and high-quality woods. It took a team effort to preserve this property: Inland Real Estate Development Corporation, The Conservation Foundation, Foundation members Steve and Kathryn Graves, and the Kendall County Forest Preserve District all came together to make it happen.



- In August 2014, we hosted more than 500 volunteers from the Fairmount Santrol Company for a restoration workday at our Dayton Bluffs Preserve in Ottawa. Volunteers used loppers and chainsaws to remove invasive brush from 13 acres of woodlands in a matter of hours. Volunteers also built picnic tables and a storage shed to house tools and supplies for future workdays. In the first year of ownership, we have cleared 40 acres of woodland, planted 70 acres of prairie, and had more than 2,200 hours of volunteer help at Dayton Bluffs.

- Conservation easements are voluntary agreements that landowners make to permanently restrict the type and amount of development that can occur on their property. This year, we helped two local property owners **permanently** protect their land.

One property is the latest conservation easement in a large-lot, wooded neighborhood in Winfield. Four other residents in the area have also put conservation easements in place there to help protect the DuPage River and the West DuPage Woods Forest Preserve.



We have also helped preserve a 37-acre property adjacent to the Sycamore city limits and along the South Branch of the Kishwaukee River. The landowner put the easement in place before donating the land to DeKalb County Forest Preserve District who will restore it and open it to the public as a new forest preserve.

Protecting Rivers

- More than 500 volunteers removed 6.5 tons of trash from 96 miles of rivers and streams at the annual DuPage River Sweep on May 16th.
- At our membership luncheon in March the Village of Carol Stream received the “Low Salt Community Award” for incorporating new techniques and practices into their snow removal processes. These changes meant a decrease of in salt usage of 30%-50%. The Village Board was also recognized for their support of these changes.
- Last fall, the DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup (DRSCW) and the Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition (LDRWC) hosted several workshops to promote best management practices for salt storage and handling to help reduce the amount of harmful chloride that finds its way into our rivers and streams. 350 operators, contractors, decision makers, facility managers, sponsors and vendors participated in chloride reduction workshops in DuPage and Will counties. Both the DRSCW and LDRWC are staffed by The Conservation Foundation.
- In July, DRSCW came to an historic agreement with state and federal Environmental Protection Agency staff on area National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit. The agreement will allow local resources to fund a plan specifically designed to improve aquatic biodiversity in area streams rather than a one-size-fits-all policy being implemented elsewhere in the state.

Educating Communities

- Conservation in Our Community, a pilot program aiming to get more local involvement in conservation in five communities in DuPage County, debuted in 2015. The 2015 pilot communities are Naperville, Elmhurst, Carol Stream, Downers Grove and Warrenville. The program is being funded in part by a grant from DuPage Foundation.



Promoting Stewardship

- Several properties were awarded certification through our Conservation@Work program, including four Wheaton Park District sites, Farm Friends NFP in Big Rock, Carol Stream Recreational Center, Hawthorne Hills Nature Center in Elgin, Possibility Place Nursery in Monee and Summer Lakes Park in Warrenville. We also partnered with the Ronald McDonald House in Winfield to plant a butterfly garden at their new facility near Central DuPage Hospital.
- This year saw the launch of “The Conservation Foundation’s Pollinator Meadow Mix”, a pollinator-friendly and cost-saving alternative to high-maintenance turf grass. Sites planted with this mix will look beautiful and provide functional benefits such as rainwater infiltration and erosion control.
- Our staff presented twice at the Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) annual conference in January. The Conservation Foundation’s Pollinator Meadow Mix product was featured in both presentations.
- The Conservation@Home program was franchised twice in the past year. Franchise agreements were made to have the program available in McHenry County (through The Land Conservancy of McHenry County) and also in Midland, Michigan (through The Little Forks Conservancy). Midland is in the Flint area of Michigan.



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