

A photograph of a dirt path winding through a dense forest of tall, green trees. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating dappled light on the path. The path is covered with some fallen leaves and small plants.

Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

2022 Year in Review



Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

Board of Commissioners



Daniel Hebreard
President
Woodridge

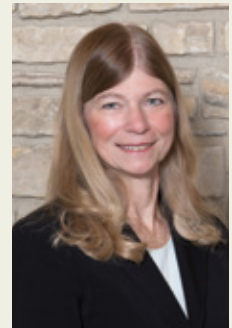
The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County is governed by a seven-member board of commissioners, one commissioner elected from each of the six voting districts and a president elected by the county at large. Normally, commission meetings are at 8 a.m. on the first and third Tuesdays of the month; planning sessions, 8 a.m. on the second and fourth Tuesdays. At both, the board hears public comments and staff reports, discusses business, and votes on agenda items. Links to agendas, minutes, live streams of ongoing meetings, and recordings of previous meetings are at dupageforest.org under “About Us” and “Our Board.”



Marsha Murphy
District 1
Bloomington



Tina Tyson-Dunne
District 2
Lombard



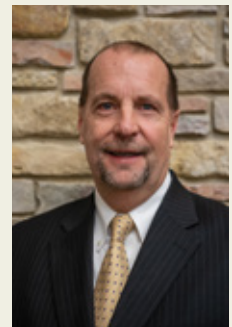
Linda Painter
District 3
Hinsdale



Jeff Gahr
District 4
Wheaton



Barbara O'Meara
District 5
Naperville



Al Murphy
District 6
West Chicago

From the President

I am proud to present the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County's *2022 Year in Review*. As you read this report, you will see many of the wonderful projects and programs we provide to our residents. With 60 forest preserves and 26,000 acres of open space, it would be impossible to include everything that was accomplished in 2022, but I hope you find the highlights of the year to be inspiring and educational.

The year was busy with many capital projects under construction along with the restoration of natural areas in many of our preserves. Every neck of the woods throughout DuPage County had something to be excited about. From our new parking lot at Waterfall Glen and exterior renovations at Mayslake Hall to the start of construction at Willowbrook Wildlife Center and restoration work at Herrick Lake, the Forest Preserve District has been hard at work. We undertook master planning efforts for three of our most popular preserves, Blackwell, Greene Valley, and Waterfall Glen; completed our Recreational Accessibility Plan; and initiated our green energy study.

Back in 2019, the Forest Preserve District approved a master plan that identified 32 certified projects and 15 initiatives that would be the focus of the next five to seven years. Even with the effects of the pandemic, we have completed more than 50% of the plan and were able to do so without raising property taxes.

In addition to our master plan accomplishments, the majority of our resources go toward providing safe, clean, and inviting places for you and your family to enjoy. Whether you visit one of our educational centers, golf at one of our three preserve courses, bike or walk our 166 miles of trails, or participate in one of our many programs offered throughout the year, we want everyone to feel welcomed in the forest preserves.

I hope you enjoy reading our *2022 Year in Review*. Please visit our website at dupageforest.org to find out more!



Daniel Hebreard
President, Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

Our Mission

To acquire and hold lands for the purpose of preserving the flora, fauna, and scenic beauty for the education, pleasure, and recreation of DuPage County citizens

Where to Visit Us

Headquarters

3S580 Naperville Road
Wheaton • 630-933-7200
TTY 800-526-0857
forest@dupageforest.org

Education Centers

Danada Equestrian Center
3S507 Naperville Road
Wheaton • 630-668-6012

Fullersburg Woods Nature
Education Center
3609 Spring Road
Oak Brook • 630-850-8110

Graue Mill and Museum
3800 York Road
Oak Brook • 630-850-8112

Kline Creek Farm
1N600 County Farm Road
West Chicago • 630-876-5900

Mayslake Peabody Estate
1717 W. 31st St.
Oak Brook • 630-206-9566

St. James Farm
2S541 Winfield Road
Warrenville • 630-580-7025

Willowbrook Wildlife Center
525 S. Park Blvd.
Glen Ellyn • 630-942-6200

Golf Courses

The Preserve at Oak Meadows
900 N. Wood Dale Road
Addison • 630-595-0071

Maple Meadows Golf Course
272 S. Addison Road
Wood Dale • 630-616-8424

Green Meadows Golf Course
18W201 W. 63rd St.
Westmont • 630-810-5330

Partner Sites

Bartlett Nature Center
Bartlett • 847-608-3120

Danada House
Wheaton • 630-668-5392

Fischer Farm
Bensenville • 630-766-7015

Lyman Woods Nature Center
Downers Grove • 630-963-9388

Online

dupageforest.org
@dupageforest



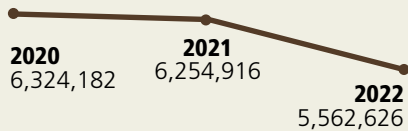
The preserves inspire me, bring me joy, and calm my busy mind. I always see something new when I stop, listen, and just watch.

— Nancy Allured

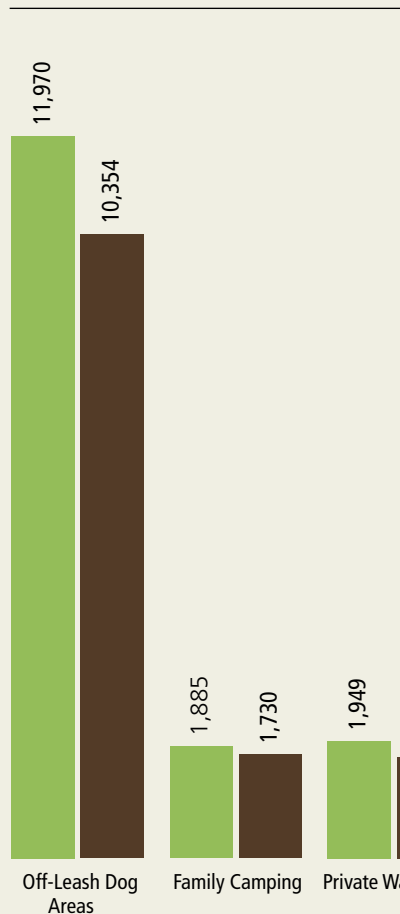
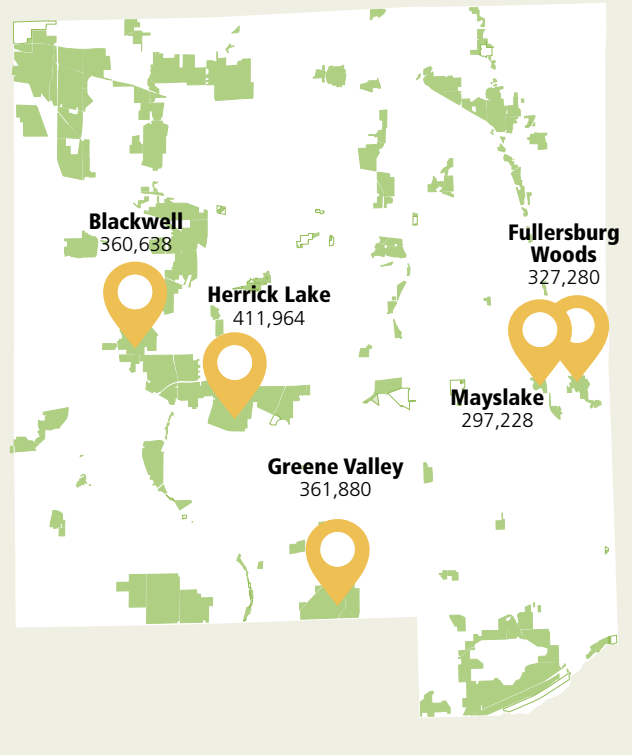
By the Numbers

Although overall visitation dropped slightly from 2021, compared to prepandemic numbers, attendance remained strong. More than 5.5 million people visited DuPage forest preserves in 2022, and the top five most-attended preserves accounted for over 1.7 million of those visits. Across the agency, though, numbers tell the story of how DuPage forest preserves remained popular throughout the year.

Overall Visitation



Top 5 Most Visited Forest Preserves



Annual Permit Sales



7,406
Boat Rentals



2,355
Snow Tube Rentals



144
Snowshoe Rentals



35
Have It at Herrick
Events



763
@ Summer Camps



200
@ Adaptive Recreation
Adventure Day



113
@ Archery Open
House



123
@ Just for Kids
Fishing Derby



259
@ Hard Water Classic

FORE!

The Preserve at Oak Meadows
Maple Meadows Green Meadows

96,000
Rounds

\$3.8 Million
Greens Fee Sales

\$6.4 Million
Total Revenue



Native Plant Sale

1,682

Shoppers

11,982

Plants Sold

\$96,482

Net Sales



Fall Tree and Shrub Sale

160

Online Orders

468

Plants Sold

\$14,100

Net Sales



Trees, Streams, and Roads

5,000

Native Trees and Shrubs Maintained at
the Nursery for Future Planting

Over **1,000**
Trees and Shrubs Planted

Over **2,300**
Trees Pruned

350
Acres Mowed

19.1
Miles of Trails Resurfaced

950,000
Square Feet Sealcoated



These preserves
really are a
place where
no matter what
kind of day I'm
having I can come
and instantly feel better.
They help put everything in perspective.
— Bryon Pulliam

1.7 Million

Page Views



66.6%

Mobile



33.4%

Desktop or Tablet



87,025

Facebook Followers



320,000

TikTok Followers



9,098

Instagram Followers



5,407

Twitter Followers



34,200

Views on YouTube



Over 100 Million

Video Views Across All Platforms
(with **13.6 million** alone for a
Kline Creek Farm video on 1890s
ice cream)



34,108 E-News Subscribers



390 Online Chats



55 News Releases

Forest Preserve Safety

Keeping up with its safety initiative, the Law Enforcement department installed automatic license plate reader cameras in parking lots at Blackwell's main entrance, the Greene Valley off-leash dog area, the Mayslake off-leash dog area, and The Preserve at Oak Meadows. Since the cameras were activated, there has been a significant decrease in burglaries at those sites. The cameras not only act as deterrents but also allow officers to track down suspects after a crime has occurred. The Forest Preserve District plans on installing additional cameras in 2023.

In 2022 Law Enforcement also acquired its second drone, a purchase made possible with the help of the Friends of the Forest Preserve District. The device has a camera with thermal and zoom capabilities, dual batteries, which allow for longer flight time, and a larger frame, which makes the drone more stable in bad weather.

The department has seven federally licensed drone pilots, who logged 32 hours of flight time during the year from trainings and search-and-rescue operations to mapping cannabis grow sites. Officers also assisted the Metropolitan Emergency Response and Investigations Team, a countywide task force.



DuPage forest preserves inspire me because the wide pathways and narrow trails allow me to become immersed in nature. I feel a connection to the planet that I really don't get any other way.

— Fred Faller



277/10

Full-Time/Part-Time Employees



168

Seasonal Employees



2,486

Job Applications



820

Regular Volunteers



3,522

Event Group Volunteers



5,071

Law Enforcement Calls

50% – 100%

Decrease in Break-Ins at Sites With New License Plate Cameras

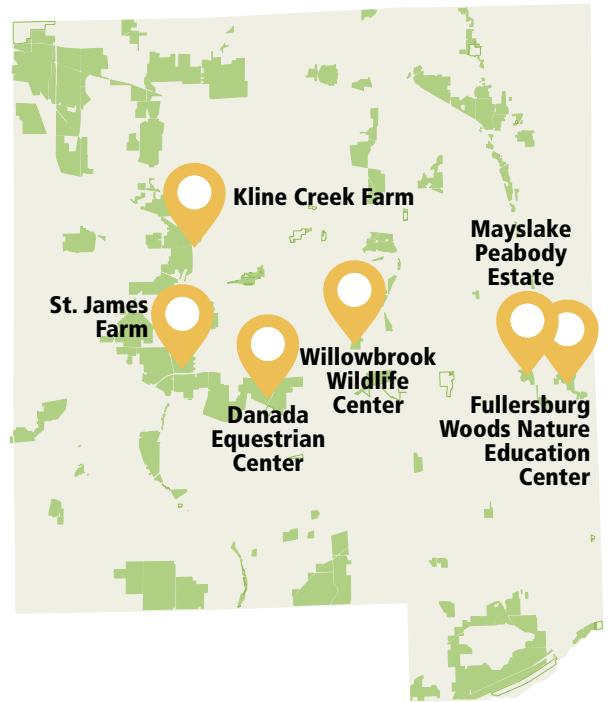
Special Destinations

The Forest Preserve District's six education centers offer special destinations where visitors can experience the county's natural and cultural history. In 2022, two of the centers marked major milestones.

In July, Forest Preserve District commissioners, staff, and guests celebrated the start of a yearlong exterior restoration project at historic Mayslake Hall. The \$6.4 million certified master plan project will repair structural deficiencies and other problems with the roof, masonry, wood, stucco, windows, doors and foundation. It will also improve drainage and accessibility. The 100-year-old mansion, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, will remain closed until the project is completed in summer 2023. The surrounding forest preserve and off-leash dog area remain open.



I love all the forest preserves. They give me such joy and make me feel more relaxed. I will keep on exploring because there are always new beautiful things and places to discover.
— Lazaro Lara



The Forest Preserve District also held a ceremonial groundbreaking in August to celebrate an ambitious \$30 million master plan project for Willowbrook Wildlife Center that will transform the center and make it the Forest Preserve District's first net-zero-designed building, which means the energy produced from renewable resources such as solar panels and geothermal heating and cooling will exceed the energy consumed by the building.

The project includes a 27,000-square-foot wildlife rehabilitation clinic and visitor center that will allow visitors to view animals through one-way windows and video monitors as they are examined, treated, in surgery, fed, and rehabilitated. The project also includes new animal rehabilitation areas, an outdoor classroom, an interpretive trail with wildlife observation areas, and outdoor activity spaces that demonstrate how to attract and live in harmony with native wildlife.

The new clinic and visitor center is expected to open in mid-2024, and the entire project is expected to be done by 2025. Wildlife rehabilitation will continue uninterrupted throughout the project.

WILLOWBROOK WILDLIFE CENTER STATS

10,468

Animals Admitted

132

Most Animals Admitted in One Day

72.9%

Release Rate
After 24 Hours

13,901

Phone Calls

90

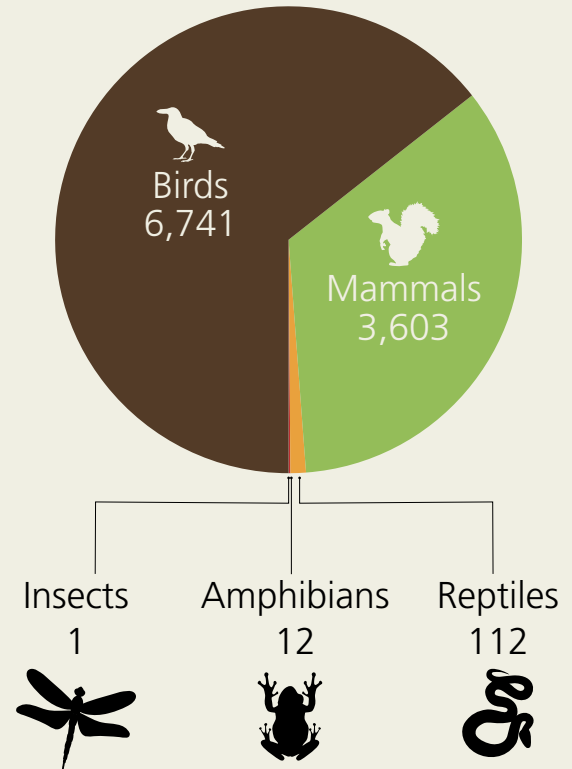
Most Calls in One Day

Top Five Most Admitted Animals

1. Eastern Cottontail
2. American Robin
3. Eastern Gray Squirrel
4. Virginia Opossum
5. Mallard



Admissions by Species Group





Danada Equestrian Center

- 176,844 visitors to the equestrian center grounds
- First two-day Fall Festival with over 11,000 in attendance
- Seven “Horsin’ Around Days” April through October
- Return to full schedule of signature programs — lessons, wagon rides, summer camps
- Increased onsite hay program with custom baling, which included providing hay for Kline Creek Farm

Fullersburg Woods Nature Education Center

- 18,358 visitor center attendees
- Expanded hours
- Converted former office building into a rental space for meetings for businesses and other groups
- Launched Find It At Fullersburg program to provide a meeting opportunity for Scout and community groups that includes a guided program

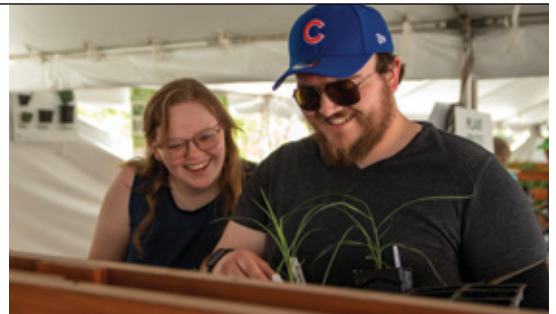


Kline Creek Farm

- 38,122 visitors
- 7,830 farmhouse tour attendees
- New hands-on harvest program where visitors helped dig potatoes — some to take home — and the farm donated half to local food pantries

Mayslake Peabody Estate

- Hosted 2022 Native Plant Sale
- Started major restoration of the exterior of Mayslake Hall, resulting in its temporary closure
- During construction, supported other departments and planned updated programming for the reopening in 2023



St. James Farm

- 163,924 visitors to the forest preserve grounds
- Hosted the fall native tree and shrub sale, A Night for Nature, and the volunteer appreciation picnic
- Indoor riding arena used by 309 equestrians
- Hosted 115 special events, including weddings, cross-country meets, and picnics
- Hosted two new equestrian clinics and the Equine Trail Sports competition

Master Plan Projects

In 2019 the Forest Preserve District's board of commissioners approved an agencywide master plan, which includes certified projects and initiatives. In 2022 the Forest Preserve District kicked off work on many of these endeavors.

Hidden Lake Bridges

The Forest Preserve District removed two bridges with structural deficiencies on popular trails at Hidden Lake. It replaced one over Round Meadow Lake with a 50-foot-long by 14-foot-wide prefabricated truss bridge. At the second location over the East Branch DuPage River, it removed the 1870s 50-foot-long by 11-foot-wide cast- and wrought-iron bowstring pony truss bridge and sent it off-site for refurbishment. The historic bridge will be reinstalled in 2023.

Mayslake Peabody Estate

Work began on the 100-year-old Mayslake Hall to improve the roof, wood and stucco facade, brick and limestone masonry, foundation, drainage, and accessibility. The \$6.4 million project is funded by a recent bond issuance as well as a \$750,000 grant from the Public Museum Capital Grants Program, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Illinois State Museum. The Forest Preserve District closed the hall for renovations but expects to reopen the building in summer 2023.

Willowbrook Wildlife Center

Crews started preparations for the construction of a new 27,000-square-foot wildlife rehabilitation clinic and visitor center and outdoor resident and rehabilitation enclosures. The new visitor center and clinic, which will open in 2024, is the Forest Preserve District's first net-zero-designed building, which means the energy produced from renewable resources exceeds the energy consumed by the building. Plans also include interactive educational exhibits on the wildlife rehabilitation process, an outdoor classroom, an interpretive trail with wildlife observation areas, and outdoor activity spaces that demonstrate how to attract and live in harmony with native wildlife.

Blackwell, Greene Valley, and Waterfall Glen

The 2019 master plan calls for updating site-specific master plans for each forest preserve, and efforts have started on three of the most visited: Blackwell, Greene Valley, and Waterfall Glen. The updated master plans will provide a roadmap for the preserves' future development with suggested timeframes for projects to determine future capital budgeting and operational impacts.

Clean Energy, Resiliency, and Sustainability Plan

The Forest Preserve District is taking a comprehensive look at opportunities related to energy, environmental resilience, and operational sustainability. Consultants are currently analyzing the agency's energy consumption patterns and waste streams and calculating the ecosystem services provided by the District's land holdings. The goal is to identify opportunities for increasing energy efficiencies and the use of solar and other renewable or sustainable energy sources and reducing the agency's carbon footprint.

Maple Meadows Golf Preserve

A new master plan for Maple Meadows Golf Preserve is underway. Once completed, the plan will serve as an important tool to guide the course's development in the future.



DuPage forest preserves give us a place to relax, to renew, and to recharge.
— Brian and Joyce Ostberg

Waterfall Glen Parking Lot

To accommodate the popularity of Waterfall Glen's Rocky Glen area and to improve visitor safety, the Forest Preserve District constructed a 180-car parking lot near the intersection of Bluff Road and Cass Avenue in the southeast part of the preserve. The project removed a smaller lot, rerouted the regional trail, and created a picnic area.

Blackwell Solar Project

After the successful installation of solar panels at the golf cart building at The Preserve at Oak Meadows, the Forest Preserve District set its sights on its next solar endeavor. After much research, it chose its fleet management building at Blackwell. Comprised of 532 490-watt panels and two 100-kW inverters, the array is estimated to produce up to 324,000-kWH annually. The facility currently uses about 290,000-kWH annually, which will put estimated energy production up to 110% of existing facility demand. The array is installed and will be ready to go online following final commissioning with ComEd in 2023.

Recreational Accessibility Plan

The Forest Preserve District identified the need to create a plan to further meet its commitment to accessibility and to serving an audience of DuPage County residents with physical or developmental disabilities. Through internal and external benchmarking, stakeholder input, and peer-agency audits, a work group identified four goals designed to improve access to recreational and program opportunities for all visitors. Information about the audience, development process, and goals with associated objectives and tasks is detailed in the resulting 2022 Recreational Accessibility Plan, which will take approximately five years to fully implement. The implementation group will identify checkpoints to share the plan's progress with stakeholders and to seek feedback from user groups.

Natural Areas Restoration Projects

Oak Ecosystem Restorations

The Forest Preserve District started work on four woodland restoration projects, all containing Class IV habitats, the highest-quality areas in the preserves. These five-year projects focused on oak-ecosystem improvements will remove invasive woody plants, thin overabundant woody native plants, herbicide invasive woody and herbaceous plants, augment native species, and provide follow-up management. Post management includes planting native trees and shrubs grown by District staff in the native plant nursery, where species are propagated from nuts and fruits collected in DuPage.

Egermann Woods

The grove is a 77-acre Class IV mesic woodland with portions of wet-mesic woodland, wet-mesic upland forest, and vernal ponds. It contains 297 native plant species, including six of special concern.

Hickory Grove

The savanna is a 31-acre Class IV mesic woodland with portions of immature upland forest, shrub meadow, tall-grass meadow, and stream communities. It contains 243 native plant species, including three of special concern.

Fischer Woods

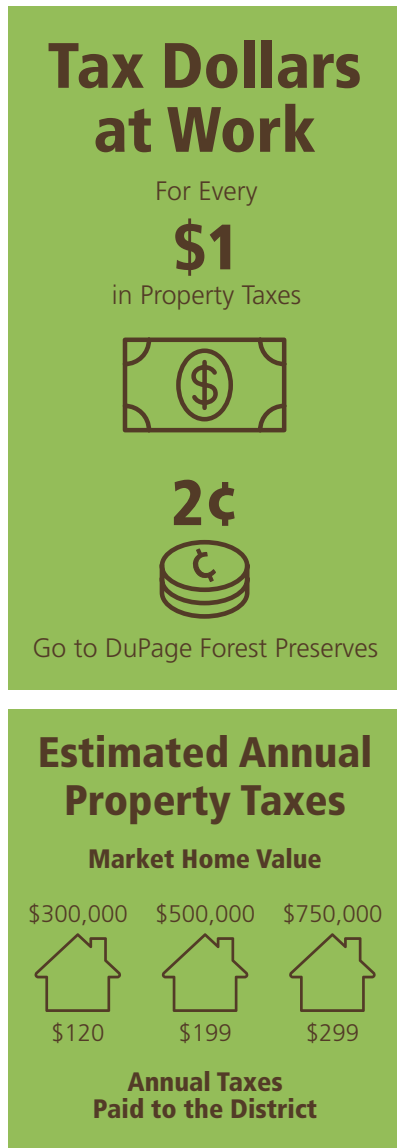
Dunklee's Grove is a 75-acre Class IV wet-mesic upland forest with portions of wet-mesic savanna, immature upland forest, diverse marsh, vernal pond, and stream communities. It contains 340 native plant species, including one state-endangered, one state-threatened, and 18 of special concern.

Herrick Lake

This 600-acre project site is the Forest Preserve District's largest intact block of natural areas and is dominated by Class IV, III, and II ecosystems with a number of communities, such as mesic woodland, shrub meadow, marsh, immature upland forest, tall-grass meadow, and re-created prairie.

West Chicago Prairie

In addition to wetlands and upland oak savannas, this 350-acre preserve is home to one of the most biologically diverse sites in northeastern Illinois: the 126-acre Truitt-Hoff Nature Preserve, one of eight state-designated nature preserves in DuPage. West Chicago Prairie contains 619 native plant species, including three state-endangered and one state-threatened. Of its 254 native wildlife species, 13 are state-endangered, and two are state-threatened. The approved master plan will use funding to continue much-needed conservation maintenance, such as removing invasive species, conducting prescription burns, and removing brush in the prairie areas.



The Forest Preserve District follows sound management principles in its commitment to the planning and use of financial resources. It maintains a AAA rating from Standard and Poor's based on strong financial operations, fiscally responsible reserves, and disciplined budgeting practices. This superior credit rating has enabled the District to attain successful bond sales over the agency's history.

The Forest Preserve District represents approximately 2% of DuPage County residents' property tax bills. Schools levy 30 to 40 times more in property taxes than the District, and municipalities have other revenue streams such as sales, income, video gaming, and cannabis taxes.

Forest Preserve District revenues are funded in three major sources: property taxes (68.4%), grants and other revenue (13.4%), permits and fees for service (10.2%), and interest earnings (8.0%). The District uses debt service issuance, or bonds, to strategically layer in funding for capital improvements, infrastructure, land acquisition, and capital expenditures.

In February of 2022 the Forest Preserve District issued bonds to fund a new Willowbrook Wildlife Center, renovations at Mayslake Hall, and the construction of a new parking lot at Waterfall Glen. Funding will also be used to pursue the acquisition of additional open spaces. In August of 2022 the board of commissioners refunded an outstanding bond issue to lower its debt service payments in the future.

For 2022, operating expenditures are estimated to come in 12.5% under budget, or just under \$15.5 million. Golf operations are estimated to come in \$1.11 million under budget excluding transfers and depreciation.

Capital expenditures across the Forest Preserve District are projected to come in at \$32.27 million under budget, or about 67%. The shortage is primarily due to supply chain difficulties and delayed projects due to inflation costs. Forest Preserve District staff actively manage capital projects to ensure an efficient and cost-effective execution of each project and asset purchase.

Awards

The Preserve at Oak Meadows

Golf Inc. Magazine awarded the clubhouse at The Preserve at Oak Meadows its 2022 Clubhouse of the Year Award Honorable Mention. The Preserve was one of only four facilities recognized in the international competition. According to the magazine, “Diverse audiences, from daily golfers to family gatherings and community events, can be accommodated, and the conservation agency can reach new audiences by connecting people to nature and golf by hosting nature-based and golf-based programs.”

Financial Achievement

The Government Finance Officers Association awarded the Forest Preserve District its Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting in 2022, the



Fullersburg Woods holds a special place in my heart as it provides the things I look for in nature:

water, a variety of animals, native plants, particularly trees, and a variation in elevation on unpaved trails.

— Nicola Germann

34th year the District has received this distinction. The program encourages agencies and professionals to prepare comprehensive annual financial reports that evidence the spirit of transparency and full disclosure. Participation in and recognition by the association’s award program exemplify the Forest Preserve District’s commitment to sound financial practices and stewardship for the residents of DuPage County.

Hometown Governor’s Award

A Forest Preserve District volunteer pop-up program received a Governor’s Hometown Award Honorable Mention for environmental stewardship, which gives formal recognition to those who contributed to projects that improved their communities’ quality of life. The program hosted 115 volunteer events in various DuPage forest preserves throughout 2021 and provided socially distanced outdoor opportunities for people to connect with nature and each other during the pandemic. It attracted more than 1,000 volunteers, who provided 2,169 total service hours, saving DuPage taxpayers \$67,173.

Green Fleet

The Forest Preserve District’s fleet was ranked fourth out of the top 50 leading fleets in the nation by *Government Fleet* magazine.

Fleets are judged on showing leadership with staff, customers, and the community; staying efficient and competitive; overcoming challenges; and having a vision and direction for the operation. Ford sponsored the award, which is co-produced with the American Public Works Association.

The Forest Preserve District also ranked No. 34 in the 100 Best Fleets in the Americas Award by the NAFA Fleet Management Association, the world’s largest membership association for fleet professionals.

The Forest Preserve District’s fleet is distinct in its variety of vehicles and focus on alternative fuels. Currently, 95% of the fleet of more than 170 vehicles is powered by alternative fuels — liquefied petroleum gas, compressed natural gas, ethanol, biodiesel, hybrid electric, and electric — and the District is committed to achieving a full alternative-fuel fleet as soon as possible.

Grants and Partnerships

Willowbrook Wildlife Center Master Plan Phase II Improvements

U.S. Representative Sean Casten announced a \$2 million award in federal funding to construct and increase energy efficiency at the new 27,000-square-foot net-zero-designed wildlife rehabilitation clinic and visitor center. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources awarded a \$400,000 Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development grant for outdoor recreational improvements.

Mayslake Hall Exterior Revitalization Project

The Public Museum Capital Grants Program, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and the Illinois State Museum awarded a \$750,000 capital grant to help repair structural deficiencies and improve drainage and accessibility.

Pratt's Wayne Woods Forest Preserve

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources awarded a \$200,000 Recreational Trails Program grant.

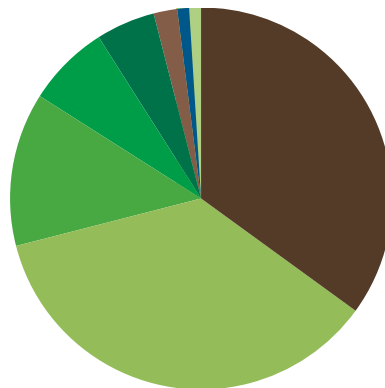
Rare Species Management

A \$100,000 cooperative agreement between the Forest Preserve District and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will support the preservation of rare plant species.

Donations

The Friends of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County 501(c)(3) helps the community support the Forest Preserve District's mission. Over 1,000 donors contributed. The Friends provided \$282,887 to the Forest Preserve District for restoration of habitat, preservation of native plants and animals, and environmental sustainability in DuPage forest preserves.

Friends Support in 2022



- Green Energy Projects — 36%
- Wildlife Care — 35%
- Natural Areas Restoration — 13%
- Education — 7%
- Greatest Needs — 5%
- Blanding's Turtle Recovery — 2%
- Mayslake Peabody Estate Master Plan Project — 1%
- Recreation/Preserve Improvements — 1%

Special Events

Events included the Native Plant Presale and A Night for Nature (both ticketed events) and special engagement opportunities for members of the Ambassador Circle and Community Partners donor recognition programs.



**Forest Preserve District
of DuPage County**

To learn more about the Friends, visit dupageforest.org/friends, and follow @dupageforestfriends on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Contact Partnership & Philanthropy at 630-871-6400 or fundraising@dupageforest.org.



**Forest Preserve District
of DuPage County**

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Wheaton, IL 60189

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