

Millennium Reserve: Calumet Core

A public, private, and community initiative led by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Submitted by Sharon Rolek, Conservation Liaison-Calumet Region (excerpted from material by Ania Ruszaj, Coastal Management Program, IDNR) Other information taken from the Illinois.gov/millenniumreserve website

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Coastal Management Program (CMP), in collaboration with Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC), is soliciting event ideas for Urban Biodiversity Week that will be hosted in Millennium Reserve from May 13-19, 2013. The date was chosen to coincide with the National Urban Biodiversity Week, a seven-city collaboration to bring urban dwellers into contact with local flora and fauna. Urban Biodiversity Week will be focused on environmental and cultural events in and around Calumet waterways, natural areas, and neighborhoods. The Week will showcase partner events in the Millennium Reserve: Calumet Core area and will encourage local residents and visitors to participate in outdoor activities in the Calumet region.

The week will include a series of events that celebrate urban biodiversity and conservation activities. On Friday, May 17, the dedication of IDNR's William Powers Visitor Center is tentatively planned. On Saturday, May 18, planned activities include biking, nature walks, fishing, and canoeing.

The Millennium Reserve Initiative (MR) is part of President Obama's *America's Great Outdoors Initiative* to reconnect Americans, especially children, to America's rich outdoor treasures; build upon public, private and tribal priorities for conservation in recreation lands, and use science-based management practices to restore and protect our lands and waters for future generations.

The MR will initially focus on transforming the Calumet Region of Chicago into a one-of-kind public destination with over 15,000 acres of open space. On March 1, Governor Quinn signed an executive order creating a steering committee made up of federal, state, and local partners that will oversee the vision of the Reserve. He also announced \$6.8 million in state and local investments to continue development of the Millennium Reserve. Projects include:



Gov. Quinn and IDNR Director Marc Miller (at podium) announcing investments to continue developing the Millennium Reserve (March 1, 2013 press conference)

William W. Powers Visitor Center: A \$900,000 capital investment is being used to complete the new visitor center. The exciting contemporary facility will orient visitors to the state recreation area on Chicago's South Side with exhibits engaging adults and children with the natural features and historical significance of Wolf Lake. Public meeting space within the center will be available for use by groups in the Calumet Region.

Recreational Investment:

The state of Illinois is using more than \$5 million in federal grant funding to invest in recreation opportunities within the Millennium Reserve. \$4.7 million from the federally-funded Illinois Transportation Enhancements Program (ITEP) will be used by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to construct new links in the Cal-Sag Trail and the Thorn Creek Trail.

The *Millennium Reserve: Calumet Core* initiative is built upon strong partnerships, community planning, and the work of active citizens and organizations who have sought to transform an economically-challenged industrial region into a re-envisioned community landscape that is economically, environmentally and culturally vital to the region. One such organization, also a grant recipient, is the Southeast Environmental Task Force (SETF), a volunteer-driven group that

serves both children and adults through its Civic and Environmental Education Programs. Using the Calumet Region as a living laboratory, SETF works with partners to create experiential learning opportunities from pre-school through college and beyond. Southeast Side residents learn about issues affecting the health of their environment, contribute to the redevelopment of the region and how to respond to environmental threats. Learning opportunities include their always-popular "Toxics to Treasures Tour." For more information on the Millennium Reserve and Calumet Core projects, go to <http://www2.illinois.gov/gov/millennium-reserve/Pages/default.aspx>

Cool Cities Update

By Lois Lauer, Sauk-Calumet Chair

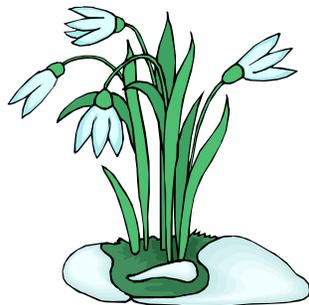
As we reported in the last newsletter, the Sauk-Calumet group's area has led the way in Illinois village commitments to sustainability by having more Cool Cities than anywhere else in the state! If you would like to encourage your town to commit to new sustainability goals by signing on to the new Cool Cities 2.0, please volunteer by contacting Sauk Calumet Chair Lois Lauer (loislauer@sbcglobal.net) or Cool Cities Chair Lonnie Morris (herbdove@comcast.net). Especially needed is help from folks who live in Hazel Crest, Oak Lawn, Orland Park, Oak Forest, Plainfield, and Olympia Fields. **Consider being part of this great and Cool effort!**

More good news! Jerry Leahy has reached out to his village of Homewood, resulting in Mayor Hofeld signing the new 2.0 agreement and committing to continuing conservation efforts. Jeff Mech has met with the mayor of Tinley Park and is meeting with the Environment Committee with hopes of bringing Tinley Park onboard as a Cool City. Cool Cities 2.0 is being considered in Plainfield. Pat Coffey is interested in working on encouraging Matteson to be a Cool City too. And Joliet is making great progress as a Cool City, with Will County even considering becoming our area's first "Cool County."

Thorn Creek Nature Preserve

By Judy Mendelson; submitted by Mary Lubertozzi,

Thorn Creek Woods has over 3½ miles of trails that meander through floodplain, over bridges, up ravines and through pine trees. Top off your day by exploring Thorn Creek Nature Center which offers a bird viewing window, children's science corner, displays for children and adults, and our Eugene Schwartz Memorial Library packed with books on local history and nature! Trails are open daily from dawn to dusk and the nature center is open Friday-Sunday, noon to 4 p.m. Trails can be muddy this time of year so wear boots.



With our new Nature Center Coordinator, Caitlin McMahon, we have a very full calendar of spring programs. An exciting addition to our monthly programs is the Junior Ecologists Club for 9 to 11 year olds. Each month, they will explore the woods, track seasonal changes and discover woodland plants and animals. JEC will meet Saturday, April 27 from noon to 3:00.

The preserve is still in need of volunteers to help keep the nature center open and to assist our part-time coordinator. We need Trail Watchers, Trail repair people, and bakers for our events. Know your local wildflowers? Come identify the wildflowers and fungi depicted in our nature center photo collection. Can you help scan in various graphics for our collection? The nature center would also appreciate donations of a hand truck, scissors for adults and children, magnifiers of any kind, and binoculars for adults and children.

For information, please contact the Thorn Creek Nature Center at 708-747-6320 or thorn_creek@att.net

Will County Green

By Connie Heinrich, Editor (with material excerpted from www.WillCountyGreen.com)

The Will County Green website continues to evolve into a very useful tool for those wanting to live a more green lifestyle. Of course, there is still the "green guide database" that is packed with information on how to recycle or reuse just about everything. The website now features a "living map" where you can find the most convenient drop-off location for your needs. Information on special community recycling events are also easily accessed.

Added to the website is information on the conservation of water and energy. That appears to be a step in the right direction if Will County is considering becoming the first "Cool County" (see *Cool Cities*

Update on page 2).

There are also links to local and state organizations "where your interest in all things 'green' can grow and flourish."

The mission of the website is to make information available to residents of all ages, business and community groups. They therefore welcome input from the public on how to make the site more useful

So, if you are a resident of Will County, or even if you aren't), www.willcountygreen.com is worth a visit. There is something for everyone from opportunities for community involvement to classroom presentations.

Midewin Proposing Establishment of Bison Herd

Press release from Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

The U.S. Forest Service will be holding an Open House on Wednesday April 3, 2013 for community members to come and learn more about the proposal to establish a bison herd on Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Staff and partners from the National Forest Foundation will be available to explain more about the proposal, the environmental assessment process, and to answer questions.

The Forest Service at Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie is proposing to establish a small herd of bison on the Prairie and will be preparing an environmental assessment for Bison Herd Establishment in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In partnership with the National Forest Foundation, the Forest Service is proposing to develop a bison grazing area on approximately 1,200 acres. A herd of bison would be established and allowed to graze on an experimental basis, to determine the success of prairie ecosystem restoration using bison grazing practices. Establishing a herd of bison on Midewin will also bring more visitors to the site to view these iconic symbols of our heritage. The proposed project site is located east of Illinois 53, south of the Iron Bridge Trailhead and north of Prairie Creek.

Bison were removed from the tallgrass prairie ecosystem over a century ago. Public interest in bison on Midewin has been growing since the mid-

1990's when Midewin was first established. Scientific literature frequently refers to bison as a keystone species in the tallgrass prairie ecosystem. The Midewin Prairie Plan provides guidance and direction to use bison on an experimental basis to meet habitat and restoration objectives.

Researchers also support bison establishment. Many partners and universities are interested in studying the effect of bison grazing when restoring grassland bird habitat.

The Open House will be held between the hours of 3:00 and 8:00 pm at the Midewin Welcome Center located at 30239 S. State Route 53, Wilmington, IL.



Nature Sundays

by Pat Coffey, Sauk-Calumet ExCom member

Would you like to get out and see more nature this spring and summer? On "Nature Sundays" we will visit a different nature site every Sunday between Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends. We will meet at the sites at noon, take an easy hike, and learn the site's plants, insects, and birds. The leaders, Bob Schwaan and Pat Coffey, are nature enthusiasts, but not experts, so the approach will be collaborative. Bring your field guides, binoculars, or camera and get to know nature better.

The first four outings will be:

June 2: Little Red Schoolhouse in Willow Springs

A noted nature center. (editor's note: If you haven't been to the Little Red Schoolhouse since the new nature center was built in 2010, you should definitely join this outing.) We will also visit Long John Slough.

June 9: Bartel Grassland in Matteson

This site has newly mown trails to explore.

June 16: Esker Trail / Teason's Woods in the Palos area

Esker Trail is the farthest point from any road in Cook County.

June 23: Gensberg Prairie / Paintbrush Prairie in Markham

These are two of the most important prairie sites in Illinois.

For directions or exact meeting places, e-mail Pat Coffey at: pjc1000@comcast.net.

Volunteer Workdays Near Your Home

If you enjoy working outdoors, please consider volunteering in one or more of your local natural areas. Contact information for workday schedules is listed below:

Cook County Forest Preserves www.fpdcc.com or
www.fotfp.org

Will County Forest Preserves
www.reconnectwithnature.org

Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie
www.fs.usda.gov/midewin

SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE

Have you been considering native plants for your home landscape? If the answer is yes, you can choose from a wide variety of flowering plants, grasses, shrubs and trees that are being offered for sale by the Midewin Tallgrass Prairie Alliance at its annual plant sale / fundraiser. Pre-orders are being taken now. For those who haven't placed orders, there will be plants available on the day of the plant pick-up: Saturday, May 18 from 10 am-3 pm

For order information, visit:

www.midewinalliance.org

Earth Day Events

Earth Day has its roots in 1960's activism. Of course, there was the Vietnam war, but there were also some serious environmental problems at home that aroused public concern for the state of our land, water and air. Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin established the first Earth Day on April 22, 1970 as a "national teach-in on the crisis of the environment." Millions of Americans participated in that first Earth Day. The EPA was established that same year.

Forty-three years later, we are still celebrating Earth Day. Here are a few of our local events:

Cook County

Sand Ridge Nature Center 10-11am April 20
Activities will include displays, hikes, puppet shows, a craft to take home, and Earth Day Jeopardy

Little Red Schoolhouse 10am-2pm April 20
Fun activities will show you how to be a better Earth keeper

Will County

Lake Renwick Preserve 8-10 am April 20
Celebrate Earth Day by taking a migratory bird walk. Registration required.

Plum Creek Nature Center noon-4 April 21
Enjoy special programs and the "Family Adventure Earth Day Challenge." No registration.

Thorn Creek Nature Center noon-4 April 20
A celebration of ash trees. Fun for everyone including a raffle, refreshments and crafts. No registration.

Letters to the Editor:

Letters on content within the Sauk-Calumet newsletter should be sent to the editor at: sc-editor@illinois.sierraclub.org

Please include your full name and address, and reference the article on which you are commenting.

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Bob Schwaan* 630-243-0305
Vice-Chair

Rich Treptow 708-747-0649
Publications,
Climate Change Liaison

*Denotes an elected member of the Executive Committee

**Sauk-Calumet Program
Schedule**

Meetings are held at 7:15 p.m. on the second Monday of every month at the Frankfort Library with the exception of June, July and August. All meetings are free and open both to Sierra Club members and to the public.

The Frankfort Library at 21119 Pfeiffer Road is located on the south side of Lincoln Highway (Rte.30) between LaGrange Rd. and Harlem Ave.

Apr. 8 Biking Through Holland

Fellow Sierran Bob Hoel of Elmhurst will show slides and tell of the adventures he and his wife Nancy had as they travelled through the Dutch countryside on their tandem bicycle!

May 13 Camping and More in the Cook County Forest Preserves

Benjamin Cox of the Friends of the Forest Preserves will describe the controversial new proposals for campsites and maybe even cabins that are being considered for construction at the Forest Preserve picnic areas.

Sept. 9 *Everglades of the North: The Story of the Grand Kankakee Marsh*

We'll watch this excellent documentary explaining the history of the Grand Kankakee Marsh and why it disappeared when Indiana decided to channelize its section of the once meandering Kankakee River.

Oct. 14 Birds of the Mississippi

Author/photographer Tom Lerczak shares stories and photos from his recently published book, *Side Channels: A Collection of Nature Writing and Memoir*, about bird life and nature along the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers.