

**CHAMPAIGN COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**RESOLUTION 2022-08**

**Champaign County Forest Preserve District Climate Change Commitment**

WHEREAS, the Champaign County Forest Preserve District (“District”) in Champaign County, Illinois, is a district organized and existing under the Downstate Forest Preserve District Act of the State of Illinois, as amended; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Working Group’s *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis* found that immediate, rapid, and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are necessary to limit warming from reaching critical thresholds for agriculture and health; and

WHEREAS, the District recognizes the urgency of rapid climate change as a threat to the people and natural resources of Champaign County; and

WHEREAS, the District has both the opportunity and the responsibility to mitigate climate change impacts; and

WHEREAS, the District is an important source of education in Champaign County, and awareness is the foundation for action in regard to climate change; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District supports efforts by the District to: mitigate our impact; enhance ecosystems, and educate for engagement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District in Champaign County, Illinois, that District Staff and Volunteers shall abide by the CCFPD Climate Commitment, to become effective Earth Day, April 22, 2022.

ADOPTED AND APPROVED THIS 21<sup>th</sup> DAY OF April, 2022.

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William Goodman, President

ATTEST:

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Andrew Kerins, Secretary

# **Champaign County Forest Preserve District Climate Commitment**

Prepared by Members of the Champaign County Forest Preserve District (CCFPD) Sustainability Committee and approved by the CCFPD Board of Commissioners on April 21, 2022 by Resolution 2022-08.

## **Introduction**

Earth's climate is changing rapidly under the influence of human activities [1]. Climate change has already generated profound effects; a recent study from the UK made headlines with evidence that wildflowers there now bloom a full month ahead of schedule [2]. These rapid changes can negatively affect interdependent ecological processes in a way that echoes throughout the web of life.

Here in Illinois, weather and climate have changed significantly over the past 120 years and changes are expected to accelerate [3]. Some of the key impacts include:

- increased average temperatures, especially night-time minimum temperatures
- increased winter and spring precipitation
- more frequent heavy rains (> 2 inches) and associated severe weather
- greater risk of summer drought and heat waves

Climate change poses a direct threat to our treasured forests, wetlands, and prairies. Changed conditions can eliminate sensitive native species, disrupt interactions such as pollination, and facilitate invasive species, including pests such as the invasive kudzu vine, the Gulf Coast Tick, and the Asian Tiger Mosquito [3].

We, through our forest preserve lands, programs, and management practices, can also help to reduce climate change impacts. CCFPD can serve as a community leader in the transition to a low-carbon future. We can be early adopters of innovations that reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We can reach out to share our successes, encouraging others to do the same.

Second, CCFPD lands provide ecosystem services that help to mitigate climate change. Healthy forest, prairie, and wetland ecosystems pull carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and store it in living biomass, detritus, and soil. If managed to their full potential, natural ecosystems could offset over 20% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions each year [4].

Third, CCFPD preserves and programs provide inspiration and education that can encourage positive change in the community. The people and places of CCFPD are at the forefront of environmental education in Champaign County. With immersive experiences, informal learning, and formal programs, CCFPD can help us understand how carbon is

cycled, how our climate is changing, and what we as a community can do to make a positive difference.

## **Future Commitment**

In this Climate Commitment, we state intentions that should inform all aspects of CCFPD operations, including purchasing, practices, service contracts, human resources, education and outreach, and land management.

All actions under this commitment will be weighed against financial and social constraints, and will be taken in a manner that supports the CCFPD's primary mission to "Protect Champaign County's natural and cultural resources and inspire people to care for, enjoy, and explore their natural world."

### **1) Mitigate Our Impact.**

Continuing current efforts, the CCFPD will take informed, vigorous action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions generated by CCFPD operations. Our goal is to reduce emissions each year, reaching near-zero net greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

Toward this end, we will:

- include greenhouse gas emissions as a factor in purchasing decisions and service contracts, favoring low-emission or carbon-neutral options
- limit emissions related to travel by using lower-emission modes of travel, by limiting travel, and by encouraging virtual meetings as an alternative
- design, build, remodel, and maintain facilities with a strong emphasis on energy efficiency and using renewable technologies
- operate buildings and other facilities in ways that conserve energy and reduce emissions
- be responsible in consuming material goods: reduce consumption and reuse materials when feasible, properly maintain and repair durable goods

### **2) Enhance our Ecosystems.**

CCFPD will work to maintain and increase the total carbon sequestration potential of healthy forest, prairie, and wetland habitats in Champaign County. We will use a combination of the following approaches:

- within existing Forest Preserves, restore and expand natural ecosystems that

function as carbon sinks

- manage ecosystems in ways that enhance their diversity, ecological health, and ability to sequester carbon
- acquire land to create and/or maintain high quality forest, prairie, savanna and wetland ecosystems
- manage preserves, facilities, and programs to make them more resilient to anticipated changes in climate

### **3) Educate for Engagement.**

CCFPD will work toward improved public understanding of climate change science and will promote practices that reduce climate impacts. Toward those ends, we will:

- share our climate change mitigation initiatives and successes with the community and encourage others to follow our example
- incorporate scientifically based climate change information and sustainability messaging in our educational programs and outreach efforts
- train new and continuing employees to make them aware of our climate change commitment and clarify how they can contribute to the effort

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

All of us - staff, visitors, volunteers, community partners, residents, the Board of Commissioners, and other stakeholders - should take part in this effort to evaluate practices and ensure that measures are taken toward the goals of this commitment. Volunteers and staff at all levels should seek opportunities to conserve energy and reduce waste - and should be empowered to bring those ideas forward. All stakeholders should be informed about our climate commitment, and should have the opportunity to comment and suggest further action.

### **Monitoring and Oversight**

The Sustainability Committee will continue to explore new ways to further reduce carbon emissions of the CCFPD and will bring forward proposals for implementation.

On an annual basis, CCFPD staff will be asked to provide data for measurement of greenhouse gas emissions, and to identify climate and sustainability-related actions

within their areas of responsibility. These may include specific actions completed in the past year, ongoing practices, new initiatives in progress, or plans under consideration.

Using this information, the Sustainability Committee will produce an annual Climate Commitment Report to provide:

- updated accounting of carbon emissions from CCFPD operations
- continuing, new, or proposed actions to mitigate impact, enhance ecosystems, and educate for engagement with climate-related issues
- significant constraints, setbacks, or areas for improvement in the operations of CCFPD as they pertain to our climate-related goals

## Sources Cited

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2. Plants in the UK flower a month earlier under recent warming. 2022. Büntgen, U., Piermattei, A., Krusic, P. J., Esper, J., Sparks, T., & Crivellaro, A. Proceedings. Biological sciences, 289(1968), 20212456. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2021.2456>
3. An Assessment of the Impacts of Climate Change in Illinois. 2021. Wuebbles, D., J. Angel, K. Petersen, and A.M. Lemke (Eds.), The Nature Conservancy. [https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/IL\\_Climate\\_Assessment\\_2021.pdf](https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/IL_Climate_Assessment_2021.pdf)
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