

September 12, 2023

Memorandum

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Nina Carmichael, Leadership in Conservation Fellow

Re: September staff reports

Executive Management (Lorrie Pearson, Michael Daab)

- Michael is in the process of changing the internet service provider at Lake of the Woods from Mediacom to Pavlov/Campus Communications Group. We will be moving from paying \$700 per month for 50 Mbps service to paying \$225 for 500 Mbps service - a savings of \$475 per month for much faster service.
- Forest Preserve staff met with representatives from an internet-based phone service company to determine our needs for new phone equipment. The Forest Preserves' current phones are no longer in production or able to be repaired.
- Michael, Peter Goodspeed, Matt Kuntz, Jacob Pruiett, and Stephen Wolfe met with staff from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Ducks Unlimited (DU), and The Wetlands Initiative (TWI) to further discuss repairing water control structures at the North and South Waterfowl Areas at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. Ducks Unlimited engineering staff is developing plans and we will continue to work with DU and USFWS to identify funding opportunities.

CCFPD Fellow (Nina Carmichael)

- Attended the 2-day Interpreting Climate Justice webinar through the National Association of Interpretation.
- Attended a Wetland Management and Conservation lecture at the Illinois Natural History Survey. The lecture was given by Auriel Fournier of the Forbes Biological Station.
- Began the Environmental Professionals of Color (EPOC) Environmental Education Gathering Series on behalf of the Center for Diversity & the Environment. This series runs from August 2023-April 2024 with one learning and coaching session per month.

Efficiency Committee

- Scheduled the first Efficiency Committee meeting for September 21st before the regular Board meeting at 5:45 pm
- Sent preliminary email introducing the committee, providing background information, and training instructions for FIOA and the Open Meetings Act
- Made requests for staff input on efficiencies to implement, and for all policy and procedural information stored by the department to be sent to me to centralize information.

Planning and Construction (Bridgette Moen)

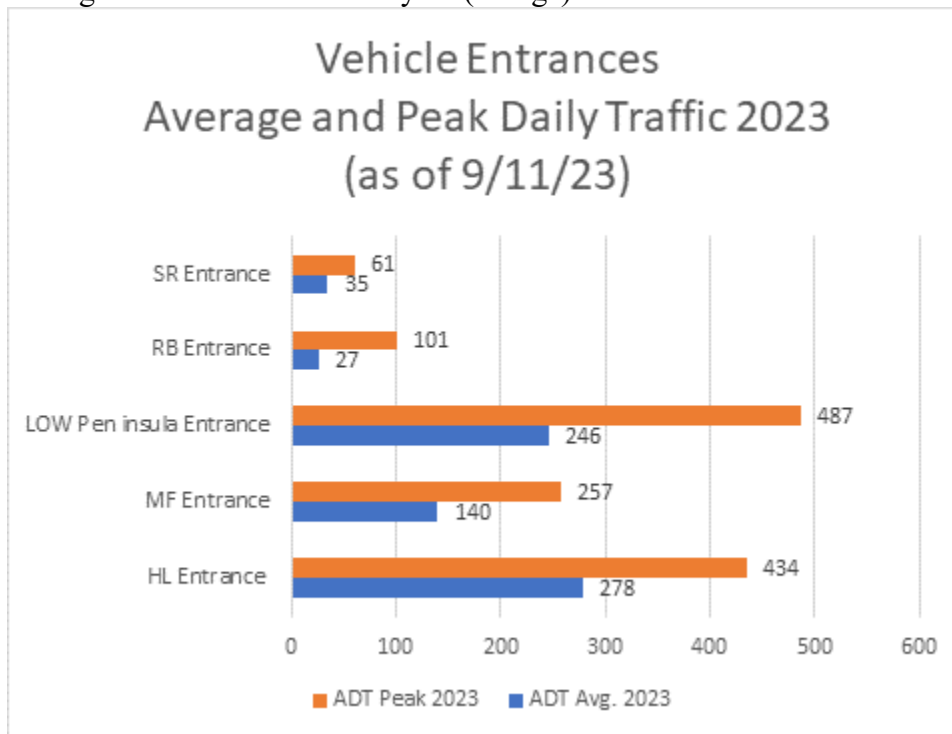
- Construction is wrapping up on the Golf Cart path project, replacing failing asphalt paths and adding extensions as needed. Construction's ability to complete this work in-house

has resulted in significant savings. Planning bid this work in 2022 and the lowest bid was \$130,000. Construction is on track to complete this work for close to \$10,000.

- Work on the Hickory Shelter (near the Lake of the Woods Pavilion) is starting. Construction has also ordered materials to replace the Hawthorn Shelter (near the Golf Course), but because that shelter will be relocated to the spillway area, it will be installed while the crew is reconstructing the spillway. Accessible picnic tables and grills have been ordered for both of these shelters and each will have an accessible route from the parking area.
- Construction replaced the toilets in the single-user restrooms at the Museum, which have long caused plumbing issues. The new toilets are now ADA and use less water.
- Construction ran the wiring for the internet at Elks Lake Pavilion.
- Planning and Golf Maintenance met with the contractor for a pre-construction meeting on the irrigation head project.
- Bridgette attended a webinar on the challenges and opportunities of the use of AI in landscape architecture.
- The architect is continuing on the design work of the new Discovery Garden Greenhouse and has updated the drawings based on staff feedback.

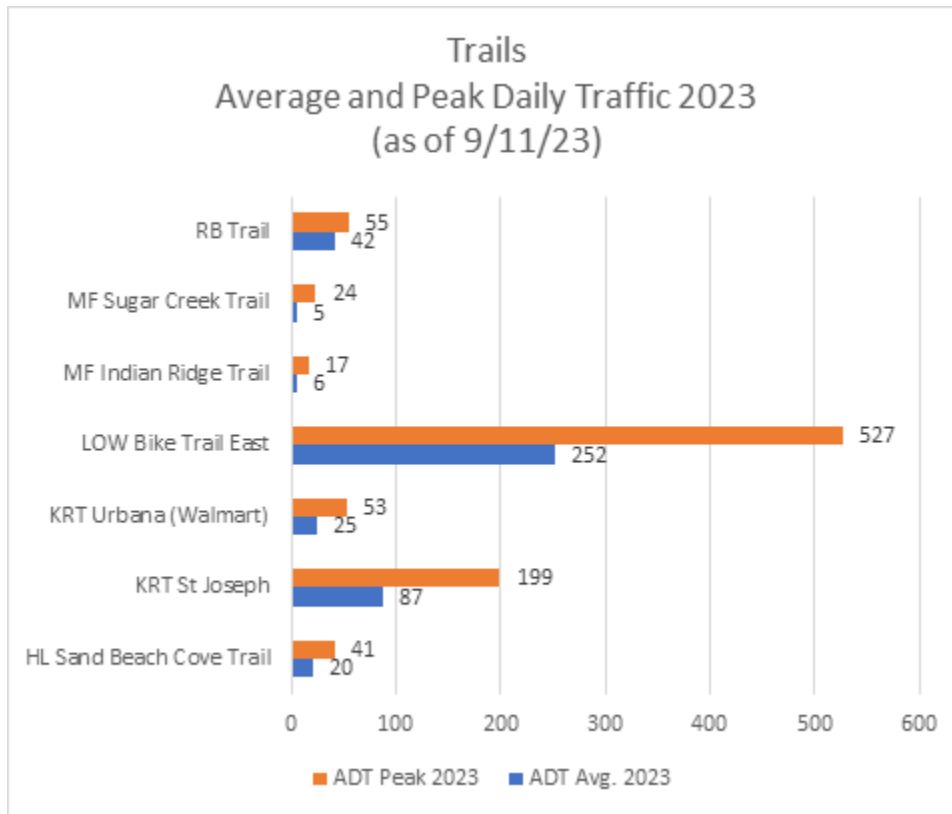
Preserve Entrances (ADT and Peak ADT)

The Forest Preserves have counters at entrances that count vehicles as they enter and leave (they are set to not double-count). The average daily traffic (ADT) for 2023 overall (blue) as well as the highest-traffic week of the year (orange) are shown below.



Trails (ADT and Peak ADT)

The Preserves also have counters at several trails that count passersby. The average daily traffic (ADT) for 2023 overall (blue) as well as the highest-traffic week of the year (orange) are shown below.



Six counters (including 3 at Lake of the Woods) have not been giving reliable data and are currently being replaced. Staff are also investigating new locations for counters, including, but not limited to Heron View, Collins Pond, Point Pleasant, and more along the KRT.

Business and Finance (Carron Johnson)

- Met with CLA auditors to discuss the FY2022 audit and exit interview with Lorrie Pearson.
- Requested extension with GFOA to submit the 2021 Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting. Extension requests approved. The deadline to submit the COA application is 10/2/2023.
- Requested an extension to file the Foundation 990 tax return with the Illinois Charity Bureau.
- Addressed outstanding audit issues from CLA - corrected statistical section in the audit at CLA's request.
- Addressed outstanding FFPF 990 questions from CLA – resolution still pending.
- Requested the extension to file the Annual Financial Report with the Comptroller's office.
- Reviewed final CLA 2022 audit.
- Reviewed the CLA audit report findings and provided responses to corrective actions.
- Met with Finance staff to continue to assess the department (Ryan Anderson, Tim Sullivan, and Kathleen Hourigan), individual duties, and responsibilities.

- Reviewed the IDNR OSLAD Buffalo Trace award and discussed with Lorrie the need to draft a resolution for the board to accept \$400,000 grant and submit a budget amendment resolution for 2023. \$200,000 received in August, the other half to be received in 2024.
- Updated FY24 ICQ in GATA Portal to complete execution of grant agreement for the Lake of the Wood Bike Trail Renovation in the amount of \$200,000.
- Continue to get access to all the District banking and investing accounts to complete daily/weekly/monthly cash management duties.
- Continuing to get familiarized with all the duties of the Business and Finance Director.
- Reviewed and approved invoices and P-cards.
- Emailed external stakeholders new contact info to Champaign County and Treasurer's office.
- Prepared the August Foundation memo and reviewed the treasurers' report for the month of August previously prepared by John Baker.
- Assisted staff with unemployment past due bills.
- Assisted the Planning Director with verification of the 2022 budget and 2023 EAV for grant application.
- Inquired about the status of \$1.2 million in multiple grants from Natural Resources and Commerce & Economic Opportunities from staff on addressing specific conditions from the grantor.
- Obtained access to the following systems: Activenet, Helcim, Foreup, and Finix to review and reconcile cash receipts.
- Updated GFOA AMS username and password for the District. New username and password forwarded to Beck and Pearson. AMS system allows the application filing of the COA (Certificate of Achievement) award.
- Continue to review/prepare the FY2024 budget.
- Continue to get access to all the District banking and investing accounts to complete daily/weekly/monthly cash management duties. This access would not be possible without the incredible efforts Tim has put forth in identifying and then filing the correct paperwork.

Human Resources (Kathryn Glynn, Mary Beck)

- During the month of August, HR processed 5 hires and 7 separations.
- As of August 31st, our total headcount was 118 employees; including 48 FT, 21 PT, and 49 seasonal.
- The District documented 1 employee injury report (1-no medical needed/0 medical needed).

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- Media this month included:
 - <https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/enjoy-nature-as-you-pedal-the-preserves/>

- <https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/stroll-through-the-botanical-garden-at-lake-of-the-woods/>
- <https://mahometdaily.com/christie-clinic-photos-candle-making-at-the-museum-of-the-grand-prairie/>
- <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2023/08/22/flower-farms-gardens-champaign-urbana/>
- <https://www.smilepolitely.com/opinion/welcome-students-were-glad-youre-here/>
- <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2023/08/29/labor-day-open-closed-champaign-urbana/>
- <https://www.smilepolitely.com/culture/get-your-culture-here-five-things-to-do-in-september-2023/>
- <https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/ciliving-stories/ciliving/explore-the-great-outdoors-of-champaign-county/>
- <https://www.smilepolitely.com/culture/get-your-culture-here-five-things-to-do-in-september-2023/>
- <https://wearecampfireconcepts.com/camping-illinois-dark-sky/>

- Social media followers update.

	FACEBOOK	+/-	INSTAGRAM	+/-
CCFPD	8,483	+134	3,619	+65
KRT	5,412	+145	172	+1
MGP	5,418	+9	1,343	+6
HLIC	3,668	+63		
GC	2,193	+12	362	+2
FPPF	690	+8		

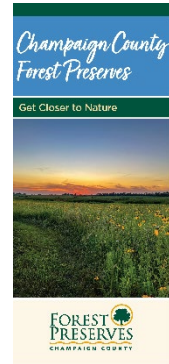
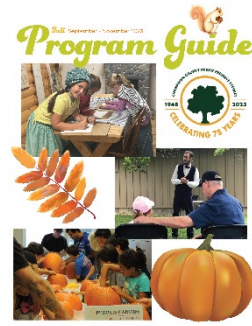
- August Facility Rental Report

2023	2022	August		2023	2022
# Rentals	# Rentals	Preserve	Facility	\$	\$
8	10	HL	Salt Fork Center	\$2,725.00	\$3,700.00
3	6	HL	Walnut Hill Shelter	\$360.00	\$540.00
1	1	LOW	Botanical Garden Weddings	\$995.00	\$995.00

6	6	LOW	Elks Lake Pavilion	\$2,200.00	\$2,500.00
3	4	LOW	Izaak Walton Cabin	\$560.00	\$660.00
12	11	LOW	Lake of the Woods Pavilion	\$4,250.00	\$4,050.00
1	3	LOW	Lakeview Shelter	\$60.00	\$180.00
2	3	LOW	Riverview Retreat Center	\$400.00	\$360.00
8	7	LOW	Rotary Hill Shelter	\$1,320.00	\$1,180.00
1	3	LOW	Sycamore Hollow Shelter	\$120.00	\$160.00
3	1	MF	Activity Center	\$1,000.00	\$250.00
0	0	RB	River Bend Shelter	\$0.00	\$0.00
48	55		TOTAL	\$13,990.00	\$14,575.00

- Lisa attended the following trainings/webinars this month.
 - BSS Fall 2023 Series: The Social Media Experience with Mark Wolters at Champaign County Chamber of Commerce, this was the first session of a two-part seminar.
 - The Art of Visual Storytelling and Getting Started on Canva through Clanin Marketing.
- Congratulations go out to the District for receiving six Top 3 placings in the News-Gazette People's Choice awards this year! Winners received a special recognition on September 5 at the Winners Reveal Celebration party held at Riggs Brewery.
 - Lake of the Woods Golf Course - Recreation, Leisure & Outdoor Golf Course- First Place
 - Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve - Recreation, Leisure & Outdoor Walking/Hiking Trail - Second Place
 - Homer Lake Forest Preserve - Recreation, Leisure & Outdoor Walking/Hiking Trail - Third Place
 - Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve - Recreation, Leisure & Outdoor Parks - Third Place
 - Museum of the Grand Prairie - Arts & Entertainment - Museum - Second Place
 - Middle Fork River Forest Preserve - Recreation, Leisure & Outdoor Campground - Third Place

- Completed the Fall Program Guide and a new updated general brochure for the Forest Preserves.
- The Perseid Meteor Shower at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve had a very large turnout (over 300 people) and was used as a fundraising opportunity. Marketing material was developed for this event including flyers and slides (one about the project and one about naming opportunities) used for the presentation.
- Pedal the Preserves was a success, (20 people registered on the day of the event, 60 people registered online) with about \$1000 of registrations and donations on the day of the event and over \$2,300 was generated in online registrations before the event. Marketing efforts paid off to promote the event. Forest Preserve Friends Foundation and the Forest Preserves were well-represented with graphics brochures, and swag at the registration/Welcome table.
- Donor Appreciation at Homer Lake Forest Preserve- I attended the event and brought marketing material (sandwich board with the 75th-anniversary panels on Homer Lake), brochures about the Three Rivers Society and Legacy Giving, as well as info on current fundraising projects. The event was well-attended and everyone enjoyed it.
- Volunteer Appreciation at Elks Lake Pavilion (8/31)- Lisa developed the invitation and co-hosted the event with Skylar, Nina, Kristin, Mike Daab, and Mark in Sue's absence. The event was a success.
- Social media graphics and physical print materials were developed for the StoryWalk on the Museum Meander Trail near the Museum of the Grand Prairie. I helped with the installation of the new story.
- Welcoming Week is from Sept 8-17: <https://welcomingamerica.org/initiatives/welcoming-week>. As part of Welcoming week two social media posts were developed: 1) Staff held signs that said "Welcome" in different languages. 2) Images of previous Prairie Stories Events and an image of the new story at the Storywalk (a bilingual story that is also a part of Welcoming Week).
- We hosted a station for Bike to Work Day (Sept.14) along the KRT: [C-U BIKE MONTH - Home \(weebly.com\)](http://C-U BIKE MONTH - Home (weebly.com)).
- Posts about the history of the Forest Preserves are continuing to be posted to celebrate CCFPD's 75th anniversary.



Grants and Fundraising (Ryan Anderson)

Donor Appreciation Kayak Event – On Saturday, Aug 26 we had between 30-40 people attend the event and we had a great time. Stacey Clementz (Youth Programs Director) and Skylar Smith (Homer Lake Site Superintendent) gave talks on projects and programs going on at Homer Lake. Thank you to all the Foundation volunteers who attended, connected with our donors, and made this event a success!

Pedal the Preserve - The Champaign County Forest Preserve District hosted the Pedal the Preserves on August 19-20. There were 80-90 cyclists and proceeds donated to the Foundation's unrestricted fund totaled around \$3,500.

Dark Sky Fundraising – Foundation members are meeting with prospective donors and an appeal letter and brochure have gone out to about 50 select donors that may be interested in the project. We have received \$1,300 in response so far.

Homer Lake Boat Launch – The Foundation received a \$5,000 donation from AMBUCS.

Fundraising Campaigns Progress as of 8/29/23:

Campaign	Raised	Left	Goal	%
Dark Sky Trail	\$ 37,508.40	\$ 62,491.60	\$ 100,000.00	38%
Timberdoodle Trail	\$ 3,423.00	\$ 3,577.00	\$ 7,000.00	49%
Homer Lake Boat Launch	\$ 5,530.00	\$ 14,470.00	\$ 20,000.00	28%

Fundraising Trends (as of 8/29/2023)

Donations 4 Year Summary

4-year totals:	2020	2021	2022	2023(ytd)
Total \$	\$164,219.10	\$209,832.74	\$207,053.66	\$117,430.04
Total \$ (adjusted)	\$111,738.24	\$174,725.10	\$175,731.78	\$91,118.14
# of donors (adjusted)	341	407	345	236
# of 1st time donors	134	165	87	92

Updates to Bloomerang have altered these figures: "Adjusted" numbers have grants and bequests removed

Adjusted Revenue by Month (May-Aug)

	May	June	July	August
2020	\$ 18,600.59	\$6,830.49	\$ 4,361.14	\$1,615.92
2021	\$ 11,330.06	\$15,513.44	\$ 3,758.82	\$6,061.91
2022	\$ 24,112.80	\$17,278.82	\$ 2,515.53	\$4,799.53
2023	\$ 3,733.38	\$11,613.14	\$ 3,234.10	\$45,040.94

Volunteer coordinator (Sue Gallo)

- Pedal the Preserves engaged roughly 30 new and existing volunteers who gave approximately 315 hours to help the event succeed!

- Many thanks to Lisa, Kristin, Nina, Michael Daab, Skylar and Mark hosting our annual volunteer appreciation! We had record volunteer interest (50!) and attendance (45), possibly due in part to holding it at Lake of the Woods rather than at Homer Lake. (photo [here](#) or take your pick from the file)
- Emily started with a new cohort of Lincoln’s Challenge Cadets at Homer Lake. Roughly thirteen female cadets will help remove woody invasive plants from near the north boat launch/west lake trail for the next 10 or so weeks. Sue is still trying to recruit volunteers to host a second group of cadets to work with volunteers along the KRT.
- Eagle Scout Project of flag collection box installed along the KRT in St. Joseph (photo [here](#) and below)
- Eighteen new applicants last month.

Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Chris Edmondson & Joie Torres)

- Despite the variance of weather in August, we managed to have a very successful month. Heavy rains at the start of the month forced us to cancel the University of Illinois Wrestling event, one of our largest. Record-breaking heat late in the month made it difficult for outdoor activities. We had 5896 players for the month and revenue of \$160,593. This player count is above the 5-year average of 5338. The revenue is the second highest on record for August, just short of the \$161,300 last season, and well above the 5-year average of \$116,145.
- We hosted several events and tournaments in August. The events and revenue numbers for the month are listed below:

Outing	# of Players	23 Total Rev	23 Actual Merch
St. Thomas More ABO	144	\$9,783.68	\$720.00
U of I Wrestling - RAINOUT	10	\$907.00	\$571.00
Smitley Memorial	100	\$5,186.00	\$500.00
Mahomet Community Foundation	92	\$6,994.20	\$759.20
Local #149	104	\$6,415.00	\$900.00
Champaign Rotary	72	\$4,765.00	\$805.00
Black & Gold Initiative	54	\$2,970.00	\$360.00

Tournament	# of Players	23 Total Rev
Hartwell Match Play	31	\$775.00
Club Championship	38	\$950.00

- High School golf teams began play in August. Our Head Professional, David Sebestik, is once again coaching the Mahomet-Seymour High School Boys team. We host both the girls and boys golf teams for practice and “Home” golf matches. There are approximately 40 students that went out for these 2 golf teams in 2023.
- With the assistance of the Forest Preserve Construction Department and Furat, we completed installation of security cameras in and around the Pro Shop in order to better monitor activity in the merchandise and visitor transition areas. The Construction Department also has been busy with repairs, upgrades, and installation of cart paths on the 18 hole course (Pictures are attached). Specifically:
 - Hole # 4 was redesigned and moved away from tree roots that had damaged the previous path.
 - Hole #16 cart path was extended to the fairway to avoid low areas where water collects.
 - We had a new cart path installed on the left side of #9 green. This will greatly reduce turf wear and tear between #9 green and #10 tee, while also reducing the safety hazard of carts driving up #9 into the tee shots coming from #1.

Museum and Education Department (Kamryn Suttinger)

Patrons Served

	In-Person Programming*	Online Programming*	Outreach**	MGP Visitation	HLIC Visitation
Jan-23	78	302	423	Closed	40
Feb-23	286	92	35	Closed	48
Mar-23	246	150	90	707	167
Apr-23	1312	0	210	830	274
May-23	1559	0	0	1286	352
Jun-23	892	0	0	1616	239
Jul-23	1197	0	0	1578	136
Aug-23	984	0	465	1215	153
YTD	6554	544	1223	7232	1409

Collections and Exhibits:

- Our 2023 Smith Intern from the National Museum of African American History and Culture completed work. A series of social media posts coordinated by Pat Cain shares some of the intern's work. An example may be found here: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1926646844385246>.
- Our 2022-2023 Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board grant activity is complete. Oral histories from the Hoskins archive found on 30 audiocassettes and 26 minidiscs were successfully reformatted and digitized.
- All artifacts in the Sangamon River Forest Preserve (SRPF) shed that are candidates for deaccessioning have been reviewed by staff and await final approval.

- Except for one object, all unknown artifacts remaining at the SRFP shed are now identified.
- Research and visioning for the tool wing exhibit upgrade and its compatibility with public and youth programming has begun. Taylor Studios has agreed to collaborate on the graphic and spatial exhibit design. The working exhibit title is “Hard Work, Hardship, and Resilience: Personal Stories from the Early Days of Agriculture in East Central Illinois.”

Youth Programs

- Staff met with Unit 4 teachers/coordinators to discuss how we can provide educator resources and programs to meet their needs. Illinois is piloting new Common Core standards that will affect the programming that we offer. We are excited to be able to partner with this school district to provide quality historical, cultural and environmental education opportunities.
- Staff had a Forest Preserves table at the Stratton Back to School event and met a lot of families interested in visiting the forest preserves or sharing stories about their time at the preserves.
- Staff are partnering with the Urbana School District’s Freedom Schools afterschool program this fall to provide on-site programming and service projects with their students. This may also involve other departments within the Forest Preserves; more information coming soon.

Public Programs and Visitor Services

- There was a great turnout at Middle Fork for the Perseid Shower Viewing event. 200+ visitors attended an educational presentation by retired William M. Staerkel Planetarium Director, Dave Leake, and several hundred more visited the preserve throughout the night. Special thanks to the staff, volunteers, and foundation members who were there to help out!
- Staff wrapped up boating programs for the summer, which worked out really well. Thanks to Lunatic Kayaks for letting us use their boats.
- The Summer Concert Series concluded in August with the Hot Iron String Band performing at Middle Fork as part of the Pedal the Preserves event. 1100+ visitors attended 6 concerts this summer throughout the preserves. Special thanks to the staff, volunteers, performers, and the Foundation for making this year’s series a great success!
- Join us in welcoming John Bien (he/him) as the Forest Preserve’s newest Public Program Specialist! John will be helping to coordinate and execute public programs. He is a recent graduate from Eastern Illinois University with a degree in history and social science teaching certification. John also minored in public history and psychology as well as interned for the Douglas County Museum and Tarble Arts Center in the summer of 2022. In his free time, he enjoys trying new restaurants (if his bank account allows him) and spending time with his siblings!
- Jennifer Wick and Selena Gonzalez successfully completed the first environmental/historical Summer Library Program collaboration. They created a program around the theme, “Find Your Voice” that educated participants about cultural histories that influenced the native animals here in Central Illinois. The goal for this program was to give a voice to those local animals that were affected and spread awareness. They saw a total of nine libraries throughout the county and beyond.

Trainings and Professional Development

- The Forest Preserves are hosting a 4-day (32-hour) Certified Interpretive Guide training through the National Association for Interpretation at the Museum of the Grand Prairie. Participants will leave the training with the theoretical foundations and practical strategies to deliver quality interpretive programming. Enrolled staff include: Kamryn, Patrick, Pat, Michael Daab, Nina, Selena, and Brian.

Facilities

- The Annex roof has been repaired. Thank you to Bridgette for coordinating this much-needed work.

Natural Resources (Peter Goodspeed)

- In August, the NR team spent time spot-spraying invasive *Lespedeza cuneata*. *Lespedeza* is an invasive, herbaceous perennial plant that can take over grassland ecosystems. This plant is not yet well established in preserve prairies and the team used a grid system in over 300 acres of prairie at Homer Lake FP and Middle Fork River FP to treat known isolated populations.
- Staff collected seeds from native plants that will be included in restoration seed mixes. Many woodland and prairie grasses and forbs are starting to produce ripe seeds as late summer progresses.
- Mowing continued in newly planted restoration areas to knock down annual and biennial weeds and promote light transmission to young native plant seedlings. Restoration sites that are being prepared for fall/winter planting were also mowed.
- A new volunteer group from Lincoln's Challenge Academy began working again on invasive bush honeysuckle removal. The group is focusing its efforts on removing the invasive shrubs on the north side of West Lake Trail at Homer Lake Forest Preserve.
- Anna attended the Grassland Restoration Network workshop in Windom, Minnesota. Topics discussed at the workshop included ecological monitoring, invasive species control, and native seed collection techniques.
- Notable administrative projects:
 - Bud's Tree Care removed 17 hazardous trees at Homer Lake FP;
 - Peter developed RFQs and awarded projects for tree cabling at Lake of the Woods FP and tree removal at the campground at Middle Fork River FP;
 - Peter met with John Griesbaum with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' Nature Preserves Commission to discuss a proposal to dedicate high-quality habitat at Homer Lake FP as an Illinois State Nature Preserve;
 - Peter attended a Society of Ecological Restoration webinar on *Disturbance – renewal ecology: Science, Application, and the Future*.

Lake of the Woods (Rusty Maulding)

- We are happy to welcome Brodie Ziehr, our new Grounds and Facilities Supervisor, to the Lake of the Woods Site Operations team! Brodie has his Associate's Degree in Horticulture and spent about 6 years in the landscape and nursery field. He also spent the last couple of years maintaining and installing water conditioning and reverse osmosis drinking water systems. His love for nature and plants mixed with plumbing and equipment maintenance experience, balanced by his desire to complete high-quality work and strong leadership philosophy, will be great assets to our department.
- Botanical Gardens staff have installed a native plant border bed on the north side of the waterfall hill. The design style would be like those of Lurie Gardens at Millennium Park in Chicago where masses sweep throughout the display and bloom periods overlap to provide interest in all seasons. This will provide a better backdrop than plain old turf, that was difficult to maintain, to one of the most photographed features at Lake of the Woods. It also adds to the biodiversity of our site with significant benefits to our local ecology.
- Several open-air shelters have been power washed and then sealed to enhance the color and protect the structures. Currently, River Bend, Peninsula, Bridgeview and Rotary shelters are completed. We plan to finish Lakeview, Fisherman's and Rayburn Purnell shelters as well as place a second coat on Rotary Hill Pavilion later this season.
- The new E-Transit van is outfitted with shelving and stocked with janitorial supplies. We are still toying around with additional ways to use the vehicle to maximize its utility. Staff is enjoying the vehicle (standing upright inside is a huge win!) and have already driven 1250 miles in the last month. We've found on an average night, we use somewhere around 20-30% of the battery and generally go 2 nights between charges.

Homer Lake (Skylar Smith)

- Staff mowed vegetation and pruned woody invasive species at the edges of roadsides and mowed areas. This will help improve the appearance of roadsides and the efficiency of mowing along these areas.
- Staff continued to make improvements along the KRT by clearing vegetation around fences, mowing trail sides, string trimming, pruning woody invasive species back, and filling in trail cracks.
- Staff repaired the HLIC garden shed, which was struck by a tree during the late June derecho. This included new studs, siding, roofing, and paint.
- Skylar attended the Friends Foundation donor recognition event and the volunteer appreciation event. Both events were great opportunities to connect with folks that deeply care about and provide incredible support to the Forest Preserves.

Middle Fork (Matthew Kuntz)

- Campground numbers continue to stay high through the late summer season. We continue to see early reservations being made for the 2024 season.

- Middle Fork staff continue with invasive removal practices throughout the preserve. Focusing on honeysuckle re-sprouts and autumn olive populations take most of our time.
- We have started using SMS messaging inside the campground for our guests. This system is provided by our reservation system. Although it provides limited information to the public, we have received many compliments after the communication of activity schedules and weather-related events. We hope to research more improved methods with this type of communication.
- We have officially closed the beach for the summer season due to lowering temperatures. We had a very successful swim season this year, despite the many challenges we experienced in the startup season.