

Report on the 13th Forest Preserve District of Cook County



Erickson Woods

Cook County Forest Preserve
Commissioner Larry Suffredin

October 2019



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Finance
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October 19, 2019

Dear Resident,

The Cook County Forest Preserve District is one of the largest Forest Preserve districts in the United States. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people visit the Preserves' thousands of acres of forests, grasslands, riparian, and marshland environments.

It is imperative to work together to keep this system functioning and accessible.

The purpose of this report is to review the activities of the Forest Preserves in the 13th District of Cook County, and to conduct a satisfaction review for patrons of the Forest Preserve's picnic shelters in the 13th District. Since 2003, I have conducted this review to measure user satisfaction and identify areas for the Forest Preserve to improve.

The Cook County Forest Preserve District is a great asset to the residents of Cook County, and I am committed to cultivating and building that asset on their behalf.

I hope you find this report informative and enjoyable.

Sincerely,

Larry Suffredin
Forest Preserve District of Cook County Commissioner, 13th District

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2019 Forest Preserve Permit Users Survey Summary Report

Purpose

To analyze data from event permits held during 2019 in the 13th District of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) and survey the permit holders to measure user satisfaction and identify improvements.

Notes

1. Each percentage is rounded to the nearest .1%.
2. “±” followed by a number represents “standard deviation.” Standard deviation is a measure of the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of values
3. Below is the scale that permit holders used when answering questions:
1 star - Poor
2 stars - Below Average
3 stars - Average
4 stars - Above Average
5 Stars - Excellent

Summary Findings

Several highlights arose from the survey of permit holders.

1. As of October 1, 2019, the FPDCC sold 528 event permits for the 2019 season
2. Collectively, permit holders estimated more than 58,000 visitors attended their events
3. The most common FPDCC site was Bunker Hill, which had 276 events (52%)
4. The most popular month for an event was August, which had 130 permits, although June (129) and July (127) were close
5. Saturday and Sunday constituted 463 days in which people held permits (88%)
6. The most common home zip code for a permit holder was 60630 (6.8%), which includes Jefferson Park. The most common home zip code in District 13 was 60714 (6.6%), which includes Niles
7. Average event estimate attendance was 111
8. The most common event reason for the event was “family event” (29%)
9. According to the survey, a lack of signage and trash were the most common issues

Analysis of 13th District Event Data

Overall, FPDCC issued 528 permits for events in the 13th District during the period surveyed. Below is an analysis of data provided by the FPDCC.

Permits issued by preserve

Bunker Hill was the most common preserve for an event.

| Location (shelter) | Permits issued | Percent of permits issued |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Bunker Hill | 276 | 52.3% |
| Erickson Woods | 31 | 5.9% |
| Linne Woods | 79 | 15.0% |
| Miami Woods | 33 | 6.3% |
| St. Paul Woods | 70 | 13.3% |
| Turnbull Woods | 7 | 1.3% |
| Wayside Woods | 32 | 6.1% |
| Total | 528 | 100.0% |

Permits issued by site

Four of the five most popular sites were in Bunker Hill.

| Location (shelter) | Permits issued | Percent of permits issued |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Bunker Hill 02-Sm Grove Shelter | 48 | 9.1% |
| Bunker Hill 05-Lrg Grove Shelter | 46 | 8.7% |
| Bunker Hill 03-Lrg Grove Shelter | 42 | 8.0% |
| Linne 02-Sm Grove Shelter | 42 | 8.0% |
| Bunker Hill 06-Lrg Grove Shelter | 38 | 7.2% |
| Bunker Hill 07-Lrg Grove Shelter | 37 | 7.0% |
| Linne 01-Lrg Grove Shelter | 37 | 7.0% |
| Bunker Hill 04-Lrg Grove Shelter | 36 | 6.8% |
| Miami 01-Sm Grove Shelter | 32 | 6.1% |
| Wayside 01-Sm Grove Shelter | 32 | 6.1% |

| Location (shelter) | Permits issued | Percent of permits issued |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Erickson Woods 01-Sm Grove Shelter | 31 | 5.9% |
| Bunker Hill 01-Lrg Grove Shelter | 28 | 5.3% |
| St. Paul 02-Sm Grove Shelter | 20 | 3.8% |
| St. Paul 03-Sm Grove Shelter | 16 | 3.0% |
| St. Paul 01-Lrg Grove Shelter | 12 | 2.3% |
| St. Paul 04-Lrg Grove Shelter | 11 | 2.1% |
| St. Paul Large Event Area (1-4) | 11 | 2.1% |
| Turnbull Woods 01 - Sm Grove Shelter | 7 | 1.3% |
| Bunker Hill Forest Area | 1 | 0.2% |
| Total | 528 | 100.0% |

Permits issued by month

FPDCC issued the greatest number of permits for August events.

| Month | Permits issued | Percent of permits issued |
|--------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| March | 1 | 0.2% |
| April | 5 | 0.9% |
| May | 35 | 6.6% |
| June | 129 | 24.4% |
| July | 127 | 24.1% |
| August | 130 | 24.6% |
| September | 94 | 17.8% |
| October | 7 | 1.3% |
| Total | 528 | 100.0% |

Permits issued by day

Saturday and Sunday were the two most popular days to hold events.

| Day of the week | Permits issued | Percent of permits issued |
|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Sunday | 211 | 40.0% |
| Monday | 18 | 3.4% |
| Tuesday | 3 | 0.6% |
| Wednesday | 6 | 1.1% |
| Thursday | 18 | 3.4% |
| Friday | 20 | 3.8% |
| Saturday | 252 | 47.7% |
| Total | 528 | 100.0% |

Most popular event day

The ten days with the most events were in June, July and August.

| Date | Events held | Percent of events held |
|--------|-------------|------------------------|
| 13-Jul | 17 | 3.2% |
| 10-Aug | 16 | 3.0% |
| 18-Aug | 15 | 2.8% |
| 20-Jul | 15 | 2.8% |
| 21-Jul | 15 | 2.8% |
| 8-Jun | 15 | 2.8% |
| 15-Jun | 14 | 2.7% |
| 22-Jun | 14 | 2.7% |
| 30-Jun | 14 | 2.7% |
| 31-Aug | 14 | 2.7% |

Event size

Permit holders collectively estimated that 58,654 would attend their events, with each permit holder estimate averaging 111 people.

The most common estimated size of an event was over 100 people.

| Size of the event (people) | Permit holders who estimated their attendance within the range | Percent of permits issued |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1-24 | 11 | 2.1% |
| 25-49 | 92 | 17.4% |
| 50-74 | 110 | 20.8% |
| 75-100 | 140 | 26.5% |
| 100+ | 175 | 33.1% |
| Total | 528 | 100.0% |

Event type

The most common event was a “family event.”

| Event type | Permits issued | Percent of permits issued |
|-------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Birthday | 131 | 24.8% |
| Family | 151 | 28.6% |
| Church | 36 | 6.8% |
| Community Group | 69 | 13.1% |
| Graduation | 25 | 4.7% |
| Company | 27 | 5.1% |
| Baby Shower | 17 | 3.2% |
| Class Reunion | 2 | 0.4% |
| Wedding | 2 | 0.4% |
| Baptism | 3 | 0.6% |
| Athletic | 3 | 0.6% |
| Schools | 6 | 1.1% |
| Engagement | 2 | 0.4% |
| Large Run/Walk | 11 | 2.1% |
| Other | 43 | 8.1% |
| Total | 528 | 100.0% |

Where event owners live

Residents from 93 zip codes visited the Forest Preserves. Below are the top 10 most frequent residential zip codes. The most common residential zip code in District 13 was 60714.

| Zip code | Permits issued | Percent of permits issued |
|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 60630 | 36 | 6.8% |
| 60625 | 35 | 6.6% |
| 60714 | 35 | 6.6% |
| 60634 | 31 | 5.9% |
| 60631 | 25 | 4.7% |
| 60053 | 24 | 4.5% |
| 60645 | 22 | 4.2% |
| 60076 | 21 | 4.0% |
| 60646 | 19 | 3.6% |
| 60077 | 18 | 3.4% |

Analysis of 13th District Event Survey Data

FPDCC provided data to Com. Suffredin's office on each event permit in the Forest Preserves during 2019 in the 13th District. The Forest Preserves in the 13th District consist of Bunker Hill, Erickson Woods, Linne Woods, Miami Woods, St. Paul Woods, Turnbull Woods, and Wayside Woods.

Using both phone and email, Com. Suffredin's office used contact information from the data provided by the Forest Preserve to survey permit holders on their experience at the Forest Preserve during the 2019 season. Some answered to both the phone survey and the email survey. If so, the email survey was used and phone survey discarded.

Contacting permit holders

82 permit holders returned our survey.

| Contact | Surveys | Percent of those surveyed |
|--------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| Phone | 16 | 19.3% |
| Email | 67 | 80.7% |
| Total | 83 | 100.0% |

Permit holder sites

Bunker Hill was the most popular site amongst those who answered the survey.

| Preserve Name | Permits pulled | Percent of permits pulled |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Bunker Hill | 44 | 53.0% |
| Erickson Woods | 6 | 7.2% |
| Linne Woods | 16 | 19.3% |
| Miami Woods | 4 | 4.8% |
| St. Paul Woods | 8 | 9.6% |
| Turnbull Woods | 1 | 1.2% |
| Wayside Woods | 4 | 4.8% |
| Total | 83 | 100.0% |

First-time visitors v. returning visitors

The vast majority of people who returned surveys had never held an event at the Forest Preserve.

| Was your 2019 picnic your first time hosting a picnic at a Forest Preserve? | Count | Percent |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| Yes | 18 | 22.0 % |
| No | 64 | 78.0% |
| Total | 82 | 100.0% |

Of those who were returning guests, the average person had held events over the past 13 years.

Overall grove conditions

Respondents rated the overall grove conditions an average score of 4.4 out of 5.

| What was the overall condition of the Preserve you visited? (Please consider the condition of the grove shelter if you had one, was the grass mowed, was their trash or litter, was there graffiti, what was the condition of the grill, etc.) | Count | Percent |
|---|--------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 1 | 1.2% |
| 2 | 0 | 0.0% |
| 3 | 8 | 9.8% |
| 4 | 29 | 35.4% |
| 5 | 44 | 53.7% |
| Total | 82 | 100.1% |
| Average | 4.4 (±0.76) | |

Feedback will be discussed more in the individual sections, but the main complaints pertained to trash and lack of signage.

Grove shelter conditions

Respondents rated the grove shelter conditions on average 4.52 out of 5.

| What was the condition of the grove shelter, if you had one? | Count | Percent |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 0 | 0.0% |
| 2 | 0 | 0.0% |
| 3 | 5 | 6.2% |
| 4 | 29 | 35.8% |
| 5 | 47 | 58.0% |
| Total | 81 | 100.0% |
| Average | 4.52 (± 0.61) | |

There were no complaints about the grove shelters.

Picnic tables

Respondents generally felt that there were enough picnic tables.

| Were there enough picnic tables at your picnic grove? | Count | Percent |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| Yes | 78 | 94.0% |
| No | 5 | 6.0% |
| Total | 83 | 100.0% |

There were some people concerned about the condition of the picnic tables. Some mentioned that either the picnic tables were scattered when they arrived, or that the tables had trash on them.

| What was the condition of the picnic tables? | Count | Percent |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 2.4% |
| 2 | 4 | 4.8% |
| 3 | 11 | 13.3% |
| 4 | 32 | 38.6% |
| 5 | 34 | 41.0% |
| Total | 83 | 100.1% |
| Average | 4.11 (± 0.97) | |

Trash cans

Trash was one of the main sources of complaints amongst permit holders. Almost one-third of permit holders did not think there were enough trash bins at their site.

| Were there enough trash receptacles at your grove? | Count | Percent |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| Yes | 55 | 67.1% |
| No | 27 | 32.9% |
| Total | 82 | 100.0% |

There were several complaints about the trash bins – either them being full to capacity, there being trash on the ground, or the trash cans being too far away from the grove shelters.

Restrooms

People were generally fine with the restrooms, although three people mentioned that the washroom ran out of toilet paper during their event.

| Were there enough washrooms or comfort stations in the area? | Count | Percent |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| Yes | 63 | 76.8% |
| No | 19 | 23.2% |
| Total | 82 | 100.0% |

The restrooms received the lowest average rating in the survey.

| What was the cleanliness of the washrooms or comfort stations? | Count | Percent |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | 2 | 2.7% |
| 2 | 4 | 5.3% |
| 3 | 16 | 21.3% |
| 4 | 33 | 44.0% |
| 5 | 20 | 26.7% |
| Total | 75 | 100.0% |
| Average | 3.87 (± 0.96) | |

Parking

There were few issues with parking.

| Was there enough parking near your picnic grove? | Count | Percent |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| Yes | 79 | 97.5% |
| No | 2 | 2.5% |
| Total | 81 | 100.0% |

Water pumps

There were few complaints about the water pump, as permit holder generally didn't rely on them.

| Was there a water pump near your picnic grove? | Count | Percent |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| Yes | 46 | 58.2% |
| No | 33 | 41.8% |
| Total | 79 | 100.0% |

The water pumped worked for most.

| If yes, did it work? | Count | Percent |
|-----------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Yes | 38 | 80.9% |
| No | 9 | 19.1% |
| Total | 47 | 100.0% |

People did not seem to rely on the water pump for their water sources.

| If the pump didn't work, was it a major problem for you? | Count | Percent |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| Yes | 3 | 10.0% |
| No | 27 | 90.0% |
| Total | 30 | 100.0% |

Permit application process

Most applied online for a permit.

| Did you apply for your picnic permit in-person or over the internet? | Count | Percent |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| In Person | 17 | 20.7% |
| Internet | 65 | 79.3% |
| Total | 82 | 100.0% |

Those that applied in person, or had a question found the Forest Preserve staff helpful.

| If you applied in person, did you find the Forest Preserve Staff helpful? | Count | Percent |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| Yes | 19 | 90.5% |
| No | 2 | 9.5% |
| Total | 21 | 100.0% |

The majority of people who applied online put “other” as the reason. The list included: unfamiliarity with internet, needing to go to the Forest Preserve in person to deliver personal information, or the convenience for some of applying in-person.

| If you applied in person, why didn't you apply for your permit over the internet? | Count | Percent |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| I didn't know that I could | 3 | 14.3% |
| Due to FPDCC rules, I had to apply in person | 2 | 9.5% |
| I don't have internet access | 1 | 4.8% |
| Other | 15 | 71.4% |
| Total | 21 | 100.0% |

Signage

Many people had a difficult time finding the grove if they hadn't visited previously. There were also conflicts because of confusion, as some people accidentally set up at the wrong grove.

| Did the Preserve have adequate signage to direct you to parking, picnic groves, along the trails or inform you of Forest Preserve District rules and regulations? | Count | Percent |
|--|--------------|----------------|
| Yes | 64 | 81.0% |
| No | 15 | 19.0% |
| Total | 79 | 100.0% |

People consistently requested larger signs pointing them towards the grove and for the groves to be better marked.

Specific Forest Preserves

Overall

| What was the overall condition of the Preserve you visited? (Please consider the condition of the grove shelter if you had one, was the grass mowed, was their trash or litter, was there graffiti, what was the condition of the grill, etc.) | Average | Count |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Bunker Hill | 4.3 | 44 |
| Erickson Woods | 4.5 | 6 |
| Linne Woods | 4.3 | 15 |
| Miami Woods | 4.8 | 4 |
| St. Paul Woods | 4.6 | 8 |
| Turnbull Woods | 4.0 | 1 |
| Wayside Woods | 4.5 | 4 |
| Total | | 82 |
| Average | 4.4 | |

First time visitors

| Was your 2019 picnic your first time hosting a picnic at a Forest Preserve? | Yes | No | No response | Percent "Yes" |
|---|-----------|-----------|-------------|---------------|
| Bunker Hill | 11 | 33 | 0 | 25.0% |
| Erickson Woods | 2 | 4 | 0 | 33.3% |
| Linne Woods | 2 | 13 | 1 | 12.5% |
| Miami Woods | 1 | 3 | 0 | 25.0% |
| St. Paul Woods | 1 | 7 | 0 | 12.5% |
| Turnbull Woods | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Wayside Woods | 1 | 3 | 0 | 25.0% |
| Total | 18 | 64 | 1 | |
| Average | | | | 21.7% |

Washrooms

| Were there enough washrooms or comfort stations in the area? | Yes | No | No response | Percent "Yes" |
|---|------------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Bunker Hill | 40 | 4 | 0 | 90.9% |
| Erickson Woods | 3 | 3 | 0 | 50.0% |
| Linne Woods | 10 | 5 | 1 | 62.5% |
| Miami Woods | 4 | 0 | 0 | 100.0% |
| St. Paul Woods | 2 | 6 | 0 | 25.0% |
| Turnbull Woods | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Wayside Woods | 4 | 0 | 0 | 100.0% |
| Total | 63 | 19 | 1 | |
| Average | | | | 75.9% |

Trash

| Were there enough trash receptacles at your grove? | Yes | No | No response | Percent "Yes" |
|---|------------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Bunker Hill | 28 | 16 | 0 | 63.6% |
| Erickson Woods | 5 | 1 | 0 | 83.3% |
| Linne Woods | 10 | 5 | 1 | 62.5% |
| Miami Woods | 4 | 0 | 0 | 100.0% |
| St. Paul Woods | 4 | 4 | 0 | 50.0% |
| Turnbull Woods | 1 | 0 | 0 | 100.0% |
| Wayside Woods | 3 | 1 | 0 | 75.0% |
| Total | 55 | 27 | 1 | |
| Average | | | | 66.3% |

Signage

| Did the Preserve have adequate signage to direct you to parking, picnic groves, along the trails or inform you of Forest Preserve District rules and regulations? | Yes | No | No response | Percent "Yes" |
|--|------------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Bunker Hill | 37 | 6 | 1 | 84.1% |
| Erickson Woods | 2 | 3 | 1 | 33.3% |
| Linne Woods | 11 | 3 | 2 | 68.8% |
| Miami Woods | 3 | 1 | 0 | 75.0% |
| St. Paul Woods | 7 | 1 | 0 | 87.5% |
| Turnbull Woods | 1 | 0 | 0 | 100.0% |
| Wayside Woods | 3 | 1 | 0 | 75.0% |
| Total | 64 | 15 | 4 | |
| Average | | | | 77.11% |

There were 15 suggestions about signage

| Wrote suggestion about sign | Suggestions | Percent of total suggestions | Percent of responses from respective site |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Bunker Hill | 7 | 46.7% | 15.9% |
| Erickson Woods | 4 | 26.7% | 66.7% |
| Linne Woods | 2 | 13.3% | 12.5% |
| Miami Woods | 1 | 6.7% | 25.0% |
| St. Paul Woods | 1 | 6.7% | 12.5% |
| Turnbull Woods | 0 | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Wayside Woods | 0 | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Total | | 100.0% | |

Specific Complaints

Bunker Hill

All three of the notes from people who ran out of toilet paper were at Bunker Hill. There were also a few notes about garbage left over from the previous people. In addition, some guests were confused about which space was theirs.

Erickson Woods

One person complained that the FP Preserve Officer was aggravated that they were using vehicles to pick up and drop off food and equipment.

Linne Woods

The complaints were very dispersed. There was one complaint on each of the following: having to bring a porta-potty, grass not being cut recently, lack of signage causing confusion and trash from previous people being there.

Miami Woods

No complaints.

St. Paul Woods

One person complained they did not receive their deposit back.

Turnbull Woods

One person wished there was a grill.

Wayside Woods

No complaints.

Recommendations

We make the following recommendations:

1. Increase the number of rolls of toilet paper in the washrooms, especially at Bunker Hill
2. Clarify ahead of time with permit holders their responsibility to clean up their trash after the event, and charge a “clean up fee” for those who do not clean up their space
3. Add or clarify signs around the Forest Preserves. Clearly state the grove number in addition to signs directing residents towards the groves from the street
4. If it doesn't already, the Forest Preserve should survey residents the day after their event occurs while their memories are better.