

**Forest Preserves of Cook County
Conservation & Policy Council
September 10, 2015**

1:15 pm to 2:45 pm: Pre-meeting Visit

[Powderhorn Lake Nature Preserve, 13817-14451 Brainard Avenue, Burnham, IL 60633](#)

3 pm to 5 pm: Council Meeting

[Sand Ridge Nature Center, 15891 Paxton Avenue, South Holland, IL 60473](#)

A G E N D A

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| 3:00 pm | 1. Welcome & Introductions |
| | 2. Comments from the public |
| | 3. Approval of minutes for 6.23.15 meeting of the council (See attachment 1.) |
| | 4. Receive and file minutes for 8.7.15 review committee (See attachment 2, page 2.) |
| 3:15 pm | 5. Review of draft 5 year implementation strategy. (See attachment 3.) |
| 4:15 pm | 6. Discussion of 2016 budget recommendations. |
| 4:50 pm | 7. Next steps |
| | a. Authorize review committee to work with staff to incorporate revisions and approval final documents, OR |
| | b. Reconvene council in October. |
| 5:00 pm | 8. Adjourn |

ATTACHMENTS

1. Minutes from 6.23.15 council meeting
2. Minutes from 8.7.15 review committee
3. Draft 5 year implementation strategy

Attachment 1

**The Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Conservation & Policy Council**

Minutes for June 23, 2015 • Village of Barrington Hills, 112 Algonquin Road, Barrington Hills, IL 60010

Call to Order. Council chair Wendy Paulson called the meeting to order at 3 pm. The following council members and others attended:

Advisory Council Members

Wendy Paulson, chair
Robert Castaneda
Michael De Santiago
Peter Ellis
Terry Guen
Dr. Sylvia Jenkins
Falona Joy
Linda Mastandrea
Laurel Ross
Mark Templeton

Forest Preserve Staff

Amanda Grant
Anthony Tindall
Arnold Randall
Cathy Geraghty
Chris Adas
Cynthia Moreno
Daniel Rodriquez
Dennis White
Erik Varela
Lambrini Lukidis
Lydia Uhler
Mary Pat Cross
Stephen Hughes
Troy Alim

Partners

Dr. Alejandro Grajal (CZS)
Benjamin Cox (FOTFP)
Emily Harris (Harris Strategies)
Dr. Gregory Mueller (CBG)
Justin Pepper (Bobolink
Foundation)
Lenore Beyer-Clow (Openlands)
Rebecca Sanders (Audubon)
Richard Gamble (CZS)
Shelley Davis (FP Foundation)
Dr. Stuart Strahl (CZS)

Welcome. Council members Wendy Paulson and Laurel Ross gave a brief overview of the pre-meeting hike at Galloping Hill - a large-scale, successful grassland restoration that is an exemplary example of the forest preserves working together with contractors, volunteers, other government agencies and NGO's

Public Comments. There was one public comment from Stuart Strahl, Ph.D., President & CEO, Chicago Zoological Society (CZS)/Brookfield Zoo who expressed his full support of the Forest Preserves and cited several initiatives including:

- The Zoo is excited to be working in partnership with the Forest Preserves to implement the Next Century Conservation Plan;
- The Zoo is hosting the July board meeting of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County Board of Commissioners. Council members are invited.
- The Zoo is launching a new "wild encounters" program at the Brookfield Zoo to help build a constituency of people that appreciate nature.

In addition, Council Members Mark Templeton, Laurel Ross, and Wendy Paulson expressed their appreciation for those who sponsored and participated in "Celebrating 100 Years of Beauty in the Forest Preserves," the Forest Preserves Centennial Symposium/Tour on May 28 and 29, 2015 at DePaul University and Sagawau.

Approval of minutes. A motion to approve the minutes of the April 6, 2015 meeting of the Council was made by Mark Templeton and seconded by Laurel Ross; the minutes were unanimously approved by voice vote.

Presentation by the People Committee. Co-chair Rebecca Sanders explained that the role of the People Committee is to connect the citizens of Cook County to nature. Co-chair Cynthia Moreno went on to discuss the Preserves' recent successes including opening new campgrounds and launching the CLIC (Camping Leadership Immersion Course) program. Council Member Rob Castaneda recently participated in a community partner CLIC training and stated he had an amazing time. He thought the program was well run and appropriate for everyone from the experienced to the amateur. He encourages all Council members to visit the campgrounds and is excited to introduce young people to camping so they can experience nature without having to travel too far from home. Cynthia also discussed the status of the signage and wayfinding plan and gateways project, and Rebecca discussed program partnerships and the importance and challenges of working with partners. Cynthia finished the presentation by highlighting current top priorities of the People Committee, including:

- Nature & Health
- ADA Accessibility
- Cultural Competency

(Also see Attachment 1A.)

Council members asked the following questions and offered guidance:

- Was the ADA considered and incorporated into the Signage and Wayfinding Plan? ADA issues were discussed in some specific signage cases as part of the planning process and the Forest Preserves will be incorporating a general policy into the final plan.
- What are the gateway sites? A gateway is designed to invite and encourage people to enter a forest preserve; entrances will be at high visibility locations with access to outdoor recreation opportunities (such as trails) and will be revitalized through landscaping, signage, and other interpretive elements. The Forest Preserves has been awarded funds from the Cook County Department of Public Health through a CDC grant program in order to create a Gateway Master Plan and site plans for 10 gateway locations.
- Are the funding needs highlighted in the People Committee's presentation part of the Forest Preserves budget or are they a Forest Preserve Foundation funding priority? The funding needs outlined in the presentation are not currently part of any budget, but those needs may be included in the Forest Preserves' 2016 budget requests.
- Will or does the Forest Preserves offer people unrestricted open spaces to interact with nature outside of the confines of a campground? The Forest Preserves are currently in the process of producing literature on outside activity opportunities for each campground location. Campgrounds are all different and offer many types of activities and opportunities for people to experience nature including ropes courses/climbing walls, nature play areas, and nature trails. Outside of the campgrounds, there are nature centers with nature play areas. The Forest Preserves are currently working with the Chicago Zoological Society to develop a nature play plan for each nature center.
- Is there a formal education program? While the Forest Preserves does not have a formal education program, it does have many informal programs including Mighty Acorns, Citizen Scientists in Action, It's Cooler in the Forest, school field trips to nature centers, and classroom programs in schools. Its educational programs have been professionally developed to be

flexible, to meet the needs of any curriculum, and to align with Illinois Learning Standards. The Preserves also work with University of Illinois Extension to offer teacher training opportunities. There are also many informal partnerships that use the Forest Preserves for curriculum based programs, including Birds in My Backyard. The Preserves need to build on the success of its current programs, which are dependent on the commitment of individual teachers and schools.

- What are the metrics, quantitative and qualitative, that the Forest Preserves are using to measure success with attracting people to the Preserves? The Forest Preserves is part of the Cook County STAR performance management program through which the Forest Preserves report quarterly numbers on six strategic areas which are made publicly available. For education and outreach, the Preserves measure the number of participants in programs and number of groups with which Preserves staff interact. Preserves staff welcome any recommendations on how they can better measure programs. Metrics are available to view online at <http://fpdcc.com/star/>
- Will the website be translated into different languages? Currently website translation is not a top priority but we are considering it. A suggestion was made that the Forest Preserves should think about seeking volunteers to translate website in several languages if funding is an issue.
- Are there targeted communities? The People Committee recently put together a map of where the Forest Preserves and partners have groups with which they have worked. This map is a starting point for determining what communities the Preserves and its partners are not currently reaching and where the Preserves and its partners should focus.
- Is it possible to leverage resources with partners? It is something the Forest Preserves can consider, but even its partners need resources. The Preserves are working on relationship building, but it can be difficult for community organizations to find funding for their current programs and the Forest Preserves are not always a priority, so this has been a challenge.

The time to discuss key questions identified by the People Committee was limited, and it was suggested that Council members provide feedback via email.

1. What do you perceive as the barriers to people accessing the Forest Preserves?
2. In what capacity can we count on the Conservation & Policy Council to assist the People Committee in implementing these three priority areas?

Presentation by the Economics Committee. Co-chairs Richard Gamble and Chris Adas explained that the goal of the Economics Committee is to insure that the people of Cook County will “value the economic benefits of protected lands.” They explained that the Committee is focused on the following priorities:

- Documenting the economic value of the Forest Preserves
- Encouraging economic business development
- Developing a strategic marketing campaign

(Also see Attachment 1A.)

1. Chris and Rich asked for feedback on this key question: *“How do we allocate limited resources for surveys and marketing to be as efficient and effective as possible?”* Also, how do we use the results from surveys and market research in the most efficient and effective manner, ensuring our decisions are data driven and focusing on our final goal--getting more people to use and value the Forest Preserves?

Council members asked questions and offered suggestions as follows:

- It's a challenge to compete against for-profit companies for advertising/marketing. Consider using an economic value report to show communities, municipalities and corporations the value of the Forest Preserves. This will help them see the forest Preserves as an asset and encourage them to market the Forest Preserves on behalf of the Preserves and themselves.
- Consider developing an editorial calendar to help manage the marketing of the Forest Preserves.
- Consider the concept of place making/sense of place – how do we make the Forest Preserves destination sites? Need to determine if we want to promote/market 'destinations' or just general information/awareness.
- Utilize the Chicago Botanic Garden and Brookfield Zoo membership database and communications portals to market the forest preserves. Consider a profile on the Preserves in the Garden and Zoo magazines.
- Discovery Communications had a great approach to promoting the National Parks. Look into it.
- Need to consider public policy perspective and to think about the public and economic benefits and how it's translated to the forest preserves constituencies.
- Work with media outlets like WBEZ to do a profile on the Preserves or perhaps a regular feature.
- The value of partnerships is important to keep in mind, because partners all use the Preserves and there is no competition.
- Think about partners for actual dollars—and expand partnership base to include local chambers of commerce, real estate agents
- Consider corporations as 'partners' through volunteering, marketing, and actual dollars. Should develop an asset map highlighting corporations adjacent to Preserves.
- Look at digital infrastructure and wayfinding.
- Focus on church and faith based institutions when trying to recruit new partners. People like to give where they are involved already.
- General impression problem, corporations may not see the benefits of the Preserves.
- Is the Forest Preserves considering a naming rights policy? There are many opportunities for naming with current assets. Could the Forest Preserves could make money? The Forest Preserves is already considering naming rights/sponsorship and has worked with REI to sponsor a trail, for example.
- People don't think about the Preserves in the bigger picture of the regions assets. The Preserves should come to mind when one thinks of the lakefront and the Chicago parks system.
- Consider joining forces with other partner agencies and corporations to develop a general nature campaign to help promote the forest preserves. By aligning with others, the Preserves have more opportunities for marketing, PR and research.
- Work with Choose Chicago and the "Epic" Campaign, e.g., birds making an epic journey an stopping in the Forest Preserves.
- The Forest Preserves should considering highlighting its role with ADA25 Chicago as a marketing opportunity.

Review and approval of amended language in section 4.3g of the Plan. A motion was made by Mark Templeton and seconded by Peter Ellis to approve the amended language proposed to read as follows:

Put in place a financial plan that will produce the annual investment needed to restore 30,000 acres and expand the forest preserves to 90,000 acres in 25 years, and to meet the other goals outlined in the Next Century Conservation Plan.

The language change was approved by majority vote. The Council stressed the importance of determining a targeted annual measurement so we can hold ourselves accountable and know what we need to do each year to reach our goals.

Early Action Seed Funding. \$40,000 is currently available for funding small scale projects, with the maximum award capped at \$10,000. An RFP has been drafted and will be open to the public. Proposals must accomplish the goals of the Next Century Conservation Plan and is open to both current and new partners. Council members suggested the cross-committee initiatives could benefit from this funding.

Communications Strategy. The current www.nextcenturyconservationplan.com website is being revamped to include information on the NCCP's implementation process and the work of the Conservation & Policy Council. Recent and future accomplishments will be featured on the website through journalistic quality stories and progress on key targets for 2020 will be highlighted and tracked.

Adjournment. A motion was made by Falona Joy and seconded by Laurel Ross and the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 PM.

ATTACHMENT 1A
PEOPLE COMMITTEE TOP PRIORITIES FOR 2016

Nature and Health

2014/2015 Baseline	2016 Mileposts	2016 Funding Needs	Where we want to be in 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and education workshops held with 25 community providers • Held a Nature, Culture and Human Health Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold four health/community workshops • Launch one pilot study to document benefits of nature and health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$15K for four workshops • \$20K for one pilot study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health/community workshops held regularly creating lasting relationships with the healthcare community • Have documented research validating benefits of nature on health

ADA Accessibility

2014/2015 Baseline	2016 Mileposts	2016 Funding Needs	Where we want to be in 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalizing site and facility assessment for accessibility • Creating a working group focused on ADA programming and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize facility and site improvements • Evaluate current programs • Develop programming and training plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • \$150K (including ADA consultant, equipment, programming) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Phase I of ADA accessibility plan • ADA awareness integrated into staff training • Increase number of accessible programs

Cultural Competency

2014/2015 Baseline	2016 Mileposts	2016 Funding Needs	Where we want to be in 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and prioritize materials/signage for translation • Current culturally focused programs and partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop communications and engagement strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$75K (consultant, focus groups, marketing, translation, and programming) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming, materials and outreach efforts will be reflective of largest cultural communities in Cook County

ECONOMICS COMMITTEE TOP PRIORITIES FOR 2016

Documenting Economic Value

2014/2015 Baseline	2016 Mileposts	2016 Funding Needs	Where we want to be in 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With research partners, document and publicize the dollar value and avoided costs of nature’s benefits, such as reducing flooding, improving air quality and storing carbon, as well as offering free public health amenities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FPCC will develop a report that documents the full economic value of the Preserves via land type and other metrics used by land mgt. Agencies. • The FPCC will produce maps to show elected officials, business leaders, and other key stakeholders, District (District + Partner + Volunteer) investments, including direct job creation figures. • The FPCC will support and identify opportunities for compatible economic development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10K-\$100K (Possible collaboration with Earth Economics, U.S. Forest Services, CW, CMAP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FPCC is able to leverage its political and branding capital for future new investments and fundraising strategies.

Encourage Economic Business Development

2014/2015 Baseline	2016 Mileposts	2016 Funding Needs	Where we want to be in 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with communities to find opportunities for trail and preserve-related retail uses. • Help neighboring communities use the forest preserves to attract visitors and create markets. • Collaborative projects, such as promoting native landscaping on corporate campuses. • Anticipate how local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider expanding concession and other business opportunities including farmers’ markets, coffee shops, bike rentals, canoe and kayak facilities or outdoor outfitters. • Connect FPCC users to local hotels, B&Bs, restaurants and retreat facilities nearby (and vice versa). • Establish partnerships with local chambers of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New staff focused on marketing • Budget for marketing staff • Cost of new marketing staff and budget TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FPCC users are happy with being exposed to, or have access to, other amenities, concessions, and tourism opportunities (1) the Forest Preserves has marketed, (2) that are near the Forest Preserves, or (3) are at the Forest Preserves. • IL/Cook County/CW area visitors are exposed to FPCC via hotels, restaurants, etc...

economic development needs relate to nature conservation goals.	commerce, tourism bureaus and community organizations.		•Businesses locate/relocate to be near FPCC/FPCC users.
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Marketing Campaign

2014/2015 Baseline	2016 Mileposts	2016 Funding Needs	Where we want to be in 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Capitalize on shared marketing opportunities with the Garden and Zoo. •Creatively tie the preserves to tourism opportunities. •Package visitor opportunities with cultural and dining possibilities and a robust tour program. •Track and publicize increased local investment and tax revenues from these new preserve-related businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Visitors to the CBG & the CBG will receive new marketing related information/communications about the FPCC. •FPCC will work with surrounding businesses, neighborhoods, and elected officials to connect to FPCC users and FPCC amenities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Additional Staff focused on Communications •Increased budget for communications •Outside Agency/Consultant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The FPCC will be able to reach new users, build support throughout the County for future new investments, and promote its economic value in support of the implementation of the NCCP.

Attachment 2

**Forest Preserves of Cook County
Conservation & Policy Council 5 Year Plan Review Committee
Minutes for August 7, 2015**

The meeting was called to order at 9 am. The following Council members and others participated in the meeting:

Conservation & Policy Council Review Cmte

Wendy Paulson
Mark Templeton (by phone)
Michael DeSantiago
Peter Ellis (by phone)

FPCC Staff & Others

Arnold Randall
Cathy Geraghty
Eileen Figel
Emily Harris
Lenore Beyer-Clow
Troy Alim

The following issues were discussed:

Council's obligations to report – these will be the focus of the Sept. Council meeting:

- Annual report to the President – this will be in the form of a brief summary memo summarizing where we are, how we got here, and where we are going. The report will highlight key aspects of the strategic plan and budget recommendations.
- Strategic operating plan.
- Budget recommendation.

Review of draft 5 year strategic plan. Emily Harris presented an overview of the draft 5 year strategic plan. The review committee offered the following suggestions:

Document Overview. There was consensus that:

- The strategic plan has three purposes:
 1. Connect the broad long-term goals of the Next Century Conservation Plan to operations of the District
 2. Set priorities
 3. Serve as an internal and external communications and management tool about how the NCCP is being implemented
- The primary elements of the NCCP vision are mutually dependent and the four goals are all in service of these priorities which include:

- Restoration (30,000 acres high quality for ecological health)
- Expansion (grow Preserves to 90,000 acres)
- Public Engagement (welcoming preserves, iconic for Chicago region, users/community of support reflecting diversity of Cook County)

Proposed Revisions. The current document moves in the right direction with the following changes:

- Add an introduction to: (i) Explain the purpose of the strategic plan and how it ties to the NCCP, (ii) summarize top priorities including building partnerships, changing culture, improving internal and external communications, etc., and (iii) highlight our approach to scaling up, increasing resources, and other challenges. These three elements should also be carried through to the introduction to each goal as appropriate
- There are many good programs and projects which address priority goals; the challenge is scaling these up to create large scale impact. The plan should be explicit about strategies to validate successful programs and/or design new pilot programs and evaluate the potential for replication and scaling up. These pilots/validation efforts will ultimately surface the metrics for evaluating the success of the plan, especially in terms of the People goal which is harder to measure.
- Be explicit about any actions omitted from 5 year strategy (such as local food production).
- Add details explaining how we will get from 2016 mileposts to 2020 outcomes (e.g. identify additional mileposts along the way.) The current draft is inconsistent.
- Make explicit whether resource needs are for the District or for Partner organizations. Clarify throughout throughout how the district can “set the table for others” to be effective partners in accomplishing the goals, recognizing that this level of partner engagement requires an investment of staff time by the District

Detailed recommendations.

- Final design: Provide a map of the entire forest preserves system in the final document. Provide working maps for the council detailing key programs and proposals (such as the 7000 acres currently under restoration, 3000 to 5000 acres which are a top priority for restoration, etc.)
- Nature Goal:
 - Metrics seem fairly explicit in terms of acres but more clarity needed about process vs. results
 - How do metrics for hours translate to restoration goal? Is there a way to monetize these as in-kind hours toward the ultimate cost of restoration to demonstrate what is being contributed?
 - Include a communication focus including continuing and expanding efforts to communicate more effectively to those already engaged

- People goal:
 - Metric is harder to achieve – theory is that positive experience will translate to engagement. Evaluation should test/validate this
 - Be explicit that a goal is to reflect the diversity of Cook County and demonstrate how existing and pilot programs are increasing that engagement
 - Include engagement of business community (civic leadership) examining things like how Corporate work days translate to ambassadors for the Preserves
 - Consider new opportunities to partner with Chicago Public Schools in ways that can lead to much larger scale participation of diverse urban audience. Difficult to achieve, but consider a pilot designed to be scaled

Review of draft 2016 budget recommendations. Eileen Figel and Troy Alim presented a framework for the 2016 budget recommendations. The Review committee agreed that the entire district budget should be reflected in the analysis to enable a conversation about costs/benefits and tradeoffs of both new and “legacy” programs. This conversation may be limited during this first year, but could become more in-depth in future years.

Determining how to count partner investment is tricky. It is important to be explicit about the relationship to Plan priorities – e.g. restoration investment that is toward the priority sites identified by the District’s natural and cultural resources master plan.

Next Steps. The committee asked to proceed as follows:

1. Committee members will send to Eileen questions or suggestions they have regarding any aspects of the draft 5 year plan.
2. Eileen and Cathy will review and respond to questions.
3. Staff will update the draft plan, add an introduction and prepare budget recommendations and distribute the updated documents to the review committee. Staff will offer various group or individual phone calls to get feedback from the review committee.
4. Eileen will incorporate feedback and forward a final draft to the full council one week prior to the September 10 council meeting.
5. The Council will be asked to approve the 5-year plan with proposed changes and authorize the review committee to approve a final document (including designed format) for presentation to the President and Board of Commissioners. We will utilize the same process for annual report and budget recommendation.