

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Report on Federal Awards

December 31, 2024

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

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**Report on Internal Control
Over Financial Reporting and on Compliance
and Other Matters Based on an Audit of
Financial Statements Performed in Accordance
With Government Auditing Standards**

Independent Auditors' Report

To the Honorable President and Members of the Board of Commissioners of
Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois

We have audited, in accordance with the auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States (*Government Auditing Standards*), the financial statements of the governmental activities, the discretely presented component units, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (the District), as of and for the year ended December 31, 2024, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise the District's basic financial statements, and have issued our report thereon dated July 16, 2025. The financial statements of the Pension Fund and the Postemployment Group Health Benefit Fund were not audited in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, and accordingly, this report does not include reporting on internal control over financial reporting or instances of reportable noncompliance associated with the Pension Fund and the Postemployment Group Health Benefit Fund. Our report includes a reference to other auditors who audited the financial statements of the Chicago Horticultural Society, the Chicago Zoological Society, the Pension Fund and the Postemployment Group Health Benefit Fund, as described in our report on the District's financial statements. This report does not include the results of the other auditors' testing of internal control over financial reporting or compliance and other matters that are reported on separately by those auditors.

Report on Internal Control Over Financial Reporting

In planning and performing our audit of the financial statements, we considered the District's internal control over financial reporting (internal control) as a basis for designing audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances for the purpose of expressing our opinions on the financial statements, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the District's internal control. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of the District's internal control.

A deficiency in internal control exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity's financial statements will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies and therefore, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies may exist that were not identified. We identified a deficiency in internal control, described in the accompanying schedule of findings and questioned costs as item 2024-001, that we consider to be a material weakness.

Report on Compliance and Other Matters

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the District's financial statements are free from material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the financial statements. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit, and accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

The District's Response to Finding

Government Auditing Standards requires the auditor to perform limited procedures on the District's response to the finding identified in our audit and described in the accompanying schedule of findings and questioned costs. The District's response was not subjected to the other auditing procedures applied in the audit of the financial statements and, accordingly, we express no opinion on the response.

Purpose of This Report

The purpose of this report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control or on compliance. This report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the entity's internal control and compliance. Accordingly, this communication is not suitable for any other purpose.

Baker Tilly US, LLP

Chicago, Illinois
July 16, 2025

**Report on Compliance
for the Major Federal Program;
Report on Internal Control Over Compliance; and
Report on the Schedule of Expenditures of
Federal Awards Required by the Uniform Guidance**

Independent Auditors' Report

To the Honorable President and Members of the Board of Commissioners of
Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois

Report on Compliance for the Major Federal Program

Opinion on the Major Federal Program

We have audited the Forest Preserve District of Cook County's (the District) compliance with the types of compliance requirements identified as subject to audit in the OMB *Compliance Supplement* that could have a direct and material effect on the District's major federal program for the year ended December 31, 2024. The District's major federal program is identified in the summary of auditors' results section of the accompanying schedule of findings and questioned costs.

In our opinion, the District complied, in all material respects, with the compliance requirements referred to above that could have a direct and material effect on its major federal program for the year ended December 31, 2024.

Basis for Opinion on the Major Federal Program

We conducted our audit of compliance in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS); the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States (*Government Auditing Standards*); and the audit requirements of Title 2 U.S. *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance). Our responsibilities under those standards and the Uniform Guidance are further described in the Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance section of our report.

We are required to be independent of the District and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion on compliance for the major federal program. Our audit does not provide a legal determination of the District's compliance with the compliance requirements referred to above.

Responsibilities of Management for Compliance

Management is responsible for compliance with the requirements referred to above and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of effective internal control over compliance with the requirements of laws, statutes, regulations, rules and provisions of contracts or grant agreements applicable to the District's federal programs.

Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether material noncompliance with the compliance requirements referred to above occurred, whether due to fraud or error, and express an opinion on the District's compliance based on our audit. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS, *Government Auditing Standards*, and the Uniform Guidance will always detect material noncompliance when it exists. The risk of not detecting material noncompliance resulting from fraud is higher than for that resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Noncompliance with the compliance requirements referred to above is considered material, if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, it would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user of the report on compliance about the District's compliance with the requirements of the major federal program as a whole.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS, *Government Auditing Standards*, and the Uniform Guidance, we

- exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- identify and assess the risks of material noncompliance, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the District's compliance with the compliance requirements referred to above and performing such other procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.
- obtain an understanding of the District's internal control over compliance relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances and to test and report on internal control over compliance in accordance with the Uniform Guidance, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the District's internal control over compliance. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and any significant deficiencies and material weaknesses in internal control over compliance that we identified during the audit.

Report on Internal Control Over Compliance

A deficiency in internal control over compliance exists when the design or operation of a control over compliance does not allow management or employees, in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct, noncompliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program on a timely basis. A *material weakness in internal control over compliance* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control over compliance, such that there is a reasonable possibility that material noncompliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program will not be prevented, or detected and corrected, on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency in internal control over compliance* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control over compliance with a type of compliance requirement of a federal program that is less severe than a material weakness in internal control over compliance, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control over compliance was for the limited purpose described in the Auditors' Responsibilities for the Audit of Compliance section above and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control over compliance that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control over compliance. Given these limitations, during our audit we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control over compliance that we consider to be material weaknesses, as defined above. However, material weaknesses or significant deficiencies in internal control over compliance may exist that were not identified.

Our audit was not designed for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control over compliance. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.

The purpose of this report on internal control over compliance is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over compliance and the results of that testing based on the requirements of the Uniform Guidance. Accordingly, this report is not suitable for any other purpose.

Report on Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards Required by the Uniform Guidance

We have audited the financial statements of the governmental activities, the discretely presented component units, each major fund, and the aggregate remaining fund information of the District as of and for the year ended December 31, 2024, and the related notes to the financial statements, which collectively comprise the District's basic financial statements. We issued our report thereon dated July 16, 2025, which contained unmodified opinions on those financial statements. Our audit was conducted for the purpose of forming opinions on the basic financial statements that collectively comprise the basic financial statements. Our report includes a reference to other auditors who audited the financial statements of the Chicago Horticultural Society, the Chicago Zoological Society, and the Pension Fund and the Postemployment Group Health Benefit Fund as described in our report on the District's financial statements. The accompanying schedule of expenditures of federal awards is presented for purposes of additional analysis as required by the Uniform Guidance and is not a required part of the basic financial statements. Such information is the responsibility of management and was derived from and relates directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the basic financial statements. The information has been subjected to the auditing procedures applied in the audit of the basic financial statements and certain additional procedures, including comparing and reconciling such information directly to the underlying accounting and other records used to prepare the basic financial statements or to the basic financial statements themselves, and other additional procedures in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. In our opinion, the schedule of expenditures of federal awards is fairly stated in all material respects in relation to the basic financial statements as a whole.

Baker Tilly US, LLP

Chicago, Illinois
July 16, 2025

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards

Year Ended December 31, 2024

Federal Grantor/ Program Title	AL Number	Pass-Through Agency Grant Number	Federal Expenditures	Payments Made to Subrecipients
U.S. Department of Treasury:				
<i>Passed through Cook County:</i>				
Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds:				
COVID-19 - ARPA - Conservation Corps (M)	21.027	N/A	\$ 1,419,489	\$ -
COVID-19 - ARPA - Riparian Restoration (M)	21.027	N/A	730,722	-
COVID-19 - ARPA - Premium Pay (M)	21.027	N/A	36,000	-
COVID-19 - ARPA - SE Land Acquisition (M)	21.027	N/A	4,703,706	-
COVID-19 - ARPA General Headquarters (M)	21.027	N/A	1,243,497	-
COVID-19 - ARPA New Comfort Stations (M)	21.027	N/A	702,000	-
COVID-19 - ARPA Comfort Station Rehabilitation (M)	21.027	N/A	1,425,000	-
Subtotal - 21.027 - Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds			<u>10,260,414</u>	<u>-</u>
Total U.S. Department of Treasury:			<u>10,260,414</u>	<u>-</u>
U.S. Department of Commerce:				
<i>Direct:</i>				
Coastal Zone Management Administration Awards				
CEP - Eggers Community Engagement	11.419	N/A	104,221	-
Subtotal - 11.419 - Coastal Zone Management Administration Awards			<u>104,221</u>	<u>-</u>
Habitat Conservation				
Partner APP No AA	11.463	N/A	27,985	-
Subtotal - 11.463 - Habitat Conservation			<u>27,985</u>	<u>-</u>
Total U.S. Department of Commerce:			<u>132,206</u>	<u>-</u>
U.S. Department of the Interior:				
<i>Direct:</i>				
Great Lakes Restoration				
Bemis Woods-Salt Creek Improvement	15.662	N/A	87,947	-
Subtotal - 15.662 - Great Lakes Restoration			<u>87,947</u>	<u>-</u>
Total U.S. Department of the Interior:			<u>87,947</u>	<u>-</u>
U.S. Department of Transportation:				
<i>Direct:</i>				
Illinois Bicycle Path Grant Program				
Tinley Creek Trail Improvements	20.205	N/A	21,474	-
Subtotal - 20.205 - Illinois Bicycle Path Grant Program			<u>21,474</u>	<u>-</u>
Total U.S. Department of Transportation:			<u>21,474</u>	<u>-</u>
Total expenditures of federal awards			<u><u>\$ 10,502,041</u></u>	<u><u>\$ -</u></u>

(M) Denotes a major program.

See notes to schedule of expenditures of federal awards

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Notes to Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards
December 31, 2024

1. Basis of Presentation

The accompanying schedule of expenditures of federal awards (the Schedule) includes the federal award activity of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (the District) under programs of the federal government for the year ended December 31, 2024. The information in this Schedule is presented in accordance with the requirements of Title 2 U.S. *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 200, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* (Uniform Guidance). Because the Schedule presents only a selected portion of the operations of the District, it is not intended to and does not present the financial position, changes in net position or cash flows of the District.

The reporting entity for the District is based upon criteria established by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board. The District is the primary government according to GASB criteria, while the Chicago Horticultural Society and Chicago Zoological Society are discretely presented component units. Federal awards received directly by the discretely presented component units are not included in this report since the component units have been audited by other auditors for their grants and those amounts are reported in separate reports.

2. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

Expenditures reported on the Schedule are reported on the accrual or modified accrual basis of accounting. Such expenditures are recognized following the cost principles contained in the Uniform Guidance, wherein certain types of expenditures are not allowable or are limited as to reimbursement. Pass-through entity identifying numbers are presented where available.

The underlying accounting records for some grant programs are maintained on the modified accrual basis of accounting. Under the modified accrual basis, revenues are recorded when susceptible to accrual, i.e., both measurable and available. Available means collectible within the current period or soon enough thereafter to be used to pay liabilities of the current period. Expenditures are recorded when the liability is incurred. The accounting records for other grant programs are maintained on the accrual basis, i.e., when the revenue has been earned and the liability is incurred.

3. Indirect Cost Rate

The District has not elected to use the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate.

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Schedule of Findings and Questioned Costs
Year Ended December 31, 2024

Section I - Summary of Auditors' Results

Financial Statements

Type of report the auditor issued on whether the financial statements audited were prepared in accordance with GAAP:

Unmodified

Internal control over financial reporting:

Material weakness(es) identified?

 X yes

 no

Significant deficiency(ies) identified?

 yes

 X none reported

Noncompliance material to financial statements noted?

 yes

 X no

Federal Awards

Internal control over major programs:

Material weakness(es) identified?

 yes

 X no

Significant deficiency(ies) identified?

 yes

 X none reported

Type of auditor's report issued on compliance for major programs:

Unmodified

Any audit findings disclosed that are required to be reported in accordance with section 2 CFR 200.516(a) of the Uniform Guidance?

 yes

 X no

Auditee qualified as low-risk auditee?

 yes

 X no

Dollar threshold used to distinguish between type A and type B programs:

 \$750,000

Identification of major federal programs:

<u>Assistance Listing Number</u>	<u>Name of Federal Program or Cluster</u>
21.027	Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Schedule of Findings and Questioned Costs
Year Ended December 31, 2024

Section II - Financial Statement Findings Required to be Reported in Accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*

Finding 2024-01: External Financial Reporting

Criteria: An internal control structure over external financial reporting is necessary to ensure the proper presentation of the financial statements.

Condition: The District does not maintain an external financial reporting department or function but relies on its audit firm for this purpose.

Cause/Effect: The District does not have an external reporting function but relies upon the auditor for expertise in external financial reporting. External financial statements would not have been presented in accordance with GAAP without reliance on the external auditor. Material adjustments in order to present in accordance with GAAP were found by the auditor. Management is ultimately responsible for the fair presentation of the financial statements.

Management Response: Budget constraints has limited the District's ability to hire with expertise in government financial reporting. We feel that this is an acceptable level of risk in that finance staff works closely with the auditors to ensure that the statements are a fair presentation of our financial condition.

Section III - Federal Awards Findings and Questioned Costs

None noted.

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

Summary Schedule of Prior Year Audit Findings
Year Ended December 31, 2024

Finding No.: 2023-001

Condition: The District does not maintain an external financial reporting department or function, but relies on its audit firm for this purpose.

Current Status: Finding still applicable. See 2024-001.

Finding No.: 2023-002

Condition: Management is responsible for maintaining accounting records pertaining to the entity's capital assets for purposes of financial reporting.

Current Status: The District has remediated this finding in 2024.