

# Conservation & Policy Council

April 6, 2015

Sagawau Environmental Learning Center, 12545 W 111th Street, Lemont, IL 60439

1:30 pm to 2:45 pm: Tour of Sagawau Canyon

3 pm to 5 pm: Council Meeting

## AGENDA

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- 3:00 pm
1. Welcome & Introductions
  2. Public Comment
  3. Approval of minutes for 1.20.15 meeting of the council
- 3:15 pm
4. Presentation by the Nature Committee
    - a. Setting context: Why restoration is important & what would happen without it. (Jane Balaban)
    - b. Top Priorities (John McCabe)
      - i. Baselines
      - ii. Mileposts
      - iii. 2016 budget
      - iv. where we want to be in 2020
    - c. Key Questions
      - Without broad public support, we will not succeed. How, then, do we convince the public that healthy, thriving forest preserves are as important as clearing the snow and other public services?
      - How do we talk about the need for restoration and expansion so it resonates with the different constituencies that need to buy into the plan? How do we hone and deliver our message?
      - What information do council members need to be effective ambassadors?
- 4:00 pm
5. Presentation by the Leadership Committee
    - a. Setting context: Overview of current revenues and expenses for FPCC. (Troy Alim)
    - b. Top Priorities (Lenore Beyer-Clow)
      - i. Baselines
      - ii. Mileposts
      - iii. 2016 budget
      - iv. where we want to be in 2020

c. Key Question

- We know we need to raise significant resources. How do we make the case that this work is important and build the widespread support needed to ensure success?

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|---------|---|
| 4:45 pm | 6. Election of Vice Chair and Secretary (Falona for VC, Mark for Secretary) |
|         | 7. Review and approval of amended operating guidelines (See Attachment B.)  |
|         | 8. Interest in individual/group fieldtrips (Cathy Geraghty)                 |
| 5:00 pm | 9. Adjourn  |

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**Attachments**

- A. Minutes for the January 20, 2015 meeting of the Conservation & Policy Council
- B. Proposed Revision to Operating Guidelines
- C. Natural & Cultural Resources Master Plan executive summary
- D. Council Member Terms
- E. Calendar of Upcoming Meetings/Events
- F. Readings/Media clips

## Directions and Map

### Sagawau Environmental Learning Center

- Location details from fpdcc.com: 12545 W. 111<sup>th</sup> Street, Lemont, IL 60439. *"100 yards east of Archer Ave, or four miles west of Swallow Cliff Sledding Hill on Rt. 83."*
- From the North, take Kingery Rd (IL-83)/ Archer Ave (IL-171) south. Turn left at 111<sup>th</sup> St /Calumet Sag Road(IL-83 South). The parking lot is located on the left, 100 yards east of Archer Avenue
- From LaGrange Rd/96<sup>th</sup> Ave (US-45), take the IL-83/Calumet Sag Rd exit. Turn left at the stop sign and travel west approximately four miles on Calumet Sag Rd. The parking lot entrance is located on the right.
- From Lemont, take Main St east, continuing on 111th St (IL-83) for approximately 3 miles. The parking lot is located on the left, 100 yards east of Archer Avenue.
- From Chicago, take the I-55/Stevenson Expressway to Exit 274 (IL-83/Kingery Road South). Travel south on IL-83 (Kingery Rd)/IL-171 (Archer Ave) for approximately 4 miles. Turn left at 111<sup>th</sup> St /Calumet Sag Road(IL-83 South). The parking lot is located on the left, 100 yards east of Archer Avenue.
- From I-355 (Veterans Memorial Tollway), take the 127<sup>th</sup> St exit. Travel east on 127<sup>th</sup> street for approximately 2.5 miles and turn left on IL-171 /S. Archer Ave. Continue north on Archer for 3 miles. Turn right at 111<sup>th</sup> St (IL-83 South/Calumet Sag Road). The parking lot is located on the left, 100 yards east of Archer Avenue.



## Attachment A: Meeting Minutes for January 20, 2015

### The Forest Preserve District of Cook County

#### Conservation & Policy Advisory Council

January 20, 2015

**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  
Commissioner Robert Steele  
Dr. Sylvia Jenkins  
Falona Joy  
Laurel Ross  
Linda Mastandrea  
Mark Templeton  
Michael De Santiago  
Peter Ellis  
Robert Castaneda  
Terry Guen

#### Forest Preserve Staff

Amanda Grant  
Anthony Tindall  
Arnold Randall  
Cathy Geraghty  
Cynthia Moreno  
Daniel Betts  
Dennis White  
Eileen Figel  
Erik Varela  
John McCabe  
Lisa Lee  
Lydia Uhler  
Mary Pat Cross  
Stephen Hughes

#### Partners

Benjamin Cox (FOTFP)  
Daniel Saurez (Volunteer)  
Emily Harris (Harris Strategies)  
Ginny Hotaling (CBG)  
Gregory Mueller (CBG)  
Lenore Beyer-Clow (Openlands)  
Rebecca Sanders (Audubon)  
Richard Gamble (CZS)  
Shelley Davis (FP Foundation)

**Public Comments.** There were no comments from the public.

#### **Overview of the Forest Preserves of Cook County and the Next Century Conservation Plan (NCCP).**

General Superintendent Arnold Randall presented an overview of the district and the NCCP.

**Testimonial.** Daniel Suarez of Audubon Chicago and a long-time volunteer with the forest preserves discussed how and why he got involved as a volunteer. He stated, “Growing up, nature was not on my radar. Nature seemed to be an “other” place—not something accessible to me.” As a teenager, Suarez volunteered for a workday along the North Branch and has been deeply committed to restoration efforts ever since.

**Implementation Strategy and Council Responsibilities.** Deputy Superintendent Eileen Figel provided an overview of the process and strategy which is being used to implement the plan and the role of the council in guiding these efforts.

**Challenges and Opportunities.** Wendy Paulson asked members of the council to share what they see as challenges and opportunities related to the plan. These include:

CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES
Don't get stuck on dollars needed; we have lots of other resources (people, partners, etc.)	Thousands of volunteers.
We need to look at the forest preserves as a whole; don't allow one site to compete against another.	Council members have lots of connections; we can pull in more partners.
What is the message and who do we need to get it to? How will we use technology to connect to urbanites and get them out here?	We must get the house in order and protect the preserves, but also think about how we reach back and bring the model of conservation into the city.
What will kids get excited about? Land restoration is a primary goal, but will these kids respond to that? How do we get to under-represented communities?	How will you track the improved accessibility for people with disabilities?
Need to retain sense of urgency.	The council can help with the "call to action." What are we asking partners to do? What are we asking the public to do? We have very specific ideas under each of the four pillars which we can measure against.
Is the County Board behind this? Commissioner Steele stated that many of them are users of the Forest Preserves and indicated he will be an advocate within the board AND will be a national advocate to get more resources here. Ginny Hotaling suggested a regular update at the Cook County Board meeting.	Setting the bar high is important; if you don't set it high, you will never get there. What makes it realistic is that we have 25 years to get it done and people want to be part of the winning team that gets it done.
Cynthia explained to the People Committee how we got here; that might be helpful to council.	The plan is grand; we must look for synergies. Think about who is taking on responsibility for getting this done.

**Council Operations & Resources.** Cathy Geraghty presented the operating guidelines for the council and provided an overview of the resources included in their binder.

**Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 5 p.m.

## **Attachment B: Proposed Revision to Operating Guidelines**

### **Conservation and Policy Council Operating Guidelines**

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#### **GENERAL**

The Next Century Conservation Plan (adopted February 18, 2014) of the Forest Preserves of Cook County called for creation of a Forest Preserves Conservation and Policy Council (Council) that consists of experts and leaders in the fields that impact the Forest Preserves' mission, services and policies.

The main charge of the Council is to advise the President, Board of Commissioners and General Superintendent on specific steps to implement the Next Century Conservation Plan's vision of a vibrant, ecologically healthy and welcoming forest preserves system that contributes to the quality of life and prosperity of Cook County over the long term.

#### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Conservation and Policy Council (Council) is to provide continuous conservation leadership and expertise to the President, Board of Commissioners, and General Superintendent of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, consistent with the vision, goals and priorities of the Next Century Conservation Plan adopted by the Forest Preserves of Cook County Board of Commissioners on February 18, 2014.

#### **ONGOING TASKS**

The Council shall do, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Develop and annually update a five-year strategic and financial plan to operationalize the Next Century Conservation Plan and annually recommend adoption of the updated strategic and financial plan to the General Superintendent, President, and Board of Commissioners;
2. Review and make recommendations to the General Superintendent, President and Board of Commissioners about the annual budget and its alignment with the strategic and financial plan;
3. Review and make recommendations to the General Superintendent, President and Board of Commissioners about conservation policies and practices;
4. Review and make recommendations to the General Superintendent, President and Board of commissioners about opportunities to maximize public and private financial resources to accomplish conservation goals and initiatives; and
5. Provide public recommendations, as needed, to improve the District's operations and conservation leadership.

## **GUIDELINES, PROCEDURES, and PRACTICES**

### **MEMBERS**

- A. General: The appointed Members shall receive no compensation for their service, but may be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses while serving on the Council.
- B. Number of Members: There shall be eleven (11) Members of the Conservation Council.
  - 1. One Chairperson (1)
  - 2. One Ex-Officio Member of the Board of Commissioners appointed by the President (who shall be a voting member) (1)
  - 3. Nine Members (9)
- C. Officers: The Council shall contain three (3) Members that serve as Officers, which will include a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and a Secretary. The Chairperson shall be appointed by the President. The Vice Chairperson and Secretary are elected by the Council. Each of the three officers, respectively, shall be entitled to vote on all matters before the Council and may be appointed to serve successive terms as officers.
- D. Duties of Officers (with support from forest preserves staff):
  - 1. The Chairperson shall:
    - a. Preside at all meetings, when present;
    - b. Execute all documents relating to Council policy or designate such responsibility as warranted;
    - c. Prepare the initial agenda for each meeting; and
    - d. Perform other agenda duties as directed by the Conservation Council.
  - 2. The Vice-Chairperson shall:
    - a. Act in the capacity of the Chairperson in the Chairperson's absence;
    - b. In the event the office of the Chairperson becomes vacant, the Vice Chairperson shall succeed to this office for the unexpired term or until the President brings forth another appointment; and
    - c. Perform other agenda duties as directed by the Chairperson or the Conservation Council.
  - 3. The Secretary shall:
    - a. Maintain the Council records, including notices for, and minutes of, meetings and hearings; the minutes must include: the date/time/place; absent/present members; and a summary of discussion, including votes. Final (not draft) minutes must be made available within seven days of approval; and

- b. Minutes must be approved within 30 days after an open meeting or at the second subsequent regular meeting, whichever is later.
- c. Perform other agenda duties as directed by the Conservation Council.

## MEETINGS

- A. The President shall call the first meeting of the Conservation Council. Thereafter, the Members shall prescribe the times and places for their meetings and the manner in which regular and special meetings may be called.
- B. The Council shall meet as frequently as needed, however, no less than four (4) meetings shall be held annually.
- C. The Council may hold public hearings as it deems appropriate to the performance of any of its responsibilities.
- D. The Council shall comply with the Open Meetings Act.
  - 1. Any person who becomes an elected or appointed member of a public body subject to the Open Meetings Act after January 1, 2012, must complete the electronic training no later than the 90th day after taking the oath of office or, if not required to take an oath of office, after otherwise assuming responsibilities as a member of the public body.
  - 2. Elected or appointed members need not complete the electronic training on an annual basis thereafter unless they are also designated to receive training on compliance with the Open Meetings Act.
  - 3. The Public Access Counselor's Office's OMA electronic training is available free of charge at: [http://foia.ilattorneygeneral.net/electronic\\_foia\\_training.aspx](http://foia.ilattorneygeneral.net/electronic_foia_training.aspx)."
  - 4. If more than three (3) Council members meet (either in person, by phone or video-conference) at the same time to discuss the Council's business, the Open Meetings Act must be followed.
  - 5. The Council must provide a written notice at least 48 hours prior to the convening of a meeting. The "48-Hour Notice" must contain the time, date, location and, to the extent known, the agenda of the meeting.
- E. The Council shall be subject to the Local Records Act, as well as the Freedom of Information Act.
- F. The Council shall keep records of its meetings and activities that shall be posted on the Forest Preserve District of Cook County's website.
- G. Public Comment
  - 1. A total of up to 15 minutes will be allowed for public comment, immediately following introductions and attendance.
  - 2. Speakers will be granted no more than three (3) minutes to address agenda items or to make general comments. At the discretion of the Chair, speaking time may be reduced to one (1) or two (2) minutes per speaker and the Chair may opt to move speakers to later slot on the agenda.



3. Speakers must sign in at least 15 minutes prior to the start of the meeting with a designated staff member.
4. The Chairperson may cut off a comment if it is irrelevant, repetitious, or disruptive.

## **VOTING PROCEDURES**

- A. A majority (6) of the voting Members shall constitute a quorum. Recommendations of the Council shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the voting members of the Council present and voting at the meeting at which the action is taken.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

- A. No member of the Council shall derive any personal profit or gain, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation with the Council. Each Council member shall disclose to the Council any personal interest which he or she may have – or thinks they may have – in any matter pending before the Council and shall refrain from participation in any decision on such matter.

Any member of the Council who is an officer, board member, a committee member or staff member of the Chicago Botanic Garden or the Chicago Zoological Society, or any organization that receives more than \$1 million annually in funding from the Forest Preserves budget, shall identify his or her affiliation; ~~further, in connection with~~ **when discussing** any Council action specifically directed to that agency, including the annual Forest Preserve budget recommendation, ~~he/she shall not participate in the decision affecting that agency.~~

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION COUNCIL**

- A. The Council shall submit to the General Superintendent, the Board of Commissioners and the President an annual report prior to the end of each calendar year.
- B. Included in the report shall be any recommendations for additional legislation or other action which may be necessary to carry out the mission, purpose and intent of the District with respect to conservation issues.

## **CHANGES TO OPERATING GUIDELINES**

- A. The Council may make changes to these guidelines as it deems appropriate to the performance its responsibilities.

## Attachment C: Natural & Cultural Resources Master Plan

In March 2015, the Forest Preserves of Cook County released the *Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan*. The plan focuses on conserving natural and cultural resources in concert with each other, and on both the people who are doing that work and those who benefit from it. Effective conservation requires understanding those resources; understanding the “place” or context in which they are found; and understanding the history, traditions, values, and attitudes of the people living in that place. Ultimately it depends on a shared understanding of the problems facing the region and a shared commitment to improving the conditions for the people, plants, and animals living there.

The 2014 Next Century Conservation Plan for the Forest Preserves of Cook County offers an ambitious vision for expanding the preserves and restoring the native landscapes they contain. The Natural and Cultural Resources Master Plan aims to provide the guidance needed to implement the Next Century Conservation Plan’s natural resource goals. It also provides a natural and cultural resources framework for future land acquisition, recreation development, and capital improvement.

The full plan is available on-line at <http://fpdcc.com/preserves-and-trails/plans-and-projects/natural-and-cultural-resources-master-plan/>. Hard copies of the plan will be distributed to the council at the April 6 meeting.

## Attachment D: Conservation & Policy Council Member Terms

(As selected by staw poll on January 20, 2015.)

<b>1 Year</b> <i>Term expires 1/20/16.</i>	<b>2 Years</b> <i>Term expires 1/20/17.</i>	<b>3 Years</b> <i>Term expires 1/20/18.</i>
Falona Joy Michael DeSantiago Rob Castaneda	Peter Ellis Sylvia Jenkins Terry Guen	Wendy Paulson (chair) Robert Steele (ex-officio) Laurel Ross Linda Mastandrea Mark Templeton

***Please note members may be nominated to serve additional terms.***

## Attachment E: Calendar of Upcoming Meetings/Events

For a full list of current meetings, see <http://www.nextcenturyconservationplan.org/implementation/>

<b>Mon Apr 6 3:00pm– 5:00pm</b> <b>1:30pm – 2:45 pm</b> (pre-meeting tour of Sagawau canyon) <b>3 pm – 5 pm</b> (meeting)	Conservation & Policy Council Sagawau Environmental Learning Center, 12545 W 111th Street, Lemont, IL 60439
<b>Mon Apr 13 11:00am – 1:00pm</b>	NCCP - Nature Committee Meeting - Openlands - 25 East Washington Street, Suite 1650, Chicago, IL 60602
<b>Tue Apr 21 12:00pm – 1:30pm</b>	NCCP - Leadership Committee Meeting - 69 W. Washington, 20th Floor, Chicago, IL 60602
<b>Tue Apr 21 1:00pm – 3:00pm</b>	NCCP - People Committee Meeting - 536 N Harlem Ave, River Forest, IL 60305, United States (Museum Room)
<b>Fri Apr 24 3:00pm – 4:30pm</b>	NCCP Economics Committee April Monthly Meeting - 69 W. Washington, Chicago, IL 60602
<b>Tue May 12 12:00pm – 1:30pm</b>	NCCP - Leadership Committee Meeting - 69 W. Washington, 20th Floor, Chicago, IL 60602
<b>Wed May 13 11:00am – 1:00pm</b>	NCCP - Nature Committee Meeting - Brookfield Zoo - Discovery Center Founders Room - 8400 West 31st Street, Brookfield, IL
<b>Tue May 19 1:00pm – 3:00pm</b>	NCCP - People Committee Meeting - 536 N Harlem Ave, River Forest, IL 60305, United States (Museum Room)
<b>Thurs May 28 9 am – 5 pm</b> <b>and</b> <b>Fri May 29 9 am to 4 pm</b>	FPCC Centennial Symposium & Tour – Celebrating 100 Years of Beauty in the Forest Preserves, DePaul University Student Center, 2400 N. Sheffield, Room 314, Chicago
<b>Fri May 29 3:00pm – 4:30pm</b>	NCCP Economics Committee May Monthly Meeting - 69 W. Washington, Chicago, IL 60602
<b>Thu Jun 11 11:00am – 1:00pm</b>	NCCP - Nature Committee Meeting - Chicago Botanic Garden - 1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, IL 60022
<b>Tue Jun 16 12:00pm – 1:30pm</b>	NCCP - Leadership Committee Meeting - 69 W. Washington, 20th Floor, Chicago, IL 60602
<b>Tue Jun 23</b> <b>1:30pm – 2:45pm</b> (pre-meeting visit to Galloping Hill/Spring Creek Forest Preserve) <b>3:00pm – 5:00pm</b> (meeting)	Conservation & Policy Council Meeting Crabtree Nature Center, 3 Stover Road, Barrington Hills, IL 60010
<b>Fri Jun 26 3:00pm – 4:30pm</b>	Forest Preserve NCCP Economics Committee June Monthly Meeting - 69 W. Washington, Chicago, IL 60602
<b>Tue Jul 14 12:00pm – 1:30pm</b>	NCCP - Leadership Committee Meeting - 69 W. Washington, 20th Floor, Chicago, IL 60602
<b>Fri Jul 31 3:00pm – 4:30pm</b>	Forest Preserve NCCP Economics Committee July Monthly Meeting - 69 W. Washington, Chicago, IL 60602
<b>Thu Sept 10</b> <b>1:30pm – 2:30pm</b> (pre-meeting visit to Powderhorn for seed collecting) <b>3:00pm – 5:00pm</b> (meeting)	Conservation & Policy Council Meeting Sand Ridge Nature Center, 15891 Paxton Ave, South Holland, IL 60473

## Attachment F: Media clips

### Nature in the City: Wildlife Returns to Greater Chicago

by [Earth Island Journal](#), March 3, 2015 ▪ *Written by Jason Halm*

<http://www.care2.com/causes/nature-in-the-city-wildlife-returns-to-greater-chicago.html>



A cougar prowls wooded ravines in a wealthy community, searching for a mate. A coyote slinks through a human-built landscape on its way to its [den outside one of the country's largest football stadiums](#). Out in the chain of lakes, a recreational boating area, a plant biologist finds lotus plants blooming for the first time in generations. Further still from the city, a black bear wanders cornfields, seeking a home.

Thirty years ago, this was all improbable — perhaps impossible. Now, wildlife is returning to the shores of the Great Lakes, even into the heart of the great city of Chicago. Although it's home to nearly 10 million people, greater Chicagoland also houses more wildlife than at any time in recent history. The city and its suburbs are being rewilded.

Ecological impoverishment has a long and sad history in this country, including the greater Chicago region. When white settlers first arrived in the Great Lakes region, the area had an abundance of deer, coyote, fox, otter, beaver, and a smattering of bobcats, wolves, and elk, too. In the early nineteenth century, there was more than enough wildlife; settlers could trap beaver, muskrat, and otter for fur, go hunting for sport, and have more than enough to feed themselves. In time, though, the city and its hinterland swelled in population, with little to no change in the every man for himself hunting policy. By the turn of the last century, white-tailed deer, by far the most abundant large animal here, was extirpated in the region.

But now the pendulum is swinging back toward ecological health. In the absence of any real predator, deer have overpopulated the area. In 1957, the first modern, regulated hunting season for the animal began. By the 1990's, the deer had so capitalized on the available habitat and lack of predators that professional culling became necessary, though controversial.

It seemed, for a bit, that Chicago area residents had only to deal with the deer. Then the coyotes started to appear.

In 2000 the Urban Coyote Research program began to study the increasing reports of coyote sightings in suburban Dundee, located northwest of the city center. The project has since evolved into a full-fledged monitoring of the Chicagoland coyote population. Unbeknownst to researcher Stan Gehrt when he started, there are more than 2,000 coyotes living in metropolitan Chicago.

Reasons for the coyote's success are multifaceted. An urban environment presents an escape from hunting pressures typically found in rural areas. The city also provides an incredible amount of food waste that can be exploited — as well as a surprising amount of shelter, including, for one coyote in the summer 2010, the chill of an air-conditioned Quizno's.

Coyotes are currently the apex predator in Illinois, in contrast to their pre-settlement role as a mesopredator one notch below wolves. The coyotes have enjoyed the benefits of a phenomena known as “mesopredator release,” in which a smaller predator that has stopped being preyed upon by a larger predator has less pressure on its population. In turn, the coyote has become physically larger in urban areas, and is able to hunt basically without fear of being hunted.

But coyotes may not enjoy free reign at the top of the food chain for long. Cougars are also making a tentative comeback in the region. In 2008, [a mountain lion was shot in a Chicago neighborhood](#), right next to a preschool. Since 2002, there have been at least four shootings of mountain lions in Illinois. Along the wealthy North Shore, an area that boasts an extensive network of forested ravines and Lake Michigan shoreline, rumors of mountain lion sightings pop up every year. Most of these are probably [common house cats mistaken for mountain lions](#), and there are likely mistaken bobcat sightings as well. Bobcats have also surged in population in recent decades.

A lot of this wildlife comeback is attributable to the fact that greater Chicagoland — however urbanized and industrialized it is — actually has a significant amount of habitat capable of supporting coyotes, bobcats, deer, otters (and maybe one day, bears, cougars, and wolves, as well). In the early part of the last century, city residents began to escape to the newly constructed suburbs, emboldened by the popularity of the railroads and the new automobile. It was around this time that Forest Preserve Districts — a peculiar political institution dedicated to preserving open space on a county-wide scale — were established.

The Cook County District, sharing territory with the city of Chicago, was established in 1916 with 500 acres of land. Today, the District preserves 69,000 acres, or 11 percent, of the county. In the region

as a whole — from southwestern Michigan to southeastern Wisconsin — some 500,000 acres of forest and prairie are preserved in some fashion.

What is being done with these protected areas is the remarkable story of Chicago conservation. In the 1970's, volunteers began doing work along the North Branch of the Chicago River, restoring the natural vegetation by removing overgrown brush and replanting prairie and savanna vegetation. Since then, bird species have come back in troves. Sandhill cranes and bluebirds now nest throughout the area, and whooping cranes fly over every year.

The movement to restore Chicagoland's native prairie vegetation is successful in no small part due to its volunteer-based nature. On almost any given weekend, volunteers are busy across the region clearing garbage from streams, ripping overgrown buckthorn from forests, and removing invasive species from riverbanks. These weekend events, though still niche in the area, are becoming more and more commonplace — symptomatic, perhaps, of a culture growing into its home. There is the Illinois Mycological Association, the Illinois Native Plants Society, Chicago Wilderness, park and forest preserve districts the region over, and a few highly successful land trusts throughout the area, all working hard to create conditions amiable to native flora and fauna.

The efforts range from fairly easy work — cutting out invasive white and yellow sweet clover with machetes — to more sophisticated endeavors such as restoring meanders back to channelized prairie streams and, during the spring and fall, conducting lots of prescribed prairie burns. The people involved range from high schoolers to retirees, and many work in sectors unrelated to the work at hand.

Tangible successes have come from all of these efforts. Riverfront views have opened up for the public, erosion has been lessened as agricultural fields are converted to second-growth prairies, and lotus plants have begun to bloom in Chain of Lakes state park,

In the last decade, [rewilding has become one of the most potent ideas](#) in the conservation movement, a way to pivot from simply preserving wild landscapes to restoring them. But for the Chicago wilderness community it has become more than an intellectual exercise in imagining thousand-mile long corridors with species brought back from extinction. To those of us who make our home in the Chicago area, rewilding is the act of rooting down in this community, branching out to each other to make our homes beautiful and to honor the past — and hoping that one day, Bear and Cougar and Otter and Whooping Crane also come around to see what we've built for them.

*This post originally appeared in [Earth Island Journal](#).*

# City in a Garden - Conservation

*Chicago's aesthetically challenged seal and prescient motto*

**By Curt Meine**

[http://conservationmagazine.org/2014/03/city-garden/?utm\\_source=Conservation+Magazine&utm\\_campaign=047b3b4ade-This+Week's+Good+Read+Nov+30+2013+10+19+2013&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_d0cc46f2ab-047b3b4ade-](http://conservationmagazine.org/2014/03/city-garden/?utm_source=Conservation+Magazine&utm_campaign=047b3b4ade-This+Week's+Good+Read+Nov+30+2013+10+19+2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d0cc46f2ab-047b3b4ade-)

**On March 4, 1837**, the Illinois legislature approved Chicago's proposal for incorporation, and the lakeside village of 4,170 souls officially became a city. That June, the city adopted its official seal, one of those wonderfully cluttered montages of symbols that nineteenth-century Americans did so well: in the center, a sheaf of wheat against a federal shield of red, white, and blue, indicative of the Midwest's fruitful land; to one side, a tomahawk-wielding figure representing the native inhabitants of the land; on the other side, a ship (presumably bearing European immigrants) heaving across Lake Michigan toward its western shore; and, floating overhead, a sleeping babe borne on a cloud and representing the newborn city reposing in peace and purity. The cloud was later upgraded to a large shell, Chicago being (natch) the pearl of the Great Lakes.

At the bottom of the seal, a ribbon is inscribed with the city's motto: "URBS IN HORTO," Latin for "City in a Garden." One interpretation holds that this reflected an appeal from the city's first mayor, William Ogden. Shortly after he became mayor in those busy months of 1837, the nation fell into a financial panic. Ogden paid off the city's debts by taking out personal loans and paying the bills. He also encouraged his fellow Chicagoans to plant their own gardens in the city's open plots and peripheral fields—a sort of frontier hedge fund!

A more widely held interpretation is that the motto captured the vital vision of the city's founders, of their fair new city held in the fresh bosom of its rich, supporting hinterlands. Did they see those *hortus* lands beyond the city boundaries as Illinois tallgrass prairie flowering forth with its 850 species of native plants, rife with mammals large and small, birds and reptiles, frogs and bugs, with rich soils and abundant freshwaters? Or did they see those lands as what they might, and did, become: "futures," the agricultural cornucopia, the mid-continental empire of grain and meat?

I don't know whether minutes were kept at the meeting of the 1837 *ad hoc* committee on a Chicago city seal and motto. Whatever the committee's view, I can't help but think that the motto expressed what must have been a common and visceral sense of the land's raw, organic fertility, built throughout 12 postglacial millennia by the land's soil-building, moisture-retaining, nitrogen-sucking, carbon-holding plants and its pollinating, grazing, seed-dispersing, nutrient-shuffling, and predatory animals. Chicago was to become an urban community bubbling away at the top of what Aldo Leopold described as the land's "fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals." However the new city-dwellers and their country cousins might reconfigure the plumbing of that energy fountain, however short-sighted or visionary the efforts of ensuing generations to conserve its flow, the motto declared Chicago to be a city grounded in a place. It gave the city a



stake in the land, as did the city's very name: the Miami's *chicagoua* or *chigagou* (for the native wild garlic, *Allium tricoccum*), the Potawatomi's *schicago*. The motto and those smelly garlies may not be as dramatic as the wild she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus along Rome's River Tiber, but they still serve to remind us of the city's—of every city's—rootage in the land, and in older cultures on the land.

Fast-forward 75 years, to 1914. In just three generations, Chicago's population had grown 500-fold, to more than 2 million. The expanding *urbs* had encroached relentlessly upon the *hortus*, not only in the immediate shadows of the rising skyscrapers but also across the vast prairies, northern forests, and extensive wetlands of the entire mid-continent. The result was a landscape, urban and rural together, transformed—a story told so compellingly by William Cronon in *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. That year the citizens of Cook County approved a measure to establish a “forest preserve district” that encompassed the entire county. Envisioning something far beyond the idea of urban parks, the measure authorized the district

*to acquire . . . and hold lands . . . containing one or more natural forests . . . or lands connecting such forests or parts thereof . . . for the purpose of protecting and preserving the flora, fauna and scenic beauties within such district, and to restore, restock, protect, and preserve the natural forests and such lands together with their flora and fauna, as nearly as may be, in their natural state and condition, for the purpose of the education, pleasure, and recreation of the public.*

As the *Encyclopedia of Chicago* explains, “No similar preserves existed anywhere in the world at the time, but architect Dwight Perkins, the principal proponent of the preserve idea, believed that the preservation of nature would have important value for life in a growing metropolis.” The claim is somewhat chauvinistic, for Cook County's forest preserve district was inspired by other efforts—including Boston's in the 1890s to protect portions of its outer lands in parks. Nonetheless, the people of North America's great Midwestern *urbs* were taking a revolutionary step to conserve the *hortus* in which it was embedded. As Perkins and his compatriots in Chicago's Municipal Science Club had stated, Cook County's special lands “should be preserved for the benefit of the public in both the city and its suburbs, and for their own sake and scientific value, which, if ever lost, cannot be restored for generations.”

Fast-forward another century, as we mark the centennial of Cook County's Forest Preserve District. The population of the city proper holds at around 2.7 million, while the larger metropolitan region is now home to 9.5 million. The preserves that were once on the urban fringe are now themselves embedded, forming an emerald chain through the developed urban and suburban landscape. The *urbs* leap-frogged the close-by *hortus*, while the greater *hortus* of the Midwest agricultural landscape has been transformed into a severely cultivated and highly profitable but biologically depauperate *desertus*. The redirected fountain of energy now overfloweth into corn and soybeans, feedlots and muck farms, corporate boardrooms and the floor of the Chicago Board of Trade.

But another transformation also occurred along the way. Over its century of existence, the district's green network of forest, savanna, prairie, wetlands, streams, and lakes grew to embrace about 68,000 acres (275 km<sup>2</sup>) of open space within the Chicago region. Surrounding counties followed



Cook County's example and undertook their own land-protection efforts. But in the absence of fire, grazing, and other disturbances, plant succession had its way: shrubs and trees spread into the open prairies and filled in the understories of the savannas and woodlands. The fragmented district lands had no defense against the surge of invasive plant and animal species—and no response. White-tailed deer disappeared, then returned, then proliferated, browsing their way down the list of palatable plant species (and into suburban lawns and gardens). At the interface of the *urbs* and the *hortus*, dramatic ecological change came constantly to the “natural forests and said lands.”

Beginning in the 1970s, Chicago-area citizen-conservationists returned to the forest preserves with a different understanding of land stewardship. An ecological restoration movement took root. People of the *urbs* took to the *hortus* with a new appreciation of the *avium* (roughly, the wild). The city and its rippling economy had altered forever the wild woodlands, savannas, prairies, wetlands, and waterways of the hinterlands. But in the city, and across the hinterlands, restorationists sought new ways to integrate the *urbs*, the *hortus*, and the *avium*.

This dirt-under-the-fingernails restoration work did not only yield revitalized prairies and oak groves, but it also provided the basis for a far-sighted experiment in urban conservation. In the mid-1990s, the Brookfield Zoo, the Field Museum, the Openlands Project, and The Nature Conservancy—plus other civic organizations and institutions and local, state, and federal agencies—banded together to form a new conservation consortium. They christened it, provocatively, Chicago Wilderness. Now comprising some 300 member groups from across the entire Chicago metropolitan region, Chicago Wilderness is dedicated to protecting and restoring the region's biological diversity and ecological health and to reconnecting the city's people to their landscape. The name that seemed oxymoronic to some now seems like almost a dare—an ongoing challenge to our conservation ideas, policies, and practice. Through Chicago Wilderness, the city provides a model of new ways to honor the wild amid the urban, to enrich the urban amid the wild, and to keep them connected, in more fruitful and durable ways.

For all of human history, the story of our species' cultural development has emphasized the conversion of wild landscapes to agriculture, the movement of people into cities, the rise of industry and the globalization of trade, the intensification, mechanization, and corporatization of farming, the continual spread of cities and suburbs into the rural countryside and up against the wild. Chicago has exemplified, on a dramatically condensed time scale, that saga. But Chicago's history and geography and culture—its time and place and people—also allowed it to emerge from that story with the intimation of a radically revised trajectory. The city now acts to protect, restore, and sustain something of its natural inheritance, its layers of post-glacial, prehistoric Woodland Period, Miami and Potawatomi, and European frontier nature. It now benefits (as communities large and small increasingly do) from a new agrarian movement that recovers connections to land through food, in the city and beyond. In so doing, Chicago aims to conserve the foundations on which it was built, the fountain from which its wealth and health have flowed.

And so, on a planet whose growing human population is increasingly urbanized, we might consider revising and extending Chicago's motto as an example to the world: *Urbs in horto ... hortus in avio ... avium in universo* (i.e., the cosmos). We might see the city anew, not only as a human community but as a place within its place. We might aspire to complete the circle that Chicago's

founders began to trace in 1847: to re-place the city within the cosmos and to find the cosmos within ourselves; to find some greater harmony across our landscapes, within and far beyond the cities and at every place in between.

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*Photo ©Andrea Lipinski*

# THE RIGHT TO A WALK IN THE WOODS: Children's connection to the natural world should be considered a human right

By [Richard Louv](#) on January 19th, 2015; The New Nature Movement: *Field Notes from the Future: Tracking the Movement to Connect People and Nature*

## About the Author

Richard Louv is Co-Founder and Chairman Emeritus of the [Children & Nature Network](#), an organization supporting the international movement to connect children, their families and their communities to the natural world. He is the author of eight books, including "Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder" and "The Nature Principle." In 2008, he was awarded the Audubon Medal.

*This essay originally appeared as "A Walk in the Woods" in the March/April 2009 issue of [Orion](#) magazine. In 2011, it was adapted and expanded in Richard Louv's book, "The Nature Principle."*

A few years ago, I visited Southwood Elementary, the grade school I attended when I was a boy growing up in Raytown, Missouri. I asked a classroom of children about their relationship with nature. Many of them offered the now-typical response: they preferred playing video games; they favored indoor activities—and when they were outside, they played soccer or some other adult-organized sport. But one fifth-grader, described by her teacher as "our little poet," wearing a plain print dress and an intensely serious expression, said, "When I'm in the woods, I feel like I'm in my mother's shoes."

To her, nature represented beauty, refuge, and something else.

"It's so peaceful out there and the air smells so good. For me, it's completely different there," she said. "It's your own time. Sometimes I go there when I'm mad—and then, just with the peacefulness, I'm better. I can come back home happy, and my mom doesn't even know why."

She paused.

"I had a place. There was a big waterfall and a creek on one side of it," she said. "I'd dug a big hole there, and sometimes I'd take a tent back there, or a blanket, and just lay down in the hole, and look up at the trees and sky. Sometimes I'd fall asleep back in there. I just felt free; it was like my place, and I could do what I wanted, with nobody to stop me. I used to go down there almost every day." The young poet's face flushed. Her voice thickened. "And then they just cut the woods down. It was like they cut down part of me."

I was struck by her last comment: "It was like they cut down part of me." If E. O. Wilson's biophilia hypothesis is right—that human beings are hard-wired to get their hands wet and their feet muddy in the natural world—then the little poet's heartfelt statement was more than metaphor. When she referred to her woods as "part of me," she was describing something impossible to quantify: her primal biology, her sense of wonder, an essential part of her self.

Recently I began asking friends this question: Does a child have a right to a walk in the woods? Does an adult? To my surprise, several people responded with puzzled ambivalence. Look at what our species is doing to the planet, they said; based on that evidence alone, isn't the relationship between human beings and nature inherently oppositional? I certainly understand that point of view.

But consider the echo from folks who reside at another point on the political/cultural spectrum, where nature is the object of human dominion, a distraction on the way to Paradise. In practice, these two views of nature are radically different. Yet, on one level, the similarity is striking: nature remains the "other." Humans are in it, but not of it.

The basic concept of rights made some people uncomfortable. One friend asked, In a world in which millions of children are brutalized every day, can we spare time to forward a child's right to experience nature? Good question. Others pointed out that we live in an era of litigation inflation and rights deflation; too many people believe they have a "right" to a parking spot, a "right" to cable TV, even a "right" to live in a neighborhood that bans children. Do we really need to add more "rights" to our catalogue of entitlements? Another good question.

The answer to both questions is yes, if we can agree that the right at issue is fundamental to our humanity, to our being.

A growing body of scientific evidence identifies strong correlations between experience in the natural world and children's ability to learn, along with their physical and emotional health. Stress levels, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, cognitive functioning—and more—are positively affected by time spent in nature. "In the same way that protecting water and protecting air are strategies for promoting public health," says Howard Frumkin, director of the National Center for Environmental Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [now Dean of the School of Public Health at the University of Washington], "protecting natural landscapes can be seen as a powerful form of preventive medicine." For example, researchers at Indiana University School of Medicine, Indiana University–Purdue University at Indianapolis, and the University of Washington reported that greener neighborhoods are associated with slower increases in children's body mass, regardless of residential density. Such research will be immensely helpful as we rethink our approaches to urban design, education, and health care, in particular our societal response to childhood obesity.

Yes, we need more research, says Frumkin, "but we know enough to act." To reverse the trends that disconnect children from nature, actions must be grounded in science, but also rooted in deeper earth.

In 2007, the National Forum on Children and Nature, an impressive collection of mayors, professors, conservationists, and business leaders, met in Washington DC to explore the disconnection between children and nature. The conversation was enlightening, at times passionate, but as the hours passed several of the attendees began to ask about quantification. Some were looking for a business model to apply to the challenge of introducing children to the natural world. Most saw the obvious need for more research. "I appreciate this discussion, but I'd like to say something," announced Gerald L. Durley, Senior Pastor at Providence Missionary Baptist Church in Atlanta. Durley had helped found the Afro-American Cultural Organization and worked shoulder to shoulder with Martin Luther King Jr. He leaned forward and said, "A movement moves. It has life."

Like every successful movement, the civil rights struggle was fueled by a strongly articulated moral principle, one that did not need to be proved again and again.

The outcome of the civil rights movement might have been quite different, or at least delayed, had its leaders waited for more statistical proof to justify their cause, or focused on the metrics of lunch-counter sit-ins, Durley added. Some efforts proved successful, some were counterproductive. But the movement moved.

“When making a moral argument, there are no hard and fast rules, and such arguments can always be contended,” according to my friend Larry Hinman, professor of philosophy at the University of San Diego. “But most moral arguments are made based on one or two points. These include a set of consequences and a first principle—for example, respect for human rights.” Science sheds light on the measurable consequences of introducing children to nature; studies pointing to health and cognition benefits are immediate and concrete. We also need to articulate the underlying “first principle”—one that emerges not only from what science can prove, but also from what it cannot fully reveal; one that resists codification because it is so elemental: a meaningful connection to the natural world is fundamental to our survival and spirit, as individuals and as a species.

In our time, Thomas Berry presented this inseparability most eloquently. A Catholic priest of the Passionist order and founder of the History of Religions Program at Fordham University and the Riverdale Center of Religious Research, for the better part of his ninety-four years on the planet Berry was prescient.

Berry incorporated Wilson’s biological view within a wider, cosmological context. In his book *The Great Work*, he wrote: “The present urgency is to begin thinking within the context of the whole planet, the integral Earth community with all its human and other-than-human components. When we discuss ethics we must understand it to mean the principles and values that govern that comprehensive community.”

The natural world is the physical manifestation of the divine, Berry believed. The survival of both religion and science depends not on one winning (because then both would lose), but on the emergence of what he calls a third story, a twenty-first-century story. Speaking of absolutes may make us uncomfortable, but surely this is true: As a society, we need to give nature back to our kids. Not doing that is immoral. It is unethical.

“A degraded habitat will produce degraded humans,” Berry wrote. “If there is to be any true progress, then the entire life community must progress.”

In the formation of American ideals, nature was elemental to the idea of human rights. Inherent in the thinking of the Founding Fathers was this assumption: with every right comes responsibility. Whether we are talking about democracy or nature, if we fail to serve as careful stewards, we will destroy the reason for our right, and the right itself. Those of us who identify ourselves as conservationists or environmentalists—whatever word we prefer—nearly always have had some transcendent experience in the natural world, usually in the form of independent play, with hands muddy, feet wet. We cannot love what we do not know. As Robert Michael Pyle puts it so well, “What is the extinction of a condor to a child who has never seen a wren?”

We must do more than talk about the importance of nature; we must ensure that children in every kind of neighborhood have everyday access to natural spaces, places, and experiences. To make that happen, this truth must become evident: we can truly care for nature and ourselves only if we see ourselves and nature as inseparable, only if we love ourselves as part of nature, only if we believe that our children have a right to the gifts of nature undestroyed.

The little girl in Raytown may not have a specific right to that particular tree in her chosen woods, but she does have the inalienable right to be with other life; to liberty, which cannot be realized under protective house arrest; and to the pursuit of happiness, which is made whole by the universe.

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Postscript:



In September, 2012, the World Congress of the [International Union for Conservation of Nature \(IUCN\)](#), meeting in Jeju, South Korea, passed a resolution declaring that children have [a human right](#) to experience the natural world. Dutch human rights lawyer Annelies Henstra, the IUCN's Keith Wheeler and Cheryl Charles, co-founder of the Children & Nature Network, and others made the case to the Congress — attended by more than 10,000 people representing the governments of 150 nations and more than 1,000 non-governmental organizations. [The resolution, “the Child’s Right to Connect with Nature and to a Healthy](#)

[Environment,”](#) calls on IUCN’s membership to promote the inclusion of this right within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The resolution recognizes “concern about the increasing disconnection of people and especially children from nature, and the adverse consequences for both healthy child development (‘nature deficit disorder’) as well as responsible stewardship for nature and the environment in the future.” And it recognizes that:

*“...children, since they are an inalienable part of nature, not only have the right to a healthy environment, but also to a connection with nature and to the gifts of nature for their physical and psychological health and ability to learn and create, and that until they have these rights they will not bear responsibility for nature and the environment...”* According to the IUCN World Congress resolution, the World Congress is also convinced “that growing up in a healthy environment and connecting children with nature is of such a fundamental importance for both children and the (future of) the conservation of nature and the protection of the environment, that it should be recognized and codified internationally as a human right for children.”

Full text of the Resolution can be read [here](#).