



Patricia A. Provenzano 933 W. Van Buren Unit 914 Chicago, Illinois 60607  
708.431.3817 [patprovenzano@comcast.net](mailto:patprovenzano@comcast.net)

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Board of Commissioners. I have been attending these hearings for over 15 years, but using the trails for all of my life. I ride my horse, walk my dog, and ride my bike almost every weekend on Palos and Sag Valley FPD trails.

Thank you for the terrific job Resource Management has been doing with prescribed burns. The difference over the last five years is immeasurable; the ability to see through the woods to admire an oak savannah is breathtaking. As an equestrian, I really appreciate the communication from John McCabe to let us know where the fires will be happening. His enthusiasm and leadership is admirable. I am concerned about the budget cuts referenced in the 2017 budget, and emphasize the importance of the Resource Management in the care of our greatest resources, the forest preserves.

Over the past years I have had the honor of being part of Trail Watch. I am proud to be a volunteer. I have called the FPD Police a few times to report a situation, and each time the police have been very responsive. I have contacted Mike Hart, Trails Manager, much more often to report a fallen tree on the trail, erosion issues, and other matters needing his attention. The Trails Division works very hard to restore damage as quickly as possible. We really appreciate them.

I attended the Cultural History Forum at the Field Museum this month, and greatly appreciated learning about the long history of our Forest Preserves. The speakers were fascinating, and I appreciated their different perspectives.

We are fortunate to have the leadership of Arnold Randall, who does a great job of balancing the various needs of the multiple users of our Forest Preserves.

Last year at this meeting I listened while a man told the board of his experience being employed by Greencorps Chicago, and how it changed his life. I serve on the board of The Cara Program, a local, free workforce and leadership development organization for adults seeking to get back into the labor force. Our students are **screened** (we do drug tests and criminal background checks on everyone; and we assess for motivation), **trained** (individuals are with us for 32 hours a week for at least six weeks and often beyond 4.5 months in a rigorous, experiential training environment), **placed** into quality transitional and permanent jobs, and **supported** for at least one year on the job to ensure successful job retention. Our success is best defined by our one-year retention rates. At least 70% of our population celebrates their first year anniversary on the job – a figure that outpaces national norms as reported by the Department of Labor by over 20 points. I contacted John McCabe, and he put me in touch with Alice Brandon, Resource Management Administrator. Alice introduced us to Greencorps, which resulted in jobs for two of our students.

The Forest Preserves of Southern Cook County are priceless, and we are very fortunate to have them so accessible. Please continue to find the funds necessary to keep the trails safe, and enjoyable. And while you find new ways to bring more people in to use the FPD, please consider adding more trails. The existing trails are heavily travelled by many different users, some with competing interests, and safety is always an issue.