

## Forest Preserves of Cook County Conservation & Policy Council

### Meeting Minutes for September 1, 2021

*Note: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the meeting was held via Zoom video conference. A recording of the meeting is available [here](#).*

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**Welcome and Call to Order.** Chairperson Alan Bell called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. The following Council members and others attended:

#### Advisory Council Members

Alan Bell, Chairperson  
Mark Templeton, Vice-chairperson  
Emily Harris  
Henrietta Saunders  
Laurel Ross  
Maria Pesqueira  
Sylvia Jenkins

#### Presenters

Arnold Randall, Forest Preserves  
Benjamin Cox, Friends of the Forest Preserves  
Eileen Figel, Forest Preserves  
Jacqui Ulrich, Forest Preserves  
Jane Balaban, Key Steward  
Steve Hughes, Forest Preserves

Shelley Spencer, Terry Guen, and Commissioner Stanley Moore did not attend.

Staff representing Commissioners Moore and Suffredin attended. Other meeting participants included representatives from the Chicago Zoological Society, the Chicago Botanic Garden, the Forest Preserve Foundation, Friends of the Forest Preserves, Openlands, the League of Women Voters, and the Field Museum. A full list of participants is presented in Attachment 1.3.

**Approval of Minutes.** A motion was made by Mark Templeton to approve the minutes of the June 17, 2021 meeting. The motion was seconded by Laurel Ross. The results of the roll call vote are as follows:

Name	Vote
Alan Bell	Yes
Mike DeSantiago	Yes
Terry Guen	Absent
Emily Harris	Yes
Sylvia Jenkins	Abstain
Commissioner Moore	Absent

Name	Vote
Maria Pesqueira	Yes
Laurel Ross	Yes
Henrietta Saunders	Yes
Shelley Spencer	Absent
Mark Templeton	Yes

The minutes were approved.

**Public comments.** No members of the public registered to address the Council and no written comments were submitted.

**Chairman's Report.** Alan reported on the following items.

- **Referendum.** Alan indicated that Benjamin Cox previously reported that a broad coalition is advocating for a referendum to secure needed funding for the preserves. As indicated in the email sent recently by Eileen Figel, Council members are restricted from advocating for or against the referendum while acting in their role as Council members. However, Council members can provide factual information regarding what the referendum is intended to do and how funding will be used. Hank Saunders is serving as the Council's liaison to the referendum committee. Hank reported that she would like to reach out to each Council member to discuss their thoughts. Hank also indicated that Eileen will schedule small group briefings to do a deeper review of the facts regarding the proposed allocation of funding. Hank has shared the fact sheet with the referendum campaign steering committee. The fact sheet can be distributed to any interested party; these are not campaign materials. Benjamin Cox added that every commissioner voted in favor of placing a referendum on the ballot and they all asked to be sponsors. Benjamin reported that the advocates are recruiting campaign members and looking to hire a campaign manager. They are hoping to raise \$3M to \$3.5M for this campaign. Benjamin added that anyone can be involved as a private citizen, but Forest Preserves' resources cannot be used.
- **Governance & Nominations.** There is a need to formalize various liaison roles individual Council members play and make other refinements to the governance structure; Alan indicates the Council will focus on these matters in 2022. Alan also reported that the nominating committee met on August 26 and is recommending the reappointment of Alan, Shelley, Mike and Maria to an additional term. The nominating committee also wants to create a pipeline of candidates who would be a good fit for the Council. Alan asked Council members to share the names of potential candidates with Alan or Eileen.
- **Potential Non-conforming Land Uses.** Alan reported that there have been several good conversations and he is working with staff and partners to frame out communication protocols. Chris Slattery added that this is a work in progress; staff will share information as best they can.
- **Picturing the Prairie.** Alan encouraged everyone to visit the Chicago Botanic Garden's Picturing the Prairie exhibit. Alan will also be sharing a book with Council members.
- **Arnold Randall's appointment to NRPA.** Alan congratulated Arnold on his appointment to the board of the National Recreation and Parks Association.

**Discussion with General Superintendent Arnold Randall.** General Superintendent Arnold Randall provided the following updates:

- **Potential non-conforming land uses.** Arnold confirmed he supports a process which shares information early on, gathers feedback from the Council and advocates, and then reports back at a later phase.
- **Urban Dark Sky Place.** Arnold thanked Sylvia Jenkins and her team for their support throughout the designation process.
- **COVID update.** All County and Forest Preserve employees must be vaccinated by October 15. Many people are relieved; some people need a little push to get vaccinated; some people will be resistant. We are going to do what we need to do.
- **Appointment of Chief Odum.** Theresa Odum has been appointed as Chief of Police at the Forest Preserves.

- Arnold congratulated **Stuart Strahl** on his retirement after a long and successful career in conservation.
- Sylvia Jenkins asked if **vaccinations** are required for visitors who rent campsites or other event sites. Arnold indicated that the mandate does apply to contractors and vendors who have employees working at FPCC sites, but it does not apply to the public.

**Nature-Compatible Recreation Update.** CEP Director Jacqui Ulrich provided an update on two priority actions for implementing the position paper: (1) re-imagining Whelan Pool to make it more nature-compatible, and (2) finalizing and applying an evaluation process which begins with a “fit exercise”. (See attachments 1.1 and 1.2.)

Key points related to Whelan Pool include:

- Design students from Northwestern University developed several concepts to redesign Whelan Pool to better connect to the mission of the Forest Preserves. One idea is to create a nature education space at what currently serves as an outdoor changing area. Other ideas include adding educational signage, using water features which look like native trees or native fish, and installing nature trails.

Key points related to the evaluation of nature-compatible uses include:

- The process is guided by the district’s vision and mission, the guiding principles established in the district’s 2013 Recreation Master Plan, and the principles outlined in the position paper.
- Staff has developed a “fit test” which uses a series of questions to determine whether a proposed use or activity aligns with the district’s mission, vision, master plan, and with the position paper.
- If it is a fit, then the proposal proceeds to the next stage. A staff person is assigned to continue the evaluation by applying a REDI lens and using features of the DeSantiago matrix to assess other factors such as market demand, economic impact, etc.

Mike DeSantiago stated that the whole idea of coming up with tools and evaluation from a qualitative and quantitative way is a tricky thing and it's good to see how this has matured over time. Mike added that the way staff are using these tools is commendable.

Alan added that he is excited to hear the position papers mentioned so often and to see staff using the recommendations in the position papers to guide their work.

**Scaling Up Volunteers.** Jane Balaban reported that a top priority of the Scaling Up Volunteers (SUV) committee is to put in place a plan for recruiting and training volunteers. Jane provided an overview of where we are currently in terms of stewardship resources, explained the methodology used to estimate the total number of stewards needed to meet 2025 goals, and highlighted several challenges. (See attachment 1.3.)

Key points include:

- An estimated 100 stewards are needed by 2025. This would require adding eight to ten stewards per year, which is a very heavy lift. Only six stewards were added over the past five years.
- While the limited increase in stewards is not encouraging, improvements to training have been implemented and support for stewards has greatly improved in recent years.
- 40% of current stewards are 75 years old or older. In the next several years, many may retire and step down from this role. Staff and volunteers need to develop a succession plan.
- Volunteers need to better utilize social media to communicate.

Alan added that the entire conservation community struggles to get younger and more diverse people engaged. There is a need to make relevant connections to build a pipeline of new volunteers. Emily Harris thanked Jane and the committee for their dedication to this work. Emily added that the REDI group held a focus group this week and participants indicated that volunteering simply is not an option for many people who are working multiple jobs or have limited transportation. Emily explained that for some people, it can be off-putting to even ask them to volunteer. As we strive for diversity, this is a structural issue which extends broadly. Emily's synagogue struggles to get work done and is seeing a generational transition with older members who are willing and able to volunteer, but it is not the same with the younger generation. Emily indicated that we may need to look at other models.

Arnold added that the nature of the steward program requires people who have a lot of time. He stated that, in his experience, people of all backgrounds volunteer. It really is about not having enough diversity up and down the ranks. The more we can build diversity across the ranks, the more we will see people with different racial and ethnic backgrounds prepared to move up to become a steward when they are at a different point in their lives. Hank added this is the most sobering challenge in the whole plan. Hank suggests we think about this in a consumer marketing way and perhaps get some business students to help. Jane added that she is seeing younger people volunteer, including those who are still working full time but are willing to volunteer on weekends. She added that we need to get out messages such as: "These are your lands; come on out because you own these." We should also hammer the point that the Forest Preserves are one of the ways to mitigate climate change.

**Review of Proposed 2022 Budget.** CFO Steve Hughes presented an overview of the proposed 2022 budget. Mark Templeton asked for more information on the transfer of reserve funds to the self-insurance fund. Steve responded that there have been several accidents and injuries that have occurred in recent years for which the district was held liable, and that other settlements are being litigated. In addition, this fund is used to pay workers' comp claims. Chief Attorney Lisa Lee is exploring whether the district can buy insurance for catastrophic loss. Arnold added that it is a big number, but with millions of visits each year, there are times when people get injured and file suits. Arnold added that the district is actively making changes to mitigate risk.

Mike reported that the Zoo trustees are concerned that their support remains flat; it does not increase over time. Steve confirmed that this levy is held steady but added that the Zoo and Garden do have the ability to raise fees whereas the district has limited ability to raise non-tax revenue.

Mike expressed concern about the challenge filling police officer vacancies. Arnold reported that the district loses some officers who go to other municipalities with higher pay. The district has made changes to attract officers who want to spend time in nature. The district is also working on retention strategies.

Delio Calzolari reported that trail immunity was changed in 2017 from full immunity to a lesser immunity; this also impacts settlements.

Sylvia asked about the significant transfer from reserve funds and asked if there is a policy regarding a minimum balance. Arnold responded that the district is proposing a higher draw on these funds once again this year to address capital needs and maintain a steady level of service. Steve added that the district complies with a minimum fund policy (about 10% of the district's operating budget).

**Review of 2021 Annual Report and 2022 Budget.** Eileen Figel and Benjamin Cox presented an overview of the draft Annual Report and Budget Recommendation.

- **Process and Structure.** Laurel suggested that the Council designate a liaison to the Steering Committee.

- **Challenge Initiative.** Mike added that new signage at Milwaukee and Devon is well done; Chris Slattery explained that Caldwell is a gateway site and this investment had been planned prior to the Challenge Sites initiative. Chris added that the Challenge Sites initiative will allow additional interpretive signs.

Alan asked for further discussion at a future meeting regarding how the phase 2 implementation strategy aligns with the implementation of the position papers. Mark suggested more time is needed to review the report.

A motion was made by Mark and seconded by Laurel to: (a) convene a special meeting for further discussion of the report, and (b) delegate to the Council's officers authority for final approval of the report and budget recommendation in the event there is not a quorum at the special meeting or additional revisions are required. The motion was seconded by Laurel. The results of the roll call vote are as follows:

Name	Vote	Name	Vote
Alan Bell	Yes	Maria Pesqueira	Absent
Mike DeSantiago	Yes	Laurel Ross	Yes
Terry Guen	Absent	Henrietta Saunders	Yes
Emily Harris	Yes	Shelley Spencer	Absent
Sylvia Jenkins	Absent	Mark Templeton	Yes
Commissioner Moore	Absent		

The motion passed.

**Stories/Testimonials.** Alan grew up in East Chicago, Indiana, as one of ten children. His mom had a garden in front of the house and his dad had a garden in the back. Alan wasn't introduced to the preserves until 13 years ago when he joined the board of Openlands and had a chance to explore the preserves. Before that time, he had a sense that the preserves are there, but not for him. He almost instinctively kept himself away from this incredible resource. But as he explored the preserves, he found them amazing. Now he thinks about how to engage more people who aren't connected to nature or don't believe the preserves are for them. How do we breakthrough these barriers and connect them to this beautiful resource?



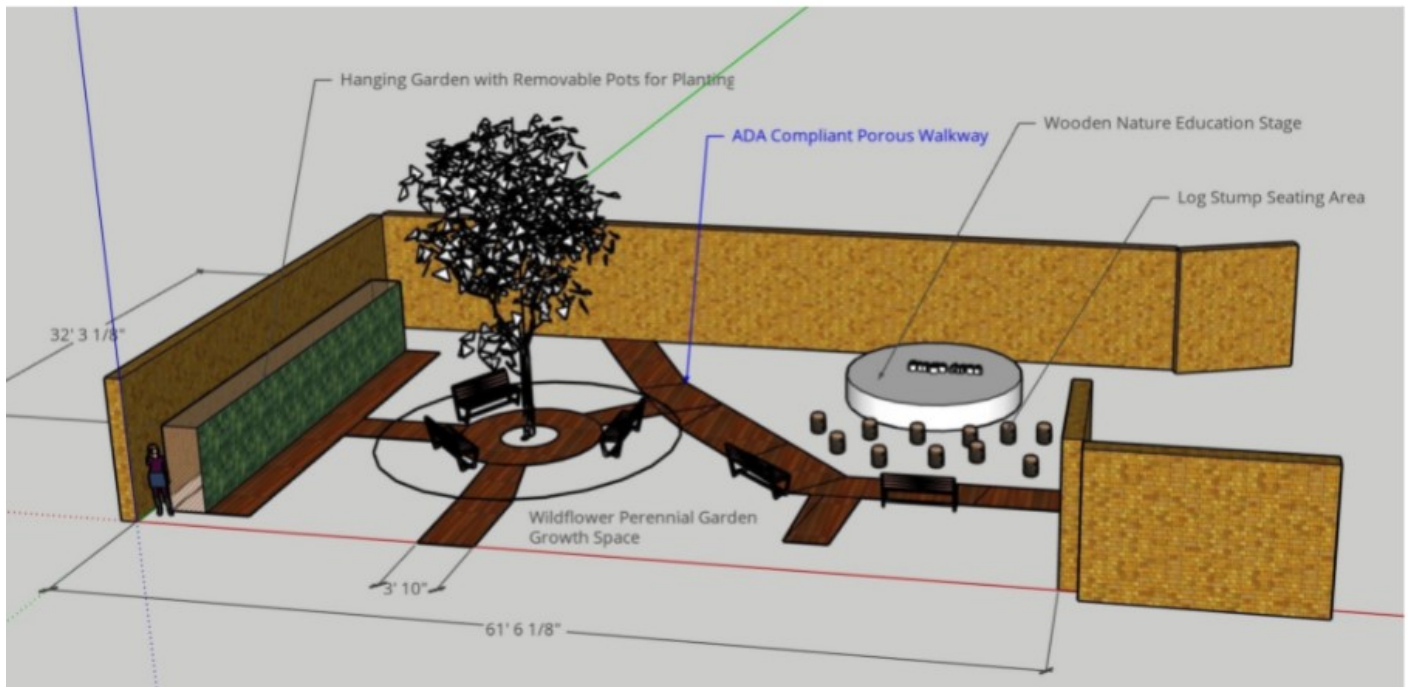
**Adjournment.** Alan thanked all Council members for their work and commitment throughout the year. He noted that the diversity and passion of the Council is amazing. Alan also thanked Arnold and Eileen for their work. A motion to adjourn was made by Laurel Ross and seconded by Mark Templeton. The results of the roll call vote are as follows:

Name	Vote	Name	Vote
Alan Bell	Yes	Maria Pesqueira	Absent
Mike DeSantiago	Yes	Laurel Ross	Yes
Terry Guen	Absent	Henrietta Saunders	Yes
Emily Harris	Yes	Shelley Spencer	Absent
Sylvia Jenkins	Absent	Mark Templeton	Yes
Commissioner Moore	Absent		

The motion passed and the meeting adjourned at 12:15 pm.

## Attachment 1.1: Redesign of Whelan Pool – Proposals from NU Students

### Outdoor Nature Education Space



## Attachment 1.2



### Forest Preserves of Cook County

#### Nature Compatible Recreation Use Evaluation Criteria and Process

**FPCC Mission:** To acquire, restore and manage lands for the purpose of protecting and preserving public open space with its natural wonders, significant prairies, forests, wetlands, rivers, streams, and other landscapes with all of its associated wildlife, in a natural state for the education, pleasure and recreation of the public now and in the future.

#### **FPCC Vision** (from Recreation Master Plan 2013)

Cook County residents and visitors' value and enjoy the Forest Preserves by engaging in diverse and educational and recreational experiences that foster health and wellness and a lifelong love of nature and outdoor activity.

#### **Guiding Principles**

- Outdoor recreation opportunities are provided to promote healthy lifestyles and connect people to nature.
- A variety of safe and accessible outdoor recreational opportunities are offered that attract diverse communities.
- Environmental awareness, open space advocacy, and stewardship messages are incorporated into what we do.
- Recreational uses are sensitive to natural resources and not located where they would disturb high value ecologically-sensitive areas.
- Recreational opportunities are created using the District's 80/20 land use recommendation to ensure that 80 percent of District land is protected and undeveloped.
- Visitors are educated on the value of the natural resources in the District and how to minimize their impact when using the preserves.

The community is engaged in the planning process.

## Nature Compatible Recreation Paper (2021)

- Opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in recreational activities within the Forest Preserves of Cook County that support and further the Forest Preserves' mission. These are educational and recreational experiences that foster human health, wellness, and a lifelong love of nature and outdoor activity while minimizing detriment to the Preserves' natural habitats and properties. The Forest Preserves' mission of environmental awareness, open space advocacy, and active stewardship is to be achieved through Compatible Recreation participation where possible.

### Key Principles

- Placement of facilities and implementation of programs should not harm nature. High value ecologically sensitive areas must be protected from disturbance.
- The vast majority of FPCC's holdings should remain in a natural state with no more than 20 percent developed for active recreation or other uses.
- Everyone should have access to recreation and programs which promote healthy lifestyles and connect people to nature.
- Operation and maintenance of facilities and programs must be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable.
- Residents must have an opportunity to have meaningful impact on plans for recreation programs and facilities within the Forest Preserves, and participation should be broad enough to include those who lack formal organization or influence. If elimination of a facility or program harms a specific community, the Forest Preserves should seek ways to provide alternative benefits or otherwise mitigate the harm. Special concern should be paid to communities impacted by a history of racial inequity

### Step 1: Determine Fit

Does this activity fit FPCC Mission and Vision – using enabling Mission, Recreation Master Plan and Nature Compatible Recreation

Fit = no - rationale provided to requester and General Superintendent

Fit = Yes - a FPCC staff person/department is assigned to take activity through the following additional steps

### Step 2: Assess Need and Demand

Meets a demonstrated **need**.

**Attracts** and engages users.

Market analysis



**Does not duplicate** other services in the market area.

Analyze **community support** for or against

**\*Unsanctioned uses** are occurring.

### Step 3: Evaluate the Site

Is **sensitive to site resources** (natural and cultural).

**Does not conflict** with other site uses.

**Activates** an existing developed area or previously disturbed site.

Site is **accessible** and connected to trails and multi-modal transportation.

### Step 4: Identify Implementation Options

**Service delivery approach** is identified and deemed feasible (e.g., District staff, partnership, contract, etc.).

**Financial resources** are identified (capital and operational).

**Sustainability** is assessed.

Quantifies district investment, both capital and staff time, including opportunity cost

Plot on the subsidy pyramid -- Is it subsidized at the appropriate level or If not, how do you get it there?

## STEP 1: FIT Exercise

How does acceptance of this proposal impact the Forest Preserves 80/20 guidelines?

### ***From 2013 Recreation Master Plan***

In 1929, an advisory committee put forward a recommendation for recreational development policy in the forest preserves based on a survey of current land use at the time:

- 75% of the forest land be kept in their natural state.
- 5% be maintained as water recreation areas in rivers and lakes, including marsh lands.
- 18% be developed for recreation uses, including playfields, parking areas and golf courses; and
- 2% for a zoological park and an arboretum.

This early recommendation is still used today as a guideline but has been more loosely stated as an 80-20 policy: that 80 percent of the forest land should be kept in as natural a condition as possible, and 20 percent developed for recreational uses. Based on cursory analysis conducted several years ago, it is likely that the holdings developed for recreational uses likely fall well below 20 percent of total preserve land.

### ***2013 Analysis from Recreation Master Plan***

Out of 66,920.69 GIS acres, water covers 5,016.28 acres, natural lands covers 49,547.62 acres, developed lands covers 10,073.39, acres (including acreage for the Chicago Botanic Garden at 385 acres and the Brookfield Zoo at 216 acres) and undetermined covers 2283.4 acres.

- Water = 7.5%
- Managed Natural Lands = 74.04%
- “Developed” Lands = 15.05%
- Undetermined = 3.41%

Need to do a regular update to 80/20 based on new info, new policies, etc.

If the activity puts FPCC over % developed area we would not do it

Some new things to developed, picnic grove, in natural area, will it need to be mowed etc.

Developed land was calculated as follows:

In 2013 **Total Developed Land** was calculated by adding total developed or unmanaged acreage + total parking lot acreage+ total

trail buffer acreage + structure buffer acreage + utility buffer acreage + athletic and recreation acreage

## Step 1 Fit Exercise Questions

1. Does placing this activity in the Forest Preserves provide a unique opportunity for users compared to other locations?

*Key: The FP is a unique place and should be a place for activities that emphasize that uniqueness; different than a park district*

Score: 0- not a unique experience – 5 totally unique experience

2. Can this activity and its maintenance take place in a Forest Preserves' location where it will cause no harm to nature or wildlife?

*Key: Mowed area? Not sensitive ecological area? Is it at place where there is already infrastructure?*

Score: 0-extreme harm; 5 no harm

3. Would this activity negatively impact or cause harm to other users?

*Exclusive use? Noise/other pollution? Can't do other things when this activity is happening?*

Score: 0-extreme harm; 5 no harm

4. Does this activity promote/provide users a health/wellness benefit?

*What is the health/wellness benefits (mental and physical) of the activity; human powered activity?*

Score: 0 no; 3 maybe; 5 yes

5. Can effective open space, nature, conservation and stewardship messages be communicated by/through this activity?

*How do we use the activity as a tool to talk about the importance of the Forest Preserves, our mission and the value of open space, nature, conservation and stewardship?*

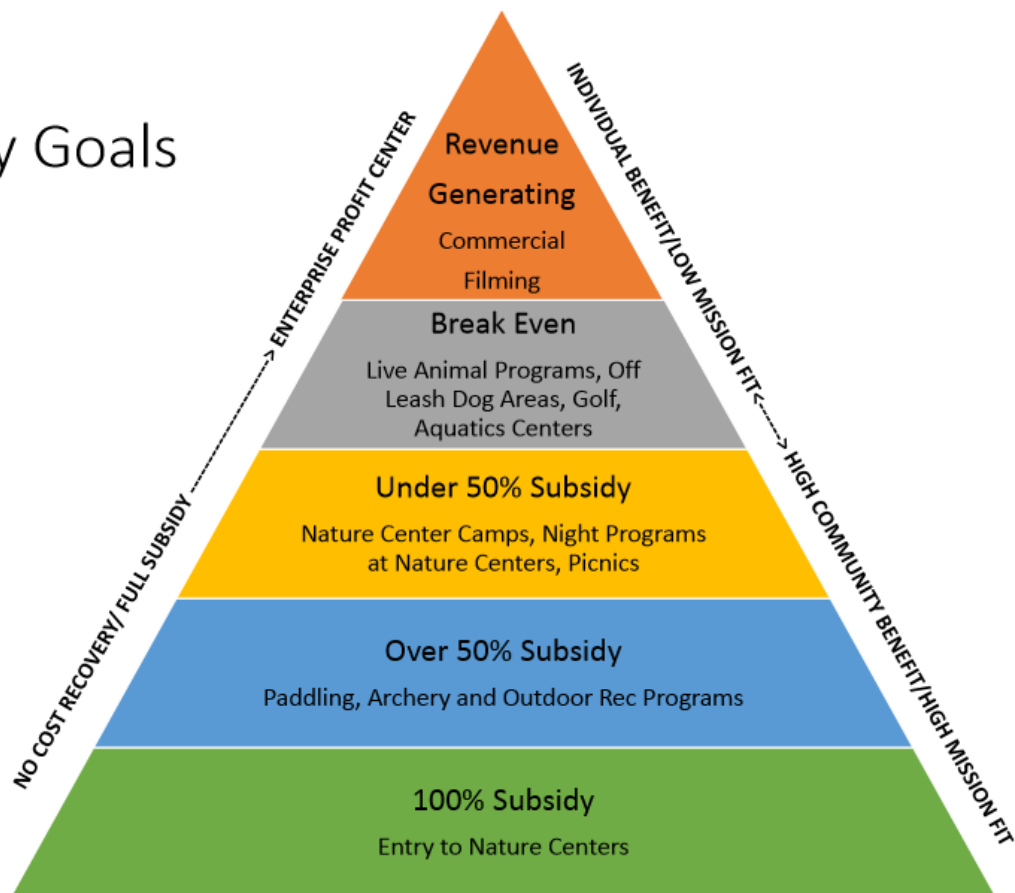
Score: 0 – no messages; 5 many messages

6. Could the proposed activity fall in the appropriate level on the subsidy pyramid either on its own, or as part of a portfolio of activities?

*Gets to are we subsidizing at the right level; is there a revenue aspect? If we are going to have pay for something to make the experience happen can we afford it? (SPECIFICS CONSIDERED IN LATER STEPS) consider time - insert image of pyramid.*

Score: 0-no/never; 3-maybe eventually; 5=yes/now or right away

## NCCP/ Subsidy Goals



7. Is the proposed activity placed in an area of Cook County that (1) has less Forest Preserves' amenities, or (2) has been negatively impacted through social and economic injustices?

Reference REDI and NCR papers for map

<https://fpdcc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FPCC-CPC-Position-Paper-Compatable-Recreation-030321.pdf>

<https://fpdcc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FPCC-CPC-Position-Paper-Racial-Equity-030321.pdf>

Score: 0 no; 5 yes

8. Can the community (all Cook County residents, neighbors to the preserves, community of users) help in the planning of how this activity could/would take place?

*Reference REDI and NCR papers re: community engagement strategies; to what degree (see above)*

Score: 0 community not involved - 5 community can be involved

9. Does this activity align or support the Sustainability and Climate Resiliency Plan?

<https://fpdcc.com/downloads/plans/FPDCC-2018-Sustainability-Report-092818.pdf>

Score: 0=no; 5= meets multiple goals

Key: what are the environmental impacts; will this impact FPCC goals toward emissions reduction.

**Attachment 1.2**  
**Phase 2 NCCP 2021 – 2025**  
**Scaling Up Volunteers, Building Leadership**

Where we are now

80 volunteer sites, various size, are managed by 73 Stewards, assisted by 40 certified Workday Leaders (WDLs) and other trained volunteers.

Of 8968 acres to be managed (restored), ~ 50% (4880 acres) being actively managed.

To manage the other half of the total 8968 acres by 2025 – should have **100 active stewards by 2025** plus more Workday Leaders. Increasing the diversity of all participants is a priority as well.

Attrition in current leadership will occur, for various reasons. People relocate to different locales or have different life changes. Long-serving stewards eventually age out.

**Of 69 current stewards, 27 are 71+ years of age.** A third of our current stewards could retire in the next 5 years.

**To reach our 2025 goal of 100 active stewards, we need to add 8-10 new stewards per year.**

This does not account for additional restoration acres that will be added in the next 5 years, requiring more support from volunteers.

Identifying and recruiting potential stewards and leaders requires skill and persistence.

Training leadership requires multiple steps and hours of mentoring by staff and volunteers.

**We've added just 6 stewards and 39 workday leaders in the last 5 years.**

How to get to where we want to be?

Gather lessons from what we've learned from surveys, interviews, outreach; compile a toolkit on recruiting potential leaders. Share "best practices", lessons from compiled data to help maximize recruiting efforts.

Build plans for leadership succession, staff and long-time stewards working together on a plan; maintain a list of regulars at a site, who are potential leaders to cultivate with regular follow up.

Develop an "expert" inventory of volunteers – stewards and others -- who are willing to serve as mentors, help with observations, lead learning tours/classes.

Workday Leaders provide valuable support; often will continue to be stewards.

Training involves 3 classes, exams, multiple observations by staff or stewards, taking up to a year to finish and certify. Completing observations is one of the roadblocks -- compile list of expert volunteers available that can be called on? Streamline the reporting process?

Review and update the Apprentice Steward path. Promote the role of Steward as an important leadership role, tied to the NCCP goals. Design classes specific to ecological restoration.

Provide training in social media, to help volunteer projects reach out more effectively.

Benefits: engage wider audience, increase diversity of participants; share a consistent message on managing for healthy natural areas; strengthen the volunteer group communities.

## Strategic Priorities 2021

### Scaling Up Volunteers

Presented to Council April 2021; updated September 2021

***NOTE: Updates are in bold italics***

1. **Work with partners to develop a plan for recruiting and training the 500 (make this a minimum 250?)** Volunteer Leaders that will sustain the ecological stewardship program that is critical in the effort to restore 30,000 acres to high quality. Engage staff, partners, and volunteers in gathering useful information that can inform the Cook County Forest Preserve plan, identifying the best current models for recruiting and training volunteers and engaging current leaders in developing broader strategies. **Have the basic plan in place and begin implementing it by end of 2021**

Progress:

- In 2014, FPCC, Friends of the Chicago River, and Friends of the Forest Preserves (“collaborating partners”) launched the Centennial Volunteers (CV) initiative. CV was designed to build a self-sustaining volunteer community that is geographically diverse and that lays the foundation for a next generation of volunteer leaders. In the summer 2019, FPCC hired PEER Associates to carry out an evaluation of the CV initiative. The evaluation aimed to answer the following:
  1. What benefits does the Centennial Volunteers initiative provide to the Forest Preserves, to volunteers, and to the collaborating partners?
    - a. What are the differences between sites/regions?
    - b. How do these differences impact the CV initiative and the Forest Preserves overall volunteer engagement model?
    - c. Which benefits (outcomes) should the Forest Preserves prioritize going forward?
  2. What modifications should the collaborating partners make to the Centennial Volunteers initiative to increase the number, diversity, retention, and progression of volunteers?
    - a. What challenges will the CV initiative face going forward?
    - b. How can engagement strategies be further modified for each site to strengthen restoration impact?
  3. How should the collaborating partners structure their relationship to best support the CV initiative?
    - a. How can the strengths of each partner be leveraged to maximize efficiency and collective impact?
    - b. How should future decisions about the CV initiative be made by the collaborating partners?

A key recommendation of the PEER evaluation was to schedule a multiday retreat to revisit and reimagine the CV program, paying particular attention to lessons learned around recruiting and training stewardship leaders. Ideally the resulting best practices will be replicated throughout the District. The collaborating partners are in the process of identifying a retreat facilitator with plans to execute the retreat this spring and summer.

***The Centennial Program has been evaluated and re-imagined over the last two years by staff, partners, and volunteers with assistance by two outside facilitators. It's anticipated that the new CV strategy will be available by October this year, to be used as a model for building leadership everywhere.***

The VR Team:

- Conducted a survey of existing volunteer leaders (site stewards) to gauge site leadership needs and to better understand where recruiting resources should be distributed. Additionally, the VR team worked with a GIS specialist to map volunteers by zip code to determine where existing volunteers live to better target marketing efforts.  
***The Volunteer Resources team is working to aggregate interview and survey data collected over the last two years to produce best practices on building volunteer leadership. Sources include extensive focus groups for the SUV paper; interviews from the Centennial Volunteer program evaluation; a needs assessment survey of all site stewards; and Key Stewards discussion on best practices on recruiting.***
- Conducted a review of dormant programs to identify which programs might be reimagined and relaunched to enhance diversity and expand volunteer engagement.
- Committed to improved communication and follow up with 'one and done' volunteers to determine what barriers might be in place for continued engagement with FPCC and how to help remove those barriers.  
***Volunteer Resources is working to modify the existing Online Volunteer System (OVS) to make it more user friendly both internally and externally. OVS is a core source of communication with volunteers so revamping inefficiencies is paramount to current (and potential) volunteer communication.***
- Worked to identify opportunities for volunteers and partners to co-teach field classes, citizen science monitoring programs and online learning.  
***Volunteer leaders have presented several times at Key Stewards meetings—from Marc's "botany corner" to Poplar Creek's presentation on their team's history and best practices. With the help of Adler Planetarium's Teen Stratonaut light pollution monitoring, the Forest Preserve's Mt. Forest Island area was designated as an Urban Night Sky Place by the International Dark Sky Association. Volunteer Resources was central in this effort. Teen Stratonauts will continue monitoring across the Preserves.***
- Identified and implemented new processes and procedures to make volunteering more efficient and enjoyable.  
***Added an additional ecological stewardship certified leadership position—Seed Collection Leader. Additional certified leadership positions are in development.***
- Worked with the REDI team to create and implement a racial, equity, diversity, and inclusion (REDI) training for Stewardship Leaders and other public facing roles.
- Hired a consultant to review the VR section of the website with a REDI lens and make recommendations for improved communication.



- ***Revamped trainings to accommodate more volunteers by adding live virtual trainings, on-demand trainings, regional field workshops, and more evenly distributing classes across the District.***
  - ***Friends of the Forest Preserves presented a “Frozen Fungi” class that was open to volunteers and staff. Volunteer Resources developed several new classes-Reading the Landscape; Soils and Restoration; Who’s Afraid of the Dichotomous Key; as well as various plant ID classes to enrich stewardship knowledge. Additional classes are in the development stage.***
2. **Work with the Forest Preserves Board of Commissioners to connect with constituents and local leaders.** Provide Commissioners and their staff with regular updates that can help inform constituents about the Preserves, what the natural resources provide, and how citizens can get involved in the Preserves. Identify restoration projects within or nearby a Commissioner’s district and help engage the constituents with the Preserves.
- The SUV committee met with commissioners to introduce the paper and gather feedback.
  - VR had four (4) meetings with Commissioners and their staff since SUV paper was adopted. ***Volunteer Resources hosted an ecological stewardship workday with State Senator Ram Villivalam’s staff. US Representative Sean Casten and Cook County Commissioner Scott Britton will attend the National Public Lands Day stewardship workday hosted by the Deer Grove Natural Areas Volunteers and the Northwest Cook Sierra Club on September 25<sup>th</sup>. Volunteer-related outreach to elected officials will be ongoing among Volunteer Resources staff as well as partners.***
  - Partners are engaging with Commissioners in separate but complementary ways.
3. Volunteer programs are a powerful resource, but they require long-term support and innovation to be effective. **Identify and deploy new resources to support and accelerate restoration at existing volunteer stewardship sites, in consultation with site stewards.**
- The Centennial Volunteers Program (mentioned above) retreat will set a new and expanded strategy for fundraising.
  - FPCC and Partners have identified and secured small scale, short term funding from individuals, foundations, and government sources. A new strategy for multi-year funding has been identified as the biggest need, as the development of volunteer leadership requires a variety of community building strategies to establish trust along the engage-retain-train-sustain continuum.
  - FPCC and Partners are developing strategies for ‘resource stacking’ or combining complementary efforts of contractors, Conservation Corps crews, and volunteers to accomplish habitat restoration goals.

### **Attachment 1.3: Meeting Participants**

Alan Bell, Council  
Aldine Wilson, Office of Commissioner Moore  
Anthony Tindall, FPCC  
Arnold Randall, FPCC  
Benjamin Cox, Friends of the Forest Preserves  
Beth Dunn, Chicago Botanic Garden  
Bob Megquier, Openlands  
Carl Vogel, FPCC  
Carolyn \_\_\_\_\_  
Chip O’Leary, FPCC  
Chris Adas, FPCC  
Chris Slattery, FPCC  
Damon Howell, FPCC  
Debra Walker Johnson, Forest Preserve Foundation  
Delio Calzolari, FPCC  
Eileen Figel, FPCC  
Emily Harris, Council  
Henrietta Saunders, Council  
Jacqui Ulrich, FPCC  
Jane Balaban, Key Steward  
Jenn Baader, Chicago Zoological Society  
John McCabe, FPCC  
Laura Davis  
Laura Milkert, Field Museum  
Laurel Ross, Council  
Liz Millan, FPCC  
Maria Pesqueira, Council  
Mark Templeton, Council  
Michelle Jordan, Office of Commissioner Suffredin  
Mike DeSantiago, Council  
Patti White (captioner)  
Sharon Williams, FPCC  
Steve Hughes, FPCC  
Sylvia Jenkins, Council  
Tom Conlon, FPCC

## Attachment 1.4: Record of Chat

00:59:04	Henrietta Saunders:	Hi all please let me know if you hear echo or chirping from my computer. I have been having some issues here but can switch machines if that helps
00:59:30	Benjamin Cox (he/him):	I can hear someone typing though.
01:09:13	Benjamin Cox (he/him):	I can speak to this later, but please do not share this out. We will have materials to share at a later date. Right now we are keeping the campaign quiet.
01:11:56	Maria Pesqueira:	Wow! That speaks to your work @Ben and the times we are living in.
01:21:46	Laurel Ross:	It is a SPLENDID exhibit!!
01:22:34	Henrietta Saunders:	Very gracious of you Alan. Thanks so much!
01:22:34	Sylvia Jenkins:	Thank you, Alan
01:23:11	Emily Harris:	Congratulations Arnold!
01:23:19	Mark Templeton (he/his):	Bravo!
01:23:44	Maria Pesqueira:	Congratulations Arnold!
01:23:44	jane:	Congratulatons, Arnold -- so well deserved
01:23:54	Sylvia Jenkins:	Congrats Arnold! Well deserved recognition.
01:30:21	Jennifer Baader:	Thank you Arnold. Stuart very much enjoyed his time working with the Forest Preserves and the Policy Council!
01:30:24	Mark Templeton (he/his):	It would be nice to hear from Chief Odum at one of our upcoming meetings.
01:30:42	Mark Templeton (he/his):	Hats off to Stuart!
01:30:44	Henrietta Saunders:	Second to Mark's comment
01:38:40	Laurel Ross:	Behind the pool is a great place for birding!
01:40:21	Anthony Tindall (he/him):	Our pools are our largest energy using buildings, outside of our General Headquarters and Maintenance Shop.
01:40:39	Emily Harris:	Love this idea of a design competition for the pools. Terry Guen has great contacts into the landscape architecture community - she led work like this during the Burnham Centennial, and can be a great resource.
01:41:33	Alan Bell:	Great thought Emily!
01:50:34	Henrietta Saunders:	Yes - impressive work Jacqui and staff. Thanks
01:50:35	Emily Harris:	Great work Jackie and team, this is really exciting!
02:05:38	John McCabe:	Apprentice Stew position doesn't really exist, so adding that for that in-between!
02:15:20	Emily Harris:	Increase in younger folks is super encouraging!

02:16:54	Emily Harris:	Yes to climate change messaging - that may be why you are getting the younger folks interest now
02:17:17	Henrietta Saunders:	Another message: it's FUN!
02:18:49	Carl Vogel:	We recently reworked the landing page for our Volunteer work, with more specifics to come for specific programs. This was done with a REDI lens specifically: <a href="https://fpdcc.com/volunteer/">https://fpdcc.com/volunteer/</a>
02:40:08	Emily Harris:	Carl, the volunteer page looks fantastic. 🍌 Also so excited about the accessibility page.
02:54:39	John McCabe:	For the record - we were not found liable in that branch/bike incident Steve mentioned. Settlement was agreed to.
03:02:46	Henrietta Saunders:	It will be interesting to see if employee turnover is higher with the new hybrid model.
03:02:56	Henrietta Saunders:	Or - hopefully lower!!
03:03:02	Anthony Tindall (he/him):	We did have significant energy reduction numbers during the past year. We achieved our energy reduction goals in fact.
03:06:24	Delio Calzolari:	Illinois Supreme Court Holds: No Absolute Immunity for "Share-Use" Paths <a href="https://www.koponairdo.com/illinois-supreme-court-holds-no-absolute-immunity-for-shared-use-paths/">https://www.koponairdo.com/illinois-supreme-court-holds-no-absolute-immunity-for-shared-use-paths/</a>
03:07:15	Laurel Ross:	there is important information in the chat will it be included in the minutes of this meeting?
03:07:32	Anthony Tindall (he/him):	We are planning a hybrid return to work model, however we are piloting a number of different actions to continue our energy reduction successes. In addition, we are making energy upgrades to our lighting and hvac systems, and will be re-launching our employee green challenge.
03:07:55	Henrietta Saunders:	Eileen includes the chats with minutes Laurel.
03:10:09	Laurel Ross:	does the council have a liaison to the steering committee
03:16:08	carolyn:	YES! Sauk Trail Woods! Thank you!
03:29:33	Sylvia Jenkins:	I have to log off now. Thank you.
03:30:01	Henrietta Saunders:	I am ok with Eileen's suggestion of a few small briefings available and then delegate to officers
03:31:05	Benjamin Cox (he/him):	Before we run out of time I want to be sure to thank the many staff members that contributed recommendations to the Challenge Sites project.
03:31:05	Henrietta Saunders:	small briefings can happen without a "public meeting" which might be easier.
03:31:33	Emily Harris:	I would support that solution meeting to workshop with a backup
03:37:29	Arandall:	Thanks for your story and your leadership Mr. Chairman!
03:37:44	Mark Templeton (he/his):	Agreed!
03:38:53	Henrietta Saunders:	she does it so gracefully too!
03:39:04	Emily Harris:	🍌