



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 17-0094, **Version:** 1

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### PROPOSED RESOLUTION

#### **RECOGNITION OF THE *BIRD THE PRESERVES* INITIATIVE, A SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION TO CONNECT PEOPLE WITH THE FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY**

**WHEREAS**, the Forest Preserves of Cook County's nearly 70,000 acres of natural lands are home to some of the nation's most biologically diverse flora and fauna, including nearly 300 types of resident and migrant birds, both common and unusual, that depend on Forest Preserves' habitat; and

**WHEREAS**, birding is one of the most popular recreational activities in America and can serve as a gateway activity to a greater connection with the natural world, and is an excellent way to introduce people to the forest preserves, providing a positive, healthy, and fun experience in nature; and

**WHEREAS**, Bird the Preserves is an initiative that connects diverse communities to the Preserves by expanding birding programs and activities, celebrating the migration stories that people and birds share, and establishing the Preserves as a premier birding destination in the Chicago Wilderness region; and

**WHEREAS**, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through Chicago Wilderness provided federal funding to the Preserves to launch the Bird the Preserves initiative in 2016; and

**WHEREAS**, over 17 partner organizations representing birding clubs, non-profits, and government agencies worked together to successfully implement the Bird the Preserves initiative throughout 2016, holding more than 220 bird walks and related events; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bird the Preserves initiative included a Big Year competition, a yearlong friendly contest where teams from throughout Cook County adopted different preserves and competed to find the most bird species and recruit the most new birders at that preserve. The Chicago Botanic Garden and Brookfield Zoo also formed teams and promoted the initiative; and

**WHEREAS**, the Big Year was a resounding success and had 21 official teams that spotted a total of 253 species of birds and had an estimated 2,400 people participate in bird walks and events--35% of whom were new birders, 35% had never birded in the forest preserves before, and over 190 unique zip codes were represented; and

**WHEREAS**, the Bird the Preserves initiative has proven so successful at connecting people with the Preserves, that the Preserves has sought and received additional funding from the Forest Preserve Foundation to incorporate elements of the Bird the Preserves initiative into the Preserves' permanent program offerings; and

**WHEREAS**, the initiative's successful communications and marketing campaign, led by the Preserves and partners, resulted in Bird the Preserves stories featured in nearly 20 online and print publications, on-air media coverage from FOX and WCIU's You and Me This Morning, a 593% increase in page views on the Preserves' birding webpage, and a major social media presence utilizing the hashtag #birdthepreserves; and

**WHEREAS**, Bird the Preserves is consistent with the goal of the Forest Preserves to increase connections between people and nature.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, on behalf of ourselves and staff, do hereby congratulate the partners, Big Year teams, field trip leaders, staff, funders, and participants of Bird the Preserves on their success in launching a unique and influential initiative that can serve as a model for both the Forest Preserves and others; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this Resolution be spread upon the permanent Record of Proceedings of the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and that a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to partners, funders and Big Year teams of the Bird the Preserves initiative.