

We save land. We save rivers.



## 2013-14 Progress Report

The Conservation Foundation would like to provide you with a progress update on our key mission areas for the period of July 2013 to June 2014. This 12-month period turned out to be a particularly active one, with strides being made on many fronts. Our land acquisition activity remained constant (and high profile!), our water conservation activity continued steadily, our efforts to promote stewardship were on-going and we have laid the groundwork to continue in our efforts to educate children.

### *Preserving Land*

- On April 25, we purchased a 2.25 acre parcel of land as a buy and hold for the Butterfield Park District. This land, on the corner of Routes 53 and 56, lies adjacent to Butterfield Park District's recreation center and a child-care facility, and was in the process of being developed into the largest gas station and car wash in DuPage County. This property will be owned by The Conservation Foundation and leased to the Butterfield Park District for the next year, until the Park District can acquire the funding to purchase it.
- We've just celebrated the one year anniversary of our acquisition of the Dayton Bluffs preserve. Restoration work continues to progress through regularly scheduled volunteer workdays, and the site was recently given the designation of Illinois Land and Water Reserve by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. This designation is for lands and waters that support significant natural heritage or archaeological resources, and essentially is a form of conservation easement with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.
- After many years of working with the Antos family, their 43-acre property near Big Rock Creek in far western Kane County was finally preserved. It is the newest acquisition by the Kane County Forest Preserve. Among its features: a group of the prettiest yellow lady-slipper orchids you have ever seen.

### *Protecting Rivers*

- This year's annual DuPage River Sweep resulted in over 700 registered volunteers removing over 10 tons of trash from the DuPage River. Because of this and all of our other many restoration projects along the river, the DuPage River is in its best shape in years.
- Several species of native river fish such as the Johnny Darter and Creek Chub have made a comeback in our area streams because of improved stream conditions. These conditions are a direct result of the work done in partnership by The DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup and The Conservation Foundation.
- The leadership of the DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup, including our own Stephen McCracken, have reached a groundbreaking agreement with the Illinois Tollway Authority regarding the use of chlorides. The Tollway is building the new western access tollway for O'Hare Airport. More expressways = the use of more road salt, which can result in fewer quality fish and less healthy rivers. The Tollway has agreed to support chloride reduction efforts on its own roads as well as those villages impacted by the new road.



## *Educating Communities*

- Planning for the Beyond the Basics seminar has been completed. This highly popular event occurs every 18 months and has been expanded to a two-day event for the first time. This year's event was held September 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> and emphasized green stormwater practices.
- In June, The Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce's Sustainability Forum partnered with The Conservation Foundation for a tour of the sustainable features at McDonald Farm. Several Naperville businesses sent representatives to the farm to learn about our sustainability efforts.

## *Promoting Stewardship*

- The Conservation@Home and Conservation@Work programs continue to be popular. We certified properties in Yorkville, North Aurora, Bensenville, Downers Grove and Lockport. The Shedd Aquarium in Chicago was also certified with Conservation@Work for its outdoor landscaping on the lakefront.
- In January, The Conservation Foundation and the DuPage County Green Government Council hosted The DuPage Energy Summit at Hotel Arista in Naperville. Speakers from several disciplines talked about the importance of energy efficiency, including presenters from Nicor, ComEd, Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, Center for Neighborhood Technology and the Metropolitan Planning Council. This popular annual event has attracted 250-300 participants each year to learn about various environmental and conservation topics.

## *Teaching Children*

- The long-term future of the Mighty Acorns programs at our DuPage County schools has become an issue, as county funding for these programs is no longer available. We remain steadfast in our efforts to find sustainable funding models for these critical programs.
- We continue to provide Mighty Acorns educational offerings in Elgin, and have begun discussions to expand our programs with additional partnering agencies in Kane County. In addition, discussions have also been held in Kendall County about expansion of Mighty Acorns programming.



## **Broadening Our Circles**

- Our annual Earth Day Benefit Dinner, held on April 24 at Bobak's Signature Events in Woodridge, achieved record attendance when over 500 guests joined us to celebrate our successes. The event has grown in popularity each year, and it provides significant financial support for our operating expenses. The event raised over \$150,000 in support of The Conservation Foundation's programs and operations.
- Over 180 guests have attended "Meet the Conservation Foundation" sessions throughout the year. These new hour-long events are done twice per month with the goal of introducing people to the work of The Conservation Foundation through a series of stories told by volunteers and staff.



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