

The Conservation Foundation Will County Successes and Activities



Established in 1972 by business and community leaders, The Conservation Foundation is a private, not-for-profit land and watershed protection organization working throughout Northeast Illinois with a focus in DuPage, Kane, Kendall and Will Counties. Its main offices are located in Naperville (Will County) on a 60-acre working, organic farm and has a program office in Montgomery. The mission of the Foundation is *to preserve and restore natural areas and open space, protect rivers and watersheds, and promote environmental stewardship*. In 1997, after serving DuPage County exclusively for 25 years, the Foundation expanded its service region to include Kane, Kendall and Will Counties.

Will County Forest Preserve District

The Foundation organized the campaigns for the forest preserve's 1999 and 2005 open space referenda totaling \$165 million. Staff members currently assist the forest preserve district on selected land acquisitions throughout Will County. Since 1999, the Foundation has helped the forest preserve district preserve 53 properties, protecting more than 3,300 acres of open space valued at nearly \$77 million.

McDonald Farm, Naperville

The 60-acre McDonald Farm, located in northern Will County, is the home and offices of the Foundation. The farm is protected in perpetuity by a conservation easement and is being used for education, conservation and sustainable agriculture purposes. The farmland is leased to the Green Earth Institute, who grows organic vegetables through a Community Supported Agriculture initiative. The McDonald Farm is a showcase for residential-scale environmentally-friendly practices, including native vegetation, rainwater harvesting and renewable energy.

Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition (LDRWC)

The Foundation recently spearheaded a two-year watershed protection planning process for the Lower DuPage River, which starts in Naperville and flows to Channahon before merging with the Des Plaines River. The Foundation then helped to establish a separate organization (LDRWC) to lead the plan's implementation. Foundation staff members run the day-to-day operations of the LDRWC, which is comprised of several municipalities and local units of government, landowners and conservation groups and is modeled after the highly-successful DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup in the upper part of the watershed.

Manhattan Park District

The Foundation worked with the Manhattan Park District and the Forest Preserve District of Will County to preserve this historic and scenic icon located on Route 52. Instead of being torn down for new housing, the 100-acre Round Barn Farm serves as the gateway to Manhattan and hosts a number of community festivals and events.



Village of Romeoville

The Foundation worked with the village in facilitating a donation of 92 acres of wetland along the Lily Cache Creek greenway from a developer. The Foundation has also worked with the village and forest preserve district to expand the Ohara Woods property.

Village of Manhattan

Foundation staff worked with the village, park district and a developer in restoring nearly a mile of Manhattan Creek. This partnership resulted in the “day-lighting” of a previously-piped creek, restoration and bike trails along the creek bank and the reduction of flooding in adjacent properties. The creek property is owned by the park district and has a conservation easement in place.

Conservation Easements

The Foundation currently holds conservation easements on 200 acres in Will County, including a 40-acre wooded property in northern Will County along the West Branch of the DuPage River, a 130-acre historic farm in western Will County which protects land along both the I&M Canal and the DuPage River, and a 30-acre easement as part of a development in Manhattan. Foundation staff were also instrumental in negotiating a conservation easement on a 160-acre farm in the Beecher area. Additional landowners have contacted the Foundation and several discussions are occurring on conservation easements throughout Will County.

DuPage River Sweep

The annual DuPage River Sweep has been organized by the Foundation since 1991. Mostly held in DuPage County because of funding, some communities in Will County along the river have joined the clean up efforts.

Kingsley School, Naperville

The Foundation hosts hundreds of students from Kingsley School at the McDonald Farm each year. Staff members assist with curriculum topics such as local history, farming and conservation.

Green Earth Institute Partnership

The Foundation is working with the Green Earth Institute in developing and delivering education programs to schools and the public on organic gardening and conservation farming. Both the Foundation and the Institute hold programs for children at the farm.

Conservation @ Home

As an extension of our existing homeowner education and watershed protection efforts, The Conservation Foundation formed the Conservation@Home program to encourage and recognize property owners that actively manage and/or create yards that are environmentally friendly and conserve water. Staff involved in this program have visited many homes and businesses throughout Will County. The Foundation holds presentations in many communities, teaching homeowners and local businesses about the benefits of native landscaping and water conservation on their properties. Dozens of properties in Will County have been certified and several communities have participated in rain barrel programs.