The Dayton Bluffs Preserve Acquisition

The Dayton Bluffs property is located where I-80 crosses the Fox River, and is also adjacent to Route 71, a major road in the area. The land is adjacent to the corporate limits of the City of Ottawa. The entire property for sale is 415 acres in size, with about half of it being farmed. The other half is made up of high quality wooded slopes and unique ravines along the river. The ecological quality of the site has earned it praise from a 1999 study, and is why it has been identified as a priority property in the Lower Fox River Land Conservation Plan. The Dayton Bluffs property has a floristic quality index of 59, which is considered of statewide importance. It is interesting geologically as well, with layers of glacial deposits over shale; very different than the sandstone bluffs prevalent just upstream. There are also significant pre-historic archeological sites located on the property.

The Conservation Foundation will purchase 253 acres of mostly the forested areas, which includes about one mile of river frontage, wooded slopes, ravines and some farmland that will make a nice natural area preserve for the area’s residents. Through the past year we have negotiated with the landowners and come to an agreement on purchase price of roughly $2.1 million.

The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and Grand Victoria Foundation both assisted The Conservation Foundation with acquisition funds, along with the Hamill Family Foundation. An additional $185,000 will need to be raised for a three-year restoration effort, of which $35,000 has already been raised to date.

Because of its high ecological quality the property will be designated as a Land & Water Reserve with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. That designation will allow passive recreational uses (hiking, biking, bird watching, etc.) and picnicking facilities. Long-term ownership will remain with The Conservation Foundation, who will serve as the site’s long-term ecological manager. Daily public access and maintenance will be provided by the City of Ottawa, which will lease the property from the Foundation and use it as a public facility. The City will provide the funds and services to maintain the site’s ecological health. This unique collaboration between the two organizations will serve as a public-private partnership model for future land preservation efforts in the Lower Fox River area.