The Conservation Foundation (TCF) would like to provide you with a progress update on our key mission areas for the period of July 2017 to June 2018, our fiscal year.

This year was punctuated by significant land acquisitions, an increase in community-based projects and the merger of the Green Earth Institute (now our Green Earth Harvest program) and TCF.

**Preserving Land**

A 10-acre Plainfield property on the corner of Renwick and County Line Road contains a beautiful pond set into the restored prairie that will now be protected with a conservation easement. Conservation easements are voluntary agreements by landowners that permanently restrict the type and amount of development that can occur on a property.

- In partnership with the Forest Preserve District of DeKalb County, 162 acres of land in the Kingston area were protected. The land is located adjacent to the District’s Potawatomi Forest Preserve, and protects a tributary of the South Branch of the Kishwaukee River.

- A 44-year effort came to fruition with the purchase and preservation of the 135-acre Stevenson property along Little Rock Creek outside of Plano in Kendall County, now the Little Rock Creek Forest Preserve. It is adjacent to the Maramech Woods Nature Preserve, boasts several rare plant species and permanently protects a former Boy Scout camp along with 1.3 miles of Little Rock Creek frontage.

**Green Earth Harvest**

- As of January 1, 2018 the Green Earth Institute (GEI), the organic farming organization that had been leasing acreage at our McDonald Farm, merged with TCF and became our Green Earth Harvest program. Steve Tiwald, the founder, wished to retire and believed that the future of GEI would be best placed with The Conservation Foundation. We’ve been working hard to maintain traditionally high levels of service and produce while bringing Green Earth Harvest under our umbrella. The Green Earth Harvest program is currently serving more than 500 families, most of them coming to the McDonald Farm each week to pick up their veggies. The Spring and Summer harvest seasons were full this year.
 Protecting Rivers & Streams

• During the annual DuPage County River Sweep, approximately 800 volunteers worked to clean out 9.25 tons of debris from more than 61 miles of shorelines. Volunteers groups also removed about two acres of invasive species.

• The DuPage River Salt Creek Workgroup (DRSCW), staffed by TCF, is implementing studies and projects to improve water quality and aquatic life throughout these watersheds. In 2018, the DRSCW continued preliminary investigation and design of two dam modification projects. These projects will allow for fish passage and improve water quality and habitat in Salt Creek and the West Branch DuPage River.

• In 2017 TCF staff worked with the Lower DuPage River Watershed Coalition (LDWRC) to implement a seasonal outreach campaign with member communities in the watershed. Campaigns focused on Planting Native Vegetation in the spring, Monitoring Stormwater Basins in the summer, Managing Leaf Collections in the fall and Salt Smart, Save More in the winter. These campaigns will be built upon each year and shared with the other watershed groups that we work with.

• TCF worked with the Lower DesPlaines Watershed Group (LDWG) to develop a monitoring plan for the watershed that will be implemented over five years and repeated to provide a long-term look at water quality in the watershed. The plan identifies more than 170 stations where water and sediment chemistry will be collected in addition to fish, macroinvertebrates and habitat assessments. This data will provide valuable information about the watershed to guide local resource management decisions. TCF provides staffing, leadership and technical support to all three of these watershed organizations (DRSCW, LDWRC and LDWG).

Impacting Communities

• More than 250 people have participated in workdays at the Heritage Quarry Recreation Area (HQRA) in Lemont this year. Sponsored by CITGO and in partnership with the Village of Lemont and Lemont High School, the project includes two public workdays as well as restoration efforts and educational programming. More people have been walking, running, biking and fishing at HQRA, thanks to the ecological and aesthetic improvements that we’ve made there. People come up to us and thank us for being there, reporting that the place looks and feels better than ever.

• The Conservation In Our Community program has grown from nine participating communities of Carol Stream, Downers Grove, Elgin, Elmhurst, Lisle, Naperville, Oswego, Warrenville and Wood Dale to include Frankfort and Mokena in Will County, Glen Ellyn in DuPage County and Plano in Kendall County.

• Eighty-one new properties were certified by the Conservation@Home and Conservation@Work programs, including the notable certifications of: DuPage County Fairgrounds in Wheaton, Jan Smith Park in Carol Stream, Lake Ellyn in Glen Ellyn, Governors State University in University Park, Eliz Church in Naperville and Isle a la Cache Museum in Romeoville.
The Dickson-Murst Farm Partners, a volunteer group of The Conservation Foundation, held three free events this year:

- **Spring at the Farm**: This annual event, held this year on May 6, featured antique tractors pulling hayrides through the neighborhood, mid-century farm equipment on display, activities provided by local 4H clubs and farm animals provided by the Newark FFA.

- **Farm Camp**: Twenty five local youngsters became farmers the last week in June when they attended Farm Camp, learning history and modern-day farm chores, cooking, music and more.

- **Beer, Bands and Barns**: This year the Beer, Bands and Barns event took place on July 21st, featuring live musical acts, impromptu open mic performances, craft beers and food trucks set up amidst our iconic historic red farm buildings.

- **Day at the Farm**: Dickson-Murst Day at the Farm was held on August 19th. This family-friendly event included many activities such as hayrides, farm animals, antique tractors and cars on display, and live music. All kicked off with a convoy of tractors driven from the Plainfield area.

### Teaching Children

- We have maintained our Mighty Acorns® partnerships with schools, park districts and forest preserve districts in DuPage and Kane County while expanding the program with nontraditional partners. This is the 20th year we have provided Mighty Acorns®. It began with Currier Elementary School in West Chicago and has expanded to 11 schools benefiting from the program. Currently, we are serving five schools in DuPage County totalling 19 classes, and one afterschool program. In Kane County we are now serving three schools totalling 17 classes and two afterschool programs. In LaSalle County we are serving three schools totalling 12 classes.

- This year we provided a weekly summer camp for C.W. Avery YMCA in Plainfield for 98 third and fourth graders. We also held a one-week summer camp at the Dickson-Murst Farm in Montgomery.

### Empowering Adults & Communities

- The 2018 DuPage Environmental Summit was held on January 25th at the Northern Illinois University Naperville Meeting and Conference Center. Approximately 400 attendees listened to environmental and health professionals present topics in the theme of “Nature Rx: How Spending Time in Nature is Good for Our Mind, Body, and Soul.”

- In the DuPage River and Salt Creek watershed areas, a total of 14 workshops were hosted with focuses on watershed quality, streambank stabilization, and detention basin retrofits. These workshops are aimed at professional staff in public works and related fields, and are sponsored by DuPage County Stormwater Management.
Promoting Stewardship

• We completed the second year of our Fox River Education and Outreach Initiative. The year was highlighted by Art of the Fox, a project celebrating the connection between art and nature and featuring the work of local artist Joel Sheesley. Joel is an Emeritus Professor of Art at Wheaton College and he spent two years painting and journaling along the Fox River. Now through December 14th, his 73 Fox River works, compiled in an exhibit entitled A Fox River Testimony, are on display at the Schingoethe Center of Aurora University. The original paintings are currently available for sale, along with high-quality prints of selected works and a coffee table book titled *A Fox River Testimony*.

• The Conservation Foundation held its fourth-annual Strengthening Our Foundation fall fundraising event at Cantigny Park in Wheaton. In its first four years, this initiative has raised more than $670,000 in donations and pledged support for operations and programs.

• We distributed nearly 500 oak trees to private and public land as part of our participation in the Regional Oak Recovery Program.

• Our annual Earth Day Benefit Dinner, held on April 19 at Bobak’s Signature Events in Woodridge, was attended by 513 guests to celebrate our successes. The event maintains its popularity and continues to provide significant financial support for our operating expenses. The event raised more than $174,000 in support of The Conservation Foundation’s programs and operations.

• We have been working with 11 local public and private agencies in an historic partnership called the Fox River Valley Monarch Corridor Project. Funded by a $250,000 grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the project aims to preserve and restore existing monarch butterfly habitat, create additional habitat and get more milkweed plants on the landscape along the Fox River in McHenry, Kane and Kendall Counties. The project is restoring more than 975 acres and includes the establishment and restoration of 10 multi-acre natural areas, and hundreds of “stepping stone” sites on private land that will connect the breeding and migration habitats of monarch butterflies and other pollinators.