



Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

2024 Land Preservation Plan

October 2024



Forest Preserve District of DuPage County



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Forest Preserve District Land History

The Start of the District

The idea of preserving natural areas for public benefit had its beginnings in the late 1800s. Rapid industrialization was having a noticeable effect on society, and a new line of thinking posited that access to open space could help improve people’s physical and mental health. Open-space advocates like John Muir and Gifford Pinchot and prominent landscape architects like Frederick Law Olmstead, Calvert Vaux, Jens Jensen, and Ossian Cole Simonds were championing the idea that in the face of rapid urbanization, preserving land in a natural state could benefit the public. Olmstead and Vaux in particular were creating plans for some of the first coordinated park systems in major cities, plans being implemented in San Francisco, New York, and Boston around the turn of the century.

In Chicago, plans for a parks system came to fruition during the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893, when Frederick Law Olmstead collaborated with architect Daniel Burnham to create Jackson Park, Washington Park, and the Midway Plaisance, launching the “City Beautiful” movement. These ideas gained national popularity between the 1890s and 1920s and advanced the notion that urban planning and design should seek to mitigate social issues by making cities livable and orderly through a system of parks and grand boulevards.

The U.S. government was also protecting natural lands, starting in 1872 with the designation of Yellowstone as the country’s first national park. In 1890 it preserved the first two

major Civil War battlefields – Chickamauga and Chattanooga – and in 1891 established the national forest system with the passage of the Forest Reserve Act.

Back in Illinois, after years of work by like-minded open-space advocates, the state legislature approved the Forest Preserve Districts Act in 1905, but it became clear to supporters that although the idea of forest preserve districts was a good one, the act was hastily drafted. The governor never signed it into law.

Nevertheless, support for the forest preserve idea continued, notably in Daniel Burnham’s 1909 Plan of



Chicago World’s Fair 1893, by H.D. Nichols

Chicago, which touted a system of urban parks, forest preserves, and connecting boulevards. After a few more years of work, the Illinois legislature passed a new Forest Preserve District Act in 1913, authorizing the establishment of a forest preserve district for Cook County.

The Downstate Forest Preserve District Act followed in 1915, allowing the establishment of districts throughout the state. That same year, DuPage residents approved the establishment of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County through a voter referendum. (Worth noting, the vote, which used separate ballots for men and women, showed women helped decide the vote in favor of creating the agency.)

The Downstate Forest Preserve Act provides the District's mandate, a major component of which is land acquisition. As stated in the act, the District shall have the power to "acquire in the manner hereinafter provided, and hold lands containing one or more natural forests or parts thereof or land or lands connecting such forests or parts thereof, or lands capable of being forested, or capable of being restored to a natural condition, for the purpose of protecting and preserving the flora, fauna, and scenic beauties within such district, and to restore, restock, protect and preserve the natural forests and such lands together with their flora and fauna, as nearly as may be, in their natural state and condition, for the purpose of the education, pleasure, and recreation of the public."

In support of the mandate, DuPage County levied its first tax for the Forest Preserve District in 1917. Almost immediately, its forest preserve commission made its first purchase: 79 acres for \$200 per acre known as Forest Preserve Number One, today's York Woods in Oak Brook. Between 1917 and 1930, the District acquired 694 acres and created 16 new forest preserves.



CHICAGO. BIRD'S-EYE VIEW, SHOWING THE LOCATION OF THE CITY ON THE SHORES OF LAKE MICHIGAN, TOGETHER WITH THE SMALLER SURROUNDING TOWNS CONNECTED WITH CHICAGO BY RADIATING ARTERIES. Painted for the Commercial Club by Jules Guerin.

Daniel Burnham's 1909 Plan of Chicago, Title Page of 1st Edition.

SPECIMEN WOMAN'S FOREST PRESERVE BALLOT

Following is fac-simile of the Official Forest Preserve Ballot to be voted at an election to be held in the County of DuPage, State of Illinois, Monday, June 7th, A. D. 1915.
A. A. KUHN, County Clerk.

ON THE QUESTION of the organization of a FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT under an act of the General Assembly of the State of Illinois, entitled "An Act to Provide for the Creation and Management of Forest Preserve Districts and Repealing Certain Acts Therein Named," approved June 27th, 1913, in force July 1, 1913.

Shall there be organized a Forest Preserve District in accordance with the order of the Judge of the Circuit Court of DuPage County, under the date of the first day of May, A. D. 1915, to be known as FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF DU PAGE COUNTY, and described as follows: The territory having boundaries co-terminous with the boundaries of all the territory within the boundaries of and embraced in the County of DuPage in the State of Illinois, and being all of the territory within the boundaries of and embraced in the County of DuPage in the State of Illinois?

YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

Specimen ballots from the Illinoian May 28, 1915 Edition

Specimen Forest Preserve Ballot

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YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

European Settlers on Today's DuPage Forest Preserves

A lot of the land that makes up today's Forest Preserve District was once owned by the county's first European settlers, who used the area's natural resources to develop the county by building gristmills and sawmills along major rivers, clearing areas for agricultural production, and using timber from old growth woodlands to construct roads and buildings.

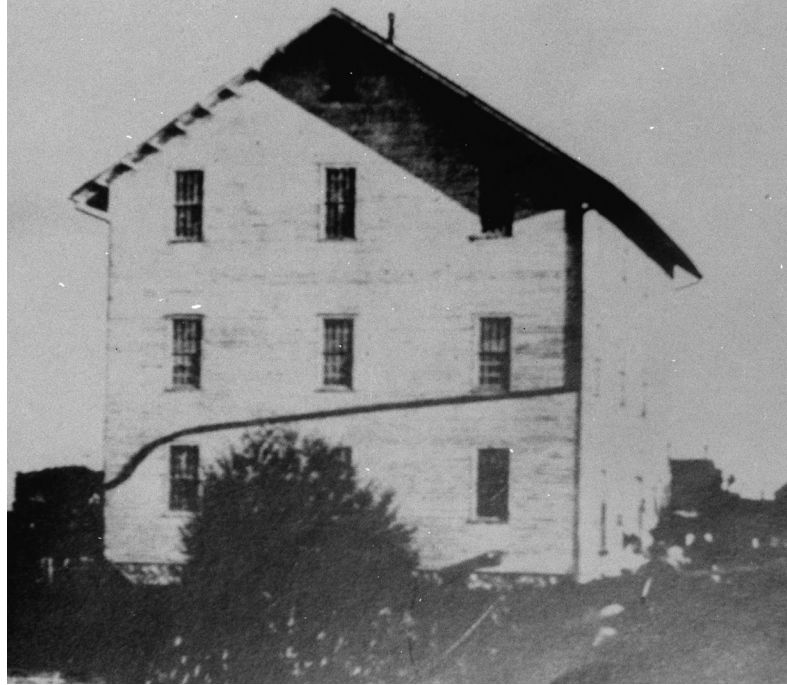
The first European settlers in DuPage County were Bailey and Clarissa Hobson, who settled with their children along the West Branch DuPage River about 2 miles south of the center of Naperville. There in 1832 in present-day Pioneer Park north of present-day Hobson Road, Bailey Hobson built a gristmill, which became a valuable asset for others making their way into DuPage County. (Forest preserves like Warrenville Grove, Blackwell, Fullersburg Woods, McDowell Grove, Hidden Lake, and Waterfall Glen all had sawmills or gristmills during this period.) At the urging of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Forest Preserve District purchased Hobsons' land in 1929, and today a monument marks the site of the mill next to remnants of the mill's earthen dam.

In 1833 three Meacham brothers settled an area in Bloomingdale that over time became a popular picnicking destination with locals. The Forest Preserve District purchased the property over several years starting in 1920, creating today's Meacham Grove.

Ralph and Morgan Babcock settled along St. Charles Road near present-day Glen Ellyn, calling their land Babcock's Grove. The District acquired the first parcels starting in 1935, creating Churchill Woods, but beautiful wooded portions of the property are still known as Babcock Grove.

In 1838, to attract a stagecoach line, Israel Blodgett and Samuel Curtis created a path through the prairie near a grove of trees along what is now Maple Avenue in Downers Grove. They lined the path with maple trees, and it became the center of development of the growing village. When development started to threaten the grove, local support grew to protect the land. In 1920 the Forest Preserve District purchased the first parcels of Maple Grove from William Blodgett.

Benjamin Fuller settled the town of Brush Hill in the vicinity of current-day Oak Brook in 1851. Brush Hill was later known as the town of Fullersburg, which was incorporated soon thereafter. Its center was at the present-day intersection of York Road and Ogden Avenue. As Ogden became a main route west from Chicago, Fullersburg continued to grow, but as development patterns changed, the town lost its strategic location. The Forest Preserve District purchased the first parcels of Fullersburg Woods in 1922.



Hobson's Mill circa 1836, Naperville



Maple Grove



Old Tavern near Ogden Avenue and York Road, Fullersburg

Railroads, Canals, and the Development of DuPage County

The European settlement of DuPage County accelerated in 1848 when construction started on the railroad system and the Illinois & Michigan Canal. The Galena & Chicago Union Railroad was the first to cross the county, but by the early 1900s six railroads and an interurban line were in operation. As Chicago grew to be the nation's largest and most important rail hub and the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal began to flow in 1900, the shipment of agricultural products and manufactured goods and their related commercial activities promoted the county's rapid development.

Ralph L. Herrick of Wheaton used the rail lines to ship his livestock to slaughterhouses in Chicago. The Greene Family, who settled along the East Branch DuPage River in 1841, shipped milk from their dairy farm on the rails from Lisle to Chicago. The Forest Preserve District purchased the first parcels at Herrick Lake in 1925 and at Greene Valley in 1926.

As the railroad and Chicago's meat-packing industry further developed, the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad constructed a stockyard west of the city of West Chicago, where workers could offload livestock to feed and water the animals on their way to the Chicago stockyards. (Some relics of the livestock watering troughs are still there today.) Unlike other parts of the county, this land was never farmed, so its prairie seed bank was well-preserved. Although the Forest Preserve District did not purchase the first parcel of West Chicago Prairie until 1979, the undisturbed seeds helped recreate one of the most diverse prairies in the area today.

Alternatively, landowners of today's Waterfall Glen relied extensively on the I&M Canal and Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to move quarried stone to meet the demand of a growing Chicago. Some of that stone was used to construct the Chicago Water Tower and Old St. Patrick's Catholic Church; some went into Central High School in suburban Lemont.

In 1907 the Chicago Park District and Lincoln Park Commission purchased 107 acres near the quarry for a nursery for Chicago's Lincoln Park and for topsoil to construct the park. Some of the nursery structures remain in the preserve today. The Forest Preserve District acquired the first parcels at Waterfall Glen in 1925.

Railroads contributed to park development, a result of a reaction to deteriorating conditions in the cities and a demand for more open spaces. Burlington Park in Naperville was created by the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad in the 1890s as a picnic ground for urban dwellers, who could take the train to the country on the weekends and picnic in the park. Railroad and electric trolley companies were developing these kinds of railway parks all over the country on the outskirts of urban areas. But Burlington Park closed in 1899 after complaints about excessive gambling on Sundays. The Forest Preserve District acquired the property in 1922.



West Chicago Prairie



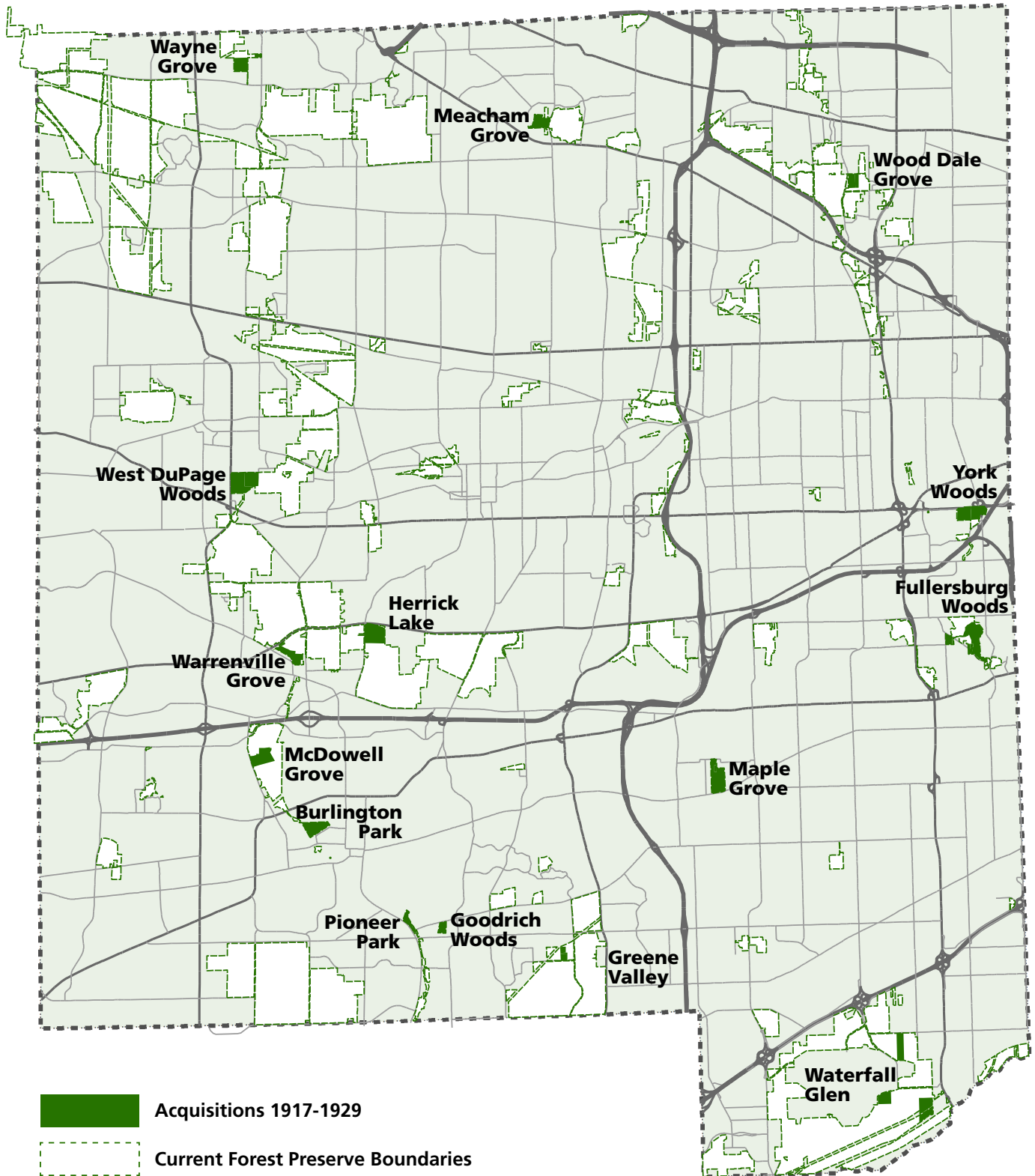
Relic of Lincoln Park Nursery at Waterfall Glen



Burlington Park historical photograph

First Land Acquisitions

Through the 1920s, the Forest Preserve District acquired over 820 acres in 16 preserves, including protected old growth parcels in West DuPage Woods in 1920, Wayne Grove in 1923, and Wood Dale Grove in 1929. The average price paid per acre was \$240.



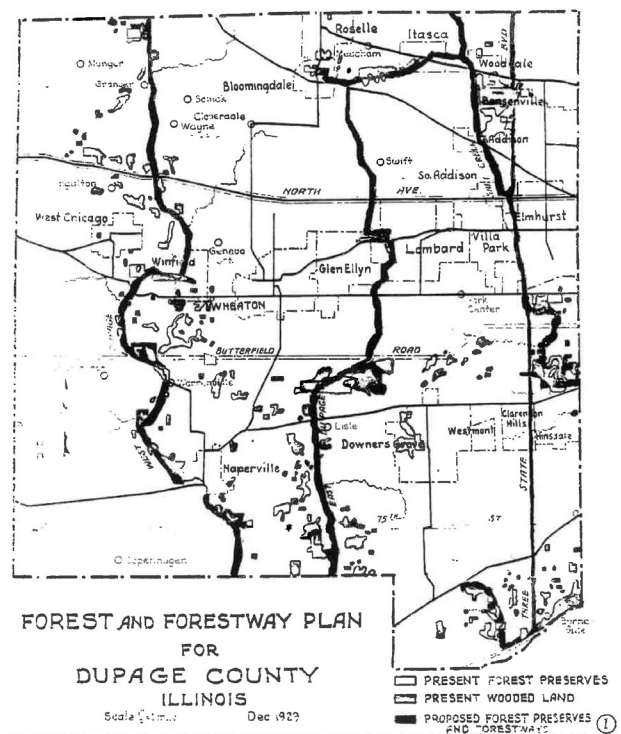
Land Acquisitions 1917-1929

Early Plans and Land Acquisitions

1930 Master Plan

In 1929 as the county was experiencing a rapid growth in development and population, the Forest Preserve District's board recognized the need to consolidate District land into a continuous system of forest preserves. To that end, the board passed an ordinance in 1930 to adopt a plan that would match existing holdings with future acquisitions, creating "a most useful recreation area." The main purpose of the plan was to ensure that DuPage County would "become one of the most outstanding counties in the United States" and would attract a population that would appreciate its "wide and beautiful boulevards and forestways." The plan called for "forestways" along Salt Creek, the East Branch DuPage River, Sawmill Creek, the Des Plaines River, the Sanitary and Ship Canal, and the West Branch DuPage River. It also called for agreements with golf courses and country estates to acquire their properties when they were put on the market before they could be further developed.

The plan called for public ownership and control of waterways to guard against pollution and promote public health. It called for the Forest Preserve District to control wide rights of way along three main east-west thoroughfares – North Avenue, Butterfield Road, and 75th Street – to add well-planned but informal tree plantings to provide roadside beauty. Finally, the plan recognized that property would continue to increase in value, so delaying acquisitions would postpone the plan's implementation because properties would be too expensive to acquire.



Map from 1930 Master Plan

The plan recommended that the number of acres protected as forest preserves align with the population. It suggested a conservative ratio of 30.6 acres per 1,000 people and established a goal of 7,500 protected acres based on population projections for 1950. Additionally, the plan called

for the reforestation of land so that approximately two-thirds of the properties would be forested and the remaining one-third developed for recreational purposes. To implement the plan, the board appointed as superintendent Robert L. McKee, who remained in this position for the next 30 years.

Land Acquisitions 1930 – 1959

Over the next three decades, using the 1930 master plan as a guide, the Forest Preserve District continued to acquire land, including the first parcels at Blackwell, Churchill Woods, East Branch Riverway, Fischer Woods, Mallard Lake, Pratt's Wayne Woods, Salt Creek Greenway, Salt Creek Park, Timber Ridge, and Willowbrook. During this time, the board mostly relied on budgeted funds, occasionally paying for land in yearly installments, but in 1935 it issued \$70,000 in bonds specifically for acquisitions. These funds likely lasted until the 1950s given there were only 411 acres purchased from 1935 to 1959 at a cost of \$99,516.

The 1930s was a time of development of existing properties for the Forest Preserve District, advanced by federal aid through the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps. CCC camps were at various forest preserves including Fullersburg Woods and McDowell Grove. Workers constructed recreational areas, water-control features, and structures like dams, bridges, boat houses, picnic shelters, wells, and latrines in preserves such as Fullersburg Woods, McDowell Grove, Herrick Lake, Warrenville Grove, Churchill Woods, Salt Creek Park, Wood Dale Grove, York Woods, Waterfall Glen, Pioneer Park, and West DuPage Woods. The corps also assisted with the construction of the Forest Preserve District's first headquarters building and superintendent's house at Churchill Woods in 1936.

In 1946 the District acquired 21 acres from the U. S. Department of Defense adjacent to existing properties at McDowell Grove. During World War II the land housed a secret radar school and later a communications training camp for the U.S. Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the CIA.

In 1956 Audrie Alspaugh Chase donated 42 acres near Glen Ellyn to the Forest Preserve District in memory of her late husband and parents. It was the District's first land donation. The donation called for the property to support wildlife habitat and to be named after its resident stream, which the Chases called Willow Brook. Several years later, the District would hire staff to care for injured wildlife at the facility constructed in the preserve known as Willowbrook Wildlife Haven, today's DuPage Wildlife Conservation Center.

Also in 1956, the District entered into an agreement with Illinois to dredge an 111-acre parcel in today's Mallard Lake. As part of the agreement, the parcel was later transferred to



CCC Workers at the Boathouse at Fullersburg Woods

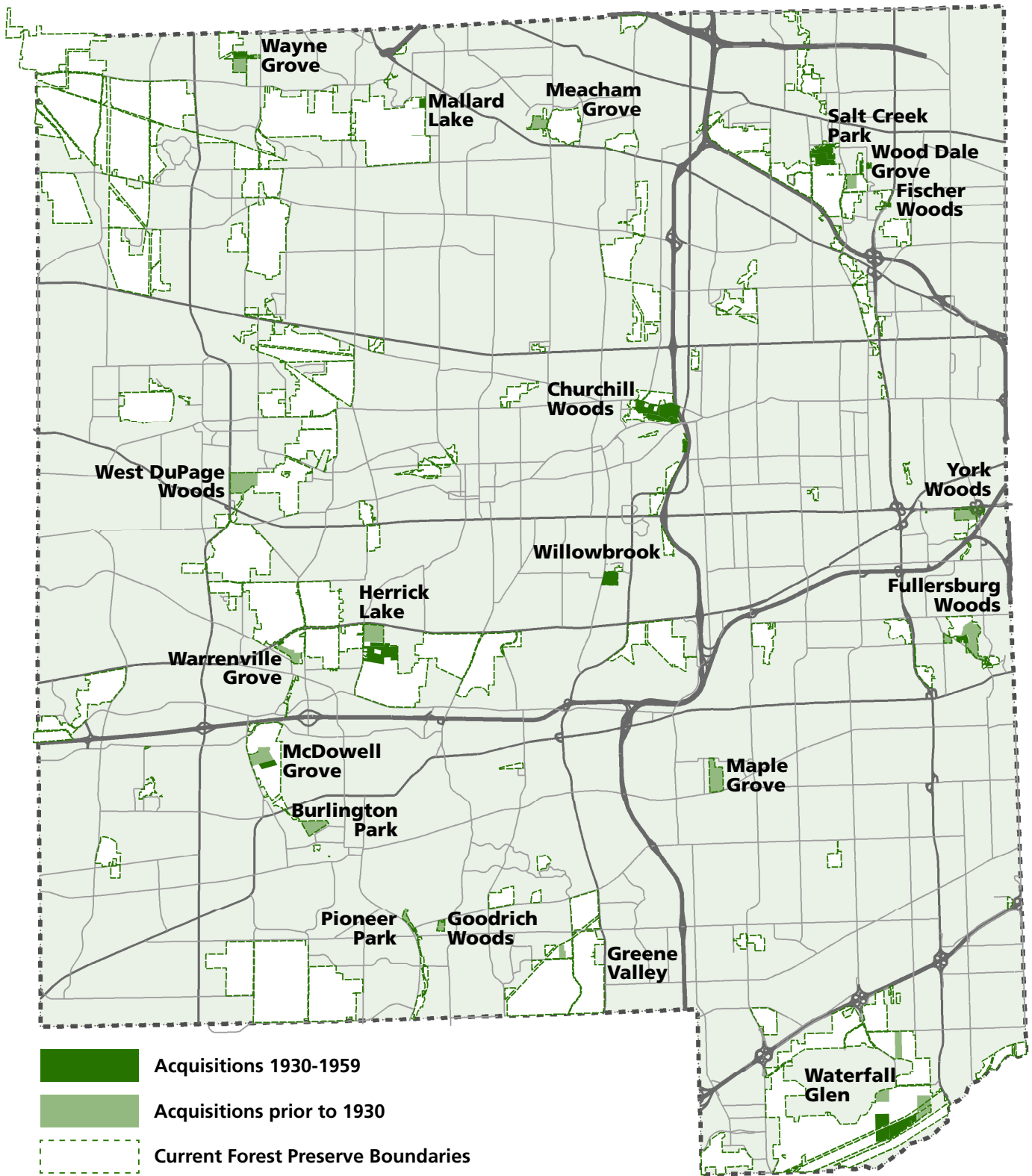


CCC barracks at McDowell Grove



CCC-built Rocky Glen Dam at Waterfall Glen

the District in 1963. Before then, though, in 1958, the District received a donation from a local construction company for land adjacent to the Illinois parcel. In exchange for the donation, the company would continue to mine gravel at the site, gravel that would be used to construct a toll road for the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority.



Land Acquisitions 1930-1959

The 1966 Land Acquisition Plan

In 1962 H.C. “Chuck” Johnson replaced Robert L. McKee as superintendent and became the District’s first director. Johnson developed a land acquisition master plan with the goal of providing a forest preserve within a 10-minute drive of every DuPage resident. His vision was to create an “emerald necklace” of open spaces formed by protected lands along the three major north-south streams and connected by east-west ribbons of interconnecting tracts of land. The system would be a valuable corridor for wildlife and an accessible recreational feature for residents.

To accomplish this vision, Johnson advocated for an aggressive acquisition approach. He worked with like-minded public officials in DuPage, the surrounding counties, and the state to preserve DuPage County’s best natural resources before they were lost to private development.

In 1963 the District engaged the Northeastern Illinois Metropolitan Area Planning Commission to prepare a long-range recreation and open space plan that would estimate open space needs through 1980. The resulting 1966 Land Acquisition Master Plan recognized that the county was rapidly urbanizing and that there was a need to acquire additional forest preserve land to provide outdoor recreational space, flood control, augmented groundwater supplies, improved surface water quality, and the conservation of the county’s aesthetic, biological, and mineral resources. In all, the plan called for the acquisition of an additional 10,631 acres to reach a total of 13,261 acres, which would result in a ratio of 13 acres per 1,000 people based on population projections for the year 2000. The plan recognized that to create a significant and beneficial open space system, public lands would not alone be sufficient. Private golf courses, cemeteries, major land-owning institutions, and other permanent forms of open space would also need to contribute.

The plan outlined important objectives for land acquisition including providing relief from the urban environment by creating a sense of spaciousness, protecting native flora and fauna, and ensuring preserves expand as population grows. It also placed importance on preserving wetlands and floodplains along with the construction of reservoirs to create better environments for plants and animals.

In terms of recreation, the plan emphasized that forest preserves differ from local parks. Preserves are larger and oriented toward less intensive recreation that is often compatible with biological conservation. The locations of the preserves are also established in relation to natural features rather than to the population served.

The plan called for more water-oriented recreation, a universally popular type of recreation desired at the time. The plan recognized that the number of opportunities to engage in water-oriented recreation in the forest preserves was deficient and should be a focus in the future. Additionally, land compatible with water resource management projects such as surface reservoirs, flood plain protection, and groundwater recharge should be prioritized.

The plan recognized that private golf courses were vulnerable to private development and therefore recommended proposing forest preserves near existing courses with the intention that the golf courses could themselves be acquired when put on the market.

To implement the plan, Johnson developed a policy statement that was approved by the board in 1966. The policy called for the District to “preserve the natural plants, animals and scenic beauties within the county for the education, pleasure and recreation of the public, but also to improve the water resources and to preserve mineral resources, that would otherwise be lost through urbanization.” It also called for acquisitions that enriched people’s quality of life yet were harmonious with the other political subdivisions within the county. It called to preserve 15 acres with unique natural characteristics for every 1,000 people. Acquisitions along the West Branch DuPage River were given emphasis due to their outstanding resource potential. Additionally, preserves should be hundreds of acres in size in order to protect and maintain their natural attributes and to provide ample recreational space.

The policy also included an evaluation system that called for valuing properties based on the variety of native plants, animals, and habitats and scenic quality as well as the potential for recreational development. It called for valuing properties based on the potential for preserving and improving water resources and preserving mineral resources that would be mined in the future for recreational lakes.



Warrenville Grove

1960s Land Acquisitions

The Forest Preserve District acquired over 4,650 acres during the 1960s using a variety of tools including eminent domain, which it used for the first time in 1960. The board helped fund the decade's acquisitions by issuing bonds in 1960, 1964, 1965, 1968, and 1969 totaling \$17,800,000.

Blackwell was a major acquisition. Its first parcels were purchased in 1960 with the intent of transforming an existing dry quarry into a recreational lake. Later acquisitions would allow the District to excavate additional lakes for boating, fishing, and swimming. While excavating, workers encountered a clay layer that needed to be removed. Around that same time, DuPage County needed space to construct a sanitary landfill to accommodate the county's growing waste removal needs. The county board, which at the time was the same board that governed the Forest Preserve District, decided to use the layer of clay to create a landfill at Blackwell that could also be used as a winter sports area. The recreation area opened in 1973.

Blackwell was an example of Johnson's vision for the multiple benefits forest preserve land could provide. It had gravel the District excavated and sold to finance the creation of its lakes. The creation of the landfill relieved pressure the county was under to deal with waste and provided landfill tipping fees that allowed the District to construct a winter tubing hill at the site while the landfill was in operation. Although the landfill is now closed, the hill is still a popular birding site and tubing hill. The former quarry, now Silver Lake, is one of the District's most popular recreational lakes.

In 1965 the Forest Preserve District started purchasing parcels at Timber Ridge. They were a major part of Johnson's vision of the "emerald necklace." The purchases included Spring Lake, one of the only glacially formed lakes in the entire county and a high priority acquisition that protected the valuable resource. Two years later the District purchased an adjacent farm from Anna Klein. This acquisition included the family's historic farm, which was later restored and developed into the living history farm known today as Kline Creek Farm.

Also in 1965, the Illinois National Guard transferred 72 acres of land now known as Belleau Woods to the District. The property was originally owned by Col. Robert R. McCormick but was deeded to Illinois in the 1940s. At the suggestion of Hope McCormick, wife of Brooks McCormick, the land was then transferred to the Forest Preserve District. Robert R. McCormick named the land "Belleau" after a World War I French battle site.

In 1965 Illinois transferred property to the Forest Preserve District at today's Pratt's Wayne Woods. George Pratt, a county board commissioner at that time, advocated for the transfer and continued to push for additional acquisitions. Pratt was very involved in local politics and wanted to maintain the agricultural character of DuPage County while advocating for conservation and forest preserves. Today, Pratt's Wayne Woods is the largest forest preserve in DuPage.



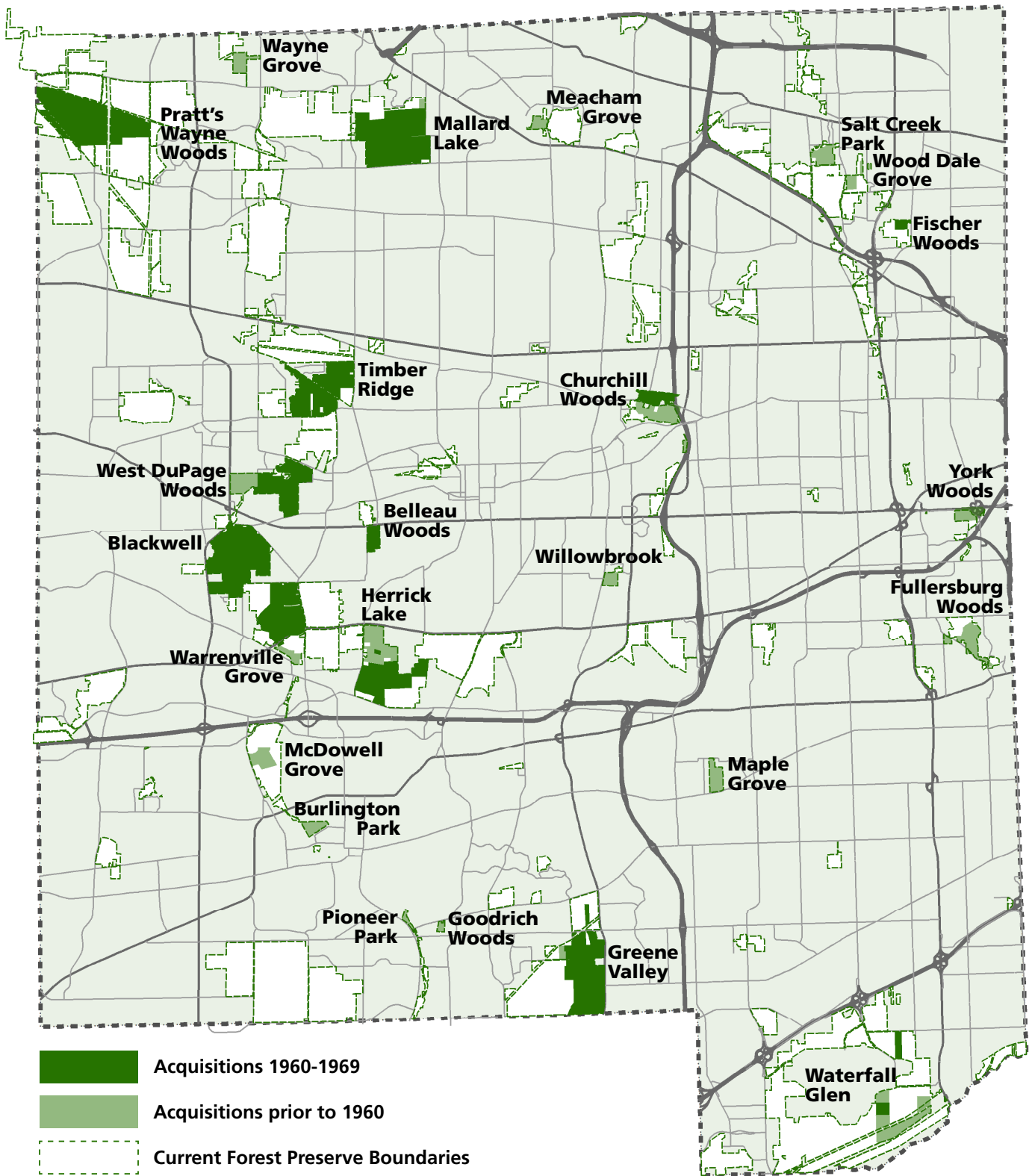
Tubing at Blackwell



Kline Creek Farm at Timber Ridge



Pickerel Lake at Pratt's Wayne Woods



Land Acquisitions 1960-1969



Land Acquisitions in the Late 20th Century

From the 1970s through the end of the 1990s, land acquisition continued to focus on acquiring property to alleviate conditions resulting from development. The value of acquiring property to mitigate concerns exacerbated by development like flooding and the generation of solid waste became more visible as the county continued to develop.

When residents witnessed the transformation of natural areas and agricultural land into residential and commercial areas, groups began to organize to advocate for the protection of some of the county's remaining high-quality natural areas. This advocacy spurred the Forest Preserve District into action to protect those lands.

In 1986 and then later in 1998, the District updated its property rating systems, which continued to place importance on preserving native plant and animal communities as well as water resources to improve water quality and mitigate stormwater concerns. However, criteria that considered a property's location and proximity to population centers, ability to positively shape urbanization and the property's cost were added in response to the county's change in the level of development and increase in property values.

1970s Land Acquisitions

The District issued a total of \$81,000,000 in land acquisition bonds in 1972, 1973, 1975 and 1979. These funds not only allowed the continued acquisition of over 9,300 acres at existing preserves but also provided for the first parcels at East Branch, Hawk Hollow, West Branch, Fullerton Park, Cricket Creek, Hidden Lake, Songbird Slough, Egermann Woods, West Chicago Prairie, and Springbrook Prairie.

To support the objectives of flood control and water-based recreation, the District purchased the first parcels at East Branch in 1970 (then known as East Branch Reservoir), Hawk Hollow in 1972 (then known as West Branch Upper), and West Branch in 1973 (then known as West Branch Lower Reservoir). In 1972 Illinois conveyed 300 acres adjacent to District holdings at McDowell Grove with the agreement that the District would allow the land to be overflowed by the Naperville Dam and Reservoir Project. The Fawell Dam was constructed immediately south of the property several years later on land retained by the state and later conveyed to DuPage County. In 1974 the District acquired Fullerton Park for flood-control purposes and also began buying parcels along Salt Creek in order to transform a flood-prone housing development into a forest preserve in an area now known as Cricket Creek. In 1977 the District purchased the first parcels at Hidden Lake for flood-control purposes and in 1978 purchased the first parcels at Songbird Slough (then known as Campbell Slough) with the same objective.

In 1973 a local effort known as the “Committee to Save Egermann Woods” was organized to advocate for the acquisition of 91.5 acres near Naperville. After much coverage in local newspapers, the District purchased the property, which preserved a beautiful stand of oak trees.

That same year the District acquired 2,200 acres of surplus land at Waterfall Glen from the U.S. Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. This added to the preserve’s existing 228 and encircled Argonne National Laboratory.

In 1975 the District began acquiring property for “Dragon Lake” in the area now known as Springbrook Prairie. At the time, the District planned to excavate a 200-acre lake in the southwest part of the county. However, after ecologists discovered a significant grassland bird population at the site, the plan was abandoned. Later, the District remeandered Springbrook Creek to improve aquatic habitat and provide stormwater storage. Today, Springbrook Prairie is a regionally significant grassland for breeding and overwintering birds.

In the 1970s DuPage County’s need for solid-waste disposal prompted efforts to develop landfills on county property. In response, DuPage established landfills in 1974 at Mallard Lake and Greene Valley. The plan was to develop the hills into winter sports areas after landfill operations ceased, but due to the shape of the hills, settling, required environmental controls, and other conditions not foreseen at the time, the use for winter sports was not practical. However, with management of the final cover of the landfills as grassland habitat, the landfills today have become regionally beneficial habitat for rare birds.



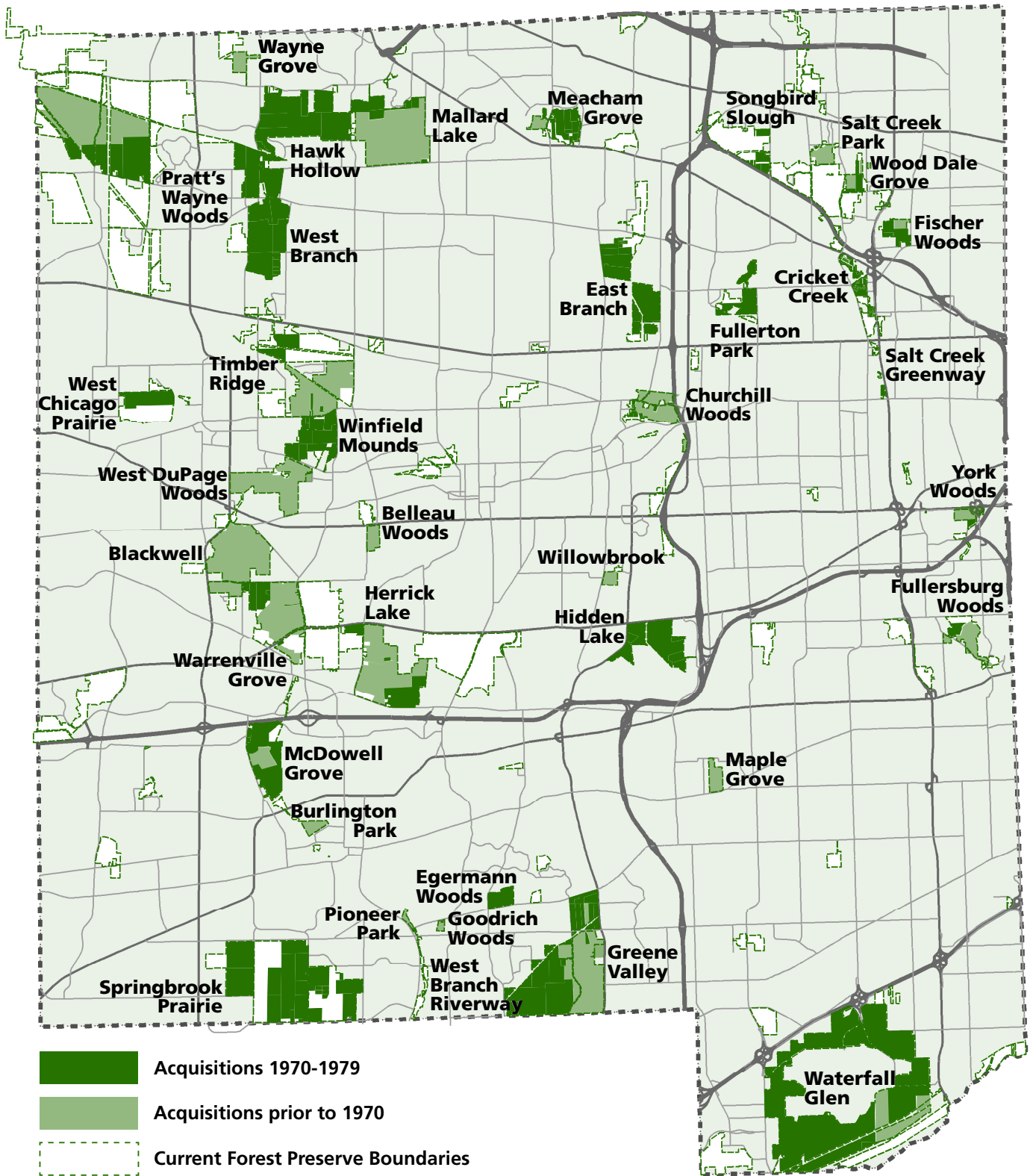
Deep Quarry Lake at West Branch



Multipurpose trail at Springbrook Prairie



Prairie on the Landfill at Mallard Lake



Land Acquisitions 1970-1979

1980s Land Acquisitions

Trends in land acquisition continued to support flood control and stormwater management, but the Forest Preserve District also responded to local advocacy efforts to protect important natural areas from development and supported local municipalities and park districts by acquiring wooded areas for passive recreation and nature education. The board issued over \$141,000,000 in land acquisition bonds in 1985 and 1987, funds that went toward the purchase of over 4,200 acres at existing preserves and the first parcels at Danada, Fox Hollow, Glen Oak, Hickory Grove, Hitchcock Woods, Lyman Woods, Maple Meadows, Salt Creek Marsh, Silver Creek, Spring Creek Reservoir, Swift Prairie, Oak Meadows, West Branch Riverway, Wood Ridge, and York/High Ridge.

After the death of Ada Rice in 1977, a local group of concerned citizens started an effort called “Save the Rice Farm.” The property was attracting attention from developers interested in transforming the farm into a commercial and residential development. Motivated by local open-space advocacy and with attention to the benefits preserving this land for open space could provide, the Forest Preserve District acquired 734 acres of the Rice Farm for \$21,000,000 in 1980.

In 1984 the District recognized a need for a new headquarters location and negotiated with DuPage School District #41 to acquire a school and 13 acres in Glen Ellyn, which is now known as Glen Oak. The District operated out of the building until 1999, at which time it conveyed the majority of the property to the Glen Ellyn Park District, holding 6 acres of wetlands and floodplain in reserve. In 2000 the agency moved into its newly constructed headquarters building at Danada.

Land acquisitions to provide stormwater relief continued in the 1980s with the 1986 purchase of Barnes Pit, today’s Spring Creek Reservoir, and Salt Creek Marsh in 1989. Spring Creek Reservoir contained a quarry, and the purchase was in response to a U. S. Soil and Conservation Service study of the Lower Des Plaines Watershed, which identified it as a site for a flood-control reservoir. Shortly thereafter, the District entered into an intergovernmental agreement with Illinois to construct the Spring Creek Reservoir Flood Control Project, which was part of a larger state stormwater relief effort that included work at the Medinah Country Club. The District and DuPage County cooperatively operate this reservoir to this day.

During this decade the District recognized that golf courses could advance stormwater-management goals while providing recreational amenities to the county. In 1985 the District purchased the Elmhurst Country Club, now known as The Preserve at Oak Meadows, with the objective of providing stormwater relief along Salt Creek. The District received \$2,500,000 from the state to help defray the costs of acquisition. Around that time, the nearby driving range at Brookwood Country Club was under threat of commercial development. The District purchased that property in 1987 and several more parcels in the coming years to create what is now Maple Meadows Golf Course.



Danada Farm Aerial circa 1979



Elmhurst Country Club



The Preserve at Oak Meadows



Maple Meadows Golf Course

In 1987 the District attempted to purchase Woodridge Golf Course, now known as Seven Bridges Golf Course. The acquisition of the larger property was unsuccessful, but the District did acquire 141.5 acres now known as Hickory Grove. In the process, the District obtained a conservation easement over the golf course as well as the right of first refusal, therefore protecting it from development in the future.

The Forest Preserve District also worked during the decade with local park districts and municipalities to cooperatively protect valuable natural areas from development, and a series of acquisitions protected land in Downers Grove, Lisle, and Wheaton.

In 1986 a large woodland was under threat of development in Downers Grove. The District collaborated with the village to acquire the property, now known as Lyman Woods, and continued to purchase contiguous parcels in cooperation with the village and the Downers Grove Park District. The park district currently manages, maintains, and operates Lyman Woods and the nature center on the property.

In 1987 the Forest Preserve District entered into an agreement with DuPage County and Wheaton Park District to acquire and protect land in Wheaton that was mostly in or adjacent to a floodplain. The land, now known as Lincoln Marsh, was of interest to the park district, county, and Forest Preserve District, which all agreed to fund the purchase. The park district also contributed land acquisition dollars it received from the state for the purchase and agreed to operate, maintain, and develop the property for the public good. Although this agreement was put into place in 1987, the property did not officially transfer ownership until the early 1990s.

That same year the District entered into an agreement with the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority for the construction of the North-South Tollway (I-355). In exchange for land and borrow excavation needed to construct the tollway, the authority would construct ponds, lakes, and wetlands on

District property. In 2005 it also conveyed 44 acres north of Roosevelt Road and east and west of the East Branch DuPage River and 19 acres east of the river north of Route 53.

In 1988 the District obtained a grant from the Illinois Department of Conservation and began purchasing parcels north of Army Trail Road in Addison, which would later become Swift Prairie. The following year the District collaborated with the Lisle Park District to acquire 18 acres now known as Hitchcock Woods. The District and park district each paid half of the purchase price, and Lisle Park District agreed to manage, maintain, and operate the park.

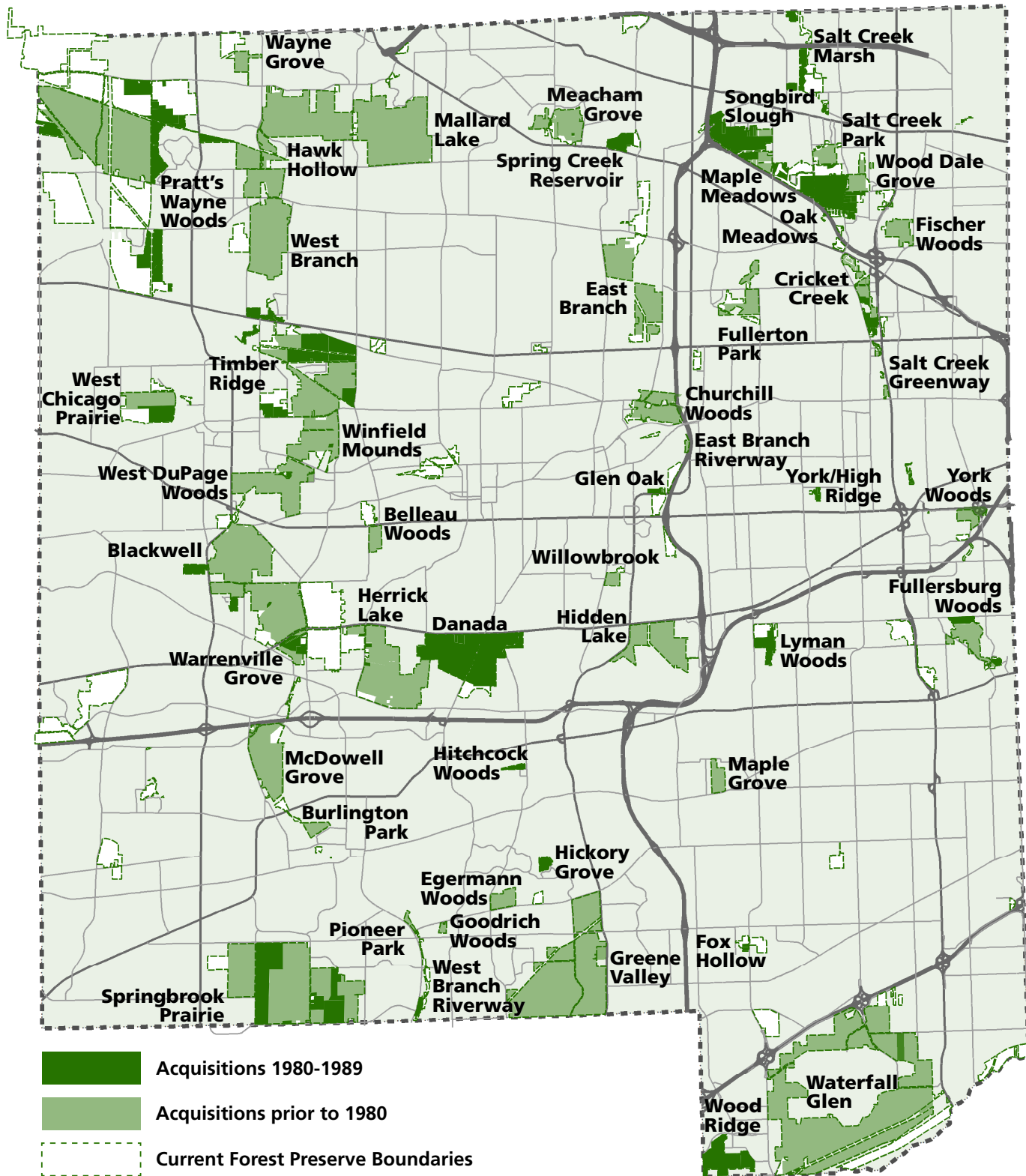
Elsewhere in 1989, the Forest Preserve District collaborated with the Westmont Park District and the village of Westmont to purchase Black Horse Golf Course, located in an unincorporated area that would later become part of Westmont. The village and park district agreed to reimburse the District \$2,000,000 for the acquisition now known as Green Meadows, and in turn, the District agreed to manage and operate the property. Later in 1991 the Forest Preserve District bought out the park district and village's interests in the larger 43-acre property and conveyed 8 acres closer to the street to the park district to be developed as a park.

In 1989 the Forest Preserve District received a donation of 5 acres of wetland. In the coming years neighbors advocated for it to purchase valuable adjacent wetland property, eventually creating today's 68-acre Fox Hollow.

The District purchased a large wooded tract in Woodridge from a developer also in 1989, which together with adjacent property acquired separately makes up today's Wood Ridge. That same year the District purchased 21 acres along the West Branch DuPage River. Two years later it would enter into an intergovernmental agreement with Naperville and the Naperville Park District to collaboratively develop a greenway and recreational trail along the river with an added objective of stormwater management.



Wood Ridge



Land Acquisitions 1980-1989

1990s Land Acquisitions

The Forest Preserve District placed referendums on the ballot in 1991, 1992, and 1997 to approve the issuance of a total of \$96,500,000 in bonds for land acquisition and preserve development. All three were successful, and \$59,415,337 of these funds were used to acquire over 3,200 acres.

In 1991 the District purchased its first parcel in what is now known as Big Woods to protect valuable wetlands under threat of commercial development. One year later after encouragement from local residents, it placed a measure on the ballot to see if DuPage voters would support a bond issuance to acquire the 90-acre property operated by the Franciscan Friars in Oak Brook, today's Mayslake. After two ballot measures, the referendum passed, and the District acquired the property, which contained Mayslake Hall, a retreat wing, friary, and chapel.

In 1998 the District began acquiring wooded property in Darien. Over the coming years, it continued to add acreage to form the 103-acre preserve we know as Oldfield Oaks. Later in 1999, residents advocated for the District to purchase property containing wetlands that was owned by a developer in Aurora. The District purchased the land, creating Night Heron Marsh.

During these years, the Forest Preserve District continued partnering with various park districts and the county to cooperatively acquire land to advance open space goals. Partners and preserves included the Burr Ridge Park District at Oak Grove, Bloomingdale Township and DuPage County at Black Willow Marsh, the Lombard Park District at Broadview Slough, the Carol Stream and Wheaton park districts at Community Park, and the Glen Ellyn Park District at Maryknoll.



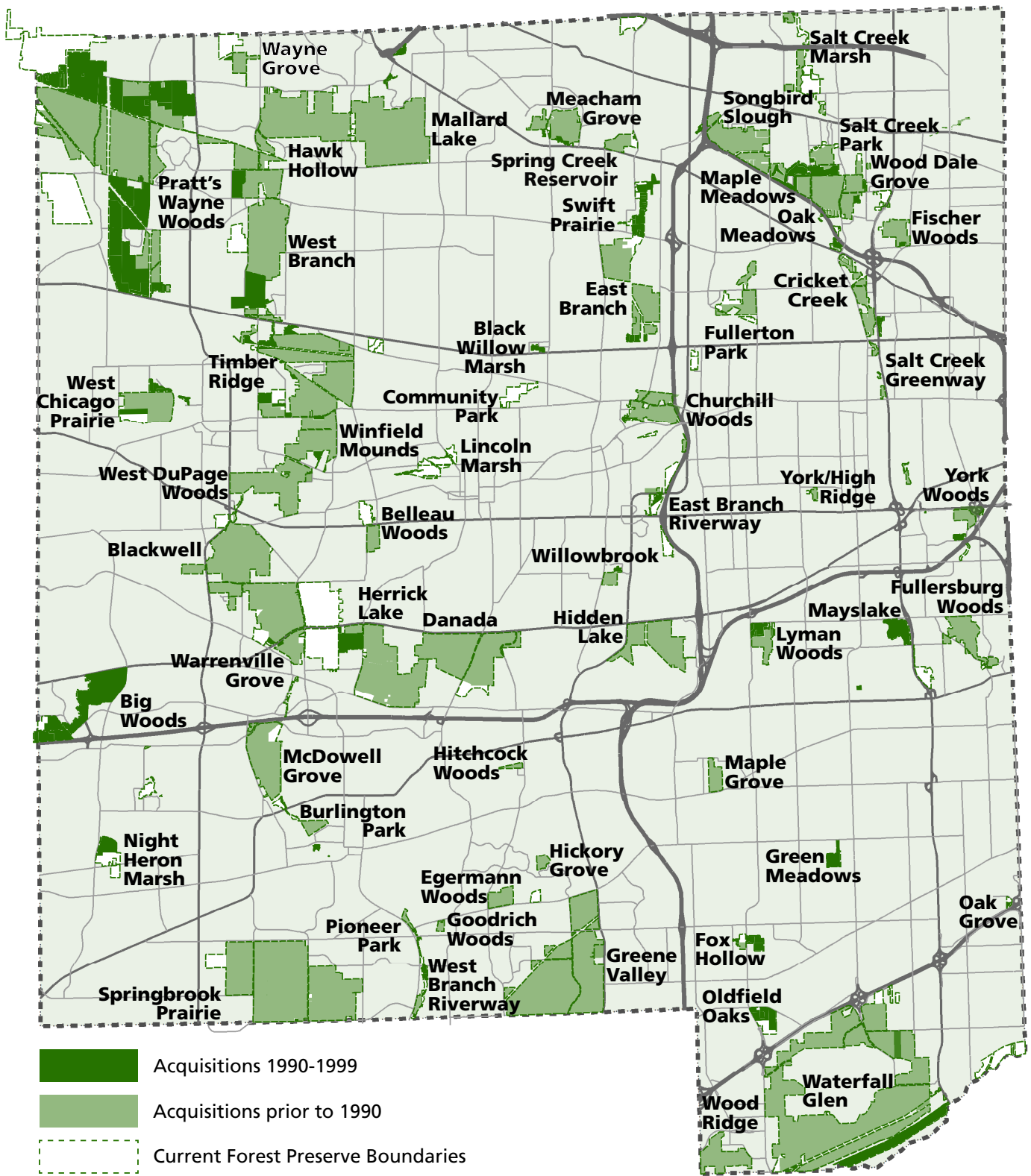
Oldfield Oaks



Mayslake



Mayslake Peabody Estate



Land Acquisitions 1990-1999



Land Acquisitions in the First Quarter of the 21st Century

Land Acquisitions 2000-2023

From 2000 through 2023, land acquisition focused on the remaining large tracts of open space in the county and inholdings within existing forest preserves. During those years, over 3,100 acres of land were purchased at 59 preserves. In addition to smaller acquisitions and those detailed below, 92 acres were added at Blackwell, 76 acres at Night Heron Marsh, 40 acres at East Branch, 48 acres at McDowell Grove, 58 at Waterfall Glen, and 44 acres at West Chicago Prairie. Additionally, the Forest Preserve District continued partnering with other agencies including the Carol Stream and Glen Ellyn park districts to cooperatively purchase land to advance open space goals.

In 2003 the District updated its property rating criteria to focus on the restoration potential of a property and the preservation of rare species. These criteria called for the consideration of the threat of loss, outside funding opportunities, and effects of the property on operations and maintenance activities. Notably, express consideration of water resources was not included as a specific consideration.

Three bond issuances totaling \$182,932,591 were approved by the board for land acquisition and preserve development. Issuances in 2000 and 2005 were nonreferendum, but bonds issued in 2006 were approved through a voter referendum. These funds acquired 1,693 acres at existing preserves and the first acres at Brush Hill, Dunham, and St. James Farm and supported numerous capital development projects.

Grant funds were also an important funding source

for land acquisition between 2000 and 2010. The District leveraged \$13,888,000 in grant funds from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in 1998 to acquire land along Salt Creek with the objective of mitigating flooding in the area. The funds purchased property at Salt Creek Park, Salt Creek Marsh, Cricket Creek, Salt Creek Greenway, and Fullersburg Woods.

Also in 2000, the District began buying properties north of Roosevelt Road, assembling numerous separate parcels that would create the 53-acre Belleau Woods.

A major land acquisition was finalized in 2000 when the District negotiated an agreement with landowner Brooks McCormick to purchase his 607-acre country estate near Warrenville known as St. James Farm. The District took possession of the land and its historic farm structures in 2007. This acquisition provided a link connecting over 3,100 continuous acres of forest preserve land in the center of the county between Wheaton and West Chicago.

In 2002 DuPage County conveyed land to the Forest Preserve District along the Des Plaines River. The District had been leasing contiguous property along the river from the Metropolitan Wastewater Reclamation District since 1998, and this conveyance from, along with other acquisitions in the coming years, formed Des Plaines Riverway.

Also in 2002 the District entered into a lease agreement with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to take over the maintenance and management of the 501-acre Tri-County State Park, today's James "Pate" Philip State Park. The District already owned 302 acres adjacent to the park in Pratt's Wayne

Woods , and the agreement was entered into to advance the natural resource management objectives of both agencies.

In 2002 the District purchased 113 acres adjacent to Springbrook Prairie. Since then this wet agricultural area has been restored into a high-quality wetland connected to other important natural areas in the preserve, now a regionally significant grassland bird habitat and designated Illinois state nature preserve.

Acquisitions that became standalone forest preserves in the 2000s included 50 acres in Oak Brook purchased in 2003 containing a dam and wetlands, which became Brush Hill; 23 acres of wetlands acquired in 2005 in Medinah, which became Medinah Wetlands; and 378 acres of agricultural land acquired in 2006 in Wayne, which became Dunham. The Dunham property in particular was under threat from development and had good potential to be restored into a high-quality natural area.

In 2007 the Forest Preserve District passed “An Ordinance Establishing the Policy Guiding the Preservation of Land to Support the Mission of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County”. The policy’s goal is to help the District “fulfill the present and future open space resource needs of the citizens while recognizing the diminishing open space opportunities within DuPage County.” It outlines objectives to protect watershed and floodplain areas, expand existing forest preserves, connect land holdings, and develop and enhance recreational and educational resources. The intent was that the policy would enable the District to provide important recreational and educational opportunities, reduce flood damage, improve water quality by increasing filtration of sediment and pollution from runoff, protect important natural resources, reduce habitat fragmentation, increase buffers, reduce adverse threats, reduce operation and maintenance costs, and provide critical pathways for wildlife.

In 2007 the District purchased 52 acres immediately south of Danada, which were in danger of development. Later in 2009 it acquired 94 acres adjacent to West Branch, protecting the rare fen within the preserve.

In 2008, the District acquired 41 acres of a former religious retreat at Blackwell which contained valuable riparian and wetland areas. Then, in 2010 the District acquired an additional 41 acres at West Chicago Prairie protecting valuable wetlands and woodlands that provide a buffer to the adjacent Truitt-Hoff Nature Preserve from the railroad. Later in 2016 and 2017, the District acquired 46 acres at Salt Creek Marsh protecting almost one mile of Salt Creek and important wetland and floodplain habitat.

In 2021 the District issued \$40,392,235 in bonds to acquire and develop land. As of 2023, 28 acres had been purchased to expand existing preserves and facilitate the development of the West Branch DuPage River Trail connection between Blackwell and West DuPage Woods.

Today, the Forest Preserve District protects 26,000 acres of woodlands, prairies, wetlands, and waterways, and more than 5.5 million people visit the District’s 60 forest preserves, 175 miles of trails, seven education centers, and scores of programs each year.



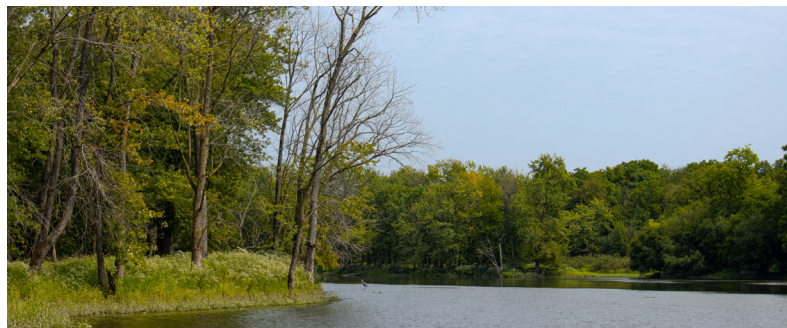
St. James Farm



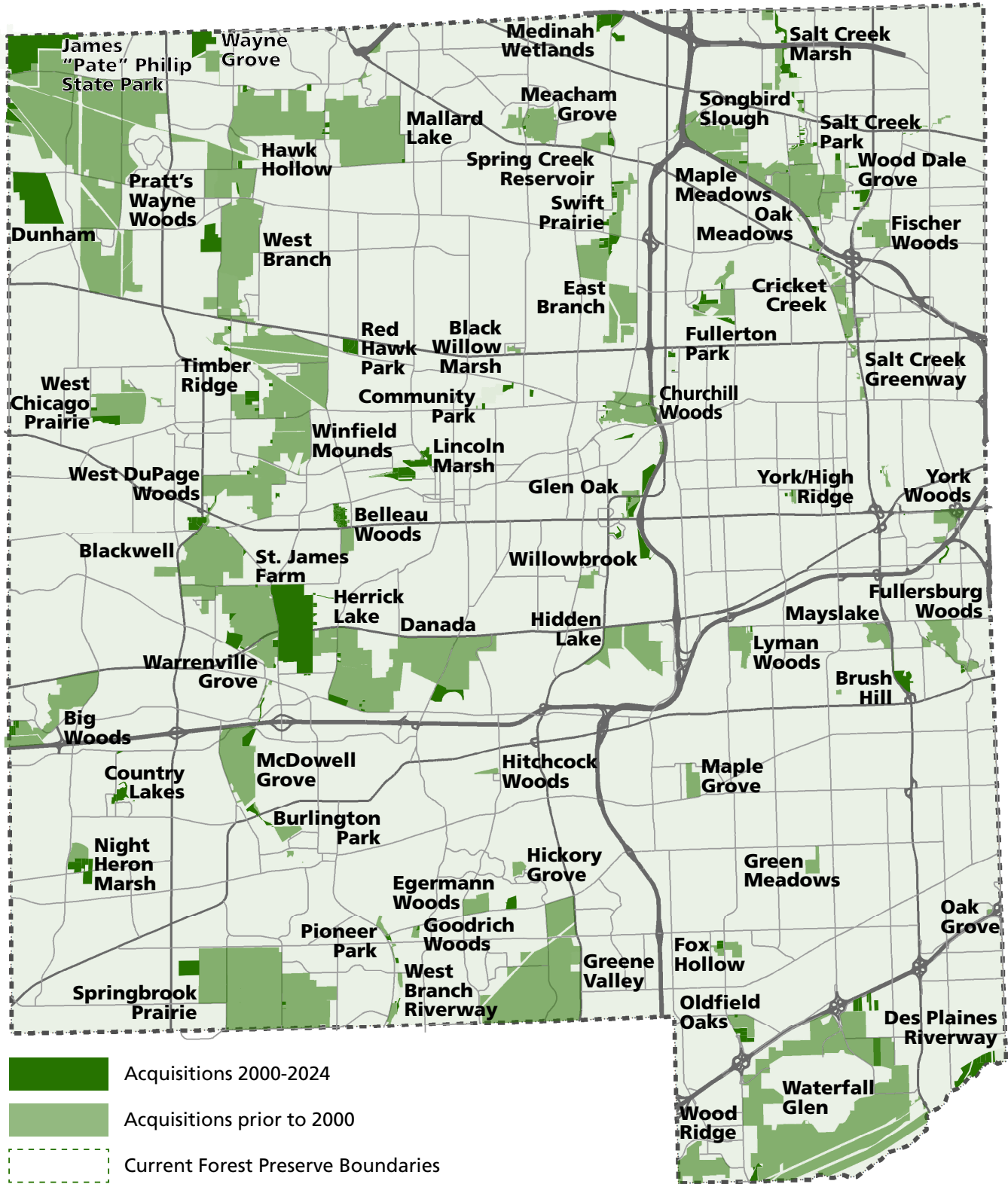
St. James Farm



Blackwell



Des Plaines Riverway



Land Acquisitions 2000 - 2024



Land Acquisition Benefits and Methods

Land Acquisition Benefits

Since the Forest Preserve District's inception in the early 1900's, it has been the vision of its leaders to provide an open space system that protects natural areas and serves as a respite from the urban condition. Throughout the years, land with important historical significance and valuable natural resources has been protected to serve that purpose. With few large tracts of land left to acquire in the county, a thoughtful approach is needed to preserve land to further that vision.

Land acquisition is core to the District's mission and is outlined in the District's enabling legislation, the Downstate Forest Preserve Act. The act states that forest preserves have the power to acquire and hold lands for forest preserve purposes, and that they should "acquire and hold lands containing forests, prairies, wetlands and associated plant communities or lands capable of being restored to such natural conditions for the purpose of protecting and preserving the flora, fauna and scenic beauty for the education, pleasure and recreation of its citizens." Additionally, the District's strategic plan recognizes that land acquisition is core to the District's purpose, which is to "acquire, preserve, protect and restore the natural resources in DuPage County while providing opportunities for people to connect with nature."

Forest preserves provide a variety of environmental benefits including climate resiliency, clean air and water, flood control, biodiversity, and pollination while providing opportunities for people to connect with nature. Protecting and restoring land promotes climate resiliency as land in the natural

and undeveloped state holds carbon. Restoration activities allow for the storage of additional carbon. Also, when the Forest Preserve District protects floodplain land, this helps mitigate the effects of flooding associated with increased flooding frequency and intensity. When the land is restored to its natural state, it supports biodiversity and pollination by reintroducing native plant communities, increasing habitat complexity, and providing wildlife corridors, thereby promoting genetic diversity and pollinator populations.

Forest preserves also benefit the public by supporting positive community development through preventing over development, mitigating noise pollution, and alleviating urban heat islands. They benefit the economy by improving property values, promoting tourism, and avoiding public costs associated with the development of residential areas.

Forest preserves promote improved physical health and quality of life by providing access to open space and destinations for physical activity. This leads to improved physical health through positive outcomes like lower blood pressure and a healthy weight. Access to nature in forest preserves also provides cognitive benefits like improved memory and attention as well as mental health benefits like reduced stress and anxiety and improved mood and well-being.

The District is the leader in DuPage County in open space protection and outdoor recreation focusing on providing nature-based outdoor recreational facilities. Twenty-five percent of DuPage County is open space, and the District protects almost half of that, or 13% of the county's total

acreage. The District complements the county's open-space network of local parks and federal, state- and locally protected open-space and private institutions that preserve open space by providing a destination for passive outdoor recreational activities and nature enjoyment.

The land protected by the Forest Preserve District provides the most benefits when it functions as an interconnected system made up of properties of sizable acreage. Such a system provides numerous ecosystem services, economic benefits, and high recreational value. Large blocks of land provide habitat for species otherwise sensitive to habitat fragmentation that is inherent in smaller disconnected sites. Large contiguous blocks support a greater variety of species and diversity and help wildlife adapt to environmental changes. Large properties also provide needed buffers to help protect sensitive habitats and provide opportunities for landscape-scale restoration not possible with small disconnected parcels.

Large blocks of land provide more area to disperse users, which reduces potential damage to natural areas and promotes an immersive experience away from development. Interconnected properties also provide opportunities for recreational corridors such as highly valued regional trails and greenways, which facilitate the use of active modes of transportation and provide quality recreational experiences.

Land Acquisition and Protection Methods

The District has a variety of tools it can use to acquire land. The most common is to negotiate the fee simple purchase from a willing seller. The District also negotiates life or term estate agreements with property owners from time to time whereby the property owner may continue to live on the land for an agreed upon duration after the property is acquired by the District. Property owners have also donated land to the District outright or at a reduced price. Finally, the District has powers to condemn land, not for less than fair market value.

Another way the District can protect land is through conservation easements. Property owners may choose to enter into an agreement with the District to permanently restrict the type and amount of development that may occur on their property. The owner retains ownership of the property and may gain certain tax benefits, but the conservation easement is recorded on the property's deed and will remain in force no matter who owns the property in the future.

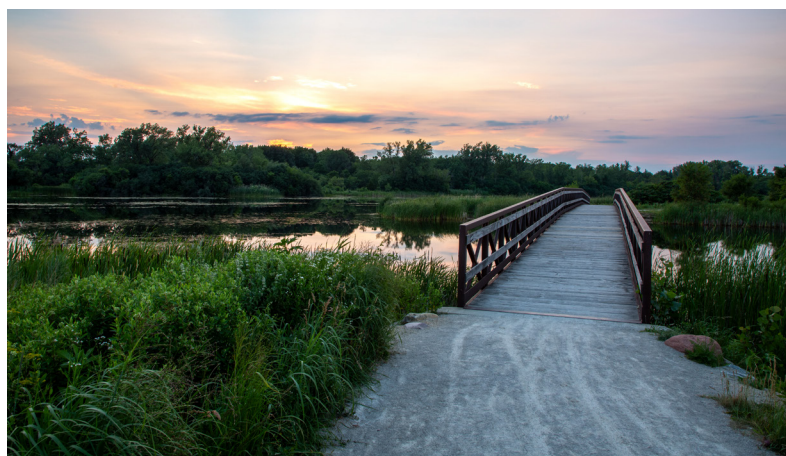
The District uses a variety of ways to fund land acquisition, including interest earnings, donations, referendum and nonreferendum bond funds, and grants. Typical grants the District has received have been from agencies including the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, the Illinois Department of Transportation, the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Lyman Woods



Hidden Lake



Mallard Lake



Fullersburg Woods



Strategic Land Acquisition Goals, Actions, and Priorities

Land Acquisition Goals

In 2023 the Forest Preserve District board began to revisit land acquisition goals that would drive policy for managing existing property ownership and acquiring new land. The updated goals reflect the current state of available open space and development and better align with the board's current vision for land acquisition efforts.

This work was supported by the results of a statistically valid countywide survey that the District performed in 2023. The results showed residents very highly value preserving natural areas and providing outdoor recreation. Residents thought that acquiring new natural areas as they become available should be among the District's top priorities. However, they indicated that operating and maintaining existing properties should be the District's most important priority. These results provide valuable guidance when considering the priorities that compete for the District's limited funding.

The District's goals for land acquisition remain similar to past policy direction but have been updated to meet today's conditions and needs. The updated Land Acquisition Policy Guidelines include:

- **Protect Watersheds, Floodplains, and Remnant Native Areas**

Protecting the county's watersheds, floodplains, and remnant native areas is critical to advancing important environmental benefits like flood control, biodiversity,

and water quality. Natural systems are the least costly and most efficient way to control flooding. They reduce peak stormwater flows, which encourages infiltration and reduces nonpoint source pollution thereby helping to purify water. Protecting these areas promotes local conservation and species-recovery efforts by the District and its partners. Protecting this land offers numerous outdoor recreational opportunities and provides interpretive and educational opportunities to share information about local history, ecology, natural sciences, and environmental-protection efforts.

Priority properties that protect watersheds should be considered including land along major rivers and tributaries like floodways, floodplains, and buffer zones. Land that promotes stormwater infiltration and pollutant removal and other water-quality benefits is also important. Designated wetlands and wet areas that have the potential to be restored into wetlands should be pursued. Land that provides access to waterways is valuable to provide water recreational opportunities.

Finally, protecting the few remnant native woodlands, savannas, prairies, and wetlands that still remain in the county is a high priority. These remnants host higher-quality native and rare plant species than other open spaces and can help support biodiversity. Acquiring buffers that surround these remnant areas will also help ensure these high-quality areas are resilient to environmental threats.

- **Expand Existing Preserves**

Expanding existing preserves promotes greater opportunities for protecting and preserving natural resources as well as providing opportunities to maximize maintenance and management efficiencies. It does this by providing buffers to sensitive habitats, reducing habitat fragmentation, and providing simplified boundaries that are more efficient to manage.

Experience has shown that it is difficult and resource-intensive to manage and restore smaller disconnected parcels into properties that support diverse habitats and provide nature-based outdoor recreational facilities different from the offerings of park districts. If opportunities arise, it may be beneficial for DuPage residents and the District to explore opportunities to convey smaller parcels that do not have a high ecological quality and cannot be expanded into large forest preserves to other open-space agencies like park districts. This will help to advance open space goals that complement the District’s mission and would be in the best interest of the public.

- **Connect Land Holdings**

Linking open spaces offers critical pathways for wildlife. It also provides a network that promotes recreational opportunities like regional trails and greenways and presents opportunities for learning experiences. By working cooperatively with other governmental agencies, the Forest Preserve District can help accomplish countywide and regional open-space goals. Properties that connect natural areas and wildlife corridors, in addition to those that connect preserves, parks, open space, and river corridors, should be pursued.

- **Enhance Outdoor Recreational Learning Experiences**

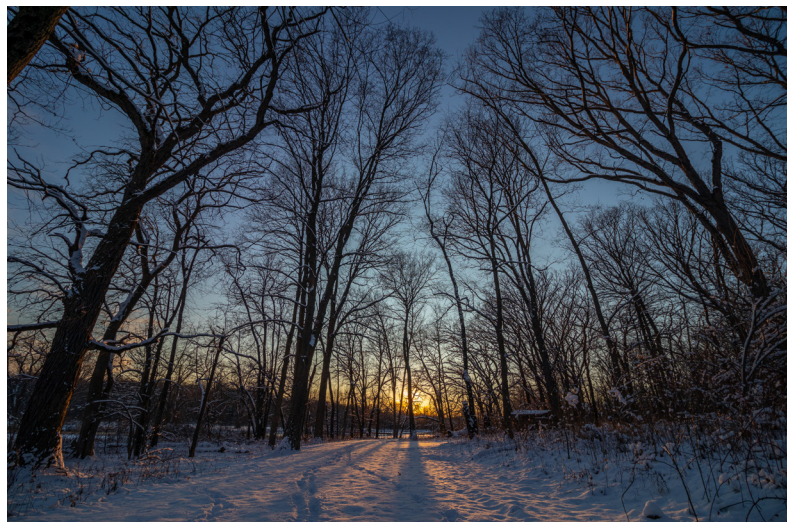
Forest preserves serve as ideal locations for outdoor recreation and learning experiences. Recreating outdoors, enjoying nature at a forest preserve, visiting one of the District’s education centers, and participating in forest preserve programming are critical ways people can connect to nature. These experiences are proven to improve people’s wellbeing and to help to build support for open space by cultivating future stewards. Properties that promote these activities support existing and future learning objectives in a way that does not affect potential environmental benefits should be pursued.



Herrick Lake



Wood Dale Grove



Churchill Woods

Land Acquisition Priorities

After the board refined the land preservation goals, it evaluated all the remaining unprotected open space in DuPage County and identified properties that would advance the District's goals. These properties were ranked and prioritized by the board. These properties will be pursued as opportunities and funding becomes available.

Staff recommended changes to the previous property rating system to better align with the updated goals and land preservation policy. The rating system considers a potential property's natural and water resources value; its size, configuration, and location; and its open-space and recreational value. The rating system also considers if there is an urgency to protect the property. These considerations include the property's vulnerability to development, the possibility of missed acquisition opportunities, and the potential loss of external partnerships or funding if the property is not acquired in a timely manner. Finally, the rating system considers if the property may have beneficial or detrimental effects to the costs and resources needed to operate and maintain the larger forest preserve system.

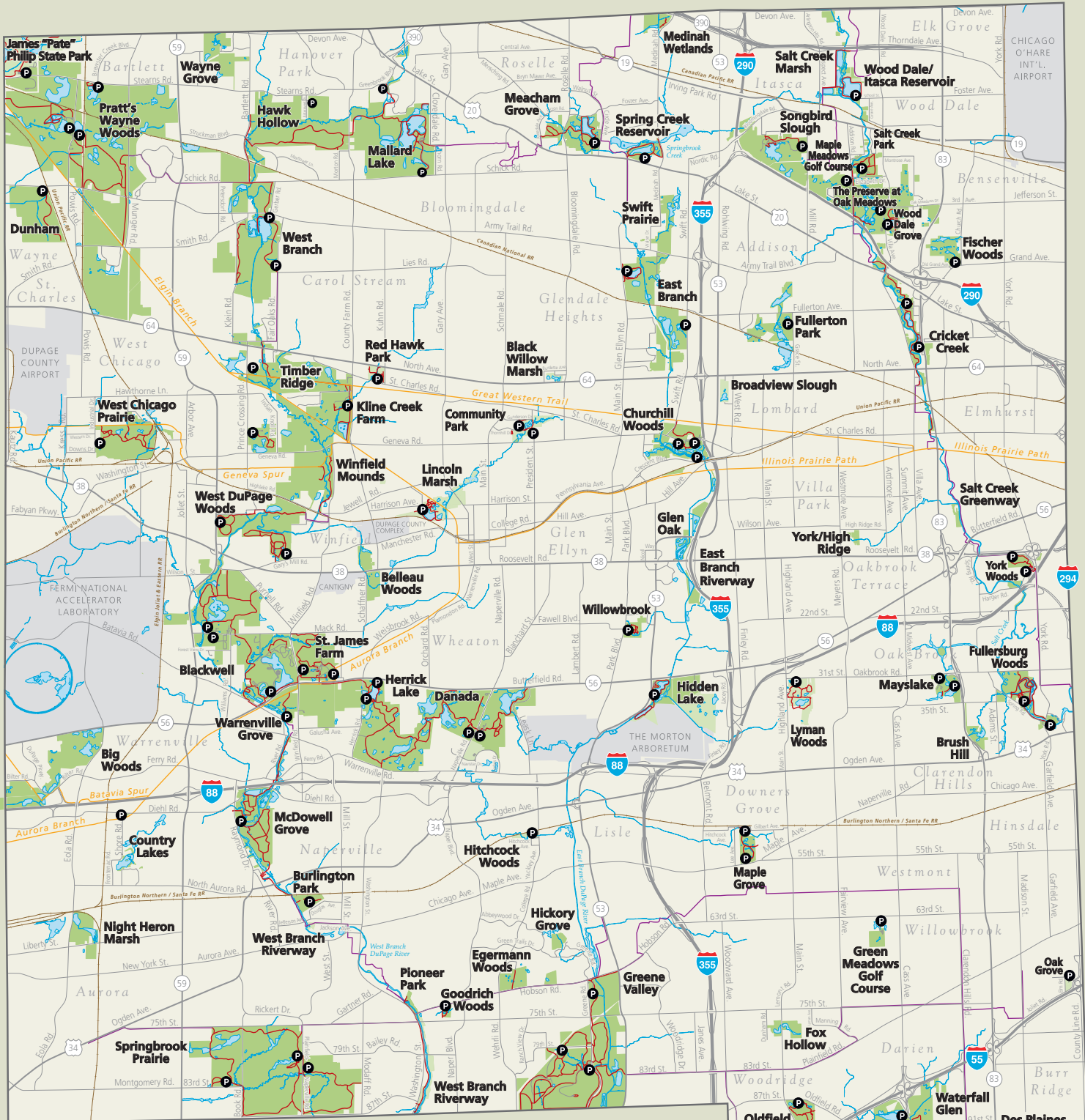
Future Actions and Priorities

As funding becomes available, the District should pursue priority properties identified by the board. Additionally, as adjacent parcels and inholdings within existing forest preserves become available, the District should work with those property owners to acquire them to build contiguous, uninterrupted forest preserves that fit within the larger forest preserve system.

Through thoughtful action, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County will continue to advance critical environmental benefits and contribute to the high quality of life in DuPage County by acquiring and holding land for the education, pleasure, and recreation of the public.



Blackwell



- Forest Preserve Property
- Jointly Owned, Leased, or Operated Forest Preserve Property
- Lake, Pond, Waterway, or Wetland
- P Entrance/Parking
- Forest Preserve Trail
- Multiagency Trail
- County Trail



Scan for Interactive Trail Map

