

"Make No Small Plans"



The Cook County Forest Preserve District
and Lake Calumet

Cook County Commissioner Mike Quigley, 10th District
November 2002



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction _____	2
History of Lake Calumet _____	4
Current Threats to the Calumet Region _____	6
Saving the Calumet Region _____	8
Importance of Project _____	10
Land Acquisition Opportunities _____	12
<i>Map of Opportunity Areas</i> _____	15
Land Acquisition Funding _____	17
Time for Action _____	20

Appendices

Appendix 1—Works Cited

Appendix 2—Related Correspondence

Appendix 3—Related Media

“Make No Small Plans”

Daniel Burnham “Plan for Chicago,” 1909

“...[the] Calumet area has experienced every abuse that a wealthy society can subject to a small surface of the earth except significant radiation exposure and warfare...Because these activities have been concentrated in such a confined and biologically important area as the Calumet, the consequences are apparent...”¹

Abandoned and contaminated brownfields, remnants of the industrial era, lie next to wetlands providing habitat for more than 200 species of birds. State endangered species such as the Great Egret watch over North America’s only metropolitan area served by five major railroads; waste disposal facilities create a grim skyline behind families fishing in Lake Calumet. More than 2,500 different plant and animal species reside in this area.² Neighborhoods of families live side by side with industrial remnants and a highly endangered ecosystem of wetlands, endangered and threatened species, and prairies.

Lake Calumet has been singled out as “being by far the most significant wetland and natural area within the City and in critical need of some form of protection.”³ This year, the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois released an ambitious plan to attract and retain industry while preserving Lake Calumet’s highly endangered ecosystem. The Calumet Area Land Use Plan seeks to preserve 4,800 acres of open space and in addition, create the largest industrial Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in the City of Chicago. Wetlands will be rehabilitated, habitats will be saved, and new industries will bring new jobs and tax revenue.⁴

¹ Greenberg, Joel, *A Natural History of the Chicago Region* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 234.

² Casillas, Ofelia, “Calumet-area study has scientists abuzz,” *Chicago Tribune*, 25 August 2002.

³ City of Chicago, et al, *CitySpace*, January 1998.

⁴ City of Chicago, *Calumet Area Land Use Plan*, 2002.

The open space preservation goals contemplated by the plan are a perfect fit for the Cook County Forest Preserve District (FPD), whose mission is "to acquire and hold lands for the purpose of protection and preservation." Recognizing this, the City of Chicago has identified 440 acres for the FPD to acquire in the region. This acreage would be a great addition to the FPD's current holdings. However, the FPD can participate even more fully in the region by acquiring all the available open space in the area -- a total of 1,270 acres.

The benefits to more aggressive participation of the FPD in the Lake Calumet region would be many. For example, by acquiring the full 1,270 acres in the Lake Calumet region, the Forest Preserve District would:

- Reduce the disparity between open space preserves in the city and suburbs;
- Operate a powerful educational tool by teaching inner-city school children about the natural world;
- Save a habitat that houses 2,500 species including state endangered birds, animals and fish;
- Rescue an environmental gem that is threatened by development and the ongoing impact of years of dumping and neglect.

This is an unparalleled opportunity for the FPD to acquire large expanses of open space in the City. However, if the FPD does not act now to acquire as much land in the area as possible, this opportunity will slowly vanish, acre by acre. Moreover, the rapid pace of development and the climbing prices of real estate in the metropolitan area virtually guarantee that the FPD will never have this kind of opportunity again.

History of Lake Calumet

The vision for the Calumet area has not always been a harmonious co-existence between industry and nature. Of the 22,000 acres of wetland that previously meandered around Lake Calumet, only 500 remain.⁵ While the industrial activities of Lake Calumet were influential in shaping the Greater Metropolitan Chicago Area as a center of industry and manufacturing, industry filled many of the wetlands with slag⁶ to create buildable land. The slag that permeates the land creates hostile growing conditions for many native plant species. Poor water and sediment quality threatens fish life and the aquatic habitat.⁷ In addition, at least 51 locations within the Lake Calumet area have been used for waste disposal. “The western Calumet area has experienced every abuse that a wealthy society can subject to a small surface of the earth except significant radiation exposure and warfare...Because these activities have been concentrated in such a confined and biologically important area as the Calumet, the consequences are apparent.”⁸

The degradation of the area began in the 1800s when Lake Calumet served as a transportation hub, fostering an enormous boom in population and commerce in the Chicago region. The marshes of Lake Calumet were viewed as sources of disease, wastelands in need of reclamation.⁹ New railroads, railcar facilities, and industry quickly crowded the region. In 1893, the commander of the Army Corps of Engineers indicated that, “keeping the Grand Calumet River channel clear was a fruitless exercise because it ‘filled up rapidly by slaughterhouse refuse and filth from manufacturing establishments and solid matter from the sewage poured into the dead stream.’”¹⁰ North Chicago Rolling Mill, located at the mouth of the Calumet River, deposited so much slag and dredge that the area around it grew at four acres per year.

In 1925, the City of Chicago authorized a project to turn Lake Calumet into an industrial harbor. The bill’s sponsor, Alderman Guy Guernsey, referred to Lake Calumet as “nothing more than a breeding

⁵ Greenberg, 2002.

⁶ Slag is the fused material separated from iron ore during smelting. It is the most common byproduct of the steel industry.

⁷ City of Chicago, Ecological Management Strategy Executive Summary: Phase I Sites, 2002.

⁸ Greenberg, 2002.

⁹ City of Chicago, 2002.

¹⁰ Greenberg, 2002, p. 235.

place for mosquitoes and mud turtles.”¹¹ Twelve hundred acres of land were filled by the City so a railroad company could expand its rail line. This segregated the lake from adjacent marshes.¹²

Later, the Metropolitan Sanitary District attempted to regulate industrial waste, but met with strong resistance from businesses. The Army Corps of Engineers sued three companies in 1954 for their failure to cease dumping. The Corps prevailed in court but an analysis conducted in 1965 found that two of the defendants contributed to the dumping of 376 million gallons of liquid waste into the Calumet Region every day. The analysis also found that, “the Grand Calumet River was incapable of even maintaining populations of sludge worms (Tubifex), animals whose toleration of low oxygen enables them to survive when literally every other living thing is gone.”¹³

“...In 1893, the commander of the Army Corps of Engineers indicated that, “keeping the Grand Calumet River channel clear was a fruitless exercise because it ‘filled up rapidly by slaughterhouse refuse and filth from manufacturing establishments and solid matter from the sewage poured into the dead stream...”¹⁴

It was not until the late 1970s that a systematic effort, mainly by community and environmental activists, to improve the environmental conditions of Lake Calumet began. Later, in 1996 Congressman Jerry Weller passed legislation mandating the National Park Service to undertake a detailed study on including the Calumet region in the national park system. A proposal evolved to create a bi-state Calumet National Heritage Area, which is still underway.¹⁴ Beginning in 1997, 38 government and private organizations partnered to protect Lake Calumet. These agencies are now involved in the planning of the Lake Calumet Open Space Reserve.

¹¹ qtd in Greenberg, p.238

¹² Greenberg, 2002, p. 238

¹³ Greenberg, 2002, p. 237.

¹⁴ Greenberg, 2002.

Current Threats to the Calumet Region

While the Calumet Area Land Use Plan seeks to protect open space, not all participants of the project have the same vision. Recently, one of the partners of the Calumet Advisory Committee offered alternative plans for the area. This year, the Illinois International Port District (Port District) attempted to create a marina for 1,000 boats, a boat repair facility, and a boat storage facility. Criticism from numerous elected officials halted this plan.

The marina would have caused significant disturbance to the ecosystem. The continued dredging of the lake would have sterilized the lake bottom, making it unsuitable for fish habitat. In addition, the boats would have stirred up sediment and discharged and water-borne pollutants. The new parking lots and storage facility could have increased stormwater pollution run-off into Lake Calumet and the wetlands adjacent to the site.¹⁵

The Lake Calumet Vision Committee, comprised of community activists and environmental organizations, wants to utilize the same space for public access to the lake, bicycle trails, park and picnic areas and water access for non-motorized boats. In addition, they suggest areas for bird watching and other forms of passive recreation.

This is not the first project that the Port District has proposed in the Lake Calumet area. In 1995, the Port District opened a 480-acre golf course, built partially on top of a landfill. The landfill served as the Metropolitan Sanitary District's sludge disposal facility for more than 20 years. Clay, which could have been purchased elsewhere, was dredged from Lake Calumet in order to cap the landfill. To dredge the clay, Lake Calumet was divided and a portion of its contents was drained. More than 200,000 fish were removed while the clay was excavated.¹⁶

“...’the mud flats of the northern section and woods are meadows that provide important habitat for birds’... despite the importance of this parcel, “this area was filled recently by the Port District with bricks, asphalt and other construction debris...”

¹⁵Chien, Douglas, 2002 (on file)

¹⁶ Hayden, Sean, “Field of Dreams,” Daily Herald, 18 July 2002.

Typically, the use or planned usage of land in the Lake Calumet Region by the Illinois International Port District is inconsistent with the preservation of open space. Other examples from the draft Calumet Open Space Plan include:

- **West Shore of Lake Calumet.** According to draft land ownership/management plans from the City of Chicago, “the mud flats of the northern section and woods are meadows that provide important habitat for birds, and they are likely also to be good habitat for amphibians, reptiles, and other species of wildlife.” However, it goes on to say that despite the importance of this parcel, “this area was filled recently by the Port District with bricks, asphalt and other construction debris...”¹⁷
- **Gateway Center.** This area was also recently filled with bricks, asphalt and other construction debris. The draft land ownership/management indicates possible development by the Port District for the area including a small lodge or hotel with guest rooms, boat launch and storage, or a parking lot with restrooms. Alternatively, a visitors/educational center could occupy this area.
- **East Shore of Lake Calumet.** This shore contains the only pier in Lake Calumet without any industrial development. The Port District would use this parcel as a marina or golf course extension. However, the area could be used as natural open space that could be isolated as a nesting place for waterbirds or for wildlife observation.

¹⁷ City of Chicago, draft Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan, p. 18.

Saving the Calumet Region

Two recent reports have highlighted the need for expanded land acquisitions for open space and corresponding strategies for funding and acquisition: the Forest Preserve District's Land Acquisition Plan and CitySpace, produced by the City of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, and the FPD. These reports led to the creation of the Calumet Area Land Use Plan by the City of Chicago.

The 1994 Land Acquisition Plan (passed by the Forest Preserve District Board of Commissioners in 2000) identified over 40,000 acres of land as potential acquisitions by the FPD throughout Cook County. Chief among them are holdings owned by other public entities. For example, the FPD could lease surplus ecologically diverse open spaces from the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District or the Illinois International Port District. It identified Lake Calumet as the most important natural area still in need of protection in Chicago.

As outlined in the **CitySpace Plan** of January 1998, the City of Chicago, Chicago Park District, and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County sought to add 1,300 acres of new local open space in the City of Chicago by 2005. The plan indicates that the FPD should target acquisitions in the City of Chicago since the majority of Cook County's population resides in the City. The majority of open space available is in the Lake Calumet area.

Like the Forest Preserve District's Land Acquisition Plan, CitySpace indicates that the MWRD and Port District own high-quality land in the Lake Calumet area and the FPD should lease their land. "...The acquisition of unprotected wetlands and natural areas in the Lake Calumet District should be a priority for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County...these public lands represent a significant opportunity for the FPDCC to cost-effectively expand its land holdings in Chicago through leasing and management agreements..."¹⁸

In response, through a \$200,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the City of Chicago Department of Planning and Development collaborated with the City's Department of Environment, the Southeast Chicago Development Commission, Openlands Project, and the Calumet Area Industrial Commission to create the **Calumet Area Land Use Plan**.

¹⁸ City of Chicago, p.123.

The **Calumet Area Land Use Plan** seeks to protect and enhance wetland and natural areas, retain and enhance existing businesses and industries within the Calumet area, and attract new industrial and business development. The plan will improve the quality of life in the Calumet Area and the surrounding communities through greater economic opportunity and enhanced environmental quality.

The Calumet Area Land Use Plan identifies 7,800 acres of land for two primary purposes: the protection of open space and industrial development. Four thousand eight hundred acres are slated for open space that will include public open space (land that is managed or available for public recreation); open space preservation (land to be preserved primarily for habitat); open



space recreation (land to be developed for public recreation); and open space reclamation (land that has been or is used for waste management purposes). Three thousand acres are slated for industrial development including the largest industrial Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in the City of Chicago. Other manufacturers once occupied most of the acreage slated for industrial development.¹⁹

¹⁹ Calumet Area Land Use Plan, 2002.

Importance of Project

Cook County is among the most ecologically diverse areas of the country with its mixture of forest, prairie, oak savanna, and wetland. The Cook County forest preserves clean the air, filter our water, and reduce the frequency and extent of flooding.²⁰ As open space in Cook County succumbs to development, the pursuit of additional land for the Forest Preserve District is crucial. The decrease in open space is not only problematic for the natural world, but the holdings of the Forest Preserve District are insufficient to meet the nature-based recreation and education needs of the five million citizens of Cook County. This is especially evident in the City of Chicago where the FPD has only approximately 5% of their holdings.

The Slow Pace of Land Acquisition

The FPD currently manages approximately 68,061 acres of land.²¹ During the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, the Forest Preserve District acquired an average of more than 700 acres of land per year. Despite the increasing population of the county, between 1993 and 1998, the district acquired an average of only 50 acres per year, a decrease of 93%. In fact, land acquisition is presently slower than during the Great Depression and war years.²² Development is rapidly depleting the available open space for land acquisition and prices are dramatically rising.

Currently, the Cook County Forest Preserve District lists approximately 824 acres of land (23 parcels) on their 2002 Land Acquisition Status Report. However, the FPD completed acquisition for seven of these parcels in 2000. Eight parcels have been under acquisition since 2000, and three parcels have been under acquisition since 2001. No new land acquisition projects listed began in 2002. Of the 400+ acres recommended to the FPD for purchase in the Calumet area, only 78 acres have been acquired.²³

²⁰ Friends of the Forest Preserve.

²¹ Forest Preserve District of Cook County (as of 9/17/02); The FPD owns 67,561 acres and manages 68,061 acres of land (including land leases, etc).

²² Friends of the Forest Preserve.

²³ CCFPD Land Acquisition Status Report, 2002.

Environmental Education

The Forest Preserve District currently has six nature centers, none of which are located in the City of Chicago. In order for youth living in the City to attend a nature program offered by the FPD, they must travel to Barrington, Northbrook, Willow Springs, South Holland, Lemont or River Forest. By increasing their involvement in the Lake Calumet region, the FPD can collaborate with the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois to provide environmental education opportunities at Lake Calumet.

“...During the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, the Forest Preserve District acquired an average of more than 700 acres of land per year... land acquisition is presently slower than during the Great Depression and World War II years...”

Habitat Protection

Lake Calumet allows the FPD an opportunity to expand its holdings and protect the over 2,500 species currently living in the region, including numerous state endangered species. In 1997, the U.S. EPA indicated that the area has the ‘highest concentration of biodiversity in Indiana, Illinois, and the entire Great Lakes Region.’²⁴ The Army Corps’ classifies the area as one of “highest biological significance.”²⁵ Powderhorn Lake has one of the state’s largest populations of banded killfish and Iowa darters. Van Vlissingen Prairie contains the false golden sedge, a state endangered plant.²⁶ Over two hundred of these species are birds, including seven state endangered wetland bird species that nest and

breed in the area. According to naturalist Joel Greenberg, “The area is widely recognized as one of the region’s largest and most important migratory wetland bird habitats...I know of no other place in the region where the skies are so constantly filled with birds across such a wide front. In this respect, the Calumet is almost maritime. Far from an ocean, of course, it is but the tatters of a once great marsh—a marsh that refuses to die.”²⁷

²⁴ Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan Draft, 2002, p. 3.

²⁵ qtd in Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan Draft, 2002; classification in Army Corps’ Lake Calumet Management Plan

²⁶ Greenberg, 2002,p. 239-240.

²⁷ Greenberg, 2002,p. 241.

Land Acquisition Opportunities

We can reverse the land acquisition trend of recent years. Through greater participation in the Calumet area, the FPD has the best opportunity in years to acquire land in the City of Chicago. The Forest Preserve District should work towards acquiring the following 1,270 acres:

(indicates parcel recommended in the draft Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan and/or by correspondence with City of Chicago)*

LAKE CALUMET

The FPD should acquire the shores of Lake Calumet, designated as open space by the Calumet Area Land Use Plan, to ensure that portions of Lake Calumet remain open and accessible to the public. The shores should be utilized for passive recreation and provide quality habitat for the 2,500 species in the Calumet area.

1. West Shore. As outlined earlier, this 190-acre parcel should not be allowed to continue under the management of the Port. The Port District has already contributed to the further degradation of this land by filling the area with debris. The FPD should acquire this parcel of land through intergovernmental agreements with the Port District, and improve the habitat for the native wildlife.

2. East Shore of Lake Calumet. As outlined earlier, the Port District would use this parcel as a marina or golf course extension. It includes the only pier in Lake Calumet without industrial development. The Forest Preserve District should preserve this 50-acre parcel of land for natural open space.

3. Gateway Center. As outlined earlier, this parcel, currently owned by the Port District, should not be allowed to be developed into a hotel, marina, or parking lot. These 65 acres could be the site of a small visitor center, with most of the area preserved and restored for natural habitat. Leaving the parcel in the hands of the Port District risks its future as open space for habitat and limited public recreation.

CITY OF CHICAGO—Little Calumet River Area

In the area of the Little Calumet River, the FPD currently owns Beaubien Woods.

4. Altgeld Gardens—Beaubien Woods Expansion.* Over 20 acres of forested riverfront is vacant. This would be a tremendous habitat and recreational addition to Beaubien Woods Preserve. The Chicago Underground Railway Effort (C-CURE) has ascertained that the former Ton Farm on the riverbank was an Underground Railway Station, and is seeking to establish a small memorial park on the site of the Ton house.

5. ACME Steel.* Expand the Whistler Woods Preserve by acquiring 25 acres of undeveloped wetland and bottomland forest directly across the Little Calumet River and adjacent to the Major Taylor Bikeway. ACME Steel has recently been sold. The new owner should be contacted. The FPD should immediately pursue this parcel.

CITY OF CHICAGO—Wolf Lake Area

In the area of Wolf Lake, the FPD currently owns Eggers Woods and Powderhorn Lake and Prairie.

6. Eggers Woods Expansion.* The City of Chicago is prepared to transfer 10 acres of wetland habitat, which was acquired through the County’s Tax Reactivation Program, to the FPD for a wildlife habitat buffer for the adjacent Burnham Greenway and Eggers Woods Preserve. Additionally, the City would work through People’s Gas to provide a management easement over the remainder of the property for a total of up to 60 acres. The FPD, however, has refused land that the City of Chicago wants to give to the FPD at no cost.

CITY OF CHICAGO AND SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY--Grand Calumet River Area

In the area of the Grand Calumet River, the FPD currently owns Powderhorn Lake & Prairie, the Burnham Woods Golf Course, and the recently acquired Burnham Prairie.

7. Powderhorn Lake Prairie Expansion.* An additional 100 acres could be acquired by expanding Powderhorn Lake Prairie east to the Indiana border by acquiring and restoring industrial sites. 30 acres of open space may also be available adjacent to and directly to the north of the Powderhorn Lake Prairie.

8. 134th Street Marsh.* This 30 acre critical parcel would connect the William Powers Conservation Area and Powderhorn Lake and Prairie.

9. Burnham Woods Golf Course. (Calumet City and City of Burnham) Expand the Burnham Woods Golf Course to the south by acquiring property on both sides of the Grand Calumet River and up to the Norfolk and Western Railroad. The 270-300 acre property is currently industrial but would be purchased and restored. This addition could connect to the recent 78-acre acquisition of the Burnham Prairie.

10. Burnham Prairie Expansion.* (City of Burnham) 50 acres of Burnham Prairie could be acquired from Waste Management extending the high quality prairie preserve all the way to the Grand Calumet River. This expansion is “widely considered one of the most important unprotected areas in Illinois.”²⁸

SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY—Parcels not yet included in the Calumet Open Space Reserve

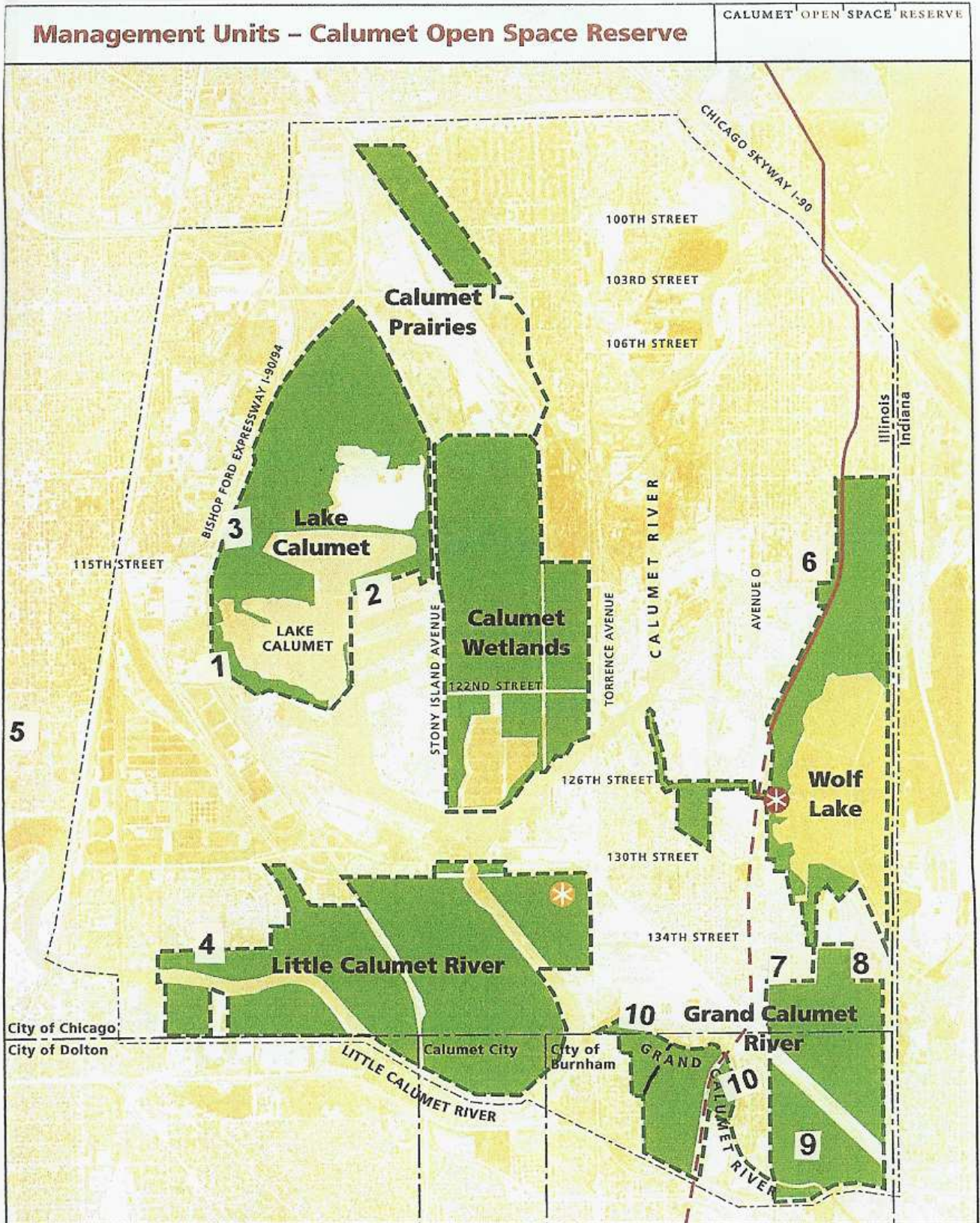
11. River Oaks Golf Course. (Unincorporated Cook County) Expand and connect the north end of the River Oaks Golf course linking it to the Sand Ridge Nature Center and Shabbona Woods. In addition, the FPD should acquire additional vacant acreage west of the golf course as well. The area is approximately 100 acres.

12. Sand Ridge Prairie. (Calumet City) Expand and ultimately connect the Sand Ridge Prairie to the Calumet Park and Wentworth Woods in Calumet City by acquiring property north of the Holy Cross cemetery. This 50-acre acquisition, in compilation with the following two acquisitions, could provide an almost continuous connection among *four* existing Forest Preserve properties.

13. Wampum Lake. (City of South Hammond) Expand and ultimately connect the Wampum Lake and Zander Woods areas with the River Oaks Golf Course by acquiring property along Thorn Creek and the Calumet River. This will provide an opportunity to protect a water corridor and greenway and provide an alternative trail connection between the existing Lansing Woods Trail and the potential Greenwood Avenue Corridor Trail. This acquisition could result in up to 200 acres.

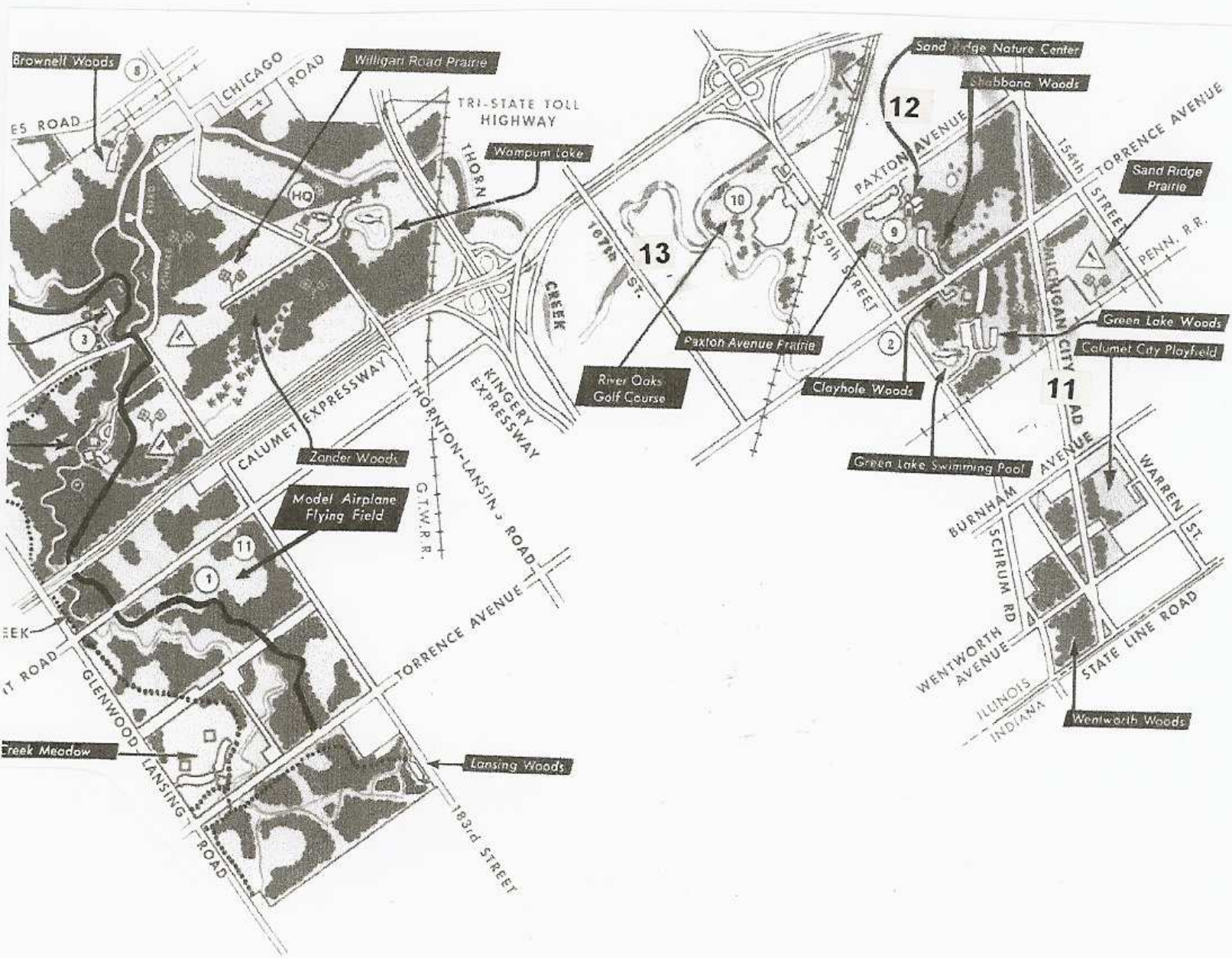
TOTAL POSSIBLE ACQUISITION ACREAGE: 1,270 ACRES

²⁸ City of Chicago, Calumet Area Land Use Plan, 2002.



- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. West Shore 2. East Shore 3. Gateway Center 4. Beaubien Woods Expansion 5. ACME Steel | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Eggers Woods Expansion 7. Powderhorn Lake Prairie Expansion 8. 134th Street Marsh 9. Burnham Woods Golf Course 10. Burnham Prairie Expansion |
|---|--|

Make No Small Plans: The Forest Preserve District and Lake Calumet



11. River Oaks Golf Course

12. Sand Ridge Prairie

13. Wamnum Prairie

Land Acquisition Funding

The financial condition of the CCFPD need not be an impediment to land acquisition. Alternative methods of acquisition can include intergovernmental agreements and a land referendum bond. In addition, funding through grants for remediation for contaminated land must be explored.

Intergovernmental Agreements

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) recognizes that its lands have great value beyond serving its own corporate function. It has historically encouraged and facilitated open space or recreational usage of its lands by giving first priority to leases relating to government and/or recreational purposes and by leasing lands to tax-based entities for nominal fees (usually \$1/year). Furthermore, public or open space agencies interested in leasing lands from the MWRD are not required to comply with the same stringent requirements as private or commercial entities.

While the MWRD has adopted an informal policy of giving first priority to governmental and/or recreational uses, it does not proactively market its land, assuming instead that if a governmental entity has a need for its land, it will make the first inquiry. Furthermore, it generally responds to the first party that inquires into the availability of the land.

By working with the MWRD, the FPD can lease land contiguous to our preserves for nominal cost. However, the FPD must act quickly. The preferential treatment provided government entities may not continue. The Board and administration of the MWRD recently indicated that substantial commercial interests might be given priority over recreational uses. Tax cap legislation is limiting the MWRD's funding and it needs to increase non-tax revenues.²⁹

Long-term leases or intergovernmental agreements from the Illinois International Port District to the Forest Preserve District should also be pursued. The land slated for development as a marina should be leased by the FPD and utilized for open space, recreation, and education opportunities as outlined by the Lake Calumet Vision Committee.

²⁹ Friends of the Chicago River, et al, 2000.

Land Referendum Bond

Neighboring forest preserve districts have pursued land referendum bonds for funding land acquisition. In 1997, the voters of DuPage County passed a \$75 million forest preserve district referendum for land acquisition. In 1999, voters in Kane, Lake, and Will Counties passed similar referenda for \$70 million, \$55 million, and \$70 million respectively. These counties have subsequently made substantial acquisitions to their holdings, greatly expanding the educational and recreational opportunities available to their citizens. This trend is evident nationwide. According to the Land Trust Alliance, in 1999, nationwide, 90 percent of 102 bond referenda for open space land acquisition passed, yielding \$1.8 billion in funds for open space. In 2000, 174 of 209 ballot measures passed, yielding \$7.5 billion in funding for open space.³⁰

The Cook County Forest Preserve District's 1994 Land Acquisition Plan included a public outreach campaign to sample Cook County residents' opinions about the state of the forest preserves and to solicit their ideas for improvements. Among the sentiments expressed was a belief that having more open space was worth paying for in the form of fees or a land referendum bond. In particular, residents supported financing the purchase of land that could be restored to its natural state. The plan acknowledged that this could be a major component in obtaining the financial resources to reach the county's goal of 75,000 acres.

Although a \$100 million dollar bond referendum ordinance was introduced before the Finance Committee, it was never called for vote. This ordinance should be reintroduced, adopted, and placed on the ballot in the near future with a re-evaluated dollar amount. According to the Friends of the Forest Preserves, a house with a fair market value of \$150,000 would pay \$5.20 per year over the 20-year life of the \$100 million bond. The Friends of the Forest Preserves estimate that a \$100 million bond referendum would allow for the purchase of 6,000-7,000 acres.³¹

³⁰ It should be noted that the economic landscape has changed since neighboring counties successfully pursued bond issues. The District will have to persuade taxpayers that their money will be well spent before the public can have confidence in the District.

³¹ The recent average land acquisition cost of the Cook County Forest Preserve District is \$30,000/acre. Some land acquisitions may be matched with grant funds and some may be more/less expensive to acquire.

Remediation

Many of the parcels in the Lake Calumet region may have environmental issues. However, before the Forest Preserve District rejects any of these acquisitions based on possible contamination, they must gather data to assess the level (if any) of contamination. And the FPD should, at a minimum, perform a feasibility and cost study of clean-up.

Outside funding is available for clean-up of contaminated parcels of land. The FPD should pursue government grants as well as clean-up funds from the former landholders. The U.S. EPA reports an increase in the number of responsible parties paying for clean-up of their sites.³²

The State of Illinois and the City of Chicago are already actively involved in remediation efforts in the Calumet Region. For example, according to the draft of the forthcoming Calumet Open Space Reserve Land Acquisition Schedule and the draft Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan, the 25 acres of Indian Creek and Indian Creek Trail are contaminated. By the end of the year, the City and state agencies will have completed an environmental assessment and secured acquisition funding by the end of January 2003. According to the draft plan, Ford Motors will restore a portion of the property and City, federal, and state agencies are investigating other sources of funding for the remainder of the parcel. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources is scheduled to become the eventual landowner.

According to the draft timeline, an environmental assessment for the Eggers Woods Expansion should be completed by June 30 of 2003 and the environmental assessments for the Burnham Prairie Expansions East and West should be completed by the end of 2002. The FPD should not rule out any parcels until environmental assessments are completed.

³² U.S. EPA, 2002b.

Time for Action

The draft Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan calls for the FPD to acquire an additional 440 acres of land in the Lake Calumet area but we call on the FPD to go even further. There is a potential for at least 1,270 acres of land for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County in the Lake Calumet region.

To date, the Forest Preserve District has not been an active player in the Lake Calumet region. While the District has acquired 78 acres of Burnham Prairie, it currently will not pursue additional parcels, citing financial, environmental and access concerns. The financial state of the Forest Preserve District need not be an impediment to the pursuit of our mission to hold and acquire lands in their natural state. To reach our goal, the county can also pursue alternative methods of acquisition including intergovernmental agreements or land referendum bonds. In addition, the City of Chicago has acquired land that it would like to give to the FPD at no cost. With the budget constraints the FPD is facing, it seems ridiculous to refuse open space purchased for us.

In addition, the FPD must realize that almost all land in the Lake Calumet region may have environmental contaminants due to its turbulent past. Most available open space parcels in Chicago would most likely have similar problems. Clean up funds are available from various funding sources, and not all contamination is at a hazardous level. At a minimum, the FPD should conduct a preliminary analysis of the feasibility and cost of remediation before ruling out the parcels.

Lake Calumet is in need of immediate support from the Forest Preserve District. Cook County is currently 7,439 acres short of reaching its statutory maximum of 75,000 acres of land. The parcels at Lake Calumet would be a good step in that direction. Lake Calumet has the potential to represent the best of Cook County and the best of Chicago, with native plants, endangered species and recreational areas, all intermingling with job opportunities and economic development. The Calumet area also provides an opportunity for the Forest Preserve District to provide environmental educational opportunities in the City of Chicago. Only 500 acres of the 22,000 acres of wetland that once occurred in the Lake Calumet area currently remain.³³ It is up to the Forest Preserve District to show that Cook County supports the environment and the 2,500 species that call the area home.

³³ Greenberg, 2002,p, 239.

Works Cited

Casillas, Ofelia, “Calumet-area study has scientists abuzz, Wildlife survey nets 2,000 species.” *Chicago Tribune*. 25 August 2002.

City of Chicago, et al. CitySpace: An Open Space Plan for Chicago. Chicago, IL: 1998.

City of Chicago. *Ecological Management Strategy Executive Summary: Phase I Sites*, Department of Environment, Executive Summary, Fall 2002.

City of Chicago, Department of Planning and Development. Calumet Area Land Use Plan. Chicago, IL: 2001.

Forest Preserve District. Land Acquisition Plan. 1994.

Deardorff, Julie. “Lake Calumet Project Making New Waves, Critics Fear Impact of Marina Project.” *Chicago Tribune*. 16 June 2002.

Field Museum. Mapping Social Assets in the Lake Calumet Region. 7 May 2002.

Friends of the Chicago River, et al. Waterways for our Future: Land Management Policies, Land Holdings and Regional Open Space Opportunities. 2000.

Friends of the Forest Preserves. White Paper: Cook County Forest Preserve Land Acquisition Campaign. (on file)

Greenberg, Joel. 2002. A Natural History of the Chicago Region. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

Hayden, Sean. “Field of Dreams.” *Daily Herald*, 18 July 2002.

Journal of Environmental Planning and Management. January 2000.

United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2002. Accessed via internet, <<http://www.epa.gov/epahome/hi-brownfields.htm>> (21 October 2002).

United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2002. Accessed via internet, <<http://www.epa.gov/ebtpages/cleacosts.html>> (21 October 2002).

Weston, Roy F. Lake Calumet area Ecological Analysis. Prepared for the City of Chicago. 1998.

Addendum

The Cook County Forest Preserve District (Forest Preserve District) should acquire additional parcels of land along the shores of Lake Calumet, designated as open space by the Calumet Area Land Use Plan, to ensure that portions of Lake Calumet remain open and accessible to the public. Currently the Illinois International Port District (Port District) owns the property. According to Illinois State Statute, the Port District has the broad power to operate and maintain port and harbor facilities. None of the 858 acres of open space owned by the Port District at Lake Calumet are used to fulfill any such statutory responsibility.

Land intended for open space preservation should be given to the Forest Preserve District, whose mission is "to acquire and hold lands for the purpose of protection and preservation." In addition to the East Shore of Lake Calumet, the West Shore of Lake Calumet, and Gateway Center, the Forest Preserve District of Cook County should also acquire the following parcels around Lake Calumet:

1. Harborside Marsh & Harborside Marsh Dike (155 acres, 10 acres)

These parcels of open water and wetlands are best suited for ownership by the Forest Preserve District.

2. Gull Island (3 acres)

According to the Draft Calumet Open Space Reserve, over 5,000 pairs of gulls have made nests on Gull Island and raised their young there in recent years. It is Illinois' largest nesting colony for ring-billed gulls.

3. Harborside International Golf Course (435 acres)

The operation of a golf course is not consistent with the powers awarded to the Port District. The Golf Course should be owned/operated by either the Forest Preserve District or the Chicago Park District.

4. Harborside Golf Course Expansion (45 acres)

The Forest Preserve District of Cook County should acquire this parcel of land and maintain it as natural open space in lieu of a golf course expansion.



City of Chicago
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning
and Development

Alicia Mazur Berg
Commissioner

121 North LaSalle Street
Chicago, Illinois 60602
(312) 744-4190
(312) 744-2271 (FAX)

<http://www.cityofchicago.org>

May 31, 2002

Mike Quigley
10th District Cook County Commissioner
County Building
118 N. Clark Street
Room 567
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Commissioner Quigley:

We were glad to have had the opportunity to take you on a tour of the Calumet Area. Approved by the Chicago Plan Commission of February 14, 2002, the Calumet Area Land Use Plan balances industry and nature. Widely recognized as one of the region's largest and most important migratory wetland bird habitats, seven state endangered wetland bird species are known to nest and breed in the Calumet area.

The Calumet Area Land Use Plan proposes the creation of the 4,000 acre Calumet Open Space Reserve. To create the Reserve, over 2,500 acres of wetlands, woodlands, and prairies would be added to the existing 1,440 acres of protected natural areas. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPD) are targeted as the future owners of these unprotected natural areas. The City of Chicago is actively pursuing the acquisition of some sites for eventual ownership by these two agencies.

Below are recommendations from the Calumet Area Land Use Plan and the forthcoming Calumet Open Space Reserve Plan that pertain to the FPD.

1. Eggers Woods Expansion – The City of Chicago is prepared to transfer 10 acres of wetland habitat which was acquired through the County's Tax Reactivation Program to the FPD for a wildlife habitat buffer for the adjacent Burnham Greenway and Eggers Woods Preserve. Additionally, we would work through Peoples Gas to provide a management easement over the remainder of the property.
2. Altgeld Gardens Expansion – Over 20 acres of forested riverfront is vacant, and would make a tremendous habitat and recreational addition to Beaubien Woods Preserve. Some community members believe this area provided a safeway site on the Underground Railroad.
3. Burnham Prairie Expansion - 50 acres of Burnham Prairie could be acquired from Waste Management extending the high quality prairie preserve all the way to the Grand Calumet River.

The City of Chicago and the State have entered into an intergovernmental agreement to acquire and remediate natural areas targeted for IDNR ownership within the Calumet Open Space Reserve. This agreement could serve as a model for the FPD establishing the framework and responsibilities of each agency.

NEIGHBORHOODS



In addition, we also recently visited another potential FPD acquisition site owned by ACME Steel just west of the Calumet Open Space Reserve, adjacent to the Major Taylor Bikeway, and across the river from Whistler Woods Preserve. This site consists of 25 acres of undeveloped wetlands and bottomland forest.

We look forward to working with the FPD as a partner to develop the Calumet Open Space Reserve. If you have any questions, please call me at 312-744-1074.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathleen Dickhut', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name.

Kathleen Dickhut

Assistant Commissioner

Cc: Rosie Andolino