



SALT CREEK CHRONICLES

A Newsletter of the Salt Creek Greenway Association

Issue 2, Fall 2009

Salt Creek Greenway - Gateway to Discovery

Natural areas, historic sites, cultural attractions, land and water recreational trails, shopping centers, theatre and gourmet dining beckon visitors to experience one of the richest and most scenic and diverse open space corridors in Illinois.

Located within the densely populated suburbs of western Cook and eastern DuPage Counties, the Salt Creek Greenway trail is designated a priority Greenway in the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan and extends through 9 communities with a combined population exceeding 300,000 residents and includes:

- 15 forest preserves in two counties
- 8 local parks and recreational facilities in 5 communities
- 5 National Historic Register sites and other historic attractions
- 3 dedicated Illinois Nature Preserves
- The Brookfield Zoo
- The historic Fullersburg area
- Graue Mill and Dam
- Mayslake/Peabody Estate
- Shopping malls, theaters restaurants, employment and economic centers, mass transit services, historic homes, vintage communities and spacious subdivisions.

SCGA is tax exempt (501)(c)(3) organization and all contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

SCGA is a member of Chicago Wilderness, Partners for Parks and Wildlife and the Lower DesPlaines Ecosystem Partnership.

The purpose of the Salt Creek Greenway Association (SCGA) is to identify, preserve and promote the natural, historic, cultural and recreational resources of the Salt Creek Greenway and to collaborate with partners on watershed sites, features, projects, activities and events.

The Year in Review

Our website, www.saltcreekgreenwayassociation.org, is growing fast as new information about watershed features and partners is posted. The web site is designed to create links to partners, projects, activities, sites and happenings and serves as a unifying resource within the Greenway system.

Over the past months, photographers have contributed magnificent scenes of Greenway sites and Greenway users have shared their experiences and love for the open space corridor and all it has to offer. Fascinating historical information has been researched and recorded.

The Salt Creek Greenway Association has been involved with several projects over the past several months as an advocate for preserving and protecting the special places within the watershed.

- We have identified the following priority projects:
- Restoring the c.1840 Ben Fuller Farmhouse
- Saving the historic Graue Mill Dam
- Saving the historic Arcade Building
- Protecting Wolf Road Prairie and Hickory Lane buffer
- Opposing the use of Forest Preserve of Cook County lands for non-forest preserve use



Photo by Dave Waycie

aspirations, success stories or threats to the character and history of the Greenway, we can work together to protect one of the most significant regions in Illinois and beyond.

Your support and involvement will help us continue our work.

Valerie Spale
Audrey Muschler

We invite partners in the Greenway to join us as we gather information and develop interactive and educational connections. Our goal is to distribute as much information as possible. The unique scenic, open space, historical and recreational opportunities within the Greenway are only a short distance away from where many people live and work. These special places can be enjoyed as a backyard vacation or a short visit, an hour's leisurely stroll along the creek or a long bike ride with connections to other Illinois trail systems. By unifying stakeholders and sharing concerns,

Threat to Forest Preserve Land in Cook County

On October 7, 2009, nine Forest Preserve District of Cook County Commissioners voted to approve use of forest preserve land by developers and private interests. These two land giveaways were led by Commissioner Anthony Peraica - District 16 of Riverside and Commissioner Elizabeth Gorman - District 17 of Orland Park.

The first was the approval of a request by the Village of Westchester for a water line easement at Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve for development on land the District has identified as public open space and Wolf Road Prairie Buffer. This vote was contrary to the District's Land Acquisition Plan.

The second was entering into negotiations to allow 36 acres of land known as Bemis Woods South, now in its natural state, to be converted to a soccer field by the Village of Hinsdale Park District to benefit citizens of Hinsdale who live in DuPage County. This vote was not in accordance with the mission of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and its Land Use Plan.

Both of these Cook County sites represent integral public lands within the Salt Creek Greenway. These giveaways were vigorously opposed by the SCGA, Friends of the Forest Preserves, Friends of the Parks, Openlands, conservation groups, civic organizations, forest preserve stewards, equestrians, trail users, paddlers, open space advocates, birders and other preserve users.

SCGA and other watchdog organizations are determined to protect the public lands of our forest preserves. We cannot allow our lands to be taken away by bits and pieces for non-forest preserve use. This violates and diminishes the open space heritage established for us and future generations by the founders of our forest preserve districts.

Saving the Graue Mill Dam



Photo by Faith Fellowship Church

The present Graue Mill Dam was built in 1935 during the Great Depression by the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC). Nature artists and photographers are drawn to capture the picturesque beauty of the dam on canvas and through the lens. The historic dam site, a popular tourist attraction, is one of the most scenic and visited places in the DuPage stretch of the Salt Creek Greenway.

In June, a threat to the survival of the dam took place. The DuPage River Salt Creek Work Group presented testimony at the Oak Brook Village Hall and reported that water quality above the dam is not as high in dissolved oxygen levels as it should be. The report recommended modifying or removing the historic dam to slightly improve upstream water quality. During the hearings, organizations, including SCGA, homeowners associations and citizens testified in opposition to the removal or modification of the historic dam.

Since then, over 2,000 signatures have been obtained on petitions opposing the modification or removal of the dam. The Village of Oak Brook board voted unanimously to oppose removal or modification of the dam.

Water quality improvement can be achieved by taking a less drastic and more economical approach than the one recommended by the Work Group by dredging the creek above the dam and addressing upstream pollution discharges. This has been done in the past without damaging the character and historic significance of the dam.

The changes proposed to the dam by the Work Group would result in undesirable alterations to the scenic beauty of Salt Creek in the Old Fullersburg Historic District. This would include a narrowing of the stream and reduced water levels during times of drought, degrading habitat needs for aquatic birds and other wildlife within the flyway. The gently flowing Salt Creek could, from time to time, become an ugly, exposed muddy stream bed, diminishing the enjoyment of the site by visitors. The dam is owned by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County.

Although no final decision on the future of the Graue Mill Dam has been reached, the outpouring of support to save the dam is overwhelming. SCGA plans to continue our partnership with coalition members to defend the dam.

Restoring the Ben Fuller Farmhouse



Photo by Dave Wayclic

In the spring of 1834, Benjamin Fuller arrived at the present day location of Ogden Avenue and York Road in Oak Brook/Hinsdale by horseback from upstate New York. In c.1840 he built his Greek Revival farmhouse along York Road south of Salt Creek using a new

construction technique invented in Chicago called "balloon frame." The Ben Fuller Farmhouse is believed to be one of the best examples of this construction style still surviving in northeastern Illinois.

The exterior of the Farmhouse was historically restored in the 1980's and early 1990's, but no further restoration has taken place since then. The Farmhouse is owned by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County.

Now, plans are underway to stabilize and repair the exterior of the Farmhouse, restore the interior, develop exhibits of the era, and open the Farmhouse to the public for viewing and the interpretation of Fullersburg history.

The Salt Creek Greenway Association is supporting the restoration of the Ben Fuller Farmhouse spearheaded by the Fullersburg Historic Foundation. SCGA has testified on behalf of the project at District headquarters and in the Village of Oak Brook.

Two state grants have been allocated to the restoration project. Terence Russell, historic architect with the firm of STV Inc., has developed a structural report identifying the condition of the house and what work needs to be done to secure the structure and preserve its historical integrity. Although some damage due to weathering is evident, the Farmhouse can be saved and restored as one of the most historic buildings in the Salt Creek Greenway.

The Ben Fuller Farmhouse is one of five original buildings comprising the Old Fullersburg Historic District. The other buildings include the Graue Mill and Museum, the Frederick Graue Home, the York Tavern and the Faith Fellowship Church.

American Society of Landscape Architects Visit Wolf Road Prairie



Photo by Pizzo & Associates

On Friday, September 18, 2009 twenty-five members of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) traveled from their national convention in Chicago to spend a field day at the

Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve and 9 Hickory Lane buffer owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The field day featured a presentation by Jack Pizzo, ASLA, President of Pizzo and Associates, Ltd and a SCGA board member. Jack spoke on sustainable development, ecological restoration and natural areas creation. He explained the need to preserve, protect and restore the natural world and our connection to it.

Steve Byers, Northeastern Illinois Representative of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC), welcomed the group. He spoke to the rarity of the Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve whose origins date back to the retreat of the last glacier some 12,000 years ago and the diversity of native plant species protected at the site. Steve explained the role of the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission in protecting and managing over 500 dedicated Nature Preserves in Illinois.

Highlights of the Field Session included demonstrations and discussions on:

- How to identify the difference between restored and unrestored ecosystems
- How to design, plan, budget, bid and implement ecosystem restoration projects
- How to select the proper herbicides for specific invasive species to maximize effectiveness and kill
- How to collect, cleanse and store native seed mixes. How to purchase, label and identify seeds for introduction to ecosystems undergoing restoration. How to protect seeds from mold and insects using bacterial and mycorrhizal inoculents.

Two methods of seed introduction were demonstrated in areas of old turfgrass on the buffer site. The parcels were first treated with herbicide a few days prior to the demonstration. The first method featured a Truax Drill. Selected seed was loaded into the equipment and the drill was driven over the area identified for seeding. Seed was drilled directly into the previously herbicided lawn to a depth of about 1/4 inch making it less vulnerable to predation by birds or small mammals. The second method featured broadcast spreading. Seed was loaded into a hopper, and much like fertilizing a lawn, the seed was scattered into the prepared area manually using a rotary handle. To protect the seed from predation and erosion, a sheet of erosion control blanket was rolled over the newly introduced seed.

Later, ASLA members took a tour of Wolf Road Prairie and learned how to remove woody invasive species and how to effectively apply herbicide to stumps of cut buckthorn and other invasive brush. Jack explained why native grasslands and savannas are fire dependent ecosystems which have evolved over millennia to survive in a natural cycle dominated by fire.

Salt Creek and the Black Hawk War

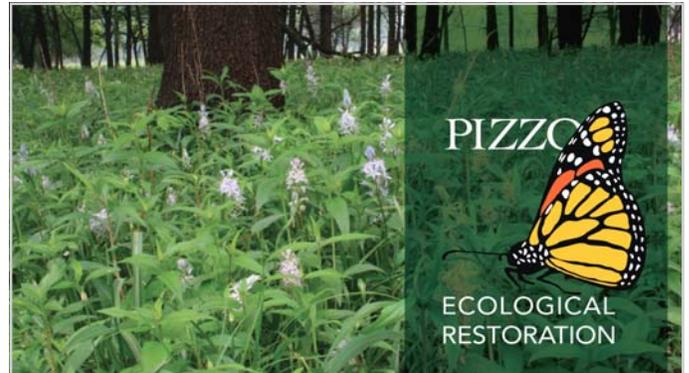
The Salt Creek area played a role in the history of the Black Hawk War of 1832. The war was short and lasted just fifteen weeks but the outcome shaped the future of Illinois and opened the northern part of the state to settlement.

The area east of Salt Creek and south of Lake Street was the location of General Winfield Scott's campsite during the Black Hawk War. Scott planned to engage Chief Black Hawk and join other troops in the campaign by marching westward along a route which is the present-day Army Trail Road. Scott's old campsite is now owned by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County as part of the Cricket Creek Preserve.

But when Scott reached Chicago with his first detachment of troops on July 10, 1832, most of his soldiers became too ill with cholera to join in the pursuit of Chief Black Hawk and his warriors and saw no action. However, Scott collaborated with other commanders in the field during the war.

In addition to General Winfield Scott (1786-1866), one of the most respected military leaders in the country at the time, many notable figures were involved in the Black Hawk War. These included Abraham Lincoln, a captain of the Illinois Mounted Volunteers, Jefferson Davis, who was selected to escort the captured Black Hawk to prison and would become the President of the Confederacy during the Civil War, and future governors of Illinois, Thomas Ford, Joseph Duncan and Thomas Carlin.

In addition to the Black Hawk War, General Winfield Scott's distinguished military career included the War of 1812, the Seminole War, the Mexican War and the Civil War.



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Deer Grove West Woodland and Wetland Nature Preserve



Photo by Steve Byers, INPC

On May 5, 2009, Deer Grove West Woodland and Wetland, owned by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, became the 500th site to be approved for dedication as either an Illinois Nature Preserve or Land and Water Reserve by the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission.

Deer Grove was acquired in June 1916 and represents the first acquisition of forest preserve land in the District's history.

The Deer Grove Preserve includes 786.9 acres dedicated as nature preserve and 248.8 acres dedicated as nature preserve buffer. Deer Grove Nature Preserve is located in the Morainal Section of the Notheastern Morainal Natural Division in Cook County and is located within the boundaries of the Salt Creek watershed.

The preserve supports savanna, dry-mesic upland forest, mesic upland forest, wet floodplain forest, sedge meadow and wetland communities that collectively provide habitat for 394 native plant species, including the state-threatened forked aster, pale vetchling, small sundrops and marsh speedwell and the state-endangered bulrush. Threatened and endangered wildlife include the black tern, yellow-headed blackbird, the cerulean warbler and a state threatened reptile.

Deer Grove combines scenic ravines, woodlands, wetlands and a prairie in a pristine landscape while also affording recreational opportunities such as fishing, birding, photography and trail use at one of the most significant and historic forest preserves in Cook County and the Salt Creek watershed.

Preserving the Historic Arcade Building

The Arcade Building, one of the most historic structures in Riverside, is in peril. Vacant and listed for sale, the Arcade faces an unknown future. This landmark structure, dating back to 1871, was designed by Frederick C. Withers, a partner of Olmsted and Vaux. Withers was retained by the Riverside Improvement Company to create a commercial building in the heart of the Riverside business district to complement the character of the village.

Constructed in the rural Gothic style of pressed brick in two colors with cut stone trimmings, the Arcade has contributed to the rich and historic past of Riverside for nearly 140 years. The Arcade is recognized as the first suburban shopping center in the nation and served as a model for other commercial shopping centers in the country. It was occupied for use by retail stores, offices and lodging rooms during its long history.

The Arcade has been listed as one of the Ten Most Endangered Places by Landmarks Illinois. The Riverside Preservation Commission believes the Arcade can be preserved if a developer experienced in historic rehab and uses of tax incentives acquires the property. A public mural project to create awareness is scheduled to be completed at the building in late November themed "This Place Matters" and involves art students from Riverside-Brookfield High School.

The SCGA is supporting the preservation of the Arcade Building.

Ecology Club Students Visit Wolf Road Prairie

On October 29th, ten students from the Morton Freshman Center Ecology Club and their teacher, Laura Sosnowski, visited Wolf Road Prairie for an introductory field trip in prairie ecology.

The tour was organized by SCGA and led by Patricia Armstrong of Prairie Sun Consultants and renowned native plant expert and advocate. The students learned about prairie ecosystems, prairie plant root depths and soil requirements and the different ways prairie plants survive and disperse seed.

The group found a lone goldenrod still in bloom in the savanna, the last touch of autumn color in a prairie landscape gone dormant for the season.

Wolf Road Prairie Burn

A Wolf Road Prairie burn took place in mid-November under ideal weather conditions. Winter removal of invasive buckthorn and other non-native woody growth is scheduled.

The restoration work, known as the South Fork Project, is coordinated by Corlands; Conservation Design Forum; Steve Byers, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission; and the preserve landowners, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and is funded by mitigation dollars allocated to Wolf Road Prairie and Hickory Lane buffer by the US Army Corps of Engineers. Pizzo & Associates is the ecological contractor for this project.

Other Happenings in the Greenway

- The Illinois Department of Transportation has funded the construction of a one mile Centennial Trail connection from The Chicago Portage National Historic Site in Lyons to the Salt Creek Trail at 47th Street. Nearly complete, this extension expands trail connections and recreational opportunities not only for Salt Creek Greenway trail users in Cook County but also opens a new connection for trail users within the regional trail system.
- The Forest Preserve District of DuPage County recently announced that it has received state and federal money to build three canoe and kayak launches along Salt Creek. One of the launches will be built in the Salt Creek Greenway north of the Butler National Golf Course in Oak Brook. Another launch will be built in Wood Dale and the third will be built at Cricket Creek in Addison. The sites have been selected as part of the Northeastern Illinois Water Trails Plan.
- The Riverside Sustainability Council is pursuing a bike path connection to the Salt Creek Greenway trail in Riverside. SCGA attended a meeting of the Council in support of the plan.
- The historic Village of Riverside, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, was one of the first planned communities in the United States. Riverside is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Several residences in the Village are also listed in the Register, including homes designed by renowned historic architects Frank Lloyd Wright and William LeBaron Jenney.

Get Connected

Just contact us and share your ideas, projects, special places and plans. Let's link up and get the word out about the many important and fascinating things going on in the Greenway.

We're on the Web!

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