



Café

Funding Opportunities for Habitat Creation

September 10, 2024

Presenters:

Dana Berkes (NIPSCO, a NiSource company, Public Affairs and Economic Development Coordinator)

Lindsay Vacek (ComEd, Senior Environmental Program Manager)

Chris Bourbois (Openlands, Conservation Ecologist)

Dave Guritz (Kendall County Forest Preserve District, Executive Advisor)

Jen Faust Lefebvre (Gross Park Neighbors Foundation, Copywriter)

Caroline Hernandez (Assistant Director of the Sustainable Landscapes team, University of Illinois Chicago)

With Appreciation to Our Sponsors

Because trees are important to equity as well as to human health, this CWA Café is supported by the [US Forest Service](#) and the [Illinois Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Forestry Program](#).

The funding supports workshops and trainings so the Alliance can help more communities improve urban tree canopy forests across the region, including through participation in [Tree City USA](#)

These institutions are an equal opportunity provider.





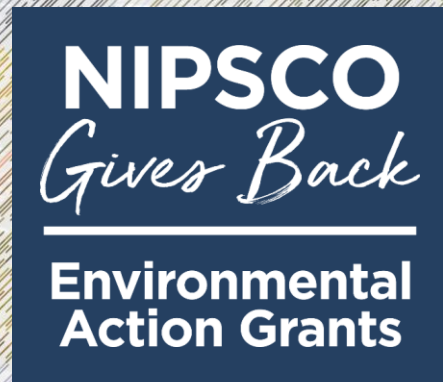
NIPSCO Gives BACK for Environmental Stewardship

We exist to deliver safe, reliable energy that drives value to our customers

NIPSCO ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GRANT

Since 2016, NIPSCO and the NiSource Charitable Foundation have awarded:

- **\$577,000 in support of 143 projects**
- **Projects include:**
 - Native habitat and prairie restoration
 - Invasive species removal
 - Youth nature programming and summer camps
 - Wildlife research and sustainability education
 - Wetland restoration and education
 - Urban forestry and tree canopy projects
 - Monarch migration outreach and pollinator habitat development



Funding environmental restoration and education projects and programs

We exist to deliver safe, reliable energy that drives value to our customers

NIPSCO ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION GRANT

2024 Grants: \$78,700 in support of 21 projects including:

- **Indiana Dunes Environmental Learning Center**
 - Nat's Nature Club – Nat the Nature Nut is the Center's mascot and local acorn
 - Seasonal outdoor adventures for families
- **The Monarch Joint Venture (MJV)**
 - Partnership to protect the monarch migration across the U.S.
 - Establish and enhance prairie pollinator habitats at Cedar Creek Wetland Conservation Area in Steuben County
- **Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame**
 - Campus canopy project's living exhibition event for Arbor Day
 - Interactive campus canopy map

NIPSCO
Gives Back
**Environmental
Action Grants**

Nurturing strategic partnerships and relationships with environmental stewardship and education organizations

We exist to deliver safe, reliable energy that drives value to our customers

NiSource | NYSE: NI | nsource.com |   

NEAT (NiSource Environmental Action Team)

Mission

- The NiSource Environmental Action Team (NEAT) exists to promote and facilitate recreational and educational opportunities with a focus on environmental conservation and sustainability, in line with the company's business strategy and stakeholder commitments, for coworkers, their families and the communities we serve

Four Areas of Focus

- Recreation: organizing/facilitating activities with the primary focus of enjoying the outdoors.
- Stewardship: encouraging/facilitating activities related to conservation and sustainability
- Education: providing instruction and information pertaining to conservation and sustainability
- Expansion: encouraging NEAT chapters at a state and local level across the NiSource footprint
- History
- Engagement

We exist to deliver safe, reliable energy that drives value to our customers

The Wetlands Initiative: Chase Street Complex



- 2021 Environmental Action Grant recipient
- Request to NiSource Charitable Foundation in late 2023 for local match dollars to leverage National Shoreline Resilience Funding of \$269k
- 800 acres, located in Gary, IN.
- Development of river re-meandering alternatives
- Engineering firm: 60% engineering & design
- Survey and mapping current conditions
- Land cover, plant communities, infrastructure
- Hydrology: berms, dikes, ditches, streams, and springs
- Community-driven project planning
- Community engagement consultant
- Community organization partners
- Collecting community feedback

We exist to deliver safe, reliable energy that drives value to our customers

Big Brothers Big Sisters Conservation Buddies

FEATURED LOCAL NEWS

THE GREAT OUTDOORS

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS START 'CONSERVATION BUDDIES' PROGRAM

May 7, 2021 The Waynedale News Staff



Conservation Buddies is inspired by Big Brother Andrew Niedermeyer and his wife, Big Sister Charita Niedermeyer. Both are interested in every aspect of outdoor life and have been honored by the National Wild Turkey Federation for their success in bringing others into their passion of hunting, fishing, shooting, birding, hiking and other outdoor activities.

"The numbers of hunters are decreasing, and quickly, and the reality is that sportsmen and sportswomen pay for

- Environmental Action Grant funded pilot in 2021.
- Impact funding to expand in 2022-23 - \$50,000
- Interactive match activities for Bigs and Littles in the outdoors
- Through activities like greenhouse gardening, fishing, kayaking, archery, rifle safety and campouts, matches and memories are made.
- Increased participation from Bigs with passion for outdoors, conservation and nature.
- Match activity partnerships
 - LC Nature Park, ACRES Land Trust, Gills N' Bills, National Wild Turkey Federation, Soarin' Hawk, Chain O' Lakes State Park, Black Pine Animal Sanctuary, Indiana DNR, Salomon Farm

We exist to deliver safe, reliable energy that drives value to our customers

NiSource | NYSE: NI | [nisource.com](https://www.nisource.com) | [f](#) [t](#) [in](#)

Dunes Learning Center

Education partner
for Indiana Dunes
National Park

Nat's Nature
Club - 2024

NIPSCO leadership
board service

Buds for
Butterflies and
Bees - 2022



We exist to deliver safe, reliable energy that drives value to our customers

NiSource | NYSE: NI | [nisource.com](https://www.nisource.com) | [f](#) [t](#) [in](#)

East Chicago Monarch Fest - Festival de la Monarca

- East Chicago festival celebrating and educating community about Monarch migration
- Held in September during National Hispanic Heritage Month
- NIPSCO sponsorship through Environmental Action Grant
- Volunteer support through NIPSCO Charity of Choice
- 600+ attendees
- The Nature Conservancy event



We exist to deliver safe, reliable energy that drives value to our customers

The Nature Conservancy: Kankakee Sands



Funding to support a bison viewing platform

The Nature Conservancy property in Northwest Indiana/Newton County

In 2016, 23 bison introduced to the property; currently 90+ bison roaming the prairie

\$25,000 funding

Green Regions Grant Program

Lindsay Vacek, Sr. Environmental Program Manager,
ComEd

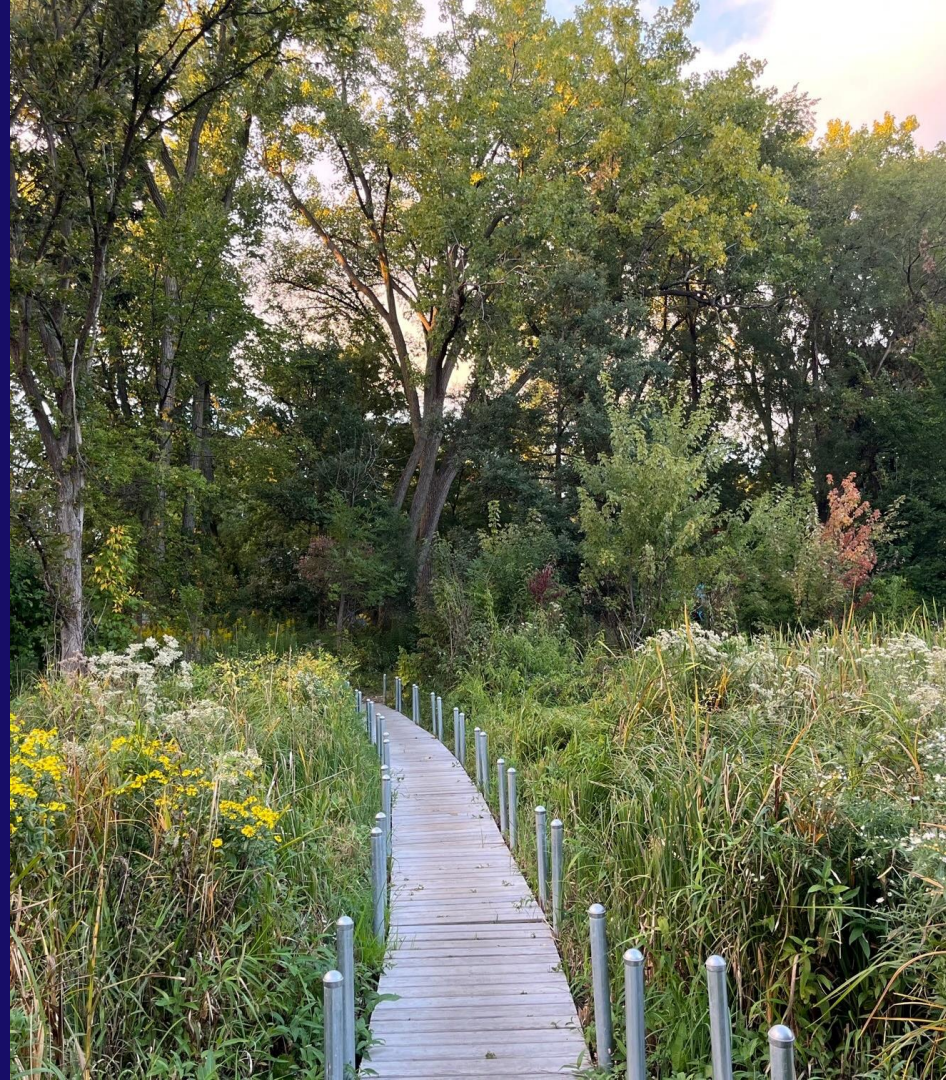
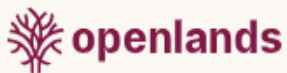
Chris Bourbois, Conservation Ecologist, Openlands

Dave Guritz, Executive Advisor, Kendall County Forest
Preserve District

Jen Faust Lefebvre, Gross Park Neighbors Foundation



comed



Overview

- Program created in 2013
- Funded by ComEd and administered by Openlands
- Awards are for of up to \$10,000 for pollinator, climate resiliency and conservation projects
- Since its inception, the program has resulted in:
 - More than \$2.3 million awarded to more than 280 green space improvement projects
 - More than 1.6 million people across northern Illinois benefited
 - More than 85,000 feet of ADA-accessible trails created
 - 38,600 trees planted
 - 1,590 acres of land enhanced



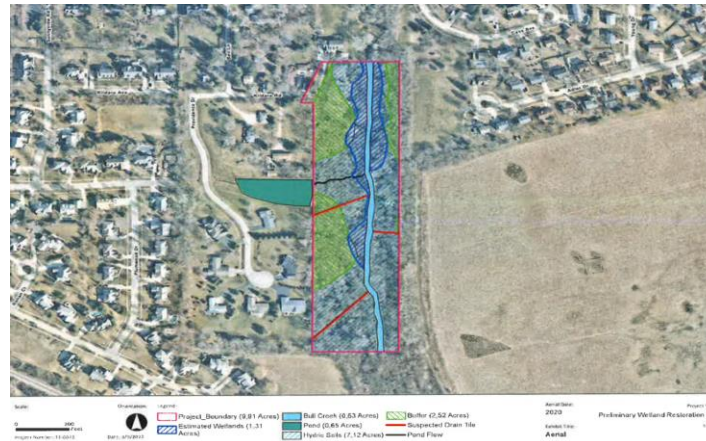
Application Information

- Eligible applicants include nonprofits, school districts, municipalities, etc. in ComEd service territory
- 18-month project period
- Submission deadline is in the spring; awards announced in late summer
- Requirement to submit a final report to Openlands/ComEd by two months after final expenditure of grant funds
- 12th annual grant cycle:
 - Special focus: Creating Nature-based Solutions to Climate Change
 - Award recipients announced in late August
 - \$200,000 will go to 23 communities across northern Illinois



What Makes a Competitive Grant Proposal?

- It is best to develop projects and then look for funding, rather than the other way around
- Aesthetics can matter – presenting your plans in an attractive way can make your project more appealing
- Projects should be a team effort – a project with only one person involved can be nearly impossible to finish if that person moves on
- Having partners very involved is very important – yet that work is usually done before the application process
- Making your application easy to read can really help – use the provided templates, highlight relevant portions, etc.
- The project should feel ready to go – quotes secured, seed lists prepared, maps made, etc.
- Make sure your goals and methods are clear and measurable – It should be easy to understand what you are trying to achieve and how





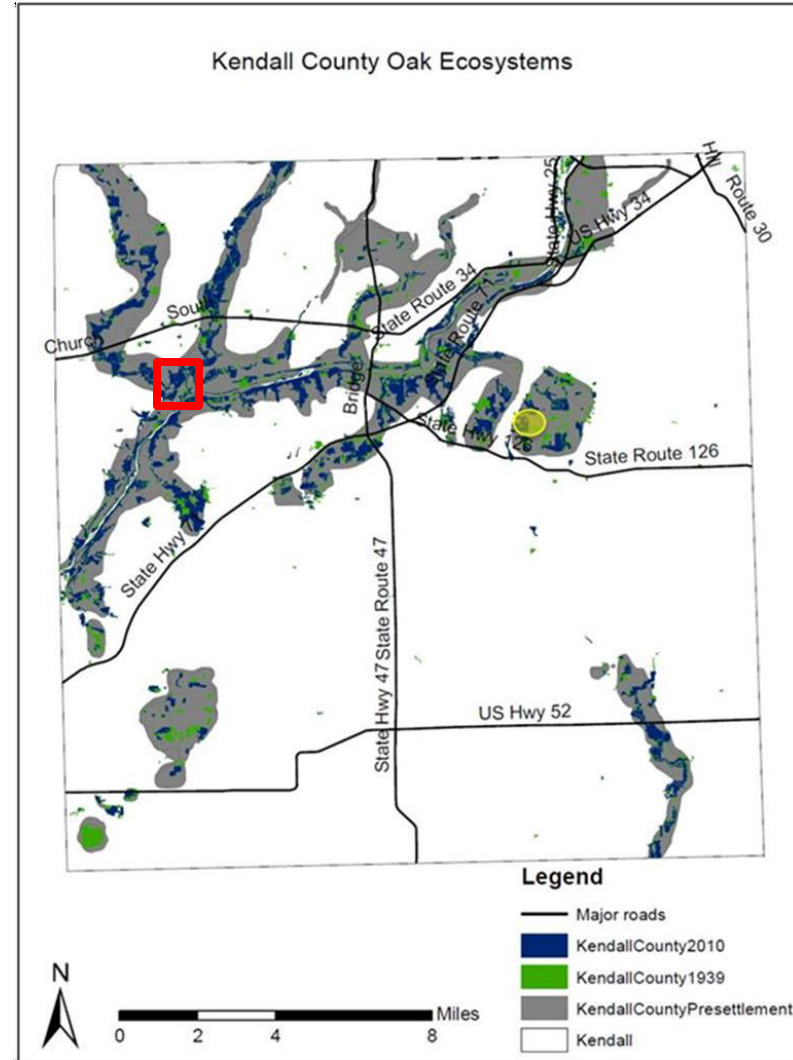
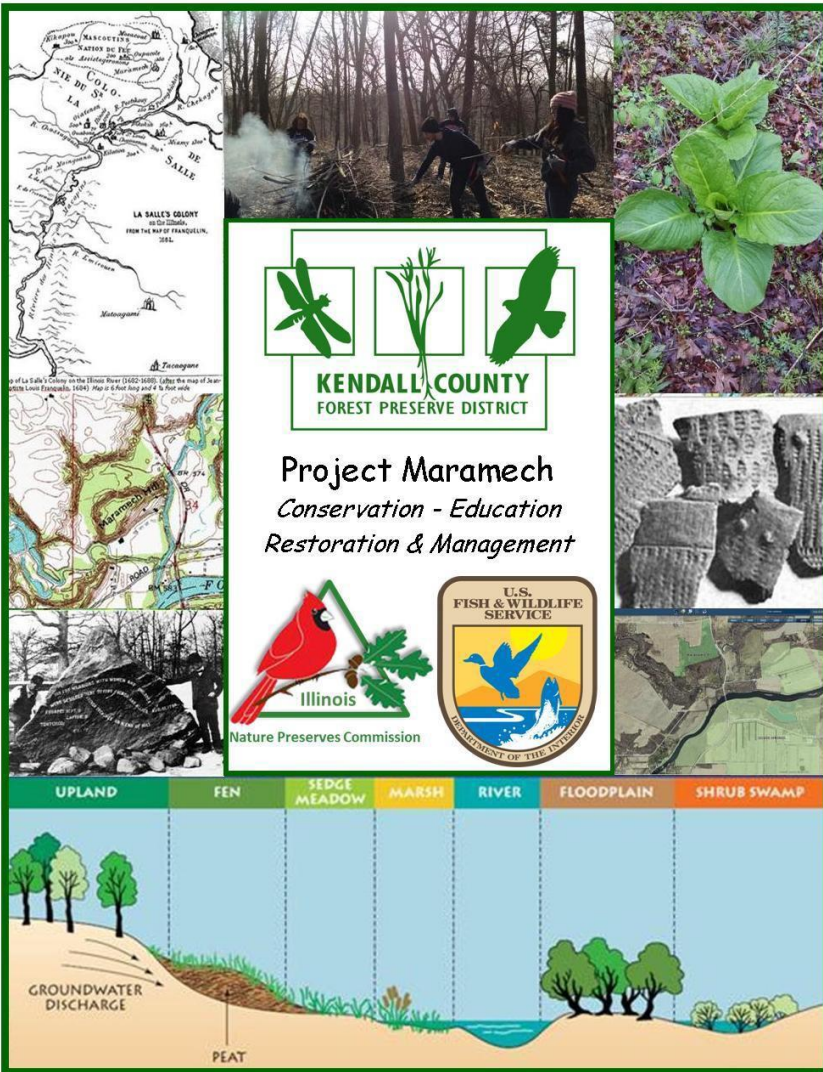
Kendall County Forest Preserve District

ComEd - Openlands Green Region Grant Projects – 2015 to 2020

Lessons and Key Take-Aways for Strengthening Applications

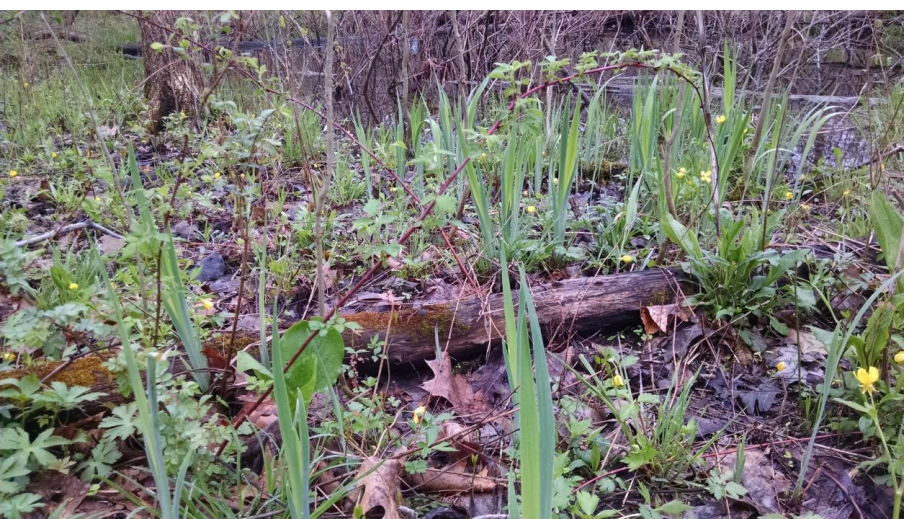
This is a screenshot of the Openlands website's banner for the ComEd Green Region Grant. The banner has a green background. At the top left, the "openlands" logo is visible. To its right are navigation links: "Get Outside", "Get Involved", "Get Help", "Get Expertise", and "Get Me To". Further right is a red "Donate" button, followed by a search icon and a menu icon. Below the navigation bar, the breadcrumb "Home / Openlands Programs / ComEd Green Region Grant" is displayed. On the right side of the banner, there is a "SHARE" button and social media icons for Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Email. The main content area features a dark blue box on the left with the ComEd logo and the text "2024 Green Region Grant Application Now Open!". To the right of this box is a circular image of a bee on a purple flower. The text "ComEd Green Region Grant" is prominently displayed in white on the right side of the banner.

This is a screenshot of a website section with a purple background. On the left, there is a vertical image of purple and orange flowers. On the right, there is a white text box with the following text: "The 2024 Application portal is now open and will close on April 12." Below this text is a white button with the text "APPLY NOW" and a small circular icon with a right-pointing arrow.



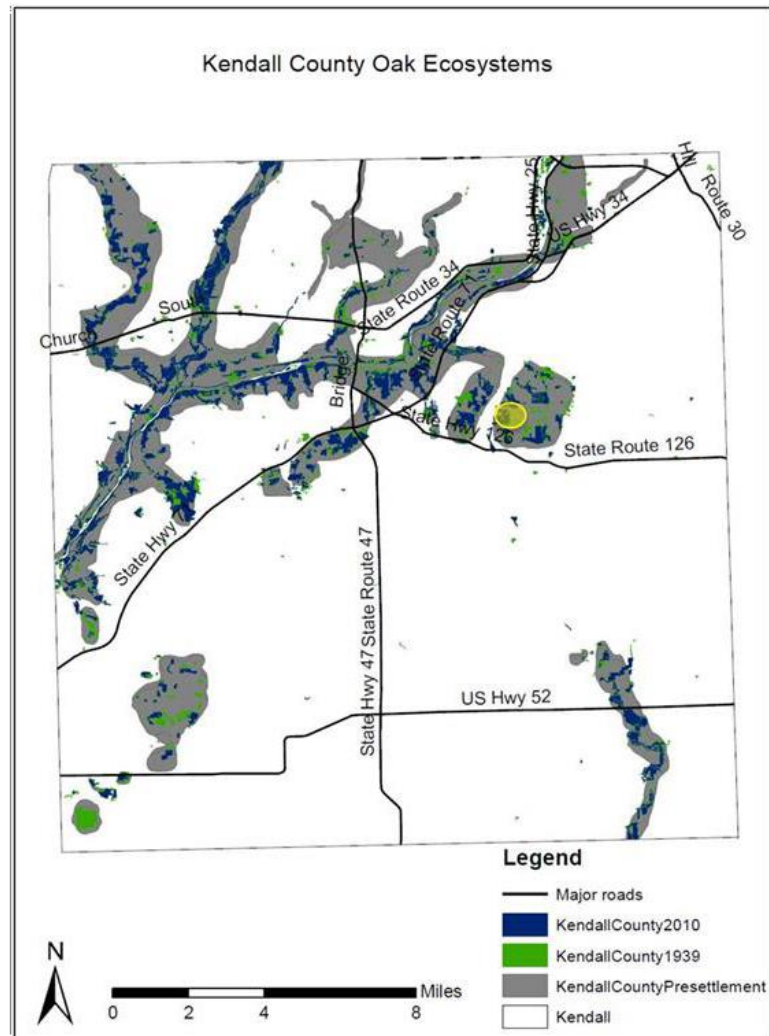


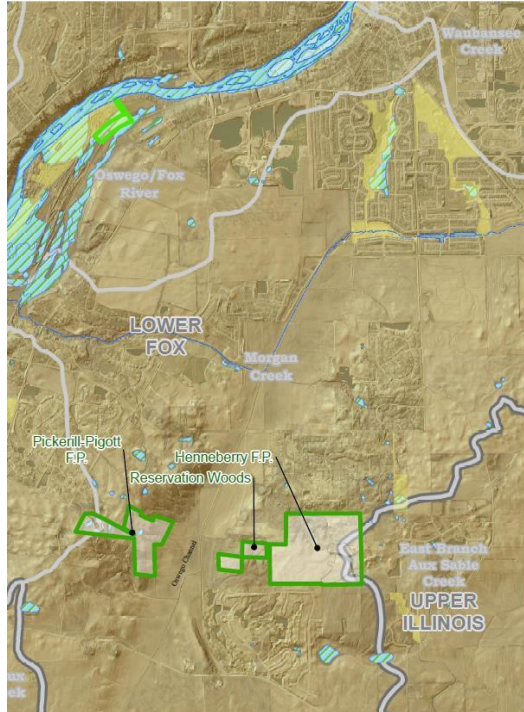




Henneberry Woods Forest Preserve Location

1. East of the Oswego Channel Formation
2. Located on the Ransom Moraine formed between 21,000 BP to 14,000 BP





Henneberry Woods Exhibit KENDALL COUNTY - 2016 -

<http://www.co.kendall.il.us>



Scale: 1 in = 100 feet
0 150 300 450 600
Feet

Legend

- FPCorralPoints
- Corral Area
- Seeding Area
- Seed Type
 - Pollinator Seed Mix
 - Savannah Seed Mix
 - Short Sedge Meadow Seed Mix



Kendall County GIS
115 West Fox Street - Room 200
Yorkville, Illinois 61080-1490
815-533-0038



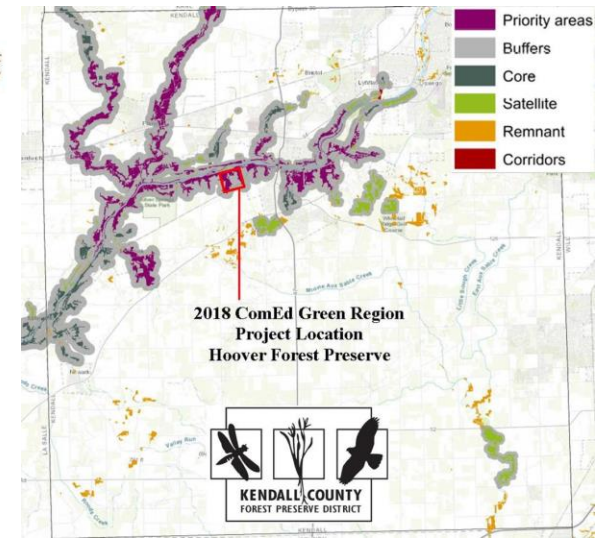






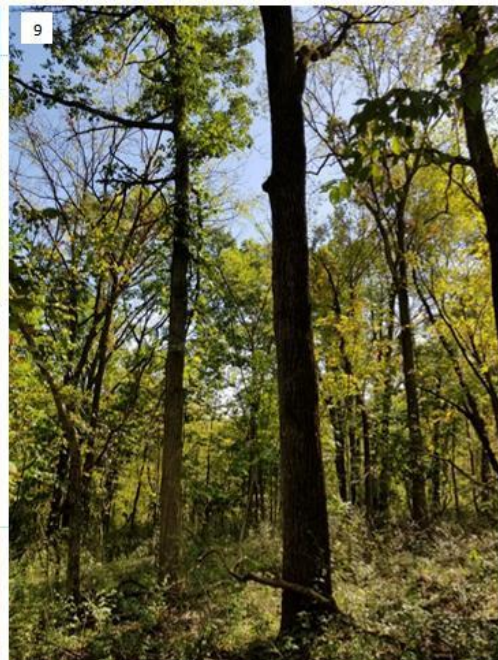


ComEd-Openlands Green Region 2020 KCFPD Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Habitat Recovery and Community Outreach Project









Meet the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (*Bombus affinis*)

One Bee; Two Habitats

In 2018 an Illinois Department of Natural Resources statewide survey confirmed the presence of Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (*Bombus affinis*) in Kendall County at Hoover Forest Preserve. Rusty Patched Bumble Bees rely on nectar and pollen from a wide variety of flowering plants each year in order to grow their colonies.

While Rusty Patched Bumble Bee colonies rely heavily on prairie wildflowers in summer, they also rely on woodlands for foraging nectar from spring wildflowers, and for shelter for overwintering queens. Hoover Forest Preserve contains large habitat areas helping to support this local population. Rusty Patched Bumble Bees are susceptible to extreme weather impacts from climate change. Recovery of the species will require expansion of remaining populations through the creation and restoration of high-quality foraging habitats.



Photo: Heather Holm

Identification

Rusty Patched Bumble Bees live in colonies that include a single queen and female workers. The colony produces males and new queens in late summer. Queens are the largest bees in the colony, and workers are the smallest. All Rusty Patched Bumble Bees have entirely black heads. The workers and males have a T-shaped area of black hairs between the wings that extends back towards the abdomen and a patch of reddish or brownish hairs that is surrounded by the yellow hair on their abdomen.



Color and pattern illustrations of a rusty patched bumble bee queen (left), worker (center), and male (right). Elaine Evans—The Xerces Society.

Do you think you've spotted a rusty patched bumble bee at Hoover Forest Preserve?

Help us document your sighting by submitting your photos at bumblebeewatch.org.

Super-foods and Super-friends

Rusty Patched Bumble Bees rely on nectar and pollen from flowers. Pictured below are just a few of the many species of the native plants seeded and planted within our restored prairies and woodlands at Hoover Forest Preserve with support from our community and corporate partners.



Wild Bergamot
Monarda fistulosa



Cream Wild Indigo
Baptisia bracteata



Culver's Root
Veronicastrum virginicum

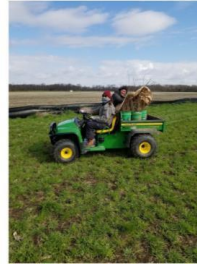
Why Conserve Rusty Patched Bumble Bees?

In 2017, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee as endangered, or in danger of becoming extinct under the Endangered Species Act. Rusty Patched Bumble Bees, like other pollinators, contribute to our food security and the healthy functioning of our ecosystems. Bumble bees are keystone species in most ecosystems, pollinating native wildflowers and generating the reproduction of seeds and fruits that feed a variety of wildlife.





ComEd – Green Region Projects Successes & Key Take-Aways



1. Identify Projects that Fit High Priority Areas and Conservation Impacts
2. Properly Scope the Plan for Restoration
3. Generate a Site Plan Showing Locations and Planned Actions
4. Recruit Multiple Project Partners and Opportunities for Community Involvement
5. Match the Project with Funding from Multiple Sources
6. Generate a Plan for Press and Social Media Interest and Touchpoints
7. Document Impacts, Capture Moments, and Tell a Good Story

Thank you

PLANTED GREEN

GROSS PARK

DATE: 10/10/10
 DRAWN BY: [Name]
 CHECKED BY: [Name]
 SCALE: 1" = 10'

NORTHWEST BED 1

- Plantings: [List of plants]
- Structures: [List of structures]

NORTHWEST BED 2

- Plantings: [List of plants]
- Structures: [List of structures]

EAST BED

- Plantings: [List of plants]
- Structures: [List of structures]

WEST BED

- Plantings: [List of plants]
- Structures: [List of structures]

SOUTHWEST BED 1

- Plantings: [List of plants]
- Structures: [List of structures]

SOUTHWEST BED 2

- Plantings: [List of plants]
- Structures: [List of structures]

LEGEND

- Plantings: [List of plants]
- Structures: [List of structures]

SCALE

1" = 10'

NOTES

[List of notes]

The Beginning

Gross Park is a neighbor-nurtured Green Space in the heart of Chicago - a boulevard park taken care of by the community (the city only mows and provides water.) After high utilization post-Covid it was in serious need of restoration. And ready to be reinvisioned for the future to reduce its water dependency and increase its utility to the natural world. Enter the Openlands Green Region Grant opportunity.



2020: Children doing ballet outside during Covid - park overrun, traffic path depleted, gardens forgotten

Gross Park's Grant Scope

- **Revised original garden design** plans with updated native plantings to decrease dependence on water and increase habitat for wild things and pollinators.
- **Partnered with a Master Naturalist** to design beds and price the correct plants.
- **Purchased and installed 100s of feet of fencing** to protect plants and redefine walking paths.
- **Installed informational kiosks** at each end that showcase features of the park and native plants.
- **Commissioned a 'garden key'** to the park from our naturalist (see cover page) to aid in identification of plants and signal to the community that, although the new park had an air of 'wild exuberance,' it was indeed carefully designed and thoughtfully installed.



Grant Application Tip #1: What is your hook?

When applying, we described how our space was not just an opportunity for a native habitat – it was an opportunity to create an ambassador space in an urban, central location that could become, if executed beautifully, an inspiration for community members to adopt such plantings in their own spaces. **What is your hook?**



Girl Scouts collecting native seeds

Grant Application Tip #2: Build community from day 1

Start building community day one when applying. Use the matching grant to unite your community – we received a large donation from a preschool that uses the park, donations from neighbors from all over our area, etc.

Start with Giving Tuesday (first Tuesday after Thanksgiving) before you apply to test drive messaging and build awareness. Then, do a second reach out to potential donors before finalizing grant to message dollar-for-dollar matching opportunity with a measurable goal and a deadline.



Gross Park fundraising flyer

Grant Application Tip #3: You need more than just plants

Plants need infrastructure – care, volunteers, ideal soil conditions, light, and stewardship. We learned so much about their needs post-planting – we might have considered monthly costs for a Master Naturalist to guide our volunteer efforts (which we ended up fundraising for after grant was executed.)

Think about what the plants and your volunteer community will need AFTER the garden is planted and have that infrastructure in place and, ideally, funded if possible. Remember the three year growth cycle of natives:

- year one – sleep
- year two – creep
- year three – leap.

Think through the gardens' care and stabilization at least through year three and build a strong foundation plan for support and maintenance.



Application Tip #4: Consider national certification

When telling your story on your application and to your community, consider national certification. If your area will meet the requirements of the National Wildlife Federation, Monarch Watch, etc., it's a great way to build credibility with Openlands and your community. It shows that what you are doing is backed by solid science.



**NATIONAL
WILDLIFE
FEDERATION**



**HOMEGROWN
NATIONAL PARK®**

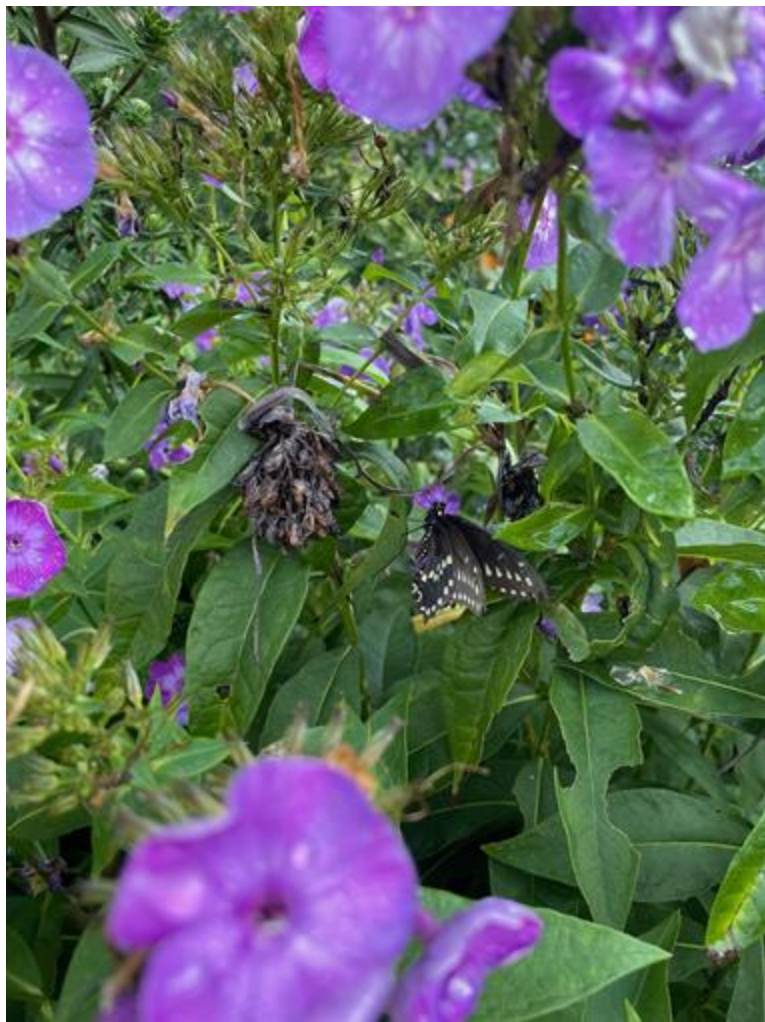
BUT WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS?

Here we will let the pictures talk...























Thank you! Learn more about
Gross Park at
grossparkneighbors.org

**Gross Park
Is Recognized BY:**

The National Wildlife Federation



Monarch Watch



Openlands



UIC's Rights-of-Way as Habitat Working Group and the Pollinate Program

Caroline Hernandez

Assistant Director, Sustainable Landscapes
Energy Resources Center - University of Illinois Chicago
cah272@uic.edu | rightofway.erc.uic.edu



**SUSTAINABLE
LANDSCAPES**

Rights-of-Way as Habitat Working Group

The Rights-of-Way as Habitat Working Group connects a diverse network of people to enhance compatible, value-added conservation on energy and transportation lands.



400+	Organizations
1700+	Individuals
2	Countries

<https://rightofway.erc.uic.edu/>



SUSTAINABLE
LANDSCAPES

What We Do

Conservation Agreements



Pollinator Scorecard



Geospatial Database and Mapping Tools



Webinars and Roundtables



Facilitation and Workshops



Nature-based Sustainability Support



Resources Library



Interactive Seed Map



Solar-Pollinator Research



Online Tools and Reports



gROWing Habitat Initiatives

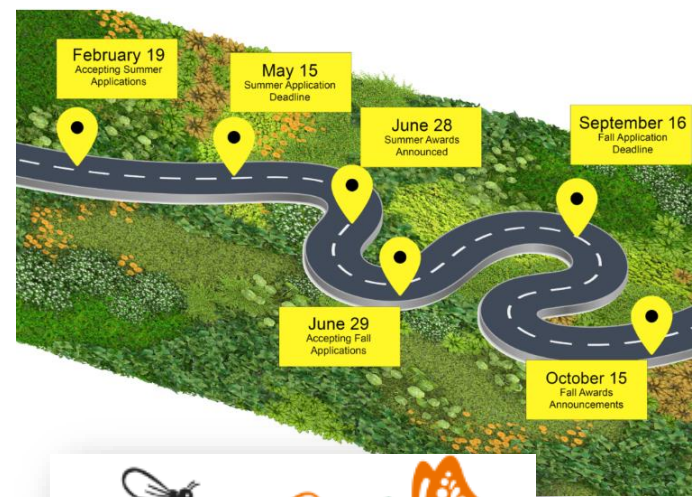


Habitat-Related Events Calendar & News



Pollinate Program

- Small awards program
- Energy and transportation organizations
- \$3,000 - \$10,000 awards
- Previous engagement in at least one ROWHWG program
- Reimburse costs associated with
 - pollinator habitat creation using native plants,
 - pollinator garden plantings, Seed mix procurement,
 - native plants or materials used for wildlife and biodiversity enhancement,
 - services related to project installation and evaluation



Stantec



SUSTAINABLE
LANDSCAPES

Pollinate Program – Summer Success

Summer Application period was a huge success!

- 18 applications received
- 11 projects awarded
- Committing over \$73,000 in match
- 50% of projects are in EJ communities
- Projects include:
 - Demonstration gardens
 - Pollinator habitat creation
 - Turf-to-prairie conversions
 - Existing vegetation enhancements
 - Integrated vegetation management planning and monitoring
- Engages company employees, community groups, and volunteers.

★ Fall applications are due by September 16th.



Stantec



SUSTAINABLE
LANDSCAPES

CREATE A CAFÉ!

Are you a Chicago Wilderness Alliance partner with a conservation success story you'd like to share or a topic to introduce and discuss with your peers? We'd love to have you create a [Cafe session](#)!

Cafes are conducted via Zoom and typically last 1 hour.

We'll help you decide on a format for your session and can provide template slides or other assistance as needed. We'll also promote your session on social media and in our monthly newsletter.

[Complete the CWA Cafe Request form](#) or contact Laura Reilly to talk through your Cafe session idea. Thanks for sharing your expertise with the Chicago Wilderness network!

Questions?

Laura Reilly, Chicago Wilderness Alliance

Coordinator laura.reillycw@gmail.com



Café