



Fox Valley
Land
Foundation

NEWS

Fall 2003

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Illinois Clean Energy
community foundation

Land Conservation Challenge

Given the rapid pace of development in Kane County, this is a critical time to work to protect open lands and natural areas for the future. Realizing that Fox Valley Land Foundation must grow in order to meet this challenge, the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation recently granted the organization a *Land Conservation Challenge Grant*.

Over the next two years, this Challenge Grant will match all new and increased donations, up to \$40,000! The goal is to preserve and enhance natural areas, one of Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation's funding priorities.

"This challenge grant is a great incentive for members and potential donors. It will enable them to double their investment in land conservation," said President Tom Armstrong. "Challenge grants work for public radio and television. Why not for a land trust?"

By responding to this challenge, members will be funding a *Landowner Contact Program in Kane County*. The land foundation will begin an outreach program to landowners of sites that have been identified as high quality but are not currently protected, or slated for acquisition by any public agency. These landowners don't have to sell—they can protect the land they love and still retain ownership.

Through conservation easements, landowners can guarantee that their land— whether a field of wildflowers, a corner woodlot or a pristine wetland— will be preserved forever in the condition they choose. And they also may be able to realize tax benefits from their donation.

Please help Fox Valley Land Foundation get this message to landowners in Kane County. Make a membership donation by returning the enclosed card today!

Fox River Land Alliance

If you believe that it takes a village to raise a child, then you'll understand that it takes more than just a single organization to protect land in the Fox River watershed. Fox Valley Land Foundation works with private landowners primarily in Kane County, but is also a member of a national land conservation movement, the Land Trust Alliance (LTA).

LTA has convened all the land conservation groups working in the Fox watershed and has launched a collaborative watershed-wide *Fox River Watershed Land Alliance*. Working together with a regional approach, the groups can more quickly and efficiently protect "the best of the rest" of the remaining high quality open spaces before they are gone.

The "Private Land Conservation Easement Program" will work to promote the understanding of conservation easements throughout the region. Promotion is something that is expensive, and by pooling resources the new alliance should be able to get quality materials into the hands of landowners to explain the benefits of conservation easements. The new brochure will be ready in November.



Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid (*Plantanthera leucophaea*)

This graceful and elegant orchid blooms in late June and July, and is on the State Endangered List.

Photo by Jack Shouba

Grant Awarded for Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid Sites

Fox Valley Land Foundation is one of three organizations in Region 3 of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to be awarded a *Private Stewardship Program* grant to implement restoration activities and improve habitat for the benefit of endangered, threatened, or other at-risk species on privately owned land. The \$79,500 will be used to increase the size and number of this orchid on eleven private sites.

Although only one of these sites is in Kane County, each of the sites participates in the *Eastern Prairie Fringed Orchid Restoration Project*. This unique program is a partnership between Region 3 of the USFWS and the Illinois Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. It was designed to use volunteers to monitor the state endangered orchid. Volunteers not only provide estimates of orchid populations at each site annually, they also hand-pollinate flowers, and collect and disperse seed.

Fox Valley Land Foundation will be the fiscal agent, providing general oversight for the project. We will coordinate contact with the landowners, technical assistants and the contractors. Volunteers with the *Restoration Project* will provide monitoring on the sites, and their data will be used to evaluate the success of the restoration work that is done.

Member Support Leverages Other Funding from Grants

Membership support is the backbone of Fox Valley Land Foundation. The Challenge Grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation will help Fox Valley Land Foundation grow its membership support. That support in turn helps leverage other grants for us to grow our capacity and work on specific projects. This year we are proud to have received the following grants.



Grand Victoria Foundation Elgin Grantworks—\$10,000

Elgin Grantworks is an initiative to provide operating funds for Elgin-based nonprofits.



Northeastern Illinois Wetlands Conservation Account—\$15,745

Administered cooperatively by The Conservation Fund and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, it provides support for wetlands in northeastern Illinois. These funds are for restoration work in the sedge meadow on Mill Creek in our easement in the Deerpath subdivision at Randall Road & Main St. in Batavia.



Fox & Kishwaukee River Watershed Habitat Restoration Program—\$2,250

Cost-share funding comes through the Kane DuPage Soil & Water Conservation District to protect aquatic resources. These funds will be used for a homeowner matching grant program for homeowners along Mill Creek in the Deerpath Subdivision.

Hear Aldo Leopold at FVLF's Annual Dinner

Save the Date!

Thursday, December 4, 2003
Riverside Reception & Conference Center
35 N. River Lane, Geneva

(see story on page 4)



Photo by Marianne Nelson

Volunteers collected seed from the Brundige Road Railroad Prairie last fall before the track was widened.

A Patch of Native Illinois Prairie has been Preserved

by Mitch Adamus
*FVLF Board Member and
Steward for Campton Hills Park*

Today less than .01% remains of the once vast Illinois prairies. Some of the best remnants are next to railroad lines. In Kane County one of the highest quality prairie remnants is along the railroad tracks between Geneva and Elburn. Metra's extension of their west line to Elburn required that the tracks be made wider. That meant some more native Illinois prairie would be destroyed.

But it wasn't destroyed! Through the efforts of many partners, a small patch of the native prairie was moved out of the way and has found a new home. Fox Valley Land Foundation worked with Metra's ecological consultants, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the St. Charles Park District to make it possible to move some of the prairie to a new site.

Before the railroad began their work on the track widening, a small section of prairie was removed west of Brundidge Road, and another section west of Harley Road. The relocation site was nearby Campton Hills Park. You might think this is a relatively simple process, but the planning for the project took

more than a year. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers required that there be mitigation for the wet prairie that would be destroyed. Union Pacific Railroad then allowed their mitigation funds to be used for the rescue. A contractor had to be hired to dig out the deep-rooted plants and move them. A destination site with similar hydrology had to be scraped and prepared so the plants would go into the ground at the right depth.

The actual move took less than a week: July 19th to 23rd. Contractor Drew Frasz came up with some creative equipment and unique techniques to scoop up the sods, place them on pallets, load them on flat bed trucks, move them and unload them at the new site. Volunteers filled in the cracks between the sod chunks, smoothed out and leveled the transplants. Eight people worked three days to get the plants in the ground!

Then the plants had to be watered by the park district two or three times a week. Some plants were droopy, but some looked as if they had always been at the new site. The area was over seeded with seed collected at the donor site by FVLF volunteers last fall.

What is the prognosis? Between the root stock and seed bank, I expect quite a high percentage of native plants to survive or spring from the soil. It will take a couple of years for things to settle out, and success is very weather dependent. But I am hopeful.



Photo by Mary Ochsenschlager

Flatbed with prairie plants on pallets ready to be moved.



Musings from the Shed

Chances are you never met Aldo Leopold, America's foremost conservationist and environmental scholar. But you will feel like you have met him when Al Carr presents a first person historical interpretation of the author of the "land ethic" at the Fox Valley Land Foundation Annual Dinner on December 4th, 2003. Don't miss this performance.

" There must be some force behind conservation more universal than profit, less awkward than government, less ephemeral than sport, something that reaches into all time and places where man lives on land, something that brackets everything from rivers to raindrops, from whales to hummingbirds, from land estates to window boxes.

I can only see one such force: a respect for land as an organism; a voluntary decency in land use exercised by every citizen and every land owner, out of a sense of love and obligation to that great biota that we call America."

Aldo Leopold

Our Mission

To protect,
restore,
and preserve
significant
natural lands
and open spaces
through
public and
private
partnerships.



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