

Kendall County Forest Preserve District 2023 Year in Review



Pickerill Estate House Outdoor Pavilion



Stephanie's Garden and Hoover Nature Play Space Renovations



Tree Planting and Seeding at Little Rock Creek Forest Preserve



Volunteer Restoration Work Day at Fox River Bluffs Forest Preserve



Ken and Jackie Pickerill Estate House Opening



KENDALL COUNTY
FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT

Kendall County Forest Preserve District Board of Commissioners

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The mission of the Kendall County Forest Preserve District is to preserve and manage natural areas and open spaces, provide environmental education, and offer recreational opportunities for Kendall County residents.



KCFPD 5-Year Plan: <https://www.kendallcountyil.gov/departments/forest-preserve-district/about-kcfd/mission>

February 2024

Dear Kendall County Residents,

The Kendall County Forest Preserve District achieved several significant 5-Year Plan objectives and milestones in 2023. We are proud to share our accomplishments and projects planned for 2024.

Land Acquisition

Kendall County Forest Preserve District encompasses over 2,800 acres within 27 forest preserve areas across Kendall County. In 2023, the District partnered with the Village of Minooka to apply for an Illinois Department of Natural Resources - Land and Water Conservation Fund grant to support a 37-acre addition to Baker Woods Forest Preserve, and a 5-acre addition to Aux Sable Springs Park near Minooka. All parcels were acquired by The Conservation Foundation and located within the Aux Sable Creek corridor, a Class A-rated stream.

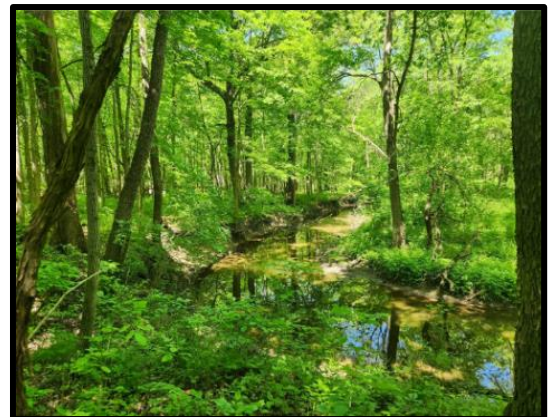


High-Quality Natural Resources



Little Rock Creek Forest Preserve was acquired in 2018. In 2023, the District seeded and planted over 5,000 trees and shrubs to restore the remaining crop production areas to natural cover and habitat.

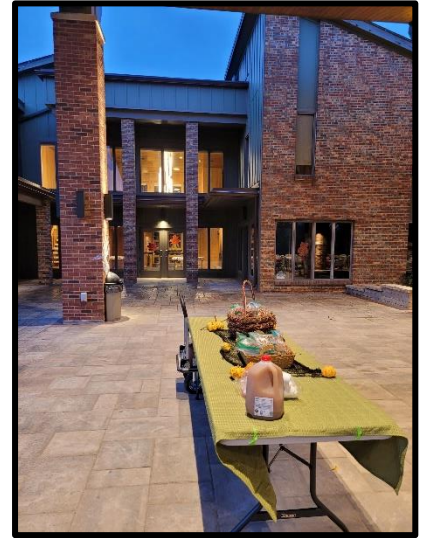
The District continues to monitor and manage preserve wildlife resources, completing several prescribed burns and invasive brush clearing projects within high-quality natural areas.



In 2023, the Forest Foundation of Kendall County funded a baseline floristic quality study of the Hollenback Sugar Bush Forest Preserve as part of the preparations to open this preserve area to the public.

Preserve Improvement Projects

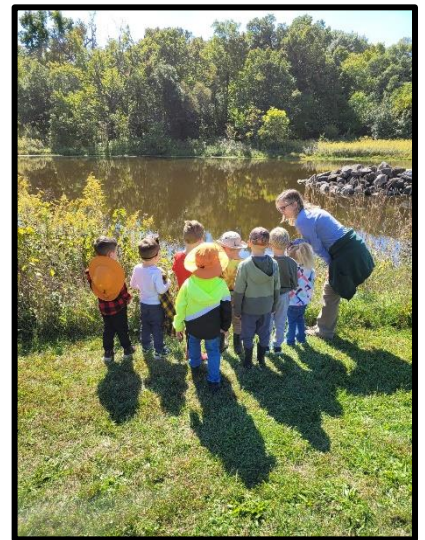
In 2008, Ken Pickerill donated his 26-acre property and estate house to the Kendall County Forest Preserve District. Upon his passing, the District worked to fulfill its commitment to opening the preserve and estate house to the public. With support from two State of Illinois – Illinois Department of Natural Resources grants (\$316,500 OSLAD grant and \$828,200 PARC grant), the residents of Kendall County are now able to enjoy the vision achieved with the opening of the Ken and Jackie Pickerill Estate House in July 2023.



Fox River Bluffs Forest Preserve, a 168-acre preserve acquired in 2015, opened to the public following completion of the Eldamain Road extension and bridge crossing in May 2023. Completed improvements include a new parking lot, kiosk, trail loop and spur. The preserve features high-quality oak woodlands, bluffs, and ravines along the Fox River. A 100-acre habitat restoration project consisting of restored prairies, and a large-scale tree planting project was completed in 2020. 31,000 tree and shrub seedlings were planted including several species of oak, hickory, walnut, and American plum.

Connecting People to Nature and Outdoor Recreation

2023 was a record year for public participation in District programming and use of forest preserve shelters and facilities. Reservations for use of picnic areas, campgrounds, and special event facilities eclipsed all previous prior year totals. Natural Beginnings Early Learning Programming, summer camps, equestrian lessons, school programs and teacher workshops also saw increased enrollment and participation as the District's reputation for delivering high-quality educational programs and experiences grows.



Capital Infrastructure and Equipment Priorities



Over this past year, the District’s Board of Commissioners evaluated the capital infrastructure and available resources needed to fulfill the District’s mission. The District’s Finance Committee completed a five-year capital budget and equipment replacement plan, and analysis of the remaining referendum bond payment schedule to prepare for the debt service sunset of the District’s 2007 referendum bonds.

The projects completed in 2023 reflect the commitment to teamwork from all individuals charged with the administration and stewardship of the District’s resources.

Fiscal Control and Management

Careful monitoring and allocation of the District’s financial resources contributed to the assignment of an improved Aa3 bond rating by Moody’s, the third consecutive bond rating improvement extended since 2015.

End-of-year financial statements (preliminary) show the District’s operating surplus for the year exceeded expectations, generating over \$150,000 in operating and capital reserves. The District’s Operating Fund reserves increased to \$634,626, representing 40% of the District’s FY24 operating budget.

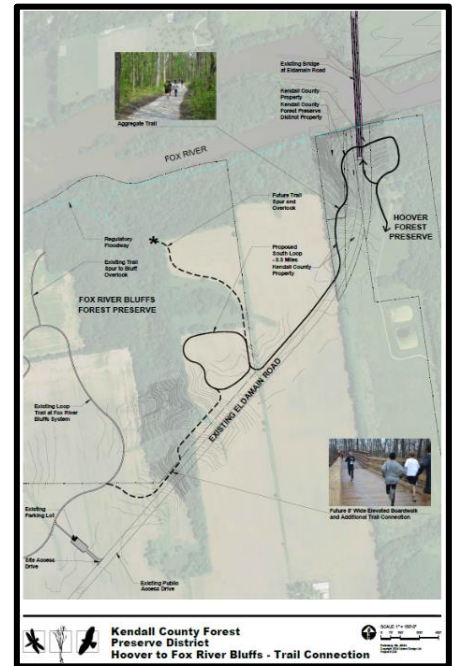
FY24 Project Goals

The District has set ambitious goals for 2024. The design phase for Subat Nature Center is well underway, with construction beginning this summer. The District is also pursuing grant funding to complete connecting trails between Hoover, Subat and Fox River Bluffs Forest Preserves.

Special thanks to the District’s leadership team and staff, and the Forest Foundation of Kendall County’s Board of Directors for their contributions to the success of these projects.

On behalf of the Board of Commissioners, we look forward to continuing to move the District’s efforts forward in 2024.


Brian DeBolt, President





KCFPD 5-Year Plan: <https://www.kendallcountyil.gov/departments/forest-preserve-district/about-kcfd/mission>

