

# NEWS

Champaign County Forest Preserve District  
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*“Celebrating 60 Years”*

Middle Fork River Forest Preserve • Homer Lake Forest Preserve • Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve • River Bend Forest Preserve

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT AWARDED MORE THAN \$1 MILLION TO PURCHASE LAND ALONG SANGAMON RIVER!**

Mahomet, IL, April 25 – With the award of two grants totaling more than \$1 million dollars, the Champaign County Forest Preserve District is about to purchase 160 acres north of Mahomet along the Sangamon River south of Fisher. The District recently learned it has been granted \$500,000 from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources just announced the District will receive an Open Space Land Acquisition and Development Grant (OSLAD) in the amount of \$543,000. The combination of the two grants will provide most of the \$1.2 million purchase price, which will make the acquisition possible.

“This is great news,” said Board President Ruth Wene. “Acquiring land along our rivers and streams is our highest priority. These are the best places left that provide wildlife habitat in our county. With this purchase, we will protect more than 5/8 of a mile on both sides of the Sangamon River, including the confluence of a major tributary, Wildcat Slough.”

Jerry Pagac, CCFPD Executive Director, praised the present owners of the property, Ron and Karen Cook, for their outstanding stewardship. “The Cooks discontinued the use of their bottomland years ago and planted thousands of native tree species. Their two-story historic house has been lovingly cared for and the outbuildings will be put to good use by the District in managing the property.” Pagac went on to describe the property noting in addition to the river and stream “visitors will see oak savanna, floodplain forest and wetlands.”

The District plans only minimal development including an entrance road, parking lot, restroom, picnic shelter, canoe landing and trails. They expect hikers, fishing enthusiasts and birders to be the primary users of this bit of nature. It is expected to take about a year to complete that development.

“The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation applauds the Champaign County Forest Preserve District for its leadership in acquiring this 160 acre parcel so critical to the protection of the Sangamon River Corridor,” said Foundation Executive Director James Mann. “With almost 100 acres of natural habitat, this project carries forward the Foundation's commitment to help through its grants Illinois communities protect and preserve their most important natural areas for the enjoyment and learning of today's and future generations.”

The yet-to-be-named property will become the county's 5<sup>th</sup> forest preserve joining Middle Fork River Forest Preserve near Penfield, Homer Lake Forest Preserve north of Homer and Lake of the Woods and River Bend Forest Preserves in Mahomet.

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