

NEWS

Champaign County Forest Preserve District
P.O. Box 1040 • Mahomet, IL 61853
E-Mail: HQ@ccfpd.org
Website: www.ccfpd.org

LAKE OF THE WOODS FOREST PRESERVE • HOMER LAKE FOREST PRESERVE • MIDDLE FORK RIVER FOREST PRESERVE
HERON VIEW FOREST PRESERVE • SANGAMON RIVER FOREST PRESERVE • RIVER BEND FOREST PRESERVE • KICKAPOO RAIL TRAIL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Michael Daab, Deputy Director, Planning & Development

Mdaab@ccfpd.org

Joe Zalabak, President, PACA

joe@zalabakhomes.com

Tod Satterthwaite, Treasurer, PACA

todsatterthwaite@gmail.com

Land donation expands Heron View Forest Preserve

The Champaign County Forest Preserve District (CCFPD) has received a land donation of 5 acres from the Preservation and Conservation Association of Champaign County (PACA). The land is located on the north side of County Road 2600 at the Sangamon River, contiguous with the Heron View Forest Preserve expanding its total size to 103 acres. The historically designated Hazen Bridge is located on the donated parcel.

With the District's mission of preserving the natural and cultural history of Champaign County, PACA had long considered CCFPD to be an appropriate local governmental agency to take ownership of the Hazen Bridge and the 5-acre parcel of land on which it sits. The site contains good native habitat, including mature oak trees and an abundant population of Virginia bluebells in the spring. The land will help CCFPD provide more access to the river for recreation. A new parking lot and loop trail will be constructed in 2022.

PACA acquired the historic Hazen Bridge in 1991 after a new bridge over the Sangamon River was built lining up with County Road 2600 North. The bridge was donated to PACA by the Newcomb Township Road Commission and the 5 acre parcel of land that it sits on was donated by Jack Richmond. "PACA is delighted to have the Hazen Bridge become a historic feature of the Heron View Forest Preserve. It makes good sense to have this 5 acre parcel in the stewardship of the CCFPD" said Joe Zalabak, President of PACA, "they protect not only natural areas, but cultural treasures as well."

The Hazen Bridge is of historical significance due to the Pratt truss design. It is one of only two truss bridges remaining in Champaign County. The bridge was constructed in 1893, and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The bridge will remain observable for historical interpretation, but will be closed to travel due to accessibility and safety concerns.

"PACA's generous donation gives Champaign County residents an additional preserved natural area, a historic structure, and access to the Sangamon River. We are grateful that PACA has chosen the Forest Preserve District to be the steward of these important resources as they help further our mission to protect the county's natural and cultural resources and inspire people to care for, enjoy, and explore their natural world," says Lorrie Pearson, CCFPD Executive Director.

As the name implies, Heron View Forest Preserve is home to a great blue herons, whose grouped nesting is called a rookery. Staying on CCFPD designated trails will help visitors avoid levels of disturbance that could result in the herons abandoning their nests. The rookery should only be observed from a distance, especially during the nesting season that lasts from mid-March until August.

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