

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: Mike Daab
Mdaab@ccfpd.org

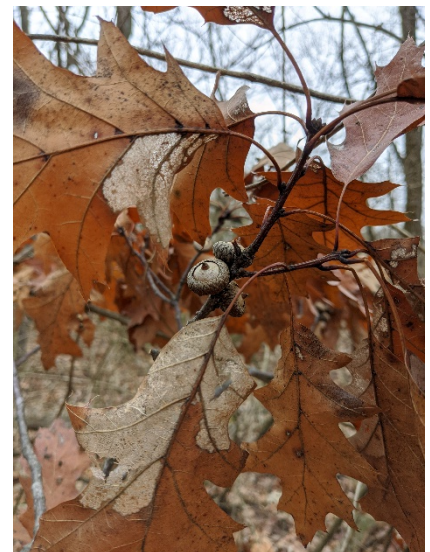
Champaign County Adds New Preserve along Sangamon River

The 98-acre Heron View Forest Preserve is Champaign County Forest Preserve District's newest preserve, and fourth along the Sangamon River. The land was purchased with a combination of grants and donations, and is situated north of Mahomet approximately halfway between Lake of the Woods and Sangamon River Forest Preserve. The Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation granted a majority of the funding for the land, and a donation made by Shawn Tabeling and Brian Keigher of Hidden River Development, LLC., which is developing home sites east of the preserve, provided the balance needed for the land purchase.



The site is primarily land-locked by private property, but CCFPD staff will be working to provide access to the site from County Road 2600 North in 2021. As a condition of the grant used for purchase, the land will remain largely undeveloped in order to provide wildlife habitat. Hiking and access to the Sangamon River for paddling are amenities that CCFPD hopes to offer in future years.

As the name suggests, great blue herons are plentiful at the site, with dozens of nests grouped in some large sycamore trees along the river. A majority of the site is bottomland forest, and Virginia bluebells are abundant in the spring. The remaining upland forest area has a good canopy of oak and hickory trees, but the understory needs restoration due to invasion by non-native shrubs like bush honeysuckle, privet, and Japanese barberry. The purchase grant included nearly \$10,000 to kick-start that management over the next year.



Floodplain forests like that found at Heron View help to regulate flood peaks by acting as a sponge that stores water during high volume, and releases water to help maintain flow during drier periods. The forest also removes sediments and nutrients from the river, which improves water quality. The combination of these ecosystem services, wildlife habitat, and recreation opportunities made the property addition a natural fit for the Champaign County Forest Preserve District.

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