



Newsletter

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www.ParkLandsFoundation.org

Farewell from former President Deneen



Thank you to all!

At the annual meeting, I handed over the reins of ParkLands Foundation to Jessica Chambers after two years. Jessica will do a fine job with a softer touch as ParkLands moves forward.

I would like to thank all of the ParkLands members for their tremendous support over the past two years. Without your great assistance the 50th Anniversary events would not have been highly successful. You can't have a great party if the guests don't show up!

I also must thank Jason Shoemaker, Erin Herbez, the Board of Directors, and other Parkland volunteers for the tremendous assistance over the past two years. The Outreach Committee could not have done a better job for the 50th under the direction of Julie Elzanati. Jason Shoemaker and Stewardship Chairperson Michael Brown have pressed forward on restoration and maintenance to the fullest extent possible given ParkLands limited financial resources at this time.

Guy Fraker was the driving force behind our 50th banquet. Nancy Armstrong has been tremendous behind the scenes keeping the ParkLands financial house in order.

I could callout many other people, but my experience has been that all persons assisting ParkLands are selfless individuals more concerned with the ParkLands mission and the environment and not attention for their efforts. Probably my best takeaway from my two years as President is gratitude to all who have helped to move ParkLands Foundation forward for their efforts!

Sincerely yours,

Daniel G. Deneen





About Our Foundation

Since its founding in 1967, ParkLands Foundation has been dedicated to protecting and restoring natural lands in the Mackinaw River Valley of McLean and Woodford Counties. Our goal is to create a network of continuous land corridors along the Mackinaw River and its tributaries. With over 3,250 acres of prairie, savanna, floodplain forest and river habitat protected and restored, the Foundation is the only one of its kind in the Bloomington-Normal Area. This includes two Illinois Nature Preserves that are owned (Ridgetop NP, Merwin NP), one that we manage in conjunction with our owned buffer strip (Weston Cemetery NP) and one that was donated to the IDNR (ParkLands NP). We are also in the process of dedicating three additional owned preserves within this program.

Message from our new President, Jessica Chambers



I love being an Illinoisan. On December 3rd, 1818, Illinois was formally admitted into the union becoming our country's 21st state. As we celebrate 200 years of statehood, I have given a lot thought this past year to what Illinois means to me.

I grew up in the rural Secor area. My grandfather created Fairlakes Golf Course and my maiden name, Sparks, is the namesake for the bridge just southeast of the golf course. As kids we often would play in the creeks that empty into the Mackinaw River and occasionally, we would follow the creek all the way to the river. When I think back to the time my sister and I spent outside, I realize how peaceful and quiet that time was.

As a board member and now board president, I have asked Jason, the ParkLands' Land Steward, about visiting all the parcels that ParkLands maintains. As a child I never knew how close the Chinquapin oaks were or that Letcher Basin existed, both just down the road from the golf course. These are just two of many beautiful preserves that ParkLands maintains right here in central Illinois.

The foundation actually protects over 3200 acres of land along the Mackinaw River in Woodford and McLean Counties. Many of the preserves are open to the public for hiking, canoeing, bird watching and photography. The land and watershed protect species such as blue herons, bluebells, river otters, muscles, mudpuppies, Chinquapin oak and our nation's emblem the bald eagle and many more species.



I personally get tired of hearing negative comments about Illinois. I think this significant anniversary can be an opportunity to change how people view our state. I would ask you to think about what Illinois means to you. How can you help to protect our land? Some things you can do are as simple as being curious and paying more attention to nature. If you want to help ParkLands you can also share ParkLands information with friends, be an active participant at the preserves, become a member, and donate to the foundation. If you want to be more involved than what I listed, we are always looking for volunteers to help in the preserves and with our outreach events.

I love being an Illinoisan. I am enthralled in the prairies, forests and water that give her that awesome shape so identifiable on a map. Fascinated by the critters and plants that inhabit those lands and water. So proud that we belong to the Land of Lincoln. Happy to have a day job at our state's first public university. And honored to be president for the next two years of the ParkLands Foundation.

From our Land Steward, Jason Shoemaker



I have been thinking a lot about history lately with the State of Illinois turning 200 years old this year. This interest was again sparked when I visited an area with a new ParkLands Board Member and we talked about the fact that a massive cottonwood tree was likely a small tree and actually physically seen by Lincoln as he passed literally feet from its roots while practicing on the Eighth Judicial Circuit. This tree is located near a ford in the Panthers Creek located in Woodford County. Lincoln also crossed the Mackinaw at our Letchers Basin Land and Water Reserve which is also one of ParkLands true gems in land ownership.

I have always noticed that folks don't stop and think about how really short our history is in relation to our own lives. For instance when ParkLands was founded in 1967 the State of Illinois was only 149 years old. I didn't know about ParkLands Foundation until I started walking with my parents as a small child in 1986 as ParkLands was nearing its 20th Anniversary. I remember walking the trails, especially the deer trails at the Merwin Preserve as that was the only way as a small child to truly get out into nature. I remember sitting and having lunch on top of the hill prairie and dropping my apple which rolled all the way to the river. As a small child that was the worst thing that could have happened, and to this day I make sure to hold onto my apple at the top of the hill prairie at lunch!

In 2007 I was able to apply with ParkLands and get the job as Land Steward. At that time ParkLands was celebrating their 40th anniversary. In 2017 I got to see ParkLands celebrate their 50th anniversary with many great events. I am excited to see what ParkLands can accomplish in the next 49 years to come. If anyone was curious, the year will be 2067 and ParkLands will be celebrating their 100th anniversary! I will hopefully still be alive to see it as I will be 83 years old, and the State of Illinois will be 249 years old.

Remind yourself of an old growth tree and how each growth ring reminds you of the past and the future. ParkLands has a lot of these old growth trees on their properties and with your help more trees can be protected in the future with your help. The biggest thing that you can do is become a member if you are not one, if you are a member take your friends to the preserves and ask them to become members to support the organization.



Thank you for your support: Past, Present and Future

As you read through our Year in Review, please be keep us in mind for your end of year giving. We know you receive many requests this time of year, but as we hope you will see by the end of the report, the work that ParkLands Foundation undertakes is well worth your donations. Donations from members like you represent a significant part of our organization's budget and help us complete our goals.

If you're a member or have ever been a part of ParkLands Foundation, you understand why your help is needed. You know we've been helping to restore and preserve lands around the Mackinaw Valley Watershed for over 50 years.

Please consider supporting ParkLands Foundation through donations, or by renewing your membership. These actions are an investment into your community and the future of the region.



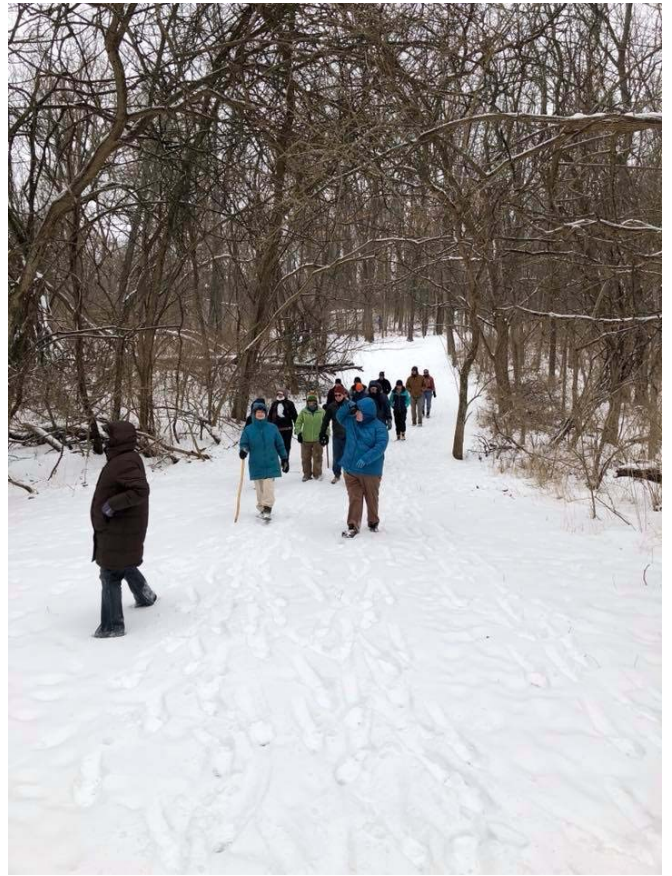
Finally, we owe a huge thank you to so many for their help and support in all the endeavors showcased in these pages and more. We could not do any of this without our members and supporters. Thanks also to our board members, who work tirelessly to make ParkLands Foundation the wonderful organization that it is. And of course, thank you to the many people who volunteered their time to assist in our many restoration projects. You truly make a difference and we hope to continue our rich tradition of volunteerism.

Here's to an even better 2019!



February

This February, members were treated to an incredible experience at our newest preserve, The Hayes Woods Nature Preserve. Our Land Steward, Jason Shoemaker led the group on a nature tour through the newly established preserve and introduced a new way of viewing Illinois landscapes. Perhaps the most awe-inspiring aspect of this property is the fact that it is home to a beautiful Rookery; a colony of breeding Great Blue Herons that use this particular location on the Mackinaw watershed as a place to raise their young and spend the spring and summer seasons. The fact that our foundation can provide suitable habitat for such a large number of this critical species is part of what makes our work both highly important as well as fantastically rewarding. Continuing this tradition of exploring preserves in future years, we hope to see even more of our amazing members on the next trip!





March & April

March: On March 4th, ParkLands Foundation participated in the 15th annual fundraising event known as “Home, Lawn and Garden Day” in Bloomington, IL.

The event hosted educational classes, inspirational speakers, and horticulture treasures from a variety of exceptional businesses and artisans. It was a special opportunity to introduce ourselves to the broader community.

April: On April 20th, the foundation celebrated Earth Day with our very first volunteer work day of the year.

Student volunteers visited the Bunney Tract in Lexington, IL. The day was spent collecting and piling brush in order to help clear out the land.

We rely upon and love our devoted and enthusiastic volunteers. Our work is made possible through them. If you have any interest in donating your time, please visit our website, parklandsfoundation.org and click on the volunteer tab.

May & June

May: On May 6th, we had an absolutely fantastic Wildflower Walk event at our very own Merwin Nature Preserve.

Dr. Roger Anderson, Dr. Joe Armstrong and Janice Turner a distinguished Prairie Restoration Ecologist, hosted the walk.

Excitingly, every available space for the event was taken, making this one of our most popular events of the year.



June: June 3rd marked another wonderful event – Wandering in Woodford. This event was hosted at Letcher Basin Prairie Preserve and was free and open to the public.

Letcher Basin is one of ParkLands’ most beautiful preserves and is truly a testament to the restorative force that the foundation is capable of.

Being so proud of this land, it was a great honor to be able to show off this success story with a hike and a few lessons on the natural history of the area itself.



July: Half Century Bike Ride

After the huge success of the first, on July 28th, we hosted the second annual Half Century Bike Ride.

Participants could choose to ride either 20 or 50-miles, starting in Lexington, Il. along roads traversing Parklands Foundation properties.

The event was open to all ages and one of our sponsors, Kemps Upper Tap helped us celebrate the occasion by providing food and craft beer.

September: Annual Members Meeting at Letcher Basin Preserve

A stunning example of the once extensive Illinois prairie, the restored Letcher Basin served as the perfect backdrop for the ParkLands 51st annual meeting on September 9th. Our own land steward, Jason Shoemaker began the day by taking the roughly 40 members in attendance on an educational hay ride through the Basin. With perfect weather conditions, members were able to fully enjoy the prairie, while also spying some incredible wildlife, including a bald eagle high up in the trees. Afterwards, all sat down to enjoy an excellent lunch provided by Epiphany Farms, and even better company. Many stories of past times with the Foundation and future plans were shared under



the shade of the lovely Sycamore tree.



Additionally, we hope you will join us in welcoming our new president, Jessica Chambers. As Dan Deneen said his goodbyes and handed over the torch, we are sad to see him go, but look forward to the work ahead with Jessica. We wish them both the best.

The festivities concluded with an in-depth presentation on the history of the surrounding Southern Illinois landscape which detailed the story of the Kickapoo Tribe who had lived on the land since the 1600's.

As always, we thank our members for their continued dedication and support. Without you, our work would not be possible.

October

October was a fantastic month for our foundation, with many volunteers aiding in arguably one of our most important preservation efforts. Native prairie seed with a good level of genetic diversity can cost up to \$1,000 per acre, depending on the source. As a non-profit, this is an expenditure we simply can not afford. Thankfully, with help from student volunteers, we are able to collect seeds from our very own restored lands to plant in new areas. Seed collection from local prairie also helps maintain continuity between our preserves and is a great way to interact with the land. We had a great time with the ISU Geography Club (top picture). They helped out with our last day of seed collection for the month.

Students from Illinois Wesleyan University (middle picture) have been helping both in seed collection as well as with removal of invasive species such as Bristly Locust and Teasel.

Eureka College students (bottom picture) collected 30, 30-gallon bags of invasive Lespedeza before it dropped seeds on our Chiquapin prairie. In addition, their hard work helped raise money towards our Community Stewardship Grant through Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation.



November & December

Once the weather chills we start to move our efforts indoors to plan the upcoming year. In November we ran campaigns on both Black Friday (Nov. 23rd) and Giving Tuesday (Nov. 27th). Both campaigns were part of our ongoing attempts to increase our active community involvement. It was great to see so many people coming out to Merwin Nature Preserve on both Thanksgiving and Black Friday to celebrate the holidays with their families.



Parklands Foundation

On December 31, 1818, Illinois was formally admitted into the union becoming our country's 21st state. As we get ready to celebrate 200 years of statehood, Parklands Foundation asks you to consider donating on this Giving Tuesday to help protect some of our land.

The Parklands Foundation protects over 3200 acres of land along the Mackinaw River in McLean and Woodford Counties. Many of the preserves that make up the Parklands Foundation are open to the public for hiking, canoeing, bird watching and photography. The land and watershed protect species such as blue herons, blackbirds, river otters, muskies, mudpuppies, Chinquapin oak and our nation's symbol the bald eagle and many more species.

The foundation runs on a staff of 2 people and dedicated volunteers who preserve, manage, and educate central Illinois. As you may imagine this requires many resources including equipment, prairie seeds and trees, interns and other necessities.

By giving to the Parklands Foundation YOU help to preserve Illinois! Please consider donating.

Thank you,
Jessica Chambers
Parklands Foundation Board President

200 YEARS



HIKING IS THE BEST BARGAIN!

This Black Friday escape the hustle and bustle and come and hike the Merwin Preserve in McLean County.

To get directions and the trail guide go to: <http://www.parklandsfoundation.org/>



From our Administrative Director – Erin Herbez



ParkLands Friends,

I hope you have enjoyed reading about our activities in 2018. Our board, staff, and volunteers have worked tirelessly to make our organization successful (51 years and counting!!). As we look to increase ParkLands' name recognition in the community we would also like to get to know YOU. I would like to encourage you to attend at least one of our events in 2019. It's a great way to learn about our organization and for staff and board members to meet our supporters. Thank you and I hope to see you in 2019!

HELP US PROTECT AND RESTORE NATURE

Help make a difference, protect native ecosystems, and educate the public about the importance of natural areas in the Mackinaw River watershed with a donation to ParkLands Foundation. Your generosity supports the protection and restoration of 18 nature preserves covering over 3,200 acres in McLean and Woodford counties. ParkLands Foundation's preserves are open to the public every day of the year. **Thank you!**

HOW TO GIVE:

Visit our website at <http://www.parklandsfoundation.org/donate/donate-online/> to give a one-time donation

Or, call ParkLands Foundation office at 309-454-3169 or mail a check to ParkLands Foundation, P.O. Box 12, Normal, IL 61761.

PURCHASE AN ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FOR YOURSELF OR A FRIEND

Visit our website at <http://www.parklandsfoundation.org/donate/membership/>

Member levels: Student \$15 | Basic \$30.00 | Contributing \$50.00 | Supporting \$100.00 | Sustaining \$250.00 | Patron \$500.00 |
Champion \$1,000.00

SET UP RECURRING DONATIONS

Determine the amount of your gift and select a recurring payment option of weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually. We will charge your credit card automatically on the correct interval. ParkLands Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit.





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