

August 2020



Newsletter

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www.ParkLandsFoundation.org

Signing Off: Farewell from the Board President

Dear Friends,

I like to joke I was bamboozled into the ParkLands' presidency position. Four years ago, when Nancy Armstrong asked me if I would consider taking on the Vice President role she said, "You don't really have a lot to do as Vice President."

At the time, I was committed to helping ParkLands. I had been on the board for a couple of years and was starting to understand the organization, the preserves, and the people who work and volunteer for ParkLands. I also thoroughly enjoyed working on the Outreach committee. Accepting the Vice President role seemed to only add a minor time commitment of one additional meeting every other month.

To be honest, there was that little voice in my head saying, "WAIT, that means in 2 years I would be President of ParkLands" but I was able to wrangle that thought away by reasoning "I could always change my mind and decline the position" OR "Maybe they will pick somebody else?"

Over my two years in the Vice President position, I wrestled with the idea of being President. I had many things on my plate: family (3 teenage children), work (director of the ISU Horticulture Center), and my husband running for office. There was also the fundamental thought that if I took the President position I needed to be fully committed. But there was another factor that came into play that really gave me no choice in accepting the role as President of ParkLands.

In 2017, ParkLands celebrated its 50th anniversary. Part of the celebratory year included a banquet dinner where I realized in reading the evening's program there had only been one female President of the ParkLands Foundation in 50 years. (That honor goes to Mary Horgan, 2004-2006). It also occurred to me that perhaps there had never been a minority President. And those two things nagged at me. How could I, as a Latina female, say no when given the opportunity to lead?

So, when I say I was bamboozled into the Presidency, I am kidding because the decision was purposely thought out and fretted upon. Ultimately, it was my determined nature that said, "You will take this on and do the best job you can."

I have realized over these past two years how much I love ParkLands. I love the preserves. I love the people and volunteers associated with ParkLands. I love learning about the plants, animals, and history that make up ParkLands. And truth be known – I like the board meetings.

There are many people associated with ParkLands that are "ParkLands Patriots" – individuals who help the organization no matter the position or years that pass by. I have decided I want to be one of those volunteers. I am very thankful I had the opportunity to be board president and now look forward to helping ParkLands in other ways.



Jessica Chambers

ParkLands Board President



ParkLands Summer Fund Drive

I wanted to thank everyone that participated in our summer fund drive! This is the first general fundraiser that we have conducted since I began at ParkLands in 2016. It was a huge success! We had 110 donors and raised crucial programming funds. ParkLands has been expanding over the last 5 years and we need your help to keep conserving, restoring and managing land in the Mackinaw River watershed. The ParkLands' staff and board of directors truly appreciate all that our members and volunteers cocontribute to our organization.

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU!



Erin Herbez, Administrative Director

New Website

ParkLands has a new look! We are incredibly pleased to announce the rollout of an all-new, completely revamped website featuring more vivid imagery, an interactive watershed map, one-click directions and detailed histories of our most popular preserves, a calendar of events, and so much more. Give the new site a visit (same address: parklandsfoundation.org), and let us know that you think! This website was funded through a Capacity Building Grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and we thank ICECF for all of their support for ParkLands!

Website Committee

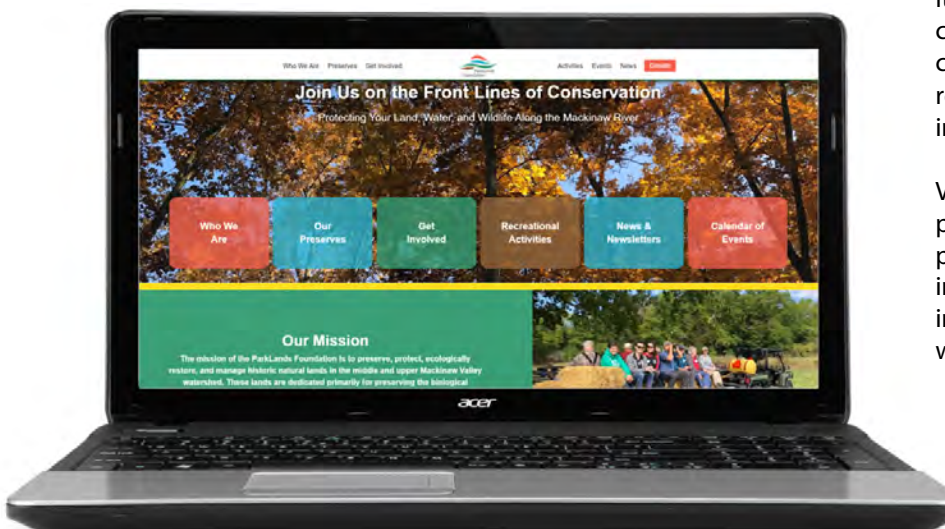
The idea of designing a new website is daunting. Some might compare it to building a new house – the concept and vision is a thrill, but the endless decisions on small details can be overwhelming. What content is most important? Where do we put it? What picture to use? The wordsmithing can be endless.

These challenges were taken head-on by a committee led by volunteers Michael McKinley and Ron Dierkes. Both Mike and Ron have extensive project management experience in the business sector and key drivers in moving the project forward. The committee, which also included Krista Kirkham, Jessica Chambers, Erin Herbez, Craig Lutes, and Jason Shoemaker, partnered with local web design firm to implement our vision into the final product.

The committee met nearly every week since February, often with ideas and debates rolling well into the evening hours. Mike and Ron also met weekly with our local design firm partner. Numerous others had a hand in reviewing content, telling the history, and sharing quality photos. Add it all together and a significant amount of volunteer hours to make this happen. If you get a chance, please give this team a huge "thank you" on behalf of ParkLands.

It is better designed to be updated with new content and features over time. A small committee will remain and will periodically review suggested changes and improvements, and brainstorm new ideas.

Visit the site. Tell your friends. Share your photos, stories, and ParkLands history. Point people to it when you receive questions or interest in ParkLands. ParkLands has an incredible story to tell, and this is just one more way we can share that story with more people.



Flexing Our Mussels

By Craig Lutes, Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator



When we scheduled our busiest ever season of outreach events for 2020, no one could have guessed it would be whittled down to one. While ParkLands has not been immune to the hardships faced by so many during the current global pandemic, our value as an outlet for outdoor recreation and education has only shown stronger. We recognize that more people than ever are seeking the respite that only nature can provide, and we are fortunate to have the outdoor space to accommodate current social distancing guidelines. So, with the proper precautions in place, ParkLands' inaugural mussel event took place on August 8th at Hayes Woods Preserve.

The event was designed as a hands-on learning experience for all ages. ParkLands board members and local biologists Eric Smith and Krista Kirkham led groups into the river to collect, sort, survey, and learn about these incredible freshwater mollusks. Just how hands-on was the experience? To find the mussels, participants dredged their fingers through the Mackinaw's riverbed, feeling for the shells often hiding just below the silt's surface.

Why mussels? While most are familiar with marine mollusks as popular table fare, even frequent users of the river paddle over freshwater mussels by the hundreds without ever giving them a thought. Mussels, ranging in size from a half dollar to a dessert plate, spend most of their life buried in the first few inches of substrate acting as living filters as they siphon water for nutrients. This filtration makes them simultaneously a reason for clean water and highly susceptible to contaminants.

Mussel numbers throughout North America's rivers have declined significantly over the last two hundred years for several reasons including water pollution, overharvesting (often for button manufacturing), and declining host fish populations. Several species are currently listed as threatened or endangered. In fact, one should not even handle live mussels without the proper licensing and training, such as that of our biologists. Given these trends, the diversity of species still in the Mackinaw is a major reason for the river's recognition as one of Illinois' most high-quality streams.

Conditions during the event proved perfect with low water levels, mild temperatures, cloud cover, and enough breeze to ward off both perspiration and bugs. Picture the scene; small groups of families and individuals peppered across the river, arched over at the waist, noses inches from the water, arms plunged into the gentle current, hollering with pride after each catch. Is there a more intimate way to experience the river? Both groups were wonderfully diverse in age, with about half of the participants being school-aged. Curiosity and eagerness were palpable and universal, though the children receive special credit for plunging through several spots of "river muck" without hesitation. In all, 45 live mussels were observed accounting for 10 different species.

While mussels were the highlight of the morning, the experience went far beyond bagging a couple of pigtoes. The 1-mile round-trip hike to the river allowed volunteers show off Hayes Woods, still one of our most recent acquisitions (2017) and a true preservation success story. Participants learned about mussels' unusual host fishes such as drum, darters, and mudpuppies. They learned that the same natural habitat enjoyed by mussels is sought by the rookery of great blue herons that returns to this preserve each year. And, perhaps most importantly, they learned about ParkLands' efforts to preserve this delicate, interconnected river ecosystem.

Several memorable moments occurred throughout the day, but perhaps none more than visits from the river's most well-known raptors. The murmur of trickling water was twice broken with shouts of "Eagle!" from ParkLands board member and Biology professor Dr. Given Harper. Like a stadium flyover, two separate bald eagles - one juvenile and one fully mature - gracefully soared down the center of the river less than 50 feet above the heads of musselers, adding to the magic of the scene. It was only after they disappeared around the next bend that we realized no one bothered to take a picture, all seemingly content with being immersed in nature's glory for the moment.

In reflection, Dr. Harper summarized the event perfectly, "The weather was perfect and it was great fun, and it made me very proud of ParkLands!".

The Ultimate Volunteers

By Jason Shoemaker, ParkLands Land Steward

Since I started in 2007 with the ParkLands Foundation I have gotten to know the properties very well. I realized early on that I was not able to keep an eye on and restore the over 3,600 acres by myself. We have an amazing group of volunteers that help out, whether they are on the Board of Directors, sub-committees, restoration crew, or assisting with outreach events. Over the years I have gotten to know many of our volunteers very well, as well as meet many people who have helped when they could through school groups, scouts, etc.

Five or six years ago we transitioned into having Volunteer Stewards who help at many of our Preserves. This is in addition to having scheduled work days with our regular volunteers. The stewards are not "regular", in fact they are "exceptional" as many times they look after entire preserves and work throughout the year in extreme heat and cold conditions. Their work consists of checking on our property lines, walking the trails, picking up trash, planting trees, and removing invasive species.

A few years back I had gotten to know Andy Smoot who had recently retired and was looking to get to know many of our Preserves. He started out by just walking the trails and getting familiar with our property lines. At some point he mentioned that we was willing to help out, but would need some help learning the plants. He has helped remove tree protectors that were no longer serving a purpose at the Lexington Preserve, Mohr Preserve, Sweeney Preserve, and Kenyon-Baller Woods Preserve. He has easily removed thousands of these plastic tubes, which ended up being at least 20 to 30 truck bed loads to be recycled. He also has been working on removing invasive teasel in the floodplain.



Andy Smoot removes old fence posts and barbed wire from Kenyon-Baller Woods Preserve, allowing safe travels for humans and wildlife, alike.

He currently is removing several barbed wire fences at our Kenyon Preserve which is "Andy's Preserve", where he is the Steward. Again, I cannot emphasize how hard working our Stewards are; I just saw him today and he showed me his poison ivy scars from removing fencing!

Our Stewards also hold another role being our advocates for the importance of preserving land along the Mackinaw River in McLean and Woodford counties. Andy has taken many non-members to our preserves, and many of his friends have become supporters of the ParkLands Foundation after visiting. He also recently recruited another friend to be a Steward at our newly acquired Baller Preserve. This property is located just north of the Kenyon Preserve, and will now be called the Kenyon-Baller Woods Preserve. We have plans to restore this preserve as well as registering the site as a Land and Water Reserve with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission. In this way, we will be able to protect the Preserve in perpetuity.

I am telling you about Andy's ParkLands story to show how one person can make a huge impact for our environment and community. Over the years I have come across many dedicated volunteers, who have collectively made ParkLands Foundation who we are. Thank you to all of our volunteers who have their own individual ParkLands stories!

Volunteer Land Steward Team

Maintenance and rehabilitation of our preserves would simply not be possible without our dedicated team of volunteer stewards. Want to contribute to the cause? We are looking for stewards at: www.parklandsfoundation.org and skw@parklandsfoundation.org. Contact craig@parklandsfoundation.org for more information.

Steward	Preserve
Amy Funk	Chinquapin Bluffs
Frank Sanders	
Suzanne Rogers	
Meredith & Juergen Schroeer	Merwin
Jason Chambers	
Amy Woodrum	Mohr
Andy Smoot	Kenyon-Baller Woods
Chuck Croxton	
Douglas Kaufman-Dickson	Letcher Basin
Dianne Feasley	
Jack Pfaffmann	
Sherrie Snyder	Ridgetop Hill Prairie
Wayne Gustafson	Sam Leman Canoe Launch
Roger Anderson	Weston Cemetery
Mary Jo Adams	Wyatt's Ford



2020 Intern Recap

By Gregory Cluskey, Intern

The 2020 Summer interns for the ParkLands Foundation were Mason Diederich and myself, Gregory Cluskey. Mason and I are both seniors at Eureka College majoring in Environmental Studies and minoring in Biology. Mason is part of the football team as well as the baseball team and hopes to work in conservation following graduation. I, Gregory, am part of baseball and interested in going into forestry. Now, what does a typical day on the job with Mason and me look like?

A large part of our internship has been trying to eliminate invasive species from native prairies. The two main species that we attack daily are honeysuckle and autumn olive. We learned from Jason, ParkLands' Land Steward, that honeysuckle was originally planted by Illinois conservationists in the past to provide nutrition to birds, and that autumn olive was commonly planted as a windbreak for houses. Now both are taking over forests and prairies, and it has been our job to remove as many of them as possible. So, Mason and I fill up the fifty gallon herbicide sprayer on the back of the gator and get out there to spray.

If we aren't riding around in the gator spraying invasives, in the woods cutting invasives, or dealing with invasives in any kind of way, it is likely we are maintaining trail conditions. Ever since the first day on the job when we followed Jason who was mowing the trails to the days after the big storm that knocked down 15 trees in the forest, Mason and I have been clearing the trails of fallen trees, branches, hanging branches, and more. It is important that the trails are safe and remain safe for the many hikers we encounter enjoying ParkLands' beautiful hiking trails.

On July 18th, ParkLands was able to organize a volunteer event to help at the Sweeney Woods Preserve. Here, volunteers assisted Mason and me with the removal of silver maples and the trimming of trees in a field along the Mackinaw River. This part of the preserve has been overgrown with rapidly growing

silver maple trees, and it has been a project this summer to try to thin this area out in order to restore it to a more balanced and natural state.

Volunteers worked from 8 a.m. until 11 p.m. Some took loppers while others took herbicide sprayers, and they ventured into the field to lop trees and spray the stumps in order to ensure the trees did not grow back. At 11, we finished the day by taking the volunteers that were not too tired of the heat already on a little hike down by the Mackinaw River. It did not take long, though, for the volunteers to appreciate the beauty of the river and decide to return back and get into our air conditioned cars!

It was a successful day, and we were able to make progress on an area that has been a main focus for us this summer. Mason and I have enjoyed all of the opportunities ParkLands has offered and thanks them for a fantastic summer.

What did you enjoy most about your internship?

"I have enjoyed working in the woods above all else. I have seen countless deer, turkeys, hawks, owls, and snakes just to name a few of the species we have encountered. I hope to work in the woods after graduation, so it is nice to get a taste early on."

What surprised you?

"How much land ParkLands actually has. It amazes me how many beautiful places there are right next to where I live that I was previously unaware of."

What did you learn about conservation biology?

"Identification of plants. I will need to know my tree species for my future career, so having Jason help point species out and the opportunity for me to interact with these species every day allowed me to learn a lot."

2020 Annual Meeting

Dear ParkLands Foundation Members,
We would like to invite you and your friends to join us at the ParkLands Foundation Annual Meeting Sunday, September 13, 2020 at north Chinquapin Bluffs Preserve (formerly known as Hazle Preserve). Signup online at parklandsfoundation.org/events or by mail using the slip below.

We will begin the morning with an optional guided hike to the north bluffs of the river where you can learn about this section's unique flora, fauna, topography, and history.

Agenda:

- 10:30am Optional Guide Hike to north bluff of Mackinaw River.
- 12:00pm Lunch (boxed or bring your own)
- 12:30pm Formal Membership Meeting, Year in Review, and Volunteer Recognition

Directions: From Fairlakes Golf Course in Secor, IL go west on 600N for 1.0 mile. Turn left (south) onto 1200E. Continue on 1200E for 0.7 miles as it turns to gravel, curves past a private residential shed, and ends at the gate to north Chinquapin Bluffs.

2020 PARKLANDS ANNUAL MEETING SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13th at North Chinquapin Bluffs (Hazle Preserve) LUNCH ORDER DEADLINE: Friday, September 4th 2020

A to Z catering will be supplying our boxed lunches this year
COST = \$11 per box (please choose a sandwich, wrap, or salad).
Water will be provided.

BOXED LUNCH INCLUDES:

SANDWICH OR WRAP, CHIPS, APPLE, COOKIE OR BROWNIE

gluten free wrap or bun available

(CHEF'S CHOICE)

Ham & Swiss Sandwich

on rye with house mayo, lettuce, tomato

Turkey & Cheddar Sandwich

on wheat with house mayo, lettuce, tomato

Beef & Colby Jack Sandwich

on sourdough with horseradish mayo, lettuce, tomato

Comed Beef & Swiss Sandwich

on rye with house mayo, lettuce, tomato

Turkey Club Wrap

turkey, bacon, house mayo, lettuce, tomato, colby jack cheese

Sicilian Wrap

ham, salami, pepperoni, lettuce, pepperoncini, mozzarella, house mayo

Grilled Veggie Wrap

grilled veggies (bell pepper, onion, zucchini, mushroom, seasonal vegetables), spinach, colby jack cheese, house mayo

Chicken Caesar Wrap

grilled chicken, lettuce, red onion, tomato, caesar dressing

Chicken Bacon Ranch Wrap

grilled chicken, bacon, ranch, lettuce, tomato

SALAD LUNCH INCLUDES:

SALAD, APPLE, COOKIE OR BROWNIE

(CHEF'S CHOICE)

House Salad

lettuce, carrots, tomato, cucumbers; your choice grilled chicken or grilled vegetables

Caesar Salad

lettuce, grilled chicken, parmesan, caesar dressing, crouton, tomato

Chef Salad

turkey, ham, boiled egg, lettuce, tomato, red onion, colby jack cheese

Choose your dressing:

French, Ranch, Italian, Balsamic

dressing served on the side



To register by mail, please send this slip and a check to: **ParkLands Foundation, P.O. Box 12, Normal, IL 61761**

Attendee #1

Name: _____

Sandwich: _____

or

Salad: _____

Attendee #2

Name: _____

Sandwich: _____

or

Salad: _____

Attendee #3

Name: _____

Sandwich: _____

or

Salad: _____

Attendee #4

Name: _____

Sandwich: _____

or

Salad: _____



2020 - 21 Slate of Nominations for Directors and Officers

In conformance with Article V, Section 11 and Article VII, Section 2 of the Bylaws, the following slate of nominations for Directors and Officers is hereby presented:

To fill six vacated seats as Director, the following individuals are hereby presented for nomination for a three-year term (20-23):

Morgan Armbrust
Deanna Frautschi
Johanna “Corrie” Scott
Mark Kotte
Jim Franks
Ginny Eves

The following current Directors are hereby presented for nomination to continue for three-year terms (2020-23):

Dan Deneen
Mark Larsen

These nominations will be announced in the Foundation’s next edition of the membership newsletter (August-September) for election by the membership present at the annual membership meeting to be held Sunday, September 13, 2020.

The following slate of nominations for Officers is hereby presented for one-year terms (2020-21):

Eric Smith	President
Francis Sanders	Vice President
Michael McKinley	Treasurer
Cristina Almeida	Secretary

These nominations will also be announced in the Foundation’s next newsletter for election by the Board of Directors at its annual meeting held in conjunction with the annual membership meeting on Sunday, September 13, 2020.

The following Directors have agreed to serve as primary standing committee chairpersons for the next term year (2020-21):

Eric Smith	Administrative/Executive
Michael McKinley	Finance
Douglas Kaufman-Dickson	Stewardship
Jessica Chambers	Outreach
Dan Deneen	Real Property



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Officers, Board of Directors and Staff

Jessica Chambers
President

Eric Smith
Vice President

Krista Kirkham
Secretary

Nancy Armstrong
Treasurer

Directors

Cristina Almeida
Finn Amble
Angelo Capparella
Dan Deneen
Bill Davison
Katy Everett
Matt Fraker
Given Harper
Douglas Kaufman-Dickson
Mark Larsen
Maria Lemke
Michael McKinley
Francis Sanders
Paul Van Ness

Honorary Directors

Roger Anderson
Guy Fraker

Staff

Jason Shoemaker
Land Steward
Erin Herbez
Administrative Director
Craig Lutes
Outreach/ Volunteer Coordinator