

ANNUAL REPORT 2019–2020

Protecting our land,
water, and wildlife
along the Mackinaw
River in McLean and
Woodford counties.



Letter from ParkLands Board President

A lot can happen in one year, and for ParkLands, it was a busy one. There are so many things that I learned this past year.

1. ParkLands has an exceptional board. The board consists of 18 individuals who have diverse backgrounds. Their experience comes in handy when dealing with all sorts of ParkLands issues. The board also generously donated their time this past year to complete a Strategic Plan, to review the Consultant's Report, to assist in many outreach events, and to a full day planning retreat this past February. The board donated 1600 hours of their time this past year to ParkLands!

2. ParkLands' staff ROCKS. Jason Shoemaker, ParkLands Land Steward, has been with ParkLands for 13 years. Jason is a pleasant, gentle, and hard-working individual who understands ParkLands preserves, wildlife, and its neighbors. Erin Herbez is ParkLands Administrative Director. Erin has been with ParkLands for 4 years now and is a Jill-of-all-trades. Erin handles all the things I consider not fun (office work) with competence and a can-do attitude. In early March, we hired Craig Lutes, as our part-time Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator. I am just getting to know Craig, but from what I can tell he seems like a hard-worker and exhibits the same passion for ParkLands as Jason and Erin.

3. ParkLands Volunteers are dedicated and amazing people. I wish I had the time to sit down and have tea with every single one of the 25 volunteers and listen to their stories. I would want to know so many things about why they are drawn to ParkLands. Their ideas, hard-work, energy, and dedication help to make ParkLands a more vibrant place. There is no doubt that our volunteers make ParkLands look good.

4. ParkLands Preserves are amazing. I had been to Merwin, Hayes, Letcher, and Ridgetop but this past year I had the chance to visit three more incredible preserves.

I finally visited Weston Cemetery in the fall. I saw the difference in the soil depth between the preserve and the farmland that surrounds it. I saw a diverse group of beautiful prairie forbs, tripped over the tufts of prairie grasses and headstones in the preserve, and was saddened to think that as far as my eyes could see was once original prairie.

I visited north Chinguapin with Frank and Alice Sanders – Chinguapin's Volunteer Stewards. Chinguapin is an incredible preserve with 12 different natural communities.

And my family and I participated in the winter hike at Sweeney in February where we learned about beaver trails, the impacts of flooding, and saw the most magnificent oak on the hill.

There are more things I want to learn.

There are so many plants and animals I know very little about and I really want to learn more about the members that support ParkLands. This year has brought uncertainty, but from everything I have learned, I am so glad to be a part of this wonderful organization and confident that ParkLands will continue to protect life along the Mackinaw River.

Jessica Chambers

ParkLands Board President

Message from ParkLands Administrative Director

When I look at this report and think about this past year I'm amazed at what **WE** have all done! If you are reading this report, it's likely that you have helped ParkLands this year. Whether you became a member, dedicated your time as a board member, volunteered, came to one of our events or took a hike at one of our properties. Maybe you did all of the above! At ParkLands our mission is: to preserve, protect & ecologically restore historic natural lands in the middle & upper Mackinaw Valley watershed. We do this because we believe the land should exist in a natural state and we work tirelessly to attain this mission.

As we hope this report shows, we cannot do this work without **YOU!** Our board members, volunteers, contributing members, and event participants keep our organization strong. As I look forward to next year I want to share three personal goals I have for ParkLands.

Name recognition: I would like people in our community to know who we are and what we do! I'm hoping as I continue to talk to people about ParkLands I will meet more people who understand that we provide access to thousands of acres of natural lands within 30 miles of our community.

Membership: ParkLands has a strong and loyal membership base. As our community grows our membership base needs to grow! Do you know someone that would enjoy taking a hike at one of our preserves? Once it is safe to do so...

take them for a hike! Show them your favorite tree/ flower/ rock/ mushroom. Help them to understand the peace that nature can provide and encourage them to become a member.

Communicating more with our members: We want to be here for you! One of our goals for this next year is to talk more with our members. Whether it's virtually or in person we want to know what you think. Our membership committee is creating a survey that we will send to our members. It will help us immensely for our members to let us know how we are doing.

Thank you for reading about this past year in ParkLands! May we all work together in this next year to make ParkLands even better! Wishing you all the best and I look forward to working with all of you in the next year.

Erin Herbez

ParkLands Administrative Director

Letter from 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 **3,200 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 had 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 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. 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!

Jason Shoemaker

ParkLands Land Steward

Calendar of Events

PARKLANDS FOUNDATIONS EVENTS 2019

JANUARY

Sunday,
January 27
3 pm – 6 pm
Social Event at
Keg Grove

MARCH

Saturday,
March 2
9 – 4pm
Home Lawn and
Garden Day

JUNE

Saturday,
June 1
10 – 3:00 pm
National Trails Day
Sunday,
June 9
12 – 2:00 pm
Mudpuppy Event at
Letcher Basin
Saturday,
June 29
7 – 12 pm
Ride with Lincoln 3rd
Annual
Parklands' Foundation
Ride

OCTOBER

Sunday,
October 6
10:00
Warbler Ridge
Conservation Area
Saturday,
October 12
6:30 pm - Night
Hike at Merwin
start at North Gate

FEBRUARY

Saturday,
February 16
9 – 1:30 pm
Board Retreat for
Board Members
Only
Sunday,
February 24
9 am
Winter Hike at
North Chinquapin
Preserve

MAY

Mother's Day
Sunday,
May 12
1 – 3:00 pm
Wildflower Walk

SEPTEMBER

Sunday,
September 8
11 – 2:00 pm
Annual Members
Meeting at Hayes Tract

Parklands Foundation
PO Box 12
Normal, IL 61761-0012



Email: parklands@icloud.com
Phone: 309.454.3169 ext. 16
Web: parklandsfoundation.org

Parklands
FOUNDATION



CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2020

JAN

Sunday, January 26, 3–6pm
Cheers to 2020
Stave, Normal

FEB

Sunday, February 16, 9 am
Winter Hike
Sweeney Woods Nature
Preserve

MAR

Saturday, March 7, 9–4:00pm
Home Lawn and Garden Day
Central Catholic, Bloomington

MAY

Sunday, May 3, 1–3:00 pm
Wildflower Walk
Merwin Nature Preserve

JUN

Friday, June 5, 7–9:00 pm
Night Event
Letcher Basin Preserve
MEMBERS ONLY

Saturday, June 6, 10–3:00 pm
National Trails Day
Sugar Grove Nature Center
Sunday, June 28, 9–11 am
Prairie Hike
Ridgetop Nature Preserve

JUL

Saturday, July 11
4th Annual Parklands Bike
Ride
Lexington, IL

AUG

Saturday, August 8, 2–4 pm
Mussels & the Mackinaw
Hayes Woods Preserve

SEP

Sunday, Sep. 13, 11–2:00 pm
Annual Members Meeting
Hazle Nature Preserve
MEMBERS ONLY

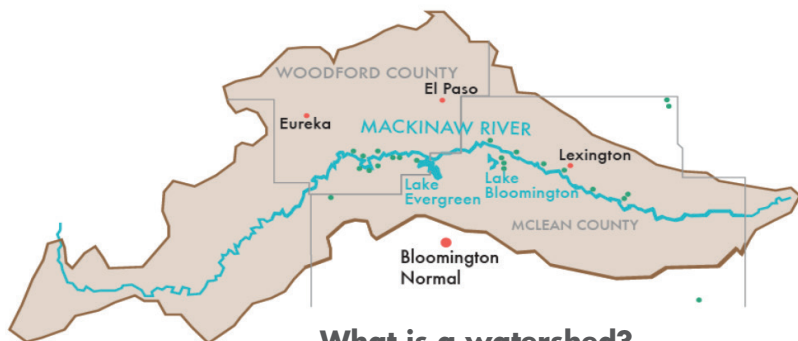
Saturday, Sep. 26, 9–3 pm
Mackinaw River Watershed
Geomorphology Trip

OCT

Friday, Oct. 30
Parklands Foundation
Presents: Curt Meine,
Aldo Leopold Scholar and
Celebrates: Directors Emeritus
Dale Birkenholz, Guy Fraker,
and Roger Anderson

Due to Covid-19 pandemic some events of 2020 may change or will be canceled.

Mackinaw River Watershed



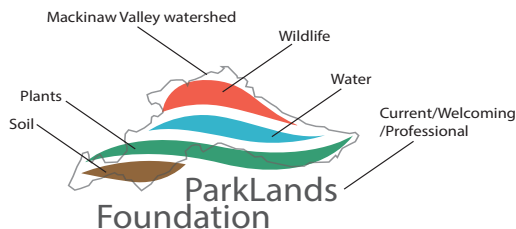
What is a watershed?

A watershed: an area or ridge of land that separates waters flowing to different rivers, basins, or seas.

ParkLands Logo

Did you know?

The Parklands Foundation Logo is the shape of the Mackinaw Watershed! All the rain that falls into this area flows into the Mackinaw River.



Greenbriar



80% Black



Vermillion
Orange



River Blue



Golden Brown

PROTECTING & PRESERVING 3600 acres of habitat along the **MACKINAW RIVER**

MCLEAN COUNTIES **1,518.56** ACRES

Breen 1-Champion Federal
37.60 acres

Breen 2 - 21.76 acres

Frey-Henline 80.91 acres

Hubert 4.80 acres

Lexington Preserve 173.32 acres

Merwin Nature Preserve and Land
and Water Preserve 712.84 acres

Mohr Preserve 277.70 acres

Moon Preserve 42.45 acres

Newlin Preserve 20.20 acres

NIG Preserve 22.30 acres

Shelley Preserve 30.51 acres

Sweeney Woods Preserve 92.63 acres

Weston Cemetery Prairie Nature
Preserve 1.54 acres



NO ACTIVE MANAGEMENT



LIMITED ACTIVE MANAGEMENT



ACTIVE MANAGEMENT

441.8 Acres Transferred

ParkLands Foundation preserved and transferred the Lilly Tracts (430 acres) and Stubblefield Woodlots (11.8 acres) to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and Sugar Grove Foundation respectfully.

	NO ACTIVE MANAGEMENT
	LIMITED ACTIVE MANAGEMENT
	ACTIVE MANAGEMENT

WOODFORD COUNTY

1,359.61 ACRES

Hazle 40 acres

Chinquapin Bluffs Land and Water Reserve 728.78 acres

Woodrum 54.29 acres

Dungey 6.09 acres

Letcher Basin Land and Water Reserve 153.91 acres

Ridgetop Nature Preserve 17.46 acres

McLure Preserve 50 acres

Wyatts Ford 61.88 acres

Kenyon Preserve 141.71 acres

Hayes Woods Preserve 69.49 acres

Baller Woods 36 acres

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

403.96 ACRES

Betts Easement 86.8 acres

Sears-Butler Easement 120.52 acres

Fraker-Throton Easement—Letcher Basin 51.73 acres

Fraker-Throton Easement—Woodrum 5.71 acres

Franklin Farms Easement 139.2 acres

Parklands Newest Addition

Baller Woods Preserve

This past fall Parklands acquired 36 acres of Panther Creek forest near its confluence with the Mackinaw River in southeastern Woodford County. The preserve is named after Dr. Robert Baller who maintained the property in excellent ecological condition. Baller woods is close to three other Parklands Foundation nature preserves and abuts and extends northward to our 142-acre Kenyon Preserve, thereby increasing overall connectivity and area of natural protected land.

Baller Woods furthers Parklands' Mackinaw Bluffs Corridor Project goals of increasing protected natural areas in both Woodford and McLean Counties to enhance ecological health, provide habitat for native plants & animals, and protect water quality in the Mackinaw River watershed. The preserve will include extensions of the Kenyon Preserve trails system that are open to the public for passive nature recreation such as hiking, nature viewing, and nature photography.

This purchase occurred due to funding from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation, along with funds generated from Parklands Foundation's members and supporters.



Parklands Foundation **Board of Directors**



Jessica Chambers
**President &
Outreach Chair**



Eric Smith
Vice President



Krista Kirkham
Secretary



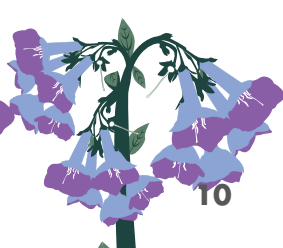
Nancy Armstrong
**Treasurer & Finance
Committee Chair**



Dan Deneen
**Immediate Past
President**



VIRGINIA BLUEBELL





Kathryn Everett
Director



Douglas Kaufman
Dickson **Stewardship
Committee Chair**



Maria Lemke
Director



Angelo Capparella
Director



Michael McKinley
Director



Finn Amble
Director



Cristina Almeida
Director



Jason Shoemaker
Land Steward



Erin Herbez
**Administrative
Director**

Not Pictured
Matt Fraker
**Real Property
Committee Chair**
Bill Davison
Director
Mark Larsen
Director

Paul Van Ness
Director
Given Harper
Director
Roger Anderson
**Honorary
Director**

Guy Fraker
Honorary Director
Craig Lutes
**Outreach &
Volunteer
Coordinator**

500 Volunteer Hours

PARKLANDS STEWARDSHIP VOLUNTEERS

Letcher Basin Land & Water Reserve

Douglas Kaufman-
Dickson*

Jack Pfaffmann

Dianee Feasley

Ridgetop Hill Prairie Nature Preserve

Sherrie & Bill Snyder

Jim Franks

Chinquapin Bluffs Land & Water Reserve

Frank & Alice
Sanders

Suzie Rogers

Amy Funk

Kenyon-Baller Woods Preserve

Andy Smoot

Chuck Croxton

Kiosk & Sign Management

Peg Schickedanz

Bunney Tract

Amy Woodrum

Wyatts Ford

Mary Jo Adams

Weston

Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve

Roger Anderson

Merwin West Gate

Marilyn Gaddy

Merwin Garlic Mustard Removal

Meredith & Juergen
Schroeer

* = BOARD MEMBERS



American Bull Frog

250 Volunteer Hours
PARKLANDS OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS

Mary Jo Adams

Jan Turner

Cristina Almeida*

Kristin Duffield

Austin Calhoun

Paul Van Ness*

George Farnsworth

Ron Dierkes

**1720
Board
Volunteer
Hours**



**2420
TOTAL
Volunteer
Hours**

* = BOARD MEMBERS

CONSERVATION RESEARCH AT PARKLANDS PRESERVES

Chinquapin Bluffs

Angelo Capparella

Various fish amphibians and reptiles



Merwin, Franklin Easement; Sears-Butler
Easement; Kenyon-Baller Woods Preserve;
Hayes Woods

Steven Juliano

Various mosquitoes

Sears-Butler Conservation Easement

Ben Sadd

Bumble bees

Weston Cemetery Prairie Nature Preserve

Diane Byers

Bees



Ridgetop; Weston, Merwin

Catherine Dana and Jonathan Tetlie

Grasshoppers, crickets and bumblebees



HenLine Creek

Rachel Vinse

Mussels

Merwin Preserve

Charlie Thompson

Wrens



Merwin Preserve

Roger Anderson

Garlic Mustard



MUDPUPPY

There are many items that ParkLands would love to have to make stewardship easier at our preserves. Here is our wish list!

ParkLands Foundation Wish List

Stihl handheld sprayers

\$50 per unit

Stihl backpack sprayers

\$120 per unit

Stihl Brush cutters

Two \$1,000 per unit

Gravel for parking lots, lanes

\$600 to \$2,500 per year

Restoration Project at the preserves

\$2,500 to \$5,000

Fund an internship

\$5,000 per intern

Mowing trails

\$5,000 to \$7,000 per year

Prescribed fire

\$5,000 to \$10,000

Battwing mower 15ft

\$20,000 to \$25,000

Tractor

\$60,000 to \$70,000

2019 Achievements

Summer 2019



Illinois Clean Energy
community foundation

\$32,000 from Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation for Capacity Building with a **\$12,000 community match**

3rd Annual Bike Ride

Completed a **Campaign Internal Readiness Assessment** with Ter Molen Watkins & Brandt LLC



Summer: Mudpuppy Event



Summer: 3rd Annual Bike Ride



Fall: Land Trust Professional Development Exchange with Grand Prairie friends

2019 Achievements

Fall 2019



Illinois Clean Energy
community foundation

Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Land Acquisition Grant **\$115,000**. This allowed us to acquire **Baller Woods, 36-acres along Panther Creek**. This addition extends northward from our 142-acre Kenyon Preserve, thereby increasing overall connectivity and area of natural protected land

Land Trust Professional Development Exchange with Grand Prairie Friends at Warbler Ridge Conservation Area, Charleston, Illinois

52nd Annual Member Meeting – South Chinquapin Preserve

FIRST Night event at Merwin Preserve

Extended ParkLands outreach to our community by participating in **3 local events and giving 5 presentations on ParkLands**

6 events brought over **350 people** to our preserves with a total **280 supporters & members!**

2020 New Initiatives

Spring 2020

ParkLands hired a part-time outreach coordinator, **Craig Lutes**, who will help with outreach events and run the volunteer program.

A **revamped volunteer program** will bring more organization, collaboration, and recognition to our volunteers.



Craig Lutes
Outreach & Volunteer
Coordinator

Summer 2020

Summer interns hired in preparation of our stewardship needs.

Research continues at our preserves where our scientific partners are studying the frogs, birds, and bees of our natural communities.

A **brand-new website** that will make it easier to find preserves, learn about ParkLands' history, and more. We went live on Aug 1st 2020.

Expanding parking at the Kenyon-Baller Woods Preserve to allow a place for visitors to park.

Increase signage at our preserves to provide information to visitors.



2020 New Initiatives

Summer 2020 cont.

Create and share trail maps for all of our publicly accessible preserves .

Continue to **collaborate with the Prairie State Conservation Coalition** in order to learn more from other Illinois Land Trusts.

Continue to hold public events as allowed.

Focus on creating **self-guided tours** for our preserves



ParkLands Interns

Refugio Moreno—Illinois Wesleyan University

Amanda Best—Illinois Wesleyan University—Summer Intern

Morgan Armbrust—Eureka College—Summer Intern

DJ Rizzi—Illinois State University—Graphic Design Intern

Brianna Blair—Illinois State University—Graphic Design Intern

Kendra Goeken—Illinois State University—Graphic Design Intern

Liam Byrne—Illinois State University—Graphic Design Intern

Kelly Zhang—Illinois State University—Graphic Design Intern

Fiscal Year 2019-20 Financial Highlights

The ParkLands Foundation's fiscal year runs from March 1st to the end of the following February. While this may seem a bit odd, it was set up this way to be aligned with the decision-making cycles of various grant-providing organizations. In a normal year, we would have our final financial statements available by mid-Summer. This year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the annual audit is taking a bit longer than usual. Thus, for this inaugural Annual Report, we are providing a few Financial Highlights with more general context and less detailed numbers. Once completed, the official financial statements will be available to any member who may want to see them through the Foundation's Administrative Director.

Consistent with past years, the Foundation's operations in 2019-20 were funded from a variety of sources to include:

- Membership dues, other gifts, memorials, and donations
- Grants from a variety of conservation-minded foundations and organizations, and in some cases grant-matching contributions from our members and supporters
- Event sponsorships and participant fees from outreach and fund-raising events
- Federal and state "Conservation Reserve" funds from the CRP/CREP programs
- Farm income (rent from the limited ParkLands-owned acreage that is still actively farmed)
- Other minor sources such as ParkLands merchandise sales
- Investment income and disbursements from our endowments

In 2019-20, the first six categories of revenue from our members and other external sources funded approximately 45% of our operating expense, while the remaining 55% was funded by our investment income, prior year funding set aside for specific purposes, and distributions from the endowments.



Significant categories of operational expense for the Foundation include:

- Property restoration and maintenance
- Personnel costs (for our small but very dedicated paid staff)
- Office expenses and materials including rent for our modest office space
- Outreach and fundraising event costs (which are often but not always offset by event revenue).
- Property taxes and other fees and permits – yep! ... although we are working on reducing them.
- Various professional services costs (accounting, legal, etc.)
- Other operating expenses such as insurance of various types, printing, postage, etc.



While the accounting isn't quite finalized and all of these numbers are subject to revision, in the 2019-20 fiscal year, the Foundation spent slightly north of \$270,000 on Operations, with approximately two-thirds (65%) supporting stewardship, restoration and the direct cost of the preserves, 20% supporting administration and legal expense, the remaining 15% supporting outreach and a number of one-time capacity building initiatives. Additionally (and somewhat out-of-the-norm) the Board elected to self-fund roughly half of the acquisition of the ecologically important 36-acre Baller property along Panther Creek in Woodford County (discussed in-depth elsewhere in this report), while our long-time supporters at the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation funded the rest.

Despite the significant investments made and the initial negative impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the equity markets (and therefore on our investment portfolio), the Foundation's balance sheet finished FY 2019-20 with just under \$5.6 million in total assets, with only nominal liabilities, which is essentially the same as where we started the year 12 months earlier. However, it is also worth noting that approximately three-fourths of the Foundation's assets are tied-up in the essentially illiquid value of the land and conservation easements under our stewardship. With that in mind, the financial health of the organization continues to need careful and prudent management from our staff and the Board, as well as continued commitment and support from our wonderful members and other benefactors notwithstanding the nation's current environment of great economic uncertainty.

2019 Oct. Night Hike



2020 Social



BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are always needed!

ParkLands can always use volunteer help, whether by an individual, a couple or a whole group! Workdays on our preserves are scheduled throughout the year and are posted on our website and social media pages.

Our volunteers provide accounting, appraisal, legal work, contribute to the newsletter, lead nature walks, help with stewardship and workdays.

Interested in volunteering at ParkLands Foundation?
If you have any questions about volunteering please contact...

Craig Lutes at volunteer@parklandsfoundation.org

**Your contributions
are essential in
preserving life along
the Mackinaw River.**

ParkLands Foundation

PO Box 12

Normal, IL 61761-0012

Email: info@parklandsfoundation.org

Phone: 309.454.3169 ext. 16

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Designed by: Kendra Goeken