

## My Time as ParkLands Foundation President By Eric Smith

I will not bore you with all of my accomplishments. Actually, I did not have an agenda as President. As I stated when I accepted this position in September 2020, I only wanted the organization to continue moving forward and not disappoint the people who have been so instrumental in its success up to this point.

And we did those things. Post-Covid we got back outside, held fun events, wrote grants, solicited funds, purchased a big tractor to increase management efficiency, stopped critical pieces from being developed within the Mackinaw River Corridor by accepting conservation easements, controlled exotic species, conducted prescribed burns, started conservation easements and land swaps, and promoted our employees where possible. But I can honestly say it wasn't me as president that made those things happen. It's the board members, past board members, volunteers, Erin, Jason, Interns, Committee Chairmen, and their respective committees that make things happen. It's the countless two-hour meetings 2-3 times a month. It's lots of folks giving their time for something they believe in. As the President, I took all the moving parts and got them together every couple of months so could be all on the same page.

I thought my most important role as President was to just be present at events, to be the face of the organization. I didn't want people to associate ParkLands Foundation with me personally, but I wanted to put my best foot forward on behalf of ParkLands Foundation. I wanted to personally greet each person, thank them for coming, and let them know we appreciate them. I wanted participants to see that their support was worthwhile, or it was an organization that a non-member would want to join.

I have a lot of other reflections as President that are important to me. The following keep coming to my mind.



Eric, his niece, and brother in Maine, taking a much-needed vacation from ParkLands

- Several board members were sick with Covid and other illnesses. I hope they knew I was genuinely concerned for their health and well-being far more than I cared about them as a board member. Did they know I meant it when I told them if I can help then don't hesitate to contact me?

- I hope I brought the right amount of levity to serious topics when I felt it was necessary. Budgets, fundraising, employee satisfaction, trespass, and land acquisition are all important topics. I hope my attempt at humor was not too much of a disruption to the board.

- Did donors sense my gratitude on behalf of the organization when I said thank you in person or wrote them a personal note on a postcard or Christmas card. I have never been an eloquent speaker, but I hope they knew my emotions were honest. Doing those things were fulfilling to me. I hope that authenticity showed through.

- I hope I represented the organization well to outside entities, guest speakers, other land trusts, potential donors, and members.

- I hope the employees knew that I had their back if they needed me. I did not interact frequently with either Erin or Jason. They are both professionals and they don't need me to tell them how to best do their job. But I hope they knew they could come to me for help.

- Did my fellow board members find me approachable? Maybe they didn't want to approach me! 😊 Did I do enough to make the board members feel welcome, important, and their contributions significant? And if we disagreed on a matter, I tried my best to make sure they knew it was not personal.

Frank Sanders will be replacing me as President in September. He's an excellent choice to steer this ship the next two years. He's a stand-up guy. IF you haven't met him then introduce yourself to him.

I am humbled that the organization asked me to serve at its President. I certainly stepped outside my comfort zone and learned a great deal about myself and the organization. Thank you for this wonderful learning opportunity.

## Summer Internship Recap

By Lauren Ausmus

Working for ParkLands this summer was a valuable experience. I enjoy the outdoors, and working outside everyday was the best job I could choose for myself. Despite having to wake up at the crack of dawn, seeing the sunrise on morning commutes made getting up that much easier. The amount of deer I spotted this summer has to be some crazy high number. Without fail, I would see at least a couple of deer grazing each morning. While at Moon preserve, one doe and its two fawns would always be hiding in the woods. I saw them each morning while trimming trees. Their bedded spots can often be found in the tall prairies/grass.



Speaking of preserves and prairies, Letcher Basin has one of the most beautiful prairies. This preserve is probably my favorite. The overlook preserve has to be one of the best views. You can imagine how pretty the various flowers look with morning dew droplets on them. All in all, I enjoyed my experience working for ParkLands. Working alongside Jason and Macie made the few months go that much smoother and faster. The valuable knowledge gained from this internship has also helped further advance my career path of which I am grateful for.



Macie and Lauren hard at work

By Macie Hammons

I am a junior at the University of Evansville in southern Indiana. I am an Environmental Policy and Administration major with a minor in Legal Studies. This internship was a great experience, it helped me learn about topics related to my major through summer break. Over the past few months I worked with Lauren on various projects at many preserve sites. This included clearing trails, spraying herbicide on invasive plant species, creating new trails and even putting up new preserve signs. During the weekends, it was fun to be able to bring friends and family out to the trails and show them all the different things I've learned so far. I have learned to identify so many new species while also learning about proper trail and land management. I loved the hands-on experiences and I learned from the organization about good skills to have in this field.



It was really cool to get my herbicide applicator's license as part of the internship! I loved all of the preserves I got to work at but I think my favorites have to be Ridgetop and Lexington. The hillside prairies at Ridgetop were so cool to see and have so many pretty flowers blooming right now. The Lexington preserve was also one of my favorites because I didn't know it was there until I started working for ParkLands Foundation, it is a lot more property than some would think when you first see it. Even though Lauren and I had some early mornings, it was fun to see all of the animals waking up and walking around the preserves. I got to meet and work alongside some amazing people, from Land Steward Jason Shoemaker and Stewardship Chair Katy Everett to the volunteer stewards of each of the preserves, and the board members of the foundation. I am very excited to work for ParkLands Foundation this summer and I hope to be able to work with them more in the future!



## 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Bike Ride

After a sweltering week, the weather broke and gave us a mild morning for our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual ParkLands Bike Ride. We had 270 riders this year making it our biggest ride yet! We had three route options again this year, 20 miles, 50 miles and 100 km and no matter what distance they chose, most wound up finishing the morning with some great food and drink at Kemp's in Lexington.

This year with registrations and sponsors we raised over \$15,000 for ParkLands! These funds are crucial for our restoration efforts, and we have deep gratitude for our sponsors, supporters and our excellent volunteers that spend their time making this event a success. Thank you and we hope to see you next year!

Thank you to our Bike Ride sponsors:

**Oak:** Zimmerman and Armstrong

**Hickory:** Bloomington Cycle & Fitness, Commerce Bank and Commerce Trust Company, Dan G Deneen Law Office, Deer's Mill Farm, Prairie Oak Veterinary Center, and Vitesse Cycle Shop

**Birch:** The Factory, Gentle Family Dentistry, Heartland Bank and Trust, Keg Grove Brewing Company, and Kemp's Upper Tap.

## Dragonflies, Damselflies and Mussels Oh my!

Our third river event focused on Dragonflies and Damselflies with a side of mussels. 50 participants of all ages (from 5 years on up!) splashed, netted, and brailed for whatever they could find in the waters of the Mackinaw. Professor Bill Perry taught us about the invertebrates that we can find with dip nets in our river including damselflies, dragonflies, and crayfish. Eric Smith led the mussel tutorial and encouraged participants to scoot around in the gravel until they felt something smooth. Most of the time it was a rock but every once in awhile we found a mussel! Once again, we found that our waters are flowing clean and host a variety of organisms. In our short time in the river, we identified 11 mussel species from over 100 individuals and dozens of insect larva. Thank you to everyone that participated and to our volunteers that a spent a day teaching the public about the beauty of the Mackinaw and the life that it supports with its clean flowing waters.



## Upcoming Events

Sept

11

### Annual Meeting

Join us for our 56th annual Meeting of the Members at the Franklin Farm in Lexington. The day will start with a guided hike at 10:30am. A box lunch will be served at 12:00pm, followed by the meeting at 12:30. See details on page 4 of this newsletter, and to register visit: [parklandsfoundation.org/event/annual-meeting-of-the-members-2/](http://parklandsfoundation.org/event/annual-meeting-of-the-members-2/)

October

1

### Little Celebration on the Prairie

Come celebrate the conclusion of the Prairie Quest with an event at Letcher Basin. There will be interpretive hikes and lots of activities for the whole family. More details coming soon!

## Volunteer Workdays

Time and date may change. More workdays may be added. Visit [www.parklandsfoundation.org/events](http://www.parklandsfoundation.org/events) to sign up!

Date	Location
August 20	Chinquapin Bluffs
November 7	Cayuga Ridge

## Board Member Spotlight

Meet ParkLands board member, Bill Snyder.

### Profession

I graduated from ISU with a BS and MS in Economics and got my first "real" job as an Actuary at State Farm. After a fulfilling and challenging career, I retired from State Farm in 2011.

### Years with ParkLands

I have no idea when I joined ParkLands. My involvement has been growing incrementally since my wife Sherrie introduced me to ParkLands... in the 90's? Hard to say when I got started. I have these vague memories of collecting seeds along railroad tracks, choking on smoke from a prairie burn, learning what an "invasive" was, and meeting wonderful people whose dedication and passion kept pulling me further into the ParkLands fold.



Bill and Sherrie Snyder in Alaska

### Why Volunteer?

So many reasons. I love the physical effort and being outdoors, the opportunity to learn about our local environment, restoration techniques and practices, having a tangible, positive impact on our local environment, and best of all, the fellowship of like-minded, dedicated individuals.

### Favorite Spot

Too many to name. So many of the ParkLands properties have a unique beauty and quality that my "favorite" seems to be the one I'm at. I remember thinking central Illinois was a farmland desert until I learned about ParkLands and how special their preserves are: bluebells at Merwin, the bluff at Ridgetop, the prairie at Letcher Basin, the wonderful oaks at Chinquapin Bluffs, and the list goes on.

### Other info to share:

My favorite color is blue.



Do you have a passion for conservation?

Apply to join the board of directors! You'll be able to work with like-minded people with similar goals.



ParkLands Foundation is looking for

# BOARD MEMBERS

What does being a board member include?

- 5-10 hours of volunteer time a month
- Committees meet once a month and the board meets once every two months

For more information, contact Erin Herbez

[erin@parklandsfoundation.org](mailto:erin@parklandsfoundation.org)  
(309) 454-3169 x16

You do not need to be an expert in conservation! We are looking for people with skills such as: Graphic Design, Law, Community Networking, Finance, and Fundraising

ParkLands Foundation is a growing not-for-profit organization whose goal is to conserve and protect land along the Mackinaw River .

## 2022 Annual Meeting of the Members

Dear ParkLands Foundation Members,

We would like to invite you and your friends to join us at the ParkLands Foundation Annual Meeting Sunday, September 11, 2022 at the Franklin Cabin near Lexington, IL. Signup online at:

[www.parklandsfoundation.org/event/annual-meeting-of-the-members-2/](http://www.parklandsfoundation.org/event/annual-meeting-of-the-members-2/) or by mail using the slip below. Paper registrations can be sent to PO Box 12, Normal, IL 61761.

We will begin the morning with an optional guided hike to learn about the Lexington preserve/ Franklin Farm and its unique flora, fauna, topography, stewardship, and history.

### Agenda:

10:30am Optional Guide Hike

12:00pm Lunch (boxed or bring your own)

12:30pm Formal Membership Meeting, Year in Review, and Volunteer and Board Member Recognition

### Directions:

Head west on PJ Keller Rd from the I-55 Lexington Exit. Travel west for approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile and look for the event signs on your left.

\*\*\*\*\*

A to Z catering will be supplying our boxed lunches this year. Cost is \$12 per box (choose a sandwich, wrap, or salad). Water will be provided.

### LUNCH ORDER DEADLINE: Friday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>

#### Grab & Go Lunch Menu

\$10 per person

Boxed lunch includes Sandwich/Wrap, Chips, Apple, and chef's choice Cookie or Brownie

PLEASE CHOOSE ONE:

- Ham & Swiss Sandwich with house mayo, lettuce, tomato
- Sicilian Wrap ham, salami, pepperoni, lettuce, pepperoncini, mozzarella, house mayo
- Grilled Veggie Wrap grilled veggies (bell pepper, onion, zucchini, mushroom, seasonal vegetables), colby jack cheese, house mayo
- Chicken Bacon Ranch Wrap grilled chicken, bacon, ranch, lettuce, tomato

\*\*gluten free options available\*\*



Attendee #1

Attendee #2

Attendee #3

Attendee #4

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Sandwich: \_\_\_\_\_

Sandwich: \_\_\_\_\_

Sandwich: \_\_\_\_\_

Sandwich: \_\_\_\_\_



## 2022 Annual Meeting of the Members

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 three vacated seats as Director, the following individuals are hereby presented for nomination for a three-year term (22-25):

Robert Fitzgerald  
Craig Lutes  
Keith Pluymers

To fill one vacated seat with one year remaining the following individual is present for nomination for a one-year term (2022-2023):

George Farnsworth

The following current Directors are hereby presented for nomination to continue for three-year terms (2022-25):

Kathryn Everett  
Michael McKinley  
Francis Sanders

In compliance with Section 11 of the ParkLands bylaws, the following slate of nominations for Officers is hereby presented for one-year terms (2022-23) for election by the membership present at the annual membership meeting to be held Sunday, September 11, 2022:

Frank Sanders	President
Eric Smith	Vice President
Michael McKinley	Treasurer
Katy Everett	Secretary

These nominations are also being presented for election by the Board of Directors at its annual meeting held in conjunction with the annual membership meeting on Sunday, September 11, 2022.

The following Directors have agreed to serve as primary standing committee chairmen for the next term year (2022-23):

Frank Sanders	Administrative/Executive
Michael McKinley	Finance
Katy Everett	Stewardship
Craig Lutes	Outreach
Dan Deneen	Real Property



## Looking Back Down the Trail By Bill Kemp

Flood control plan for the Mackinaw, August 1945

The sheet metal silo shown here held a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers gauge to measure the depth of the Mackinaw River. This was the summer of 1945, with the gauge located at the Route 150 bridge east of Congerville. At the time, work was underway to study the feasibility of an expansive Illinois River flood control plan and tracking the ebb and flow of the Mackinaw River was part of that effort.

Federal officials envisioned the construction of a series of floodwater reservoirs on the Mackinaw and other tributaries of the Illinois River watershed. Floodgates—such as those planned just upstream from this bridge—were to be closed during heavy rains to prevent downstream flooding. At peak deluge, such a plan could've created a narrow, temporary "Lake Mackinaw River" stretching some 15-miles in length—almost to Lexington (though in years of average rainfall the reservoir would be a fraction of that size).

All told, the Army Corp of Engineers proposed no less than fifteen such flood control reservoirs in Central Illinois, including those on Kickapoo, Salt, and Sugar creeks. Such was the hubris of federal planners when it came to "managing" water resources and the natural world! Strong local opposition from farmers and county Farm Bureaus over potential relocations and loss of farmland spelled doom for the flood control plan.

Alas, this being the mid-1940s, few individuals or organizations spoke out against the project from an environmental perspective—and how such an inelegant, mechanistic approach to flood control might negatively impact water quality and the future health of the Mackinaw River's flora and fauna communities.

ParkLands member and "Looking Back Down the Trail" author Bill Kemp is the librarian for the not-for-profit McLean County Museum of History. The accompanying photograph is one of more than 120,000 Pantagraph negatives—dating from the mid-1930s to early 1950s—the Museum has archivally digitized and uploaded onto the Illinois Digital Archives site. To begin your search, go here: <https://mchistory.org/research/pantagraph-negative-collection>



## Signs Matter.....and....you can do anything you put your mind to.

By Peg Schickedanz

During my five years as a volunteer sign steward for Parklands, I have happily painted and repaired 30+ signs, placed information in kiosks, and checked on them almost monthly, always rewarding myself with a walk in the woods. During this time I have been driving by a little sign that needed more than most, the Merwin Prairie sign. Its shake roof was falling apart. This spring I decided it was time to replace the shakes on that roof. First I needed shakes. My sister, having replaced the old shake roof at the farm, told me to look in the old shed where there were shakes, unused by our Dad when he put the shake roof on the old farmhouse 50 years ago. Like most farmers he never threw anything away.



So I made a trip to the 100+ year old farm shed where I bravely ventured into a dark, scary, probably full of critters, old time shed on the five generation farm. First I had to tiptoe precariously through all the stuff stored in that shed, with no light source, a dirt floor, and inches of dust and dirt. Of course the shakes were in the far back corner. I carefully chose enough shakes (while watching for spiders, snakes, fuzzy things with teeth) and carried them out to my car in piles I could lift. I wrapped them in a tight tarp just in case there were any small arachnids riding along.

Now that I had the shakes, I had to figure out how to put a shake roof on. Even though this is a very small shake roof I still wanted it to be done the right way so of course I went to YouTube to learn how to do it. Then knowing there would be no power connection out at the site, I laid the whole thing out in my garage and did all of the power tool stuff ahead of time.

The last step was figuring out how to take all the shakes out to the site, laid out exactly how they were in my garage, and put them on the roof in order. I asked a very handy neighbor for his thoughts, and he said number all of the pieces, and here, use my battery powered stapler!!!

So I waited for the perfect day knowing this could take a while, putting the six rows of shakes in 6 - 5 gallon buckets, loading up my ladder, stapler, extra staples, Gatorade, sun hat, lunch, cell phone in case I fell down and couldn't get up (:), and went to do the deed!

This project took two weeks of planning and doing. I wasn't sure I could do it. But I was determined that this little Parklands sign had to look good. And every time I drive by it now, I am reminded that where there is a will, there is a way; and of my father who taught me I could do anything.





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## Officers, Board of Directors and Staff

	Directors	Honorary Directors
Eric Smith President	Finn Amble Jessica Chambers Dan Deneen Michael Doherty	Roger Anderson Guy Fraker
Vice President Frank Sanders	Jim Franks Deanna Frautschi	
Katy Everett Secretary	Shannon Fulton Douglas Kaufman-Dickson Mark Larsen	Staff Jason Shoemaker Land Steward
Michael McKinley Treasurer	Corrie Scott Bill Snyder Paul Van Ness	Erin Herbez Director of Development and Administration