

Newsletter

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A Promising Future

The coming years look to be quite promising. I just concluded meeting one-on-one with each of our 17 board members and, you can be proud of their enthusiasm and ideas for how to move ParkLands Foundation forward in the coming years. They have introduced many new and exciting ideas that give ParkLands the potential of improving our operations, expanding our membership, and increasing public awareness.

At the risk of wearing out our board, we have a number of events planned for the near future. In December, we will hold orientation with new board members, where we will cover ParkLands' history, mission statement, committee functions, organization chart, bylaws, Strategic Plan, and preserve descriptions and locations. As a new board member, it can be a difficult task to try and quickly get up to speed on what is being discussed in meetings. The orientation will, hopefully, give newer members a better concept of how ParkLands functions in meeting its goals.

In January, we plan to hold our annual stewards meeting, where stewards will share ideas from past experiences and discuss the future, including chainsaw training, herbicide handling, a newly developed stewardship apprentice program, and other topics that will help the stewards accomplish work on their preserves.



Frank Sanders and Suzie Rogers at chainsaw training.

Also in January, the board will hold a retreat to discuss future fund raising. This has been discussed in the past but, due to various factors, including our recent bout with Covid-19, no significant action was taken. In order for ParkLands to progress with new ideas and expand educational opportunities for the public, we must cover this important topic. However, unlike the past, it is imperative that we come out of the retreat with a commitment to action and accomplishing our goals.

We recently sent out a letter seeking gifts from our members. We thank you for your consideration of providing your financial support. Your gift will go a long way in accomplishing even more in the future. We will be able to conduct prescribed fires in select locations, manage the preserve trails, monitor and control invasives, and hold events that invite the public. As always, much of this is accomplished by our stewards and volunteers.

So, what are our goals for the coming year? They are: develop a capital plan, diversify the board, increase public awareness of our commitment to conservation, and prioritize our management of our current and future preserves. Accomplishment of these goals will not take place all in one year. It will take a strong committee by our board and our members as we move into the future.

In case you might be wondering, I will close by telling you something about me. I have been volunteering with ParkLands for about six years. I came to ParkLands through the University of Illinois Extension and becoming a Master Naturalist. I have an advantage over most, if not all previous, presidents: I'm retired. I don't have a day job. But this can be both an advantage and disadvantage to both staff and board members. I can help move ParkLands forward or I can be bothersome and get in the way. I will try my best to help.

We thank you all for believing in ParkLands Foundation.

Frank Sanders, ParkLands President



Working Together

We are extremely grateful to our members, stewards, volunteers, and donors for all they do and the ongoing support they give to ParkLands Foundation. This year ParkLands completed a record number of projects and offered volunteer opportunities across McLean and Woodford Counties. These included the removal of invasive brush throughout the year at various preserves, the construction of new parking lots at Champion Federal Reserve, North Chinquapin Preserve and Lexington Preserve, renovation and naming of the Hayden King Bridge at Merwin Preserve, and the purchase and placement of a new trailer at Lexington Preserve. We are extremely grateful to our members and volunteers for all they do and the ongoing support they give to ParkLands Foundation.



2022 Calendar of Events

2022

Jan

New Years Eve Hike

Our New Year's Eve hike rang in the year a day early on December 31st at Kenyon-Baller Preserve with a fantastic turnout!



Feb

New Tractor

ParkLands Foundation acquired a new tractor for property maintenance thanks to generous donors.



Mar

Merwin Garlic Mustard Removal

As the weather began to warm up, volunteers gathered at Merwin Preserve to jump start garlic mustard removal.



Start of Bluebell Season

April 16th kicked off the start of the bluebell season at Merwin Preserve.

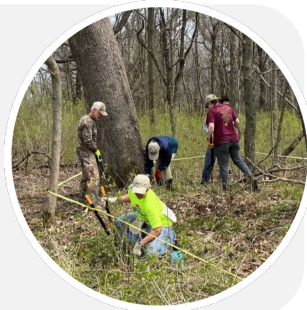
April

Aldo Leopold Speaker: Curt Meine

ParkLands Foundation members, volunteers, and staff were invited to attend Curt Meine's lecture at the ISU Bone Center.

Earth Day Volunteering

Volunteers assembled in droves at the Mohr Preserve Bunney Tract to cut invasive honeysuckle for Earth Day 2022.



May

Wildflower Walk

Our annual Wildflower Walk was on April 23rd at Merwin Preserve, with a plethora of attendees!



GPF Field Trip to ParkLands Foundation

Grand Prairie Friends (GPF) met with ParkLands members on June 12th to share ideas.



June

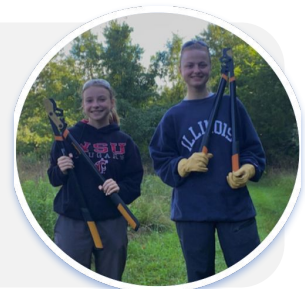
Merwin Bluebells

After weeks of enjoying the bluebells in full bloom, on Sunday, May 1st, crowds of nature lovers enjoyed the final blossoms of the bluebells for the year.



College Interns

Lauren Ausmus and Macie Hammons spent the summer spraying invasives, cutting brush, and clearing trails.



Dragonflies and Damselflies

In mid-August, our third annual river event took place with the theme of Dragonflies and Damselflies at Chinquapin Preserve.



July

5th Annual Bike Ride

Nearly 300 riders flocked to Lexington for a two-wheeled tour of the Mackinaw River Valley's rolling hills at our Annual Bike Ride 2022.



Aug

Chinquapin Bluffs Work Day

Volunteers gathered at Chinquapin Bluffs on August 20th to tackle invasive teasel and honeysuckle removal.

ISU Festival Days

ParkLands Foundation set up a booth at the ISU Festival Days Community Service Fair on September 1st to scout for more student volunteers.

Sept

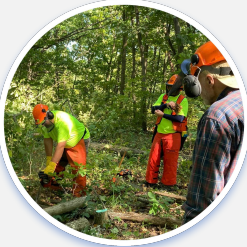
56th Annual Meeting

ParkLands Foundation members gathered at Franklin Family Farm in Lexington for the 56th Annual Member Meeting on September 11th.



SAWW Woodworking Class

Brave ParkLands volunteer stewards participated in an Illinois Extension chainsaw and woodworking class in September to learn how to take down trees and brush.



Oct

Work Day with Eureka College

Eureka College students accompanied Professor Katy Everett to Letcher Basin to remove invasive teasel.



Work Days with Illinois Wesleyan

IWU students accompanied Professor Given Harper for several days clearing trails and honeysuckle.



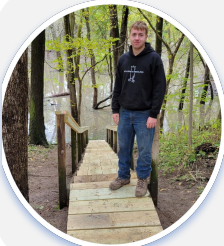
Prairie Celebration

On October 1st, families, volunteers, and community members gathered to celebrate the beauty of the prairie at Letcher Basin Preserve.

Nov

Updated Bridge at Merwin

Bloomington Boy Scouts Troop 19 along with the help and support of Chris Hoyt and Thrivent Financial updated a bridge on the North side of Merwin Preserve to have handrails.



Lexington Preserve Work Day

One of the last work days of the year, led by Terrie and Jeff Howard, took place at Lexington Preserve on 10/15.



New Member Hike

To celebrate membership, a new member hike was hosted at Chinquapin Bluffs on 11/12.



Dec

Hayes Woods Preserve Work Day

The final public work day of the season took place on 11/4 at Hayes Woods Preserve.



Upcoming Events

January

1

New Year's Day Hike

What better way to bring in the new year than time outside? Join us for a guided hike through one of our spectacular

preserves. Check our website and social media for more details to come and to register for the hike!



Stewardship Updates

Change is on the horizon as 2022 comes to a close; all prospective/incoming volunteer stewards will complete a steward-apprenticeship prior to becoming ParkLands Foundation Volunteer Stewards going forward in 2023. The steward-apprenticeship program is in place to help ParkLands recruit, build, and retain highly-skilled, enthusiastic stewards to help maintain our beautiful preserves. The details of the apprenticeship steps and procedures are included below for interested individuals!



Steward Apprenticeship Program and Procedures:

1. An apprentice steward will work for an unspecified time, but no more than a growing season, with other seasoned stewards.
2. Once an apprentice steward has completed their apprenticeship period, they must be approved by the Stewardship Committee.
3. After their apprenticeship, they will adopt their own preserve with another volunteer steward.
4. We will have at least two stewards at a preserve (this will be for safety, continuity, and sharing ideas).
5. We will attempt to distribute stewards to various preserves that have the highest priority.
6. Annually, the Stewardship Committee will review the performance of the stewards and approve or discontinue their service each year. It shall be the responsibility of the Land Steward, with input from other stewards, to advise the Stewardship Committee.



Annual Meeting of the Members

The 56th gathering of ParkLands members took place on September 11th at Franklin Family Farm at Lexington Preserve in McLean County.

Although misty and cold, the weather did little to dampen our spirits! While the morning was originally planned to start with a brief hike around the Lexington Preserve, the rain forced us inside the Franklin Family Farm cabin to commence the 56th annual meeting of ParkLands Foundation members. We kicked off the meeting with lunch, catered by A-to-Z Catering, followed by nominations for directors and officers.

Nominations at the annual meeting started with filling vacant Director seats. Robert Fitzgerald, Craig Lutes, and Keith Pluymers were voted to fill 3 vacated seats as Directors for a three year term (2022-2025). George Farnsworth was voted to fill one vacated seat for a one year term as director (2022-2023).

Current Directors presented for nomination to continue their 3-year terms (2022-2025) included Kathryn Everett, Michael McKinley, and Frank Sanders. Officer nominations for 2022-2023 consisted of Frank Sanders as President, Eric Smith as Vice President, Michael McKinley as Treasurer, and Kathryn Everett as Secretary.

The primary committee chairmen nominated for 2022-2023 are as follows: Administrative/Executive-Frank Sanders; Finance-Michael McKinley; Stewardship-Kathryn Everett; Outreach-Craig Lutes; and Real Property-Dan Deneen.



Angelo Capparella Volunteer Service Award

To close the meeting, Krista G. Kirkham was awarded the 2022 Angelo Capparella Volunteer Service Award for her dedication and commitment to ParkLands Foundation.

Thank you Krista!

Looking Back Down the Trail

What's in a Name?—Money Creek

The Mackinaw River tributary Money Creek looms large in local natural and human history, though its course is now rudely interrupted by way of impoundment and the creation of Lake Bloomington. Money Creek is also the namesake of the McLean County township that's home to ParkLands Foundation's flagship 713-acre Merwin Preserve.

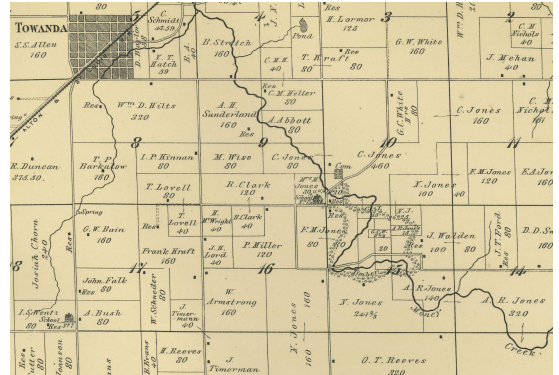
That's all well and good, but how about the name itself—Money Creek? Where'd that come from, you might be wondering. Good question. Unfortunately, there's no definitive answer. What we do know is it's a rare place name indeed. In the southeastern corner of Minnesota, one will find a tributary of the Root River and an unincorporated community so named, but that's about it as far as the whole U.S.

Back in Central Illinois, the 1879 *History of McLean County*, which includes richly detailed portraits of each of the county's thirty townships, notes the origin of Money Creek as a place name "is shrouded in mystery." There were, though, two competing theories as to the name.

One theory held that soon after the first Euro-American settlers arrived on the scene, there circulated an enticing legend having to do with a heap of money buried near a stretch of the creek that runs through Smith's Grove (this being southeast of Towanda). But wild tales of buried loot were quite common in the eighteenth century. The 1879 county history even quotes this bit of verse:

"Ever since the days of Capt. Kidd,

The Yankee thinks there's money hid."



Money Creek 1874

According to the second theory, some indigenous people—whether Kickapoo, Delaware Potawatomi, or others, it's not said—"found a piece of money along the creek, and gave it the name of Money Creek, from this fact."

Although it's hard to compete with the gleam and glint of buried treasure, there's yet another hypothesis. The archives of the McLean County Museum of History in downtown Bloomington are home to the papers of Ezra M. Prince (1831-1908), a local public historian of some note. Anyway, the Prince papers include a June 5, 1901 letter to Prince from W.J. McGee, then acting director of the Smithsonian Institution's Bureau of American Ethnology

Evidently, Prince had written the Bureau (established in 1879 by John Wesley Powell—he of much local fame—but that's a story for another day) regarding the origin of the name Money Creek. "The name," McGee noted in his reply, "is probably derived from the stem *mono*—, which, in all the central Algonquian dialects, refers to digging: Ojibwa, *nin mona-a pini*, 'I dig out roots, potatoes;' *mona-ashkikiwe*, 'I dig out medical roots;' *monashkwe*, 'I root out bad herbs.'" In his letter, McGee cites Jean-Andre Cuoq (1821-1898), a Roman Catholic priest and early scholar of historical linguistics, including the Algonquin languages.

Whether any of this archaic, byzantine philological analysis holds up today, we cannot say! Regardless, until some long-lost document is rediscovered—or a treasure chest pulled from the Money Creek mud—the origin of the place name will likely remain well shrouded in the misty past.

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"Looking Back Down the Trail" contributor Bill Kemp is a proud member of ParkLands. His day job is that of librarian for the not-for-profit McLean County Museum of History. In the next newsletter, Bill will follow-up with another, "What's in a name?" The name he'll explore in the spring? Get ready for ... Hell's Bend!



Money Creek Bridge 1930

Board Member Spotlight – Mike Doherty



Profession

Senior Economist for Illinois Farm Bureau and also serves as Executive Director of the Illinois Wheat Association

Favorite ParkLands "Spot"

Letcher Basin was the first ParkLands Preserve to knock my socks off. I grew up on 200 acres of flat prairie soil that had been in corn/soybean/oats rotation since the mid-1800s. To see a large area of restored prairie grasses was stunning. Plus, the banks of the Mackinaw River that wrap around the Basin were once the home of the county's earliest indigenous people. That's something to reflect on, when one is walking along its banks.

Years with ParkLands

I first really became interested because of a snowshoeing event that was held in the winter of 2021. I had hiked Merwin Preserve many times in my life, but that was my first experience with ParkLands staff and an event like that. I loved it.

Shortly after, I joined the ParkLands Board in September of 2021.

Why Volunteer?

One only has to gaze out over the cropland of McLean County after harvest to recognize how precious our remaining natural spaces are. As a lifelong birder, I feel we owe it to future generations to try to preserve areas for wildlife in the county.

What is your favorite 'memory' with ParkLands?

My favorite memories with ParkLands are simply to hike in any of the preserves, pause quietly, and listen for birdsongs.



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