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A Force Multiplier: Your Commitment to ParkLands

In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer beautifully describes the “Three Sisters” - corn, beans, and squash - and their traditional indigenous farming method of mutual reciprocity. This isn’t just about planting three crops together; it’s a meaningful example of how individual strengths create a thriving community. The corn provides a sturdy stalk for the beans to climb, lifting them toward the sun. The beans, in turn, fix nitrogen from the air into the soil, enriching it for the corn and squash. Finally, the broad leaves of the squash create a living mulch, shading the ground to retain moisture and suppress weeds. It’s an ecological masterpiece where each plant flourishes by supporting the others.

As Kimmerer writes, “...the beauty of the partnership is that each plant does what it does in order to increase its own growth. But as it happens, when the individuals flourish, so does the whole.” This concept is a powerful reminder that “...the most important thing each of us can know is our unique gift and how to use it in the world.”

My own gifts and skills have evolved over the years. While the basketball skills that once paid for my college education have diminished, I still have an enduring fire for work that matters and a strong ability to actively dedicate myself to a cause, especially when things are difficult. The belief in a path and the courage to commit to it before you can see the outcome is not just a skill - it’s a superpower shared by many who have dedicated themselves and their financial support to ParkLands Foundation over the years.

Over the past 10 months, the Board and Staff have applied our unique gifts and skills in a rigorous strategic planning process guided by two tremendous land conservation strategy consultants, David Allen and Nancy Moore. We have refined and defined a renewed commitment to our mission, goals, and aspirations for the next five years. Our new Strategic Plan outlines how we will expand land conservation and stewardship in McLean and Woodford Counties and how we will engage our community of volunteers, ambassadors, advocates, members, and donors. At our Annual Meeting on September 14th, David Allen will give an overview of where we’re headed, so you can see exactly where to apply your unique gifts.

Our solidarity is a force multiplier, and during this period of significant change, it gives us massive leverage to achieve things that once seemed unimaginable. I look forward to seeing you on September 14th.

With Gratitude,

Shannon Fulton, Board President
Shannon@StraightUpSolar.com



Planning for the Future
ParkLands Foundation's 2025 Annual
Meeting of Members
Sunday, September 14, 2025
(Please Register by September 8)

Agenda

9:30 a.m. Optional Guided Hike - Merwin Preserve South
11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. Lexington Community Center, Lexington, IL
11:30 a.m. Committee Representatives & Table Displays Open
12:00 p.m. Lunch, Year in Review, and Keynote Speaker David Allen, Conservation Consulting Group, will present *Planning for the Future: ParkLands Foundation's 5-Year Strategic Plan*
1:30 p.m. Committee Representatives & Table Displays Open

Members of ParkLands Foundation are invited to the Annual Meeting of Members on Sunday, September 14, 2025. *This is a free event with the option to purchase lunch or bring your own.*

Our Merwin Preserve South Gate, located at 20183 P J Keller Hwy, Lexington, IL 61753 will be the site for our optional hike. Experienced guides will lead and highlight important features on this 2-mile trail located at the south entrance to the Merwin Preserve. Further details and directions will be sent upon registration.

At 11:30, at the nearby Lexington Community Center, 207 W Main St, Lexington, IL 61753, attendees will have time to visit with various Committee Representatives to learn what these committees do and where to lend your skills. A Tony's Taco Bar lunch (\$20 pay44ment at registration, or bring your own) will take place starting at 12PM and presentations will begin shortly thereafter. We'll look back at the accomplishments of the past year and look ahead to our future. Keynote Speaker David Allen from Conservation Consulting Group will unveil the new ParkLands 5-Year Strategic Plan.

If you are not a member, now is the perfect time to join: [Parklandsfoundation.org/membership](https://parklandsfoundation.org/membership).

We hope to see you there! Please register and learn more at ParklandsFoundation.org/events or otherwise contact ParkLands Foundation at info@parklandsfoundation.org 309-872-6846 by September 8 to ensure we have enough chairs and food for everyone.

Election Information

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 vacated seats as Director, the following individuals are hereby presented for nomination for a three-year term (25-28):
Ross Fogle
Mark Rocke

The following current Directors are hereby presented for nomination to continue for a three-year term (2025-28):
Dan Deneen
Michael McKinley

These nominations will be voted on Sunday, September 14, 2025 by the ParkLands Members present at the Annual Meeting of Members.

The following Directors have decided not to renew their three-year terms and we thank them for their dedication and service to ParkLands:

Keith Pluymers
Frank Sanders

.....

Register online by credit card at parklandsfoundation.org/events/ or fill out this form, pay by check if applicable, and mail it to: ParkLands Foundation, PO Box 12, Normal, IL 61761.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____ Email address: _____

All correspondence will go to the person listed above. Please forward information to those under your registration.

List the names of everyone attending under this registration (including yourself) and lunch preference.

Name	Tony's Tacos	Will bring lunch/no lunch
	Total x \$20= \$	

Please Register by September 8!

8th Annual Bike Ride Wrap Up

Riders

Two hundred and ten bike riders took off from the Lexington Pavilion on the morning of Saturday, July 12, 2025. They chose between courses of 20 miles, 50 miles, or the Century (100 kilometers, approximately 62 miles), all in an effort to raise money for ParkLands Foundation while enjoying a ride through the rural Illinois countryside.



Volunteers

Volunteers were on hand to get the riders checked in, assist those experiencing bike issues, and stock the Rest Stops with beverages and snacks- from cookies to pickles and everything in between. We couldn't do this without them!



After Party

Bikers and volunteers alike relaxed at Kemp's Upper Tap in Lexington for the after party.



Thank You to Our 2025 Sponsors

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If you would like to be a sponsor for the 2026 Annual Bike Ride, contact Erin Herbez, erin@parklandsfoundation.org.

Upcoming programs

To register for all programs, visit parklandsfoundation.org/events/.

ParkLands Annual Meeting of Members

Date & Time: Sunday September 14, 2025: Optional hike, 9:30am. Table presentations, lunch and meeting 11:30 – 2pm.

See pages 2 & 3 for complete information. This event is open to ParkLands members only. Become a member at www.parklandsfoundation.org/membership.

Nature Trails Day, Hosted by University of Illinois Extension McLean County Master Naturalists

Date & Time: Saturday, September 20, 2025; 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Location: COMLARA Park, Hudson

Cost: \$5/family or group, register at <https://extension.illinois.edu/lmw/events>.

This fun-filled family event offers opportunities to hike the trails, learn up close about fish in Illinois, and engage in hands-on activities to dive into the environment around us. Registration includes a complimentary hiking bag courtesy of COMLARA Park, filled with useful hiking supplies and resources to enhance your outdoor experience. For more information, visit <https://extension.illinois.edu/events/2025-09-20-nature-trails-day>.

Family Night in Nature

Hosted in Collaboration with University of Illinois Extension McLean County Master Naturalists

Date & Time: Saturday, October 4, 2025; 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Location: Chinquapin Bluffs Land and Water Reserve, Carlock

Cost: \$5/Family

Bring out the family to learn what comes out when the sun goes down! Create a craft, then experience a fun presentation on owls. A trailer ride will take guests to hear night sounds, and experience other nocturnal animals. Finish off the night by making and eating s'mores around the fire! Please bring a flashlight. We will cover the lens with red cellophane to preserve night vision. To register [CLICK HERE](#).

Bluebells Circle: Thank You Celebration

Date & Time: Saturday, October 18; 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Free, for Bluebells Circle Members only

Our second annual thank you event for our Bluebells Circle is scheduled for October 18 from 2:00-4:00 p.m. This will be held at Chinquapin Bluffs. We will have refreshments and a short presentation about the area. Participants will be able to tour the preserve by trailer ride or by foot. Members of the Bluebells Circle will receive more information in September. If you wish to learn more about the Bluebells Circle or would like to join please contact Erin: erin@parklandsfoundation.org or 309-872-6846.

Hike with a Naturalist: Sweeney Woods Preserve

Date & Time: Sunday, November 9, 2025; 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Cost: \$5/group

Location: Sweeney Woods Preserve, Lexington

An experienced naturalist will guide through the autumnal forest at Sweeney Wood Preserve. To register, [CLICK HERE](#).

Workdays

Public workdays are held throughout the year at many of our preserves. Typically, volunteers will remove invasive plants and do trail maintenance. You do not need experience nor plant identification skills. Your Lead Stewards will give you all the information you need. In addition, you will become part of a like-minded community and learn about plants, animals, and ecosystems! If you have been thinking about volunteering at our preserves, give it a try! Come prepared wearing long sleeves, long pants, and gloves.

Moon Preserve Workday, within the inner loop of Lake Bloomington

Tuesdays, September 2 & 16, 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Location: Parklands Moon Preserve at Lake Bloomington 18060 Carver Road, Hudson, IL

These stewardship projects include removing invasive autumn olive and honeysuckle using loppers. At some point, other invasive plants such as sweet clover and Queen Anne's Lace will need to be pulled.

Please bring water, eye protection and wear work clothes. Janet will have loppers and hand saws, but feel free to bring your own. Contact: Janet Wiser at jlpwiser@yahoo.com 309-532-4652 for questions.

To register for Moon Preserve Workdays, [CLICK HERE](#). Knowing how many volunteers to expect will allow us to bring enough tools for everyone!

Merwin South Gate, along PJ Keller Highway

Date & Time: Saturday, August 30, 9:00 -11:00 a.m.

Location: Merwin Preserve South Gate, along PJ Keller Highway, M428+X6 Lexington, Illinois

ParkLands' Members will have the opportunity to hike Merwin Preserve's South Trail as part of our annual meeting. It needs some sprucing up and we need your help! We plan to clear the Loop Trail of debris by raking, picking up sticks, and making sure logs are moved off to the side. If we have enough people, we'll have some folks work on the invasives around the wooden bridge.

Participants should wear long pants/sleeves, work gloves, suntan lotion/bug spray, and bring a water bottle. We'll provide any needed equipment, a water jug for refills, and snacks. If you have questions, email jill@parklandsfoundation.org or call 309-872-6846.

To register for the Merwin South Workday, [CLICK HERE](#).

What Motivates a ParkLands Foundation Steward?

by Tom Niebur, Master Naturalist & ParkLands Foundation Steward

During my tenure as a volunteer with the ParkLands Foundation I have moved through the following steps: general volunteer, apprentice steward, and volunteer steward at Chinquapin Bluffs preserve over the course of three years. I have been fortunate to be mentored by some very experienced and knowledgeable people: Terrie & Jeff Howard; Sherrie Snyder; Mary Jo Adams, Jim Franks and Frank Sanders.



Early this morning, July 3, 2025, Mary Jo, Frank and I were cutting and applying herbicide to invasive common teasel plants in the North Chinquapin prairie. We had no trouble working up a sweat in the hot and humid weather as we waded through chest high prairie that included mosquitoes, poison ivy, and thorns. We discussed how this is not the definition of fun for most folks. We reflected on the common experience of overwhelm given the immensity of the challenge to protect and “rewild” a landscape that can sometimes be saturated with invasive species and pollutants.

So, what motivates us to do this work?

The renowned conservationist Dave Foreman, defined rewilding as follows: “Rewilding is a comprehensive, often large-scale, conservation effort focused on restoring sustainable biodiversity and ecosystem health by protecting core wild/wilderness areas, providing connectivity between such areas, and protecting or reintroducing keystone species.” This is the ParkLands Foundation’s mission in my interpretation. I don’t believe that natural ecosystems can become sustainable, if at all, without our help.

For me there are some “do’s & don’ts” with my attitude and motivation as a steward for the ParkLands Foundation:

1. Let go of expectations & outcome.
2. Discern what you can do to be the most effective with your skill set and purpose.
3. Don’t see the glass as half full or half empty. Rather, recognize that there is some water in the glass and discern who needs it. I focus on giving the water to nature in the context of connection with people.
4. Here is where I become a bit controversial. Let go of hope. Hope is an ambush. It sets us up for disappointment, passivity, and fear. Rather, practice “clear seeing” with the current reality. See what needs to be done that is within your wheelhouse and do it.
5. Do the work for its own sake. Nature, which we are a part, has inherent value.

6. Practice certain core values. Values are energy. Values are principles that we practice in our life. Determine what these core values are for you. A cardinal value I have witnessed with ParkLands staff and volunteers is neohumanism. Neohumanism is a term I learned from the author Ronald Logan. It is defined as a reverence and sacredness for all levels of life not just humans, including animals, insects, plants, fungi and ecosystems.
7. The welfare of human beings is contingent on the welfare of the web of life.
8. Develop an appreciation for the diversity, equity, and beauty of all of life.
9. Become “eco-centered” in your perspective and approach.
10. Whatever the problem, community is the answer. Don’t go it alone.
11. Margaret Wheatley emphasizes the importance of steadfastness. “The world always changes from the actions and commitment of a small group of dedicated people.”
12. Don’t let your commitment to being of service become an exaggerated heroism. This kind of eagerness usually results in burnout.

Capital Contributions

by Dan Deneen

Estate Planning Attorney and Board Member

I recently attended a charitable giving seminar sponsored by the American Cancer Society. The topic was Non-Cash Contributions to Charitable Organizations. Amazingly, only 6%-8% of charitable contributions are not in cash. The speaker appropriately described this as charitable giving in a less-than-optimal manner. He was referring to significant capital contributions, and not annual dues or other grassroots giving.

The speaker emphasized that for non-retirement gifting the donors should assess which of their assets have the largest proportion of long-term capital gain, and consider donating those assets. In most instances, the long-term capital gain for a gift is tied to appreciation from the date of acquisition. If a donor believes that an investment has “maxed out”, it might be a good time to maximize a charitable deduction while avoiding the capital gains tax on a sale.

An even more beneficial situation is when the owner has taken depreciation against the asset, which depreciation will be taxed as ordinary income if the asset is sold. The best example would be commercial buildings or apartments. Any ParkLands supporters with an interest in donating appreciated assets should contact Erin Herbez to start a dialogue.

If a prospective donation is more than an outright transfer of publicly traded stock, our legacy giving team can meet with a donor to discuss any issues. Our real estate committee can discuss any prospective gifts of land including any restrictions on the further uses of the land, especially if the property to be donated is conservation property. As always, ParkLands Foundation recommends that you consult with your estate planning attorney and tax advisor before any material contributions. They should be able to discuss the above strategies in greater detail with you and explain the clear benefits.



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