

PROGRESS REPORT FOR 2015



PRIORITY PROJECTS

Open Public Access to Lake Calumet -- In June, the State of Illinois cancelled its agreement with the Illinois International Port District to purchase 282 acres at Lake Calumet, after doing due diligence related to the property title and phase one environmental assessment. The participating parties in the agreement did not go back to the drawing board in 2015 because Illinois was without a State budget through the remainder of the year.

Build the Blue Island Intercollegiate Rowing Center and Marina -- By the end of 2015, the rowing center Feasibility Study was 90% complete, though some outstanding issues needed to be resolved before study completion (anticipated summer of 2016). South Suburban Land Bank and Development Authority, which in late 2014 acquired and now manages the Fay's Point Marina parcel along the Little Calumet River, intended as the rowing center location, opened the marina for the 2015 boating season. Social venture firm High Bridge managed the restored native landscaping on the property.

Develop and Implement the Millennium Reserve Natural Areas Conservation Compact – Compact partners, led by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), secured a \$1 million grant from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to restore 12 high-quality natural area sites. Ambitious work to control invasive species got underway as result of this funding. In addition, Conservation Compact partners initiated the Wetlands Bird Planning Project, which will develop habitat management practices to increase wetland bird populations. The latter project was made possible with funding from IDNR's Coastal Management Program, through a federal grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, U.S. Dept. of Commerce.

Implement a Millennium Reserve Industrial Jobs Work Plan -- The Calumet Green Manufacturing Partnership (CGMP) continued to meet local workforce needs and build career advancement pathways for low-skilled and underprepared workers. The CGMP collaborative program developed strong relationships with four regional colleges, a Chicago and Cook County inter-college partnership. It implemented the regional manufacturing STEM learning exchange, partnered with ten regional high schools and coordinated the Calumet Manufacturing Careers Internship Program that serves young adults aged 18-24. The initiative is employer-led, and over 75 manufacturing and logistics employers have become actively involved in the advisory committee. Public funding for the project was suspended due to the State of Illinois budget impasse.

Catalyze Redevelopment of Brownfield sites -- Led by the Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation, the priority project team met seven times to discuss work to be done, plan operations, and determine funding needed to make properties ready to market and develop. The team identified ten sites in need of public development incentives, environmental remediation, geo technical analysis, stormwater management systems, and clear title to make the sites shovel ready for development. Sterling Lumber, recognized as one of the fastest growing companies in the Chicago region, completed the redevelopment of a 45-acre brownfield site for its operations

Communicate the Assets of the Region -- The Communications Working Group continued implementing its Millennium Reserve Strategic Communications Plan. This work included supporting the production and distribution of 46 e-news and website feature stories highlighting successes and Partner-driven work in the region. A team that included IDNR, Metropolitan Planning Council, the Steering Committee Program Manager, and a freelance writer led e-news story development and distribution. IDNR maintained the Reserve's social media presence and, in partnership with the Steering Committee Program Manager, managed the partnership-focused Millennium Reserve website. The Communications Working Group also initiated concept development for a comprehensive Wayfinding system and an online Millennium Reserve Story Map. (The first phase of both projects will be complete in spring 2016.) In addition, the "Join Millennium Reserve" campaign resulted in 38 official new Partners, taking the official Partner total to 90 government agencies, nonprofits, businesses, and communities.

Support National Heritage Area (NHA) Designations for Distinctive Regional Landscapes -- The proposed Calumet National Heritage Area initiative, led by Calumet Heritage Partnership, reached major milestones in the feasibility study process. This included convening Public Engagement and Themes task forces, initiating the formation of an Advisory Committee, and engaging several consultants with NHA experience. Calumet Heritage Partnership also held four public open houses to review drafts of key sections of the feasibility study that showcased the region's nationally significant themes and resources, as well as the NHA's proposed boundary. In addition, Calumet Heritage Partnership co-sponsored the bi-annual 2015 Calumet Summit, a 2-day conference which attracted some 188 attendees and focused on environmental education, outdoor recreation, stewardship, and regional identity. The Black Metropolis National Heritage Area Initiative, led by Bronzeville Community Development Partnership, continued to refine and improve the feasibility study completed in 2013. The Black Metropolis Heritage Area Steering Committee also planned and developed a wide variety of programming for the 2016 celebration of the Great Migration Centennial.

Support and Promote the Designation of the Pullman National Park -- Chicago's historic south side Pullman community received National Park Service designation in February! (President Obama himself signed the legislation right here in Chicago). The American Institute of Architects in partnership with the National Park Conservation Association held a Pullman design charrette and produced "Positioning Pullman," a community-driven vision and planning document to help guide development of the area. The Pullman Visitors Center, now operated by the National Park Service, welcomed nearly 2,000 visitors to the new National Monument.

Acquire and Build the Strategic Connections Missing in the Calumet Area Trail System -- The western half of the Cal Sag Trail, from Rte. 83 near Lemont to Cicero Avenue in Alsip, opened on June 6. Partners involved in the eastern end of the Cal Sag Trail worked on resolving various engineering issues to keep the project on track for its estimated 2017-18 construction. The Burnham Greenway "gap" within the city of Chicago, from Wm. Powers State Recreation Area to Brainard Avenue, had a bid-letting in April; no bids were received, so it re-initiated that process. The Burnham Greenway "gap" in the village of Burnham was in its final engineering phase. The Forest Preserves of Cook County opened its trail connecting the Burnham Greenway at 114th Street to the Hammond Wolf Lake trail system at 112th and

the Indiana state line. The Forest Preserves of Cook County also acquired lands on the south end of Wolf Lake which are strategically located to provide a more continuous off-road trail location for the proposed South Wolf Lake Trail once its engineering is initiated. The Chicago Department of Transportation received funding from IDNR's Illinois Coastal Management Program through a federal grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association for South Wolf Lake Trail engineering. The Chicago Department of Transportation in collaboration with the Chicago Park District contracted Active Transportation Alliance to develop a proposed trail plan to connect the Big Marsh Bike Park with the surrounding area. The American Institute of Architects held a design charrette at the Pullman National Monument and made trail recommendations for linking Pullman to its surrounding neighborhoods.

Review and Revive the Ford Calumet Environmental Center -- The Chicago Park District's feasibility report, developed by The Lakota Group and funded by The Chicago Community Trust, was finalized in June. Two key recommendations from the report were to keep the project budget to funds already in hand (approximately \$7M) and change the intended location from the Chicago Park District's Hegewisch Marsh property to its Big Marsh site.

Improve Stormwater Management Through Investments in Coordination of Green Infrastructure Solutions -- Chicago Wilderness released the Millennium Reserve Green Infrastructure Plan for the South Cook County suburbs. The Calumet Stormwater Collaborative had quite a few accomplishments including: a WEFTEC session and tour about green infrastructure projects in the Reserve (led by Metropolitan Planning Council), development and release of design templates for green infrastructure for municipalities (work group led by Delta Institute), and the completion of the first ever "RainReady" plan for the Village of Midlothian (work group led by the Center for Neighborhood Technology). The Stormwater Collaborative project team also applied for US EPA Clean Water Act section 319 funding for Calumet watershed planning, investigated data and modelling needs, and completed a logic model for a needs assessment for green infrastructure installation, maintenance and training programs.

ORGANIZATIONAL MILESTONES

- Continued to successfully convene Steering Committee members even with a change in State of Illinois leadership
- Elected new leadership for the Steering Committee chair and vice-chair positions
- Expanded the Steering Committee's Program Manager position to full-time and hired a more skilled and experienced individual for the job
- Formally engaged Indiana-based entities in the Partnership
- Filed articles of incorporation with the IL Secretary of State (approved March 2016; the organization is now an independent not-for-profit entity)
- Initiated the process of applying for 501c3 status with the IRS (anticipated approval in late fall 2016)