

Millennium Reserve Priority Projects Progress Report

FALL 2014

Prepared by René Cousineau on behalf of the Steering Committee, and in
consultation with priority project team leads



Priority Projects

OPEN ACCESS TO LAKE CALUMET

PROJECT LEAD: MILLENNIUM RESERVE STEERING COMMITTEE

In the fall of 2013, IDNR developed a preliminary proposal for creating a public recreation area at Lake Calumet, and by March 2014, the Illinois International Port District passed a resolution to initiate negotiations with IDNR for long-term management of the targeted acreage. On October 25, 2014, Governor Quinn announced an agreement to purchase 282 acres from the Illinois International Port District that will provide public access at Lake Calumet. The contract, signed by IDNR, will expand public recreational opportunities on currently unused portions of Lake Calumet. The parcel is being purchased with Open Land Trust funds for \$9 million and will be managed by the IDNR. Prior to opening the property to the public, IDNR must first complete required environmental reviews. Within the next several months IDNR will convene a planning process with partner agencies, organizations and the public to develop a vision for the property (full press release can be found on the [Illinois Government News Network](#)).

BUILD THE BLUE ISLAND INTERCOLLEGIATE ROWING CENTER & MARINA

PROJECT LEAD: JASON BERRY/CITY OF BLUE ISLAND

With \$50,000 in funding from the Chicago Community Trust, the City of Blue Island issued an RFP in the spring of 2014, and Hitchcock Design Group was selected to perform an opportunity analysis. Currently, Hitchcock has been busy working on the project and approximately 50 high school, colleges, and universities have been interviewed for the opportunity analysis. A few interviews with local leaders remain and will be completed soon, along with a demographic market analysis and sports participation potential analysis. Presentation of the final

opportunity analysis is scheduled for early November.

DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT THE MILLENNIUM RESERVE NATURAL AREAS CONSERVATION COMPACT

PROJECT LEAD: JOHN LEGGE/ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

IDNR, The Nature Conservancy, Forest Preserves of Cook County, Chicago Park District, and Illinois Nature Preserve Commission have collaborated to develop, sign, and begin implementation of a Conservation Compact for Millennium Reserve. The partners agreed to focus on 23 designated Illinois Natural Area Inventory sites, which represent the sites of highest biodiversity value in the Reserve. Compatible, shared, and coordinated conservation outcomes for the natural features at these sites are being identified as part of the agreement.

The written compact is complete, and has been signed by all partners. Signatories must now identify and undertake the protection and restoration activities necessary to provide effective long-term conservation of the rare and high-quality species and natural communities present at these sites. IDNR has already committed funding toward restoration work at four of these sites, including: \$210,000 for habitat improvements at Big Marsh and Hegewisch Marsh; \$60,000 for habitat restoration at William Powers State Recreation Area and \$15,000 for sediment testing on Indian Creek at William Powers; and \$26,000 for Eggers Marsh Hydrological Restoration Planning.

IMPLEMENT AN INDUSTRIAL JOBS WORKPLAN AND CREATE INDUSTRIAL JOBS ON BROWNFIELD SITES IN THE CALUMET REGION

**PROJECT LEAD: MOLLIE DOWLING/OAI AND SOUTH SUBURBAN MAYORS & MANAGERS
ASSOCIATION**

The Millennium Reserve Industrial Jobs Work Plan (MRIJWP) builds on the successful Calumet Green Manufacturing Partnership (CGMP) initiative, which utilizes a dual customer approach to build career advancement pathways for low-skilled/underprepared workers, and meet employer demands. Using this approach,

technical training for both new and existing workers will lead to family and community-sustaining livable-wage employment. Additionally, focusing on the redevelopment of the over 3,000 acres of vacant or severely underutilized, industrially-zoned land also creates the potential of new jobs in the region.

To this end, SSMMA, Cook County, Chicago Neighborhood Initiatives (CNI), and the Calumet Area Industrial Commission (CAIC) have worked together to create a platform of programs that support the private redevelopment of brownfield sites in the Calumet. These partners are collaborating to ensure these programs can work with the specific needs of particular sites, and SSMMA has identified four key rail served properties that are poised for redevelopment. IDOT awarded a \$250,000 grant for a rail study that supports Millennium Reserve priority objectives and, as developers are ready to talk specifics, SSMMA will call the Site Development Team to action.

One of these sites has already been acquired by Method, which is bringing 100 new manufacturing jobs to a former brownfield in Pullman. The Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is administering a business investment package that includes training grants to enhance the quality of the workforce and tax credits worth \$1.1 million over 10 years, provided Method meets its commitment to create and retain 65 new jobs and invest in the community. Along with that, Sterling Lumber has relocated to Phoenix, Ill., thanks to a stupendous example of intergovernmental cooperation between local actors (the Village of Phoenix, City of Harvey, and South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association) working with Cook County and the State of Illinois to make transportation improvements to 151st Street, improve a critical rail spur, and provide attractive tax incentives. The company currently employs 112 people and plans to add 50 jobs in the next two years.

Based on the highly successful intergovernmental cooperation that led to Sterling Lumber's relocation, the Millennium Reserve Site Development Team was established, consisting of the South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association (SSMMA), Millennium Reserve State Agency Task Force members, the Governor's office, Cook County, OAI, and various other state agencies. The Development Team is

the next key step to formalizing how local and state agencies collaborate to attract companies to move or expand in the area. SSMMA is creating a plan to redevelop vacant land into sites for manufacturers. Three additional projects are currently in the pipeline and, as developers are ready to talk specifics, SSMMA will call the Site Development Team to action.

A new grant of \$300,000 from DCEO is funding the expansion of the Calumet Green Manufacturing Partnership. This initiative —led by OAI, SSMMA, CSEDC, community colleges, and manufacturers—has surpassed its goals of securing training and a full-time manufacturing jobs and has placed over 150 people into employment to date. The Partnership is currently funded by DCEO, the Chicago Community Trust, National Fund for Workforce Solutions, United Way, Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership, and the 1,000 jobs campaign of World Business Chicago. In the current year, the CGMP initiative aims to screen over 750 job seekers, enroll over 250 in manufacturing-skills training at regional colleges, and place at least 100 in careers in manufacturing. The support from DCEO will also help SSMMA establish a Manufacturing Industry Sector Partnership in the Calumet region, which will complement and expand the impact of CGMP within the broad economic development goals of the Industrial Jobs Work Plan. Additionally, CGMP has received valuable technical assistance awards from both the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, implemented by the Chicago Jobs Council, and ArcelorMittal Foundation, implemented by CAEL.

SUPPORT NATIONAL HERITAGE DESIGNATIONS FOR DISTINCTIVE REGIONAL LANDSCAPES

PROJECT LEAD: MARK BOUMAN/THE FIELD MUSEUM & CALUMET HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP

In July of 2014, a report was prepared for The Field Museum and the Calumet Heritage Partnership, entitled *The Calumet Region: Road Map for a National Heritage Area Feasibility Study*. The report details the definition of a National Heritage Area, the scope of work that achieving such a designation entails, recommendations on how to proceed with a feasibility study specific to the Calumet region,

accomplishments to date, and a suggested timetable for completing the feasibility study, as well as other political and economic considerations. The project team is currently assembling an advisory committee, as they prepare for initiation of the feasibility study.

Additionally, the Calumet Heritage Partnership held its 15th annual conference on October 25th, 2014 in Munster, IN, with a focus on Art and Heritage—the important link between the two having been distinguished at the previous year’s conference.

SUPPORT AND PROMOTE THE PROPOSED PULLMAN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

PROJECT LEAD: LYNN MCCLURE/NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

In early 2014, U.S. Senator Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), and U.S. Representative Robin Kelly (D-Ill.-02) introduced legislation to create the Pullman National Historic Park in the neighborhood’s historical district, an architecturally unique area, which played important roles in America’s railroad, industrial and labor history. According to a report released by NPCA, a national park at Pullman could attract 300,000 visitors each year and create 356 new jobs, providing \$40 million annually to the community.

As Congress is unable to move legislation this year, attention turned to designating Pullman as a national monument through presidential authority. A public meeting was held on August 21st of 2014 to give people an opportunity to provide input to the Director of the National Park Service. National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis came to Chicago on August 21, 2014 to gauge local interest in establishing the city’s historic Pullman district as part of the national park system. Soon thereafter, NPCA and partners gathered letters from high profile people, organizations, and businesses in support of the President using his authority to create a Pullman National Monument.

ACQUIRE AND BUILD THE STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS MISSING IN THE CALUMET AREA TRAIL SYSTEM

**PROJECT LEAD: DERS ANDERSON AND GEORGE BELLOVICS/OPENLANDS AND ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

Substantial investment in the initial stages of a pedestrian/ bicycling trail system has been accomplished in the Calumet region over the past 15 years with 1) the development of the north and south segments of the Burnham Greenway, 2) the designation of the 500 mile Grand Illinois Trail route through the Calumet area, 3) the development of the Indian Creek Trail within the Ford Industrial Supplier Park, and 4) the recent rapid expansion of trails on the Indiana side of Wolf Lake and along the Lake Michigan Lakefront in Hammond and Whiting.

Several key connections to complete this system have substantially finished final engineering, need to overcome several land acquisition, lease, and railroad reviews, and are then funded for construction: 1) the Burnham Greenway “Gap” in the Village of Burnham and 2) the Cal Sag Trail stretching west from the Village of Burnham to Lemont. In addition, several very strategic cross-state border connections have been initiated recently to connect these major trail systems that were developing separately in Illinois and Indiana: 1) only ¼ mile separates the Hammond Lakefront Trail from Calumet Park along the Lake Michigan shoreline, and with the closure and demolition of the Stateline Generating Plant, that gap may soon be connected, and 2) along 112th Street the Forest Preserves of Cook County will build a trail connecting the Burnham Greenway to Hammond’s Wolf Lake Trail system in 2015.

As of early 2014, four of the five communities that will be traversed by the eastern portion of the Cal-Sag Trail (which connects 14 communities in total) had secured more than \$3.5 million in federal funding for construction: Blue Island,

Burnham, Calumet City and Dolton. IDNR then provided \$1.2 million toward the required local match for these four, as well as a fifth—Riverdale—all of which are categorized as economically disadvantaged by state or federal definitions. Thanks to IDNR covering the local match for Riverdale, the federal government ultimately came through with a grant to Riverdale, and now nearly all of its trail construction costs are funded. A groundbreaking for the Cal-Sag Trail took place June 7.

Additionally, IDNR provided Openlands with \$77,000 for Wolf Lake Trail System connection planning, and further engineering studies and funding are being pursued to advance a number of trail opportunities—including an increase in the number of access locations along the Calumet water trail system, and additions to the existing Wolf Lake trail system.

REVIEW AND REVIVE THE FORD CALUMET ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

PROJECT LEAD: ZHANNA YERMAKOV/CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT

Having an attractive, high profile destination point would be a boon for Millennium Reserve. Artfully designed, strategically sited and properly programmed, it would be a source of pride for regional residents. It has the potential to provide locals—as well as visitors from outside of the region—with a gateway to begin their exploration of a region that might otherwise seem fragmented and foreboding, instead of ecologically rich with a vibrant history and culture. This project was developed a decade ago and has received \$35,000 in funding from Chicago Community Trust to perform a feasibility study, however, some components of the project may no longer be in line with current resources and community needs. The following components need to be revisited in consultation with prospective partners and stakeholders:

- Purpose
- Programming (what it is and who delivers it)

- Location
- Design
- Capital funding/budget
- On-going operations and maintenance

IMPROVE STORMWATER MANAGEMENT THROUGH INVESTMENTS IN AND COORDINATION OF GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE SOLUTIONS

PROJECT LEAD: JOSH ELLIS/METROPOLITAN PLANNING COUNCIL

Since April 2014, the Calumet Stormwater Collaborative has been meeting monthly to identify challenges and implement strategies aimed at improving stormwater management in the Millennium Reserve. Fundamental challenges have been established, and the collaborative is in the process of developing “strategic opportunities for collaboration to create positive change.” Implementation working groups were formed in August to focus on key actions related to the following four actionable challenges:

- Consequences of non-overbank flooding
- Drain on public resources from repeated, ineffective, partial interventions
- Drain on private resources from repeated, ineffective, partial interventions
- Declining infrastructure performance and sufficiency over time

The Stormwater Collaborative’s coordination and planning efforts have received preliminary funding from The Chicago Community Trust (\$75,000), IDNR, Cook County, and IEPA—as well as a \$2.9 million grant from the 8th Ward of the City of Chicago to enlarge sewers in the area in order to reduce flooding.

Communications Updates

In the summer of 2014, Public Communications Inc.—in collaboration with the Steering Committee and Communications Subcommittee—finalized the Millennium Reserve Communications Plan with the help of a \$20,000 grant from IDNR. The Communications Subcommittee has since been working to implement a number of key strategies outlined in the plan, and work groups have been formed to place special focus on some of the more complex tasks (detailed below). An integral part of the Communications Plan is the Millennium Reserve website, which was launched in June, 2014.

MILLENNIUM RESERVE AND GREATER CALUMET GUIDEBOOK **LEAD ORGANIZATION: BLUESTEM COMMUNICATIONS**

Explore the Millennium Reserve and Greater Calumet Region: A Natural and Cultural Guide to the Region from Bronzeville to the Indiana Dunes, released in September 2014, is a free, 75-page, full-color guidebook to the greater Calumet region complete with maps, photos and plenty of history.

Nature lovers can use it to discover all of the best places for hiking, biking, birding, boating and fishing in this diverse, bi-state region. There's also plenty of culture to explore—from breweries to museums, the Guide offers a fascinating glimpse into the region's cultural hotspots.

The Guide was created with funding from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management in conjunction with IDNR's Coastal Management Program. Thanks to this funding and additional support from ComEd, Chicago Southland Convention & Visitors Bureau and Adage Technologies, the free Guide is available in both printed and electronic PDF forms.

With maps, photos and detailed descriptions of regional highlights, this Guide was researched, written and designed to encourage residents and visitors to this region to get out there and explore—to see, smell and touch the fantastic world around them.

“JOIN MILLENNIUM RESERVE”

Since July 2014, a Millennium Reserve credential work group has been convening regularly, with the goal of formalizing and building the Reserve partnership through a simple, manageable, and inclusive process. To date, the group has developed and finalized a set of guiding principles, materials expressing the function and benefits of applying to “Join Millennium Reserve,” and is currently beta testing the application process in preparation to officially launch the partnership campaign in October.

Twice a year, official Partners will have the opportunity to nominate their organization/agency or Reserve-specific project for a series of special spotlights in Millennium Reserve e-news, social media, media relations, and other strategic communication strategies.

WAYFINDING

A work group focused on developing a comprehensive wayfinding strategy for the Reserve began meeting in August of 2014. The group is still in the early stages of planning, as this is a complex undertaking and will take much time and effort to execute successfully. They are currently conducting research on other successful wayfinding endeavors, as well as attempting to narrow in on specific goals and messages related to Millennium Reserve wayfinding needs and opportunities.