



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES

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Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE USE

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CONCEPT PLAN PROPOSED FOR BUFFALO CREEK FOREST PRESERVE

Future plans for public access improvements and significant natural resource restoration at Buffalo Creek Forest Preserve were approved today at a joint meeting of the Lake County Forest Preserves' Land Preservation and Acquisition, and Development, Planning and Conservation Committees.

The Committees approved two separate resolutions authorizing intergovernmental agreements with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) for granting an easement to construct a new reservoir at Buffalo Creek and with the Lake County Division of Transportation (LCDOT) for transfer of land needed for future road improvements at the intersection of Arlington Heights Road and Lake-Cook Road.

The resolutions will now be considered by the Finance and Administrative Committee at their Friday, October 13 meeting, and then by the full Forest Preserve Board at their October 20 meeting. If the Board approves the concept plan, work at the Preserve would begin in 2007. The project would take approximately two years to complete and would be constructed in phases.

"This project is very forward thinking. It addresses major ongoing flooding issues at the regional and local levels, and provides for a complete transformation of the site's natural resources and recreational amenities. Everyone benefits, especially our Lake County residents and wildlife," said Bonnie Thomson Carter, Lake County Forest Preserve President.

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“Through careful planning, we intend to keep designated sections of the Preserve open to our visitors during the construction process. When the project is complete, Buffalo Creek will boast three new looped trail systems, two new water elements, two picnic shelters, additional parking and restrooms, a man-made heron rookery, and acres of restored wetland and prairies.”

David Stolman (Buffalo Grove), Lake County Forest Preserve Commissioner for District 20, has served on the planning committee for this project for the past six years. “I am proud that so many governmental agencies were able to work together to overcome a variety of obstacles to make this important project happen, which will also provide a means for Lake and Cook Counties to proceed with transportation improvements at the congested intersection of Lake-Cook and Arlington Heights Roads,” said Stolman.

“Careful and creative design of the new reservoir would create a natural-looking wetland and provide long-lasting flood control benefits for Lake County residents as well as for our neighbors downstream. The natural resources restoration work, additional miles of trails and other public access improvements planned for Buffalo Creek are very extensive. The transportation improvements will ease congestion and make travel safer and more efficient for Preserve visitors and others who use this busy roadway. I am excited to bring this plan forward today and believe that when complete, Buffalo Creek will emerge as a premier Forest Preserve in southwest Lake County,” said Stolman.

About the Proposed Concept Plan

The concept plan will help guide stormwater storage, public access improvements and extensive natural resource restoration work at the 387-acre Preserve located near Buffalo Grove and Long Grove on the southern border of Lake County.

The plan calls for an additional 30-acre regional stormwater storage flood control reservoir to be constructed and paid for by the MWRD. It will be designed to blend into and enhance the natural environment.

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A new looped trail system will surround the new reservoir, providing a variety of scenic views and recreational opportunities. The reservoir will also offer visitors a second location within the Preserve for shoreline fishing.

In order to construct the reservoir, the MWRD needs to obtain a drainage easement over the middle portion of Buffalo Creek, just west of Schaeffer Road. The proposed concept plan improvements for Buffalo Creek would be funded by the MWRD and are estimated to be in excess of \$10.4 million.

In addition, the LCDOT and the Cook County Highway Department will plan for road improvements at the intersection of Arlington Heights Road and Lake-Cook Road that will improve safe and efficient traffic flow.

Natural Resource Restoration

Proposed natural resource restoration efforts include transforming an existing agricultural field into high-quality wetland and prairie, installing a man-made rookery for nesting herons and egrets, planting hundreds of native oaks along the trails and in groves in the prairie, and reseeding the entire Preserve with native prairie grasses and flowers.

Public Access Improvements

Proposed public access improvements include redesigning existing recreational trails and reconstructing them on higher ground to protect from washouts during flood events. Other plan elements include creating new trail loops and foot bridges, constructing a new trail link to the Long Grove Park on Old Hicks Road, building two family picnic shelters, expanding the current parking area on Checker Road and adding a second entrance, parking area and restroom facility off of Schaeffer Road.

Project History

The proposed concept plan at Buffalo Creek is part of a nearly 10-year multi-agency regional flood control planning effort on the Upper Des Plaines River in Lake and Cook Counties driven by the need to store up to 485 acre-feet of stormwater on the Buffalo Creek tributary to the Des Plaines River. In fall 2005, three potential stormwater storage sites were identified. Due to the land's suitability for flood control, Buffalo Creek was selected as the first priority site.

Earlier this year, the Forest Preserve District drafted a concept plan for Buffalo Creek that would significantly improve the site's natural habitat, expand recreational offerings and provide for future land acquisitions, as well as meet the need for flood control management in the region.

Planning Open House

Public input about the proposed future plans for Buffalo Creek will be welcomed at a **Planning Open House** on Thursday, September 28 from 5 to 7:30 p.m., hosted by the Lake County Forest Preserves. The **Planning Open House** will take place at the Arboretum Golf Club at 401 Half Day Road in Buffalo Grove.

At the Open House, the public is invited to review the proposed plans for Buffalo Creek, submit written comments about the project, and ask questions of Forest Preserve professional staff. Project partners from the MWRD, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and the LCDOT have also been invited to participate.

Those unable to attend the **Planning Open House** can view the proposed plan by visiting the Lake County Forest Preserve website at www.LCFPD.org. Comments concerning the plan can be e-mailed to the Forest Preserve District's Director of Planning, Conservation and Development, Mike Fenelon, at mfenelon@co.lake.il.us. Comments submitted at the Planning Open House or via e-mail will become part of the public input for the planning process that will be reviewed by the Forest Preserve Board of Commissioners.

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For more information about the proposed Buffalo Creek concept plan or the **Planning Open House**, please call the Forest Preserves Planning, Conservation and Development office at 847-680-6301.

For times and locations of Forest Preserve Committee meetings, or for other information about the Lake County Forest Preserves visit www.LCFPD.org.

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Note: Photos of Buffalo Creek and a copy of the proposed concept plan are available. Contact Sue Hawkins at 847-968-3207 or shawkins@co.lake.il.us.