

**Forest Preserves of Winnebago County
BOARD MEETING**

Wednesday, May 20, 2026 – 5:30 PM
Forest Preserve Headquarters



A G E N D A

- A. ROLL CALL**
- B. PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE**
- C. APPROVAL of MINUTES**
Minutes for April 15 Regular Meeting
- D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**
- E. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**
- F. NEW BUSINESS**
Finance Report
- Page**
- G. ACTION ITEMS**
 - 1.** 1. Bills for April
 - 3.** 2. Amendment to Sugar River Adventures License Agreement
 - 9.** 3. Approval of Employee Handbook
 - 11.** 4. Reappropriation of Klehm Gazebo Money
- H. DISCUSSION**
 - 1. South Rockford TIF Redevelopment
- I. UPDATES and REPORTS**
 - 12.** 1. Preserve Operations
 - 17.** 2. Natural Resources
 - 20.** 3. Golf
 - 24.** 4. Marketing
 - 25.** 5. Human Resources
 - 6. Partner Groups
- J. CLOSED SESSION**
 - 1. Land Acquisition
 - 2. Review of Closed Session Minutes
- K. REGULAR SESSION CONTINUED**
- L. ACTION ITEMS CONTINUED**
 - 1. Consent Agenda
 - a. Approval of Closed Session Meeting Minutes (Tabled from April meeting)
 - i. January 18, 2017.
 - ii. March 15, 2017.
 - iii. April 19, 2017 – Fiddis property (land acquisition).
 - iv. April 19, 2017 – Eckburg property (land acquisition).
 - v. April 19, 2017 – Stone Bridge property (land acquisition).
 - vi. May 16, 2017.
 - vii. July 19, 2017.
 - viii. July 19, 2017.
 - b. Approval of Closed Session Meeting Minutes
 - i. February 17, 2016.
 - ii. March 16, 2016.
 - iii. May 18, 2016.

- iv. July 20, 2016 – Land Acquisition.
- v. July 20, 2016 – Personnel.
- vi. September 21, 2016.
- vii. November 16, 2016.
- viii. December 21, 2016.

2. Non-consent Agenda

26. a. Approval of Resolution to Review and Release Closed Session Minutes and Destruction of Verbatim Recordings (Tabled from April Regular Meeting)
28. b. Approval of Resolution to Review and Release Closed Session Minutes and Destruction of Verbatim Recordings from 2016.

M. ANNOUNCEMENTS and COMMUNICATIONS

1. June 6 & 7 – Garden Fair at Klehm Arboretum.
2. June 6 – Seth B. Atwood Crosstown Classic at Ledges Golf Course.
3. June 7 – Seth B. Atwood Crosstown Classic at Atwood Golf Course.
4. June 13 – Hooked on Fun Kid’s Fishing Derby at Four Lakes Forest Preserve 9:00 – 11:00am.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Next regular Board Meeting– 5:30 PM Wednesday, June 17, Forest Preserve Headquarters

If you require assistance while attending our meetings, please call 815-877-6100 or email ewendlandt@winnebagoforest.org no less than 48 hours prior to the Board meeting.

Anyone wishing to address the Board must call 815-877-6100 or email ewendlandt@winnebagoforest.org in advance of the meeting.

Forest Preserves of Winnebago County
Authorization to Process Payment of Bills



May 20, 2026

**TO: THE AUDITOR AND TREASURER OF THE
FOREST PRESERVES OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY.**

Your Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners, to whom were referred the following bills in the amount of **\$ 1,062,233.07** against the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, have reviewed and approved and therefore respectfully request that orders be drawn on the account of the Forest Preserve District for their payment:

| | | |
|-------------------------|------|-----------------------|
| CORPORATE FUND | 3001 | 355,188.29 |
| HEALTH BENEFITS FUND | 3185 | 39,100.36 |
| SOCIAL SECURITY FUND | 3192 | 16,463.39 |
| RETIREMENT FUND | 3193 | 19,073.18 |
| LIABILITY RESERVE FUND | 3194 | 17,047.00 |
| IMPROVEMENT & DEV. FUND | 3302 | 431,370.93 |
| CORPORATE FUND | 3402 | <u>183,989.92</u> |
| | | \$1,062,233.07 |

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Chapman, Finance Director

Date

RESOLUTION
No. 26-0501
PAYMENT OF BILLS FOR APRIL

WHEREAS, the Forest Preserve incurs annual and monthly operating and capital expenditures during its budget cycle; and

WHEREAS, the Winnebago County Finance Department compiled the attached invoices relating to Forest Preserve expenditures to be paid for the month of April; and

WHEREAS, our Finance Director, Steve Chapman, has reviewed the invoices and avows them to be accurate and appropriate for payment; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board authorizes the payment of the attached compilation of bills totaling \$1,062,233.07 to be paid by the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County for the month of April, 2026.

Voting YES_____ Voting NO_____ Voting ABSTAINING_____

The above and foregoing Resolution was adopted this 20th day of May, 2026.

That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately upon its adoption.

Jeff Tilly, President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind, Secretary
Board of Commissioners

RESOLUTION

No. 26-0502

AMENDMENT TO LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH SUGAR RIVER ADVENTURES

WHEREAS, the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County (FPWC) and Sugar River Adventures (SRA) has a License Agreement that was drafted and approved via Resolution in 2021, and;

WHEREAS, the License Agreement was renewed in 2024 with a term ending Feb. 28, 2030, and;

WHEREAS, the License Agreement allows SRA to launch and pick up renters floating tubes and kayaks at various locations owned or leased by the FPWC, and;

WHEREAS, SRA has been in compliance with the License Agreement and is in good standing with the FPWC, and:

WHEREAS, SRA would like to expand their services to include the Paula Swanson Forest Preserve.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County hereby approves the following amendment to the License Agreement dated September 18, 2024.

Amendment

The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County (Licensor) and Sugar River Adventures (Licensee) agree to expand the License Agreement dated March 1, 2025, to include the Paula Swanson Forest Preserve (PSFP) at 10178 W. Winslow Rd., Shirland, with the following provisions specific to the Paula Swanson Forest Preserve:

1. Licensee will have vehicular access past the entrance gate, for the purpose of dropping off and picking up equipment, during March through November of each year. Clients may not be transported in motorized vehicles, or upon any towed implements, within PSFP. Licensee may only enter PSFP with a vehicle when ground is stable and ruts will not be made in the lane or parking area. Any damage must be reported immediately to the FPWC Executive Director.
2. Licensee will receive a key, or agree to another gate-locking option, in order to access into the preserve. Keys may not be duplicated. Keys and/or codes may not be shared with anyone outside of the employees or volunteers of Licensee. If key is lost, it shall be reported immediately to the FPWC Executive Director. If key is lost, it will be reissued by Licensor for a fee of \$10.00. Key must be turned into Licensor during the "off" season and will be reissued prior to the start of the following season.
3. Licensee must close and lock the gate after entering and after exiting to ensure no other vehicles enter into PSFP.
4. Licensee may not interfere, obstruct or block access down the lane and must allow FPWC staff, vendors, and land leasees to have priority access.
5. Licensee may park trailer(s)/wagon(s) in the area shown in Attachment A anytime from dawn to dusk during the time period mentioned in item one (1). If unforeseen circumstances arise that equipment must be left inside of PSFP, Licensee must get permission for overnight from the FPWC Executive Director.
6. The FPWC staff, volunteers and Board members shall not be responsible for any lost, stolen or damaged items owned by Licensee.

7. If any incidents or accidents occur with Licensee staff, volunteers or clients, it must be immediately reported to the FPWC Executive Director.

Term of Amendment

The term of this amendment shall run concurrently with the License Agreement (until Feb. 2030). At time of expiration, conditions of this amendment should be considered for inclusion into a new License Agreement.

No Other Changes

Except as expressly amended herein, all other terms and conditions of the License Agreement remain in full force and effect.

Counterparts

This Amendment may be executed in counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties have executed this Amendment as of the date first written above.

Licensor:

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Licensee:

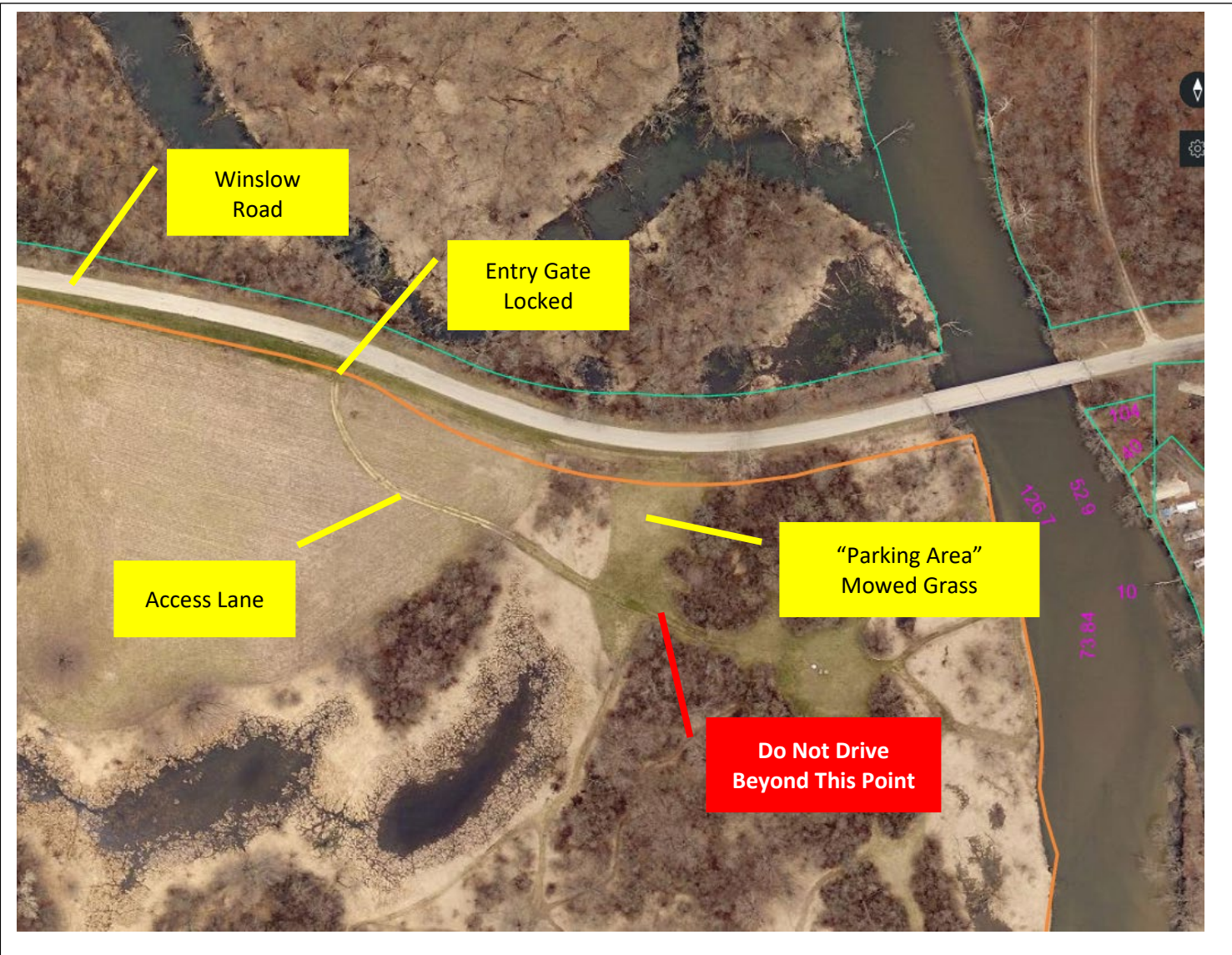
Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

ATTACHMENT A – Paula Swanson Forest Preserve aerial of access gate, lane and “parking” area for Licensee to use.



Voting YES_____ Voting NO_____ ABSTAINED_____

The above and foregoing Resolution was adopted this 20th day of May 2026.

That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately upon its adoption.

Jeff Tilly,
President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind,
Secretary
Board of Commissioners



MEMORANDUM

TO: Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners
FROM: Daniel J. Olson, Executive Director
DATE: May 20, 2026
RE: Employee Handbook Revisions

REQUEST

Staff requests the Board of Commissioners approve the resolution and Employee Handbook as it is presented tonight, to go into effect immediately.

BACKGROUND

The current Employee Handbook, was last revised in 2023. Best practice for our industry suggests that a review and revision of the Handbook should be completed on a two-year rotation to keep up with new legislation.

To complete the latest revision, a committee of six staff members worked several months to complete a draft suitable for legal counsel review. The draft, as well as key staff questions, were reviewed by legal counsel.

CHANGES AND UPDATES

The majority of the updates to the Handbook were changes in federal or state law. Several changes streamlined internal procedures and processes.

Of the changes to the Handbook, the following need to be highlighted for the Board.

New substantive items since the March 18 Board memo.

1. A section on Children in the Workplace was added.
2. We are allowing new employees to use or accumulate the floating holidays when they occur, instead of after 90 days of work.
3. We deleted sections on payback for trainings, conferences, workshops and other certificates and trainings. Tuition reimbursement scaled payback has not changed. This was discussed in the last meeting as a question that came from Commissioner Porter.
4. Insurance eligibility change: Now effective the 1st day of the month, following 30 days of employment. Instead of waiting 90 days of employment.

Items 1-4 listed below and highlighted in yellow, were included in the March 18, 2026 Board memo and remain as written.

1. The Safety Wear Reimbursement Policy would be new for the District, but has been an industry standard for a couple of decades. I am presenting it as a separate action during this Board meeting (currently section 5.5).
2. Upon final approval of the Employee Handbook, we are requesting that the Board of Commissioners give authority to the Executive Director to approve and enter into contracts that are one year or less and within the Executive Director spending authority, without getting Board approval. Anything over that amount of time or money would need to be approved by the Board (currently section 4.5). This will also need to be reflected in the next revision of the District's purchasing Policy.

3. Upon final approval of the Employee Handbook, we are requesting that the Board of Commissioners allow a prorated employee payback of tuition reimbursement if the employee leaves the district within a certain timeline after receiving the reimbursement.
4. Upon final approval of the Employee Handbook, we are requesting that the Board of Commissioners allow the Executive Director to have discretion with layoffs, demotions, and reassignment of positions (currently sections 3.35 and 3.36).

ORDINANCE
No. 26-0503
APPROVAL OF EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

WHEREAS, the Downstate Forest Preserve District Act, 70 ILCS 805/8(a), provides that the Board shall be the corporate authority of such forest preserve district and shall have power to pass and enforce all necessary ordinances, rules and regulations for the management of the property and conduct of the business of such district; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners adopted a full manual (Personal Policy Manual) on February 17, 2021 and has also approved individual policies since that time; and, it is deemed necessary to approve currently accepted employee policies, procedures and legislation; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to approve currently accepted employee policies, procedures and legislation; and,

WHEREAS, a new Employee Handbook has been developed that meets the needs of the employees and the District.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Commissioners of the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District, Winnebago County, Illinois, the following:

Section 1. The Forest Preserve District of Winnebago County hereby adopts and approves the attached Employee Handbook.

Section 2. Repeal of Conflicting Provisions. All ordinances, resolutions and policies or parts thereof, in conflict with this Ordinance are, to the extent of the conflict, expressly repealed on the effective date of the Ordinance.

Section 3. Severability. If any provision of this Ordinance or application thereof to any person or circumstance is ruled unconstitutional or otherwise invalid, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or application of this Ordinance that can be given effect without the invalid application or provision, and each invalid provision or invalid application of this Ordinance is severable.

Section 4. This Ordinance shall be in full force and effect after its passage in accordance with 70 ILCS 805/11

APPROVED AND PASSED ON THIS 20TH DAY OF MAY 2026

Voting Yes

Voting No

Judith Barnard

Judith Barnard

May 20, 2026
Rockford, Illinois

Mike Eickman

Mike Eickman

Gloria Lind

Gloria Lind

Cheryl Maggio

Cheryl Maggio

Emily Porter

Emily Porter

Jerry Paulson

Jerry Paulson

Jeff Tilly, President

Jeff Tilly, President

The above and foregoing Ordinance was adopted this 20th day of May, 2026

Jeff Tilly, President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind, Secretary
Board of Commissioners

May 20, 2026
Rockford, Illinois

RESOLUTION
26 – 0504
REALLOCATION OF FUNDS AT KLEHM

WHEREAS, the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners approved \$ 50,000.00 for the Garden Gazebo Roof Replacement at the Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden in the 2026 Capital budget; and,

WHEREAS, the re-roofing project has been completed and \$24,965 remains left in the project budget that will not be used: and,

WHEREAS, there are two projects in the children’s garden area underway (Kids Creek renovation and Splash Pad installation) that are utilizing volunteers and outside contractors to complete, and are in need of further funding; and,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County approves reallocation of \$24,965.00 from the re-roofing project to be used for projects underway in the Children’s Garden at Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden.

Voting YES_____ Voting NO_____ Voting ABSTAINING_____

The above and foregoing Resolution was adopted this 20th day of May, 2026.

That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately upon its adoption.

Jeff Tilly, President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind, Secretary
Board of Commissioners

Preserve Operations

Vaughn Stamm, Director of Operations
Matt Weik & Scott Wallace, Preserve Managers
Bryan Helmold, Facility & Equipment Manager
April 2026 Activities Report

- Continued drawing and submitting annual water samples on various preserve hand pumps.
- Chlorinated, flushed and tested water at Sugar River and Hononegah Campgrounds.
- Opened campgrounds on April 15th.
- Put out American flags in the preserves.
- Painted hand pumps in various preserves.
- Painted Kieselburg Kiosk.
- Assisted Resource Department with controlled burns.
- Interviewed candidate for the Hononegah Host position.
- Interviewed candidate for the Sugar River attendant position.
- Laid soil and seed at Sugar River Equestrian area.
- Replaced damaged campground posts at Hononegah Campground.
- Pearson Plumbing de-winterized/re-opened Sugar River Campground shower house.
- Chlorinated and flushed water systems at Sugar River and Hononegah campgrounds.
- Removed straw bales from Macktown Visitors Center septic pump area.
- Dirt and seed to plow damaged areas at Headquarters
- Put out “Share the trails/ Leash your Dog” yard signs throughout preserves.
- Cleaned Sugar River Shower house prior to opening.
- Cleaned Sugar River attendant building prior to opening.
- Checked and repaired electric at both campgrounds before opening.
- Removed honey suckle at Macktown roadway heading to boat launch.
- Closed off certain sections of preserves due to flooding
- Replaced three “Net Area Closed to Public” signs at Colored Sands Bird Banding station.
- Met with Helm electric for parking lot light replacement at Headquarters.
- Harvested willow saplings for Macktown Historic District wigwam.
- Installed two new docks at Colored Sands Bird Banding station.
- Cleaned outside of windows at Headquarters building.
- Closed Atwood, Sugar River, & lower section of Hononegah preserves due to flooding.
- Closed boat launches due to flooding.
- Opened water fountain at Headquarters.

Preserve Operations

April 2026 Activities Report – Cont.

- Placed newly updated Tick information in preserve kiosks.
- Del Johnson hung flags for South Area Preserves.
- Del Johnson hauled mowers for Golf Department.
- Painted green squares on camping posts at Hononegah to indicate primitive camping.
- Provided services to Macktown Historic District prior to Macktown Gathering.
- Mickey Rykowski installed sewer pumps at Macktown Visitors Center.
- Split firewood.
- Area Mechanical performed preventative maintenance on furnaces in District buildings.
- Mike and Sherry Hogan started at Hononegah Campground as hosts on Friday May 1st.
- Updated First Aid kits in all trucks and buildings.
- Met with Lisa Kirkland from IDPH for onsite assessment for Primitive Campground Hand pump.
- Reopened lower section of Hononegah Forest Preserve after flooding.
- Started mowing preserves.
- Completed flood cleanup at Sugar River primitive campground.
- Started regular mowing of Atwood Homestead Preserve Areas.
- Completed monthly inspections.
- Installed Pedestrian Crossing signs at Headquarters.
- Removed Survey signs from Kiosks and areas in preserves.
- Cleaned up fallen tree on Hononegah back loop.
- Installed welcome and thank you signs along the entrance drive at Seward Bluffs.
- Chlorinated and tested the well at Seward Bluffs Equestrian Campground.
- Mulched around young oak trees within turf areas at Cedar Cliff and Funderburg Forest Preserves.
- Installed vertical logs, new log seats, and poles with signage in the block play area of the Grove Nature Play Area.
- Added new trailhead sign at Oak Ridge.
- Replaced deadbolt lock at Kishwaukee River concrete outhouse.
- Installed new entrance sign at Severson Dells.
- Added large stone to washed out culvert at Deer Run.
- Updated signage in preserve Kiosks.
- Flood damage cleanup and repair at Deer Run, Oak Ridge, Espenscheid and Kilbuck Bluffs.
- Repaired damaged floor at Blackhawk Springs concrete outhouse.
- Cleaned, inspected and tested electric pedestals at Seward Bluffs Campground.

Preserve Operations

April 2026 Activities Report – Cont.

- Cleared culverts under Espenscheid roadway.
- Completed monthly preserve inspections.
- Cleaned out campfire pits at Seward Bluffs campground.
- Mowed trails and turf areas within the preserves.
- Tree removal and maintenance along preserve trail systems.
- Hired and trained seasonal staff.
- Added gravel along upper roadway at Seward Bluffs.
- Cleaned interior of Pecatonica River study center.
- Repaired damaged bridge and removed fallen trees along the Severson Dells trail system.
- Picked-up fishing tackle boxes from the Plano distributor for the Hooked on Fun event.
- Conducted low frequency playground inspections.
- Stocked firewood at Seward Bluffs campground.
- South Area Senior Ranger obtained his pesticide applicators license.
- Added gravel to Funderburg entrance drive.

FOREST PRESERVES OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY

November - April

| | <u>2024-2025</u> | | <u>2025-2026</u> | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Total</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Total</u> |
| Small Shelter Res. | 18 | \$1,530 | 17 | \$1,445 |
| Small Shelter N/Res. | 1 | \$110 | 1 | \$110 |
| Large Shelter Res. | 53 | \$5,830 | 55 | \$6,050 |
| Large Shelter N/Res. | 3 | \$405 | 11 | \$1,485 |
| Electric Res. | 87 | \$10,875 | 97 | \$12,125 |
| Electric N/Res. | 11 | \$1,705 | 6 | \$930 |
| TOTAL | 173 | \$20,455 | 187 | \$22,145 |
| ONLINE | 141 | 82% | 120 | 64% |
| Over 300 Res. | 0 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 |
| Over 300 N/Res. | 0 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 |
| Ground Use/Tent Res | 9 | \$270 | 7 | \$210 |
| Ground Use/Tent N/Res. | 1 | \$45 | 2 | \$90 |
| Building Use Permits | 0 | \$0 | 0 | \$0 |
| Commercial Photography Permit | 1 | \$100 | 0 | \$0 |
| Special Use Permits | 8 | \$2,410 | 12 | \$1,360 |
| Rides | 10 | \$400 | 3 | \$120 |
| TOTAL | 29 | \$3,225 | 24 | \$1,780 |
| ONLINE | 13 | 45% | 4 | 17% |
| Equestrian Passes | Number | Total | Number | Total |
| Yearly Tag Res. | 64 | \$3,200 | 66 | \$3,300 |
| Yearly Tag N/Res. | 22 | \$1,540 | 15 | \$1,050 |
| TOTAL | 86 | \$4,740 | 81 | \$4,350 |
| ONLINE | 37 | 43% | 23 | 28% |
| Fly Field Passes | Number | Total | Number | Total |
| Yearly Pass Res. | 26 | \$910 | 25 | \$875 |
| Yearly Pass N/Res. | 5 | \$225 | 7 | \$315 |
| TOTAL | 31 | \$1,135 | 32 | \$1,190 |
| ONLINE | 7 | 23% | 9 | 28% |
| Metal Detecting Passes | Number | Total | Number | Total |
| Yearly Pass Res. | 30 | \$750 | 29 | \$725 |
| Yearly Pass N/Res. | 7 | \$245 | 6 | \$210 |
| TOTAL | 37 | \$995 | 35 | \$935 |
| ONLINE | 11 | 30% | 13 | 37% |
| GRAND TOTAL | 356 | \$30,550 | 359 | \$30,400 |
| ONLINE | 209 | 59% | 169 | 47% |

Natural Resource Management

Mike Brien, Director of Natural Resources
Mike Groves, Natural Resources Manager
Keith Krey, Stewardship Coordinator
Abigail Pounders, Wildlife Technician
April 2026 Activities Report

Natural Resource Staff:

- Installed photo monitoring points at Pecatonica River, Kishwaukee Gorge, Blackhawk Springs, and Colored Sands Forest Preserves. These points will allow preserve users to take a snapshot of the preserve from a fixed location and submit it to the District via a QR code. District staff will use this chrono sequence of pictures to track changes to the preserves over time.
- Cut willows at Four Lakes Forest Preserve to be used to construct a new wig wam at Macktown Living History.
- Conducted prescribed burns at Stone Bridge and Pecatonica River Forest Preserves.
- Assisted Illinois Department of Natural Resources with trout stocking at Four Lakes Forest Preserve.
- Assisted with volunteer workday at Blackhawk Springs Forest Preserve.
- Planted bare root oak trees at Pecatonica Wetlands, Funderburg, Trask Bridge, Sugar River, Colored Sands, Pecatonica River, and Kishwaukee Gorge Forest Preserves.
- Transplanted trees from the District's nursery into Pecatonica River and Severson Dells Forest Preserves using the tree spade truck.
- Assisted Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden with digging trees from their nursery.
- Assisted wildlife staff with herpetofauna and nestbox surveys.
- Chemically treated poison hemlock and day lilies in preserves throughout the county.
- Surveyed preserves for the invasive callery pear and chemically controlled all flowering individuals located.
- Boom sprayed restoration area at Kishwaukee Gorge Forest Preserve.
- Monitored ongoing forestry contract work at Funderburg Forest Preserve.
- Continued project coordination for the construction of the new natural resource facility.
- Completed candidate search for the vacant wildlife biologist position.
- Attended quarterly meeting of the Illinois Association of Conservation Districts at Starved Rock Lodge.
- Coordination of various utility projects in preserve throughout the county.
- Began working on the 2026-27 budget.

Wildlife

- Wrapped up spring salamander surveys in preserves throughout the county.

Natural Resource Management

April 2026 Activities Report – Cont.

- Finished 2026 spring raccoon removal efforts at Deer Run and Ferguson Forest Preserves.
- Put out purple martin houses at Four Lakes Forest Preserves.
- Continued pilot water quality study across trap sites to begin documenting the impact of environmental changes/trends in preferred habitat across sampled populations.
- Blanding's turtle monitoring:
 - Began weekly VHF telemetry of all turtles with transmitters.
 - Replaced a damage transmitter. Ordered several new transmitters, thanks in part to a donation made by members of the Rockford Garden Club.
 - Began the 2026 turtle trapping season at various preserves.
 - Captured two new adult turtles. Took the two new turtles to the Forest Preserve District of Cook County for blood draws and radiographs, contributing to a multi-county collaborative EMBL disease study initiated by Dr. Allender of FPDCC/University of Illinois Wildlife Epidemiology Lab.
- Snake monitoring:
 - Began coverboard surveys for the 2026 season.
 - Captured and marked a new male smooth greensnake in a southern preserve. Smooth green snakes are listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan.
 - Deployed iButton environmental data loggers at smooth greensnake sites in collaboration with Dr. Allison Sacerdote-Velat, Curator of Biology and Herpetology and VP of Conservation Research at Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, in an effort to document environmental influence on SGS clutch success.
- American Kestrels:
 - Hung three new AMKE nest boxes at Oak Ridge, the Kishwaukee shop, and Pecatonica Wetlands Shelter house. These nest boxes were donated by the Northern Illinois Raptor Rehabilitation Center. *We now have 15 nest boxes across FPWC, at 30% of our preserves!*
 - Began 2026 nest box monitoring season.
 - 3 clutches so far this season at Crooked River, Pecatonica Wetlands, and Ferguson Forest Preserves. These are sites that did not see kestrel usage in year 1 of the nest box program (2025).
 - Continued camera trapping efforts to document presence/absence and site usage of migratory bird species and mammalian carnivores.
 - Completed assembly of and deployed new AH Drift camera trap system at Sugar River Alder Forest Preserve to document smaller-bodied wildlife.
 - Began 2026 aquatic sampling season in tandem with turtle trapping; have begun deploying minnow traps at turtle trapping sites and seining opportunistically at sites with historic T&E records of fish and aquatic invertebrate species.
 - 2026 seasonal Wildlife Assistant, Emilia Ciesla, started on 4/27.

Stewardship Coordinator:

- Assisted natural resource staff with prescribed burns as needed.

Natural Resource Management

April 2026 Activities Report – Cont.

- Hosted six volunteer workdays at Blackhawk Springs, Kishwaukee Gorge, Pecatonica River, Macktown, and Espenscheid Forest Preserves.
- Co-hosted bat monitor training with Liza Lehrer, Assistant Director of the Urban Wildlife Institute.
- Co-hosted bumble monitor training with Michelle Boone of the Xerces Society.
- Coordinated a spring cleanup of the native plantings at Burpee Museum’s Nature Nook.
- Hosted a tree planting event at Funderburg Forest Preserve. 4H members planted 25 trees supplied by the Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Co-hosted bumble monitor training with Michelle Boone of the Xerces Society.
- Coordinated a spring cleanup of the native plantings at Burpee Museum’s Nature Nook.
- Hosted a tree planting event at Funderburg Forest Preserve. 4H members planted 25 trees supplied by the Winnebago County Soil and Water Conservation District.
- Conducted herbicide training for a volunteer site steward.
- Repaired and maintained bluebird nestboxes as needed.
- Hosted ten students from Jefferson High School at Blackhawk Springs Forest Preserve, where they removed invasive species as part of World Give Day.
- Hosted 170 students from Christian Life School at Blackhawk Springs Forest Preserve, where they planted bareroot trees, picked up litter, and removed invasive species to celebrate Earth Day.

2026 Statistics

A total of 236 volunteers have completed 1,637.25 service hours in 2026.

The monetary value of these service hours equals **\$59,170.22**. As of April 2026, the estimated national value of each volunteer hour is currently \$36.14 (based on the Independent Sector, April 21st 2026).

Community Science Snapshot

- 7 volunteers logged 18 hours-Calling Frog Survey
- 3 volunteers logged 11 hours-Bat Monitoring
- 13 volunteers logged 56 hours-Eastern Bluebird Monitoring
- 1 volunteer logged 2 hours-Budburst
- 2 volunteers logged 5 hours-Bumblebee Monitoring
- 1 volunteer logged 3 hours-IL Odonate Survey

Golf Operations

Vaughn Stamm, Director of Operations
Bobby VanSistine, Golf General Manager
Rose Mathews, Golf Food & Beverage Manager
Tyler Knapp & Mark Freiman, Golf Maintenance Managers
April 2026 Activities Report

Clubhouse Operations:

- Lightspeed Point of Sale System set up
 - Meetings with Lightspeed
 - POS updates
- Lightspeed Implementation
 - Staff Trainings
 - Went Live on April 20th
- Headquarters Meetings
 - Administrative Services Manager
 - Lightspeed set up
 - AOD (Attendance on Demand)
- Food and Beverage Manager
 - Lightspeed Setup
 - Updated pricing
- Macktown Golf Course Open
 - Golf Shop Set up
 - Staff Meeting
- Schedules completed using When to Work software
 - Outside Attendant
 - Cashier
- Spoke at the Macktown Women's golf league annual luncheon

Food and Beverage:

- There are currently 7 employees assigned to Atwood. Three who have returned and 4 new employees.
- There are currently 5 employees assigned to Macktown. Three who have returned and 3 new employees. Due to issues, only one of the new employees has been trained enough to be on her own. One will start training this weekend and the other should be completely trained in one or two more shifts.
- There are currently 6 employees assigned to Ledges. Five returning and 1 new employee, who will begin training this Friday.

Golf Operations

April 2026 Activities Report – Cont.

- The current beer coolers we have are not holding up like they should. Zippers have been broken and inside liners are ripping. I bought 2 from Amazon to test them at Ledges. The customers liked them because they did not leak like the old ones as the lining is a better quality. The cost for each bag was \$7.99 each.
- I set up accounts for each location with Breakthru liquor vendor. We have had an enormous number of requests for Tito's, Captain Morgan, etc. Our current vendor does not offer those brands. I will continue to use Southern Glazer's as well. There are two "levels" of mixed drinks/shots now. Rail mixed drink and Premium mixed drink with the Premium being \$2 more than the rail.
- I had conversations with Sysco Foods as they are wanting us to utilize their food service. Due to our season already starting, I will not consider them and will revisit their offer in the off season.
- Due to employees working for schools and not available until June or being on vacations, I have filled in at all locations for many shifts. I use that time to do orders and make sure product is being rotated.
- All current workers have been trained in the use of Lightspeed Point of Sale. All have caught on quickly and seem to really like it over Rec-Trac.
- Most are using the When-To-Work app. If it will continue, I will make sure everyone knows how to use it correctly.
- I will need to get new people (not all as some are certified) signed up to get BASSET certified as well as getting the Food Handlers Certification.
- Ledges and Atwood's liquor license are both current.

Golf Maintenance:

Ledges

- Updated expense report for the 2026 season to ensure accurate, up to date tracking of all expenses.
- Performed extensive golf course cleanup following flooding. Work included the following:
 - Tree removal from creek on #4
 - Debris cleanup after water receded on #2, 3, 4, and 13.
 - Clearing of excessive amounts of sand and silt off of fairways on #2, 4, and 13.
 - Removal of silt from greenside bunkers on # 2 and 11.
- Applied pre-emergent fertilizer across rough, fairways, tee complexes and green surrounds.
- Applied pre-emergent herbicide to bunker faces and surrounding areas.
- Began greens fertility program to promote root development.
- Edged bunkers to improve definition and overall aesthetic appeal.
- Completed removal and cleanup of a large fallen Silver Maple behind the 10th green.
- Cleared the Willow Grove 15 feet back along the 12th fairway to enhance playability and improve aesthetics.
- Removed fallen trees from the creek that runs between the 6th and 7th fairway.
- Began spring broadleaf weed applications in the rough and select fairways.

Golf Operations

April 2026 Activities Report – Cont.

- Applied seed head suppressant to the greens to prevent Poa Annua from producing seed heads.
- Cut sod from the driving range and installed it in select fairway areas to repair bare spots.
- Continued moving and grading spoiling's that were removed from the creek between holes 5 and 11 to restore water flow.
- Completed pump station assembly and pressurized irrigation lines.
- Performed sand trap maintenance to restore proper playing depth following heavy rainfall.
- Completed the 2026-2027 capital budget request and submitted to the Director of Operations.
- Trained newly hired seasonal employee.
- Mechanic performed repairs and maintenance on equipment.

Macktown

- Updated expense report for the 2026 season to ensure accurate, up to date tracking of all expenses.
- Performed sand trap maintenance to restore proper playing depth following heavy rainfall.
- Completed storm damage cleanup, including removal of fallen trees and several days of debris cleanup.
- Applied pre-emergent fertilizer across rough, fairways, tee complexes and green surrounds.
- Applied pre-emergent herbicide to bunker faces and surrounding areas.
- Began greens fertility program to promote root development.
- Began spring broadleaf weed applications in the rough and select fairways.
- Completed pump station assembly and pressurized irrigation lines and tested.
- Removed all tee signs from storage and reinstalled them throughout the course.
- Removed all garbage cans, bunker rakes, and tee markers from storage and placed on the course.
- Removed all golf cars from storage and parked in designated stalls.
- Replaced multiple irrigation solenoids, fuses, and a timing mechanism on hole #12 following the recent electrical storms.
- Completed the 2026-2027 capital budget request and submitted to the Director of Operations.
- Completed removal and cleanup of a large fallen pine trees on holes #4, 5 and 8.
- Mechanic performed repairs and maintenance on equipment.
- Final course clean-up and set-up prior to opening day.
- Make repairs to several irrigation heads.
- Hire and train new seasonal employees.
- Completed grinding stumps from dead and damaged trees removed during off season.
- Receive Toro bank mower from capital equipment list.

Golf Operations

April 2025 Activities Report – Cont.

Atwood

- Remove trees along right side of practice range to reduce amount of lost range balls.
- Apply fertilizer with pre-emergent herbicide to tees, fairways and rough for crabgrass prevention.
- Clean debris and several fallen trees from recent severe storms.
- Remove volunteer trees and undesirable vegetation between 18 green complex and practice range.
- Apply pre-emergent herbicide around all bunkers for crabgrass control.
- Begin broadleaf weed herbicide application to golf course grounds.
- Apply plant growth regulator to greens to suppress annual bluegrass seed heads allowing for a smoother putting surface and reduced seed bank.
- Remove volunteer trees and bush hog vegetation to improve playability of hole 11 back tee complex.
- Begin fertility program for golf greens.
- Repair and replace several irrigation heads and leaking swing joints.
- Assemble Atwood and Ledges irrigation pump stations following winterization.
- Pump water from select bunkers and adjust sand to proper playing depth after heavy rain events.

Marketing & Communication Relations

Sarah Lorenz, Communications Coordinator

April 2026 Activities Report

Marketing/Advertising:

- General and targeted golf (Mid-West Family targeted display ads running seasonally).
- GoRockford advertising (Outdoor Activities, Family Fun).
- Meta ad (survey) through April 30.

Engagement:

- Community Survey closed April 30 (1,281 responses).
- May digital newsletter to be sent to subscribers on 5/21.
 - June digital newsletter scheduled for 6/18.

Events/Programs/Tabling:

- Past: City Nature Challenge Hike with Wild Roots Nature Center 4/24, From Backyards to Boardrooms: Building Community Led Climate Resilience at Every Scale with Illinois Extension 5/6, Wildflower Walkabout: Deer Run with Wild Roots Nature Center 5/6; REAP Day-Bluebell Seed Collection with IL Extension 5/16.
- Upcoming: Wildflower Walkabout: Colored Sands with Wild Roots Nature Center 5/20, Hooked on Fun Kids' Fishing Derby with Muskies Inc.-Flatlander's Chapter 6/13
- Past: Pollinator Palooza 5/2 (Wild Roots Nature Center); Pelican Fest 5/16 (Natural Land Institute, Sinnissippi Audubon Society, Village of Rockton).
- Upcoming: Garden Fair 6/6-6/7 (Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden).

Print/Signage:

- Tick safety signage posted in preserve kiosks and staff shops.
- Report for May IACFPD meeting completed.
- Preliminary redevelopment of Visitor Guide & Map continues

Social Media:

FPWC Facebook: 6,385 followers (+156)

- Reach: 29,478 (-7.9%)
- Engagement: 2,426 (+32.5%)
- Views: 118,589 (-11.2%)

FPWC Instagram: 2,107 followers (+9)

- Reach: 8,425 (+255.6%)
- Engagement: 1,354 (+56.5%)
- Views: 23,844 (-12.4%)

MISCELLANEOUS

- RFP for website redevelopment issued 5/10

Human Resources

Jody Kennay, Human Resources Manager
April 2026 Activities Report

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Full-Time New Hires | 0 |
| Full-Time Open Requisitions | 0 |
| Seasonal Hires | 87 Returning 17 new 2 Open |
| Resignations | 0 |
| Orientations | 20 Orientations (seasonal employees) |

Projects and Progress:

Seasonal Employees - Orientations began the week of March 9 and will continue thru April and May, as needed. All new hires are required to attend Orientation and take the Illinois Harassment training. Open seasonal positions posted on website.

Employee Handbook (updated with new employment laws, rewrote sections as needed, added addendums) Staff/ED review complete; Legal review complete; Asking for Board approval at May meeting.

Compensation Study (current state, pain points, research, other updated Preserve information, compensation analysis, etc.). Reviewed analysis with ED.

Insurance Open Enrollment Sent email to all employees informing them of what's changing (costs and EAP activation), what's not changing (insurance providers and 15/85 split). Open enrollment begins May 12 and will close on May 26th. The new 2026-2027 benefits are effective July 1.

RESOLUTION

No. 26-0408

REVIEW, RELEASE OF CLOSED SESSION MINUTES AND DESTRUCTION OF VERBATIM RECORDINGS

WHEREAS, pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2.06(d), the Forest Preserve District of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners (the “Board”) has met and reviewed the minutes of all meetings of the Board dated below that are presently closed to the public; and

WHEREAS, the Board hereby finds and declares that the minutes for closed sessions held on certain dates no longer require confidential treatment; and

WHEREAS, section 2.06(c) of the Open Meetings Act allows for destruction of closed session verbatim recordings more than eighteen (18) months old; and

WHEREAS, District staff and legal counsel have reviewed and made recommendations to the Board about the minutes of all meetings dated below.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE WINNEBAGO COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT IN ILLINOIS, AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION ONE: The recitals set forth herein above shall be and they are hereby incorporated as if said recitals were fully set forth within this Section One.

SECTION TWO: The Board finds and hereby declares that closed session minutes or parts thereof of the following dates no longer require confidential treatment and can be released at this time:

January 18, 2017 – Entire set of minutes.

March 15, 2017 – Entire set of minutes.

April 19, 2017 – Set of minutes related to Fiddis property (land acquisition).

April 19, 2017 – Set of minutes related to Eckburg property (land acquisition).

April 19, 2017 – Set of minutes related to Stone Bridge property (land acquisition).

May 16, 2017 – Entire set of minutes.

July 19, 2017 – Entire set of minutes on land acquisition.

July 19, 2017 – Entire set of minutes on personnel.

SECTION THREE: The Board finds and hereby declares that the verbatim recordings of closed session minutes for the following dates may be destroyed by the recording secretary, as approved written minutes exist for those sessions.

January 18, 2017 – Entire set of minutes.

March 15, 2017 – Entire set of minutes.

April 19, 2017 – Set of minutes related to Fiddis property (land acquisition).

April 19, 2017 – Set of minutes related to Eckburg property (land acquisition).

April 19, 2017 – Set of minutes related to Stone Bridge property (land acquisition).

May 16, 2017 – Entire set of minutes.

April 15, 2026
Rockford, Illinois

July 19, 2017 – Entire set of minutes on land acquisition.
July 19, 2017 – Entire set of minutes on personnel.

SECTION FOUR: Any and all motions, policies or resolutions of the Forest Preserve District of Winnebago County in conflict with the provisions of this resolution shall be and are hereby repealed.

SECTION FIVE: This resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval in the manner provided by law.

PASSED THIS 20th day of May, 2026.

Voting YES _____ Voting NO _____ ABSTAINED _____

Jeff Tilly, President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind, Secretary
Board of Commissioners

RESOLUTION

No. 26-0505

REVIEW, RELEASE OF CLOSED SESSION MINUTES AND DESTRUCTION OF VERBATIM RECORDINGS

WHEREAS, pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2.06(d), the Forest Preserve District of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners (the “Board”) has met and reviewed the minutes of all meetings of the Board dated below that are presently closed to the public; and

WHEREAS, the Board hereby finds and declares that the minutes for closed sessions held on certain dates no longer require confidential treatment; and

WHEREAS, section 2.06(c) of the Open Meetings Act allows for destruction of closed session verbatim recordings more than eighteen (18) months old; and

WHEREAS, District staff and legal counsel have reviewed and made recommendations to the Board about the minutes of all meetings dated below.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE WINNEBAGO COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT IN ILLINOIS, AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION ONE: The recitals set forth herein above shall be and they are hereby incorporated as if said recitals were fully set forth within this Section One.

SECTION TWO: The Board finds and hereby declares that closed session minutes or parts thereof of the following dates no longer require confidential treatment and can be released at this time:

- February 17, 2016 – All minutes released.
- March 16, 2016 – All minutes released.
- May 18, 2016 – All minutes released.
- July 20, 2016 – Partial release – Land acquisition only.
- September 21, 2016 – All minutes released.
- December 21, 2016 – All minutes released.

SECTION THREE: The Board finds and hereby declares that the closed session minutes or parts thereof for the following dates cannot be released at this time because it remains necessary to protect the public interest or the privacy of an individual to keep said minutes confidential:

- July 20, 2016 - Personnel section shall remain confidential and not be released.
- November 16, 2016 - All minutes shall remain confidential and not be released.

SECTION FOUR: The Board finds and hereby declares that the verbatim recordings of closed session minutes for the following dates may be destroyed by the recording secretary, as approved written minutes exist for those sessions.

February 17, 2016

March 16, 2016
May 18, 2016
July 20, 2016 – both personnel and land acquisition.
September 21, 2016
November 16, 2016
December 21, 2016

SECTION FIVE: Any and all motions, policies or resolutions of the Forest Preserve District of Winnebago County in conflict with the provisions of this resolution shall be and are hereby repealed.

SECTION SIX: This resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval in the manner provided by law.

PASSED THIS 20th day of May, 2026.

Voting YES _____ Voting NO _____ ABSTAINING _____

Jeff Tilly, President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind, Secretary
Board of Commissioners