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Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Completes Restoration Project Funded By ComEd Green Region Grant

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County (FPWC) has completed a 40-acre restoration project at Funderburg Forest Preserve in Rockford. This project was funded by the ComEd Green Region Grant through Openlands. The ComEd Green Region Grant was created in 2013 to support open space projects in Northern Illinois and awards grants of up to \$10,000. FPWC was awarded the maximum \$10,000 by the ComEd Green Region Grant for the restoration project and matched that amount for a total project cost of \$20,000.

Through this grant, FPWC was able to purchase 84 pounds of diverse woodland seed mix, including 43 native plant species. The seed mix was spread throughout a 40-acre area at Funderburg Forest Preserve which had been severely impacted by invasive species, over-grazing, logging and a lack of prescribed fire. The area was previously cleared of invasive species last year through a restoration project funded by The Conservation Fund.

This project will help restore the herbaceous layer at Funderburg Forest Preserve by repopulating native vegetation. This will also help reduce erosion and deter the re-establishment of invasive species. These outcomes will promote a healthy, resilient oak-hickory woodland within the project area.

Restoring this woodland habitat will also benefit the federally endangered rusty patched bumblebee (*Bombus affinis*) and Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*). Both species have been recorded at Funderburg Forest Preserve. By increasing the floral diversity at this site, more pollen and nectar resources will be available for pollinating insects, including the rusty patched bumblebee. This will also increase the populations of insects that the Indiana bat relies on as a food source.

This project was supported by generous funding from ComEd and Openlands.

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About Forest Preserves of Winnebago County

The Forest Preserves of Winnebago County has been proudly dedicated to conserving, protecting, and enhancing Winnebago County's natural heritage for 100 years.