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Lake Forest Open Lands Association Secures 102-Acre Land Donation

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Lake Forest Open Lands Association (LFOLA) is pleased to announce the addition of an important conservation parcel to its portfolio of preserved natural areas and nature preserves. The 102-acre natural landscape, which is prominently sited on the north side of Half Day Road at Old Mill Road, had been proposed for a 265-unit mixed-use development. Now permanently protected, it is LFOLA's goal to restore the land and plan for a future public nature preserve for all to enjoy.

"The owner of the property felt it was a privilege for the family to care for and enjoy this special place for many years," said trustee Lori Lousararian of MNR Realty LLC, former owner of the property. "Key to the decision to donate the land was Lake Forest Open Lands' promise not only to preserve the wetlands, meadows and woodlands, but also to restore the land over time to its natural splendor and share it with everyone."

The 102-acre site boasts an impressive matrix of high-quality wetland, sedge meadow, and oak savanna habitat along the headwaters of the Westfork of the North Branch of the Chicago River. "We are thrilled to help preserve such a high-priority conservation parcel as Westfork Savanna," said Fred Wacker, board chair of Lake Forest Open Lands. "Due to the generosity and vision of the former landowner and our dedicated team, 102 acres of previously unprotected and inaccessible natural beauty will now be saved, restored, and accessible to the public forever. It's a wonderful story and tribute."

The permanent preservation of this important landscape has been a priority for the conservation community for some time. The newly-protected Westfork Savanna – with outstanding habitat and water quality value in its own right -- is also bordered to the north by the 109-acre Florsheim Nature Preserve (FNP) owned by the Village of Lincolnshire. With its unique mesic prairie and oak flatwood habitats, FNP holds the distinction as a dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve.

“Over the years, we’ve learned that larger, connected ecosystems can successfully support a greater diversity of species richness” said John Sentell, president and CEO of Lake Forest Open Lands. “We believe the greenway connectivity of Westfork Savanna with the nature preserve to the north will be of greater benefit not only to the plants and animals who depend upon it, but to the many residents who appreciate nature.”

High priority species such as the Illinois chorus frog, wood duck, monarch butterfly, red-headed woodpecker, blue spotted salamander, smooth green snake, and bobolink, among many others have been found either on the Westfork Savanna site or nearby. Ryan London, V.P. of Conservation at Lake Forest Open Lands added “Due to the newly-preserved site’s size, scale and proximity to existing high-quality natural areas, these rarer species will likely utilize the restored habitats at Westfork Savanna over time.”

“It was the donor’s life-long dream to save an undeveloped piece of nature” said Sentell. “It is Lake Forest Open Lands’ honor to help fulfill that dream and share it with everyone.”

About Lake Forest Open Lands

Since its establishment in 1967, Lake Forest Open Lands, the first accredited land trust in Illinois, has acquired, preserved and maintained some of the finest natural habitats in our region including prairies, savannas, ravines and wetlands. Over 14 miles of walking trails and six, soon to be nine, nature preserves are open to the public year-round. Lake Forest Open Lands Association’s vision is to engage and expand community commitment to land preservation and conservation. As an independent conservation land trust, LFOLA is supported solely by voluntary contributions, including membership dues and donations and receives no local or state government funding to support its day-to-day operations. For more information about Lake Forest Open Lands, please visit www.LFOLA.org.



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