PROPOSAL FOR DEDICATION OF THE
FORESTED FEN
AS AN ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVE

205TH MEETING, MAY 2010

PREPARED ON BEHALF OF THE
FOX RIVER COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL
AND
ILLINOIS NATURE PRESERVES COMMISSION

Re-presented by Steve Byers for a
FREP Noon Network
10-16-13
The proposed nature preserve is located in the Morainal Section of the Northeast Morainal Natural Division in Kane County, Illinois.
Fox River Country Day School and proposed Forested Fen Nature Preserve

Illinois Route 25

I-90 Tollway: Trout Park and the proposed nature Preserve were divided by and impacted by construction of the Tollway in 1958.

Trout Park Nature Preserve
Dr. Henry Cowles (1923) eloquently described Trout Park (then combined with the Fox River Country Day School) this way: “I have long known of the place and love it for its beautiful springs and evergreens. There is no place like it in the whole state.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th># Fens</th>
<th>Acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calcareous seep</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floating mat</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>167.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graminoid fen</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>133.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shrub fen</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forested fen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>336</strong></td>
<td><strong>336.0</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
1. Formerly referred to as the Chicago Junior School; its mission is “…to educate the whole child through a value-based curriculum conducted in a home-like environment combining academic excellence with individual character development”,

2. FRCDS acquired the site in 1923, once part of a 100-acre working farm,

3. FRCDS has long recognized significance of the fen and has featured stewardship as an important element of their environmental education program,

4. In August, 1989, the Board of Trustees formally recognized ecological significance of the site by enrolling the fen with INPC as an Illinois Natural Heritage Landmark,

5. In 2006, FRCDS approved IDNR C2000 grant application to provide impetus for stewardship at the proposed Forested Fen Nature Preserve.
Educational kiosk at trailhead reflects FRCDS commitment
ball field
preserve boundary, solid yellow line
mesic forest
forested fen
dry-mesic forest
calcareous seep
FRCDS property line
school campus
I-90 Tollway
Hallmarks of this INAI site (INAI # 0968) include:

Grade B forested fen (5.0 acres), representing the balance of the 14.5 acres of forested fen identified on the INAI, and

Grade C calcareous seep (1.5 acres); representing about 1/10th of the 16.1 acres of calcareous seep identified on the INAI.
Forested fen community:

1. Considered Grade B by INAI, characteristic species include white cedars with understory of skunk cabbage (pictured here),

2. This community restricted in Illinois to nearby Trout Park Nature Preserve and the proposed Forested Fen Nature Preserve,

3. These community is restricted in Illinois to sites with strong alkaline ground water discharge and where the landscape (in this case the Fox River and steep slopes overlooking the river) prevented reoccurring fires.
Calcareous seep community:

1. Considered Grade C by INAI, characteristic species include swamp goldenrod, Ohio goldenrod, swamp thistle, grass of Parnassus and marsh marigolds (pictured here).

2. This community is restricted to seven sites in Illinois totaling 16.1 acres.

3. This community is restricted in Illinois to sites with strong alkaline ground water discharge where groundwater flows to the surface in a diffuse rather than concentrated flow. These sites are further distinguished by the absence of tree cover, and adjoining peat deposits.

4. Supports population of State-threatened common bog arrow grass.
Common bog arrow grass

Observed during INAI in 1977 and again in 1986 by Dick Young. It’s continued presence currently unknown. Herkert and Ebinger (2002) reported this species is represented by 10 populations in 3 Illinois counties.
Reserved rights:
1. Maintain road for access to ball field,
2. Maintain the existing trail system, which incorporates this road,
3. Evaluate effect of well head, and when funds become available and should study show ground water benefit, remove well head,
4. Renovate existing platform for educational venue, and
5. Continue to use the Forested Fen for environmental education.
existing foot trail with signage
existing platforms, restore for environmental educational venue
Existing well may be impacting groundwater; currently groundwater surfaces at this point and flows into natural stream course.

If studies show removal of well head would improve groundwater, (and as funds become available), FRCDS would remove wellhead.
Students at Fox River Country Day School – removing buckthorns. FRCDS reserves right to continue to use site for environmental education programs in the manner to which they have become accustomed.
preserve boundary, solid yellow line
existing trail
existing road
ball field
FRCDS school campus
pool
abandoned well head
red dashed line is balance of INAI site (not included in proposed nature preserve)
I-90 Tollway
Fox Valley Land Foundation applied for IDNR C2000 grant; pivotal in restoration of this site and created new mind set that has led to commitment by Board of Trustees to move forward with dedication of site as Nature Preserve.

Remove invasive species from groundwater discharge zone identified above.

Fox River Country Day School; aka Chicago Junior School Fen
photo points to measure restoration success

IDNR C2000 – INPC Project; administered by The Conservation Foundation, Jennifer Hammer
Vicinity G (maybe little north) looking up slope
The proposed addition supports elements of IDNR Wildlife Action Plan – wetlands campaign; restore and manage high-quality wetlands
Old field/ball field to McGraw

Approx boundary of Forested Fen to be conveyed to FPD

preserve boundary, solid yellow line – from proposal

FRCDS school campus

Dry-mesic forest will also be conveyed to FPD.

I-90 Tollway
1. This 23-acre preserve will protect the balance of the surviving forested fen community in Illinois and a restored calcareous seep wetland (both considered imperiled globally),

2. The calcareous seep supports a population of the State-threatened common bog arrow grass, and

3. Reaffirms the commitment of the Fox River Country Day School to preservation of this site while retaining the site for environmental education.
Acknowledgements:

The Fox River Country Day School, its staff and Board of Trustees merit acknowledgement. Karen Morse, Head of School, and Tim Holzworth (naturalist/teacher) are deserving of special recognition for their respective commitments to preservation and stewardship.

The IDNR C2000 program was especially helpful in funding restoration and helped foster a renewed appreciation for these unique wetland resources.
Updates since the site was presented for preliminary approval for dedication:

1. Fox River Country Day School threatened with foreclosure.
3. Fox River Country Day School went into foreclosure/site listed for sale.
4. INPC, TCF began exploring options to protect site with The Tollway Authority (Bryan Wagner and leadership).
5. INPC, TCF reached out to the FPD of Kane County, City of Elgin, and McGraw Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (mitigation for I-90 road-widening project).
6. The Tollway Authority ($2.6 m) and McGraw Wildlife ($600 k) agreed to purchase the site and convey property to the City of Elgin (Mayor Kaptain).
7. City in turn agreed to convey forested fen to FPD Kane County, small acreage to McGraw Wildlife Foundation.
8. FPD has a specified period of time to dedicate site as nature preserve and has responsibility for performance standards specified by Corps.
9. City of Elgin plans will honor easement to “freeze” existing footprint of buildings to protect groundwater recharge zone and remove some buildings. Goal (Mayor Kaptain) is to provide conservation day camp at site.
10. INPC continues to support management with IDNR NAAF funding/INPC funding ($7500) in 2014.
preserve boundary, solid yellow line

FRCDS school campus

red dashed line is balance of INAI site (not included in proposed nature preserve)

I-90 Tollway