**LWVCC Forest Preserve Annual Report 2021-2022**

Forest Preserve District Board of Commissioners voted unanimously on December 14, 2021, to finalize language ([21-0532](https://fpdcc.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5353906&GUID=08D291E9-563F-4B3F-82B8-7A1ECC9CCBC2&Options=Advanced&Search=)) for a November 8, 2022, referendum. It will ask voters to raise the district’s tax levy by .025 percentage points which will increase taxes of a $250,000 home by about $20.00 a year. If approved, the higher tax will go into effect in 2023. Forest Preserve District is not a home rule government and needs approval from voters to increase tax rate.

The money will:

\* Conserve and restore land to good health

\* Protect water quality of rivers, lakes and streams

\* Provide natural flood water storage

\* Protect wildlife habitat

\* Protect forests to improve air quality

\* Improve and maintain existing forest preserves and trails

\* Address more than $60 million in deferred capital maintenance

\* Shore up the district’s pension fund

\* Generate jobs for underserved/low income communities

\* Buy good quality land as it becomes available to expand the current 70,000 acres

The district created the Next Century Conservation Plan (NCCP) as a strategic plan. In order to continue the plan, the increased tax rate is needed to create consistent, foundational revenues. When the pandemic hit, the district needed to pull $17 million from reserve funds in order to meet the annual budget.

The district again pulled $17 million from the reserve fund to meet this year’s 2022 $137 million annual budget. Currently, there are 15,000 acres under restoration. Increased revenue, estimated to be $42 million, will support meeting the Next Century Conservation Plan, which includes a blueprint to purchase 20,000 additional acres by 2040. If the referendum does not pass, the district may have to pare down some of the current 70,000 acres in order to continue meeting the operational needs.

The LWV Cook County board voted to approve supporting the referendum at the board meeting on Tuesday, February 8, 2022 and also approved becoming a VoteYes coalition partner. The VoteYes coalition consists of over 140 organizations, including LWVCC, Palatine Area, Chicago, Wilmette, LaGrange, Oak Park/River Forest, Glenview/Glencoe, Park Ridge and Evanston/Skokie. Public education will begin after the June primary. Education for local league chapters and walks in the forests are being offered now.

Walks- all limited to 20 people:

Wed. May 18, 10:30-11:30

 Little Red Schoolhouse Nature Center, 9800 Willow Springs Road

 Willow Springs

Thurs. Sept 8, 10am to noon

 Crabtree Nature Center, 3 Stover Road (off of Palatine Road by Rte 62)

 Barrington Hills

Tues, Sept. 13, 10am to noon

 Sand Ridge Nature Center, 15891 Paxton Ave,

 South Holland

LWV - Cook County Forest Preserves Interest Team members:

Michele Niccolai, Diane Scott, Krista Grimm (La Grange Area)

Carolyn Cosentino (Homewood/Flossmoor)

Laura Davis ( Palatine Area)

Trudy Turner (Evanston/Skokie)

Henrietta Saunders, Barbara Palmer (Glenview/Glencoe)

Debby Halpern (Chicago)