On Friday, December 23rd 2016 the Boone County Conservation District (BCCD) purchased 89-acres of important conservation lands from Openlands. This purchase culminated a project that was three years in the making and involved the complex interaction and cooperation of several local agencies and one not-for-profit organization. The 89-acre property hosts the riparian corridor of the Kishwaukee River just east of the hamlet of Garden Prairie, Illinois. As the Kishwaukee leaves McHenry County and flows into Boone, it must first bow under the bridge of County Line Road. That bridge had been closed to public use due to structural wear and was in need of being replaced. About the same time, efforts were underway by the Boone County Conservation District to purchase the adjoining 89-acre property with assistance from Openlands, a land trust organization that has contributed greatly to conservation efforts in Boone County and surrounding areas.

Openlands had successfully applied for a Grand Victoria Foundation Vital Lands grant to fund and manage a conservation easement on this 89-acre property. This grant totaled $248,500 and lowered the BCCD’s purchase price to $106,500 of the appraised fair market value. Earlier reference of the County Line Road bridge now re-enters the conversation, as the McHenry Division of Transportation and Riley Township were responsible for replacing the bridge. The new bridge design called for an expansion of the County Line Road right-of-way (ROW) and the construction work and new bridge would have impacts that required mitigation by local, state and federal regulations.

The McHenry County Conservation District recognized an opportunity for an intergovernmental cooperative effort to address the McHenry County DOT issues, and convert those issues into public benefits. The Boone County Conservation District and Openlands became engaged in the mitigation of wetlands; compensatory storage of stormwater; completed tree removal during the winter season to avoid impacts to migratory bats, which are now a species in greatest need of conservation; and provide the transfer of additional road right-of-way, all to facilitate the bridge replacement. In exchange, McHenry County DOT constructed a canoe/kayak access to the Kishwaukee River on the 89-acre property and compensated the BCCD a total of $246,000.00 for obtaining wetland mitigation permits, constructing, monitoring and managing new wetlands developed at the Piscasaw Fen Conservation Area, and planting native replacement trees on BCCD conservation lands.

Additionally, the Boone County Conservation District and the McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD) have established an intergovernmental agreement to share facilities. The MCCD is providing parking for patrons using the new paddlesport access at the newly dedicated East County Line Conservation Area. The dedication ceremony was held on Saturday, August 26th. The short dedication program was led by BCCD Trustee Dr. Sean Beckmann. The public was invited to paddle the Kishwaukee River from the new East County Line Conservation Area to the Red Horse Bend Canoe Access near Belvidere. All participants expressed their appreciation and enjoyment of this new outdoor recreational facility.
The Mission of the Boone County Conservation District is to preserve and manage natural areas and open spaces for ecological, educational, and recreational benefits of present and future generations.

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Riffles & Eddies is a free newsletter published quarterly. If you know someone who would like to receive this publication, or have an address correction, please call our office at (815) 547-7935.

The Boone County Conservation District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age or handicap in admission or treatment, or employment in programs or activities. In compliance with the Illinois Human Rights Act, section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended, and the U.S. Constitution. The Equal Employment Opportunity Officer is responsible for compliance and may be reached at (217)423-7708.

Eagle Scout Project

Blake Coleman, T181, recently completed his Eagle project at BCCD. Blake constructed 12 fish habitats, and with the assistance of the Belvidere Fire Department and over 25 scouts from his troop, he placed the fish structures around the shallow edges of the Blue Pond. A fish habitat is a concrete block with polyethylene tubing extending from cement in the center. The tubing becomes a food source for fish because the tubes grow algae on them. In the shoreline areas where the fish habitats were placed in the pond, fish will congregate, and these locations will serve as popular fishing spots.

Blake came up with the idea for his Eagle project while attending a BSA Certified Angling Instructor course. With his certification, he hopes to be able to teach Fishing and Fly Fishing merit badge courses at BCCD in the near future. This project was funded by an In Youth We Trust grant from the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois.

Why are they doing that?

Have you ever visited a conservation area and seen a habitat enhancement project in progress and wondered why this work is being done? Now is your chance to ask questions, discuss individual projects, and the techniques used in managing natural areas.

Joshua Sage, BCCD’s Natural Resources and Natural Areas Manager will be presenting. Thursday January 25th, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. (In case of inclement weather the program will be held on Thursday, February 8th at 6:30 p.m.) Pre-registration is required, call 815-547-7935 to register.

The District wants everyone to discover the benefits of recreation. For families considering any of our programs who have special considerations, such as diabetes, asthma or physical or cognitive disabilities, your participation is welcome too. The earlier you contact us so we can talk with you about how to make your experience safe and fun, the more likely it will be safe and fun!
Monthly Meetings
(All Meetings held at the Roger D. Gustafson Nature Center are open to the public)

BCCD Board of Trustees
Tuesdays at 4:00 p.m. November 21st, December 19th, January 16th, February 20th and March 20th.

Gardeners of America
Tuesdays at 2:30 p.m., March 27th
No meeting at the District in December, January or February.

Prescribed Fire Season

Conservation District land management staff will be conducting prescribed burns at several of our conservation areas in the late fall 2017 and early spring of 2018. Prescribed fire is an essential and efficient management practice for the health of our native ecosystems, including prairies, savannas, and woodlands. Fire helps return nutrients to the soil, helps control undesirable exotic weeds and shrubs, increases blooming and seed production among our native plants, and stimulates the growth of our native prairie and woodland plant species. District staff manages the burns to minimize smoke on highways and neighboring properties.

Holiday Walk
Saturday, December 2nd
5:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.

Stroll along a luminary lit pathway and visit our authentic log cabins, eat popcorn popped over an open fire, and see how Christmas was celebrated in the past. There is no cost for the evening and it is held at the Roger Gustafson Nature Center Festival Grounds. Call 815-547-7935 for information.

Rock Cut State Park Christmas Bird Count December 27th

The count takes place in a 15 mile diameter circle that extends from Rock Cut State Park to Capron, and from highway 90 to beyond Caledonia. Map link: Rock Cut State Park CBC, https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1TsXNAYkCdxhJQHDker3CUHKRYw&ll=42.336359630250236%2C-88.82192612402343&z=11

The idea is to count as many birds as possible on that day within the circle. There are two ways to count, the first is if your house is in the count circle, you can sign up to simply count the birds that show up in your yard or to your feeders. The second way is to sign up for a field assignment, where you will be given a section of the circle and you drive or walk around and count as many birds as you can in your assigned area.

The Christmas Bird Count have been an ongoing tradition since Christmas of 1900 when it was started by a man named Frank Chapman. Because it has been going on for more than one hundred years it has become a valuable source of data for groups like the Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to study bird migrations, population decline, and winter movements. It is more than a fun way to spend the day, it is assisting in supplying data for these studies. For information or to sign up contact Joel at wburkfdjoel@gmail.com.

Needed:
The BCCD is looking for suet and corn for the winter feeding of birds and squirrels and binoculars for our school programs. Donations can be dropped off at the Administration Center, 603 N Appleton Rd., Monday – Friday, 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

District will be Closed

Nov. 23rd & 24th Thanksgiving
Dec. 22nd thru 29th Christmas
Jan. 1st New Year’s Day
Feb. 15th & 16th Staff Training
Feb. 19th President’s Day
Coon Creek Caster’s

Kid’s Ice Fishing Workshop

A FREE workshop for kids 5—15. Lunch provided.

Sat., February 3, 2018
9:00 a.m.—12:00 noon

Workshop will start at the Roger D. Gustafson Nature Center
603 N. Appleton Road, Belvidere, IL

Bring any ice fishing equipment you have, limited rigs available.

You must preregister for this program.
Registration begins January 2, 2018.
Call the BCCD at (815) 547-7935 to register

The Truth About Black Bears

February 21st at 6pm
BCCD Nature Center

BCCD Educator, Tina Dawson Scott will present a FREE program on black bears.

She will address the myths and misconceptions about black bears and introduce the audience to the natural history of this misunderstood animal. There will be a bear hide, skull, claw, and track on display.

There is no charge for this program but please pre-register by calling (815)547-7935.