

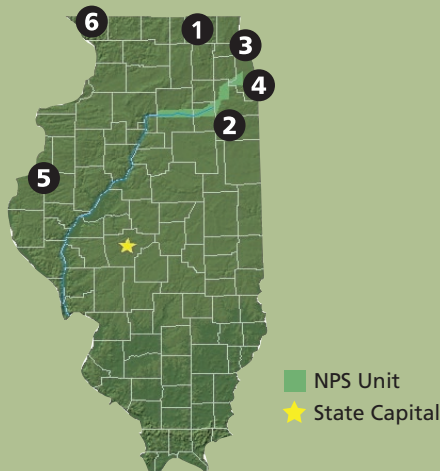


Illinois News



Chicago Heights residents and City staff engaged in park clean up.
Photo: NPS

PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2013



CURRENT PROJECTS

1. Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge
McHenry County Conservation District
2. Improving the Little Calumet Water Trail System
Forest Preserve District of Cook County
3. Lake Michigan Trails Organizational Development
Lake Michigan Water Trail Association
4. Millennium Reserve
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
5. Mississippi River Trail & Collaborative Support
Mississippi River Trail, Inc.
6. Northwest Illinois Driftless Region
Rivers to Ridges: Northwest Illinois Recreation Network

Find out more about each project starting on page 2.

Recent Successes

Growing America's Great Outdoors: Secretary Salazar Marks the Establishment of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced the establishment of Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge Friday, January 11, 2013 in Florida at Pelican Island National Wildlife Refuge. Hackmatack is the 561st national wildlife refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System and is the tenth refuge established during Secretary Salazar's tenure.

The refuge was officially established when Openlands, a Chicago-based organization dedicated to the protection of natural and open spaces in and around northeastern Illinois, donated a 12-acre habitat easement. As with the planning stages, Hackmatack Refuge will be a partnership effort, involving local, state, and federal agencies, citizen-driven groups, and other non-governmental organizations.

Wetland, prairie, and oak savanna restoration will reconnect urban populations with nature and provide outdoor educational and recreational opportunities for an estimated 3.5 million people who live within 30 miles of the project area.

ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provides technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.

Current Projects

1. Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge

Project Partner: McHenry County Conservation District
RTCA Contact: Diane Banta
Location: Bi-State Region, IL / WI
Congressional Districts: IL - 10, 14

Project Goal

Define and establish the Friends of Hackmatack which will work to support the development of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge.

NPS Role

Guide Friends of Hackmatack through the process of defining the Friends group for the National Wildlife Refuge, working on partnership building, public involvement and building a sustainable non-profit organization.

2. Improving the Little Calumet Water Trail System

Project Partner: Forest Preserve District of Cook County
RTCA Contact: Diane Banta
Location: Chicago Area
Congressional District: IL - 1, 3, 4, 5, 7

Project Goal

Improving the Little Calumet Water Trail System.



Friends of Hackmatack, Department of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Senator Dick Durbin celebrate at the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge announcement. Photo: NPS

NPS Role

Facilitate and support outreach process within local area municipalities, landowners and stakeholders, build partnership capabilities. Facilitate and support outreach process within local area municipalities, landowners and stakeholders, build partnership capabilities.

Project Goal

Build a partnership organization to work on the Lake Michigan Trails which will provide access to Lake Michigan in four states via three recreation travel modes, while marketing the trail for increased tourism and economic development opportunities.

NPS Role

Convene quad state organizations, local governments, and state governments to set vision, mission, and goals/outcomes leading to the development of land and water trails, US Bike Routes and enhancing the Lake Michigan Circle Route.

3. Lake Michigan Trails Organizational Development

Project Partner: Lake Michigan Water Trail Association
RTCA Contact: Diane Banta
Location: IL, IN, MI, WI
Congressional District: IL - 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 10

4. Millennium Reserve

Project Partner: Illinois Department of Natural Resources
RTCA Contact: Diane Banta
Location: Calumet Region, IL / IN
Congressional District: IL - 2, IN - 1

Project Goal

Implementation of land use planning recommendations for Calumet Core and expand planning to larger region for AGO project inclusion.

NPS Role

Work with Illinois Natural Resources to build lasting partnership for the Calumet Region through support of Calumet Stewardship Initiative development and land vision team development.



Senator Dick Durbin, with Ken Salazar, at the Millennium Reserve Model Projects Announcement. Photo: NPS

Current Projects cont.

5. Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/Mississippi River Trail

Project Partner: Mississippi River Trail, Inc.

RTCA Contact: Diane Banta

Location: Mississippi River, Ten States

Congressional District: AR - 1, 4; IA - 1, 2, 4; IL - 12, 13, 17, 18; KY - 1; LA - 3, 5, 6; MN - 1, 2, 6, 8; MO - 1, 2, 3, 8, 9; MS - 2, 3; TN - 8, 9; WI - 3, 7

Project Goal

Continued assistance to the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative (MRCC) with a focus on expanding the Collaborative to additional partners and creating a sustainable forum, focused on enhancing the MRT organization. Specific assistance in planning and implementation of the Year of Cycling 2013, outreach to local communities to encourage MRT improvements for enhanced recreation, tourism, and community development; continued technical assistance in the development of an organizational strategic plan to support MOU objectives and increase long-term organizational viability; and to further develop the Mississippi River "blueway" portion of the trail system.

"The establishment of the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge will help keep open spaces, including wetlands and grasslands, within easy reach of millions of people living in largely urban areas of Chicagoland and northeast Illinois."

- Pat Quinn Governor, State of Illinois

NPS Role

To assist the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative with organizational development, outreach to other organizations and agencies and development and implementation of their strategic and operations plans. Increase MRT's capacity to help develop water and land based trail along the Mississippi River.

6. Northwest Illinois Driftless Region

Project Partner: Rivers to Ridges:

Northwest Illinois Recreation Network

RTCA Contact: Mary Hanson

Location: Jo Daviess, Carroll and Whiteside Counties

Congressional District: 17



DOI Secretary Ken Salazar and Senator Dick Durbin touring the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge. Photo: NPS

Project Goal

The land managers of Rivers to Ridges will collaborate to enhance the natural resources and recreational opportunities of the region. To create a three-county group that will collaborate in the promotion of recreation and conservation in the northeast Illinois' Driftless Region. Rivers to Ridges is a partnership of federal, state, land trusts, and communities working to preserve the unique beauty of this region while providing a recreational network that attracts visitors from across the nation.

NPS Role

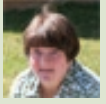
Interested in attracting new visitors to this unique region, the land managers in a three-county area are working with RTCA staff to coordinate and link their properties. They will be exploring issues and opportunities to build a long-term collaboration that will build the region's reputation for natural resources educational and recreational experiences, and create funding strategies. The results will benefit all agencies and their visitors.



MRCC - Summer of Paddling Students learning the correct way to paddle. Photo: NPS

We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from RTCA Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.



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2012 Nationwide Partnership Success

2,154 Miles of Trail Developed

1,074 Miles of River Conserved

70,230 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected

94% Percentage of Community Partners Satisfied

Find more information online at
www.nps.gov/rtca



EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA™

Recent Successes cont.

The refuge will benefit a variety of wildlife, plants, and their habitats. The refuge boundaries are based on soils, vegetation, watersheds, existing conservation areas, and wildlife habitat requirements, public roads, and public comments. The refuge will link and expand existing conservation areas to benefit migratory birds, endangered species, and provide wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities.

Conservation for four core areas of land, encompassing up to 11,200 acres, includes purchase from willing sellers, conservation easements, public-private initiatives, and partnerships aimed at creating contiguous natural habitat. Conservation corridors that connect these core areas will be established primarily through the use of partnership efforts and through willing seller purchase.

Midwest Regional Director Tom Melius had words of praise for Openlands, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Friends of Hackmatack, and the wider Hackmatack Planning Partnership. Meliu says, "This truly collaborative effort underscores our commitment to pulling in the best science together with the best community support...taken together, these components create a project far greater than the sum of its parts."

Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge will also provide habitat for 109 species of concern, including federal and state threatened and endangered species. The list includes 49 birds, five fishes, five mussels, one amphibian, two reptiles, and 47 plants.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved the establishment of the refuge on July 10, 2012, with the first parcel added on November 6, 2012.

Protecting Horseshoe Mound

Named for its unique shape, Horseshoe Mound is a rare example of a driftless area mound and one of the most prominent and scenic geologic landmarks in Jo Daviess County. Located at the eastern gateway to the historic city of Galena and less than a mile east of downtown, it has survived the pressures of development. Horseshoe Mound is now permanently protected through a joint effort of the Jo Daviess Conservation Foundation and the Natural Land Institute. Funding for the purchase came from grants from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. The Natural Land Institute holds a conservation easement on 28 acres adjoining the property.



Horseshoe Mound Ceremony. Photo: Jo Daviess County Foundation