

ROCK ISLAND COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 16TH, 2025 – 6:05PM
PRESIDENT KAI SWANSON – PRESIDING

1. Karen Kinney, County Clerk, called the roll:

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, T. Foster, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno-Baker, R. Morthland, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, K. Swanson, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL PRESENT 13

E. Dewith, C. Layer, R. Simmer, B. Vyncke

TOTAL ABSENT 4

President Swanson stated, "Duly noted here, thank you, Madam Clerk, I appreciate your time. I'm so grateful that tonight we're going to have an opportunity, will you be introducing our speaker, Jeff? I see....are you? Ok. I'm grateful to introduce Ms. Ellen Loechner. Is it Dr. Loechner? No? Well ok. For tonight it is, sure. Ellen Loechner is a biologist with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and I'm grateful for her presence with us this evening. Ellen Loechner, you have the floor."

Ellen Loechner stated, "Alright, hey everyone. Thanks so much for having me. As I've already been introduced, my name is Ellen Loechner, I work for the Illinois Iowa Ecological Services field office and I wanted to take a little bit time to highlight the really rich partnership between our office and the Rock Island Forest Preserve District, and just offer some updates in maybe a little bit of a different lens and bring some more info. Innovation, engagement and species recovery is what we're talking about. So, a little bit of context about me, just because I think that's sometimes helpful. I'm a proud Augie grad and I've been working through the Fish and Wildlife Service, in this position, for about 4 years, but dabbled, lived out west for a while, did some owl surveys in California, and have (inaudible) internships with Fish and Wildlife Service for going on around 10 years or something like that. I attended graduate school at the University of New Mexico and have a Graduate Degree in geography. So, I'm a biologist and geographer, and kind of like to toggle many hats, but I'm glad to be back here in the Quad Cities. It's fun to come home. So, Fish and Wildlife Service, we're a federal agency. Again, this is kind of boring, just a little context-building. Our mission is to work with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. So, we always like to highlight the 'working with others' piece. Our office is located in Region 3, the Midwest Region. We cover Illinois and Iowa, so both states. I was working at the Ecological Services field office so, we do endangered species (inaudible) stuff. I think a lot about the

very small, very inbred, very cryptic critters, more than our charismatic (inaudible). But, we are able to work with others and we're able to have and retain our hometown communities because of our partnerships with Forest Preserve Commissions. I'll get into that a little more in depth, but wanted to kind of refresh that. We've collaborated on prairie restorations, land acquisitions, we've done bat surveys, bee surveys, the list goes on and on. We've been able to utilize mitigation (inaudible) from pipeline projects to help acquisition some of those restoration efforts. So, our office has a long and rich history of partnering with the Forest Preserve District. It's really a huge asset to our office and to me, as an individual biologist. I'll kind of go into that, maybe a little bit more later. Alright, I really want to explore this partnership through the lens of bumblebees. So, this is the Rusty Patch Bumblebee. It was listed as endangered in 2017. It's a (inaudible) species. The more we look for it, the more we find it. But, it is officially listed as an endangered species, so it's our duty as Fish and Wildlife Service to recover that species, and do the science, and do the documentation, and the work to demonstrate that the species is not at risk of going extinct. For a little bit of context, there's about 9-10 different bumblebee species that are native to our area. The two big pictures, one is a Rusty Patch Bumblebee worker, the other is a look-alike that often fools me, called 'Brown Belted'. You can see, they look really similar. Rusty Patch Bumblebees have a little bit of extra yellow fuzz between their black segments and their rusty patch. So, keep your eyes peeled for me. People are really enchanted with pollinators and the Quad Cities is a really perfect place to practice and kind of pilot different pollinator conservation efforts. There seems to be enough greenspace, enough resources, enough people looking for these critters and it's just got a really beautiful model for conservation over the last 7-8 years since the Rusty Patch Bumblebee has been listed. So again, I mentioned that we are interested in recovering endangered species. For the Rusty Patch Bumblebee, it means that we need to maintain healthy populations, which means we also have to find them and document them, and understand how many critters there are. We need to visit them regularly and demonstrate that they have stable and increasing numbers. And we want populations that are distributed across numerous habitats. As environments change, as landscapes change, there's a lot of resilience in having bees spread across the landscape. Recovery is our goal at Fish and Wildlife, right? Like I said earlier, the more we look for them, the more we find them. So, I'm going to toggle through a few slides kind of quick to show you. These little green patches are what we call 'high potential zones'. Every new green patch, and they kind of blend together eventually, but it indicates that there was a Rusty Patch Bumblebee observed. So, this is obviously our Quad City area, our lovely community. You can see that it's really increased. This is 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025. We're really kind of systematically filling in, quote-unquote, the Quad Cities with our efforts. Which is really important. It's really important to that recovery story. And so, the long and the short of it, is that we've been able to utilize our landscape, utilize an economy of resources, as a federal agency and really stack

up the benefits, and the use of these different land uses and landscapes. From an innovation standpoint, our office is really trying to be proactive about putting conservation on the ground. So, through the Forest Preserve District, we've been able to pair habitat restoration very closely with the species recovery goal. Which means that there's dollars available for seed, and land acquisition, and really important restoration work to make sure that those bees have floral resources, have food, and have room to eat and thrive. I also want to highlight that our office is doing a really exciting Bee Tracking project. So, this little transmitter is a little mini solar panel. We're actually attaching these to a few bee species to track their movements across the landscape. We're some of the first people in the country, as far as I know, that are doing this work. We're able to do that work because we have really important county forest preserve habitats with lots of bees and lots of flowers, and we're able to find the species right in our backyard to better understand their life histories and do the really important recovery and science that I, as a Fish and Wildlife Service employee, am responsible to do. So, innovation is central to our partnership. Also, engagement. I really think about our county forest preserve sites as living labs. Our office is over by the tennis club in Moline. We don't have much of a campus, so to speak. We don't really have space to kind of go and do the work that we need to do. It's important that we get out and about, anyway. But, it's important for us to have sites where we can go to practice methods and engage, participate in training for ourselves, but also engage with interns and other conservation practitioners and Illiniwek is just a honey hole for these Rusty Patched Bumblebees and bees in general. So, we really utilize that site for our own training and work. And then again, species recovery, as I've been talking about. The Rusty Patched Bumblebee has this recovery implementation strategy, we call it the RIS, and again, because of the restoration work and the survey work, we've been able to really make progress check some of those boxes on our implementation strategy goals. There's a growing number of High Potential Zones, as you saw. All in all, the Rock Island Forest Preserve is an essential partner that makes our work so much better, and really enriches the conservation community at large. I just wanted to celebrate that and highlight that. With that, I'll take any questions."

President Swanson asked, "Any questions we have? I know I have one...just looking around to see if anyone else has one handy. I do have a question. That is, this year, almost all federal agencies have been confronting unprecedented levels of uncertainty regarding budgetary and policy matters. Is this affecting Fish and Wildlife?"

Ms. Loechner stated, "I'll say, maybe yes, and/or a lot of the particulars are still to be seen. I'm not involved in any of those budgetary conversations, obviously, and we're still kind of awaiting budgetary plans and just budgets for the next fiscal year, so it's possible. I'll say that our office, there's about 10 of us that hang out at the Moline office, we're really committed and interested in providing technical

assistance regardless of what our budgetary situation is. So, while there are some uncertainties ahead of us, we want to show up, and still participate, and still partner, in every way we can. We're really committed to that."

President Swanson stated, "I appreciate that very much. I don't see any other calls for questions, so friends, if you'll be so kinds as to join me in thanking our partner, US Fish and Wildlife please."

(Group applause)

President Swanson stated, "Thank you Ellen, for the reminder about your alma mater."

Ms. Loechner stated, "I did bring some stickers if you guys are wanting a little swag."

President Swanson stated, "Oh, I'm a sticker dude. (inaudible). We really appreciate you taking the time to be with us."

2. Commissioner Adams moved to approve the August Commission and Public Hearing minutes, as presented. Commissioner Mielke seconded.

A voice vote was taken.

Motion carried.

3. **PUBLIC COMMENTS - (NONE)** (Three calls were made.)

4. **PRESIDENTS COMMENTS:**

President Swanson stated, "As for President's comments, just a couple brief things. Most of our parks are still open, they will be through October, as a matter of fact. If you don't have your plans for designated drivers for Pints for Preservation at Niabi on Friday, please firm those up, buy your tickets and support our amazing Niabi Zoo. I will say, that the Executive Committee of the Commission had an opportunity to meet at Illiniwek, during the warmer months, and go around and meet at different facilities, and it was just a reminder, if you haven't been to Illiniwek, Mr. Morthland, I know you drive through there all the time, I hope you'll do it. The transformation there over the past 10 years, where we had a golf course with no holes, on the east side of the road, which was mowed several times a week and maintained in grassy perfection, driving away all pollinators and bees.

As under Mike Peterson's leadership, literally blossomed into an amazing place that has different things blooming three seasons out of the year, it seems. The transformation that Mike, and Jeff, and the colleagues have made is very visible at Illiniwek, and I hope you have a chance to get out there. Especially since our turning is going to be just gorgeous. So, any other questions can wait until we get to the director and department heads."

5. Commissioner Woods moved to approve the FY2025 and FY2026 Forest Preserve Claims and Treasurer's Disbursements in the amount of \$324,289.89, as presented. Commissioner Sowards seconded.

A roll call vote was taken.

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, T. Foster, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno-Baker, R. Morthland, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

6. Commissioner Perkins moved to approve the FY2025 and FY2026 Transfers of Appropriation, as presented. Commissioner Mielke seconded.

Commissioner Sowards moves to approve the previous roll call vote.
Commissioner Brunk seconded.

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, T. Foster, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno-Baker, R. Morthland, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

7. Commissioner Burns moves to waive the reading and approve the resolutions regarding the Niabi Zoo Fund additional FY2026 appropriations, FY2025 IMRF Fund additional appropriations, FY2025 Liability Fund additional appropriations, and Niabi Zoo Educational and Recreational Enhancements. Commissioner Woods seconded.

(Note** Resolutions begin on the next page.)

RESOLUTION

RE: Niabi Zoo Fund Additional FY 26 Appropriations

WHEREAS, additional funds are required for ARPA project expenses in the Niabi Zoo Fund # 131 for FY 26, and

WHEREAS, revenue has been collected over budget including a transfer of funds to be received from the Forest Preserve General Fund & DFCI Fund to the Niabi Zoo Fund #131, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Forest Preserve Commission of Rock Island County, Rock Island, Illinois, as follows:

SECTION 1. An emergency exists as outlined above.

SECTION 2. An amount of \$63,642.67 be transferred from unappropriated additional revenue funds in the Niabi Zoo Fund #131 to the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$63,642.67	131-32-35 391.60 ARPA24-00-39160	Transfer from General Fund

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$63,642.67	131-32-35 767.00 ARPA24-60-767	Infrastructure over \$15,000

SECTION3: This resolution to become effective immediately.

ADOPTED by the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission, Rock Island County, Illinois, this 16th day of September, 2025.

Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission

Karen Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission

RESOLUTION

Re: FY 25 IMRF Fund Additional Appropriations

WHEREAS, additional funds are required in the Forest Preserve IMRF Fund #132 for the necessary expenses incurred for the 2025 Fiscal Year, and

WHEREAS, additional funds are required for an IMRF additional employer contribution, and

WHEREAS, funds are available from unappropriated funds in the Forest Preserve IMRF Fund #132, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Forest Preserve Commission of Rock Island County, Rock Island, Illinois, as follows:

SECTION 1. An emergency exists as outlined above.

SECTION 2. An amount of \$1.00 be transferred from unappropriated funds in the Forest Preserve IMRF Fund #132 to the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$1.00	132-32 413.20	IMRF

SECTION 3. This Resolution to become effective immediately.

ADOPTED by the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission, Rock Island County, Illinois, this 16th day of September, 2025.

Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission

Karen Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission

RESOLUTION

Re: FY 25 Liability Fund Additional Appropriations

WHEREAS, additional funds are required in the Forest Preserve Liability Fund #133 for the necessary expenses incurred for the 2025 Fiscal Year, and

WHEREAS, additional funds are required for unemployment payments, and

WHEREAS, funds are available from unappropriated funds in the Forest Preserve Liability Fund #133, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Forest Preserve Commission of Rock Island County, Rock Island, Illinois, as follows:

SECTION 1. An emergency exists as outlined above.

SECTION 2. An amount of \$492.18 be transferred from unappropriated funds in the Forest Preserve Liability Fund #133 to the following:

AMOUNT	APPROPRIATION	DESCRIPTION
\$492.18	133-32 631.00	Professional Services

SECTION 3. This Resolution to become effective immediately.

ADOPTED by the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission, Rock Island County, Illinois, this 16th day of September, 2025.

Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission

Karen Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission

Resolution

RE: Niabi Zoo Educational and Recreational Enhancements

The Rock Island County Forest Preserve District hereby certifies and acknowledges that it has the sufficient funds necessary (includes cash and value of donated land) to complete the pending OSLAD project within the timeframes specified herein for project execution, and that failure to adhere to the specified project timeframe or failure to proceed with the project because of insufficient funds or change in local recreation priorities is sufficient cause for project grant termination which will also result in the ineligibility of the local project sponsor for subsequent Illinois IDNR outdoor recreation grant assistance consideration in the next two (2) consecutive grant cycles following project termination.

Acquisition and Development Projects

It is understood that the project must be completed within the timeframe established. The OSLAD timeframe is two years as is specified in the project agreement. The Billing Certification Statement must be submitted within 45 days of the grant expiration date and the last reimbursement request must be submitted within one year of the grant expiration date. Failure to do so will result in the Project Sponsor forfeiting all project reimbursements and relieves IDNR from further payment obligations on the grant.

The Sponsor further acknowledges and certifies that it will comply with all terms, conditions and regulations of

- 1) the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) program (17 IL Adm. Code 3025);
- 2) the Illinois Grant Funds Recovery Act (30 ILCS 705);
- 3) the federal Uniform Relocation Assistance & Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (P.L. 91-646) and/or the Illinois Displaced Persons Relocation Act (310 ILCS 40 et. seq.), as applicable;
- 4) the Illinois Human Rights Act (775 ILCS 5/1-101 et. seq.);
- 5) Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, (P.L. 83-352);
- 6) the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-135);

7) the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1988, (P.L. 100-259); and

8) the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (PL 101-336); and will maintain the project area in an attractive and safe condition, keep the facilities open to the general public during reasonable hours consistent with the type of facility, cease any farming operations, and obtain from the Illinois DNR written approval for any change or conversion of approved outdoor recreation use of the project site prior to initiating such change or conversion; and for property acquired with OSLAD assistance, agree to place a covenant restriction on the project property deed at the time of recording that stipulates the property must be used, in perpetuity, for public outdoor recreation purposes in accordance with the OSLAD programs and cannot be sold or exchanged, in whole or part, to another party without approval from the Illinois DNR, and that development at the site will commence within 3 years.

BE IT FURTHER PROVIDED that the Rock Island County Forest Preserve District certifies to the best of its knowledge that the information provided within the attached application is true and correct.

ADOPTED by the Rock Island County Forest Preserve Commission, Rock Island County, Illinois, this 15th day of July 2025.

Kai Swanson, President
Forest Preserve Commission

Karen Kinney, Secretary
Forest Preserve Commission

Commissioner Adams moves to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Foster seconded.

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, T. Foster, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno-Baker, R. Morthland, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

8. Commissioner Moreno moved to approve the purchase of a Ford F-150 for Niabi Zoo in the amount of \$39,307.00. Commissioner Sowards seconded.

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STATE OF ILLINOIS
FORD F150 TRUCK
GOVERNMENT PRICING

ORDERING AGENCY: Rock Island County Forest Preserve District
CONTACT PERSON: Jeff Craver CELL: 309-737-1853
FORD FLEET # _____ PURCHASE ORDER # 2026-0006601
QUANTITY: 1 COST EACH: \$ _____
ADDRESS: 19406 Loud Thunder Rd
CITY: Illinois City ZIP CODE: 61259 TAX EXEMPT # E999 86 496
PHONE: 309-795-1255 FAX: NA EMAIL: JCRAYER@RIFFPD.ORG
TOTAL ORDER COST: \$ 39,307.00
SIGNATURE _____ TITLE _____

Morrow Brothers Ford Inc.
1242 Main Street
Greenfield, IL 62044

Phone # 1-217-368-3037
Fax # 1-217-368-3517
Email: richie@morrowbrothersfordinc.com

PLEASE SUBMIT THIS SIGNED FORM WITH ORDER

PAYMENT DUE UPON DELIVERY

Commissioner Burns moves to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Enburg seconded.

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, T. Foster, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno-Baker, R. Morthland, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

9. Commissioner Enburg moved to a motion to consider the changes to the District's Purchasing Policy, as presented. Commissioner Woods seconded.

Commissioner Moreno moves to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Sowards seconded.

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, T. Foster, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno-Baker, R. Morthland, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

10. Commissioner Mielke moved consider the changes to the District's Benefits Policy, as presented. Commissioner Foster seconded.

Commissioner Burns moves to approve the previous roll call vote. Commissioner Enburg seconded.

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, T. Foster, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno-Baker, R. Morthland, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

11. Commissioner Mielke moved consider the revisions to the District's Park Plan, as presented. Commissioner Adams seconded.

President Swanson stated, "If you haven't had a chance to look at it, in detail, I urge you to hold on to your packets and take a look. There's a lot of exciting things. It's just further evidence of the staff paying close attention to what's happening and how we're evolving."

Commissioner Moreno-Baker moves to approve the previous roll call vote.
Commissioner Perkins seconded.

D. Adams, R. Brunk, L. Burns, C. Enburg, T. Foster, D. Mielke, L. Moreno, M. Moreno-Baker, R. Morthland, B. Perkins, E. Sowards, J. R. Westpfahl, J. Woods

TOTAL YES 13

TOTAL NO 0

Motion carried.

12. **Comments from Commissioners:**

President Swanson stated, "As I mentioned earlier, if you get a chance, once again in Mr. Morthland's territory, I want to commend the team for the work that was done on the bike path improvements. It's not often that you see an existing bike path improved, but Jeff and his team went out for funding, they found it, and it is a joy to ride the trail and get around Port Byron, Cordova. It's just a great community....I knew I could get him to say something. Mr. Morthland, please."

Commissioner Morthland stated, "The work is fantastic, Mr. Chairman, Mr. President. I drive by it almost every day. It really is magnificent, the improvements they've made. So, thanks a lot."

President Swanson stated, "Thank you...with that, oh wait, I'm sorry. There's Ms. Enburg, Ms. Enburg, please, go ahead."

Commissioner Enburg stated, "Thank you. I haven't seen it myself, but I was told about it from my Uncle that lives out there and rides that path. He said it was in really good shape."

President Swanson stated, "Oh yeah, and a huge improvement from where we were. A huge improvement."

13. Commissioner Brunk moved to approve all Routine Reports from the Director and Departments Heads of the Forest Preserve Commission, as presented. Commissioner Adams seconded.

A voice vote was taken.

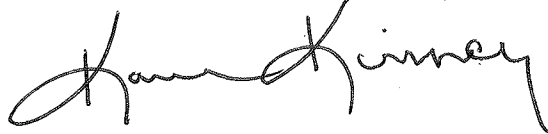
Motion carried.

President Swanson stated, "Well friends, thanks for your good work. The next meeting of the Forest Preserve Commission will be following the October Rock Island County Board Meeting, which starts at 5:30, in these chambers, Rock Island County Building, and the date is a little bit off here, but whatever the date is of the County Board Meeting, stick around for the Forest Preserve Commission."

"With that, friends, thank you for your work. We are in recess."

President Swanson declared the Forest Preserve Meeting in recess at 6:27 pm.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Karen Kinney", written in a cursive style.

KAREN KINNEY
COUNTY CLERK AND SECRETARY
OF THE FOREST PRESERVE COMMISSION

KK: td