



IMPROVING & EXPANDING Accessibility & Accommodations



Forest Preserve District
OF WILL COUNTY

Bringing People and Nature Together

STRIVING TO ACCOMMODATE **Visitors of All Abilities**

The goal of the Forest Preserve District of Will County's Accessibility Program is to accommodate visitors of all abilities by meeting or exceeding minimum accessibility requirements. This is accomplished by following published federal or state accessibility standards and implementing principles of universal design in the development and management of District programs, services, facilities and preserves.





Since adoption of its most recent ADA Accessibility Transition Plan in 2010 in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Forest Preserve District of Will County has made significant strides in the removal of physical barriers in its built environment and other barriers commonly experienced in communications and programming.



History of the District's Accessibility Program

Following the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990, the District created its first Accessibility Transition Plan which led to substantial upgrades to its existing facilities and preserves. Many of these improvements included were only modest alterations of existing amenities and were intended to serve for a limited time until more comprehensive changes could be implemented. As existing preserve sites and facilities were redeveloped or new sites were constructed through the Forest Preserve's Capital Improvement Program initiated in 1999, a higher standard of accessibility was included to ensure greater permanence of the improvements.

In 2005, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the District entered a Project Civic Access Agreement to address ADA deficiencies that were discovered at the District's Sugar Creek Administration Center in Joliet. While not included in the DOJ agreement,

a comprehensive District-wide transition plan was proposed by Forest Preserve staff to identify and schedule additional accessibility improvements throughout the rest of the District. To that end, the District contracted with the National Center for Accessibility at Indiana University (NCA) to complete a comprehensive assessment of its infrastructure, programs, services, activities and administrative policies for ADA compliance.

Following its exhaustive analysis, NCA provided recommendations for ADA enhancements throughout the District. A Transition Team was created in 2007 to address the more than 1,000 ADA deficiencies in District buildings, communications, public programs and human resources. The Team used NCA's classification of deficiencies as critical, serious or minor to help prioritize their implementation. In 2010, the District adopted its current ADA Accessibility Transition Plan.

MEETING Accessibility Standards

While the work to remove barriers throughout the District is ongoing, a number of accessibility improvements have already been completed.

Visitor Centers

The District operates four accessible visitor centers with regular public hours. These include Sugar Creek Administration Center in Joliet, Plum Creek Nature Center in Beecher, Isle a la Cache Museum in Romeoville and Monee Reservoir in Monee. While also accessible, Four Rivers Environmental Education Center in Channahon is open by appointment only. The Environmental Learning Center in Mokena can accommodate some guests with disabilities, but currently is not fully accessible. This visitor center is open by appointment only.

Parking

District visitor centers and most Forest Preserve trailheads and developed preserves provide accessible parking.

Power-Driven Mobility Devices

Persons with a mobility impairment may use a power-driven mobility device throughout the District. Certain limitations may apply. Please call 815.727.8700 for more information.

Service Animals

Qualified service animals assisting people with disabilities are allowed throughout District preserves and facilities.

Restrooms

Accessible restrooms with sinks and flush toilets are located at all visitor centers except at Monee Reservoir in Monee and the Environmental Learning Center in Mokena. Accessible outdoor latrines are found at those locations and all other preserve access areas.

Picnic Areas

All reservable picnic shelters have wheelchair accessible seating as well as accessible parking, latrines and walkways. Additionally, many preserves offer accessible individual picnic areas which are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Camping Areas

The District currently offers accessible camping at Goodenow Grove Nature Preserve in Beecher, McKinley Woods – Frederick’s Grove in Channahon, Messenger Woods Nature Preserve in Homer Glen, and Forked Creek Preserve – Ballou Road Access in Wilmington. Amenities include accessible latrines, a picnic table and fire pits. Accessible water stations are available at Forked Creek Preserve – Ballou Road Access.

Fishing

Accessible fishing areas are located at Monee Reservoir in Monee, Whalon Lake in Naperville, Lake Renwick Preserve – Turtle Lake Access in Plainfield, Lake Chaminwood Preserve in Minooka and Rock Run Rookery Preserve in Joliet.



Boating

Monee Reservoir in Monee, Whalon Lake in Naperville, Lake Chaminwood Preserve in Minooka and Rock Run Rookery Preserve in Joliet offer accessible boating, canoe and kayak opportunities. Only Monee Reservoir supplies rowboats and pedalboats for rental; the other sites require boaters to bring and launch their own watercraft. An accessible canoe launch is located at McKinley Woods – Frederick’s Grove in Channahon.

Dog Exercising

All of the Forest Preserve’s dog parks are accessible from the parking lots to the main dog park gathering areas and their shade structures. The dog parks consist mostly of natural surfaces which may be seasonally soft and will likely limit access to some areas.

Trails

The District manages more than 127 miles of accessible Shared Use Paths and Recreational Trails, with 96 of those miles being accessible. The additional 31 miles of trails do not comply with current ADA standards due to their surface material, terrain and/or slope. The District is in the process of evaluating these trails to identify specific challenges and plan for future improvements that would enhance accessibility.

Exhibits

More than 90 percent of the District’s wayside exhibits and information stations are located along accessible walkways and trails and are designed in accordance with accessibility standards.

Programs

The District offers a wide variety of interpretive, educational and recreational programs at its visitor centers and in its preserves. Program descriptions include information regarding terrain, walking distances and other conditions to assist the public. Additionally, District education staff is available to work directly with the public to modify or provide like experienced activities and programs as needed to promote participation.

Communications Assistance

The District offers cell phone audio tours at select District sites. District brochures and *The Citizen* newsletter are available in large print upon request. Select programs with captioning are also available upon request. Sign language interpreters are available for programs. However, three weeks advance notice is required to schedule these interpreters.

WORKING TOWARD Ongoing Improvements

Improvements Underway / Ongoing Maintenance

Many facilities, preserve access points and trails have been in place for more than 10 years and accessibility is not always ideal due to wear and deterioration brought on by seasonal climate changes. However, the District is committed to improving accessibility in accordance with regular capital improvement, repair and replacement plans.

Information in this brochure is accurate as of fall 2014. For more information, visit ReconnectWithNature.org or call 815.727.8700. A TDD relay service is available by calling 800.526.0844.



Forest Preserve District
OF WILL COUNTY

Bringing People and Nature Together





Compliance Statement

The Forest Preserve District of Will County does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, age or disability. In providing programs and services to the public, the Forest Preserve District will make reasonable modifications to ensure that all people have an equal opportunity to enjoy District offerings. To request this document in large print, audio or Braille, or to request modifications to participate in one of the Forest Preserve's programs or services, contact the Superintendent of Public Affairs, Sugar Creek Administration Center, 17540 W. Laraway Road, Joliet, IL 60433; comments@fpdwc.org; 815.722.9383 (voice); 800.526.0844 (TDD). Requests should be made at least 48 hours in advance. While the Forest Preserve District will make every effort to meet requests in a timely fashion, some requests may take longer to fulfill than others.

Grievance Process

Persons believing that they have been discriminated against by the Forest Preserve District of Will County may file a complaint alleging discrimination with the Forest Preserve District or the Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of the Interior, www.doi.gov/diversity. For more information on the Forest Preserve's grievance procedure, visit ReconnectWithNature.org/ADA.



Forest Preserve District OF WILL COUNTY

Bringing People and Nature Together

17540 W. Laraway Road, Joliet, IL 60433
815.727.8700 • 800.526.0844 (TDD)



ReconnectWithNature.org