



Millennium Reserve Progress

SPRING 2014

Millennium Reserve's 14 immediate priorities are collectively enhancing open space, capitalizing on the region's rich environmental assets, and investing in jobs and workforce development to create sustainable economic growth. By coordinating and focusing human, natural and financial resources on these priorities, to date the Millennium Reserve has made significant progress toward the following major outcomes:

1. Opening Lake Calumet to the public.
2. Increasing the number and quality of industrial job opportunities in the Calumet region.
3. Establishing the Pullman National Historic Park.
4. Constructing and connecting trails toward a contiguous 100-mile trail system.
5. Cultivating future environmental leaders.
6. Improving local stormwater management.

See below for detailed progress reports on these and other Millennium Reserve priorities.

In addition, the Millennium Reserve Communications Working Group has secured pro bono assistance to develop a new Millennium Reserve web site (to be launched May 2014); and retained a communications consultant, Public Communications, Inc., to develop a strategic communications plan for the Reserve through 2015 (by July 2014).

A Millennium Reserve Manager is soon to be hired, thanks to collaborative funding from ArcelorMittal, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation and The Chicago Community Trust. This person will be housed at The Field Museum. He or she will help to advance Millennium Reserve priorities, while cultivating a network of supporters to catalyze and communicate ongoing economic, environmental and community transformation in this 210-square mile area encompassing the Calumet region and southeast Chicago lakefront.

To that end, the Communications Working Group has begun to collect additional "success stories" from individuals, organizations and governments working in this area; some of those successes are noted below the Progress Reports on Reserve Priorities.

Progress Reports on Reserve Priorities

1. Public Access to Lake Calumet

Project lead: Millennium Reserve Steering Committee

Transform 140 acres of unused Illinois International Port District (IIPD) property along Lake Calumet into a public amenity featuring open space, wildlife habitat, recreation, small business, and family programming.

In fall 2013, the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources (IDNR) developed a preliminary proposal for creating a public recreation area at Lake Calumet. In March 2014, the IIPD passed a resolution to initiate negotiations with IDNR for long-term management of the targeted acreage.

2. Industrial Jobs Work Plan

Project leads: OAI and South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association

Create a competitive workforce while addressing a serious labor/skills mismatch in the manufacturing sector through an expansion of the Calumet Green Manufacturing Partnership. This partnership will increase employer investment and employment opportunities and spur regional economic development.

Two new companies are adding significant employment opportunities in the Calumet: **Method** is bringing 100 new manufacturing jobs to a former brownfield site in Pullman. The Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity is administering a business investment package that includes training grants to enhance the quality of the workforce and tax credits worth \$1.1 million over 10 years, provided Method meets its commitment to create and retain 65 new jobs and invest in the community. **Sterling Lumber** will relocate to Phoenix, Ill., thanks to a stupendous example of intergovernmental cooperation between local actors (the Village of Phoenix, City of Harvey and South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association) working with Cook County and the State of Illinois to make transportation improvements to 151st Street, improve a critical rail spur and provide attractive tax incentives. The company currently employs 112 people and plans to add 50 jobs in the next two years.

Based on the highly successful intergovernmental cooperation that led to Sterling Lumber's relocation, the Millennium Reserve Site Development Team was established, consisting of the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association, State Agency Task Force members, the Governor's office, Cook County, OAI, Inc., and various state agencies. The Development Team is the next key step to formalizing how local and state agencies collaborate to attract companies to move or expand in the area. SSMMA is creating a plan to redevelop vacant land into sites for manufacturers (three additional projects are in the pipeline); as developers are ready to talk specifics, SSMMA calls the Site Development Team to action.

This plan will build on the work of the Calumet Green Manufacturing Partnership—led by community colleges, manufacturers, OAI, Inc., SSMMA and CSEDC—which has surpassed its goal of securing training and a full-time manufacturing job for 90 people. The Partnership is funded by Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, Workforce Funders Alliance and Arcelor Mittal Foundation. ArcelorMittal has allocated workforce development resources to help Millennium Reserve communities continue to identify and align the wide range of education and training programs, and to enable this wide range of stakeholders to jointly leverage intelligence, communications and capacity building. This investment will increase the scale of these efforts, ultimately improving the skills, education and quality of the region's workforce.

3. Pullman National Historic Park

Project lead: National Parks Conservation Association

Secure national historic park designation in Pullman to further preserve the history of Chicago's emergence as a transportation and commercial hub. Pullman has a unique place in US history as the first model industrial town and a birthplace of the labor movement – including the first African American labor union.

In January 2014, U.S. Senator Mark Kirk (R-Ill.), U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-Ill.), and U.S. Representative Robin Kelly (D-Ill.-02) introduced legislation to create the Pullman National Historical Park in the neighborhood's historical district, an architecturally unique neighborhood which played important roles in America's railroad, industrial and labor history. According to the National Parks Conservation Association, the Pullman National Historic Park could bring 300,000 visitors each year and create 356 new jobs, providing \$40 million annually to the community.

4. Strategic Trail Connections

Project leads: Various

Complete several key connections in what will become an impressive 100-mile regional bike and pedestrian trail system that includes the Burnham Greenway and the American Discovery, Cal-Sag, and Grand Illinois trails. Will benefit the environment and economy and offer new recreation, fitness, and transit choices.

Four of the five communities that will be traversed by the eastern portion of the Cal-Sag Trail (which connects 17 communities in total) secured more than \$3.5 million in federal funding for

construction: Blue Island, Burnham, Calumet City and Dolton. The Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources provided \$1.2 million toward the local match for these four, as well as a fifth—Riverdale—all of which are categorized as “economically disadvantaged” by state or federal definitions. Thanks to IDNR covering the local match for Riverdale, the federal government ultimately agreed to grant its portion of the project to Riverdale. [A groundbreaking for the Cal-Sag Trail will take place June 7.](#)

Plans, engineering studies and funding are being pursued to advance a number of additional trails, including the Burnham Greenway/Pennsy Greenway, through both the Village of Burnham and the Chicago neighborhood of Hegewisch; Calumet water trails; and a new Bi-State Wolf Lake Trail Loop. In addition, marketing information is being produced to promote trails to the public, in particular the Burnham Greenway/Pennsy Greenway and Calumet water trails.

5. Future Conservation Leaders

Project lead: The Field Museum

Identify funding needs and programming gaps for youth-oriented conservation education in the region.

A quarter of Millennium Reserve’s 1 million residents are between ages five and 19; engaging them in outdoor, hands-on, science-based, educational activities is key to cultivating future conservation leaders in the Reserve. To ensure “no child is left inside,” the Future Conservation Leaders project team is developing an environmental education strategy, starting with strengthening and coordinating the region’s many successful environmental education programs. Toward this end, the Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources is contributing significant human and financial resources, including over \$700,000 in grants from its Coastal Management Program in 2013/2014 for environmental education programs in Millennium Reserve, and additional funding for Mighty Acorns, a youth environmental education program at William Powers State Recreation Area. IDNR also added a site interpreter at William Powers, and contributed staff resources for Mighty Acorns program planning, coordination and field trips at that site.

6. Improved Stormwater Management through Green Infrastructure

Project lead: Metropolitan Planning Council

Coordinate existing green infrastructure practices such as bioswales, rain gardens, and permeable pavement that reduce flooding, improve water quality, enhance habitat, and more, and determine optimal placement of future, large-scale investment with a goal of mitigating 1 billion gallons of stormwater.

The Chicago Community Trust has awarded a grant to the Metropolitan Planning Council to lead the Calumet Stormwater Collaborative, which is focused on aligning existing, planned and future stormwater management initiatives throughout the Calumet region to achieve the greatest collective benefits. The Collaborative had its first working session on April 8.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency will dedicate substantial financial resources to a one-time pilot Millennium Reserve Stormwater Best Management Practices program, which the Calumet Stormwater Collaborative will assist in designing and implementing. Additionally, in partnership with South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association and OAI, Inc., ILEPA is working with seven communities to select up to 20 priority sites for sustainable stormwater management practices. These sites also will receive technical assistance for design/engineering and project implementation funding.

In time, the work of the Collaborative will improve stormwater management throughout the Calumet through coordinated, goal-driven planning and investment in both green and gray infrastructure. This coordination will make the most of individual investments that continue to

move ahead, while also developing future initiatives that address stormwater management at watershed and sewershed scales. Initial initiatives include:

- Illinois Dept. of Transportation and Illinois State Toll Highway Authority planting more than 2,800 trees at the new I-294 interchange and in surrounding communities;
- The City of Blue Island, City of Chicago, Village of Midlothian and South Suburban College making green infrastructure improvements;
- The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District working with Chicago Public Schools, City of Chicago and Openlands to install green infrastructure at area schools;
- The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District conducting a master stormwater planning exercise in an area including portions of Robbins, Blue Island, Calumet Park, Riverdale, Dolton, and Calumet City to determine which measures—both green and gray infrastructure—could be implemented. This study should also serve as a model to address similar flooding elsewhere in the county.
- Chicago Wilderness mapping of opportunities for improving stormwater management through open space protection, habitat restoration and trail connectivity.

7. Blue Island Intercollegiate Rowing Center

Project lead: City of Blue Island

Develop underutilized marina on the Cal-Sag Channel at Fay's Point in Blue Island into a host site for high-level rowing competitions. Establish revenue-generating operations including rowing center and housing.

The City of Blue Island secured a grant from The Chicago Community Trust to issue an RFP to hire an analyst to understand potential usage, demand, site and facility requirements for a rowing center in Blue Island. Blue Island released the RFP for the center this spring, triggering a rush of interest; discussions with interested parties are ongoing. The city convened the Blue Island Rowing Center advisory committee for the first working session on April 16.

8. National Heritage Designations for Distinct Regional Landscapes

Project leads: various

Support three distinctive and interlinked National Heritage Areas – the existing I&M Canal National Heritage Corridor along with the proposed Black Metropolis and Calumet National Heritage areas. Leverage these designations to stimulate economic development, cultivate environmental and cultural preservation, and foster education and stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

Dr. Mark Bouman of the Field Foundation had a very positive meeting on the Calumet National Heritage Area concept with U.S. Congressman Pete Visclosky (D-Ind.). Chicago Park District staff are very receptive to the idea of incorporating the Great Migration Trail concept—a foundation of the Black Metropolis National Heritage Area—into the Burnham Wildlife Corridor. The Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources has provided natural resources planning support for the Black Metropolis National Heritage Area feasibility study. In addition, several recent convenings have built public and decision-maker support for these heritage areas:

- The Calumet Heritage Partnership, in collaboration with The Field Museum, held its 14th annual conference on Oct. 26, 2013, at the Pullman factory. The conference had its highest attendance in recent years.
- In May 2013, more than 200 participants at the Calumet Summit 2013: Connecting for Action—focused on the region's environmental assets—ranked creating the Calumet National Heritage Area as their top priority.
- Calumet region artists and art practitioners discussed the role that the arts could play in a potential Calumet National Heritage Area on Dec. 12, 2013, at "Community Arts Conversations" at the Black Box Gallery at Calumet College of St. Joseph in Whiting, Ind..

- Dr. Mark Bouman, The Field Museum, and Dr. William Peterman, former geography professor at Chicago State University, presented "The Case for the Calumet National Heritage Area," at Tuesdays at APA, a weekly public program of the American Planning Association's Chicago chapter. Their talk introduced the National Heritage Area program and discussed reasons that the Calumet region would be an ideal candidate for this designation.

9. Ford Calumet Environmental Center

Project lead: Chicago Park District

Review and revive plans for the Ford Calumet Environmental Center. Reconsider location, funding, and design as well as management and operation options. Produce recommendations for the center's future.

The Chicago Community Trust provided \$35,000 to the Park District for a feasibility study on reviving plans for the Ford Calumet Environmental Center.

10. Natural Areas Conservation Compact

Project lead: Illinois Department of Natural Resources

Coordinate shared conservation outcomes and undertake site protection and restoration activities for the State's 23 most ecologically important sites – those of highest biodiversity value – in the Reserve.

The written Compact is nearly complete, awaiting final input from IDNR. The Illinois Nature Preserve Commission approved the Compact at its May 6 meeting. The other four partners will sign in early summer and begin active pursuit of priority strategies at that time.

11. Brownfield Redevelopment

Project lead: South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association

Secure funding to finance acquisition and predevelopment work for cargo-oriented developments projects and key rail-serviced properties. Address brownfield redevelopment challenges through strategic cooperation between the State and other public agencies.

12. Land Development Program

Project lead: South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association

Raise \$1.5M for capital investment in the nonprofit Southland Community Development Loan Fund.

13. Regional Asset Communication

Project lead: South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association

Organize and catalog extensive GIS information about the Calumet's natural, community, and economic assets. Use dynamic, web-based visualization tools to promote opportunities to live, work, and recreate.

14. Outdoor Recreation Partnership and Framework

Project lead: Chicago Park District

Develop outdoor adventure attractions and ecotourism opportunities such as paddling, camping, birding, geocaching, zip lining, and kite boarding that will position the Reserve as a recreation destination.

Other Success Stories

Chi-Cal Rivers Fund

The Chi-Cal Rivers Fund is a three-year public-private funding collaborative to restore the ecological, economic and community values of the Chicago River and Calumet region waterways by supporting green stormwater infrastructure, habitat enhancement and public-use improvements. The fund was established by a consortium of public, private and foundation partners, including ArcelorMittal, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelly Foundation and The Chicago Community Trust. Millennium Reserve remains a big "selling point" for applicants with Calumet projects.

Diverting Organic Wastes from Landfills

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District is pursuing full use of the digesters at the Calumet Water Reclamation Plant to utilize organic wastes as a renewable energy source. Diverting organic wastes from landfill will increase biogas production, reduce landfill capacity demand, reduce the number of trucks on the road, and reduce landfill CO₂e emissions by 150,000 metric tons. This project will also bring \$13 million in private investment into Calumet region. MWRD also is advancing pursuing a cooperative with local private eco-industrial group to co-compost wood waste, food waste and green restaurant waste with biosolids to produce a high-quality topsoil product and create local jobs. The nutrient-rich product will be a green alternative to soil amended with chemical fertilizers.

These initiatives are dependent on the Illinois General Assembly approving HB 4716, which would give MWRD the authority to move forward; once authorized, MWRD plans to begin engineering design work in 2014, start construction in 2015 and start operations in 2016. MWRD is funding the work; its Board of Commissioners eventually will award contracts for some of the work.

Commitments from IDNR

- Over \$2.1 million in IDNR Open Space Land Acquisition and Development grants for five project sites in the Reserve;
- Funding to Chicago Park District for park planning at the former U.S. Steel site (\$100,000) and park planning and design at Morgan Shoals (\$150,000); and,
- Through IDNR's Mud to Parks program, more than 32,000 cubic yards of soil for three strategic partner locations: the former U.S. Steel site on the southeast lakefront between 79th Street and the Calumet River; and two Growing Power urban farm sites, at Altgeld Gardens and southeast lakefront Park 503.