The Illinois Prairie Path Marks 40th Anniversary

Friends and supporters of the Illinois Prairie Path are invited to join in our 40th anniversary celebration on Saturday, September 27, at 2 p.m. in Volunteer Park, located at Carlton St. and Liberty Dr. in Wheaton. Mark your calendars and plan to attend!

"Festivities will include music, refreshments and some speeches commemorating the founding and the many accomplishments and current work of the Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation," said Don Kirchenberg, president. "We are looking forward to bringing together many of our members for this event, as well as recognizing our supporters for their donations and labors over the years! Stop by and join the celebration!"

Remembering Our Founder...

May Watts’ Trail Dream Lives On Today

May Theilgaard Watts at the Indiana Dunes State Park in October, 1957. Mrs. Watts was 70 years old in 1963 when she wrote the letter to the editor of the Chicago Tribune that started the rails-to-trails movement in the United States. The letter was republished in the Spring 2003 issue of The Illinois Prairie Path Newsletter and is currently available on our web site at www.ipp.org.

In September 1963, the Chicago Tribune printed a letter to the editor written by Mrs. May Theilgaard Watts, a distinguished naturalist, teacher, and author. In her letter Mrs. Watts outlined a proposal to convert the abandoned Chicago, Aurora and Elgin Railroad right-of-way into a trail through the western suburbs of Chicago. The letter inspired a small but dedicated group of trail advocates who decided to make the idea a reality.

Over the next several years, the group gave hundreds of illustrated talks, led numerous field trips and generated extensive media coverage for the path. They also diligently sought and received the necessary cooperation from utility companies, civic leaders, and state, county and local officials.

In 1965 Mrs. Watts' group formally established The Illinois Prairie Path (The IPP corporation), an Illinois not-for-profit corporation. For more about the development of the Illinois Prairie Path for the past 40 years, see the article on page 3 of this newsletter.

New 7th Edition Map Available

Copies of the new 7th edition of the Illinois Prairie Path trail map are in the mail to current members. If you do not receive your copy by the end of September, please contact our office by phone or email. For information on purchasing extra copies, see the order form on page 11.
The Illinois Prairie Path Newsletter
This newsletter is published by The Illinois Prairie Path Board of Directors.
Editor: Nancy Wasielewski
Address correspondence to: The Illinois Prairie Path, P.O. Box 1086, Wheaton, IL 60189
Phone: 630-752-0120
Web Site: www.ipp.org
Meetings: The Illinois Prairie Path Board of Directors meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month except August and November at Rathjep Park, 616 Delles Avenue, Wheaton. Members are always welcome to attend!

The Illinois Prairie Path Board of Directors 2003
Don Kirchenberg, President Glendale Heights
Dick Wilson, Vice President DesPlaines
F. Paul Mooring, Treasurer Glen Ellyn
Nancy Becker, Secretary Willowbrook
Nancy Wasielewski, Office Manager and Newsletter Editor Glenview
Paul Aeschleman, Oak Park Bob Bernero, Glen Ellyn Mike Cross, Naperville Paul Didzerekis, Wheaton Eric Keely, Oakbrook Terrace Jean Mooring, Glen Ellyn Tom Pedrick, Carol Stream Erik Spande, Winfield Rob Sperl, Warrenville David Watts, Glen Ellyn

Moorings Donate Bench in Glen Ellyn

"Happiness is a Winding Trail"

Thanks to Paul and Jean Mooring, charter members and volunteers for The Illinois Prairie Path since 1965, there is a new comfortable, shady spot to rest along the trail. Paul and Jean donated a new six-foot-long, black powder-coated steel bench on the Illinois Prairie Path in unincorporated Glen Ellyn between Mill Avenue and the East Branch of the DuPage River north of the Glen Oak Country Club. This part of the Illinois Prairie Path has been known as the Mooring Family Section since about 1969 when Paul and Jean adopted it.

The couple and their family have been watching over this section of the trail for some 33 years. Their work has included picking up litter and regularly emptying the concrete trash container, which Jean donated several years ago. The Moorings have also helped to build and maintain the series of five bridges over the DuPage River built by or for The Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation at the east end of this section during those 33 years.

The plaque on the bench reads:

Donated, Spring 2003
To The Illinois Prairie Path
By Jean and Paul Mooring
Charter members and volunteers since 1965
"Happiness is a winding trail"

John Wilkinson, a Glen Ellyn contractor, completes the job of pouring a concrete slab for the Mooring bench. The bench was installed on May 30.

Summer 2003
A Look Back...

A Brief History of the Illinois Prairie Path

Editor's Note: As the Illinois Prairie Path celebrates its 40th anniversary year, here is a brief history of the trail and the not-for-profit corporation.

In 1963 a small group of trail enthusiasts, led by noted naturalist May Theilgaard Watts, determined to develop a nature path through the western suburbs of Chicago. In 1965 they formed The Illinois Prairie Path, a not-for-profit corporation made up of volunteers; and in 1966 after much work, they leased the old Chicago, Aurora and Elgin (CA&E) Railroad right-of-way from the new owner, DuPage County, and began building the trail. The first green-and-white logo signs went up in 1967, and the Path was officially on the map. In 1971 most of the Illinois Prairie Path was designated a National Recreation Trail, part of the National Trails System. In 1988 the volunteers received the Take Pride in America Award in ceremonies at the White House.

Many governmental agencies have played a major role in Path development. In 1972 the State of Illinois Department of Conservation acquired much of the CA&E right-of-way in Kane County. This land was leased to the Kane County Forest Preserve District and to the Fox Valley Park District so that the Prairie Path could be extended to the Fox River at Elgin, Batavia and Aurora. In 1979 the Illinois Department of Conservation purchased 4.5 miles of the right-of-way in Cook County to extend the Path to First Avenue, Maywood, with the cooperation of the various municipalities. In 1986 the DuPage County Division of Transportation took over maintenance of the DuPage County segments and in 1987 began the lengthy process of reconnecting the last CA&E segment, the Geneva Spur, to the Illinois Prairie Path trail system.

The real story of the Illinois Prairie Path, however, is the determination and hard work of its volunteers, who for 20 years managed, developed and maintained the trail on a shoestring budget of membership dues and donations. Volunteers have built three steel bridges, surfaced miles of trail, installed benches, signs and steps, preserved prairie remnants, picked up tons of trash, and made the Illinois Prairie Path one of the greatest and most famous urban trails in the United States.

In 1983, volunteers removed the rotten railroad timbers, installed new beams, and re-decked the old CA&E bridge in Wheaton for pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

DuPage County's Contribution

Over the last 17 years, DuPage County has spent a total of $7,800,000 on a variety of major capital improvement projects along with maintenance costs estimated at $500,000 annually for equipment, personnel, insurance, screenings, signage, tree trimming, drainage, etc. In total, the County estimates it has spent approximately $16,300,000 to expand and maintain the trail system.
Thanks to Volunteers for a great Earth Day Cleanup!

The annual Earth Day cleanup on April 26th along the Illinois Prairie Path and Great Western Trail was a great success, thanks to the help of hundreds of volunteers.

There are over 61 miles of trail in DuPage, Kane and Cook Counties watched over by The Illinois Prairie Path not-for-profit corporation. The trails are cleaned year-around by volunteers. Your help in keeping the trails clean is needed and appreciated!

To recap the day’s events, here are individual reports on the Earth Day activities from members of The IPP Board and volunteers.

In Glen Ellyn: A full day of activities!

Jim Wear (center), represented The Illinois Prairie Path, and helped Michelle Thorsell (left) of the Glen Ellyn Environmental Commission register volunteers for the cleanup near the Gazebo at Prairie Path Park.

The village provided a crew and a front-end loader to pick up and haul away logs and other debris in Glen Ellyn.

Photos by Jean Mooring

GLEN ELLYN
By Jean Mooring,
IPP Board Member

The Glen Ellyn Environmental Commission planned a full day of activities for the village celebration of Earth Day on April 26. The major event was the Illinois Prairie Path cleanup from 9 a.m. to noon, coordinated by Michelle Thorsell and Sue Bateman of the environmental commission with the assistance of Melissa Hagensee, administrative intern for Curt Barrett, assistant village administrator. Michelle Thorsell (recently named the new commission chairman) and Jim Wear, representing The Illinois Prairie Path, took charge of the registration table at Prairie Path Park and reported some seventy-five volunteers signed in to work on various areas: the Prairie Path, the Great Western Trail or the Ada Douglas Harmon wildflower preserve, all in Glen Ellyn, and the “Special 8” natural area next to the Path and soon to be acquired by the DuPage County Forest Preserve District in rural Glen Ellyn.

It was a very pleasant day and the cleanup went well according to IPP board members Jean and Paul Mooring. The commission reported that a half truckload of debris was picked up on the Path plus a quarter truckload from the Ada Harmon preserve. The village provided a front-end loader and dump truck plus plastic bags, tables, soda, juices and bottled water; and there were bagels from Great American Bagels. The park district provided some tables and Michelle Thorsell arranged for the canopies and tents.

Other events following the cleanup on this exciting day at Prairie Path Park included the Lawn Doctor, an energy
Wheaton: A record turnout of volunteers!

(Left) Helen Bartlett and members of the Wheaton Environmental Commission, coordinated the cleanup effort in Wheaton at Stevens Park for a record number of volunteers. Photos on this page by Nancy Wasielewski.

Ellyn, spent two hours hauling debris, mostly logs, from behind the apartments at the west end of the Glen Ellyn section. They then drove to the intersection of the Great Western Trail and the Illinois Prairie Path at Prince Crossing Road in West Chicago and collected another pile of debris including a perfectly good Eagle shopping cart dragged out of a deep ditch. A satisfactory, productive and fun work day!

WHEATON
By Helen Bartlett,
Coordinator—Prairie Path Cleanup Committee for The Wheaton Environmental Improvement Commission

On behalf of the Wheaton Environmental Improvement Commission, our heartfelt thanks goes to all the volunteers who helped clean the Prairie Path. April 26 was a cool, sunny day with an excellent turnout of 372 volunteers — a record!

GLEN ELLYN
(Continued from page 4)

exhibit with Karen Winter, consultant to the environmental commission, a West Nile Virus exhibit by DuPage County, a children’s pot painting and planting table presided over by Shirley Fuller and an America in Bloom presentation.

The Mooring work party, including daughter Margaret from Madison, Wisconsin, and Mark Newell from Glen

Special thanks goes to the Cub Scouts, Brownies, Longfellow School 4th and 5th graders, Sandburg School Recycling Club and other classes, Aurora Christian High School Girls’ Softball Team, Park District Baseball Team (Cardinals), College of DuPage Environmental Studies Class, Wheaton-Warrenville South High School Environmental Studies Class.

An additional recognition goes to all the families, singles and couples, plus the Naperville Bike Club, Wheaton Pedal Pushers Bike Club, Wheaton A.M. Rotary Club, V.F.W., and the Wheaton Junior Woman’s Club.

Many, many thanks for your enthusiastic participation — we anticipate and look forward to your help next year. Continue to be good stewards of the earth and friends of the Prairie Path — enjoy your hiking and biking on the Path.

Summer 2003
Thanks to our Earth Day Volunteers

In Wheaton: Volunteers pitch in to clean trail

(Continued from page 5)

WEST CHICAGO
By Erik Spande

Some areas of the IPP are more traveled than others and well traveled portions get much more TLC during the annual IPP Spring Cleanup. For the last two years I have focused my efforts on the neglected areas, and it has been rewarding. These nice but (relatively) little used segments cry out for much needed attention. This year I continued my cleanup along the trail in the western part of West Chicago between Industrial Dr. and the DuPage County Airport. Last year I pulled out a mountain of trash, ranging from commercial cook tops to stylish orange shag carpeting. I fully expected to find other such treasures as I continued my work this year, and I was not disappointed. One of the first items-of-interest I pulled out was a full-size water heater. It was down the embankment and had likely been there quite a while. So, by using proper lifting techniques and a trusty (if overloaded) wheelbarrow, I managed to pull this out of the earth and into the light of day for disposal. The other surprising bit of debris was an old commercial dryer, which I dragged out of the vegetation. Luckily it was not nearly as heavy as the water heater, which seemed to weigh more than I do. There were a number of sealed 5-gallon containers, and I approached these with caution. You never know what they might contain. Most were empty, but one had several gallons of used motor oil. I took this home for recycling. In addition to these noteworthy items there were white sidewall tires, and lots of blow-in trash from the roads. I think there were about 10 large garbage bags full of general trash by the time I was done.

In West Chicago: An impressive collection of junk!

One unhappy conclusion I came to during the cleanup is that some of the Path’s industrial neighbors are not very respectful of the Path. The portion I spent so much time cleaning up last year now had stark evidence of new dumping, with piles of construction, wood, general trash, and vegetation management debris. I took this rather personally and got quite a few pictures. The County has investigated the dumping and has sent cleanup crews to clean up the mess. Be assured that the County and the IPP will be keeping a close eye on this location.

(Continued on page 7)
The day was beautiful, and I met lots of terrific people during the cleanup. Many of the joggers gave me a hearty ‘thanks!’ as they strode by, and a few people stopped since they wanted to know about getting involved next year. Of course, I was happy to oblige!

A reporter from the Winfield/West Chicago papers even dropped by. I was surprised since I was out in the boonies and can’t imagine how he found me. We chatted for a short while, he took a few action photos, and then he was on his way. Who knows—maybe I’ll be in the paper soon! Stranger things have been known to happen.

I had a lot of fun, and got enjoyment far in excess of the five hours I invested. I know I helped improve the Path, so I got to give back a little to my community. Join us next year! I’m sure you won’t regret it!

---

**SOUTH ELGIN BRANCH**

By Jeanne Berea,
Cleanup Coordinator along the South Elgin Branch

This April was our third year working on the 3-mile section from Raymond St. to Dunham Rd., starting at the junction with the Fox River Trail near Elgin.

Our helpers included 13 people, mostly 4-H 4-Leaf Friends group. The most unusual items found were a car axle and enough old barbed wire to fill a big garden cart.

Thanks to Jim Reuter, director of South Elgin Parks and Recreation for support, use of supplies and providing a staff person and truck for the past two years.

While we were working, a large group of 30+ scouts came through bicycling on the way to a weekend campout in Pratt’s Wayne Woods. Nice to see young folks and family enjoying the trail.

---

**ELGIN BRANCH**

By Dick Wilson,
IPP Board Member

Birt Hurhbert, Dick and Nancy Wilson cleaned a section of the Elgin Branch from south of Rt. 59 bridge to Smith Road in West Chicago. We picked up two bags of trash, a few pieces of plastic junk and 50+ golf balls along the golf course driving range. We also reported to the DuPage County Division of Transportation about 3 pieces of a 20-foot cyclone fence top rail on the right-of-way that was picked up later.

---

**Help keep IPP and Great Western clean!**

Litter on the Illinois Prairie Path and the Great Western Trail is picked up solely by volunteers throughout the year. Please pitch in to keep the trail clean! Thanks for your help!
Construction Begins For New Wheaton Park

Work has begun on Wheaton's new park that is located along the IPP Main Stem between Cross St. and Washington St. adjacent to National- Louis University.

ComEd began work in late spring to bury the north set of power lines and move the south set. This is the first step in the creation of a park that will relocate and improve the Illinois Prairie Path off of Union Pacific Railroad's right of way, create an 18-hole miniature golf course, a skate park, and a central plaza that will commemorate Rotary's centennial.

The park will include trail related amenities such as restrooms, a drinking fountain, concessions, bike racks, and picnic areas.

There is much work left to be done on this park, but you can expect to see the majority of construction beginning late this summer. The existing IPP will remain open throughout this process.

Helping to break ground for the new Meacham Grove Forest Preserve bridge on National Trails Day were: (left to right): Thomas Bennington, DuPage County Board Environmental Committee; Roger Kotecki, DuPage County Forest Preserve Commissioner District 6; Roger Jenisch, DuPage County Board District 1; Dewey Pierotti, President, Forest Preserve Commission of DuPage County; Marsha Murphy, Forest Preserve Commissioner District 1; State Representative Carole Pankau; Robert Iden, President of Bloomingdale; and Joe Devlin, Trustee, Village of Roselle.

Ground Breaking Held for Meacham Grove Bridge

The DuPage County Division of Transportation and the Forest Preserve District broke ground for a new single span 150-foot prefabricated truss bridge over Roselle Road in Bloomingdale on National Trails Day, June 7. The construction of this 10-foot wide bicycle-pedestrian bridge will cost an estimated $950,000 and is being funded by a $200,000 contribution from DuPage County, a $250,000 contribution from the DuPage Forest Preserve District, and a $500,000 Illinois 1st grant from the state.

New IPP Video Produced by Students

A new 8-minute promotional video about the Illinois Prairie Path was produced this summer by students in the Commercial Video Production Class at the College of DuPage. More information about the video and its availability to community groups and clubs will be included in the next issue of this newsletter. You can also see the video at our upcoming 40th anniversary celebration on September 27.

(Photo left) COD students met with Nancy Wasielewski, IPP Office Manager, (2nd row, center) and Jean Mooring this summer at Volunteer Park. Photo by Jean Mooring.
Questions for the IPP
Do you have a question about The Illinois Prairie Path? We will try to answer all questions of general interest in our newsletters so that all members can benefit from the information. Send questions to The IPP by mail at P.O. Box 1086, Wheaton, IL 60189 or email us at www.ipp.org.

Controlling the Spread Of Garlic Mustard
Who is responsible for clearing the invasive garlic mustard plant from the IPP? I noticed the other day as we rode westbound then southbound in Wheaton the amount of garlic mustard that was choking out all other plants around it. I know this weed is an issue in the Midwest and needs to be managed on a regular basis. I fear that if it is not maintained it will soon take over many parts of the prairie plants along the path—does the county handle weed control?

Gina, IPP trail user

The good thing about garlic mustard is that it is not very sun-tolerant and therefore is not a big problem in our prairie remnants and restorations (at least those in full sun). The bad thing about garlic mustard is it is very shade tolerant and will completely take over wooded areas, choking out all the native groundcover including flowers and woodland plants.

The County does not do any weeding along the trail system and the size of this problem is also well beyond what we as a Board of Directors can handle on our monthly work days.

The better approach is for local residents to adopt a section or area along the IPP and diligently remove the garlic mustard as it comes up (and before it seeds!!) Garlic Mustard is a biennial (takes two years to grow to maturity) so it will take at least two years of active work in an area to have a real impact. The first year of growth it makes a very attractive groundcover with small round leaves flat to the ground. The second year it grows into thickets that produce thousands of tiny black seeds. Mowing does nothing (even worse after it has flowered and gone to seed). It needs to be pulled up roots and all (actually very easy to do) and piled up. Again, be careful to harvest it before it seeds, otherwise your effort does little but spread seeds.

In order for a stewardship program to work, we need volunteers to help gather people to pull the garlic mustard along the length of the trail each and every May just before it flowers. On a smaller scale, a pair of dedicated individuals could clear a length of trail of approx. 1/8 mile if he/she spent 20 hours or so for a couple weekends for at least two years (total man hours per year: 80 hours, all my off-the-cuff estimates).

This plant has been present in the area for a long time, but the explosive growth began just a decade or two ago. To learn more about garlic mustard, check out this government web site—http://www.invasivespecies.gov/profiles/garlicmust.shtml

We would welcome a group of volunteers to help us organize an effort to clear garlic mustard. Contact our office or email the Board at our website: www.ipp.org

Eric Keeley, IPP Board Member
DuPage County Trail System
Public Parking Along Trails

Editor’s Note: We often receive phone calls from trail users questioning where to park along the trail in DuPage County. The following information was compiled by DuPage County. A list of available parking places is also available on the multi-color IPP map.

Public parking is available near the Path in all of the municipalities along the Main Stem. Most of it is metered parking or leased parking for train commuters. Commuter parking is free on weekends. Additional free parking is available at the following on-street and off-street sites.

Elmhurst
Illinois Prairie Path
- Parking lot east of York Rd. between Vallette St. and the path. Enter from Vallette St.
- Pioneer Park at the east end of Prairie Path Ln. where the path crosses the Chicago Central and Pacific Railroad
- Parking lot west of Spring Rd. north of the path.
- Prairie Path lane south of the path and west of Berky
- Seminole Ave. north of the path
- Randolph St. south of the path

Villa Park
Illinois Prairie Path and Great Western Trail
- Parking lot west of Villa Ave on Central Blvd.
- West of Ardmore on Central and Park Blvds.
Great Western Trail
- Rear of City Hall

Lombard
Illinois Prairie Path
- Parking lot west of Westmore Ave.
- Along Broadway on both sides of the path
Great Western Trail
- Lombard Park District—Moran Water Park

Glen Ellyn
Illinois Prairie Path
- Hill Ave. west of DuPage River
- Along Walnut St. from Lowell to Taylor
- The western end of Duane St. Enter the path from nearby Danby Park
- Park-Montclair Commuter Lot—one block north of Montclair and Duane
Great Western Trail
- West of Main St. on the south side

Wheaton
Illinois Prairie Path
- Elmer J. Hoffman Park. Enter north from Hill Ave. on Prospect St. one block east of the Union Pacific crossing
- Hill Ave. and Crescent—free parking in the Metra Commuter lots on weekends
- Lincoln and Western Aves. near the path
- Both sides of Jewell Rd. near the path

Winfield
- Northwestern corner of County Farm Rd. & Geneva Rd.

West Chicago
Illinois Prairie Path—Geneva Spur
- Reed-Keppler Park, National St.
- IPP—Elgin Branch/Great Western Trail
- Prince Crossing Rd. north of the trail

Wayne
Illinois Prairie Path—Elgin Branch
- Both sides of Army Trail Rd. at the Path

Aurora
Illinois Prairie Path—Batavia Spur
- Bilter Rd.

Warrenville
Illinois Prairie Path—Aurora Branch
- West side of Winfield Rd,
- Large parking lots south of the path near City Hall and the Public Library. Turn west from Batavia Rd. One block south of path and go one block and then turn right (north) to lots.

Did You Know?

Take a closer look at the Illinois Prairie Path logo...

The inverted Y forms a rough map of the PATH route: from First Avenue, Maywood, to Wheaton; then branching to Elgin and Aurora (with side spurs to Geneva and Batavia).

The symbols in three circles suggest ways to enjoy the PATH - on foot, bicycle, or horseback.
Illinois Prairie Path Store

7th Edition Map of the Illinois Prairie Path

All current members of The Illinois Prairie Path will be receiving a copy of the new 7th Edition trail map by mail in September. Copies of the new map will also be available for $5 each at the anniversary celebration in Volunteer Park on September 27.

The map can be ordered by mail for $6 (includes $1 for postage and handling.) Multiple copies of 10 to 49 maps will be sold for $4 each; multiple copies of 50 or more will be sold for $3 each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- **40th Anniversary Special! Free shipping on in-stock shirts!**
  Show your support for the IPP by wearing one of our shirts.
  IPP shirts feature logo embroidered (green thread) above the left breast pocket of this 7.26 oz. 100% cotton long sleeve denim shirt in both natural (light khaki) and light blue colors. Shirt also features wood tone buttons and double needle stitching. **Men’s standard sizes available including sizes M, L, XL and XXL in blue and only XL in khaki. Promotion limited to available quantities.** Call 630-472-0120 for information or to check size availability in your color choice.

  Total price = $45 (You save the $6 shipping cost while quantities last.)

- **IPP Guide:** This 32-page guidebook contains information about the history, geology, trees, flowers, birds and animals of the Illinois Prairie Path.

  Cost: $5 per copy includes shipping

Make checks payable to: The Illinois Prairie Path

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity/Size</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicate Color Choice: khaki or blue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Quantity | Amount |

Total Amount Enclosed:

Name ____________________________ Phone ____________________________ Email ____________________________

Address ____________________________ City ____________________________ Zip Code ____________________________

Send order form and check to: The Illinois Prairie Path, PO Box 1086, Wheaton, IL 60189

Summer 2003
Celebrate the 40th Anniversary of the Illinois Prairie Path!

Volunteer Park
at Carlton St. & Liberty Dr. in Wheaton

2003
40th Anniversary

Saturday,
September 27—2 p.m.
Refreshments,
Music and Fun!