



Vermilion Conservationist

Fall 2022

Forest Glen • Kennekuk • Lake Vermilion • Heron • Kickapoo Rail Trail

Leave the Leaves Alone! by Lara Danzl

Yard work is a lot of work. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, American homeowners spend an annual average of upwards of 60 hours doing yard work. I for one would love any reason to spend less time maintaining my yard. One opportunity for us to spend less time on our yard this fall and more time exploring our VCCD parks: leave the leaves alone!

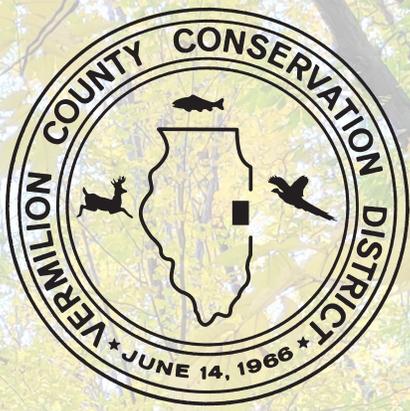
The autumn chore of raking or bagging up all the fallen tree leaves needs to go by the wayside. Research shows us the removal of fallen tree leaves is actually detrimental to the overall health of our yard. Leaving at least some of the leaves in your yard can help fertilize your grass and other plants when the fallen leaves are broken down through decomposition releasing nutrients back into the soil. Fallen leaves around the base of a tree also suppress weeds or other plants from growing that would otherwise compete with the tree.

By leaving the leaves on your lawn, you're actually creating a mini-ecosystem of thousands of organisms thriving in that leaf litter. Microscopic organisms, pill bugs, earthworms, salamanders, and toads can be found in fallen leaves. Birds are now attracted to your yard looking for a snack hiding in the leaves for dinner. Many species of caterpillars overwinter in our lawns beneath the blanket of leaves to emerge as butterflies or moths in the spring.

So if you are looking for more free time this fall and need an excuse to visit the VCCD parks, drop the rakes and bags and leave the leaves alone!



**“To assure our people permanent access
to their outdoor heritage”**



Vermilion Conservationist

This newsletter is a publication of the Vermilion County Conservation District. It covers news, programs, and natural history information of interest to residents of Vermilion County. It is free upon request from:

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Director's Dateline

by Jamie Pasquale

Some changes will be occurring with the Forest Glen office this fall. The office operations will be moved from the current location to the Ranger Station. The building that currently houses the office needs many repairs and upgrades. Beyond the repairs needed, the office was a former house and the layout does not function well for an office. The Ranger Station building is one of our newest buildings and is underutilized, has better energy efficiency, and is more centrally located in the park. The district is in the planning stages with the Lorna J. Konsis Foundation to add a multi-use structure in place of the existing office building.

Assuming our orders do not get canceled due to vehicle supply chain issues, the district has placed an order for a plugin hybrid SUV and three electric trucks. Select vehicles in our fleet would be a great fit for an electric vehicle. Given the additional cost of the electric truck over a comparable truck with a gas engine it will take many years to recoup the additional upfront cost. However, there are other factors such as emissions that come into play. There is still much to be improved with electric vehicles before we transition our entire fleet.

If you have been to Forest Glen lately you probably noticed where digging has occurred from the Ranger Station to the Gannett Education Center. The district has installed a fiber optic line that will link telephone and internet from the Ranger Station to the Gannett and ties in with our existing fiber network linking the Ranger Station, Maintenance building, and current office. We have also upgraded our internet service at Forest Glen and Kennekuk to Starlink internet. This upgrade will allow us to transition our phone systems from aged landlines to internet-based phones.

Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP) by Cole Craft

As a public land hunter in East Central Illinois I understand the struggles that come with finding that perfect spot. No matter how far you hike into the wilderness it seems like there is always at least one other person who had the same exact thoughts you did. Through the Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP), you can have piece of mind knowing that you are the only hunter on that property.



The Illinois Recreational Access Program (IRAP) leases private property from landowners throughout Illinois to provide public access for specific outdoor activities. In exchange for the four-year lease, IRAP pays the landowner a nominal fee, provides liability insurance coverage and works with the landowner to make a habitat management plan and assists with the implementation of specific habitat practices. Activities allowed on IRAP properties include turkey hunting, archery deer hunting, upland game hunting, squirrel hunting, rabbit hunting, waterfowl hunting, and sport fishing.

Applications to hunt or fish on IRAP properties are online on the Illinois DNR website. If you are a landowner who is possibly interested in enrolling you must also apply online.

You can visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/conservation/IRAP/Pages/default.aspx> for more information.

In gratitude for the following Memorials to the District

**In Memory of Lee ‘Buzz’ Sherman -
Ray Morrison Family, Lena Dowers, Janet Adams, and
Sandy Stephenson & Family**

**In Memory of Burt Whittaker -
Doug and Delora Hanner, Roger and Becky Klink, and
Kenneth and Carol Brookman**

Vermilion Valley Encampment at Forest Glen

September 24-25, 2022

The 18th Century Revolutionary War Reenactment in the Homestead Cabin Area is Saturday, 10 o'clock in the morning to 5 o'clock in the evening; Sunday, 10 o'clock in the morning until 4 o'clock in the evening with explosive battles each afternoon. During the day, fashion shows, competitions and drills to be observed by the public.

On Sunday Sept. 25 only will be Pioneer Craft Day to begin at 10 o'clock in the morning until 4 o'clock in the evening, featuring fry bread cooking & tasting; candle dipping, demonstrations by craftspeople and kid's games in the pioneer spirit,
Call 217-662-2142 for more information

Brought to you by The Vermilion County Conservation District
& the North West Territory Alliance



The Vermilion County Conservation Foundation is hosting the 2nd Annual Cheeseburgers and Run 5K Walk/Run, both VIRTUAL and LIVE!

Register now online at www.cheeseburgersandrun.org for the Live event on October 8, 2022, 11:00 a.m. at Kennekuk County Park. The Virtual event is October 8, through October 14, anytime at the participant's choice of venue: Forest Glen Preserve, Kennekuk County Park, Kickapoo Rail Trail, or pick your own location and register your time on our website at the finish. Registration fee includes a 2022 Medal, 2022 edition Cheeseburgers and Run t-shirt, and McDonald's cheeseburger voucher.

Funds raised are designated for new playground equipment at Kennekuk and Forest Glen.

Cheeseburgers and Run 5K Walk/Run

Benefiting The Vermilion County Conservation Foundation

Co-Sponsored by:



Witzel Family
McDonald's



Live October 8th, 2022 • 11:00am
@ Kennekuk County Park

Virtual October 8th - 14th, 2022
@ Kennekuk Cove, Forest Glen
or a course of your own

For more information & registration:
www.cheeseburgersandrun.org



Scan to Register

Getting to Know the VCCF Board

Two VCCF Board Directors will be highlighted in future issues of *The Conservationist*.



Mike Van De Walker

When did you become a VCCF Board Member?

I applied for an Associate Director February 2018; and was appointed to Director to fill Mark Pittman's term in April 2019.

Why did you become a VCCF Board Member?

I enjoy outdoor activities and wanted to be part of keeping these beautiful parks in good shape for all those who use them.

What is a fond memory you have with the VCCD?

Visiting Forest Glen preserve during the Maple syrup season. Spotting animals with my grandson.

What is your favorite fall or winter activity?

Pheasant hunting, walking in the parks.

What is your favorite fall or wintertime food?

Chili, particularly when it is very cold out.

What was your favorite concert you attended?

In the park, I enjoyed the Phases of the Moon weekend. Outside the park, a James Taylor concert at the Assembly Hall.



Michael Courson

When did you become a VCCF Board Member?

I joined the board in 2011.

Why did you become a VCCF Board Member?

Mark Meyer, a good friend who was on the board suggested that I attend a board meeting to see what he was doing. I really liked how the VCCF was working to get the new Kennekuk Education Center along with other park projects. I believe educating young children about nature is one of the most important things we can be doing today. Our young people need to develop an interest in the great outdoors and all that nature has to offer. I was a CASA when Mark suggested I attend and join the board, I have a real interest in making a difference in children's lives.

What is a fond memory you have with the VCCD?

Getting to know Julius Hegler as we worked on initial financing for the Ed Center. Meeting new people when working at fundraising and open house events such as Cheeseburgers and Fun, Maple Syrup and hosting the old building open house events at the Bunker Hill Historic Area.

What is your favorite fall or winter activity?

Hunting, being outdoors and viewing Fall Foliage

What is your favorite fall or wintertime food?

Weiner roasts and Thanksgiving dinner

What was your favorite concert you attended?

Johnny Cash



Upcoming Programs and Events

October 2022 - January 2023

October

- 8 VCCF Cheeseburgers and Run 5K Event
More information found on page 5 of this newsletter
- 15 IDNR ENTICE Education Workshop, "Illinois Woodlands", Preregistration and Fee Required
Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, Register at www.enticeworkshops.com
- 19 VCCD Board Meeting at Gannett Education Center, Forest Glen, 4:30p.m. Public Invited
- 21 VCCF Board Meeting, Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 9a.m.

November

- 3 KRT at Sleepy Creek Event, Sleepy Creek Vineyards, 7 - 10p.m. Call 217-442-1691 to purchase tickets
- 16 VCCD Board Meeting at Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 4:30p.m. Public Invited

December

- 4 BHHA Holiday Open House, 2 - 8p.m. Bunker Hill Historic Area, Kennekuk. Free!
- 4-31 BHHA Holiday Lights at the Bunker Hill Historic Area, Kennekuk, 5 - 8p.m. Free!
- 9 VCCF Board Meeting, Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 9a.m.
- 21 VCCD Board Meeting at Kennekuk Environmental Education Center, 4:30p.m. Public Invited

January

- 3 First Day Shelter Reservations for 2023
For those making reservations in person, we will start at 7:30 am at the Kennekuk Visitor Center or at the Ranger Station at Forest Glen. Phone call reservations will begin at 8:00 am. To reserve a shelter at Kennekuk or Lake Vermilion, call 217-442-1691; for Forest Glen call 217-662-2142. For full details on available shelters, including pricing, capacity, and photos, visit www.vccd.org. Reservation price fees for 2023 will be updated on the website by December 1, 2022.

Vermilion County Conservation District
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www.vccfoundation.info

**HAVE YOU RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP FOR 2022
WITH THE VERMILION COUNTY CONSERVATION FOUNDATION?**

Join the VCCF in making a difference in your community to support natural and wildlife resource conservation activities. Currently, the Foundation is working with the VCCD on the Gannett Outdoor Education Center remodel project at Forest Glen Preserve and replacing playground equipment at both Kennekuk and Forest Glen.

The **Mission** of the Vermilion County Conservation Foundation is to support the efforts of the Vermilion County Conservation District through the conservation of our natural resources, improvement of natural and scenic areas, scientific research, and conservation education programs to citizens of Vermilion County, IL as well as maintenance and support of capital projects for historic and nature preservation.

Your VCCF membership at any level entitles you to a 10% discount on District rental and user fees, and expires each December 31. Choose a membership today that is right for you!

- \$25 Regular
- \$50 Supporting
- \$100 Patron
- \$1,000 Life – payable in up to four installments, if preferred

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Enclose this form with your **tax-deductible check** payable to VCCF
and mail to: VCCF, c/o Forest Glen Preserve, 20301 E 900 North Road, Westville, IL 61883

