

Addition to Fort Daniel Conservation Area

By Richie Wolf

In December 2019, the Macon County Conservation District acquired 180 acres of land that was added to Fort Daniel Conservation Area, two miles east of Mt. Zion, IL. The purchase of \$1,324,736.00 was assisted by a \$1,000,742.00 grant provided by the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation. This amazing foundation has provided funding for 211 projects, totaling over 31,000 acres, throughout Illinois.

This new addition nearly doubles the size of Fort Daniel Conservation Area. The total acreage is now very close to 380. Staff plan to convert the land to native wildlife habitat, including savanna, prairie, forest, and wetland areas. This transition is anticipated to take decades of care.

One of the premiere features of the property is Big Creek. The protection of this waterway is a primary reason the District purchased this property, as it feeds into Lake Decatur, the primary



drinking water source for the City of Decatur. Many plants and animals can be found on site and it is believed that even more species will find this area desirable once exotic species are removed over time.

Many techniques will be used to restore the quality of this land to native habitats. The restoration and operations staff will work together to plant native species and remove

non-native and undesirable plants. This may be done with prescribed fires, manual removal, and by mechanical means. Regardless of the method, it will take many years of effort to make this property appear as it was before European settlement.

This addition to Fort Daniel Conservation Area will not immediately open to the public for active recreation, as there are no facilities or trails on the property. It will take a few years to get the acquisition to the point where we can develop trails and other amenities that will provide access to users. We ask that you have patience, as the delicate process to restore this land will take time. Part of the District's mission is to promote the conservation of natural resources by acquiring, maintaining, and restoring natural areas to leave them unimpaired for future generations. We are happy to say this land will forever be protected for wildlife and people.



2020 SUMMER CAMPS



Where can you go canoeing, dissect owl pellets, and roast marshmallows over your own fire? Summer camp at Rock Springs Conservation Area of course! Staff have the entire summer packed with fun, educational activities for ages 1-15.

We hope you and the children in your life can join us for a summer of exploring nature and history, and creating lasting memories. The camp season runs June 1 through August 7, 2020:

- **Mini Camp (ages 1-5):** Young children explore Rock Springs Conservation Area with their adult buddies in these hour-long camps. \$6/child each camp.
- **Earth Adventures (ages 6-12):** Children hike, swim, canoe, and discover the world around them in this full-day, week-long nature camp with optional Before and After Child Care. \$125/camper each week. Optional Before and After Care are each \$25/camper per week.
- **Adventure Club (ages 5-12):** Children join in on Earth Adventures nature camp on Tuesday mornings from 9am to noon. \$12/camper each day.
- **X-treme Camp (ages 10-15):** Older children seeking more adventure pack up for exciting daytrips, including horseback riding and canoeing. \$60/camper.

Online registration opens April 1. Find details about each camp and register online at MaconCountyConservation.org. Staff are happy to answer any questions you may have during business office hours, Monday-Friday from 8am to 5pm, at 217-423-7708.



Take Your Pick

Below you'll find activities offered at multiple times or locations. Register online before the last full weekday prior to the program. Programs held at Rock Springs Conservation Area unless otherwise noted:

NIGHT HIKES

Saturdays, March 7, April 18, and May 23, 8-9:30pm

Griswold Conservation Area

Explore Griswold Conservation Area in the dark and use your senses to find the way through the woods. Discover what makes your eyes, ears, and nose work at night.



Wear sturdy shoes. \$2/person. Register online by March 6, April 17, and May 22. Min/Max: 5/30.

CANOE THE SANGAMON

Saturdays, April 11 and May 9, 10am-1pm

Paddle a canoe down one of our local waterways, the Sangamon River. All equipment provided. Bring a drink and clothes that could get wet. Must have at least one adult in each canoe. Registered participants will be contacted with a meeting location based on river conditions. \$25/canoe. Register online by April 10 and May 8. Min/Max: 3/8 canoes.

WILDFLOWER HIKES

Sundays, April 19 and May 24, 2-4pm

Venture into the forests and prairies with volunteer Jerry Sievers. We will search for as many species of these beautiful spring delights as we can, including Virginia bluebells, spring beauties, and more. Wear your hiking boots. Free. Register online by April 17 and May 22. Min/Max: 5/30.



Briefs

CAMPGROUND AND PAVILIONS OPENING

The Friends Creek Conservation Area campground opens for the season on May 1. The campground welcomes RV and tent camping. It includes flush toilets, showers, and a dump station.

Daily fees for electric sites:

- \$17 for county residents
• \$20 for non-residents

Daily fees for non-electric sites:

- \$10 for county residents
• \$12 for non-residents

Find more at MaconCountyConservation.org. Reserve your campsite by calling 217-423-7708.

The picnic pavilions at Rock Springs, Friends Creek, Fort Daniel, and Griswold are also open for the season. Host your own outdoor event by reserving your pavilion for \$35/day at MaconCountyConservation.org.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY: HOMESTEAD PRAIRIE FARM

Have you visited Homestead Prairie Farm at Rock Springs Conservation Area? It is filled with history from the days before the U.S. Civil War. Share 1860s rural Illinois life with others. For as little as an hour or two a month, you can feel the satisfaction of leading tours and programs through this pre-war homestead. Training provided. This volunteer opportunity is for ages 13 and up.



For more information or to sign up, contact Volunteer Coordinator, Jenny Garver at jgarver@MaconCountyConservation.org or 217-423-7708. Explore more volunteer opportunities at MaconCountyConservation.org.

Alan Roberson Retiring

After 44 and a half years with the Macon County Conservation District, Alan is retiring from his position as Site Supervisor at Friends Creek Conservation Area. We wish him all the best in retirement, and thank him for all he has done to restore and preserve Macon County's natural and cultural resources.

Special Events

All located at Rock Springs Conservation Area

SANGAMON RIVER CLEANUP

Saturday, April 25,

Registration 9:30-10am, Cleanup 10am-12pm

Make the river a safer and more beautiful place for both wildlife and people as you help clear trash from the banks of the Sangamon River. Dress to get dirty. Bring your own gloves if you can, as supplies are limited. Bags will be provided. Come by yourself or with the whole family. Organized groups should call 217-423-7708 in advance. Co-sponsored by the Community Environmental Council. Register and meet at the Rock Springs Information Shelter.

FESTIVAL OF SPRING

Saturday, April 25, 12-4pm

Celebrate Earth Day and welcome spring with an afternoon of outdoor family activities. Enjoy wagon rides, crafts, canoeing, and learn what other organizations are doing in our community to protect water and wildlife. Co-sponsored by Decatur Audubon Society. Canoeing \$2/person. All other activities are free. No registration required.



WALK FOR WILDLIFE

Saturday, May 2, 12-4pm

Explore the woods and wetlands during this inaugural fundraiser for the Macon County Conservation Foundation. Walk along pines, prairies, and ponds and discover wildlife stations along the way featuring live frogs, toads, snakes, and turtles. \$15/adult, \$5/child, or \$45/family. All proceeds improve wildlife habitat. Each registrant receives a collectable native animal toy. Meet at the Information Shelter near the parking lot at Rock Springs Conservation Area. Register online by May 1. Min/Max: 15/300.



Happenings

Events located at Rock Springs Conservation Area and open to all ages unless otherwise indicated.
Register online at MaconCountyConservation.org by noon, unless otherwise noted.

Hours

OFFICES OPEN

Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm

NATURE CENTER OPEN

Monday-Wednesday, Friday, 8am-5pm

Thursday, 8am-8pm

Saturdays, 9am-5pm

Sunday, 1-5pm

TRAILS OPEN

Daily, 7am to sunset

Holidays & Closings

OFFICES & NATURE CENTER CLOSED

Sunday, April 12, Easter

NATURE CENTER OPEN, OFFICES CLOSED

Friday, April 10, Good Friday

Monday, May 25, Memorial Day

Macon County
Conservation District



Meetings

MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD MEETINGS

Third Wednesday of each month, 5:30pm

March 18, April 22, & May 20

DECATUR AUDUBON SOCIETY MEETINGS

Rock Springs Nature Center

March 15, 2pm

April 19, 2pm

May 16, 8am at Rock Springs Information Shelter

ROCK SPRINGS QUILTERS

Rock Springs Nature Center

Every Wednesday, 9-11am

Connect with Us

Find out how you can make a difference

217-423-7708

MaconCountyConservation.org



Ground Squirrels Vintage Base Ball Games

Experience base ball as it was played in the 1860s!
Cheer for your home team, the Rock Springs Ground Squirrels, as they compete in vintage base ball using authentic rules from 1858:

Saturday, March 21, 1pm

Away game Goodwill Match
against Belleville Stags at
Belleville/Swansea Moose Lodge
1221, Swansea, IL



Saturday, April 25, 1pm

Away game against several teams at Gateway Arch
National Park, St. Louis, MO

Saturday, May 2, 1pm

Home game against McLean County Prairie
Chickens at Beautiful Troubaugh Field, Rock Springs
Conservation Area

Follow the team on Facebook for more
games and information, or visit
MaconCountyConservation.org.

Open Houses

BETHEL SCHOOL

Saturday, May 2, 1-4pm

See what going to school was like in the
early 20th century at the historic one-room
schoolhouse located at Friends Creek
Conservation Area. 13734 Friends Creek Park
Rd., Cisco, IL. Free.

GOVERNOR OGLESBY MANSION

Sundays, March 29, April 26, and May 31, 2-4pm

Tour the restored home of Illinois Governor
Richard J. Oglesby. Encounter the lives of
its family members and explore their late
1800s lifestyle. \$2/person. Members are free.
421 W. William Street, Decatur, IL.

Events located at Rock Springs Conservation Area and open to all ages unless otherwise indicated. Register online at MaconCountyConservation.org by noon, unless otherwise noted.

Music

The following programs are free and open to the public at Rock Springs Nature Center.

DULCIMER CLUB

Saturdays, 10am-12pm

March 7 & 21

April 4 & 18

May 2, 16, & 30

BLUEGRASS MUSIC JAM

Sundays, 1-4pm

March 8 & May 10

CROSS COUNTRY CLASSICS

Thursdays, 6-7:30pm

March 5, April 2, & May 7

SHAPE-NOTE SINGING

Sunday, May 24, 2-4pm



Art

NORTH GALLERY ARTISTS

Katherine Unruh

March & April

Encounter animals and wild landscapes captured in oil and acrylic paintings and drawings.

Bryan Maple

May & June

Have you ever gazed up at the stars and wished you could save that exact moment? Well now you can! Explore the final frontier through astounding astrophotography by Bryan Maple.



SOUTH GALLERY ARTISTS

Ronald Bartanen

March & April

Feel the rural American countryside through colorful still-life paintings brought to you by Mr. Bartanen of Sullivan, IL.

Kattina Williams

May & June

Exotic birds, wildlife, and nature landscapes, oh my! See this local artist's exhibit on all things nature as she takes you on a journey through her photography.

Mini Camps

Children ages 1-5 explore nature with an adult buddy through crafts, activities, songs, and stories. These camps are a great stepping stone for little ones to spend time with other children with the comfort of a loved one nearby. \$6/child. Online registration required. Min/Max: 4/12.

SLY FOXES

Wednesday, March 11, 9:30-10:30am

Thursday, March 12, 9:30-10:30am

Discover native red fox that live and play in our wooded areas and view a fox skull, fur, and tracks. Register online by noon the day before camp.



BOOM & BANG

Tuesday, March 24, 9:30-10:30am

Wednesday, March 25, 9:30-10:30am

Explore the wind, rain, and thunder of spring storms with hands on activities and outdoor adventures. Register online by noon the day before camp.

HOW SEEDS GROW

Wednesday, April 15, 9:30-10:30am

Thursday, April 16, 9:30-10:30am

Celebrate the renewal of spring by learning about seedlings and how they grow. Register online by noon the day before camp.

BOXY TURTLES

Tuesday, April 28, 9:30-10:30am

Wednesday, April 29, 9:30-10:30

Meet a live box turtle and learn about this interesting reptile that carries its home everywhere it goes. Register online by noon the day before camp.



Happenings

Events located at Rock Springs Conservation Area and open to all ages unless otherwise indicated. Register online at MaconCountyConservation.org by noon, unless otherwise noted.

March

PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: ST. PATRICK'S DAY

Sunday, March 15, 2pm

Learn about clovers and other green plants emerging from their winter sleep. Children will go on a scavenger hunt and paint with marshmallows. Free. Register online by March 13. Min/Max: 5/30.



TRIP TO ST. LOUIS AQUARIUM AT UNION STATION

Tuesday, March 17, 10am-6pm

This brand new aquarium, located at the recently revamped St. Louis Union Station, features exhibits on native and exotic wildlife. Learn about fish and river otters in the Mississippi River, then discover aquatic wildlife from sharks to jellyfish. If you like, you will also have time to step outside and explore everything else Union Station has to offer, including a 200 foot tall Ferris wheel. Bring a lunch or purchase one there. Admission is on your own. \$25/person covers transportation and parking. Register online by March 16. Min/Max: 5/24.

RAG DOLL WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 21, 2pm

Rag dolls have been one of the most popular forms of children's toys throughout history. Create and personalize your own old-fashioned rag doll. All supplies provided. For all ages, but children 13 and under must be accompanied by an adult. Free. Register online by March 20. Min/Max: 5/30.



WORLD WATER DAY MOVIE NIGHT

Sunday, March 22, 4pm

Discover the importance of fresh water by watching a critically acclaimed documentary about Earth's rivers and lakes, as well as the many species that depend upon them. Popcorn will be provided. Free. Register online by March 20. Min/Max: 5/50.

HOMESCHOOL PROGRAM: BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Wednesday, March 25, 2pm

Learn all about birds and their many adaptations through the use of several skulls, feathers, and mounts. Find out what makes our feathered friends so special and which ones you could find in your own backyard. Free. Register online by March 24. Min/Max: 5/30.



HIBERNATORS OF MACON COUNTY

Saturday, March 28, 2pm

Local hibernators are beginning to wake and prepare for warmer weather. Learn which animals have been dormant all winter and why they go through this energy-saving process. We will have furs, skeletons, and a live animal to show you. Free. Register online by March 27. Min/Max: 5/30.

DECATUR'S FIVE CIVIL WAR GENERALS

Sunday, March 29, 2pm

Five Civil War generals called Decatur their home. These men varied widely in age, background, military experience, fame, and their postwar lives, but all answered their nation's call to arms. Explore the public and personal stories of these five remarkable men. Free. No registration required.



April

PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: TADPOLES

Sunday, April 5, 2pm

Baby frogs go through some amazing changes! Find out all about tadpoles, make a frog life-cycle craft, then head down to the pond and see if you can find any amphibian friends. Free. Register online by April 3. Min/Max: 5/30.

Happenings

Events located at Rock Springs Conservation Area and open to all ages unless otherwise indicated.
Register online at MaconCountyConservation.org by noon, unless otherwise noted.

TRIP TO LINCOLN PARK ZOO AND PEGGY NOTEBAERT NATURE MUSEUM

Tuesday, April 21, 8:30am-8:30pm

Venture north to downtown Chicago to see the Lincoln Park Zoo, and learn about conservation efforts worldwide at one of the few free admission zoos in the country. Then, take a short walk to Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, and explore a variety of nature exhibits including a 2,700 square-foot butterfly greenhouse. Admission to the museum is on your own. Bring a lunch or purchase one from one of the cafes at the Zoo. \$35/person covers transportation and parking. Register online by April 20. Min/Max: 5/24.

BOATER SAFETY CLASS

Tuesday and Thursday, April 28 and 30, 5-9pm

This 8-hour Illinois Department of Natural Resources class covers boating laws, boating terms, and safety requirements. Must attend both class days and pass a written test in order to receive your certificate. Free. Register online by April 27. Min/Max: 5/30.

May

POLLINATOR POWER

Sunday, May 10, 2pm

Discover the amazing world of pollination as we discuss those native to our area, including bumblebees and mason bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and even wasps. Then, go outside and take a short hike to search for some. Free. Register online by May 8. Min/Max: 5/30.



TRIP TO MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

Tuesday, May 12, 11am-7pm

Explore 79 acres of magnificent horticultural displays full of plant species from tropical to temperate zones. Venture through indoor conservatories, formal gardens, and international gardens. Admission and lunch on your own. \$25/person covers transportation. Register online by May 11. Min/Max: 5/24.

NIGHTTIME FROG QUEST

Saturday, May 16, 9-11pm

Test your frog-finding abilities by searching for as many species of frogs as you can discover! Bring your flashlights as we scope out water habitats for eye shine. We'll also try to catch some with nets and by hand. \$3/person or \$10/family. Register online by May 15. Min/Max: 5/30.

PRESCHOOL PEEPERS: BLUEBIRDS

Sunday, May 17, 2pm

What's so special about Eastern bluebirds? Young children are invited to find out by visiting a bluebird nest box, doing a craft, and learning about their natural history. Each registered family will receive a bluebird nest box. Free. Register online by May 15. Min/Max: 5/30.

WALLEYE FISHING TRIP TO LAKE ERIE

Sunday-Tuesday, June 14-16

Join staff on a trip to the Great Lakes to fish for walleye on a charter boat. Price includes two day charter, fishing equipment, transportation, and lodging. Meals and license not included.



Meet at the Information Desk at Rock Springs Nature Center. For all ages. \$465/person. Register online by June 1. Min/Max: 5/11.

MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES & STAFF

Darrel Parish, President

David White, Vice President

Doug Johnson, Secretary

Karen Schneller, Treasurer

Nina Bendsen, Second Vice-President

Richie Wolf, Executive Director

Shane Ravellette, Operations Manager

Alysia Callison, Nature Center Manager

Pam Smith, Finance & H.R. Manager

Contact Us

Macon County Conservation District • 217-423-7708
mccd@MaconCountyConservation.org
www.MaconCountyConservation.org

Return Service Requested



***River Cleanup
& Festival of Spring***

Saturday, April 25
Rock Springs Conservation Area

Cleanup **10am-12pm**
Festival **12-4pm**
Admission is **FREE**
More information inside

Two photographs are shown side-by-side. The left photo shows a person in a blue shirt and a hat bending over to pick up trash into a black bag. The right photo shows a group of people gathered outdoors at a festival, with a green and yellow flag flying in the background.

For updated trail conditions, call 217-421-7493.