



MITIGATION PROJECT

PINE DUNES WETLAND MITIGATION

After six years of prairie restoration and vegetation surveys, the Illinois Tollway received sign-off from the Army Corps of Engineers on the 315-acre wetland mitigation site at Pine Dunes Forest Preserve located near Wadsworth in northern Lake County.

The Tollway successfully restored 80 acres of wetlands and 235 acres of adjacent prairie, savanna and woodland habitat. Work began on the agricultural parcel in 2014, opened to the public in 2018 and federal sign-off was granted in summer 2020.

Now that the site has become an established ecosystem, it has been turned over to the hands of the Lake County Forest Preserve District.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Pine Dunes Forest Wetland Mitigation Project is a collaboration between the Lake County Forest Preserves and the Illinois Tollway. The mitigation work involved wetland creation, wetland enhancement, stream restoration, woodland restoration and improvement and conversion of upland farmland into mesic-prairie and oak savanna areas.

Wetland restoration and woodland enhancements included the removal of old agricultural drain tile in order to reestablish the natural hydrology and water flow, removal of non-native species, control of invasive plants and the planting and seeding of diverse native prairie species. In addition, approximately 4,800 native trees and shrubs were planted in the upland areas.

The Tollway also constructed site improvements for the preserve, including new trails, a parking lot, restroom facilities, boardwalks, a drinking water well and a new entrance road, as well as nearly three miles of bike and pedestrian trails.

PURPOSE

The Pine Dunes Forest Preserve features numerous streams, marshes, sedge meadows, ponds and other wetlands, as well as a mix of prairie, savanna and oak-hickory woodlands.

These habitats have been identified by the Illinois Wildlife Action Plan, Chicago Wilderness and the Max McGraw Wildlife Foundation as critical nesting and foraging areas for a variety of birds and other wildlife species including European goldfinches, bobolinks, and sandhill cranes

The project was coordinated with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, and Lake County Forest Preserve District.

The project provided approximately 60 acres of wetland credits to mitigate the construction impacts associated with construction of the Illinois Route 390 Tollway and the new I-490 Tollway.

