



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES
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Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation

DATE: April 3, 2017

MEMO TO: Carol Calabresa, Chair
Planning Committee

FROM: Randall L. Seebach
Director of Planning and Land Preservation

James L. Anderson
Director of Natural Resources

John E. Nelson
Director of Operations and Infrastructure

FOR INFORMATION ONLY: Removal of a portion of the green trail loop and three boardwalks to address public safety concerns, eliminate environmental impacts, and reduce operational costs at Van Patten Woods Forest Preserve.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS SUPPORTED: Organizational Sustainability, Conservation

FINANCIAL DATA: There is no financial impact at this time.

BACKGROUND: Located on two upland ridges, the one mile long woodchip-surfaced green trail loop at Van Patten Woods Forest Preserve is surrounded by high quality wetlands and woodlands. These two ridges are connected at the trail loop's northern end by a 500 foot long boardwalk that was constructed in the mid-1990s by the Youth Conservation Corps across a sedge meadow wetland. Three other smaller boardwalks, one approximately 100 feet long and the other two approximately 50 feet long, cross smaller depressional wetlands or drainage ways featured along this loop. The large boardwalk and one of the smaller boardwalks on the east leg of the trail loop are currently in a state of disrepair and are no longer safe to use by the public.

Additionally, the large boardwalk is very close to the ground and prevents vegetation from growing underneath it, and it is currently difficult to control equestrian use in this area, further impacting the vegetation when they bypass the boardwalk. This lack of vegetation has created erosional issues and the loss of soil is further impacting the wetland habitat. These wetlands are a known location for Blanding's turtles, a state-endangered species.

Finally, from a maintenance standpoint, this trail is a challenge. The boardwalks are anchored in peaty soil and have a tendency to sink in wet weather, and heave in frozen conditions. The one mile of wood chip surface is the longest section of wood chip trail in the District, and YCC crews have to replenish the wood chips every summer.

In order to address the safety, erosion and maintenance issues, staff has determined that better signage is

needed to curtail equestrian use, and that a portion of the trail and its boardwalks need to be removed. Replacing the boardwalks with the standard design was considered, but the cost of over \$250,000.00 is not justifiable for such a lightly used trail loop. The most scenic portion of the loop will be retained, and be enhanced with the addition of an overlook of the Des Plaines River floodplain.

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Chief Operations Officer, Director of Finance, Corporate Counsel