



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES
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Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation

DATE: November 6, 2014
TO: Pat Carey, Chair
Finance and Administrative Committee
FROM: Michael G. Tully
Director of Operations and Public Safety
SUBJECT: For Information Only – Drone Use in the Forest Preserves

RECOMMENDATION: For Information Only – Drone Use in the Forest Preserves

BACKGROUND: With the increased popularity and availability of remote controlled, unmanned aircraft, or drones, the question of how they are regulated on public lands has come up more frequently. The District, through our General Use Ordinance, allows remote control aircraft to be operated at the designated flying field at Van Patten Woods, with the purchase of an annual permit. Drones owners are eligible to use this area as well, as long as their device meets all the requirements set forth on the permit application. Drones are not allowed to be launched or landed at any other location in the Forest Preserves. To date, no drone owners have applied for a permit. There have been a few reports of drones operating in the preserves, most notably at Ryerson Woods, but the Ranger Police have yet to encounter any. If and when they do, warnings will most likely be issued, unless it is a repeat offender.

This practice of allowing drones to use designated and permitted remote control flying fields has also been adopted by the Forest Preserve Districts of DuPage, Kane, Winnebago and Cook Counties, and the McHenry County Conservation District. The Forest Preserve District of Will County, and the Boone and Macon County Conservation Districts prohibit all forms of remote control aircraft.

Nationally, National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis, after a number of incidents involving drones in National Parks, signed a policy memorandum in June prohibiting launching, landing or operating unmanned aircraft on lands and waters administered by the National Park Service. Jarvis stated that they remain prohibited “until we can determine the most appropriate policy that will protect park resources and provide all visitors with a rich experience.”

It should be noted that while the District has the authority to regulate the launching and landing of drones on District land, we do not control the air space above the preserves. So it is possible that drones that are launching and landing on neighboring property could fly over District property, and at this time we have no jurisdiction to control such flights.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: For Information Only

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Executive Director, Chief of Ranger Police

FINANCIAL DATA: No financial impact.

PRESENTER: Michael G. Tully