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Forest Preserve District protects the core of Sugar Grove's namesake woods

GENEVA, IL — Kane County's second-oldest forest preserve just grew in size, with a 33.09-acre addition to Bliss Woods Forest Preserve in Sugar Grove.

The Forest Preserve District of Kane County closed on the property Oct. 7. Along Bliss Road, adjacent to the eastern section of the preserve, the addition features intact forest-floor wildflowers and massive oaks. It includes the core of the woods that gave Sugar Grove its name.

The village was named after a 500-acre woodland in 1834. Protected from wildfires by its location within a bend of Blackberry Creek, the mixed deciduous woods served as a maple sugar camp for Indigenous people for generations. The grove was known as "Sin Qua Sip," which translates to "sugar grove."

A little more than half of the historic grove still exists today, thanks to the efforts of previous generations to protect these woods. Those efforts began in 1928 with the District's second land purchase.

Although large portions of the western woods have been protected for nearly 100 years, and portions to the east have been protected since 1985, the southern core, long owned by the Aurora Sportsmen's Club, remained unprotected.

"These parcels hold some of the oldest forest still in existence in Kane County. The land has never been put to the plow, and the mature oak, maple and ash trees retain the forest structure found here hundreds of years ago," said Benjamin Haberthur, executive director of the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. "There are high-quality ephemeral plant communities, outstanding old oaks and intact wetlands."

The District invested $545,985 in the 33.09-acre addition, or $16,500 per acre.

— MORE —

"We are thrilled to announce this addition to Bliss Woods Forest Preserve," said Forest Preserve District President Bill Lenert. "This purchase represents a step forward in our mission to protect local nature and provide more green spaces for everyone to enjoy. Thank you to our community for its support, our staff for their expertise and our board for making this happen."

While the land is an important addition to the preserve and supports the District's broader mission to protect remnant woodlands, Haberthur said the property also presents challenges.

The property has been privately owned since 2020, following decades of use by the gun club. Two small areas require remediation because of lead contamination. Those areas will be fenced off until funding is available for remediation, likely through environmental grants. The remainder of the addition will be available to the public.

"The District is in a unique position to both protect the trees and remediate the land. Most other buyers would need an economic return to fund remediation and would have removed the trees," Haberthur said. "These trees at Bliss Woods were under threat. Without the public's support for the Forest Preserve District, they would have been lost."

"Thank you to the people of Kane County for more than 100 years of support, which allows us to protect these core refuges for current and future generations," he said.

For more information on the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, visit www.kaneforest.com or find the District on social media by searching @forestpreserve.

Maps on the following page compare the 1871 grove with modern aerial imagery and identify the 2026 acquisition.

— ADD TWO —

Forest Preserve District protects the core of Sugar Grove's namesake woods

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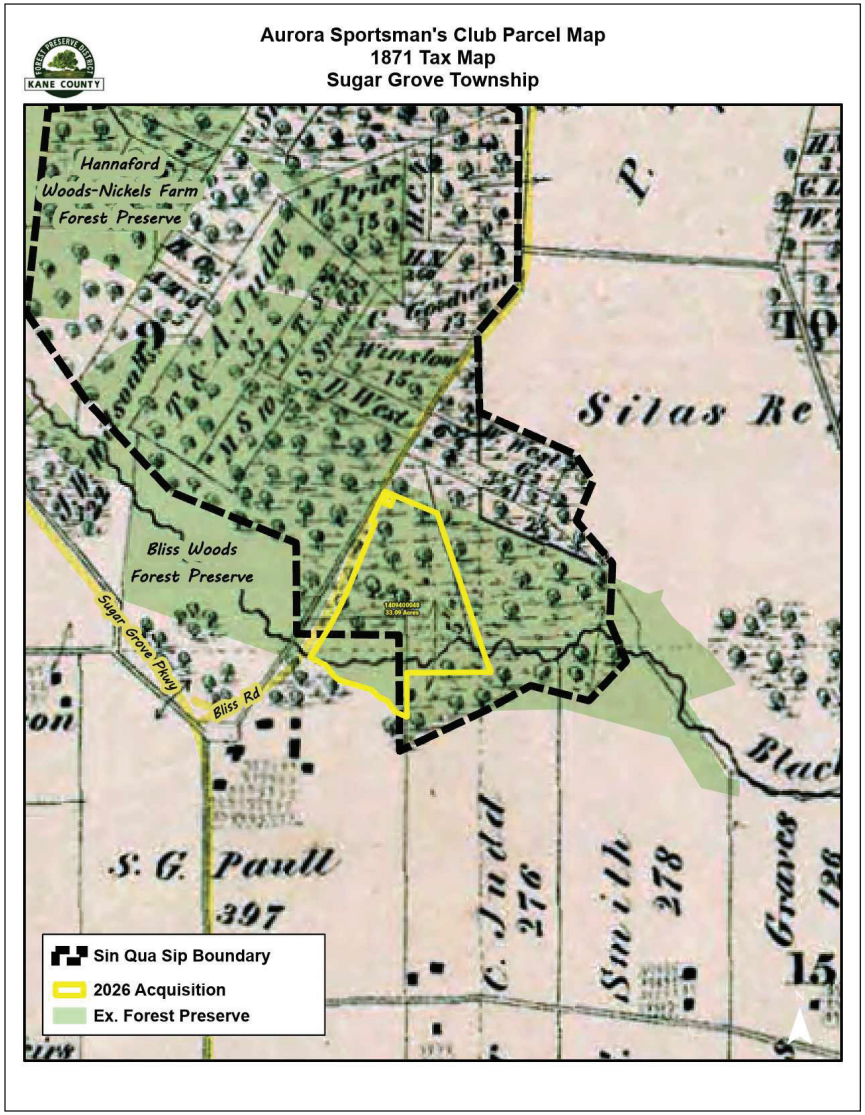
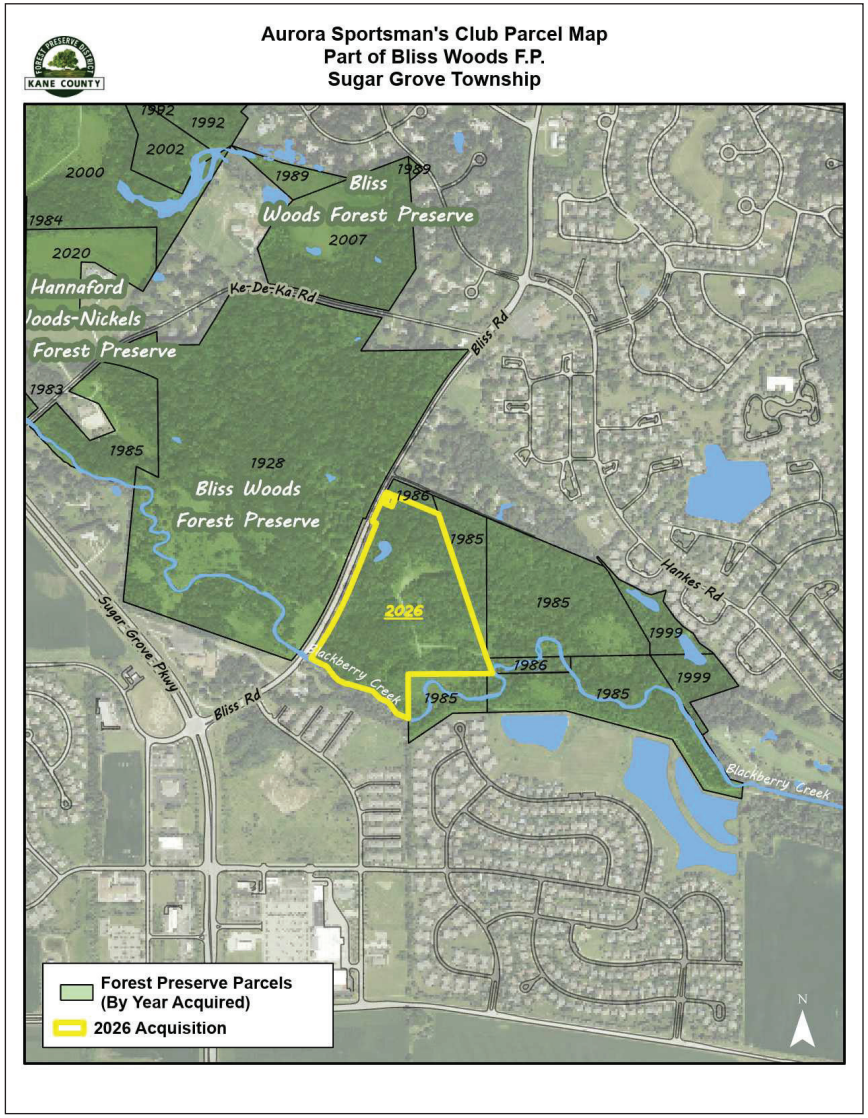
1871 TAX MAP



MODERN AERIAL MAP



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