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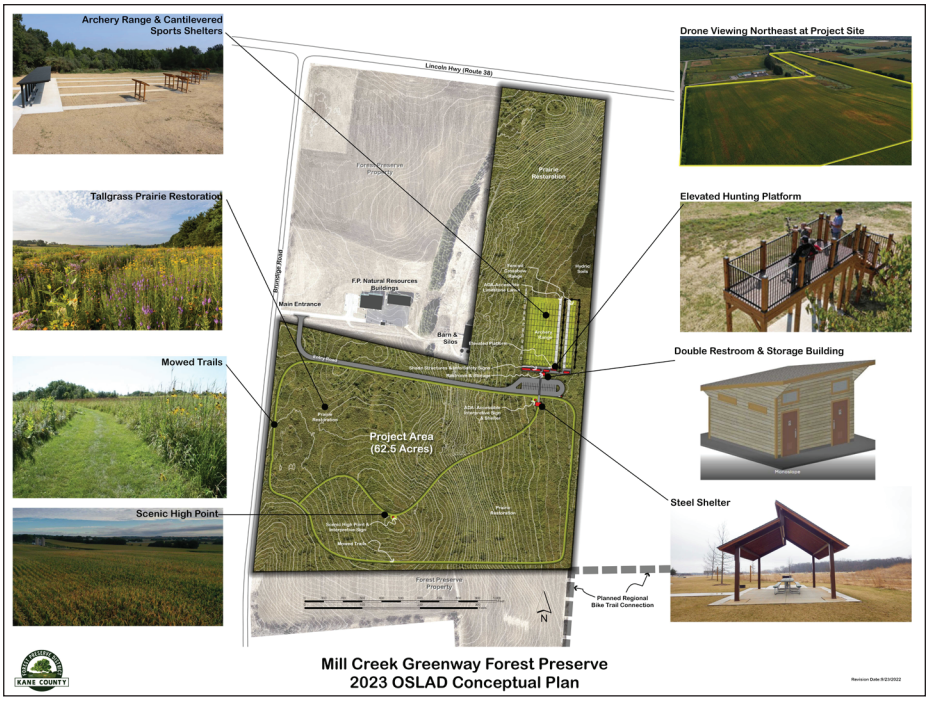
Forest preserve to construct new archery range as part of $600,000 OSLAD award

GENEVA, IL — Kane County's first public archery range will be constructed in Mill Creek Greenway Forest Preserve in Elburn, thanks in part to a $600,000 state grant, announced March 1.

The grant award was among 118 announced by Gov. JB Pritzker for Illinois parks, forest preserves and conservation agencies. In total, $60 million in Open Space Land Acquisition & Development (OSLAD) grants were awarded. OSLAD grants are administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR).



In a press release, IDNR Director Natalie Phelps Finnie said, "An investment in the outdoors is an investment in the health and well-being of the people of Illinois. We know that 83% of Illinoisans consider access to outdoor recreational opportunities important for them and their families. We also know that getting outside leads to better overall health."

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Forest Preserve awarded $600,000 grant for archery range and prairie restoration

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The Forest Preserve District of Kane County has a $1.2 million project planned at Mill Creek Greenway Forest Preserve, with plenty of recreational amenities geared toward getting people outdoors and into the preserve. Planned improvements include an archery range, picnic shelter, mowed trails, interpretive signage, restrooms, an entry drive and additional parking, plus a 62-acre tallgrass prairie restoration.

"We're thrilled with the grant award," said Forest Preserve District Executive Director Benjamin Haberthur. "These funds will allow us to better open up Mill Creek Greenway Forest Preserve for the public to enjoy. The preserve already has scenic views. We'll be adding miles of trail, a picnic shelter, and an archery range open to archers of all skill levels. Early designs incorporate a stand-alone, safety first, ADA-accessible crossbow range. We're excited, because an archery range is an amenity that Kane County residents have been requesting for years," he said.

Forest Preserve Chief of Planning & Land Management Jennifer Rooks-Lopez added, "We are grateful to the IDNR for their continued support of the Forest Preserve District of Kane County. This grant will help to restore more than 60 acres of farmland to prairie, and introduce a unique recreational experience with the construction of the first outdoor archery range owned and operated by the Forest Preserve District."

Among the natural area improvements in the project, the District will restore current farmland back to prairie, work to restore the ecological balance of the site, and help protect the flora and fauna of the area. Executive Director Haberthur said, "Like all efforts of the Forest Preserve District, our philosophy is to develop each preserve for the whole community. Along with the recreational amenities, we will be planting over 60 acres of high-diversity prairie for the entire suite of Illinois' fauna. Pollinators like the Monarch butterfly and Rusty-patched bumblebee will thrive after the restoration, along with declining firefly species, grassland birds, and other wildlife," he said.

The Forest Preserve District will begin engineering the project this year, followed by construction in summer 2024. Staff expects the improvements to be completed between late 2024 and spring 2025.

For more information on the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, visit www.kaneforest.com.

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