



HR0192

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, The members of the Illinois House of Representatives wish to commend the partnership between the North Branch Restoration Project, the Centennial Volunteers Program, and the Friends of the Forest Preserves and their efforts to restore the forest preserves, as well as the Forest Preserves of Cook County's commitment to building and supporting volunteer restoration efforts; and

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WHEREAS, The Chicago metropolitan area contains some of Illinois's largest and best remnants of its native ecosystems; these remaining natural lands are irreplaceable and need help to survive and prosper; and

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WHEREAS, In 1977, a group of enthusiastic citizens volunteered to help rescue several small remnants of native prairie that still survived in the Forest Preserves of Cook County along the North Branch of the Chicago River; today, many groups in the Chicago area are involved in the restoration of native habitats; among these groups, the North Branch Restoration Project has been called a model for volunteer stewardship and ecological restoration; and

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WHEREAS, Every weekend, volunteers gather at scheduled sites to work, restoring health to the preserves by cutting

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1 brush, pulling weeds, and gathering and sowing seeds; citizen
2 scientists collect important information about the plants and
3 animals, monitor changes in sites as restoration proceeds, and
4 add to the knowledge of local ecosystems; and

5 WHEREAS, The results have been remarkable; in prairies,
6 plants such as cream false indigo, purple prairie clover,
7 rattlesnake mater, and bottle gentian have reappeared and are
8 thriving; many grassland animals, from the smooth green snake
9 to the great spangled fritillary butterfly, survive because of
10 these efforts; with the return of sunlight and fire in the
11 woods, grasses, sedges, and wildflowers once again cover the
12 forest floor; great crested flycatchers, American woodcocks,
13 and eastern wood pewees raise their young in the woods; and

14 WHEREAS, Across the Forest Preserves of Cook County, more
15 than 20 endangered or threatened plant species have increased
16 in numbers; animals such as the Cooper's hawk and the Edward's
17 hairstreak butterfly are back from the edge of local
18 extinction, and the eastern bluebird has returned to nest in
19 the North Branch savannas; and

20 WHEREAS, The Forest Preserves of Cook County, with nearly
21 70,000 acres, is the largest forest preserve district in the
22 United States; within its boundaries are rare habitats that
23 offer plant and animal diversity on par with the rainforests of

1 the world; more than 20 years ago, the District became the
2 first agency in a major metropolitan area to monitor urban
3 wildlife that carries West Nile, Lyme disease, rabies, and
4 avian influenza; as a result, the District's Wildlife Research
5 Center now has a world renowned data set utilized by the
6 Centers for Disease Control, National Institutes of Health, and
7 many universities; and

8 WHEREAS, The Centennial Volunteers were established in
9 2015 and are a part of a community of like-minded individuals
10 who help restore the Chicago River system and make a tangible
11 difference to the environment; volunteers are trained by
12 experts in restoration and resource management and are involved
13 in regular volunteer days on the weekends throughout the year;
14 they lead activities for nine sites on volunteer days and
15 during other special events; and

16 WHEREAS, The Friends of the Forest Preserves was founded in
17 1989, and its mission is to be "the voice of a diverse
18 community inspiring and organizing people to protect, restore,
19 and expand the forest preserves in Cook County"; the Friends of
20 the Forest Preserves helped develop the Next Century
21 Conservation Plan, an ambitious blueprint to make Cook County a
22 national leader in urban conservation, and now plays a
23 leadership role in the plan's implementation; the organization
24 also played an instrumental role in developing the Conservation

1 Corps, a program that provides high school students and young
2 adults with hands-on conservation projects to help restore
3 land, including raising more than \$5 million in support, which
4 made it possible to engage more than 950 young people who have
5 helped care for and improve over 1,000 acres of Forest
6 Preserves' land; and

7 WHEREAS, The North Branch Restoration Project, the
8 Centennial Volunteers, and the Friends of Forest Preserves are
9 exemplary community partners with the Forest Preserves of Cook
10 County and support and train a vast network of volunteers to
11 help steward the woodlands, savannas, wetlands, and prairies
12 across 70,000 acres of preserves; the value of the volunteers'
13 efforts extends beyond the borders of the forest preserve
14 property, as volunteers enjoy the physical and mental health
15 benefits of spending time in nature among a supportive,
16 friendly community of people, and the neighborhoods receive the
17 environmental benefits of clean air, stormwater retention, and
18 beautiful spaces to get outdoors to relax and play; therefore,
19 be it

20 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
21 HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
22 we commend the North Branch Restoration Project, the Centennial
23 Volunteers Program, and the Friends of the Forest Preserves and
24 their efforts to restore the forest preserves, congratulate

1 them on their success, and applaud the Forest Preserves of Cook
2 County's commitment to encouraging and supporting volunteer
3 efforts; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
5 presented to the North Branch Restoration Project, the
6 Centennial Volunteers Program, the Friends of the Forest
7 Preserves, and the Forest Preserves of Cook County as an
8 expression of our esteem and respect.