



Friends of the
Sangamon Valley

South Fork Nature Reserve



June 2008

Name: South Fork Nature Reserve. The park was named through a contest held among area schoolchildren.

Location: Along Bakutis Rd. near Rochester

Directions: Rt. 29 to Rochester. Take a left on Tuxhorn Rd. Take a left on Wright Rd. to Gaule Rd. Take a right on Gaule to Bakutis Rd. Take a right on Bakutis and proceed to the small parking area.

Access: Open to the public, excluding a marked inholding.

Acres: Approximately 3.8 acres

History: This property flooded frequently. It included several homes/shacks on private lots. The Federal Emergency Management Agency purchased the property for the county for use as open space.

Owner: Sangamon County. The Friends have entered into a memorandum of agreement with the county, including management of a conservation easement. The easement was finalized in May 2006.

What's an Easement? A conservation easement is granted by the property owner to another party for purposes of preserving the land for conservation. The property owner retains ownership, but gives up most development rights. The party that holds the easement is responsible for annual inspections and reporting. In this case, Sangamon County owns the property and the Friends hold the easement.

What are the Friends responsibilities? Under the terms of the easement, the Friends will conduct a yearly survey of the property. The Friends has a strong working relationship with the Sangamon County Planning Commission and is in frequent communication with the county regarding the status of the property and our activities there.

The Friends have entered into a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with Sangamon County which allows the Friends to conduct certain types of management.

What are the owner's responsibilities? The county is responsible for property maintenance and management that is not conservation-related. For instance, maintenance of the parking area, lights, signs and security are the responsibility of the county. If any problems are noted by the Friends (e.g., transformers and electrical lines), the Friends will inform the county and the county will take the appropriate action. This work is done by the Sangamon County Highway Department.

Natural Communities: Hardwood floodplain forest

Notable Features: Large hardwood trees, historic bridge abutment

Notable Species: State endangered Kirtland's water snake (2005), pileated woodpecker, oriole

Current Threats: Demolition of riverfront structures has left considerable amounts of debris in the soil. There is also much trash in the South Fork River. The Friends have been working to clean this up, but it will need to be an ongoing effort for the next several years.

Accomplishments: Planted floodplain hardwood trees, site of Sangamon River Cleanup 2005 and 2006

Management Plans: The understory will be restored with seeding of floodplain tolerant species

Funding Needed: The Friends do not anticipate any need for funding that cannot already be accommodated by membership dues and donations.

Other information: There is one inholding within the park, marked with signs. No public access is allowed here.



The Friends of the Sangamon Valley is a charitable organization dedicated to the preservation of our natural heritage by acquiring, restoring and protecting ecologically significant lands in the Sangamon River Watershed.

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