

## 2.7 Special Lands

Special lands include publicly owned parks, recreational areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites.<sup>26</sup> Within the study area, numerous properties in the public domain are managed and protected for their special resources, including 18 forest preserve areas, one nature preserve, eight Illinois Natural Areas Inventory (INAI) sites,<sup>27</sup> and several local parks (see Exhibit 2-10). These areas provide open space and habitat for different types of plants and wildlife, including common species and threatened and endangered species that rely on this habitat for survival. Forest preserves and parks also provide recreational activities. However, nature preserves and natural areas are usually not developed for public access. In cases where public forest preserves incorporate a nature preserve or natural area, access is usually limited or restricted to well-defined trails. Forest preserves and associated nature preserves and INAI Sites within the study area are described in Table 2-21.

TABLE 2-21  
County Forest Preserves and Associated Nature Preserves and INAI Sites within the Study Area

Forest Preserve Name	County	Approximate Size (acre) <sup>a</sup>	Function <sup>b</sup>	Nature Preserve/ Natural Area <sup>c</sup>
Cricket Creek	DuPage	192	R	None
Des Plaines River Preserves	Cook	1,650 <sup>d</sup>	—	—
Axehead Lake	—	—	R	None
Catherine Chevalier Woods	—	—	R	None
Che-Che-Pin-Qua Woods	—	—	U	None
Chippewa Woods	—	—	R	None
Dam No. 4 Woods – East	—	—	R	None
Iroquois Woods	—	—	R	None
Robinson Woods	—	—	R	None
Schiller Woods	—	—	R	Schiller Woods Prairie INAI Site
Fischer Woods <sup>e</sup>	DuPage	149	U	Fischer Woods INAI Site
Fullerton Park	DuPage	185	R	None
Maple Meadows Golf Club	DuPage	245	G	None
Mallard Lake	DuPage	949	R	None
Meacham Grove	DuPage	252	R	Meacham Grove INAI Site
Medinah Wetlands	DuPage	23 <sup>f</sup>	U	None
Ned Brown Preserve	Cook	3,700	R	Busse Woods INAI Site; Busse Forest Nature Preserve

<sup>26</sup> Properties with these qualities are protected under Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 USC 303). Special lands that would likely be affected by the proposed improvements are evaluated for their potential to qualify as 4(f) properties in Section 4.6. Lands purchased or developed using Land and Water Conservation funds (Section 6(f) lands) or Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant program funds are also protected. Potential impacts to Section 6(f) lands are also discussed in Section 4.6.

<sup>27</sup> One INAI site, WGN Marsh, is privately owned. It is located within the study area near the southwest corner of the Ned Brown Preserve – outside of forest preserve limits.

TABLE 2-21  
County Forest Preserves and Associated Nature Preserves and INAI Sites within the Study Area

Forest Preserve Name	County	Approximate Size (acre) <sup>a</sup>	Function <sup>b</sup>	Nature Preserve/ Natural Area <sup>c</sup>
Oak Meadows Golf Club	DuPage	210	B, G	None
Salt Creek Greenway	DuPage	49	U	None
Salt Creek Marsh	DuPage	100	U	None
Salt Creek Park	DuPage	90	R	None
Silver Creek	DuPage	18	U	None
Songbird Slough	DuPage	391	R	Songbird Slough INAI Site
Spring Creek Reservoir	DuPage	88	R	None
Swift Prairie	DuPage	106	U	Swift Road Meadow INAI Site
Wood Dale Grove	DuPage	187	R	Wood Dale Grove INAI Site

Sources: CH2M HILL, 2008; FPDDC, 2008a; FPDDC, 2006a; FPDDC, 2006b; FPDDC, 2008a; IDNR and Illinois Natural Heritage Database, 2008a.

<sup>a</sup> Unless otherwise noted, acreages are for the entire preserve and were obtained from forest preserve district websites listed below.

<sup>b</sup> B = banquet/meeting facilities; G = golf; R = recreational opportunities, U = undeveloped.

<sup>c</sup> One additional INAI site within the study area is not associated with a forest preserve (see Exhibit 2-10).

<sup>d</sup> Acreage from CH2M HILL GIS database; includes only part of forest preserve within study area.

<sup>e</sup> Fischer Farm Park at the south end of the preserve is operated by the Bensenville Park District through a lease with the FPDDC. Educational opportunities and other programs/events are available at Fischer Farm.

<sup>f</sup> Acreage from CH2M HILL GIS database; does not include proposed forest preserve acquisition areas.

## 2.7.1 Forest Preserves

Forest preserve properties, account for roughly nine percent of the study area (see Exhibit 2-10). The largest preserves are in Cook County and include the Ned Brown Preserve and several properties located along the Des Plaines River.<sup>28</sup> There is a cluster of several forest preserves located near the southwestern part of the study area in DuPage County. The forest preserves in the study area provide a combination of protected open space, plant/wildlife habitat, and recreational facilities. IDNR identified state-listed threatened and endangered species at 10 forest preserve sites within the study area. Of the 18 forest preserve sites, 12 provide trails or opportunity for recreation (fishing, picnicking, golfing).<sup>29</sup> The remaining six are open to the public but have no established recreational facilities or parking.<sup>30</sup>

Forest preserve trails provide opportunities for walking, jogging, hiking, bicycling, inline skating, and cross-country skiing. They also provide a means to travel within the preserve and connect with other trails outside the preserves. Parts of several regional trails have been constructed or are proposed to cross forest preserve property within the study area. These

<sup>28</sup> The “Des Plaines River Preserves” include several individually named “woods.” The woods form a large contiguous system of forest preserve property, including the Des Plaines River Trail System (South). This system of preserves is counted as one forest preserve site for the purposes of this section of the document.

<sup>29</sup> Che-Che-Pin-Qua Woods, one of several FPDDC woods located adjacent to the Des Plaines River, was included in the total.

<sup>30</sup> Fischer Woods Forest Preserve is described by FPDDC as undeveloped. Fischer Farm Park, which is located at the south end of the preserve, is leased by the Bensenville Park District. It includes an old farm house and offers programs/events and parking facilities.

include the Des Plaines River Trail, Salt Creek Greenway Trail, North Central DuPage Regional Trail, and the East Branch DuPage River Greenway Trail (see Table 2-22).

TABLE 2-22  
Summary of Regional Trails Crossing Through Forest Preserve Land within the Study Area

Trail Name	Existing Length (miles) <sup>a</sup>	Proposed Length (miles) <sup>a</sup>	Primary Use	Owner
Des Plaines River Trail	5.9	N/A	Multipurpose	FPDCC
Salt Creek Greenway Trail	6.6	6.1	Multipurpose	FPDDC; local communities
North Central DuPage Regional Trail <sup>b</sup>	8.9	N/A	Multipurpose	FPDDC; DuPage County Division of Transportation; IDOT; local communities
East Branch DuPage River Greenway Trail	1.7	0.1	Multipurpose	FPDDC, DuPage County Division of Transportation; local communities

Sources: DuPage County Department of Economic Development and Planning and the DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference, 2008; FPDDC, 2009; CH2M HILL, 2008.

<sup>a</sup> Approximate trail lengths within the study area are based on sources above. Trails may extend beyond study area limits.

<sup>b</sup> Includes part of a local trail system (3.3 miles in length).

Several forest preserves within the study area are in the floodplain or were purchased by the respective forest preserve districts for flood control/stormwater quantity and quality improvements. This was accomplished through floodplain acquisition, construction of reservoirs/stormwater facilities, preservation of wetlands and riparian habitat, and public education/awareness opportunities.

## 2.7.2 Parks

In addition to the Cook and DuPage County forest preserve sites, there are numerous local parks and golf courses within the study area owned by municipalities and park districts (see Exhibit 2-10). Parks provide open space, plant/wildlife habitat, educational opportunities, and recreational facilities, such as picnic sites, playgrounds, ball fields, skate parks, and trails. Based on information provided by IDNR, some municipal parks within the study area provide potential habitat for state-listed threatened and endangered species or overlap with INAI sites. There are no state parks within the study area.

## 2.7.3 Illinois Nature Preserves

Busse Forest Nature Preserve is the only nature preserve in the study area (see Exhibit 2-10). IDNR defines a nature preserve as “an area of land or water in public or private ownership that is formally dedicated, pursuant to the terms of the law, to being maintained in its natural condition.” A major objective of the nature preserve system is the preservation of adequate samples of all the important natural features of the state, including threatened and endangered species. This 440-acre site is a registered National Natural Landmark by the U.S. Department of Interior for its rich mixture of flatwoods, upland forest, and marsh communities.

## 2.7.4 Illinois Natural Areas

The Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act (525 ILCS 30) defines a “natural area” as “an area of land in public or private ownership which, in the opinion of the [Illinois Nature Preserves] Commission, either retains or has recovered to a substantial degree its original natural or primeval character, though it need not be completely undisturbed, or has floral, faunal, ecological, geological or archaeological features of scientific, educational, scenic or esthetic interest.” Natural areas include lands registered under the Illinois Natural Areas Preservation Act or identified in the INAI. Many INAI sites are associated with nature preserves, land and water reserves, or natural heritage landmarks and may overlap a forest preserve. Based on information provided by the IDNR and Illinois Natural Heritage Database, there are eight INAI sites within the study area (see Exhibit 2-10), seven of which are associated with forest preserves (see Table 2-21).