



# Illinois News



Army Corps, AmeriCorps, Trails for Illinois—greeting the USACE Commander. Photo: NPS

## PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2015

- NPS Unit
- ★ State Capital



### CURRENT PROJECTS

1. Chicago Heights Trails Stewardship
2. Great Migration Trails
3. Illinois Trail Corps
4. Lake Michigan Trails Network
5. Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/ Mississippi River Trail
6. Wolf Lake Bi-State Task Force

Find out more about each project starting on page 2.

### ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. Program staff provide technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.

## Recent Successes

### Making Trails Work—Lake Shelbyville Project Proves Partnership Value

Illinois Trail Corps is built on partnerships with civilian conservation service and local project sponsors. At Lake Shelbyville, Trails for Illinois led a diverse group of partners: AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Service (NCCC), US Army Corps of Engineers, General Dacey Trail, Student Conservation Association, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, International Mountain Bike Association, and Central Illinois Mountain Bike Association. This group worked to fulfill the needs for training, volunteers, equipment, and funding and demonstrated what a successful public/private partnership can accomplish. This project's model for building, maintaining, and improving trails that are less expensive and take less time than traditionally planned trails continues to be used throughout the State of Illinois.

On June 1, 2014, AmeriCorps NCCC team Maple 1 arrived for five weeks of service. Trail crew training began that. Trail crew instructor Eric Oberg and Illinois Trail Corps crew supervisor Steve French taught Maple 1 to sharpen a Pulaski, gauge slopes, and build sustainable, enduring trails. It was their job to rehabilitate the 11-mile Chief Illini Trail, which links Eagle Creek State Park with the Lone Point Recreation Area. They worked to reroute low areas of trail, rebuild bridges, manage erosion and invasive species, and create wayfinding markers.

On August 5, the last working day for Illinois Trail Corps, Maple 1 walked all 11 miles of the Chief Illini Trail painting new blazes—the very last work item of a scope that, back in June, was felt to be 50% beyond what Illinois Trail Corps could finish.

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# Current Projects

## 1. Chicago Heights Trails Stewardship

Project Partner: University of Illinois Extension

NPS Contact(s): Diane Banta

Location: Chicago Heights

Congressional District(s): IL - 2

### Project Goal

Complete the 1-mile gap in the Grand Illinois Trail construction while working to build a community corps as a trail and community stewardship organization. Chicago Heights residents will connect with current trail development and bike planning initiatives.

### NPS Role

Facilitate the development of a community corps that works to enhance local trails and surrounding areas with clean ups and other quality of life projects.



Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail ready to build so they can ride. Photo: NPS

## 2. Great Migration Trails

Project Partner: The Field Museum

NPS Contact(s): Diane Banta

Location: Chicago

Congressional District(s): IL - 1

### Project Goal

Implement initial Great Migration Trail in partnership with Chicago Park District and local stakeholders along the Burnham Wildlife Corridor.

### NPS Role

Organize trail group under the umbrella of the Bronzeville Community Development Partnership to further planning and implementation of public access to the local history and stories of the proposed Black Metropolis National Heritage Area.

### NPS Role

Facilitate the development of a Friends Group at Big Marsh and support the expansion of the Illinois Trail Corps Program.

## 4. Lake Michigan Trails Network

Project Partner: Lake Michigan Water Trail Association

NPS Contact(s): Diane Banta

Location: IL, IN, MI, WI area along Lake Michigan

Congressional District(s): IL - 1, IL - 2, IL - 7, IL - 9, IL - 10

### Project Goal

Provide access to Lake Michigan in four states through planning recreation travel modes while marketing the trail for increased tourism and economic development opportunities.

### NPS Role

Convene quad state regional planning organizations, local governments, and state governments to implement vision, mission, and goals/outcomes leading to the development of land and water trails, US Bike Routes, and enhancement of the Lake Michigan Circle Route.

## 3. Illinois Trail Corps

Project Partner: Trails for Illinois

NPS Contact(s): Diane Banta

Location: Statewide

Congressional District(s): IL - 2

### Project Goal

Build a new partnership between AmeriCorps and Trails for Illinois for trail development at two locations. Trails will be enhanced and built with youth employed through AmeriCorps and with public volunteers.



Hitting the trail, bringing the hard work. Photo: NPS

# Current Projects

## 5. Mississippi River Connections Collaborative/ Mississippi River Trail

Project Partner: Mississippi River Trail, Inc.

NPS Contact(s): Rory Robinson

Location: the Mississippi River Ten States

Congressional District(s): IL - 12, IL - 16, IL - 17

### Project Goal

Improve the Mississippi River Trail for recreation, tourism, and community development; assist in the development of the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative, and increase long-term organizational viability; further develop the Mississippi River blueway portion of the trail system; develop geotourism initiative with National Geographic Society.

### NPS Role

Assist the Mississippi River Connections Collaborative with organizational development, outreach to other organizations and agencies, and development and implementation of their strategic and operations plans. Increase Mississippi River Trail's capacity to develop water- and land-based trails along the Mississippi River. Assist with the development of a sustainable destination tourism (geotourism) initiative in partnership with the National Geographic Society.

## 6. Wolf Lake Bi-State Task Force

Project Partner: William W. Powers State Recreation Area

NPS Contact(s): Diane Banta

Location: Chicago

Congressional District(s): IL - 1

### Project Goal

Build a bi-state conversation on natural resources, water quality, and recreation opportunities and enhance strategic planning.

### NPS Role

Convene stakeholders and form a partnership to address planning issues for Wolf Lake. Plan strategically to develop cohesive actions to improve the lake area.



Even Abe is celebrating the groundbreaking of the Cal-Sag Trail! Photo: NPS

*“The work of the Cal-Sag Trail Coalition and Friends of the Cal-Sag Trail was off to a good start with the work of the National Park Service on the Trail Dedication. This summer we see the results of all our time and energy put into this project as we celebrated Cal-Sag Trail Groundbreaking on National Trails Day.”*

- Mary Poulson, Marketing Director, City of Blue Island

## We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from NPS Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.

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## 2014 Nationwide Partnership Success

3,278.74 Miles of Trail Developed

2,046.25 Miles of River Conserved

9,411.06 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected

Find more information online at [www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca)



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## Recent Successes cont.

The Student Conservation Association arrived as AmeriCorps left and continued the trail building frenzy by extending the General Dacey Trail by 5 miles. Work consisted of creek crossings, hillside stabilization, and the development of technical mountain bike sections of trail.

In five weeks each, the crews cleared, cut, chopped, dug, repaired, opened, and reopened 16 miles of tough hiking trail. Volunteer engagement reconnected the Shelbyville area to the Chief Illini and created stewards of a trail that is now more enjoyable to hike and easier to maintain. The Chief Illini and General Dacey Trails can again attract hikers and explorers into the outdoors—and the economy—of Lake Shelbyville.

## Chicago Heights Earth Day

On April 26, 2014, Chicago Heights residents celebrated Earth Day with a community beautification day. Gathering at the Smith Park Fieldhouse, the park clean-up participants began with the preparation of flower beds and rain garden design and planting. Other volunteers cleared saplings, intrusive plants, and brush at Forest Preserves of Cook County Wilson Woods and at McEldowney Park. This year's event was sponsored by city aldermen and led by Chrysalis Community Center in partnership with the Chicago Heights Park District, Chicago Heights Beautification Committee, and Chicago Heights Preservation Committee. The clean-up was supported through Friends of the Parks Regional Earth Day Event and Comcast Cares Day and Global Youth Service Day volunteers.

With over 100 volunteers, the crews met the goals of creating “clean and green” neighborhood parks. The amount of trash removed from the parks made it necessary for a special trash pickup by the Forest Preserves. All generations were invited and encouraged to participate so families worked beside Comcast volunteers who worked along with high school youth creating a fun work day. Lunch and refreshments were provided to thank the incredible group that showed up to WORK!



Rain garden planting at historic Smith Park Fieldhouse. Photo: NPS