

# Stopping a 5 lane highway through Deer Grove Forest Preserve:

## *Lessons from the struggle*

Presentation at the Wild Things Conference

January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015

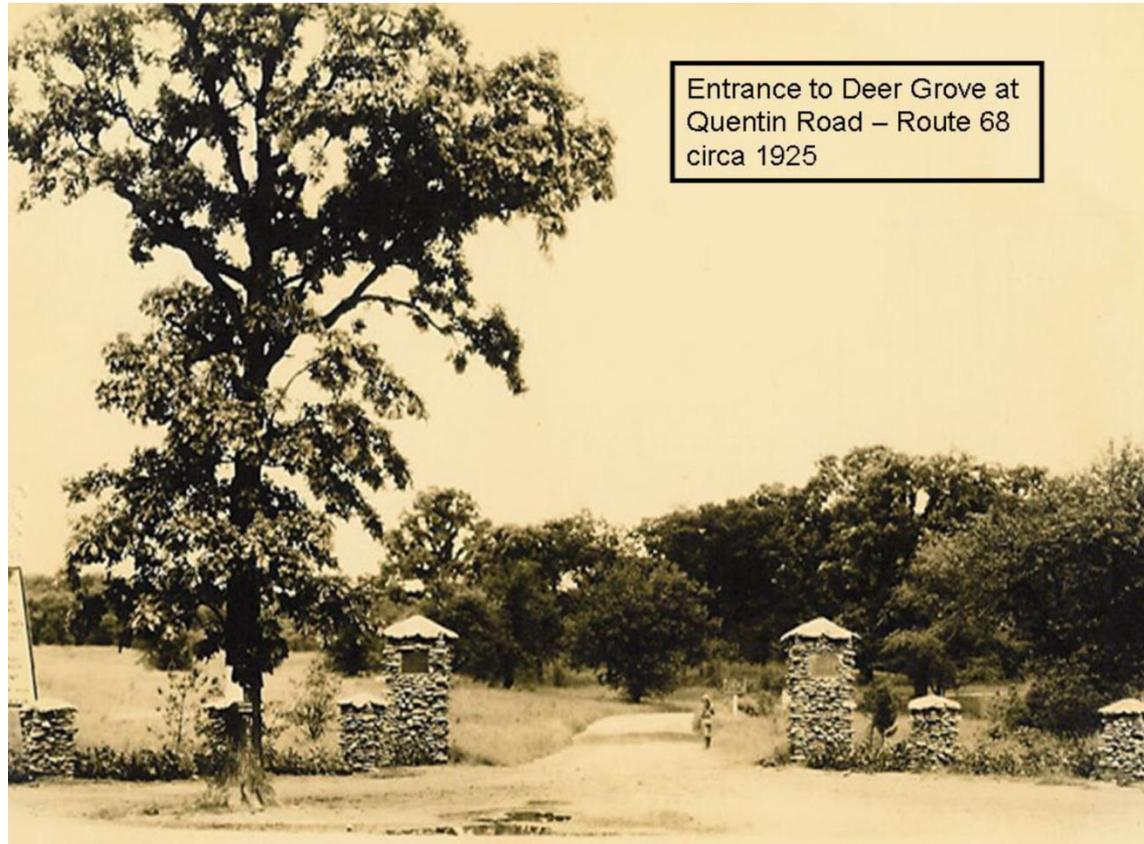
BuildQuentinRight

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BQR Steering Committee

# Context:

- Deer Grove Forest Preserve is the nation's first and oldest Forest Preserve; it will celebrate its 100 year anniversary next year!



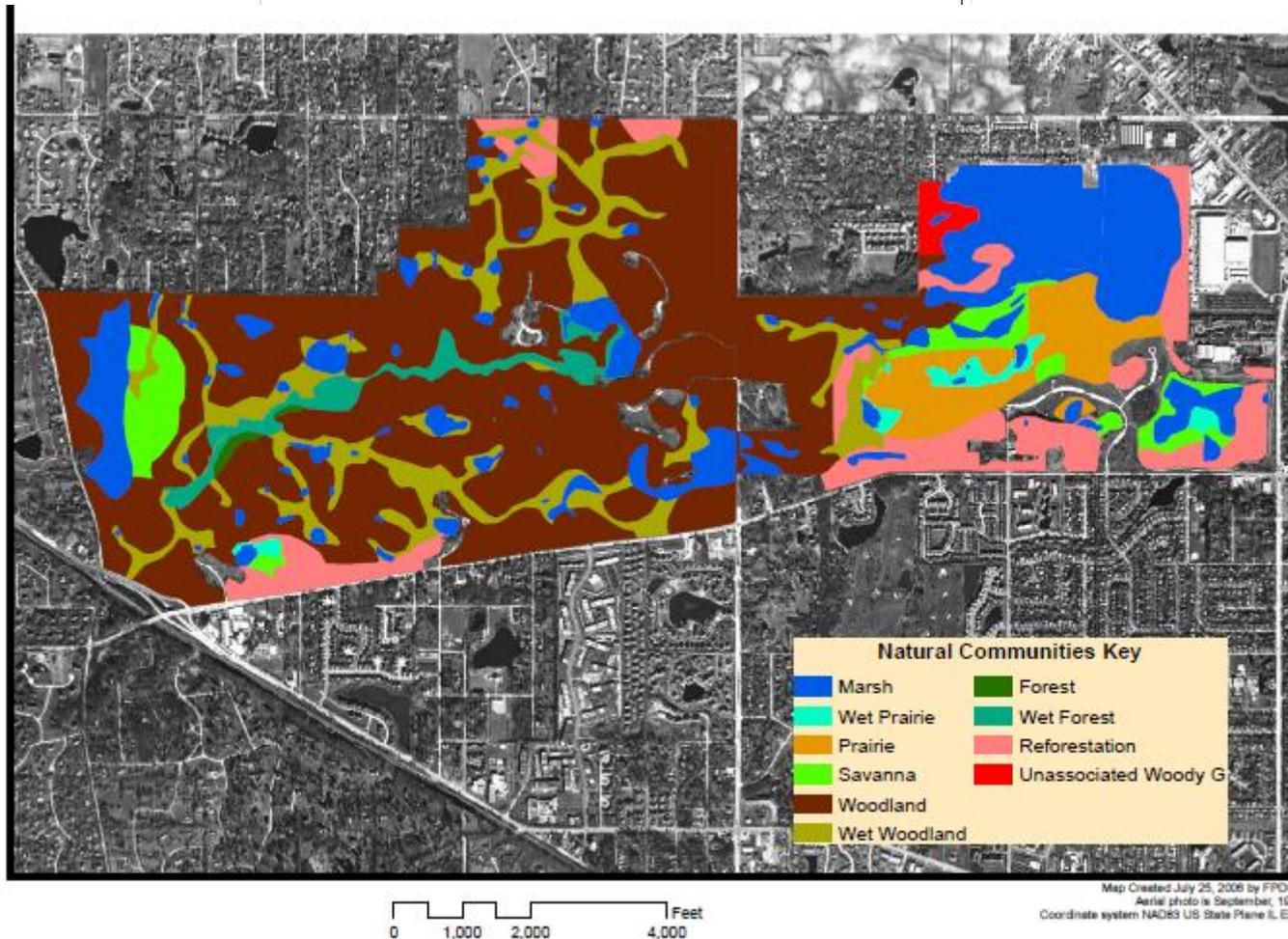
# DG West (1000 acres) is Illinois' 500th designated State Nature Preserve



DG East (500 acres) is finishing a multi-million dollar wetland restoration project (lead by Openlands).



# Quentin road: Bi-sects Deer Grove Forest Preserve from Lake Cook to Dundee Road



- **Currently the road is a two lanes. Both road and bridge over Salt Creek are in disrepair.**



- **This is a Cook County Highway; the CCHD has proposed expanding the road to five lanes!**

# History: 2009

- DG stewards Pete Jackson and Ron Vargason got wind of Quentin Road expansion
- They walked the neighborhood, gathering support and organizing neighbors and supporters to address the issues of the re-build to minimize impact on the Forest Preserve.
- BuildQuentinRight is born!
- Cook County Highway Departments has public meeting where they present the 5 lane solution as a fait accompli!

# History: 2010

- BQR organizes a stakeholder meeting and attempts to engage with Cook County Highway Department
  - Over 50 participants across all stakeholders
  - Groups led by professional facilitators—determine all stakeholders needs
  - Stakeholders report came out of that meeting
  - Copies of that report are available at our website:  
[www.buildquentinright.com](http://www.buildquentinright.com)

# History: 2011-2013

- BQR continues to try to engage with CCHD and Cook County Forest Preserves: we seek a place at the table as representing many stakeholders.
- BQR advances a “3 Lanes and a Bike Path”; gather signatures showing all stakeholders support a sidewalk/bike path along Quentin Road.
- BQR grows as a coalition with the addition of Openlands and Friends of the Forest Preserves. Both groups provide additional resources (legal advice and staff time)

# History: 2014

- Cook County Highway Department gets new Superintendent and a new name (Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways-CCDTH).
- CCDTH sits down with BQR, Openlands and Friends of Forest Preserves; appear to be more sensitive to and supportive of “context sensitive design” and “Complete Streets”.
- BQR fills the information void by informing community on the latest developments
- BQR conducts outreach to local elected officials

# What's next?:

- CCDTH recently did an updated traffic study (completed November 2014). They are analyzing this data.
- Unclear what regulatory steps will be required before work can begin.
- Entire county government from Chairwoman Preckwinkle on down to CCDTH and CCFPD knows our position; we will hold our elected official accountable to a fair, open process.
- We hope to be around the table when these discussions happen!

# Lessons Learned:

## Organize, organize, organize:

- Walking the neighborhood build core team
- Stakeholder's meeting solicited a lot of stakeholder input (focus on needs, not solutions)
- Building a broad-based community coalition has helped sustain our efforts (going on year 6!)
- Data! Use hard data and policy to demonstrate why our solution is best
  - (Understanding and articulating issues in language of the CCDTH e.g. using their rules from the Highway Capacity Manual)
- Learn for other's across the country--a lot of good information on other communities fighting road expansions and learnings about best ways to increase traffic safety and throughput.

## Don't give up:

- We are in year 6; we are still unclear what will happen
- We are still unclear if we will be part of finding a solution

# What can you do?

- Sign up on our mailing list!
  - We anticipate needing support across the county in the months ahead.
- Let Forest Preserve officials know you opposed putting a five land road through the county's first forest preserve

“Three lanes and a bike path”