A Rare Opportunity

JOIN THE DREAM

Hack-ma-tack National Wildlife Refuge

“A Vision for the Future”

Organizational Friends:
- Clear Water Outdoor, Lake Geneva WI
- Environmental Defenders of McHenry County
- Friends of Big Foot Beach State Park
- Fox River Ecosystem Partnership
- McHenry County Audubon
- McHenry County Conservation Foundation
- Nippersink Creek Watershed Planning Committee
- National Park Service
- Nippersink Trails Project
- Openlands
- Sierra Club, Illinois Chapter
- Small Waters Education NFP
- The Field Museum
- The Land Conservancy of McHenry County
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Trust for Public Land

Friends of Hack-ma-tack Steering Committee:
A group of citizens from McHenry County, Illinois
and Walworth County, Wisconsin

Sponsors list continually growing.
Information to sign on at:
www.hackmatacknwr.org

“Nothing happens unless first a dream.”
Carl Sandburg

Cover photo and wetlands photo on pages 2 & 3 courtesy of Ray Mathis, a state and national award winning large format landscape photographer from McHenry, Illinois. Over 300 images of "Chicago Wilderness," most from McHenry County, can be seen on his website at www.naturesmasterpieces.net.

Eastern Meadowlark, page 7, courtesy of wildlife photographer Matthew Fletcher.

Community photos of Antelope, Pelican & Swans are courtesy of Kathy Riakoff. Lake Geneva photos by Sarah Schuster.

Thanks to Jeff Miller and R.J. Miller & Linda Miller for Wisconsin Tourism Bureau photos. Brochure design and illustrations courtesy of Nancy Williamson.
A rare opportunity to create the first National Wildlife Refuge in the Chicago Region!

The Proposal:

The United States Fish & Wildlife Service should embrace this unique opportunity to work with other federal, state, and local agencies and citizens to designate Hack-ma-tack National Wildlife Refuge. This may be a last chance to capture remnant biologically significant communities in the rapidly developing area of Northeastern Illinois and Southeastern Wisconsin.

The Regional Benefits of Hack-ma-tack National Wildlife Refuge

- Link existing protected natural areas to form a large preserve of natural lands in Southeastern Wisconsin and Northeastern Illinois.

- Establish a mega preserve encompassing thousands of acres of wetland habitat in the flyway of the Whooping Crane Eastern Partnership. In recent years, other migratory waterfowl and shorebirds have flocked to nearby wetlands restored on McHenry County Conservation District (MCCD) lands, in NE Illinois and along the flyway in SE Wisconsin.

- Further protect the watershed of Nippersink Creek, a beautiful stream in both Illinois and Wisconsin which is home to rare fish, mussels and the river otter.

- Expand recreational opportunities in an area known for its canoeing and hiking with trail connections north into Wisconsin and the White River Trail, south through the Fox River Valley and the Grand Illinois Trail and west towards Rockford and Beloit.

- Provide birding opportunities for the large Metro Chicago area birdwatching market, recently estimated to generate $356 million per year in economic activity.

- Provide the Gateway Communities of Richmond, Genoa City, Pell Lake and Lake Geneva, with their rich history, antique stores and unique shops, the opportunity for further development as a hub for nature tourism and the cultural history of the region.
What is a Wildlife Refuge?

The National Wildlife Refuge System is a national network of public lands set aside specifically to protect wild animals and plants. Found in all 50 states and five U.S. territories and encompassing 95 million acres, 360 refuges currently exist. National Wildlife Refuges are special places with significant natural resources where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service acquires land and/or conservation easements.

- The National Wildlife Refuge System was created in 1903 by President Theodore Roosevelt with Florida’s 5.5 acre Pelican Island named the first refuge.
- Wildlife Refuges in the United States are visited 34 million times a year, by birdwatchers, photographers, educators and researchers, hunters, fishers, and hikers. These visitors are an important source of revenue for the local economy. Refuges also enhance the quality of life for local residents, both preserving the region’s aesthetic beauty and affording numerous recreational and educational opportunities. (http://www.fws.gov/realty/lap.html)

Where is OUR Refuge?

In 2003 when the National Wildlife Refuge System celebrated its 100th anniversary, Audubon Magazine boasted that “a wildlife refuge is located within an hour’s drive of every major metropolitan area.”

But a quick review of NWR locations in the Midwest shows that no refuge is found within 100 miles of Chicago except Horicon which is 147 miles away.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 2004, more than one million people visited national wildlife refuges in Illinois to hunt, fish, participate in interpretive programs and view wildlife. (Source: US Fish & Wildlife Service)

Closest Wildlife Refuges You Can Visit

(Until Hack-ma-tack is created!)

Horicon NWR
- 147 miles from downtown Chicago
- 241,417 acres of wetlands, grasslands and oak-savanna remnants - part of the nation’s largest freshwater catfish marsh
- Designated a Wetland of International Importance / Globally Important Bird Area
- Activities: birdwatching, hiking, cross-country skiing, biking, hunting, fishing, environmental education, auto tour route, visitors center
- Contact: 262-367-2658
  http://midwest.fws.gov/horicon

Upper Mississippi NWR
- 148 miles from downtown Chicago
- Established in 1934, this is the first refuge designated for both wildlife and fish
- 46,000 acres of wooded islands, sloughs, prairies, and hardwood forests enshrouding the river
- Activities: Recreational activities include boating, hunting, fishing, and swimming
  • Contact: (815)273-2732
  http://midwest.fws.gov/Savanna/Upper Mississippi River

Illinois River NWR
- 197 miles from downtown Chicago
- 11,350 acres and 1.25 river miles between the north and south boundaries, a mix of backwater lakes, bottomland forests, floodplain wetlands: Designated an “Important Bird Area”. Provides habitat for 60-70 percent of the waterfowl migrating along the Illinois River
- Activities: Hunting and fishing, environmental education and wildlife observation/photography
  • Contact: 309/535-2290
  http://midwest.fws.gov/IllinoisRiver

DID YOU KNOW?

A “nation that for a hundred years has recognized and supported an obligation to the other beings on this planet is a nation that is truly enlightened - because its people understand.”

Lynn Greenwaldt, Former Head of US Fish and Wildlife Service

"Wild creatures, like man, must have a place to live. As civilization creates cities, builds highways and drains marshes it takes away, little by little, the land that is suitable for wildlife."

Rachel Carson

McHenry County Conservation District photographed this group of Whooping cranes at Glacial Park in McHenry County in Fall of 2005. (See map of Eastern Migration, opposite page.)
The Regional Benefits of Hack-ma-tack NWR

Establishment of the Hack-ma-tack National Wildlife Refuge could accommodate the construction of a western bypass around the Village of Richmond leading to Lake Geneva. Hack-ma-tack NWR provides the opportunity for model roadway design methods such as limited-access parkway and advanced design parameters. These could include:

- Wildlife underpass areas
- Scenic pull-offs for vistas and wildlife viewing
- Sensitive placement to avoid ecologically valuable wetlands, oak groves and historic structures.
- Native vegetation incorporated into built areas and stormwater infrastructure to provide water infiltration and additional corridors for experiencing wildlife.
- Roadside landscaping with native species allowing the roadway to become an extension of the refuge itself.

**Development incorporating “eco-design” will allow local business to become part of the Refuge experience.** Hack-ma-tack NWR could include the following commercial ventures:

- Hotels or other lodgings
- Restaurants, groceries or other vacation support facilities.
- Outdoor supply stores, boat rentals, hunting and fishing stores, etc
- Private campground facilities
- Residential Active Adult community
- Immediate care medical facility
- Wineries and Micro Breweries

**NATURE**

- **OUR PLANT AND ANIMAL NEIGHBORS**
  Hack-ma-tack National Wildlife Refuge area includes many state threatened and endangered species. Blanding’s turtles and sandhill cranes use the wetlands, with bobolinks, and red-headed woodpeckers in the grasslands and oak groves. The landscape includes meandering streams feeding Nippenink Creek, with acres of marshes and calcareous seeps and groves of oak and hickory. The unusual tamarack tree occurs in both southeastern Wisconsin and northeastern Illinois. A survivor of climatic conditions from a much earlier post glacial period, this tree gives the proposed refuge its name - "Hack-ma-tack."

- **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE” IN PLACE FOR RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**
  From the Grand Illinois Trail northward to the White River Trail the proposed NWR is situated between two of the most heavily used trail systems in the Midwest. These trails are a destination for multitudes of bikers, walkers and equestrians throughout the warmer months and comprise an important link for snowmobile routes in NE Illinois and SE Wisconsin in winter. The Nippenink Trail, currently in planning stages with the National Park Service, will connect with the Grand Illinois Trail and begin the work of linking to the White River Trail in Wisconsin.

- **Expanded recreational opportunities:**
  - SQUASH
  - HORSEBACK RIDING
  - CANOEING/KAYAKING
  - HIKING
  - CAMPING
  - FISHING
  - SNOWMOBILING
  - BIRDWATCHING
  - OUTDOOR EDUCATION
  - WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY
  - SKIING

**ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

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**TRANSPORTATION & ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES**

Establishment of the Hack-ma-tack National Wildlife Refuge would form one of the largest preserves of natural lands assembled in the SE Wisconsin and NE Illinois region. The cities of Richmond, Genoa City, Pell Lake and Lake Geneva are the GATEWAY Communities for the proposed National Wildlife Refuge and the associated trails that would connect these communities. Along with their recreational amenities, these towns hold large concentrations of historically significant structures and architecture.

Lake Geneva is located on the northern end of the proposed NWR area. Its namesake lake is one of the larger lakes in southeastern Wisconsin. Many notable business barons, such as the Wrigleys and Marshall Field, built grand mansions along the lakeshore which are still impressive today. Lake Geneva is popular with tourists from Chicago, Milwaukee and the surrounding area. Visitors enjoy boat rides on or launch wind or motor powered boats. Boating, kayaking, canoeing and swimming are also popular on the many other glacial lakes found throughout the area. Hikers and bikers already make use of the Potawatomi Trail around Geneva Lake and existing trails in Lake Geneva and Richmond.

Throughout the Gateway Area there are antique stores, specialty shops, galleries, unique restaurants, and lodging from welcoming Bed & Breakfasts to grand resorts.

**A Farming History**

In addition, Pell Lake and Genoa City, in SE Wisconsin, and Richmond, in NE Illinois, have a rich farming tradition. At the southern end of the proposed area of the NWR, the Friends of the McConnell House are working to preserve and open to the public the first of the NE Illinois homesteads, the McConnell farmstead. This site could form the nucleus of a living history farm and natural resource museum and a potential visitor entrance to the National Wildlife Refuge and to the historic commercial core of old Richmond Village.

**Backdoor Science and History**

National Wildlife Refuges work closely with local schools on curriculum linked to the refuge and the local cultural history and provide science and "backdoor" outdoor education opportunities. Many areas schools are located close to the existing public lands.

**RECREATION**

- **Invest in the Past to Plan for the Future.”**
  Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel report to the Village of Richmond
  The area’s natural beauty, lakes, recreational opportunities and beautifully maintained historic towns already draw many visitors. Lake Geneva, Pell Lake, Genoa City & Richmond are the established economic bases, with potential to grow and expand if a refuge were established.

Lake Geneva, Pell Lake, Genoa City & Richmond

**Gateway Communities:**