Dates to Remember

Volunteer Quarterly Meeting
Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium
Wednesday, July 12, 11:30am-1pm
Hear the latest news in educational programming, Nature Center upgrades, natural area restoration efforts, foundation projects, and more. Lunch provided. RSVP by July 6.

Rock Springs Quilters
Rock Springs Nature Center
Every Wednesday, 9-11am

Dulcimer Club
Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium
Saturday, July 8 & 22, 10am
Saturday, August 5 & 19, 10am
Saturday, September 2, 16, & 30, 10am

Acoustic Music Jam
Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium
Sunday, July 9, 2-4pm
Sunday, August 13, 2-4pm
Sunday, September 10, 2-4pm

Welcome New Volunteers!

Blue Bird Monitor- Katie McVay
Camps- Charlotte Bramer, Emma Crowley, Jaxon Flower, James Fizer, Wyatt House, Anthony Lozano
Garden- Kim Fields
Library- Belinda Mays, Jo VanMetre
Special Events- Chad Carroll, Donnie Glosser, Gracey Huffman, Sharron Thornton
Trail Monitor- Catherine Croy, Lia Pasquariello, Libby Pasquariello, Debbie Thompson

Volunteers in Action: The Conservation District is so thankful for the countless number of volunteers that help with school programming throughout the year. This year has been a busy one with nature and history field trips a plenty. Volunteers Joann Glacken and Walt Hughes are pictured above greeting a group of school children at the Homestead Prairie Farm.

Remembering Our Volunteers
Don “Pappy” Horne (September 1928 - May 2023)
Joe Hunt (November 1947 - June 2023)
Volunteer Fun & Learning

Vintage Base Ball
Rock Springs Conservation Area, Beautiful Trobaugh Field
Sunday, July 15, 12pm
Rock Springs Ground Squirrels vs. McLean County Prairie Chickens & Champaign Clippers

Saturday, August 5, 12pm
Rock Springs Ground Squirrels vs. Belleville Stags

Saturday, August 26, 12pm
Rock Springs Ground Squirrels vs. Champaign Clippers

Saturday, September 23, 10am
Douglas Cup Tournament
Rock Springs Ground Squirrels vs. Deep River Grinders & Vermilion Voles

Wetland Restoration & Tour
Friday, July 21, 10-11:30am,
meet at Friends Creek Large Pavilion
The Operations staff have recently been working on establishing a new wetland area at Friends Creek Conservation Area. Site Technician Darryl Coates will explain how a restored wetland is created, how it will change over time, and what it should look like in the long term. We will take a tour to see the new wetland area. Expect to walk along uneven ground. Volunteers should wear long pants and sturdy shoes. RSVP by July 18.

Visit the Sites Volunteer Tour
Rock Springs Nature Center, Information Desk
Wednesday, August 23, 9am–3pm
Visit natural areas within the Macon County Conservation District. Our first stop will be Griswold Conservation Area to hear about future restoration plans and take a short hike. Next we will head over to Willow Branch Conservation Area to learn about this important waterway oasis. Our last stop will be Fort Daniel Conservation Area for a picnic lunch, a short hike, and we will view some new areas and buildings along the south boundary. Operations staff will meet us at each location to share current projects and future plans. Lunch is provided, all you need to bring is yourself! Dress for the weather and trail conditions. Space is limited. RSVP by August 18.

Astronomy Jamboree
Friends Creek Conservation Area
Saturday, August 12, 8-11pm
This year’s event coincides with the Perseid Meteor Shower! Enjoy a free concert from 8-8:45pm, create a craft to take home, enter a giveaway, and view the stars, visible planets, and meteor shower. Snacks and water provided. Bring your telescope and share your knowledge. Free. Register online by August 11.

Hummingbird Festival
Rock Springs Nature Center
Thursday, August 24, 3-6pm
Learn all about hummingbirds. Watch as we capture, band, and release wild birds. Co-sponsored by Decatur Audubon. Free. No registration required.
**Galaxy Pot Craft for Volunteers**

*Thursday, September 14, 10:30am-2:30pm, Washburn Classroom*

Would you like to make your own galaxy flower pot to take home? They were a hit as a door prize during the Volunteer Recognition Dinner in April. We will have a crafting day and decorate our pot in stages throughout the day. Terra cotta pots will be approximately 4" in diameter. Supplies will be provided, you just need to bring your own lunch along. If you would like to provide your own terra cotta pot to paint, contact Jenny for additional instructions. Space is limited. RSVPs are required by September 7.

**Operations Update**

*Phil Julius - Director of Operations*

This has been a productive spring for Operations. Staff has conducted controlled burns on 1,500 acres of MCCD property as well as helping neighboring agencies with some of their property. Fire is one tool in our tool box that can cover large areas in a short time to help control many of the invasive and exotic plants in our prairies, savannas, and woodlands. Many of the invasive and exotic species are not tolerant to fire, making it a great tool to set back and even kill the plants. Fortunately, our native plants are tolerant to fire so it has little if no effect on them.

Contractors and MCCD staff worked at Rock Springs on the removal of a house and buildings along Dipper Lane. All structures have been removed and the site has been leveled and seeded. A volunteer group came in and worked with our Natural Resources crew to remove old fence on the property. Some forestry mowing to remove honeysuckle had been done as well. The site is looking really nice.

At Friends Creek, the campground has been prepped and opened for the camping season. It was completely booked for the Memorial Day weekend. Campground reservations continue to come in for the season. Sites are filling up, so be sure to visit the MCCD website to book your site. The Friends Creek staff has spent many hours pulling garlic mustard this spring. Garlic mustard is another one of the invasive plants that we battle to remove from MCCD property. Food plots are being planted around Friends Creek to help support the wildlife around the Upland Game area.

Things look a lot different behind the Sand Creek shop. The old pines behind the shop have been removed as they are not native to this area. The site has been cleaned up and had herbicide treatment for sprouting honeysuckle. The plan is to let the existing prairie next to the removal site creep through this area and connect to the adjacent prairie. Some of the pine logs have been cut into lumber using the District’s saw mill. This lumber will set for a year to dry out and then can be used in future construction projects.
Volunteer Opportunities

Native Garden & Bush Honeysuckle Workdays
Rock Springs Conservation Area
1st & 3rd Wednesday, 8-10am
July 5 & 19, August 2 & 16, September 16 & 20
Macon County Master Naturalists are looking for assistance maintaining the native tier garden in front of the Nature Center and cutting bush honeysuckle nearby. The tier garden features prairie and woodland species that attract a variety of insect life for all to enjoy. This opportunity is for ages 13 and up. RSVP to Ethan Snively the day before each workday to ensure that we have enough supplies available.

Unplug Illinois Day
Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, July 15, 1-4pm
Ditch your electronic devices and enjoy an afternoon “unplugged” at Rock Springs! We are looking for volunteers to help with the following opportunities: bag toss, potato sack race, bubble making, rock painting, sensory bin, and concession stand. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by July 10.

Astronomy Jamboree
Friends Creek Conservation Area
Saturday, August 12, 8-11pm
Calling amateur astronomers! We are looking for folks to bring and set up their telescopes and share knowledge during this “star party.” Contact Alysia Callison if you’re interested in bringing your scope. We are also looking for volunteers to assist with fire tending, children’s craft, and snack station. Contact Jenny Garver if you are interested in these opportunities by August 4.

Prairie Pedal
Rock Springs Conservation Area
Sunday, September 24, 6:30am-3pm
The Prairie Pedal bicycling event raises funds for the Macon County Conservation Foundation. All proceeds support natural areas and wildlife diversity in Macon County. During this event cyclists ride 20, 40, or 62 mile routes. Volunteers can choose from time commitments of 2 to 5 hours. Volunteer stations include: registration, rest stops along the bike routes, photography, and clean-up. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by September 18.

Canoeing Volunteers
The public enjoys having the opportunity to canoe along the waterways of Macon County. There is a lot that goes on behind the scenes to make this a successful memory. We are looking for helpers to assist staff during our canoeing events and programs. Duties will include helping a staff member unload and load canoes from the canoe trailer, helping fit public with life vests and paddles, helping participants in and out of the canoes, and occasionally helping with paperwork and collecting fees. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver.

Heirloom Garden Volunteers
Rock Springs Conservation Area, Homestead Prairie Farm
The Homestead Prairie Farm heirloom garden plays a vital role in illustrating everyday life in the 1860s. Macon County Master Gardeners are looking for assistance in maintaining the garden during the 2023 season. Produce harvested from the garden is donated to various local food pantries. This opportunities is for ages 18 and up. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver.
Program Services Update
Alysia Callison - Director of Program Services

Warm weather is finally here, and with that comes lots of programming! May saw a busy field trip season for the Program Services Department, with roughly 24 groups of schoolchildren visiting the Nature Center for educational programming throughout the month. Most of those kids were from schools across the county, but some came from places like Pana and White Heath.

In addition to field trip season, we began preparing for summer camp season. Six new summer staff were hired, including four Summer Camp Counselors, one Historic Sites Intern, and one Intern Interpreter. We are very glad to have them on board as we begin to navigate a busy summer. Camps began on June 5, and almost every single camp is full at time-of-writing. It’s wonderful to see such an interest in what we have to offer, and we’re excited to engage with new children and families. Speaking of which, we have a new partnership this year with the Salvation Army! They are bringing up to 12 children each week to our Earth Adventures day camp.

Looking ahead to the rest of the summer, we have a lot planned! We have a new event planned for July 15: Unplug Illinois Day. This day is meant to encourage people to ‘unplug’ from their screens and electronics at home, and venture outside to see what kinds of outdoor fun their communities have to offer. We’ll be doing some fun activities like a bag toss, rock painting, some hikes, and we’ll even have myself and Brock in a dunk tank! Be sure to mark your calendars.

August brings two more special events: the Astronomy Jamboree on August 12 and the Hummingbird Festival on August 24. This year, the Astronomy Jamboree will be held at the same time as the Perseid Meteor Shower, so as long as the weather cooperates, it should be a great night!

In September, the University of Illinois Extension Office will be back at Rock Springs for Monarch Madness on the 23rd. Then the following day, on September 24, the Macon County Conservation Foundation will host their annual Prairie Pedal fundraiser.

There is always something fun going on at the Conservation District, especially in the summer! Be sure to check out our Prairie Islander newsletter for a full listing of events and programs, or keep an eye on our website and social media pages.

Thank you for all you do to help our education and outreach efforts succeed! I am thankful for each and every one of you, and look forward to seeing you all soon.
Thank You Volunteers

Jenny Garver - Volunteer Coordinator

Thank you for being part of the Macon County Conservation District volunteer family! April 22 was our biggest volunteer day of the year so far. Sixty volunteers turned out for the Sangamon River Clean-up in the morning and fifty-six volunteers assisted with the Festival of Spring in the afternoon. Summer camp, gardener, and vintage base ball volunteers are quite busy this summer. We appreciate each and every volunteer that walks through our doors. You do make a difference!

I will be updating volunteer records in the coming months. It is helpful to periodically review our files to update important information like emergency contacts and photo release permissions. Keep an eye on your email or mailbox to help speed me along on this journey. If your address, phone number, or email address changes over the course of the year, reach out to us to ensure that we can keep you in the loop about upcoming volunteer needs and events.

During the months of January through May, 306 volunteers turned in over 3,450 hours. THANK YOU! If you have any hours to turn in for 2023, send them to Jenny via email or mail them to Volunteer Coordinator, Macon County Conservation District, 3939 Nearing Lane, Decatur, IL 62521.

Tidbits of Information

- Rock Springs Nature Center will be closed on Tuesday, July 4. Enjoy your holiday!

- There are a lot of new faces around the Nature Center. Anna Sielaff is the Historic Sites Intern. Morgan Bailey is the Intern Interpreter. Lexie Hauskins, Abby Herbert, and Sydney Tanner are new Summer Camp Counselors. Our returning Summer Camp Counselors are Terri Dawson and Breanna Gallagher.

- Have you joined the MCCD Volunteers Facebook group? It is a great way to get up-to-date information, reminders about upcoming volunteer events, and behind the scenes photos. Join the group today! www.facebook.com/groups/MaconCountyConservationDistrictVolunteers

To RSVP or Contact Staff In This Issue

Rock Springs Nature Center: 217-423-7708
Alysia Callison: ACallison@MaconCountyConservation.org; 217-542-5538
Jenny Garver: JGarver@MaconCountyConservation.org; 217-542-5536
Phil Julius: PJulius@MaconCountyConservation.org; 217-542-5528
Ethan Snively: ESnively@MaconCountyConservation.org; 217-853-3465
Brent Wielt: BWielt@MaconCountyConservation.org; 217-542-5525

Volunteers are welcome to call the direct office lines listed above (542 phone numbers). Please note, direct office lines are not cell phones and cannot accept text messaging. If you are calling to cancel a sign up for a volunteer opportunity, call Rock Springs Nature Center at 217-423-7708.