



Dates to Remember

Volunteer Quarterly Meeting

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium

Tuesday, October 17, 11:30am-1pm

Hear the latest news in educational programming, natural area restoration efforts, foundation projects, and more. Lunch provided. RSVP by October 12.

Volunteer Holiday Party

St Paul's Lutheran Church

Tuesday, December 5, 12pm

Celebrate the holidays with us. Holiday Party invitations with more information will be mailed in November. Until then, save the date!



Rock Springs Quilters

Rock Springs Nature Center

Every Wednesday, 9-11am

Acoustic Music Jam

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium

Sunday, October 8, November 12,

& December 10, 2-4pm



Dulcimer Club

Rock Springs Nature Center

Saturday, October 14 & 28, 10am

Saturday, November 11 & 25, 10am

Saturday, December 9, 10am

Welcome New Volunteers!

Master Gardener – Janna Christensen, Karen Woods

Quilter – Kathy Hardy

Special Events - Robert Funk, Doris Mabry

Trail Monitor– Aaron Wrigley

Vintage Base Ball - John Dahkle



Operations Update

Phil Julius - Director of Operations

The Operations Department has been very busy working on wetland construction at Friends Creek and Fort Daniel. This has been an all hands on deck project due to the large amount of earthwork to be done. Friends Creek has two new wetlands with three control structures that will allow staff to control the water level year round. These wetlands are located on the northeast corner of Friends Creek Conservation Area. Staff has also constructed a wetland at Fort Daniel Conservation Area that has two control structures. This wetland is located on the southeast side of Fort Daniel just off Sefton Road. This project is a joint effort with the City of Decatur. These wetlands will help to filter runoff from nearby farm fields as well as water from some field tiles. The wetlands will capture silt, nitrates, and phosphates so they don't end up in Lake Decatur. These wetlands will also provide new habitat to these areas.

Dates to Remember

Archaeology Open House

Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Homestead Prairie Farm

Sunday, October 8, 1-4pm

Due to a construction project, dirt was removed from under the farmhouse at Homestead Prairie Farm where it was undisturbed for over 100 years. The dirt came from areas that were once part of the yard but as the house grew, it was built over and protected. Stop by Homestead Prairie Farm to see what artifacts we have found by sifting so far this year. Free. No registration required.



Fall Harvest Festival

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Saturday, October 14, 1-4pm



Celebrate fall at Rock Springs Nature Center with fall-themed activities including archery, canoeing, pumpkin painting, wagon rides, tours at Homestead Prairie Farm, and more. Archery and canoeing are \$3

per person, pumpkin painting is \$5 per person, and all other events are free. No registration required.

Candlelight Tour

Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Homestead Prairie Farm

Saturday, November 18,
6:30 – 8:30pm

Electricity and modern conveniences were not always at our fingertips. Glimpse what an evening in the 1860s was like at Homestead Prairie Farm, lit by candlelight and lamplight, as guides in period clothing walk you through the home. Free. No registration required.



Volunteer Fun & Learning

Fall Volunteer Hikes

Friday, October 6, 10am- Fort Daniel

Monday, October 9, 1pm- Sand Creek

Thursday, October 19, 12pm- Griswold

Wednesday, October 25, 11am- Friends Creek

Tuesday, October 31, 9am- Rock Springs

Join us at each location for an educational walk to stretch your legs and learn something new.

Dress for the weather. Please RSVP at least one

day in advance to receive any weather and location change updates.



Tree Measuring, Felling Process, & Milling

Sand Creek Conservation Area Shop
(944 E Elwin Rd, Decatur, IL)

Wednesday, November 8, 1-3pm

This demonstration led by
Natural Resources Manager Ethan

Snively will show how a tree is measured, felled, and processed on a sawmill. We will measure tree height, circumference, crown spread, and age using various methods. We will then demonstrate the bore-cut method for felling a tree, as well as limbing and bucking. Finally, we will mill the tree into dimensional lumber. RSVP by November 6.



Mail in the 1800s for Volunteers

Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium

Tuesday, December 12, 2-3pm



For the residents of Homestead Prairie Farm and the Governor Oglesby Mansion, letters and other forms of mail were a common and shared part of their everyday lives. Discover how mail changed over the century in regard to its new forms, technology, cost, style, and more. RSVP by December 8.

Program Services Update

Alysia Callison - Director of Program Services



With a busy and successful summer under our belts, we are looking ahead to the cooler months as we begin to plan programs and get ready for special events. Our annual Fall Harvest Festival is right around the corner, and is planned for Saturday, October 14 from 1-4pm. This event features fall fun for the whole family, including archery, canoeing, pumpkin painting, wagon rides, homestead tours, and more. Whether you come as a volunteer or a guest, we hope to see you there. On November 18 from 6:30-8:30pm, we'll be holding the Candlelight Tour at Homestead Prairie Farm. This unique event gives guests an opportunity to see our historic homestead in a new light, and if you haven't been before, you'll want to put it on your calendar.

Upcoming fall events include van trips to Tanners Orchard and the museums along the Peoria riverfront, a few opportunities to meet some of our education animals, and even a walk around Rock Springs to look for fall colors. Be sure to subscribe to the physical and/or digital version of the Prairie Islander newsletter to learn more about upcoming programs, or visit our website at MaconCountyConservation.org.

I want to extend a heartfelt 'THANK YOU' to all of the volunteers that helped with events and programs over the summer. From summer camps to concerts to the Astronomy Jamboree, we could not have done it without you. Thank you for all you do for the District, and I hope to see you at some upcoming programs!

Tidbits of Information

- **Nature Center Closures:** Rock Springs Nature Center will be closed on Thanksgiving (November 23), Christmas Eve (December 24), and Christmas Day (December 25). Enjoy your holidays!
- **Facebook Group:** 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
- **Volunteer T-shirts:** Did you know that we offer our volunteers a free volunteer t-shirt? The current volunteer t-shirt design arrived a few years ago. The shirt is light blue in color and comes in adult sizes S-XXL. If you need a volunteer t-shirt, reach out to Jenny Garver with your size. Reserved t-shirts can be picked up at the Information Desk.



- **Carolyn Mason Scholarship Fund & Master Naturalist Training:** This fund was created in the memory of Carolyn Mason and her enthusiasm and love for preserving natural areas. She volunteered at the Macon County Conservation District and shared her knowledge and time as
- the steward at the Leiby Hall Conservation Area, working to eradicate exotic plants so the native species had a chance to thrive. This scholarship fund founded in 2015 provides an opportunity for individuals to share in Carolyn's endeavor to preserve the natural areas and give native species a chance to thrive. The scholarship is open to any Macon County Conservation District Staff or Volunteer to enroll in the Master Naturalist Program held by the University of Illinois Extension Office for Macon, Piatt, and DeWitt counties. Three Scholarships are awarded each session providing \$100.00 toward the enrollment fee and is awarded upon completion of the program. Interested individuals should complete a scholarship form and submit it to the Administration Offices at Rock Springs Nature Center before registering for classes. The Master Naturalist classes will begin January 9 and run for 11 weeks on Tuesday nights, 6-9pm. If interested in enrolling in the class, please contact Stephanie Hale by calling 217-877-6042 or by email at smhale@illinois.edu.

Volunteer Opportunities

Native Seed Collecting

*Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Miller Wetland Parking Lot
Saturday, Oct 7, 9am-11am*

Help harvest native wildflower seeds from Rock Springs prairies to diversify other sites. This light intensity work involves picking seed from stalks and walking through tall vegetation. No experience is necessary. Dress for the weather, wearing long pants, long sleeves, and sturdy work shoes. Gloves and all necessary equipment will be provided. For all ages. RSVP with Ethan Snively by October 5.



Fall Harvest Festival

*Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, October 14, 1-4pm*



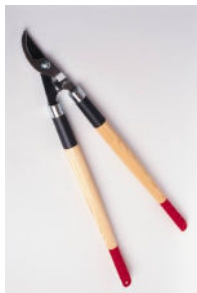
Volunteers are needed to help in a variety of areas during this annual event. Volunteer opportunities include maker's space, canoeing, children's games, Homestead Prairie Farm tours, pumpkin painting,

and more. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by October 6.

Fall Volunteer Restoration Day

*Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Meet at Homestead Prairie Farm Parking Lot
Saturday, November 4, 9am-11am*

Volunteers are requested to assist natural resources staff with bush honeysuckle removal around the Cattail Pond and Homestead Prairie Farm at Rock Springs. This workday will involve cutting shrubs while walking over uneven terrain through woodlands. Wear long pants, sturdy shoes like boots or tennis shoes, and prepare to get dirty. Tools and work gloves will be provided. Contact Ethan Snively to RSVP for the restoration day by November 2.



Candlelight Tour

*Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Homestead Prairie Farm
Saturday, November 18, 6:30-8:30pm*

Help bring Homestead Prairie Farm to life during this fun evening event. Volunteer opportunities include tour guides, trail guides, serving refreshments, and outdoor lantern tenders. For more information or to sign up, contact Brent Wielt by November 13.



Holiday Decorating

*Rock Springs Nature Center
Wednesday, November 29, 10:30am-12:30pm*



We are looking for some jolly elves to help decorate the Nature Center for the holidays. Volunteers will assist in decorating a holiday tree and the area around the Information Desk. Lunch and laughter will be provided. For more

information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by November 22.

Woodshop Volunteer

Homestead Prairie Farm

We are looking to add a few more volunteers to the Homestead Prairie Farm crew interpreting history at the woodshop. This is a fun way to teach others about how woodworking and non-electric tools fit into daily life during the 1860s. Training and opportunities to observe will be provided. This volunteer opportunity is for ages 18 and up. For more information or to sign up, contact Brent Wielt.



Volunteer Opportunities

Archaeology & Artifacts

Homestead Prairie Farm

We are looking for volunteers to help screen through dirt for artifacts from an excavation under the farm-house. This opportunity is for ages 13 and up. For more information or to sign up, contact Brent Wielt.



Volunteer Librarian

Rock Springs Nature Center

We are looking for volunteers to staff the librarian desk and assist the public. Volunteer Librarians will check out, check in, and reshelve books, as well as maintain our library collection. The library is a great resource for educational programming and is open to the public. Morning and afternoon shifts are available. This opportunity is for ages 18 and up. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver.



The More You Know

Over the summer the Macon County Conservation District Board of Trustees approved a new and improved version of the District's mission statement.

What is a mission statement?

A mission statement is a description of an organization's reason for existence. This allows the Conservation District to focus and stay on track to make the right decisions about our future. It is very helpful for the staff and volunteers of an organization to know the values and vision that drives the organization.

What was our previous mission statement?

The mission of the Macon County Conservation District is to promote the conservation of natural and cultural resources by acquiring, maintaining, and restoring natural areas and cultural sites so as to leave them unimpaired for future generations.

Why was the mission statement updated?

A review of the mission statement uncovered that the wording did not fully cover all aspects represented at the Macon County Conservation District. It was determined that the educational component of the Conservation District should be included.

What does our new and improved mission statement look like?

The mission of the Macon County Conservation District is to promote the conservation of natural and cultural resources by acquiring, maintaining, and restoring areas of natural and cultural significance within Macon County, and to protect and preserve those spaces for the education, recreation, and enjoyment of all its citizens in perpetuity.

Remembering Our Volunteers

Ruby Booker (December 1948 - August 2023)

Thank You Volunteers

Jenny Garver - Volunteer Coordinator

Thank you for making a difference! From January to August: 344 volunteers have submitted over 6,370 hours. Some of the most active groups during the last few months include: summer camp and vintage base ball volunteers. If you have yet to turn in your hours, it is not too late. Submit your hours by mail, drop them off at the Nature Center, or email them to Jenny Garver.

We are in the middle of updating volunteer emergency contact information. I appreciate everyone that has taken a moment to respond and update their information. 53% of you have up-to-date emergency contacts on file. While entering the new information, I have encountered updates in phone numbers and quite a few emergency contacts have also changed. In mid-September, we mailed out forms to volunteers that needed to update their information. If you lost your form, blank forms can be picked up at the Information Desk inside Rock Springs Nature Center. Thank you for helping us complete this project!

Do you like to brainstorm? I will be putting together a few committees in the upcoming months to brainstorm ideas for volunteer recognition events, volunteer fun & learning opportunities, volunteer recruitment, and more. Brainstorming sessions will be open to active volunteers of the Macon County Conservation District. Let me know if you would like to be on my contact list for a future session. The

first session on my list will be a brainstorming session for the annual Volunteer Holiday Party and creating a plan to make some amazing door prizes. Once I have a list of interested volunteers, we can set a date and time to meet.



Volunteers in Action: Over the summer 16 volunteers donated 570 hours of their time. Thank you for making the difference in the life of a child!



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.