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Durbin Announces \$11 Million Earmark For Upper Des Plaines River Ecosystem Restoration

LIBERTYVILLE – U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) today joined officials from the Army Corps of Engineers' Chicago District and the Lake County Forest Preserve to announce the \$11 million in earmark funding he secured in the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Omnibus appropriations bill for ecosystem restoration work on the Upper Des Plaines River in Lake County. This project is the first segment of the Corps' broader Upper Des Plaines River Project that will address ecosystem restoration and mitigate flooding along 67 miles of the river in both Lake and Cook Counties.

"For decades, increased urban and agricultural development changed the natural habitat and hydrology along the Upper Des Plaines River," said Durbin. "These changes have had significant detrimental impacts on the flow of water and the strength and diversity of the ecosystems in the watershed, severely impacting neighborhoods in the region. With the help of the federal funding I secured for this project, we'll be able to restore our ecosystems and protect our communities from flooding at the same time."

"The Chicago District is excited about these historic and timely investments in ecosystem restoration projects," said Lieutenant Colonel Matthew A. Broderick, Commander of the Chicago District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "We look forward to our continuing partnerships with not only Lake County Forest Preserves but all of our Federal, State, and local partners on these important projects. Doing this work increases the availability of critical habitat in this highly urbanized region and ensures its available for future generations to enjoy."

"We are thrilled to work with the Army Corps of Engineers at Raven Glen Forest Preserve and grateful to Senator Durbin for securing this funding," said Angelo Kyle, president of the Lake County Forest Preserves. "Lake County is stronger, healthier and more resilient because of partnerships like these. Together, we can transform degraded lands into acres of high-quality wetland, prairie and woodland, functioning at their highest ecological level."

This earmark will allow the Corps, in coordination with the Lake County Forest Preserve, to restore Pollack Lake and Hastings Creek Wetlands, a 421-acre site that has been modified in recent decades from its natural condition to support agricultural use of the land. Restoring the native hydrological conditions of the site to wetland basins, stream channel, and active floodplain will be accomplished through a range of actions by the Corps including drain tile disablement, ditch filling or plugging, bank grading, and riffle placement. Restoration of ecosystems in this watershed will mitigate flood risks, improve the quality and size of natural functioning ecosystems, restore habitat for federal and state listed species, reduce/control non-native species, restore connections between natural spaces, improve water quality, and enhance recreational opportunities.

Durbin helped authorize this project in the Water Resources Development Act of 2016 (WRDA), which provides critical funding for projects that will help Illinois and the nation mitigate flood hazards as well as prepare for and respond to weather emergencies.