



SALT CREEK CHRONICLES

A Newsletter of the Salt Creek Greenway Association

Issue 3, Summer 2010

Salt Creek Greenway - Gateway to Discovery

Natural areas, historic sites, cultural attractions, land and water recreational trails, shopping centers, theatre and gourmet dining beckon visitors to experience one of the richest and most scenic and diverse open space corridors in Illinois.

Located within the densely populated suburbs of western Cook and eastern DuPage Counties, the Salt Creek Greenway trail is designated a priority Greenway in the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways Plan and extends through 9 communities with a combined population exceeding 300,000 residents and includes:

- 15 forest preserves in two counties
- 8 local parks and recreational facilities in 5 communities
- 5 National Historic Register sites and other historic attractions
- 3 dedicated Illinois Nature Preserves
- The Brookfield Zoo
- The historic Fullersburg area
- Graue Mill and Dam
- Mayslake/Peabody Estate
- Shopping malls, theaters restaurants, employment and economic centers, mass transit services, historic homes, vintage communities and spacious subdivisions.

SCGA is tax exempt (501)(c)(3) organization and all contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

SCGA is a member of Chicago Wilderness, Partners for Parks and Wildlife and the Lower DesPlaines Ecosystem Partnership.

The Value of the Environment

Recent severe storms caused extensive flooding and tree loss in sections of the Greenway. The Oak Brook area was especially hard hit. A microburst estimated at 80-120 mph topped hundreds of trees, among them many vintage oaks believed to be over a century old.

But the flooding and damage could have been much worse had not the Forest Preserve Districts of Cook and DuPage Counties acquired flood prone lands and open space within the watershed.



Bridge over Salt Creek, Photo by Dave Waycie

Native ecosystems provide environmental services valued at trillions of dollars. These lands act as sponges. They store floodwaters, filter sediment laden runoff, improve air quality and provide habitat for wildlife and endangered species and recreation for citizens. The roots of native plants hold soil in place and prevent erosion, and the vegetation sequesters carbon and helps offset the effects of global warming and climate change.

We cannot predict when the next devastating storm will drench our communities, but we can be assured that restored wetlands and floodplains, preserved prairies and woodlands and native plants will continue to ameliorate those impacts as long as we preserve and protect them.

The Salt Creek Greenway, and its 30 miles of recreational land and water trails, provides these environmental services and more. Within its boundaries lie some of the rarest natural areas in Illinois along with an array of historic sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places. From archeological sites dating back over 8,000 years to present-day cultural and economic centers, the Salt Creek Greenway beckons locals and tourists alike to experience the heritage of the past and enjoy the scenic beauty of the Greenway's precious open spaces.

We invite you to explore these treasures in your backyard and support the work of the Salt Creek Greenway Association.

Valerie Spale
Audrey Muschler

HAPPENINGS IN THE GREENWAY

*John Rogner, Assistant Director, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, tours Wolf Road Prairie and Hickory Lane bufferlands and visits Blitz restoration site to learn about the collaborative efforts of IDNR, FPDCC and INPC staff, assisted by Jack Pizzo, Pizzo & Associates, Ltd and member of SCGA, to reclaim vital habitat areas at the nature preserve.

***The architecturally unique residence at 1 Aloha Lane, buffer to Wolf Road Prairie, is saved from demolition and adapted for use as the FPDCC Police Dept. Headquarters by Supt. Steve Bylina on the original footprint for the structure. Plans are in the works for restoring the remainder of the grounds to native ecosystem function. FPDCC police presence is a big plus to protect area preserves from poaching and other illegal activities.**

*The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) publishes the 2009 Map and Summary Update of the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trail Plan which includes the Salt Creek Greenway

***Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve, Westchester – Restoration blitz workdays are held. Exelon employees donate a service day clearing invasive brush (See feature article)**

*SCGA partners with the Sierra Club, the Izaak Walton League and the DuPage Forest Preserve District to present A Sustainability Conference... "Population, Women and Water" held at Mayslake Hall, Mayslake Peabody Estate. The conference explored the connections among population growth, water supply and demand, environmental protection, reproductive health and rights and global justice issues. Speakers included Laurie Mazur

***SCGA supports Forest Preserve District of Cook County Stormwater Management Policy**

Forest Preserve District of DuPage County receives state and federal funds to build three canoe and kayak launches along Salt Creek

***Great Bear Wilderness opens at Brookfield Zoo to rave reviews**

*The Friary – Mayslake Forest Preserve, Oak Brook – Built entirely by hand by Franciscan Order of the Sacred Heart friars from 1950-1967, the Friary was acquired by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County as part of the referendum of 1992. The Friary was modeled after a castle in Wurzburg, Germany and presented an imposing structure visible to motorists along Route 83 for many decades. Initially, the Friary was considered for use as an Arts Center and for senior housing. But no feasible plan for occupancy was finalized, and the structure, vacant since 1991 and in poor condition, is now in the process of being demolished.

***Trout Unlimited holds a fly fishing workshop at the Sam and Dorothy Dean Sanctuary donated to the Oak Brook Park District by Dorothy Dean.**

*A wild turkey is sighted in the Greenway at Fullersburg and Wolf Road Prairie

***The Riverside Board of Trustees unanimously approves two new bicycle routes in the Village proposed by the Riverside Sustainability Council**

*A documentary on the life of Loie Fuller, *Dancing the Light Fantastic*, and the history of Fullersburg is produced by Mike Dutka. Loie was world

renowned for her creative dance performances, innovative stage lighting and flowing costumes. A niece of Benjamin Fuller, Loie is Fullersburg's most famous person

***The threatened Arcade Building in Riverside has a new lease on life and a new owner who plans to restore the exterior to its 1871 origins and adapt the interior for retail space. The Arcade was listed as one of the Ten Most Endangered Places by Landmarks Illinois as the first suburban shopping center in the nation**

*The Brookfield Historical Society is working on new exhibits, including the stationmaster's quarters on the second floor of the historic Grosdale Train Station, listed in the National Register of Historic Places

***The Stanley Cup stops at the historic York Tavern, one of the five original Old Fullersburg buildings in Oak Brook, on its Victory Tour**

*Fullersburg Historic Foundation retains Terence Russell, STV, to develop a structural report and feasibility use study as the next phase in restoring the historic Benjamin Fuller Farmhouse owned by the Forest Preserve District of DuPage Co.

***A commemorative sign is installed at the old Mammoth Springs Ice House location along Salt Creek as a gift to the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County from the Fullersburg Historic Foundation**

*The Western Springs Historical Society displays vintage wedding dresses at the Water Tower Museum along with stories of the women who wore them

***Watch for the arrival of monarch butterflies at Greenway sites as they begin their migration to Mexico which peaks around the middle of September**

*SCGA contributes, along with other conservation groups, to the creation of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County Sustainability Doctrine. "It is the goal of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County to challenge itself to become the most sustainable in the nation and to inspire others to emulate our efforts." Supt. Steven M. Bylina

***Graue Mill and Museum regularly schedules events and exhibits in the spring, summer and fall. The Graue House is available for rental by private parties for special events**

*Forest Preserve District of DuPage County holds open house and art fair at Mayslake Hall, Mayslake/Peabody Estate Forest Preserve

***21 Chicagoland locations are designated Important Bird Areas in Illinois, including the Salt Creek Nature Preserve owned by the FPDCC in the LaGrange stretch of the Salt Creek Greenway. The designation calls attention to the need to preserve and restore habitat for birds using these sites for nesting and migratory stopovers such as the Bobolink and Lincoln sparrow.**

For more information about events and happenings in the Greenway, go to www.saltcreekgreenwayassociation.org and click on to the web sites of Greenway partners and stakeholders. Our goal is to list events as we become aware of them on our web site and in future editions of the Salt Creek Chronicles.

WOLF ROAD PRAIRIE – A SALT CREEK GREENWAY TREASURE



Sunrise over Wolf Road Prairie, Photo by Jerry Kumery

The Salt Creek Greenway Association (SCGA) has identified the 80 acre Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve and 43 acre Hickory Lane bufferlands restoration as a priority project in the Greenway.

Co-owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC), Wolf Road Prairie is located between 31st Street and Constitution Drive west of Wolf Road in Westchester, IL approximately 14 miles west of the Chicago Loop. The Hickory Lane bufferlands are located immediately to the west and upstream of the preserve.

Wolf Road Prairie is a popular destination for photographers, artists, writers, teachers, student and civic groups, natural resources professionals, foreign visitors, birders, nature lovers, scientists and families sharing an outdoor experience with their children.

SCGA is working with landowners and stakeholders at Wolf Road Prairie in support of additional bufferland acquisition, ecological restoration of the prairie, savanna and wetland ecosystems and the development of professional educational programs at the preserve to provide for the conservation needs of people and wildlife for today and for the future.

SAVING WOLF ROAD PRAIRIE

The rarity and diversity of this original 80 acre prairie remnant was “discovered” more than a half century ago dating back to the 1960’s when Roland Eisenbeis was Superintendent of Conservation at the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC). At the time, Cap Sauers was General Superintendent. Discussions were initiated by Roland with Cap Sauers recommending that the FPDCC acquire the land and save the prairie. “There were very few prairies still around

and Wolf Road Prairie was one of the best,” Roland said. He felt it was very important to preserve prairie land before it was too late. Following Cap Sauers death, discussions continued with Supt. Arthur Janura. Roland was quite possibly the first advocate for preserving Wolf Road Prairie when only a handful of botanists knew of its existence.

A total of 600 lots were platted in the prairie land by Samuel Insull in the 1920’s. A grid- work of streets, alleys and sidewalks checker boarded the site and blocks were laid out to replicate a city-style neighborhood. Although the streets and alleys were never paved, sidewalks were installed. They serve now as prairie trails and fire breaks during prescribed burns. One or two relic lampposts still exist at the site, overgrown with native vegetation. They are vivid reminders of the real estate boom which nearly destroyed the prairie almost a century ago. But the Great Depression of 1929 spared Wolf Road Prairie. When development threats surfaced again forty-five years later in the mid-1970’s, efforts to preserve the prairie against what seemed to be insurmountable odds began in earnest.

Wolf Road Prairie was acquired lot by lot and block by block by the IDNR and FPDCC. This acquisition spanned a period from 1980 to the early 1990’s with the IDNR and FPDCC working as partners to preserve the site. Acquisition of bufferland followed in phases as funding and grant opportunities became available. Today, Wolf Road Prairie is a dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve and a nominated National Natural Landmark. The Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) oversees protection and management of the preserve and the National Park Service oversees the nomination process.

Wolf Road Prairie, whose origins date to the back to the retreat of the last Ice Age some 12,000 to 15,000 years ago, is recognized as one of the largest and finest quality black soil prairies east of the Mississippi River. The black soil savanna at Wolf Road Prairie is considered globally critically imperiled according to the Chicago Wilderness Biodiversity Recovery Plan. A wetland centrally located within the heart of the preserve adds diversity and wildlife habitat. Over 370 species of native plants are known to the site and the list is growing. More than 140 species of birds have been documented either using the preserve for migratory stopovers or for habitat and nesting needs.

The roster of those who were involved in saving Wolf Road Prairie over the decades numbers into the many hundreds. Illinois Governors, FPDCC Presidents, bi-partisan elected officials, natural resource professionals, conservation organizations, citizens and volunteers all rallied to rescue the site. Wolf Road Prairie is protected today to be treasured and enjoyed because of those who stepped forward and cared enough to get involved all those many years ago.

For more information about Wolf Road Prairie, go to www.saltcreekgreenwayassociation.org and click on to the various Wolf Road Prairie links available on the site. Or contact us at stpspale@aol.com for volunteer opportunities or tours.

RESTORATION BLITZ DAYS AT WOLF ROAD PRAIRIE

At the beginning of the year, Jack Pizzo, Pizzo & Associates Ltd. and Salt Creek Greenway Association board member, contacted representatives from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC) and the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC) regarding ecological conditions at Wolf Road Prairie. He was disturbed to see acres of the preserve overgrown with buckthorn and wanted to donate equipment and manpower for a workday at Wolf Road Prairie.

"I have been coming to Wolf Road Prairie for nearly two decades, and I became alarmed that in the past few years buckthorn thickets were taking over the grassland and turning it into a forest of brush. It was time to take a new approach to management at the preserve involving landowners, stakeholders and the private sector," Jack said.

Jack's plan for a one day workday turned out to be a five day restoration blitz extending from February 16th through February 20th. But before the five day workday took place, Steve Byers, Northeastern Illinois Representative, INPC, wanted to do some preparatory work at the site while the ground was frozen and able to support the weight of restoration equipment without compacting sensitive roots beneath the snow.

JANUARY BLITZ DAYS

Braving some of the coldest temperatures of the season, members of the IDNR and INPC SWAT team and the Natural Resource Management team with the FPDCC conducted the first scheduled management activity of the year at Wolf Road Prairie on January 4th and January 5th. During this two-day effort, the teams gathered at the #9 and #11 Hickory Lane buffer areas at the edge of the Wolf Road Prairie wetland to begin the rigorous task of clearing a section of bufferland of invasive brush and non-native trees. Two bobcats on track mounted vehicles were provided by the FPDCC. They exert very low psi (pounds per square inch) on the ground and minimize impact to the soil. A grappler head provided by IDNR was attached to a bobcat. These machines are designed to pick up and move massive amounts of cut brush.



Bobcat Stacking Brush, Photo by Dave Waycie

The focus of this management project was to "open up" a connection between the wetland in Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve and the wet areas along the east and north end of Hickory Lane buffer. This area was heavily overgrown with invasive brush at the time the land was acquired by the IDNR and FPDCC and needed to be cleared.

As trees came down and branches were moved to brush piles, views of the prairie opened. Hydrologic connections between the wetland and Hickory Lane buffer were revealed. Expansive vistas of the prairie could now be seen looking eastward from the buffer site.

Because much of the area targeted for this restoration phase is wetland, native seed still viable in the soil after many decades is likely to respond to increased light conditions following the clearing.

As the 2010 growing season got underway, the first hardy wetland plants began "showing up" on their own in the newly restored ground.

SWAT team members included Steve Byers, Kim Roman, Brad Semel, Dan Kirk, Bryan Eubanks, Dwayne Ambroz and FPDCC team members John McCabe, John Yapelli, Mary Rojek, Dara Leitza and Brenda Occhiuzzo.



FPDCC/IDNR Staff, Photo by Dave Waycie

FEBRUARY BLITZ DAYS

The effort on February 16th focused on eliminating woody brush threatening to shade prairie plants out of existence just south of the wetland in the northern half of Wolf Road Prairie Nature Preserve. Pizzo & Associates provided a Caterpillar brush mower designed to traverse the ground with little impact. This tracked vehicle with a front end attachment consisting of chewing teeth cleared five acres of woody invasive species in one day. From February 16th to February 19th, Pizzo and Associates crew members assisted staff from IDNR, INPC and FPDCC in painstakingly herbiciding thousands of shredded buckthorn stems in the newly mowed prairie and wetland areas. Herbicide applications are necessary to prevent noxious buckthorn clumps from resprouting in the spring.



FPDCC/IDNR Staff, Photo by Dave Waycie

On February 20th, crews shifted their focus from the prairie to the Hickory Lane buffer area tackling stands of brush and non-native trees still standing after the January workdays. Invasive woody species deprive native wetland and prairie plants of water and light needed for survival and alter the natural hydrological dynamic required for healthy native ecosystems. Restoration restores balance and biodiversity to natural areas.

By the end of the Saturday workday, after hours of back breaking work, the targeted restoration site between the buffer and the Wolf Road Prairie wetland was devoid of brush. Acres of previously degraded land were converted to habitat recovery for native plants, insects, birds and animals. The blockage of brush and invasive trees, so long an impediment to natural processes, was gone and the land was open to light and the movement of the wind.

This restoration blitz was a textbook example of a successful restoration effort organized by Steve Byers, INPC and John McCabe, FPDCC with landowners and supporters to reclaim degraded portions of Wolf Road Prairie and bufferland along Hickory Lane.

“Concern for the long-term viability of Wolf Road Prairie and the concerns raised by Jack are being addressed as a team effort,” said Steve Byers. “Far more work was accomplished during the Blitz workdays than either team could have done on their own. All these efforts, including plans for a prescribed burn at the preserve, bode well for the prairie and for the long-term restoration of the bufferlands along Hickory Lane. It will be rewarding to revisit these sites in the months ahead and witness the healing process.”

Participating in the February Blitz were Dan Kirk and Bryan Eubanks, IDNR, Kim Roman and Steven Byers, INPC, and John McCabe, Bryan Doerr and Brenda Occhiuzzo, FPDCC. Staff with Pizzo & Associates, Ltd. included Jack Pizzo, Nick Fuller, Nick Zaluzec and Mike Bradtk.

EXELON VOLUNTEERS AT WOLF ROAD PRAIRIE

About 30 Exelon and ComEd employees and their families returned to Wolf Road Prairie on May 21st for their fourth spring workday at the preserve. Led by Steve Byers, Northeastern Illinois Representative, Illinois Nature Preserves Commission (INPC), and Jack Pizzo, Pizzo & Associates, Ltd. and SCGA board member, the volunteers were eager to get some serious prairieland buffer restoration work done. The task of the afternoon was to fine tune clearing of the ground opened by the January and February Blitz days.

Buckthorn clones were cut and hauled. Invasive Garlic mustard and Dame’s rocket plants were pulled. Native seed was scattered over the open ground. And heavy logs were moved to brush piles.

“We look forward to contributing volunteer service hours at Wolf Road Prairie,” said Courtney Erickson from ComEd Revenue Accounting and organizer of the Exelon/ComEd work team. “We always have a great time and look forward to returning.”

Although sporadic showers rained down from time to time, no one seemed to mind getting a little wet or dirty. Competition broke out to see who could haul the most brush or the heaviest logs.

As the work day drew to a close, volunteers posed for a group photo to capture their visit to Wolf Road Prairie. And then it was time to return to the corporate world. But for a few hours, the ancient ways of nature prevailed and everyone left with a great sense of satisfaction for a job well done.



Steve Byers, INPC



Exelon Employees Seeding the Prairie

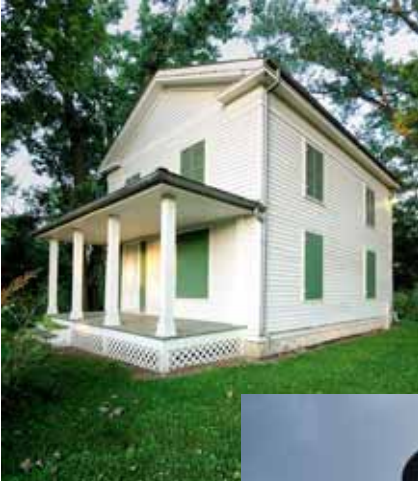


Exelon Group Photo



Jack Pizzo,
Pizzo & Associates
and SCGA

Places to See...



Ben Fuller Farmhouse,
Photo by Dave Waycie



Wolf Road Prairie, Photo by Dan Kirk, Illinois Department of Natural Resources



Riverside Tower and Well House,
Photo by Gary Mechanic



Graue Mill and Dam,
Photo by DuPage Graue Mill Corp.



Schuett-Biermann
Farmhouse and Schoolhouse,
Photo by Elk Grove Park District



Salt Creek, Photo by Dave Waycie



Hofmann Tower in Lyons, Photo by Dave Waycie

...Things to Do



Roosevelt Fountain at Brookfield Zoo, Photo by Jim Schultz, Chicago Zoological Society



Mayslake Hall, Peabody Estate, Photo by Forest Preserve District of DuPage County



Historic Chicago Portage Site, Photo by Mark McLean, Friends of the Chicago Portage



Heron, Photo by Jack Pizzo, Pizzo & Associates, Ltd.

Salt Creek Bicycle Trail, Photo by Forest Preserve District of Cook County



Grossdale Station in Brookfield, Photo by Dave Waycie



The York Tavern, Photo by Dave Waycie



Canoeing on Salt Creek, Photo by Laura Barghusen

SALT CREEK GREENWAY TRAIL

Trail System	Miles
Salt Creek Greenway Trail	30
Illinois Prairie Path	66
Fox River Trail	50
Great Western Trail	12
Centennial Trail	20
DesPlaines River Trail beginning at the Wisconsin State Line	

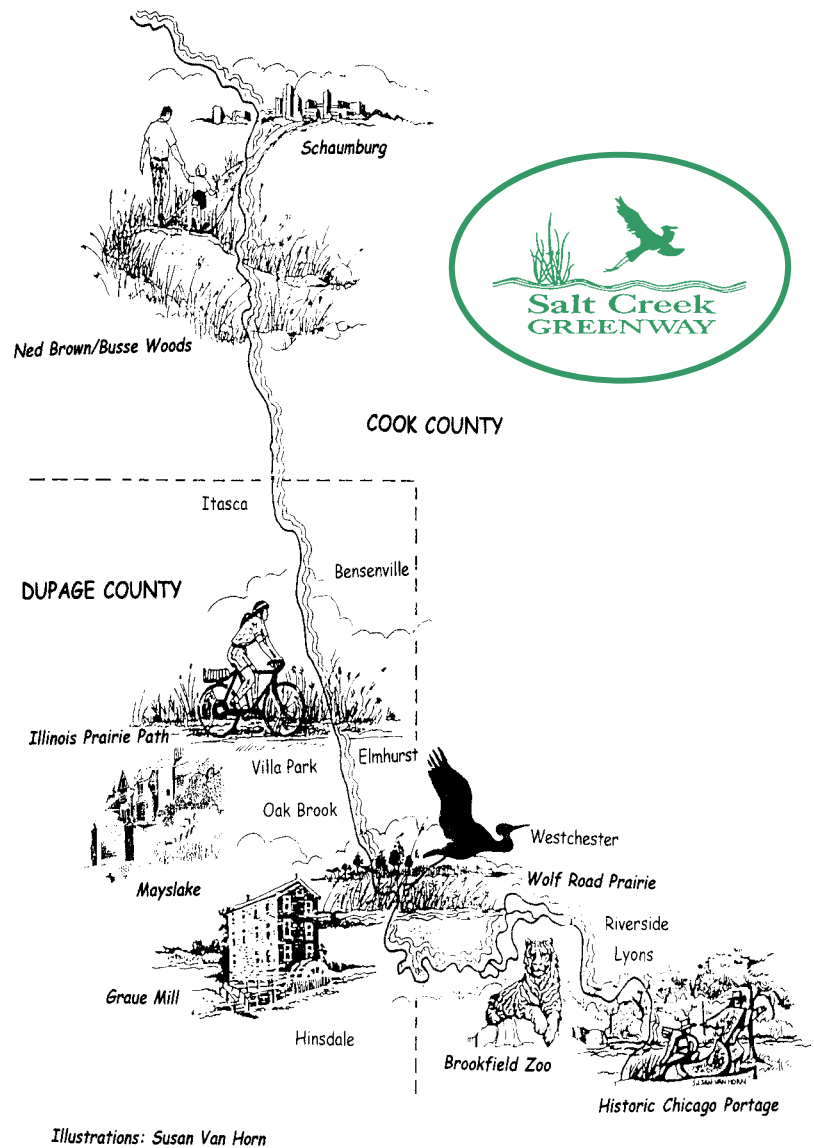
THE SALT CREEK GREENWAY and its spheres of influence contain remnants of the original landscapes of pre-settlement northeastern Illinois and the history and traditions of its people

- Ancient oak groves, savannas and prairie vistas...
- Archaeological sites dating back to 8,000 B.C....
- More recent Native American influences...
- Early settlement communities...
- Pioneer cemeteries...
- Impressive architectural structures listed in The National Register of Historic Places...
- Historic Homes and Museums...
- Recreational land and water trails...
- Vital reminders of our region's fascinating past which co-exist with modern-day communities and economic corridors

Coming Soon!

Grand Opening of the Salt Creek Greenway Trail – September 25th

After many years of planning, obtaining funding, engineering and trail construction, the Salt Creek Greenway Trail will celebrate its official Grand Opening on September 25th in conjunction with National Public Lands Day. Ribbon cutting and special events are being planned throughout the Greenway to commemorate the event.



We're on the Web!

www.saltcreekgreenwayassociation.org
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