



## City Forest Credits Preservation Project Application

### 1. Project Name Old Mill Forest

### 2. Project Operator

*Provide name of organization/entity and contact information*

Organization/Entity: Lake Forest Open Lands Association (LFOA)

Address: 350 N. Waukegan Road

City: Lake Forest

State: Illinois

Zip: 60067

Primary: Ryan London

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### 3. Project Location

*Project must be in or adjacent to one of the following. Describe which one of the criteria the project meets and provide the name of the city, town, or jurisdiction where project is located. Provide the parcel numbers.*

- *"Urban Area" per Census Bureau maps*
- *An incorporated or unincorporated city or town*
- *A planning area for a regional metropolitan planning agency or entity*
- *Land owned, designated, and used by a municipal or quasi-municipal entity for source water or watershed protection*
- *A transportation or utility right of way through one of above*

The Project Area is located in an urban area per Census Bureau maps.

Parcel numbers:

1513200012

1513300050

1513300067

1513300040

1513300044

#### **4. Project Description**

*Provide short narrative of the project goals, Project Area acreage, land ownership, forest characteristics, and land use/zoning. Provide details about when the property was acquired or potential timeline for acquisition. Include information about when carbon crediting was first introduced into the overall project scope.*

The 102-acre natural landscape, which is prominently sited on the north side of Half Day Road at Old Mill Road, had been proposed for a 265-unit mixed-use development. With our acquisition on November 15, 2021, we have protected one of the last remaining significant parcels in this area. It is LFOLA's goal to restore the land and create a future public nature preserve for all to enjoy. By enrolling these parcels in a preservation carbon project, we will accelerate our restoration and maintenance plans for this critical piece of the Chicago River watershed. The Old Mill Forest project site along with the Illinois Nature Preserve Florsheim Park that is directly north comprises the headwaters of the Westfork with 0.6 miles of the Westfork of the Chicago River and 0.38 miles of tributary streams. Additionally, the site boasts an impressive matrix of high-quality wetland, a sedge meadow, and the Project Area which is 72 acres of forest with stands of old-growth oak and hickory trees.

Future plans for the property include creating walking paths for pedestrian use. The site is contiguous with Florsheim Woods, an Illinois Nature Preserve Commission site, and is near several Lake County Forest Preserve District sites. It is not far from LFOLA's Everett Farm and is part of the protected corridor that includes Deerpath Farm. It is currently zoned in unincorporated Lake County as E (Estate).

#### **5. Project Impacts**

*Provide short narrative of the environmental, social, and health impacts this project will achieve. Examples include how the project addresses increased access to green spaces for under-resourced communities, flood control or watershed protection, benefits for human health and well-being, improved recreation opportunities, or protects bird and wildlife habitat.*

Project impacts include a multitude of environmental, social and health benefits. This site has not received any natural land management in nearly 50 years other than annual mowing for hay. Our robust implementation plan will include removing invasive species through qualified contractual work, volunteer labor and in-house management by our on-staff restoration ecologists. During the implementation phase of the restoration efforts, we will engage community partners, neighbors, civic groups, students and the constituents of local Indigenous groups to promote stakeholder engagement for this conservation project.

LFOLA's robust volunteer program which exists throughout our preserves and projected for this site will offer opportunities for people of all ages to engage with nature on their own terms. There is something available for everyone and all abilities. Whether it is one of our vigorous citizen science monitoring opportunities, our volunteer educator programs, our Center for Conservation Leadership (CCL) program which addresses the needs of those in diverse communities throughout Lake County or working alongside our team of full-time restoration ecologists. Research has shown that volunteering in nature positively affects community and subjective well-being. Our goal with students and volunteers is to help them connect with nature, learn new skills, make connections with like-minded others and use the currency that we have enriched them with to use their experience with us in the narrative economy that we all live in nowadays. Our hope is that the experience that stakeholders receive with LFOLA, is transferred to other groups, communities and

wherever people live, work or play.

Ecologically, restoration efforts will have a direct downstream positive effect on nutrient loading, flooding, algae blooms and water temperature. Many of the downstream residents in the Chicago River system have inequitable access to green infrastructure and thus are forced to contend with the challenges of flooding and impaired river nutrient loading exacerbated by our region's changing climate. By reducing the density of invasive species and increasing the species richness and biodiversity on the site through restoration, the downstream residents will experience cleaner water with reduced flash flooding.

Priority Species such as Illinois chorus frog, wood duck, black-crowned night heron, monarch butterfly, red-headed woodpecker, little brown bat, blue-spotted salamander, smooth green snake, regal fritillary and bobolink have been found either on the site or in the region. Due to the size, scale and proximity to existing high-quality natural areas, these species will very likely utilize the restored habitats on the site. Through the utilization of existing regional volunteer citizen science monitoring protocols, we will track and monitor the presence of these priority species.

Thus, through the additional financial assistance offered through the offset market, restoration and preservation of this site will have immeasurable ecosystem benefits for the future!

#### **6. Additional Information**

*Provide additional information about your project. If the Project Area is part of a larger program or preservation effort, include one sentence with more information. Examples include collaboration with other partners to preserve forestland or how this project fits into a regional initiative.*

The permanent preservation of this important landscape has been a priority for the conservation community for some time. The newly-protected property – with outstanding habitat and water quality value in its own right -- is also bordered to the north by the 109-acre Florsheim Nature Preserve (FNP) owned by the Village of Lincolnshire. With its unique mesic prairie and oak flatwood habitats, FNP holds the distinction as a dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve offering larger scale contiguous conservation potential for LFOA's nature preserve.

#### **7. Map**

*Provide a map of the Project Area.*

Map and shape files attached.

#### **PROJECT OPERATOR SIGNATURE**

Signed on May 31st in 2023, by Ryan London, president and CEO, for Lake Forest Open Lands Association.

Signature



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Ryan G London

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Printed Name

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Email