

Celebrating Success: DuPage County Blackwell Forest Preserve Warrenville, Illinois



Superfund
Redevelopment
Initiative



Olympic-sized archery range with Mt. Hoy visible in the background. (Source: The EPA)

“We wanted the ‘hill’ to fit in with the native landscape. We didn’t want a green dome that you see at typical landfills.”

Joe Benedict, Director of Environmental Services, Forest Preserve District.



Tubing on Mt. Hoy. (Source: The EPA)

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Fish propagation tanks for reintroduction to restored habitats. (Source: Forest Preserve District DuPage County)

Innovative and forward thinking on the part of the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County (the District) has resulted in recreational opportunities as well as concerted conservation efforts and educational programs at the DuPage County Landfill/Blackwell Forest Preserve Superfund site (the Site) in Warrenville, Illinois.

In the 1960s, the District not only identified suitable space for a county landfill within the 1200-acre Blackwell Forest Preserve, but also conceived of the future reuse of the landfill and forest preserve as a multipurpose recreation area. The long-term plan for reuse demonstrated the District’s commitment to making sure free, publicly accessible forest preserve facilities remain an available resource for the local community.

The 40-acre landfill operated from 1965 until 1973. In 1981, the District, Illinois EPA and the EPA found that toxic chemicals from the landfill had leaked into ground water at the Site. The EPA added the Site to the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL) in 1990. The EPA required the District to take measures to update the landfill cover and to collect and treat chemicals and gas emanating from the landfill. After these measures were taken, the landfill, known as Mt. Hoy, was ready to support the planned recreational use. The District worked with the EPA throughout the cleanup process to maintain public access to areas where cleanup actions had been completed.

Through cooperation between the District and the EPA, local residents now enjoy year-round recreational activities at the Site, including hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing and a winter tubing hill. The Site also contains ecological restoration and environmental educational areas. The District replaced the vegetation on the landfill cover with prairie grass indigenous to the region. Observational areas and interpretive exhibits provide education on the ecology of the area, as well as the Site’s remedial technologies.

The District continues to expand facilities at the Site and forest preserve. In 2012, the Urban Stream Research Center and a recreational complex opened at the forest preserve. The Urban Stream Research Center, the only research facility of its kind in Illinois, provides space for the study of the DuPage River watershed, as well as a variety of other waterway projects. The recreational complex includes an archery facility with beginner, advanced and interactive ranges; a wheelchair-accessible fishing pier; a picnic area; a new trailhead, which connects to the existing trail system; and parking. Working closely with EPA, the District has upheld its commitment to public access, a cost effective cleanup, ecosystem restoration and educational opportunities.