

Volunteer Quarterly

April / May / June 2025

Macon County
Conservation District
MaconCountyConservation.org

3939 Nearing Lane
Decatur, IL 62521
217-423-7708

Dates to Remember

Volunteer Recognition Dinner

Richland Community College, Salon I & II

Wednesday, April 2

Join us for the 44th

Annual Volunteer

Recognition Dinner.

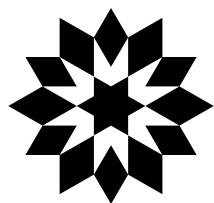
Registration begins at

5:30 pm, followed by a

buffet dinner at 6 pm.

Guests are welcome for

a fee of \$20. RSVP to Jenny Garver by March 20.



Rock Springs Quilters

Rock Springs Nature Center

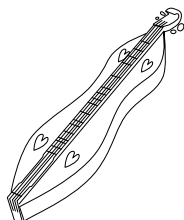
Every Wednesday, 9 -11 am

Dulcimer Club

Saturday, April 12 & 26, 10 am

Saturday, May 10 & 24, 10 am

Saturday, June 7 & 21, 10 am



Acoustic Jam Session

*Rock Springs Nature Center,
Auditorium*

*Sunday, April 13, May 11,
& June 8, 2 - 4 pm*



Vintage Base Ball Home Game

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Saturday, May 10, 12 pm

Rock Springs Ground Squirrels vs.

Belleville Stags vs. Lafayette Square Cyclones



RiverWatch Training Workshop

Rock Springs Nature Center

Saturday, April 19, 9 am - 4 pm

Become certified as a RiverWatch community scientist and learn how to monitor water quality in your local streams! Volunteers will learn to survey habitat and aquatic life, focusing on species like dragonfly nymphs, beetle larva, midges, and snails. Workshops cost \$50 for adults. This workshop is primarily for adults but kids may attend with a registered adult (2 kids per 1 adult). To register and see upcoming workshops visit <https://bit.ly/RWWorkshops25>. For more information about this workshop contact RiverWatch by calling 618-468-2781 or emailing hgriffis@lc.edu.



Festival of Spring

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Saturday, April 26

Celebrate Earth Day and welcome spring with a day of outdoor family activities! Start your morning from 8 to 10 am with a live bird banding demonstration led by Dr. Travis Wilcoxon. Afterward, join us from 10 am to 12 pm to help clean up litter along the Sangamon River. In the afternoon from 12 to 4 pm, enjoy a variety of activities including wagon rides, canoeing, a scavenger hunt, and a live bird show from the Illinois Raptor Center. You can also take tours of Homestead Prairie Farm and learn about other organizations in our community that are working to protect water and wildlife. This event is co-sponsored by the Decatur Area Audubon Society. Canoeing costs \$3 per person, while all other activities are free. No registration is required. Visit our website for more information!

Welcome New Volunteers!

Dulcimer Club- Lea Meister & Tamara Wilson

Master Naturalist- Carol Pohl

Dates to Remember

Rock Springs Ramble

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Saturday, May 17, 8 am

Join the Macon County Conservation Foundation for the fifth annual Rock Springs Ramble on Saturday, May 17. The event features a 5K, a 1-mile Fun Run/Walk, the Rock Springs Challenge, and a Kid's Fun Run, all starting and finishing at the main parking lot of the Rock Springs Conservation Area. Registration fees are \$35 for the 5K or 1-mile, \$65 for the Rock Springs Challenge, and \$10 for the Kid's Fun Run. Participants will receive race swag and top finisher prizes. Proceeds will benefit Macon County's natural areas and wildlife. Register or donate at RunSignup.com/RockSpringsRamble.



Independence Day

Rock Springs Conservation Area

Homestead Prairie Farm

Saturday, June 28, 6-8 pm

Join us for an Independence Day celebration, 1860s style! To escape the heat, the event will be held in the evening. Take a tour of Homestead Prairie Farm, explore the heirloom vegetable and herb gardens, and enjoy vintage toys and games. At 6:30 pm, experience a performance by Wild Columbine, a musical group from Central Illinois. They will play traditional music from the 17th to the 20th centuries on instruments including flute, whistles, violin, guitars, harmonium, concertina, and bodhran. Visitors are encouraged to bring lawn chairs. In the event of rain, the concert will be moved indoors to the Rock Springs Nature Center. Admission is free and no registration is required.



HAPPY
Independence
DAY

Remembering Our Volunteers

John Stickles (Nov 1927 – Jan 2025)-
Homestead Prairie Farm

Thank You Volunteers

Jenny Garver - Volunteer Coordinator

Did you know that **April is Volunteer Appreciation Month**? We have two special events planned to celebrate our volunteers this April:

#1 - The **44th Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner** will take place on **April 2**. This year, we will honor 30 volunteers for their dedicated service. Awards will be given for every four years of active service.

#2 - **Volunteer Goodie Day** will be on **April 26** during the Festival of Spring. Stop by the Information Desk during the festival to pick up a small goodie as our token of appreciation for all that you do. Please note that there is a limit of one goodie per volunteer.

Thank you

In 2024, 386 volunteers contributed over 9,900 hours of their time. What an impressive achievement! The year 2025 is off to a strong start; during the months of January and February, 118 volunteers have already logged 1,034 hours. Thank you for being a valued member of the Macon County Conservation District volunteer family!

Volunteer Fun & Learning

Spring Volunteer Hikes

Thursday, April 3, 12 pm- Rock Springs

Saturday, April 12, 10 am- Fort Daniel

Wednesday, April 16, 1 pm- Sand Creek

Monday, April 21, 2 pm- Friends Creek

Tuesday, April 29, 11 am- Griswold

We invite volunteers to join us in exploring various Conservation Areas while observing local flora and fauna. Please meet us at the designated Conservation Area. Although RSVPs to Jenny Garver are appreciated, they are not required. If you do register, we will keep an eye out for you and will contact you if the volunteer hike is canceled due to weather conditions.

Volunteer Fun & Learning

The Building of a Pavilion

*Friends Creek Conservation Area, Group Camp
Wednesday, May 7, 1-2 pm*

This past fall, the Operations staff completed a new pavilion at the Friends Creek Group Camp. Join us for an informative meeting with Andy Murphy and Ethan Spain to learn about the construction process, the local resources used, and to appreciate their exceptional craftsmanship. If you'd like, feel free to bring a sack lunch and enjoy the beautiful scenery at 12:30 pm. RSVP to Jenny Garver by May 5.



Summer Camp Volunteer Training

*Rock Springs Nature Center, Auditorium
Friday, May 30, 1-2:30pm*

Prepare for an exciting summer! Join us to assist camp counselors in working with children aged 5 to 15. You will help lead fun activities such as games, crafts, and hikes. This is a great opportunity to make new friends and have a fantastic time! RSVP to Jenny Garver by May 29 to secure your spot.



The Birds We Love to Hate

*Rock Springs Nature Center,
Auditorium
Friday, June 13, 10 - 11:30 am*

Non-native and some native birds can cause problems for other birds and for humans. Naturalist Melody Arnold will help you discover the history and other details about these annoying but interesting avian invaders. The program will start with an indoor presentation, followed by a look from the Window on Wildlife, and a short hike to observe and listen for these birds as well as others. RSVP to Jenny Garver by June 11.

Volunteer Opportunities

Native Garden Workdays

*Rock Springs Conservation Area
Thursday, April 10, 9 am - 12 pm*

Thursday, April 24, May 22, & June 26, 9 am
The Macon County Master Naturalists are seeking volunteers to help maintain the native tier garden in front of the Nature Center. These morning workdays will last one to two hours, depending on the amount of work needed in the garden. Volunteers are encouraged to bring their own tools, including work gloves, a hand trowel, shovel, bucket, and hand pruners. The tier garden showcases native prairie and woodland species that attract a variety of insect life for everyone to enjoy. Please RSVP to either Jenny Garver or head gardener Linda (lindasuehendricks@gmail.com) at least one day before each workday so we know who to expect. Thank you!



Sangamon River Clean-up

*Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Meet at Information Shelter
Saturday, April 26, 10 am-12 pm*

Join us in cleaning up the banks of the Sangamon River to create a safer and more beautiful environment for both wildlife and people. Please dress appropriately for getting dirty and bring your own gloves. We will provide trash bags. You can come alone or bring your whole family. This event is co-sponsored by the Community Environmental Council, and no registration is required.



Festival of Spring

*Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, April 26, 12-4 pm*

Volunteers are needed to assist in various areas during the annual Festival of Spring. Volunteer roles include: canoe rodeo, various activity stations, prize table, photography, farmhouse tours, and more! This opportunity is open to individuals aged 13 and older. For more information or to sign up, please contact Jenny Garver by April 18.



Volunteer Opportunities

Honeysuckle Workday

Griswold Conservation Area
Saturday, May 3, 9-11 am



Volunteers are needed to assist natural resources staff with the removal of bush honeysuckle inside the kame at Griswold Conservation Area. This workday will involve cutting shrubs while navigating uneven terrain, brushy areas, and loose rocks. Please wear long pants and sturdy shoes such as boots or tennis shoes and be prepared to get dirty. Tools and work gloves will be provided. This opportunity is open to individuals aged 16 and older. For more information or to sign up, please contact Mitch Lovgren by May 1.

Rock Springs Ramble

Rock Springs Conservation Area
Saturday, May 17, 6-11 am



The Macon County Conservation Foundation is excited to host its fifth annual 5K fundraising event. We are looking for volunteers to help with various tasks, including registration, assisting with the children's race, supporting the 5K race, food service, photography, and more. This opportunity is open to individuals aged 16 and older. For more information or to sign up, please contact Jenny Garver by May 8.

Independence Day 1860

Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Homestead Prairie Farm
Saturday, June 28, 6-8 pm



Volunteers are needed to help celebrate our nation's birthday in the 1860s style. We are looking for volunteers to lead tours and assist with activities. This opportunity is open to individuals aged 13 and older. For more information, please contact Brent Wielt by June 18.

Summer Camp Volunteers

Rock Springs Conservation Area
Monday, June 2 – Friday, August 1



Volunteers help trained camp counselors with hikes, crafts, and more!

This volunteer opportunity is for individuals aged 13 and older. For more information or to sign up, contact Jenny Garver by May 27.

Archaeology & Artifacts

Rock Springs Conservation Area,
Homestead Prairie Farm

We are seeking volunteers to help sift through dirt for artifacts from the 2018 excavation

beneath the farmhouse. This opportunity is open to individuals aged 13 and older. For more information or to sign up, please contact Brent Wielt.



Tidbits of Information

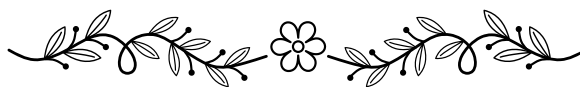
- **Holiday Closures:** Rock Springs Nature Center will be closed on **April 20**.
- **Volunteer Talks:** Did you know that we can visit local organizations and groups to discuss volunteer opportunities at the Macon County Conservation District? Contact Jenny Garver to schedule a session.
- **Monthly Email Updates:** Over the past year, we have been sending out monthly volunteer updates via email. Please add JGarver@MaconCountyConservation.org to your address book to prevent our emails from going to your spam folder. If you haven't received an update, please contact Jenny Garver to be added to our email list.
- **Facebook Group:** Have you joined the MCCD Volunteers Facebook group? It's a fantastic way to stay informed about upcoming volunteer events and see behind-the-scenes photos. Join the group today at [www.facebook.com/MaconCountyConservationDistrictVolunteers!](https://www.facebook.com/MaconCountyConservationDistrictVolunteers/)

JOIN US



Operations Update

Phil Julius - Director of Operations



The More You Know

Snow plowing and salt spreading have kept Operations staff busy as we have had several snow events over the past few months. Operations staff do a great job keeping the sidewalks and entryways clear so visitors can reach the Nature Center safely.



With a few warmer days, windy weather conditions have made it possible to start prescribed burning. Operations crews have burned around 600 acres of District property to manage exotic and invasive species. Fire is one of the biggest tools in the tool bag that we use to fight many of the invasive plants on District acres. Along with controlling invasives, fire also stimulates the growth of some species of forbs. We are still early in the burning season and hope to get many more acres burned. Several acres of District land that the burn crew is concentrating on this year have not experienced fire while under our ownership. Staff have been spreading seeds that have been collected from District prairies to improve plant diversity in several of the burn locations.

Staff have also been busy working at Fort Daniel doing forestry mowing and hand cutting of invasive and non-native trees and shrubs. The Natural Resources crew has been helping Friends Creek staff remove a large grove of black locust trees north of the Friends Creek Shop. While at Friends Creek, the Natural Resources crew has also helped Friends Creek staff with a restoration project on the west boundary. The Natural Resources crew has also been cleaning up the Griswold Conservation Area trailer site and the east side of the kame. The area has been frost seeded, so the kame will have a fresh appearance by spring.

That's all for now from Operations.

We often receive inquiries about the sources of our funding, and we're excited to share the story behind it! Our organization thrives thanks to a diverse array of funding avenues. A significant portion of our revenue—it amounts to about 80%—comes from property taxes in Macon County. This crucial support plays a vital role in allowing us to fulfill our mission.

Beyond property taxes, we also generate income through program fees, rental fees, various grants, and other contributions. This includes heartfelt memorials, generous donations, and vibrant fundraising efforts via the Macon County Conservation Foundation. We even benefit from rental income from farmland that's still in production, alongside support from the Nearing Trust.

For our larger projects—think exciting bike trail enhancements or expanding our land—we actively seek grants from notable sources like the Open Space Land Acquisition & Development (OSLAD) program through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Our programming wouldn't be the same without our partnership with the Decatur Area Audubon Society. They're instrumental in supporting us with transportation grants for schools visiting our programs and co-sponsoring fantastic events like the Festival of Spring. This year, we're thrilled to introduce a summer Audubon Internship position, made possible by their generous sponsorship.

Additionally, the Macon County Conservation Foundation, a proud 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, plays an essential role in our efforts. This year, they are hosting three exciting fundraising events: Rock Springs Ramble, Wine in the Wild, and Prairie Pedal. We invite you to learn more about the foundation and discover how you can join us in making a difference by visiting their website at MaconCountyConservationFoundation.org.

Together, we can achieve so much more!

Program Services Update

Alysia Callison - Director of Program Services

Program Services is knee-deep in planning for the upcoming field trip and summer season. Beginning in late April through May, hundreds of children from surrounding schools will visit Rock Springs Nature Center for end-of-year field trips, learning about things from snakes to trees. The calendar is starting to fill up – if you know any teachers that would like to bring their classes here, have them reach out! Bus transportation grants from the Decatur Area Audubon Society are available to schools in their territory.



In addition to planning field trips, staff have been busy looking ahead to summer. Summer camp information is ready on our website and registration opens April 1. Several scholarship opportunities are available this year thanks to funding from the United Way, Heart of Illinois Community Foundation, and the Macon County Conservation Foundation, and we are excited for another educational and fun-filled summer. We have also been booking many programs at libraries throughout Central Illinois, and our staff will be busy!

Festival of Spring is coming at us quickly and staff has been working with Decatur Area Audubon Society to plan that event. It is always a good time, and we look forward to seeing you there either as a volunteer or a visitor.

Foundation Update

Ashton Dukeman – Marketing Specialist

The Macon County Conservation Foundation is gearing up for two exciting fundraising events! Our fifth annual **Rock Springs Ramble** is set for **Saturday, May 17**, and we're always in need of volunteers to help make this event a success.

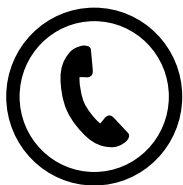
We're also thrilled to introduce a brand-new summer fundraiser at the newly named **Woodbine Farm—Wine in the Wild!** This exclusive, ticketed event will take place on the evening of **Saturday, June 14**, at Fort Daniel Conservation Area and marks the first event of its kind hosted by the Foundation. We can't wait to share more details soon!

Volunteers in Action



In February, twelve volunteers participated in an herbicide training class led by Natural Resource Manager Mitch Lovgren. During the session, Mitch discussed how to safely use, apply, and store herbicides that can be utilized on District lands to combat bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, and a variety of other invasive species.

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

Mitch Lovgren: MLovgren@MaconCountyConservation.org; 217-519-9926

Brent Wielt: BWielt@MaconCountyConservation.org ; 217-542-5525

