

the CPD does not), but most parties agree there is simply not enough staffing overall to adequately address increasing safety, regulation, and enforcement problems.

## MISCELLANEOUS GROUPS NOT FORMALLY INTERVIEWED

**John Husar**, Outdoors Writer for the Chicago Tribune, has long championed efforts to improve the Chicago River corridor for fishing, hunting, and other recreational and open space opportunities in his three-times-weekly “On the Outdoors” feature column. In addition, weekly “Fishing” and “Woods and Waters” reports he and others write in the Tribune often describe current fishing action and other activities and issues regarding the Chicago River corridor.

## PART III CURRENT AND POTENTIAL RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

### REACH 1 WEST FORK OF THE NORTH BRANCH

#### RESOURCE CHARACTER

**Location:** The West Fork of the North Branch begins in unincorporated Lake County, 1 mile south of West Deerfield Road (IL Hwy. 60) and just west of Interstate 94 (Figure 4.2). It continues south along the interstate through Lincolnshire, Bannockburn, and Riverwoods to the community of Deer-

field. There the river heads southeast, crossing the Lake-Cook County Line near Pfingsten Road. From here, the river flows through Northbrook, Glenview, and Morton Grove, where it meets the Middle Fork in the Chick Evans Golf Course (Forest Preserve District of Cook County) to form the main stem of the North Branch. Total length of the reach is around 14 miles.

**Land Use/Land Cover:** The West Fork flows primarily through residential areas, though significant sections of it are undeveloped or in public or private open space. Vegetative cover includes a mix of open and forested areas.

**Channel Character:** The West Fork is narrow, straight, and channelized through most of its length, except for its lower course through Cook County forest preserve lands. Its upper section can be very shallow, but the lower part is navigable by canoes and kayaks during periods of adequate flow.

#### CURRENT AND POTENTIAL RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES

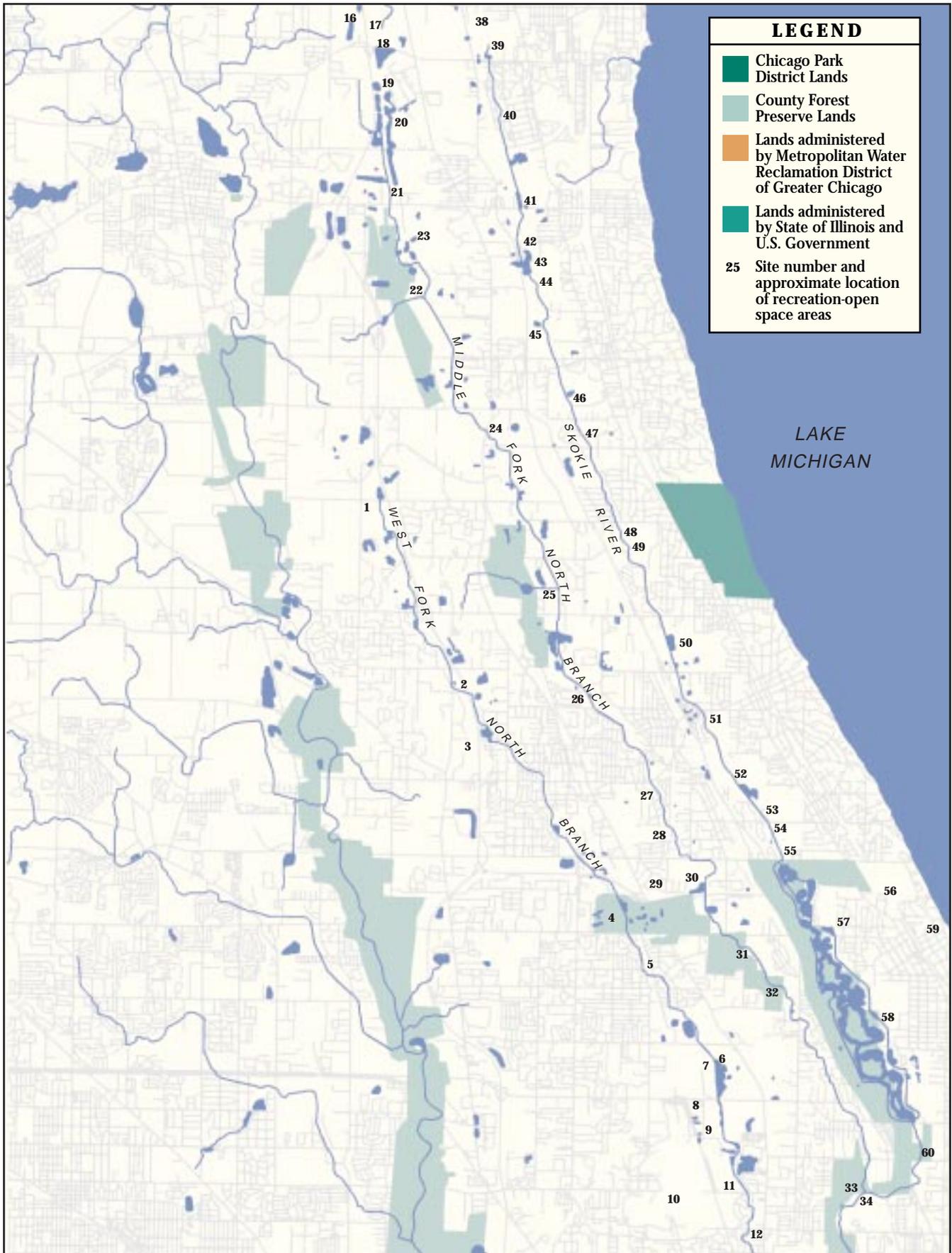
Current and potential recreation and open space opportunities in Reach 1 are described in Table 4.4 from north to south and are keyed to Figures 4.2 and 4.3 with numbers in the first column of the table. Major activity types are discussed in the sections below.

**Canoeing and Kayaking:** During periods of adequate flow, the lower stretch of the West Fork can be canoed from downtown Glenview to its confluence with the North Branch at the Chick Evans Golf Course. There is a potential put-in near Waukegan Road. Navigability above downtown Glenview is uncertain.

**TABLE 4.4**  
**Current and potential recreation-open space opportunities, Reach 1**  
*(See Figures 4.2 and 4.3 for site locations)*

SITE NUMBER AND NAME	MUNICIPALITY/OWNERSHIP	ACCESS, FACILITIES/NOTES
1 Old Mill Road property	Lincolnshire/private	40 acre potential forest/wetland restoration site
2 Bannockburn Basin	Bannockburn /Lake County FPD	40 acre flood control site—no public access
3 Deerfield Golf Course	Deerfield/Deerfield Park District	135 acre public golf course
4 Somme Woods FP	Skokie Div./Cook County FPD	735 acre picnic, restoration sites
5 Northbrook open space	Northbrook/private	Private land
6 Meadowhill Park	Northbrook/Northbrook Park District	60 acre public park
7 Anetsburger Golf Course	Northbrook/private	16 acre golf course
8 Techny Basin	Northbrook/Divine Word Missionary Fathers	Private, proposed public access
9 Techny Basin	Glenview/Marathon U.S. Realities	283 acre, private, planned public access park and trail
10 Glenview Naval Air Station	Glenview/U.S. Government	1,188 acre; proposed closing could provide public access
11 Tall Trees Park	Glenview/Glenview Park District	4.5 acre public park
12 Sleepy Hollow Park	Glenview/Glenview Park District	7.5 acre public park
13 Riverside Park	Glenview/Glenview Park District	3.9 acre public park
14 Glenview Country Club	Glenview/private	Golf course
15 Chick Evans Golf Course	Skokie Division/Cook County FPD	167 acre public golf course

Abbreviations: FPD—Forest Preserve District; URP—Urban Resources Partnership of Chicago; MWRD—Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.



**FIGURE 4.2**  
**Current and potential recreation-open space opportunities, Reaches 1, 2 and 3**

**Fishing:** Largemouth bass, bluegill, sunfish, and other species live in the river, but little fishing takes place. The sustainability of a recreational fishery under increased pressure is uncertain, especially in the upper stretches.

**Trails:** The Forest Preserve District of Cook County has bicycle, hiking, and horseback riding trails on its Somme Woods and Chick Evans sites, but no developed trails directly parallel the banks of the West Fork. Several trails outside the forest preserves were recently developed or are being planned along and near the river corridor. These projects all relate to the proposed 12-mile Techny Trail and Greenway system, and include a pathway through downtown Glenview; a bikeway along the river and Metra commuter rail right-of-way linking the North Branch Bicycle Trail with the communities of Morton Grove, Glenview, Golf, Northbrook, and Deerfield; and a trail following the river through the Techny Basin developments in Glenview and Northbrook.

**Natural and Cultural Resource-Based Recreation and Education:** The Somme Prairie Nature Preserve is a 70-acre dedicated Illinois Nature Preserve that includes the former floodplain of the now channelized West Fork. The site includes areas of very high quality prairie and Savanna, which are being managed and expanded by the forest preserve district with the help of volunteer stewards from the North Branch Prairie Project.

**Other Recreation:** Village parks in Northbrook and Glenview offer various active and passive recreation activities, and the river adds a natural element to the setting. A picnic grove at Somme Woods offers passive recreation, but is located one-half mile east of the West Fork. Two public and two private golf courses are also located along the West Fork.

## REACH 2 MIDDLE FORK OF THE NORTH BRANCH

### RESOURCE CHARACTER

**Location:** The Middle Fork of the North Branch begins in northern Lake County near Park City and flows south through Waukegan, North Chicago, Green Oaks, Lake Bluff, Lake Forest, Highland Park, Deerfield, Northbrook, and Northfield to its confluence with the Skokie River (East Fork), a length of about 21 miles (Figure 4.2). From this point, the river continues another 3 miles through Cook County forest preserve sites in Glenview and Morton Grove until it joins the West Fork to form the main stem of the North Branch.

**Land Use/Vegetative Cover:** The upper third of this reach (above Half Day Road, IL Highway 22) is a mix of low density residential, farm, and public open space, while the lower two-thirds is residential and public open space. The vegetative cover of public and private open space includes a diverse mix of forest, savanna, prairie, old field, wetland, mowed grass area, and agricultural fields. Some cultivated

fields in Lake County are being leased out by the forest preserve district to farmers until they are ready to be restored and/or developed for recreation.

**Channel Character:** The Middle Fork begins as a series of wetlands in a meandering river channel. Much of the Middle Fork floodplain south of Buckley Road (IL Highway 137), however, was modified long ago for agriculture, with the river channel ditched and the land laid with drainage tile. This narrow, straight channel is usually quite shallow, and in some places buckthorn and box elder crowd the river and hinder access; other typical bank trees include willow, silver maple, and elm.

### CURRENT AND POTENTIAL RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES

Current and potential recreation and open space opportunities in Reach 2 are described in Table 4.5 from north to south and are keyed to Figure 4.2 with numbers in the first column of the table. Major activity types are discussed in the sections below.

**Canoeing and Kayaking:** The lower 3 miles of the Middle Fork from the Skokie River to the main stem of the North Branch is usually navigable by canoe or kayak. Above the Skokie River, the narrow channel is navigable to Winnetka Road, and perhaps further, during periods of adequate water.

**Fishing:** Species observed in this reach include northern pike, largemouth bass, carp, bluegill, and sunfish. Other than the Skokie Lagoons, the Middle Fork holds the highest potential for recreational fishing of the three forks of the North Branch, especially in its lower stretches. Currently, however, little fishing takes place.

**Trails:** The Forest Preserve District of Cook County has bicycle, hiking, and horseback riding trails on its sites along the lower stretch of the Middle Fork, and a developed trail circles the Somme Woods preserve. Lake County Forest Preserves has proposed developing a pedestrian nature trail on its Middle Fork Savanna site, providing access on the north and south ends. Future plans also include a northern extension of this trail to connect the district's other Middle Fork properties, and a western extension to connect with its Des Plaines River Trail. A trail may also be developed on the district's Lake Forest flood control site once the reservoir is constructed.

**Natural and Cultural Resource-Based Recreation and Education:** Lake County Forest Preserves' Middle Fork sites contain areas of exceptional plant and animal diversity, and are used for a variety of nature recreation and environmental education activities. The district is working with the non-profit Lake Forest Open Lands in the ecological restoration of the Middle Fork Savanna property, which may include the efforts of volunteer restorationists. The district has also worked with ChicagoRivers partners to identify areas within its holdings that would be likely candidates for wetland restoration. A site on its Lake Forest property has since been

**TABLE 4.5**  
**Current and potential recreation-open space opportunities, Reach 2**  
*(See Figure 4.2 and 4.3 for site locations)*

SITE NUMBER AND NAME	MUNICIPALITY/OWNERSHIP	ACCESS, FACILITIES/NOTES
16 Headwaters marsh	Park City/private	10 acre, private, potential wetland restoration site
17 Pritzker property	Waukegan/private	160 acre, private, potential wetland restoration site
18 Baxter land	Waukegan/Baxter Healthcare	76 acre, private, potential wetland restoration site
19 Wrigley tract	Waukegan/Abbot Labs	118 acre, private, potential wetland restoration site
20 Unnamed site	Green Oaks/Lake County FPD	14 acre, undeveloped natural area
21 Green Oaks	Green Oaks/Lake County FPD	69 acre flood control site
22 Middle Fork Savanna	Lake Forest/Lake County FPD	477 acre, undeveloped natural area
23 Knollwood Country Club	Lake Forest/private	260 acre private golf course
24 School District and recycling center	Lake Forest/public	34 acre potential wetland restoration site
25 Lake Forest/Prairie Wolf Slough	Lake Forest/Lake County FPD	431 acre, undeveloped flood control site; includes 28 acre URP/ ChicagoRivers demonstration project
26 Berkeley Prairie	Highland Park/Lake County FPD	18 acre natural area
27 Trail Tree Park	Deerfield/Deerfield Park District	5 acre public park
28 Green Briar Park	Deerfield/Deerfield Park District	19.5 acre public park
29 Middle Fork Reservoir	Northbrook/MWRD	320 acre flood control site
30 Green Acres Country Club	Northbrook/Northbrook Park District	60 acre public golf course
31 Chipilly Woods <sup>1</sup>	Skokie Division/Cook County FPD	Developed trail
32 Sunset Ridge Woods <sup>1</sup>	Skokie Division/Cook County FPD	Developed trail
33 Watersmeet <sup>1</sup>	Skokie Division/Cook County FPD	Potential wetland restoration site
34 Wilmette Golf Course	Wilmette/Wilmette Park District	105 acre public golf course and driving range
35 Blue Star Mem. Woods <sup>1</sup>	Skokie Division/Cook County FPD	Bike, developed trails
36 Glenview Woods <sup>1</sup>	Skokie Division/Cook County FPD	Bike, developed trails, restoration site
37 Harms Woods <sup>1</sup>	Skokie Division/Cook County FPD	Bike/developed/foot trails, 100 acre restoration site

<sup>1</sup>Note: Forest Preserve District of Cook County does not break down acreage of holdings by site; approximate total acreage for its Middle Fork holdings is 1,626 acres. Abbreviations: FPD—Forest Preserve District; URP—Urban Resources Partnership of Chicago; MWRD—Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.

designated a ChicagoRivers demonstration project, and partial funding to carry out the project has been received through a grant from the Urban Resources Partnership (URP). In Cook County’s Glenview Woods Forest Preserve, North Branch Restoration Project volunteers manage woodland, savanna, and wetland areas near the west bank of the Middle Fork. They are also working on a 100-acre woodland site at Harms Woods that includes mesic and wet communities.

**Other Recreation:** The Forest Preserve District of Cook County maintains picnic groves at its Somme Woods, Chipilly Woods, Blue Star Memorial Woods, Glenview Woods, and Harms Woods sites. Harms Woods, the largest of these recreation areas, offers picnic shelters and access to the North Branch Bicycle Trail. One private and three public golf courses are also located on or near the Middle Fork.

### REACH 3 SKOKIE RIVER (EAST FORK OF THE NORTH BRANCH)

#### RESOURCE CHARACTER

**Location:** The Skokie River (East Fork of the North Branch) begins in northern Lake County near Park City, and flows south through the suburbs of Lake Bluff, Lake Forest, Highland Park, Northfield, Glencoe, Forest Preserve District of Cook County lands, Winnetka, and Wilmette, where it joins with the Middle Fork (Figure 4.2). Total length of this reach is about 17 miles.

**Land Use/Vegetative Cover:** The Skokie River is the most developed of the three forks of the North Branch and has the least amount of land in public open space. Land use is primarily residential, except for the large Greenbelt and Skokie

Lagoons forest preserve tracts at the northern and southern ends of the river. Significant acreage in private open space properties, however, helps maintain the natural integrity of the corridor as a greenway; these properties include conservancy lands in Lake County and several country club golf courses in Lake and Cook Counties. The vegetative cover of public and private open space includes woodland, wetland, and mowed grass.

**Channel Character:** The Skokie River was once an extensive system of wetlands from the headwaters down through what is now the Skokie Lagoons. Most of these wetlands disappeared after the floodplain was drained and filled, the river was channelized, and the Skokie Lagoons were constructed in a massive Civilian Conservation Corps project during the 1930s. Today, a small portion of the original headwaters wetlands exists in Lake County's Greenbelt Forest Preserve. Between there and the Skokie Lagoons, the river is narrow and channelized, and runs very shallow except after large rains. The Lagoons area itself includes 7 pools and more than 190 acres of water, with shoreland banks and islands that combine wild nature and groomed spaces to create a picturesque effect. Ongoing restoration projects include dredging the Lagoons and restocking them with fish, and restoring the natural character of the Skokie River channel through the Chicago Botanic Gardens. Both projects include ecological restoration of shoreline vegetation. Below the Lagoons, the river widens and deepens, and follows its natural stream course to its confluence with the Middle Fork.

#### **CURRENT AND POTENTIAL RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE OPPORTUNITIES**

Current and potential recreation and open space opportunities in Reach 3 are described in Table 4.6 from north to south and are keyed to Figure 4.2 with numbers in the first column of the table. Major activity types are discussed in the following sections.

**Boating:** The river above the Skokie Lagoons is very narrow and is not navigable by even small craft during most of the year. The Skokie Lagoons, however, offers a variety of boating experiences, including canoeing, kayaking, sailing, and row-boating, and is perhaps the most popular area in the entire Chicago River corridor for non-motorized boating (electric trolling motors are also allowed). As part of the Skokie Lagoons restoration project, a new boat launch facility has been constructed, and portageways have been improved on two of the three low head dams. Not including the Botanic Garden, it is about a 7-mile trip around the Lagoons. There is no improved portageway at the main control dam between the Lagoons and the lower channel of the Skokie River (at Willow Rd.), but portaging between the two is possible. From the Lagoons to its confluence with the Middle Fork, the Skokie River is navigable by canoe and kayak, except during periods of low water. A dam near Winnetka Road is somewhat difficult to portage around.

**Fishing:** At the headwaters of the Skokie River, the Greenbelt Forest Preserve has two 6-acre fishing ponds that are stocked for shore fishing with largemouth bass, channel catfish, and bluegill. The river between Greenbelt and the Skokie Lagoons does not have a consistent, adequate flow to sustain a recreational fishery. However, the Skokie Lagoons offers some of the best and most popular fishing opportunities in the Chicago River corridor. Shoreline vegetation is managed in part to allow access for bank fishing, which is probably the most common fishing method on the Lagoons. Areas around the dams of the Lagoons are particularly attractive fishing spots. As part of the restoration, rough fish were removed and the Lagoons were restocked with largemouth bass, walleye, northern pike, channel catfish, bluegill, and sunfish. A 14-inch limit on bass will help improve the sustainability of the fishery, and catch-and-release fishing is being encouraged. Fishing below the Lagoons is rare, but children fish along the shore occasionally. Species include carp, bull-head, largemouth bass, and bluegill.

**Trails:** The Greenbelt Forest Preserve has 5 miles of looped gravel trails for hiking, bicycling, cross-county skiing, and other trail activities. The Lake Bluff flood control site currently has an informal trails network through it, and the Village of Lake Bluff, Lake Bluff Open Lands, and Lake Forest Open Lands are interested in linking this site with trails to properties to the north and south. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County's 20-mile-long North Branch Bicycle Trail begins at the north entrance to the Chicago Botanic Garden, where it shares a service drive for 1.2 miles to the south entrance. The Botanic Garden also has many paths that wind through its outdoor garden displays, including its Skokie River ecological restoration project. Below the Botanic Garden, the North Branch Bicycle Trail follows a dedicated off-road route, paralleling the Lagoons and the river below. The Lagoons area also has hiking and horse trails.

A proposed extension from the northern terminus of the North Branch Bicycle Trail eastward along Lake-Cook Road would connect it with the Green Bay Trail, a rail-trail that runs south to Wilmette and north, joining other trails all the way to the Wisconsin border.

**Natural and Cultural Resource-Based Recreation and Education:** The Greenbelt Forest Preserve has been the site of extensive restoration of wetland, savanna, and prairie ecosystems. At the site, Lake County Forest Preserves is developing an interpretive trail that will tell the story of the Skokie River: its historical nature, past human degradation, and current efforts to restore it. The Chicago Botanic Garden is one of the key environmental education centers of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. Managed in cooperation with the Chicago Horticultural Society, the Botanic Garden has hosted several meetings focusing on the Chicago River. Its Skokie River Restoration Project is a recent endeavor to stabilize eroding streambanks and restore the ecological function of the river. The project will have a public education component and will be readily accessible to the hundreds of

thousands who visit the Botanic Garden annually. Restoration of the historic natural and designed landscape of the Skokie Lagoons area is another concern of the forest preserve district; professional, community, and public groups are participating in planning and design exercises for the area. The Lagoons have long been a popular site for birding, viewing wildlife and spring flora, and other nature-related recreation activities, and the restoration projects mentioned above should increase these opportunities. Below the Lagoons, volunteers from the North Branch Restoration Project recently began work to restore a sedge meadow community along the river.

**Other Recreation:** The Greenbelt Forest Preserve is the most developed of all of the Lake County Forest Preserves sites in the Chicago River corridor. Because of its proximity to Waukegan, Park City, and North Chicago, the site receives heavy use by a diverse clientele for a variety of active and passive activities. The Skokie Lagoons Forest Preserve contains a designated picnic area with shelters, and also is used for various other recreational activities. Finally, 12 golf courses, most of them private country clubs, are located near the river.

**TABLE 4.6**  
**Current and potential recreation-open space opportunities, Reach 3**  
*(See Figure 4.2 for site locations)*

SITE NUMBER AND NAME	MUNICIPALITY/OWNERSHIP	ACCESS, FACILITIES/NOTES
38 Greenbelt Forest Preserve	Park City/Lake County FPD	536 acre full-service facility
39 Foss Park Golf Course	unincorporated/public	178 acre public golf course
40 Great Lakes Naval Center	Lake Bluff/U.S. Government	1,800 acre, government
41 Lake Bluff Country Club	Lake Bluff/Lake Bluff Pk. District	120 acre public golf course
42 Skokie River Nature Area	Lake Bluff/Village Lake Bluff, leased Lake Bluff Open Lands	125 acre proposed nature trails
43 Lake Bluff site	Lake Bluff/Lake County FPD	85 acre, undeveloped flood control site, informal trails
44 Lake Forest Open Lands site	Lake Forest/Lake Forest Open Lands Association	Nature trails
45 Deerpath Golf Course/Park	Lake Forest/public	134 acre golf course and park
46 Deerpath Play Field	Lake Forest/Village Lake Forest	26 acre, park facilities
47 Onwentsia Club	Lake Forest/private	203 acre private golf course
48 Centennial Park	Highland /Pk. District of Highland Park	65 acre, park facilities
49 Old Elm Golf Course	Highland Park/private	175 acre golf course
50 G.M. Kushing property	Highland Park/private	34 acre, private, potential wetland restoration site
51 Highland Park Country Club	Highland Park/private	109 acre golf course
52 Sunset Valley Golf Course	Highland Park/public	149 acre golf course
53 Bob-O-Link Golf Course	Highland Park/private	165 acre golf course
54 Larry Fink Park	Highland Park/Park District of Highland Park	71 acre park, potential wetland restoration site
55 Northmore Country Club	Highland Park/private	265 acre golf course
56 Glencoe Golf Course	Glencoe/private (public access)	126 acre golf course
57 Chicago Botanic Garden	Skokie Division/Cook County FPD	280 acre gardens, education center, restoration site
58 Skokie Lagoons	Skokie Division/Cook County FPD	400 acre, bike, horse, hiking trails; boat launch, picnic areas; 2 potential wetland restoration sites
59 Skokie Playfield Golf Course	Winnetka/private	165 acre golf course
60 Unnamed forest preserve, including the Skokie Sedge Meadow <sup>1</sup>	Skokie Division/Cook County FPD	Bike and horse trails; 20 acre sedge meadow restoration site

<sup>1</sup> Note: The Forest Preserve District of Cook County does not break down the acreage of its holdings by site; approximate total acreage for its Skokie River holdings is 1,489 acres. Abbreviations: FPD—Forest Preserve District; URP—Urban Resources Partnership of Chicago; MWRD—Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago.