

# HOPKINS PARK, ILLINOIS

THE VILLAGE OF HOPKINS PARK

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## US Fish & Wildlife Tour

29 JULY 2016

ADMINISTRATOR

MAYOR'S NEWSLETTER

(0)

It was a long day, but I felt it was worthwhile. We learned a lot and, had some of our suspicions confirmed. We greatly appreciated the time and effort put in by those who hosted our group.

On Monday, July 25 our group met with local landowners and farmers to discuss the Cypress Creek US Fish & Wildlife Refuge which was established about 25 years ago.

Here are a few main points that stood out to me:

1. The Refuge Revenue Sharing Act of 1935 outlines how payments would be made to local governments in compensation for their loss of property tax revenue. The formula which would usually bring the biggest return to the community would be a payment equal to 3/4 or 1% of the land's assessed value. What we learned: When US Fish & Wildlife Service acquires land, they remove any structures on the land such as any barns, grain bins, sheds, homes, etc. That means the assessed value of the land is now a fraction of what it once was assessed as, especially if the land becomes a swamp.

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Furthermore, we learned that for this Cypress Creek US Fish & Wildlife Service Refuge, US Fish & Wildlife Service has not made a Refuge Revenue Sharing Act payment for five years. And, the payments they made years ago were not the full payments they owed the community. So, these payments are not guaranteed.

2. The US Fish & Wildlife Service sells the community on the economic growth and development that the refuge would bring as the result of tourism. When touring the southern Illinois refuge, there were no visible signs of any economic development or tourism activities as a result of the refuge. There was one canoe rental facility near the refuge, but that went out of business years ago. Many areas of the refuge appeared to be closed to the public.

It appeared that the impact to the community's economy was negative. We were told there used to be five farm implement dealers in the area, now there is one. The hardware store closed and the grocery store closed. Schools are losing student population. The tax burdens for those who remain in the area have increased.

Deer hunting was big in the area, now there isn't as much. There are some areas that allow certain restricted hunting, but there is no vehicle access to those areas. Everything must be carried in by foot and carried out by foot which means if you were to shoot a deer, you must drag it out a mile or more to your vehicle.

A fire in the refuge is a concern with a local school near the refuge. The local fire departments were told not to attempt to control a fire if one should happen but instead contact the forestry service which is hours away.

## NEWSLETTER

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3. US Fish & Wildlife Service initially proposed the Cypress Creek refuge to be 12,000 acres. They changed their plan years ago to state they seek to acquire 35,000 acres. They currently hold 16,000 acres. The name of the refuge was changed about 10 years ago to be called a "wetland refuge" which has different implications. Conducting maintenance on their river (the Cashe River) is challenging and drainage to the river has been stopped.

There was to be 10% of the land in the refuge to be reserved for agriculture. However, there are very limiting restrictions on the agricultural practices allowed on that land. And, they allow farming on less than 300 acres currently with the schedule of having no farmed land by 2019.

A land owner pays no capital gains taxes if they sell to US Fish & Wildlife Service which gives the US Fish & Wildlife Service an advantage in acquiring land.

There were many other important points made that I have not included in this short recap. If you think I might have gotten some of this information incorrect, please let me know.

If anyone who participated has anything to add, please "reply to all" so that we may all gain the information.

Also, if you have any questions about our trip or this information, please let me know.

Thank you again for your support,

Chad

Chad Miller, Manager

Kankakee County Farm Bureau

1605 West Court Street

[US Fish & Wildlife Tour.pdf \(54.46 kb\)](#)



Participants in the July 25 trip to southern Illinois to learn about the impact of having a US Fish & Wildlife Service refuge in our community included (from left to right): Curt Ralston, David Treece, Azizah Ashraf-Ali, David Haase, Sharon White, Mayor Mark Hodge, Jim Piekarczyk, Tom DeYoung, Dan Joyce, John Zumwalt, Steve Benoit, Elwood Line, Mike Johnson, Rick Bryant, and Kankakee County Farm Bureau Manager Chad Miller. The photo was taken in front of the Shawnee Community College

## August Newsletter

28 JULY 2016

ADMINISTRATOR

MAYOR'S NEWSLETTER

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Click the link below to view the newsletter:

[From the Mayor Desk Aug 7-28-16.pdf \(214.76 kb\)](#)

## July Newsletter

01 JULY 2016

ADMINISTRATOR

MAYOR'S NEWSLETTER

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[From the Mayors Desk July Newsletter 7-6-16.pdf \(176.77 kb\)](#)

[Wildlife Refuge Proposal update 5-27-2016 \(6\).pdf \(724.15 kb\)](#)

## June Newsletter

24 JUNE 2016

ADMINISTRATOR

MAYOR'S NEWSLETTER

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Click here for the June Newsletter:

[From the Mayors Desk June Newsletter 06-2016.pdf](#)  
(210.02 kb)

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