

Governor Blagojevich Announces Over \$26.4 Million in Park Development Grants for Northern Illinois

Village of Round Lake Beach to receive \$162,700.00

Governor Rod R. Blagojevich has announced \$26.4 million in grants for dozens of projects at existing parks and development of new parks throughout Northern Illinois. The funds, made available through the Open Space Land Acquisition Development (OSLAD) Program, will be used for 73 projects in Northern Illinois including land acquisition, construction of new trails and playgrounds, and the creation of new recreational opportunities including athletic fields and fishing piers.

The Village of Round Lake Beach in Lake County will receive \$162,700 to develop the Cultural & Civic Center Park on Hook Drive. The project includes walking trails, a shelter overlooking Hook Lake, a fishing station and the installation of native plants.

“Illinois is a beautiful state and enjoying the outdoors is a key to our quality of life. These grants we’re announcing today mean people in Northern Illinois will have even more opportunities for recreation and tourism in part because of the grants we are announcing today,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “Whether it’s setting aside land to ensure future park development, expanding existing parks or building trails and picnic shelters, these projects not only add to the quality of life in our communities, but can also spur more economic growth.”

“The health and safety of our children depends on their ability to run and play outdoors. The OSLAD program gives so many kids in so many communities the opportunity to enjoy expanded recreational opportunities,” Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Acting Director Sam Flood said.

The \$32.9 million awarded throughout the state this year combined with the grantee’s minimum 50 percent share will result in more than \$65.8 million of local acquisition and development projects to improve and expand open space in Illinois.

The Round Lake Beach Cultural & Civic Center is scheduled to be open in December of this year. The Center will provide a variety of unique rental spaces including a banquet room for up to 350 guests, indoor and outdoor stages, conference room for up to 40 people, Gathering Lobby with a fireplace and antique cabinet from a local hardware store that provides a distinctive setting for any event. The Round Lake Area Chamber of Commerce, Pear Tree Catering and Improv Productions will also be located in the Center. The addition of this planned parkland space will add to the beauty and uniqueness of this Center which will serve the residents of Round Lake Beach and surrounding regions.

Quick facts about OSLAD

The \$32.9 million being awarded this year is the largest award in OSLAD history. The program has been in existence since 1986.

Prior to this year’s grants, OSLAD had provided a total of \$246 million for approximately 1,298 local agency park projects.

OSLAD grants are administered by the Department of Natural Resources and provide up to 50 percent reimbursement of eligible costs incurred by local agencies for approved recreational land acquisition and development projects.

The program is funded by monies dedicated from a percentage of the state's Real Estate Transfer Tax.

To qualify for a grant, an agency must show a need for its project and an ability to carry it through to completion. Other factors include the agency's record in maintaining its other facilities, the degree of local need and planning involved and a project's ability to address regional and statewide outdoor recreation priorities.

All projects were reviewed by a subcommittee of the Natural Resources Advisory Board at a public hearing on September 11 & 12, 2006. Recommendations were reviewed by the full Advisory Board on September 25, 2006. The Advisory Board is a thirteen member panel which reviews and advises the IDNR on natural resource related issues.

A total of 101 projects are being funded statewide through the Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development program facilitated through IDNR. They include 23 projects that will provide initial recreation development of park sites for their respective communities; ten projects will provide water based recreation by providing access to lakes, rivers or streams; 47 projects will provide new playground equipment; nine projects will include water play features known as "spraygrounds" and nine projects will receive funding assistance for in-line skating/roller hockey and/or skateboarding. Seventeen projects will provide funding for facilities that promote environmental and wetland studies (examples of these facilities include interpretive trails, wildlife observation stations, wetland enhancement and prairie restoration) and seven projects will either renovate existing or construct new pool facilities.