

Friends of the Kankakee: Notes from the Field



Friends of the Kankakee Continued Growth

As we approach the fourth quarter of 2025, we continue to make connections and engage with local communities, landowners, and conservation organizations in our footprint in Illinois. If you remember our last newsletter, the Friends of the Kankakee discussed our growth strategy to include procuring and protecting land in Indiana along the Kankakee River basin. With the help of donations from several generous donors making pledges to our *IN Grand Kankakee Marsh Fund*. The Friends of the Kankakee has met with Indiana DNR representatives to establish a partnership with a mutual conservation effort on the local communities. Letters have been sent out to some landowners whose properties are aligned with our goal for preservation of the ecological landscapes of the Kankakee River Basin.

New Parking Area & Signage Coming Soon!

Friends of the Kankakee is excited to announce plans for a small parking area near our property at **407 Pike St. in Beaverville, IL**. This spot was chosen for its convenient road access and its connection to a future trailhead, making it an ideal gateway for visitors.

Over the past couple of years, 407 Pike St. has been a focus during our volunteer workdays, and thanks to the dedication of volunteers, a new parking sign has been made by volunteer Pat Bickett (pictured right).

Now, we need your help to bring this project to life. Our goal is to create a parking space for 6–8 standard vehicles, and we're looking for:

- Donations of rock to form the lot
- Assistance with rock delivery and grading services

Your support will help make the property more accessible to everyone who loves and cares for the Kankakee.



If you or anyone you know has any interest in rock delivery and/or grading services, please call/text TJ Larney at 708-707-8545 and send an email to FriendsoftheKankakee4@gmail.com.

Hunting on Friends of the Kankakee Properties

Love the outdoors? Passionate about hunting? We invite you to enjoy hunting opportunities on Friends of the Kankakee properties while also helping us care for the land we all treasure.

To keep our program strong, we ask each hunter to contribute 6 volunteer hours each calendar year. Don't worry - there are plenty of fun and meaningful ways to pitch in! You can join us on our monthly workdays (the third Saturday of each month, 8–11 a.m.), lend a hand with projects like sign building or

land stewardship, or share your unique skills and equipment to support our mission. Every hour you give helps protect the habitat and will ensure these lands thrive for future generations.

Hunting here isn't just about sport, it plays a vital role in wildlife management, habitat preservation, and honoring long-standing traditions. On our properties, you'll find opportunities for deer, quail, and turkey hunting.

If you'd like to hunt with us—or if you're new and not sure where to start—we'd love to hear from you!

For any additional hunting related questions please reach out to Darin Clutterbuck via text/call 815-867-6749 or send an email FriendsoftheKankakee4@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events:

October 18: 8-11 AM Workday. This day will focus on spreading gravel and installing our new parking sign. We will meet at the corner of Deer and Pike in Willow Estates.



November 15: 8-11 AM Workday. We will meet at the corner of Deer and Pike in Willow Estates.

December 20: 8-11 AM Workday. We will meet at the corner of Deer and Pike in Willow Estates.

All events rain or shine, there is no bad weather, just poor preparation.

To RSVP, please send an email to Gus Nyberg nyberggus@gmail.com or text/call 765-427-4345

House cleanup on FOK 22 acre

Many of the tracts of land that Friends of the Kankakee has acquired over the years, have structures in various conditions that we aim to remove to restore the land to a more natural condition. As we disassemble the remnants of human development that were left behind, I often wonder about the various items we find, and what that indicates about the past.

There are old toys, TVs stripped of components, plates and cups, collections of clothes, tires, etc. This summer I made a find that I thought was interesting and odd enough to take home (thankfully I have a tolerant partner), roughly a dozen 6" metal rulers in perfectly good condition. My experience with rulers is that they are usually 12", so is from a particular industry? Business failure? And how does an item move from business failure to Willow Estates?

Not all the things left behind, are "junk". Between the house and a former chicken run, there is a peach tree, that is now shaded, but still valiantly producing the fruit that the past owner dreamed they would be able to harvest and possibly entertain with a peach pie.

The juxtaposition of items from people that dreamed of living a rural American homestead life and the lawless dumping that plagued this particular tract before Friends of the Kankakee blocked the two-track road that formerly cut through the tract, sit within a matrix of recovering sand prairie and savanna today and speaks to the tangled history of us and the land. Land that has been cherished and abused by a gaggle of people.

The summer of 2025 saw the organization working to remove the presence of a former home that had fallen in on itself, during two of our regular third Saturday of the month workdays and on two workdays in partnership with the YES (IL based Youth Environmental Service) and SCI (IN based Student Conservation Interns). The work consisted of separating shingles from wooden structure of the building and picking up trash that was most likely dumped in the house after the house became vacant.

The joint workdays with the YES and SCI interns were hot, as much of this summer has been, and we worked steadily pulling apart the building and ferried collected materials to a dumpster for proper disposal, while the rising seniors postured and jabbered as they got to know each other. We discussed edible plants, life paths and hopefully deepened their connection to the natural world while connecting people across artificial political lines that keep us separate.



Public workday augmented the efforts of the intern lead work and continued the progress to a state of pretty darn well cleaned up house site.

This fall we plan to burn much of the wooden debris that was set aside in a burn pile in the home.

In the future, once the cleanup of the remains of previous people, we will pivot to the rejuvenation of the surrounding area and work to augment the populations of the flora and

fauna of the area and move the land to a healthier native site.

Friends of the Kankakee was organized by people wanting to actualize our connection to the land and express that love by healing the land, because we recognize that the land needs us and we need the land.

Apparel Offerings for our Friends

We at Friends of the Kankakee would like to provide you with the opportunity to purchase a hat and/or shirt. Examples of what we currently have been using are pictured. If you would like to Right now, we've been wearing grey T-shirts with our Friends of the Kankakee logo on the front left chest and across the back of the shirt. Hats will also be available and currently we have black hats with *Friends of the Kankakee* written on the front but will show our logo going forward.



If you would like pricing information and/or to order a shirt(s) and/or hat(s) please call/text TJ Larney at 708-707-8545 and/or send an email to FriendsoftheKankakee4@gmail.com.

Please make a 2025 membership contribution and consider a contribution to IN Grand Kankakee Marsh

**Friends of the Kankakee
PO Box 13 Watseka IL 60970**

Electronic donations can be made on our website at FriendsoftheKankakee.com. There is a link that will bring you Zeffy.com.

Land conservation has a long horizon like the prairies of this land. As you do your estate plan, consider supporting Friends of the Kankakee and sand / river country conservation with a legacy gift through your estate. Gifts can be a fixed amount or a percentage of your estate. To do so, instruct your estate preparer on how you want to include Friends of the Kankakee. Please reach out with any questions.

If you use social media. Friends of the Kankakee has a new Facebook page. We post events and natural observations at **Friends of the Kankakee 501c3**. Follow us, share posts and help us grow our following and keep up to date.

If you or anyone you know has any questions/concerns, please call/text TJ Larney at 708-707-8545 and/or send an email to FriendsoftheKankakee4@gmail.com.

New Giving Option Coming Soon: Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs)

What's a QCD?

A Qualified Charitable Distribution lets you donate directly from your retirement account to a nonprofit.

Why it matters:

- Avoid tax penalties on mandatory distributions
- Lower your taxable income
- Support land preservation & conservation

What to do:

- Ask your financial advisor if a QCD works for you
- Have your distribution sent directly to Friends of the Kankakee



For additional questions regarding QCDs please contact Gus Nyberg nyberggus@gmail.com or text/call 765-427-4345.

Thank you to everyone that has given their time and treasure to conservation and to the organization. Your support is essential, seen and appreciated.