

FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT
of Cook County, Illinois

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Steven M. Bylina, Jr., GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**PRESIDENT TODD H. STROGER UNVEILS 2009 FPDCC
BALANCED BUDGET**

Proposed Spending Plan Holds Line on Growth in Tax Levy

Today, Cook County Forest Preserve District Board President Todd H. Stroger presented the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (“District”) Board of Commissioners with his 2009 Executive Budget Recommendation. The \$160.7 million dollar total appropriation includes **no increase in the District’s tax levy**.

“In considering the direction the District would take in 2009, I decided that, given the current climate of our economy, it was best for the District to forgo such an increase in the coming year,” said President Stroger. “Despite this fact, by working closely with our General Superintendent Dr. Steven M. Bylina and his staff, I have been able to present the Board with a document that still provides for the District in a way that allows it to accomplish it’s mission and serve it’s visitors.”

Highlights from the budget include:

- A \$52.6 million dollar operating budget to the District;
- \$3 million dollars for land acquisition – an increase of \$500,000 over 2008;
- \$3.5 million dollars for land management - an increase of \$275,000 over 2008;
- \$75,000 in funding for youth education programs – an increase of \$25,000 over 2008;
- \$650,000 for phase III of the District’s “So Close 2 You” public awareness campaign;

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- \$14.9 million dollars to the Brookfield Zoo; and
- \$9.3 million dollars to the Chicago Botanic Garden;

The budget proposes a net increase of 12 new full-time equivalent positions, including:

- Eight Resource Technician positions tasked to improve and maintain trails;
- Twenty-three part-time and seasonal personnel to support both existing swimming pools and the new Green Lake Pool Aquatic Center, scheduled to open Summer 2009;
- The removal of three unfilled supervisory positions in our Law Enforcement Department, replaced with three police officers who will be detailed exclusively to patrol our trails; and
- A reduction of 16 underutilized part-time positions in the 2008 appropriation.

President Stroger also noted in his address that the District will undertake several new initiatives in 2009. Chief among them were:

- District sponsorship of the newly formed Illinois High School Association's bass fishing sport tournaments;
- An unprecedented pilot program with the Illinois Department of Nature Resources' Conservation Police to assign a full-time Conservation Officer to the District's open space holdings; and
- The addition of comfort stations and picnic tables that accommodate those with physical disabilities with select locations.

“As stewards of vast open spaces, we must make decisions based on what is good for the ecology,” said Stroger. “Equally, as members of the human family we must consider the greater good when doing so. I believe this proposed budget accomplishes both of those goals.”

President Stroger's 2009 budget address and Executive Budget Recommendation are available for download at the District's website – www.soclose2u.org.

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