



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

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**Mayor Emanuel, Chicago Park District Cut Ribbon on Bike Park at Big Marsh in Chicago's Southeast Side**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Chicago Park District General Superintendent Michael P. Kelly, SRAM, Friends of Big Marsh, Ford Motor Company Fund, the Board of Chicago's Environmental Fund, Alderwoman Susan Sadlowski Garza (10th) and members of the Calumet community today celebrated the official opening of the 40-acre Bike Park at Big Marsh on the City's southeast side. The Bike Park at Big Marsh is a signature project under Mayor Emanuel's *Building on Burnham* plan, a comprehensive vision to invest in Chicago's parks and open spaces.

"Until now, no bike park like this existed in the Midwest; it is an asset for residents and an attraction for tourists," Mayor Emanuel said. "Today, we celebrate the transformation of what was an industrial site to a place where families and children from across Chicago can experience nature. The completion of Big Marsh is building on Burnham's vision for the City of Chicago and providing a recreational asset to the far South side."

Designed for all ages and skill levels, the bike park is built with features for BMX, mountain, and Cyclo-cross riders and includes single track trails, a pump park, dirt jump trails, gravity flow trails, and a bicycle skills area. The park will be free of charge for general riding, and will host organized Cyclo-cross races with a goal to host the U.S. Cyclo-Cross Championships in the next five years.

"As Chicago's last frontier only 30 minutes from downtown, this new park is the perfect destination for those looking to get connected with adventure and nature recreation," said Michael P. Kelly, Chicago Park District General Superintendent.

Habitat restoration at the remaining 238-acres at Big Marsh has been underway since 2014, and continues, in partnership with federal, state and local agencies. This new natural area offers passive recreation that includes bird watching and nature walking.

Since 2014, the Chicago Park District has planted 5,000 tree saplings and 20,000 native grasses and flowers. In 2015, the Park District started the removal of more than 135 acres of buckthorn and

herbaceous invasive plants. This year, the first prescribed burn was performed. Nature monitors have been tracking the return of native species to this reformed natural area.

In addition to the ribbon cutting, the design phase of the new Ford Calumet Environmental Center at Big Marsh was announced. The mission of the Center is to create a gateway and center point that knits together the Calumet region: serving local communities, drawing in regional visitors and celebrating the region's environmental, cultural and recreational assets.

"Ford is proud to be a part of the beautiful Big Marsh Park on Chicago's southeast side," said Tony Reinhart, government and community relations manager, Ford Motor Company. "This area has an industrial past and now it has a green future. We look forward to the soon-to-be-built Ford Calumet Environmental Center serving as a resource for not only our more than 6,100 Ford employees, but also our suppliers, dealers and other community stakeholders."

The Center will be funded by The Chicago Environmental Fund, originally from Ford Motor Company Fund, for \$5.5 million and is expected to open in 2018.

Big Marsh Park is a signature project in *Building on Burnham*, the Mayor's comprehensive plan to invest in the Lakefront, the Chicago River, natural areas and recreational opportunities in neighborhoods across the city. This plan follows the Mayor's successful expansion of Chicago's park system in his first mayoral term, which has already added 750 acres of new parkland, 256 new playgrounds and more than \$800 million in capital investment from neighborhoods and private sources.

Big Marsh Park was developed with community residents' input gathered at numerous public meetings and is part of the Millennium Reserve Initiative. Costs for the entire 278-acre park came to \$8.8 million, paid for by a combination of federal and state grants, Chicago Park District funding and private donations. Friends of Big Marsh, along with SRAM, REI and other private donors contributed \$2.2 million.

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For more information about the Chicago Park District's more than 8,100 acres of parkland, more than 590 parks, 26 miles of lakefront, nine museums, two world-class conservatories, 16 historic lagoons, nearly 50 nature areas, thousands of special events, sports and entertaining programs, please visit [www.chicagoparkdistrict.com](http://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com) or contact the Chicago Park District at 312/742.PLAY or 312/747.2001 (TTY). Want to share your talent? Volunteer in the parks by calling, 312/742.PLAY.

#### **About Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services**

Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services works with community and global partners to advance driving safety, education and community life. Ford Motor Company Fund has operated for more than 65 years with ongoing funding from Ford Motor Company. Ford Driving Skills for Life is free, interactive, hands-on safety training focused on skill development and driving techniques, while addressing inexperience, distractions and impaired driving. Innovation in education is encouraged through Ford Blue Oval Scholars, Ford Driving Dreams, Ford Next Generation Learning and other innovative programs that enhance high school learning and provide college scholarships and university grants. The Ford Volunteer Corps enlists more than 30,000 Ford employees and retirees each year to work on local projects that strengthen their communities and improve people's lives in more than 40 countries around the world. For more information, visit <http://community.ford.com>.