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MAYOR EMANUEL, CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT BREAK GROUND ON THE BIKE PARK AT BIG MARSH ON CHICAGO'S SOUTHEAST SIDE

New recreational asset will be first project to break ground under Mayor Emanuel's Building Burnham Plan

Mayor Rahm Emanuel joined Chicago Park District General Superintendent Michael P. Kelly and community members on the southeast side of Chicago today to break ground on the 40-acre Bike Park at Big Marsh, the first bike park of its kind in the Midwest. 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.

"No bike park like this exists in the Midwest; when complete, the park will be an asset for residents and an attraction for tourists," Mayor Emanuel said. "We are transforming what was an industrial site to a place where families and children from across Chicago can experience nature. Breaking ground on Big Marsh is building on Burnham's vision for the City of Chicago and providing a recreational asset to the far South side."

The Bike Park at Big Marsh will be part of a 270 acre eco-restoration and habitat restoration to be built on a former industrial property in Calumet. The Bike Park will be located primarily on existing slag fields where plants have a hard time growing and successful habitat creation is unlikely. It will accommodate bikers of all ages and skill levels, and is expected to be complete by winter of this year.

"Activities like birding, off-road biking and cross-country skiing were once thought impossible in a big city," said Parks Superintendent Kelly. "The investments we make in these natural areas will have a lasting impact on our city and communities for generations to come."

The 40-acre bike park is modeled after the highly successful Valmont Bike Park in Boulder, Colorado, which opened in 2011 and attracts hundreds of cyclists a day in the summer. The Bike Park at Big Marsh will include a single track bike trail, cycle-cross course, pump park, dirt jump trail, dual slalom course, gravity flow trail and a bicycle skills area. Big Marsh will also have a

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system of multi-use trails for walkers, runners, and birders and a communal plaza area where viewers can watch the bike action.

Ecological restoration is already underway at the park including the removal of invasive species, planting of native species, debris removal and water control. To date, the Chicago Park District has planted 5,000 tree saplings and 20,000 native grasses and flowers in the area.

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.

The Chicago Park District currently manages more than 65 protected natural areas, encompassing more than 1,400 acres. Building on Burnham will underscore the expansion of natural areas, setting a goal of 2,020 acres of protected natural areas in the City of Chicago by 2020.

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