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26 Northern Illinois Communities Awarded Environmental Grants from ComEd, Openlands

*Annual Green Region Program powers sustainability with more than \$200,000 in funding
for open-space projects*

CHICAGO – July 17, 2019 – To support habitats and other open-space projects throughout northern Illinois, ComEd and Openlands today announced grants to 26 public agencies through the annual ComEd Green Region Program. Grantees receive up to \$10,000 each to plan, acquire, and improve local parks, natural areas, and recreation resources. Some grants focus on enhancing pollinator habitats and protecting pollinator species, such as butterflies and bees.

“Together with our partners at Openlands, we are proud to support organizations that are making meaningful differences to restore and enhance natural habitats and biodiversity,” said Melissa Washington, Vice President of Governmental and External Affairs at ComEd. “It’s the perfect balance of meeting our future energy needs and powering a brighter and more sustainable future for our customers and the communities we serve.”

Since the inception of the Green Region Program in 2013, ComEd has awarded more than \$1.3 million to municipalities across northern Illinois to help fund their open-space projects. ComEd provides the funding, and Openlands, one of the oldest metropolitan conservation organizations in the nation, administers the grants to local communities.

“The ComEd Green Region Program is an important commitment to sustainability across northern Illinois and a commitment to providing residents with access to natural open spaces,” said Jerry Adelman, President and CEO of Openlands. “Over the last seven years, we’ve seen how the Green Region Program has helped communities enhance many parks and trails for learning, enjoyment, and supporting wildlife, and the support from ComEd has been vital. We extend our gratitude to ComEd, and we want to thank the many partners who have implemented these projects across the region.”

Due to a recent decline in pollinators throughout northern Illinois, and strong interest in pollinator conservation, the 2019 Green Region projects again focus on advancing and protecting the region’s essential pollinator species. Earlier this year, public agencies from across

communities that ComEd serves submitted grant applications, which were then reviewed by an advisory committee composed of county government officials and members of the region's conservation community.

Additional information on the ComEd Green Region Program can be found at [Openlands.org/GreenRegion](https://openlands.org/greenregion).

The 26 ComEd Green Region Program grant recipients for 2019 are:

Woods Creek Headwaters Pollinator Project (Village of Algonquin): This project will improve the ecological health of six acres of sedge meadow wetlands for the benefit of native pollinator species. It includes invasive phragmites removal, native sedge meadow interseeding, and public education.

Restoration Along the Fox River in Downtown Aurora (City of Aurora): This project will restore native flora along the Fox River, to create a buffer between the river and adjacent impervious pavements, especially public parking lots. The restored site will intercept surface runoff, thereby reducing pollutants flowing into the river, and provide a habitat for native species of birds and insect pollinators.

Lily Cache Beneficial Insect and Pollinator Habitat Restoration Project (Bolingbrook Park District): This project involves the development of six pods, ranging in size from one-quarter to two acres, to provide essential habitat for the life cycle completion of native beneficial insects and pollinators.

Pollinator Habitat Establishment at Sewell Conservation Area (Boone County Conservation District): This project will establish 17 acres of new habitat to benefit both pollinators and conservation area visitors for years to come. This agricultural conversion is part of a 200-acre conservation area that will become a high-quality wetland within the Kishwaukee River watershed in northern Illinois.

Glenbriar Park Phase II (Butterfield Park District): This project will complete the second and final phase of a park project entitled Glenbriar Park Expansion. This land has already been acquired and prepared for development, and the grant will support installation of a shelter, looped walking trails, and a pollinator garden.

Increasing Plant Biodiversity to Support Pollinators at West Pullman Park Natural Area (Chicago Park District): This project will improve the West Pullman Park Natural Area for people and wildlife through the installation of native woody and herbaceous plants to increase biodiversity and provide an abundance of food sources for pollinators. Interpretive signage will also be installed to explain the impacts of the improved habitat conditions.

Doerhoffer and Whitlock Park Detention Area Plantings (Downers Grove Park District): This project involves taking two currently mowed detention basins and converting them to native

vegetation. It includes initial herbicide applications and the installation of native seed, native plugs, and interpretive signage. The project eliminates mowing, and provides enhanced habitat, improved water quality, educational opportunities, and the opportunity for passive park uses.

Fox Valley Park District Pollinator Recovery Project (Fox Valley Park District): This project will expand pollinator habitat and food sources, while increasing regional native vegetation presence. The Stuart Sports Complex portion of the project will connect existing prairie by converting nearly 20 acres of turf grass into native wildflower-enriched prairie, which is crucial to the survival of pollinators.

Canoe Launch Access Road and Trail Improvements (City of Genoa): This project will provide a paved trail that connects Citizens Park to additional nature trails, native prairies, wetlands, and the DeKalb County Forest Preserve. The paved access road will also provide a better road surface for vehicles and pedestrians when accessing the canoe launch and adjacent amenities in Citizens Park.

Pollinators for Park Pointe (City of Harvard): This project will restore a portion of one of the city's parks to a natural and native pollinator park. This project is beneficial in helping to promote an educational outdoor experience for the community as a whole.

Healthy Hedges to Replace Buckthorn - Old Barrington Road (Village of Lake Barrington): This project will demonstrate an alternative to buckthorn and encourage residents to do the same on their private property. Buckthorn is linked to declining populations of songbirds and the disappearance of native ecosystems. Removing and replacing buckthorn with native trees, shrubs, grasses, and flowers provides habitat to support wildlife.

Restoration and Transformation: The Making of a Local Arboretum from a Forgotten Park (Village of Lake Zurich): This project will direct resources into nearly eight acres of vastly underutilized village park to rebrand the space as a conservation arboretum, with a focus on oak preservation, invasive species, and the importance of pollinators. The Village plans to work with community volunteers and non-profit organizations to rehabilitate an abandoned walking trail and remove invasive buckthorn and huckleberry. Pollinator vegetation, picnic tables, benches, and three interpretive-learning kiosk stations with individual play-pocket areas will be installed as part of the project. The Village will also install a new entry sign for Kuechmann Arboretum.

Northwest Illinois Aerial Combat Memorial (Village of Lena): This project will support improvements to a local military memorial park, including the addition of an F-4 Phantom jet on a pylon as the park's centerpiece. Other improvements will include brick walkways, trees, grass, bushes, benches, a flagpole, didactic placards, light standards, and a three-foot brick wall along the back.

Hastings Butterfly Path (Village of Lindenhurst): This project will enable public access to Lake County Forest Preserve District's Hastings Lake preserves via a connective trail to be bordered by native plants. This pathway will benefit both the community and pollinators by extending the forest preserve's green corridor.

Pollinator Habitat Garden at Terrace View Park (Lombard Park District): This project will transform an area of Terrace View Park into a pollinator habitat to educate visitors on the significance of Illinois native plants and the pollinators that inhabit them. Improvements include native plantings, an educational kiosk, and signage to empower visitors to partake in the conservation mission and vision.

Rock River Parks and Open Space Plan (Village of Machesney Park): This project will create a parks and open space plan for 63 acres along the Rock River in Machesney Park.

Kelly Park Accessible (ADA) Improvements (Village of Orland Hills): This project will provide access from the Kelly Park Walking Pathway to two new asphalt sectional pathways which continue to two paved gazebos/picnic shelters. Under each paved gazebo, new ADA-accessible picnic tables will be installed. The Kelly Park Accessible Improvements are designed to increase accessibility for all patrons to enjoy the park areas.

Ashcroft Lake Native Shoreline Restoration (Oswegoland Park District): This project will restore the exposed mud flats of a lowered lake water table, per village requirements. It will also re-establish emergent, water-level, and upland areas around the lake with native plugs and seed.

Village of Palos Park Pollinator Garden Project (Village of Palos Park): This project will convert part of Centennial Park into a pollinator garden, with emphasis on native plants that provide food and habitat for pollinators. An informational kiosk, benches, and water features will inform visitors of the garden's ecological importance and create a relaxing ambiance.

Maine Park Pollinator Garden (Park Ridge Park District): This project will revitalize the main entrance to Maine Park Leisure Center and Preschool. Improvements include the installation of a pollinator garden with two educational signs and themed hardscape and native plants selected to attract pollinators. The intent is to provide a habitat for pollinator species utilizing a balance of host plants, nectar plants, and shelter plants, increase awareness and interest in pollinator gardens, and provide an educational opportunity for students and patrons through signage and potential future programming.

Parkways for Pollinators (Village of River Forest - Sustainability Commission): This project will transform resident parkways into native plant oases which mitigate flooding through deep root natives. It will also provide habitats for butterflies, hummingbirds, and other pollinators, expand the village's Native Garden Corridor, involve families in fun planting activities, and educate residents about the benefits of natural garden and lawn care.

Village of Romeoville's Wetland Pollinator Initiative (Village of Romeoville Parks & Recreation Department): This project will convert degraded wetlands and stormwater management basins into diverse native plant communities. These areas will expand critical habitat and food sources for pollinators, while increasing regional native wetland presence.

Round Lake Invasive Plant Remediation and Native Plant Improvement Project (Village of Round Lake): This project will remove invasive species and repopulate the area with native plants to create educational opportunities, enhance public spaces, and increase pollinator habitats.

Clock Tower Park Expansion (Village of Schiller Park): This project expands Clock Tower Park, which is located in the heart of Schiller Park. The expansion includes a pollinator demonstration garden, rain garden, playground equipment, and enhanced landscaping. The project offers residents additional leisure opportunities.

Otter Creek Bend Wetland Habitat Restoration (St. Charles Park District): This project will create a prairie ecosystem on a slope overlooking the wetland, providing habitat for pollinators and other wildlife and greater public visibility of the wetland. It includes invasive species removal and native plant installation in portions of the 69-acre Otter Creek Bend Park.

Winfield Riverwalk-Wetland Restoration and Pollinator Conservation (Village of Winfield): This project will reform unused space into an enjoyable and accessible amenity in Winfield Township and includes a wetland/pollinator area. Located along the recently completed West Branch DuPage River Trail, the Riverwalk will be fully accessible and offer numerous amenities to all visitors and families, including educational opportunities and opportunities to enjoy the natural habitat.

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ComEd is a unit of Chicago-based Exelon Corporation (NYSE: EXC), a Fortune 100 energy company with approximately 10 million electricity and natural gas customers – the largest number of customers in the U.S. ComEd powers the lives of more than 4 million customers across northern Illinois, or 70 percent of the state's population. For more information visit ComEd.com and connect with the company on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

Founded in 1963, Openlands is one of the nation's oldest and most successful metropolitan conservation organizations, having helped secure, protect, and provide public access to more than 55,000 acres of land for parks, forest preserves, wildlife refuges, land and water greenway corridors, and urban gardens. For more information, please visit openlands.org.