

# FRANKLIN CREEK CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

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Strategic Plan  
2023-2028



*Take time for what's important!*



# Executive Summary

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Franklin Creek Conservation Association (FCCA) formerly Franklin Grove Creek & Preservation Committee began in 1981 as a group of community members that were dedicated to creating and improving the Franklin Creek State Natural Area [FCSNA] during the first five years, while the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) could not staff it. Later, the organization funded and built the Franklin Creek Grist Mill, ADA Mill Spring path and fishing pier, purchased land to incorporate into FCSNA, and created interpretive trails. In addition, FCCA continues to provide educational programs, leases and operates the Grist Mill, and has purchased and maintained its own properties to protect the watershed of Franklin Creek and to be a source of community recreation and revenue generation for the organization.

FCCA is more than a traditional “friends” group to FCSNA acting also as a land steward dedicated to preserving and maintaining the Franklin Creek area and educating people about its importance. FCCA will continue to focus on conservation, education, and engagement to fulfill our mission and connect people to the unique natural area of Franklin Creek. To fulfill the objectives outlined in this plan, FCCA will need to continuously build and nurture lasting relationships and partnerships with Franklin Creek stakeholders for the benefit of the watershed.

This update to the 2016 plan outlines a newly defined mission statement, major goals, and measurable objectives created as a result of the strategic planning sessions, interviews, and surveys with donors, partners, and volunteers. Moreover, it takes the future of the organization into consideration by outlining what is needed to make sure FCCA has the capacity to both persist and expand as an entity within the Franklin Creek watershed. To do so, FCCA will grow and foster our committees and subcommittees as well as establish new ones. FCCA will also update the organization's agreements with IDNR in relation to the FCSNA and the Franklin Creek Grist Mill for years to come.

# Mission Statement and Goals

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## Mission

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To promote, conserve, and appreciate the natural area of Franklin Creek through stewardship, education, partnerships, and community engagement.

## Goals

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**Goal 1: Conservation** – To restore, protect, and maintain the natural habitats and ecosystems encompassing Franklin Creek.

**Goal 2: Education** – To foster learning and develop interest about the natural environment of Franklin Creek through educational programs, interpretive resources, and events.

**Goal 3: Community Engagement** – To engage others in expanding awareness, use, and involvement with the natural and human communities of Franklin Creek.

*FCCA encourages the use of partnerships to support and accomplish these goals. Potential partners include the DNR, trail runners, equestrian groups, hikers, hunters, governmental entities, advocacy partners, conservation groups, educational partners, etc.*

# Goal 1: Conservation

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To restore, protect, and maintain the natural habitats and ecosystems encompassing Franklin Creek.

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## Stewardship

Restore and maintain natural areas within the FCCA preserve design plan.

Develop a robust committee to support the preserve design, management plan, and management schedule.

Establish and maintain public amenities on FCCA and FCSNA lands (trails, bridges, stairs, shelters, recreational areas, etc.)

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## Land Acquisition and Protection

Develop an FCCA preserve design, management plan, and management schedule in collaboration with DNR.

Acquire properties close to the Franklin Creek area for conservation following the FCCA preserve design.

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## Advocacy

Advocate for public policies that support conservation resources and awareness at the local, state, and federal levels.





# Goal 2: Education

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To foster learning and develop interest about the natural environment of Franklin Creek through educational programs, interpretive resources, and events.

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## Interpretive Activities

Develop a broad range of interpretive activities that encourage repeat visitors by creating a connection to Franklin Creek and its heritage through programs, events, and exhibits.

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## Research and Programming

Build and grow strong, on-going science-based research and programming including involvement of area schools and organizations supporting the following areas:

- ❖ Investigate and host programs around ecology, natural history, and living history.
- ❖ Develop curriculum to support state-based learning standards for at least one grade.
- ❖ Partner with organizations such as Nachusa Grasslands to attract more research interest in the unique attributes of FCCA and FCSNA.



# Goal 3: Community Engagement

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To engage others in expanding awareness, use, and involvement with the natural and human communities of Franklin Creek.

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## Amenities

Encourage the development and maintenance of amenities for the many user groups of the FCCA and FCSNA area (equestrian, runners, hikers, hunters, etc.)

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## Board Composition

Develop the FCCA board to encompass our various geographic regions, interest groups, sectors, expertise, demographics, etc. to best support the FCCA mission.

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## Marketing

Create a marketing plan to:

- ❖ Establish FCCA and FCSNA areas as destinations.
- ❖ Increase number and geographic diversity of individuals utilizing, volunteering, and donating to FCCA activities.
- ❖ Encourage community organizations and the public to host events at the site.
- ❖ Increase the utilization of the Mill.

