

HEGEWISCH MARSH RECEIVES GRANTS FOR RESTORATION

Tucked away on Chicago's Far Southeast Side among remnants of abandoned automobile factories, steel mills, and warehouses, Hegewisch Marsh remains one of few relics of a pre-industrial Chicago. And with over \$2.4 million secured through federal, state, and city grants, the marsh will stay that way.

As Lake Michigan's wetlands are on the brink of complete extinction, local, state, and federal officials decided to take action to revive Hegewisch Marsh, which not only plays a key hydrological role, filtering water for Lake Calumet and Lake Michigan, but also attracts migrating birds searching for food and a break from flying.

Yellow-headed blackbirds and black-crowned night herons, both members of the state's endangered species list, have already nested in the area, while whooping cranes and even a bald eagle have been sighted.

This restoration project has only become realized with the help of a wide range of contributors. Most publicly, the United States Fish and Wildlife Service gave the City of Chicago a \$750,000 grant from the National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grant Program, which strives to enhance the long-term conservation of coastal wetland ecosystems. The State Wildlife Grant Program, an Illinois state program funded by



Hegewisch Marsh in the Calumet area of Chicago

Congress, gave over \$1.4 million for the purpose of maintaining a habitat for endangered species. Also contributing were the City of Chicago, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Field Museum, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Plans for restoration include removing invasive plant and animal species as well as small-scale excavations to enlarge the marsh, which is currently about 100 acres. Also with the grant money, officials will try to jumpstart eco-tourism with a trail system for hiking, biking, and canoeing and a boardwalk with platforms for bird-watching. These attractions will complement the future Ford Calumet Environmental Center, which will focus on the environmental history of the area. Although it is impossible to reverse over a hundred years of industrial pollution, the restoration project looks to make a neglected swamp a little friendlier to both traveling birds and traveling humans.



Mayor Daley, with federal, state, and local officials, accepts the check from the US Fish and Wildlife Service