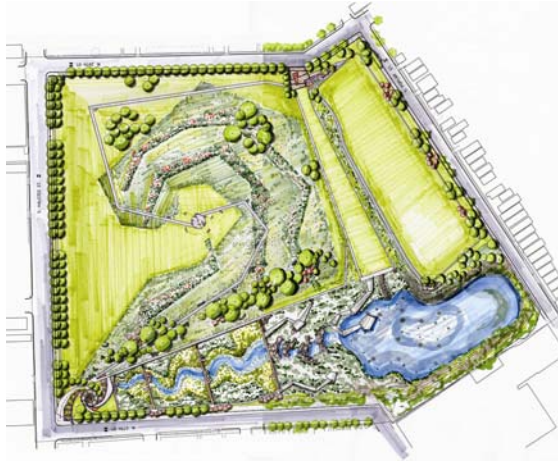


New Chicago birding spots in the works



Stearns Quarry Park – The architect's version



--Under construction April 2009

Stearns Quarry Park

Just in time for fall migration this year there should be a new 20-acre park featuring a dramatic nature area -- Stearns Quarry Park, 2700-2900 South Halsted, in the Bridgeport neighborhood. Parking along the north end of the park should be easy for early morning birders.

The site is no doubt familiar to long-time Chicagoans. Starting in the 1830s the quarry was mined for the limestone to build the new city. When the quarry closed the City of Chicago turned the site into a dump. In 2003 the Chicago Park District took over. Given the rarity of new park land in the heart of a major city, the development of this park has attracted attention nationwide. It's even included in a case study for students at MIT!

As the architectural drawing shows, the natural area dominates one end of the park. A path follows a series of wetlands down to a large pond (which will be stocked with fish). Underneath is a complex water management system to handle stormwater run-off and any residual toxins that may drain into the pond. Along one side is a quarry wall with fossils, highlighting and preserving the area's geological history.

Burnham Centennial Park

The next time you drive along South Lake Shore Drive take an extra look at the wide swath of plain turf that lines the road as it passes through Burnham Park. The Chicago Park District wants to convert the eastern stretch between 31st and 39th Streets into a 30-acre field of bird habitat, naming it in honor of the centennial of Daniel Burnham's Plan for Chicago.

The Park District is just in the initial planning stages however birders are needed to play critical roles in the development. Watch for announcements about public meetings but, in the meantime, if you can help with monitoring, in particular, contact Judy Pollock at Audubon Chicago Region—jpollock@audubon.org.

The future of the western side of South Lake Shore Drive is dependent upon the owners of the adjoining invasives farm (aka the railroad property). The Park District is actively encouraging them to eliminate their aggressive plants.

Lincoln Park - Diversey and Wellington Field

North of the Diversey golf driving range is a large turf field with poor drainage. Even in dry weather it is muddy. The Park District plans on using native plants to solve the problem, creating a savannah natural area in its place. This will add some beneficial bird habitat in an area of the park that is mostly turf grass.