



McHENRY COUNTY CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION

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McHenry County Conservation Foundation Funds Native Mussel Reintroduction Partnership

McHenry County Conservation Foundation contributed \$15,000 to a joint partnership project with McHenry County Conservation District and the DuPage County Forest Preserve District's Urban Stream Research Center (USRC) to propagate and head-start juvenile elktoe mussels. The project aims to increase the population of this State and Regional *Species of Greatest Conservation Need* in Nippersink Creek and its tributaries.

A healthy population of mussels are important to our waterways because they help filter out bacteria, algae, and other microorganisms in the stream or river they inhabit and lower overall water pollution levels. Just one adult mussel can filter up to 18 gallons of water a day. The presence of mussels in a stream are also indicators of overall stream health and water quality.

One female mussel will release thousands of larva, or glochidia, during propagation. The USRC currently has more than 4,000 juveniles in their facility specific to this project. Despite the large number, however, few mussels will survive to full maturity. The USRC will "head-start" those juvenile mussels that do survive for up to two years to ensure they are healthy and robust before they are released into Nippersink Creek. Given the right conditions, those that are released and survive will help filter the water for decades.

Freshwater mussels are the most endangered group of organisms in the United States. According to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, of the eighty mussel species native to Illinois, more than half are currently threatened, endangered, extirpated, or extinct. Sensitive to changes in their environments, populations have declined dramatically in recent decades due to pollution, siltation, competition from exotic species like zebra mussels, and grey infrastructure projects like dams that separate mussels from the host fish they depend on for survival.

The McHenry County Conservation Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that works to obtain grants and gifts in support of the work of the McHenry County Conservation District. To learn more about the McHenry County Conservation Foundation or the projects it supports, visit <http://www.mchenryconservation.org> or call (815) 338-6223.

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