

Grove on Kickapoo Creek to receive \$950,000 grant

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By **M.K. Guetersloh**

BLOOMINGTON — The city of Bloomington is getting a \$950,000 grant from state and federal environmental agencies for a project that will combine developing a housing subdivision with restoring the meandering flow of a section of Kickapoo Creek.

On Tuesday roughly 50 local developers, environmentalists, city officials and representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Illinois EPA visited the Grove on Kickapoo Creek subdivision for the grant presentation and a ceremonial tree planting.

“Instead of working in a way that doesn’t just mitigate the effect of the subdivision on the creek, they have found a way to enhance it,” said Angelo Capparella, a representative from the Friends of Kickapoo Creek and a biology professor from Illinois State University. “It really shows how important it is to open the channels of communication to all the stakeholders in a development.”



Farnsworth Group Senior Project Engineer Brandon Lott carries a rock to place on a stack of papers before the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency presents a grant check to The Grove developers at The Grove on Kickapoo Creek in Bloomington Tuesday afternoon (October 2, 2007). (Pantagraph/B Mosher)



Environmental Protection Agency Photographer Bob Wiatrolik, left, looks over his camera settings before taking Bloomington Mayor Steve Stockton's photo while a tank containing fishes of Kickapoo Creek is on display during the Grove on Kickapoo Creek Illinois EPA Grant presentation in Bloomington Tuesday afternoon (October 2, 2007). (Pantagraph/B Mosher)

The creek restoration project is part of the development east of Towanda Barnes

Road along Ireland Grove Road. The 450-acre subdivision is the city's largest and is planned for 900 houses.

The original plans for the subdivision called for a 60-acre lake, but after meeting with the Friends of Kickapoo Creek, developers saw restoring the creek was better idea, said Vic Armstrong, one of the developers of the Grove.

"We are so used to doing developments as we have done for years," Armstrong said. "But we started learning from the Friends of Kickapoo Creek on how subdivisions should be developed. After we started listening, we figured out a way we could do it."

Armstrong, Marshall Kaisner, Ron Rave, Don Franke, Larry Hundman and Bill and Kent Doud are partners in developing the subdivision.

The 88 acres used for the creek and adjacent wetlands will be turned over to Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department by the developers.

The value of the land will be used as the local match for the federal grant, so City Manager Tom Hamilton said there will be little cost to the city in helping to develop the area.

IEPA Director Doug Scott said the involvement in the project by so many organizations, including the IEPA, Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the city, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Friends of Kickapoo Creek is "extraordinary."

It is only the second stream restoration project in the state.

"I am hopeful that this grant will enhance Kickapoo Creek's natural beauty and benefit the entire ecosystem," Scott said.

The creek restoration project also is designated as one of 29 in a federal monitoring program, which should bring in more federal money and technical assistance, said Jon Scholl, agricultural policy counselor for the U.S. EPA.