

# Seavey Ditch and Lake Charles restoration project now is underway in Vernon Hills



Scrub trees and brush have been cleared in advance of the restoration of the Seavey drainage ditch from Hazeltine Drive to Lake Charles (in background) in Vernon Hills. (Mick Zawislak/mzawislak@dailyherald.com)





A sign at Lake Charles park in Vernon Hills outlines the Seavey Ditch and Lake Charles restoration project. (Mick Zawislak/mzawislak@dailyherald.com)

Piles of trees and scrub may look like a bad storm hit a portion of the Gregg's Landing neighborhood in Vernon Hills but it's actually prep work for the final phase of a stream restoration project.

Clearing brush and undesirable trees is the first stage of a \$2.87 million project to stabilize and restore about a half mile of the Seavey drainage ditch from Hazeltine Drive to Lake Charles.

"We've been seeing severe erosion along the channel, which is depositing sediment in Lake Charles," said Chris Venatta, the village's public works director.

"This is a well designed stormwater facility and the sediment is throwing that function off," he added.

The village has been working with the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission the past several years on a master plan to restore the channel, stream bank and shoreline and remove sediment at the delta where it flows into Lake Charles.

The bulk of the funding is from an Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity grant administered by the stormwater management commission. The village and Vernon Hills Park District are partners and will contribute \$287,000 and \$100,000 respectively.

Lake Charles is part of a regional stormwater network, Venatta said. The project is intended to improve water quality in the Seavey Ditch and the lake.

The Seavey drainage ditch originates in Mundelein, flows through Lake Charles into Indian Creek and onto the Des Plaines River. A portion of the restoration east of Hazeltine Drive was completed a few years ago.

Most of the vegetation is invasive buckthorn which restricts plant growth, Venatta said. With that gone, the stream banks will be graded with gentler slopes and the bottoms protected with stone to prevent future erosion.

Once restored, the stream banks will be seeded and planted with native vegetation with longer, deeper roots to hold soil in place.

Tree clearing for road and other projects in Illinois needs to be complete by March 30 to protect the potential habitat of the Northern Long Eared Bat, an endangered species. The timing resulted in a pause in the project pending permit approval but it will resume soon.

Trucks will remove excavated soil and deliver materials and the project is expected to generate noise and dust. Trucks routes generally will be limited to certain roads such as Huntington Drive, Gregg's Parkway and Butterfield Road, according to the village.

Erosion and sediment issues were identified in 2012 by a Lake County Health Department report and also in a Lake Charles water quality improvement study by consultant Christopher B. Burke Engineering Ltd., in 2019.

The village has been trying to inform the public about the pending project for about the last year and a half, Venatta said.