



## JAMES CAPPLEMAN ALDERMAN, 46TH WARD

### COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

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ZONING, LANDMARKS, AND BUILDING STANDARDS

March 22, 2021

Mike Kelly  
Patrick Levar,  
Cathy Breitenbach  
Matthew Freer

Hello everyone,

I'm writing today to share my support of the requested 1.5-acre habitat addition as part of the Montrose Beach Dunes Natural Area. The proposed habitat addition would extend from the western edge of the flooded area where Monty and Rose feed, south to the stone wall at the sidewalk. It is basically a continuation of the existing western habitat protection fence south to the rock wall. The area encompasses the habitat used during the most critical phases of breeding, brooding, and rearing of the Piping Plover chicks. Additionally, the habitat expansion would protect a colony of more than 150 Bank Swallow nests. Bank Swallows are described by the nonprofit Partners in Flight as "a Common Bird in Steep Decline." Many other shorebirds and passerine species also utilize this area as a stopover during migration.

Montrose Beach Dunes has been affected the past few years by rising Lake Michigan water levels, erosion, and climate change, as the site's size has reduced from 14 to 9 acres. Lake Michigan has swallowed up almost a third of the globally-imperiled panne habitat with a concomitant effect on the state- and federally listed plant species and on migratory and nesting birds.

Adding more protected habitat would be an important benefit to Monty and Rose, as well as the other nesting and migratory birds that use the internationally acclaimed Montrose natural areas. More habitat would also be a meaningful and significant contribution to the preservation of Illinois' natural heritage and the suite of state- and federally-listed plant and animal species that occur at Montrose Beach Dunes (28 plant species, 18 bird species). When Piping Plovers are not nesting and raising their young, the new habitat addition would be open to the public, just as the entire habitat is always open to the public outside of this period.

Active recreational activities such as volleyball can be undertaken in many parts of the Montrose Recreational Area. Piping Plovers seeking to breed do not have that luxury. In this era of climate change, historically high lake levels, and disappearing beaches, it makes sense to prioritize an endangered bird species, especially one that has demonstrated repeated yearly success at Montrose Beach Dunes.

State and federal partners (Illinois Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Illinois Natural History Survey) have been encouraged by the tremendous positive support the Chicago Park District has offered over the past two years to ensure the Piping Plovers' breeding success.

People from the 46th ward and across Chicago have connected with these birds, particularly during the pandemic. They are true survivors in a time when we are simply trying to survive COVID 19. It's my hope you will grant this request so that Monty and Rose will be welcomed back this spring with open arms.

Sincerely,