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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Head of McHenry County Conservation District
Elected Vice Chair of Regional Conservation Alliance**

Chicago, IL—The Chicago Wilderness alliance announced today that **Elizabeth S. Kessler, Executive Director of the McHenry County Conservation District**, has been elected as its new Vice Chair. Chicago Wilderness is a regional alliance of more than 300 organizations working to protect land, water and wildlife in our region.

In her role as Vice Chair, Kessler will work with conservation, government and corporate leaders to develop and guide regional conservation initiatives. She has been active in the Chicago Wilderness alliance since 2006, when she began serving on the Chicago Wilderness Executive Council, which guides the collaborative work of alliance members. Arnold Randall, Superintendent of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, currently serves as the Chair of Chicago Wilderness.

“I am so pleased to have this opportunity,” said Kessler. “I look forward to working with Chicago Wilderness leaders to expand our work in restoring health to the natural areas in our region—the woodlands, prairies, wetlands, rivers and lakes—and providing more opportunities for people to enjoy them.”

“We are thrilled that Ms. Kessler has agreed to serve as the Vice Chair of our alliance,” said Melinda Pruettt-Jones, Executive Director of Chicago Wilderness. “She brings tremendous knowledge and expertise to the role and has already made significant contributions to regional conservation through her work with the Conservation District and within Chicago Wilderness.”

Kessler led the development of the Chicago Wilderness Excellence in Ecological Restoration accreditation program, launched earlier this year. The program recognizes natural areas and the agencies that manage them in an exemplary manner to promote habitat health and conserve native species.

In her role with the McHenry County Conservation District, Kessler is responsible for managing, preserving and protecting more than 25,000 acres of open space in McHenry County, IL. Prior to this she was the Superintendent of Recreation for the Skokie Park District; President of the National Recreation and Park Association; Chairman of the Illinois Park and Recreation Association; and is currently a member of the American Academy for

Park & Recreation Administrators and Ex-Officio Director of the McHenry County Conservation Foundation. Kessler holds an MBA with distinction from the Keller Graduate School of Management and is a certified park and recreation professional.

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Chicago Wilderness

Chicago Wilderness is a regional alliance that connects people and nature. We are more than 300 organizations working together to restore local nature and improve the quality of life for all who live here, by protecting the lands and waters on which we all depend. The four key initiatives of Chicago Wilderness—to restore the health of local nature, promote green infrastructure, mitigate climate change, and to leave no child inside—reflect our commitment to using science and emerging knowledge, as well as a collaborative approach to conservation, to benefit all the region’s residents. For more information, visit www.chicagowilderness.org.