

Pere Marquette Welcomes New Natural Resource Coordinator

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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GRAFTON - Pere Marquette State Park has renewed their outreach efforts with the help of Lev Smolianski, the new natural resource coordinator.

Smolianski explained that there are several programs in the works for anyone who is interested in learning about Pere Marquette and the ecosystem it supports. Whether he

teaches at schools or at the park, he loves watching people become more passionate about the environment as they learn about it.

“When you bring these kinds of programs and lessons to folks, people become connected to their land. It changes the way they view the world,” Smolianski said. “I believe through this kind of work, people become better stewards of their environment. My ultimate goal is to create an ideal of conservation in the folks that I interact with, to preserve for future generations and to create sustainable, long term management of our natural resources.”

To do this, Smolianski is upping Pere Marquette’s programming and amplifying his outreach efforts. He offers tours at Pere Marquette and presentations at schools across the Greater St. Louis area. This allows him to highlight the ecosystem at the park while educating groups about the environment more broadly.

“We’re talking about native plants, we’re talking about native mammals, we’re talking about various aspects of Illinois natural resources and natural history through the lens of Pere Marquette State Park,” Smolianski explained. “Pere Marquette is a very geologically, historically and ecologically interesting place. It’s very dynamic and a cool ecosystem, and I’ve really enjoyed my time there thus far.”

While he enjoys helping people engage with nature in this way, he also loves watching them “nerd out” as they become more comfortable identifying plants and animals. It’s always fun to see people become more invested in the world around them.

“I’m a huge nerd, and so when other people nerd out, it gives me a lot of joy,” he added. “Most people are outside and they see trees. But having people being able to distinguish types of trees and get super excited when they know the difference and get super excited when they recognize stuff, it’s wholesome and rewarding.”

For more information about Pere Marquette State Park, visit [their official website](#).