

Natural Resource Advisory Group
2.18.2025 Minutes
3:15 pm. City Hall Conference Room

Present: Mary Gegen, Betsy Knowles, Marge Loch-Wouters, Jason Ludwigson, Cindy Wright, Randy Urich

Guest: Steve Hoff

- I. Approved Minutes from 12_04_2024.
- II. Old Business
 - A. Stoney Point Forestry Habitat Restoration Project Updates. The mowing has been completed, although additional stumps need to be cut. The current plan is to burn the two timber piles. In the spring there will be spraying of buckthorn and honeysuckle that resprout, and an evaluation of the need for a cover crop. Tree planting will take place in 2026.
 - i. Consider marking trails if needed to keep the public on trail and not traversing mowed areas.
 - ii. Update the city web page to explain next steps to public and encourage staying on trails
 - iii. Need to ask the contractor to put up signs when spraying.
 - B. 2024 Year in Review - See attached. This can be passed on to the Parks Commission and City Council.
 - C. Wagon Wheel sign - No updates.
 - D. SHIP grant park entrance signs. This grant was received for updating signs with the new city logo. Draft designs have been received, but there is no decision yet on design or sign materials.
 - E. Tree Ordinance. This will be on the March 24 Council agenda. The action will be to rescind the old ordinance and adopt the new one.
 - F. Trail Maintenance Guidelines. This updated version was approved and is attached. Jason will follow-up if needed.
 - G. Wagon Wheel Buckthorn Removal. Buckthorn removal along Wagon Wheel trail has been completed. In the spring it will be evaluated for resprouting.

III. New Business

- A. Garlic Mustard Pulling. Plan is to set April dates for pulling. Marge will work to get the information posted on the City Facebook page. In addition we have email contacts of past volunteers, and a team of volunteers from Houston County DFL have indicated their interest. The effort will focus on garlic mustard in Vetsch, and the city will provide bags for disposal. The Facebook post could also explain proper disposal methods for homeowners pulling garlic mustard.
- B. Boulevard Tree Application. Mary provided copies of the boulevard tree application, which she has begun distributing in town. The city has received applications as a result.
- C. CPL Blufflands Grant Application. Jason has written another application to hire a contractor to cut and treat buckthorn, honeysuckle, and round leaf bitterweet. This could be used to cut and treat invasives in Eagle Bluff and Vetsch/Stoney.
- D. CPL Grant Application Phase 2 Forestry Habitat restoration Project. A second area of mowing would be the target on this application, specifically to the east of Stoney Point Road and south of the well house.
- E. Additional grant opportunity. Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) grant for conservation and preservation of resources. Randy suggested considering if the culverts on the Wagon Wheel Trail are adequately sized.
- F. Informational items.
 - i. Jason and Mary attended a workshop on climate ready woodland at Wabasha Forestry Day. They received a list of trees for the region to mitigate climate changes.
 - ii. Discussed the Outstanding Sustainable Citizen nomination form to highlight efforts within the city.
 - iii. Reviewed the final "Prairies Matter" handout which Mary completed.
 - iv. The gravel bike race is scheduled for the 3rd weekend of September
 - v. Randy noted that some fill has been pushed into the wetland at the bend of the road to the dump. Discussed how to address.

IV. Next Meeting Wednesday April 2 3:15 pm, City Hall Conference Room

Respectfully submitted, Betsy Knowles

Trail Maintenance Guidelines - La Crescent Woodland Parks

Updated 10/14/24

Defining Trail Maintenance: “Trail Maintenance” includes the following activities:

1. Clearing fallen trees off trails
2. Maintaining trail width (addressing encroachment) and improving sight lines
3. Mitigating erosion
4. Controlling Invasive species
5. Maintaining overlooks and goat/dry prairies
6. Developing and maintaining signage

Responsibility, Process, Timeline and Guidelines by Task

1) Clearing fallen trees off trails:

City maintenance crew.

Process: Anyone can report a downed tree/dangerously leaning tree impacting trail use in bluffland parks directly to city administrator Bill Waller (preferably with GPS location or map). Call 507 895-4668 or email him at bwaller@cityoflacrescent-mn.gov to report blocked trails.

Timeline: Work is on-going, however a walk-through to identify hazardous trees is recommended in July.

2) Maintaining trail width and improving sight lines:

City led volunteers, NRAG

Process: Needs are identified by NRAG members based on bi-weekly evaluation of conditions from March - November, as well as citizen concerns. NRAG will guide maintenance in a way that preserves the resource for all users, and in accordance with the Parks Plan. Trail work will be done by crews of volunteers under the supervision of city staff. All volunteers must have a waiver on file with the City, completed annually.

Trail Maintenance Guidelines - La Crescent Woodland Parks, p. 2

Timeline: Weed-whipping and trimming to address encroachment is ideally completed mid July. A fall evaluation of persistent brush is completed before the snow flies.

Guidelines: The trail tread path is 18 inches, but weed whipping can clear vegetation for up to approximately 2 feet on either side of the tread path. This also guides the width for trimming overhanging brush. A height clearance of approximately 9 feet should be maintained.

3) Mitigating erosion:

City led volunteers, NRAG

Process: Needs are identified by NRAG members

Timeline: As needed

4) Controlling Invasive Species:

City led volunteers, NRAG

Process: Needs are identified by NRAG members and City

Timeline: Garlic mustard removal occurs in April and early May. Buckthorn removal occurs in November - February

5) Maintaining overlooks and goat prairies

City led volunteers, NRAG

Process: Projects are identified by NRAG which are reflective of the Group's Council approved work plan.

6) Developing and maintaining signage

City and NRAG

Natural Resources Advisory Group 2024 Summary of Activity

The following includes highlights of NRAG activity in 2024:

The proposed revision of the tree ordinance was reviewed at multiple meetings, and input regarding language clarity and species recommendations was provided.

Regular updates on relevant grants were reviewed.

The La Crescent Park Habitat Plan prepared by Val Green (DNR) was reviewed, and considered as the justification for the forestry mowing project.

Received an overview of chloride and sodium levels in local waterways, provided by Jeremy King (WDNR).

Provided input on signage for the Wagon Wheel trail, and near the Blue Lake canoe/kayak access dock.

Organized and advertised 5 days of volunteer efforts to pull garlic mustard in Vetsch Park.

Provided input on efforts to help the public understand forestry mowing in Stoney point - including language and frequently asked questions, being present at the City Council meeting, and participating in outreach at the farmers market.

Maintained the Frank J. Kistler memorial park pollinator gardens.

Revised and updated trail maintenance guidelines and developed plans for future trail maintenance work. This included a walk-through work day with City employees.

Received and considered regular updates on invasive species removal, prairie seeding, grant opportunities, etc.

Hours of Logged Activity by NRAG members and community members, 2024

Activity	NRAG Hours	Community Member Hours
Garlic Mustard pulling (5 days)	12	16.5
Frank J. Kistler Pollinator Gardens	36	3.5
Prairie Seeding*	8	.5
Invasives - Eagle Bluff*	6	39
Invasives - Vetsch/Stoney* (buckthorn and wild carrot)	4	
Invasives - Wagon Wheel Trail*	2.5	7.5
Trail Maintenance - Eagle Bluff*	3	25
Trail Maintenance - Vetsch/Stoney*, (including signage)	10	2
Outreach - Farmers Market*	3	

*City employees participated

Additional activities beyond meeting:

Close reading of and commenting on ordinances/publications/information

Coordination with Val Green, DNR