

Sustainability and Natural Resources Committee

02.26.2026 Minutes

3:15 p.m. City Hall Conference Room

Present: Betsy Knowles, Chris Langen, Marge Loch-Wolters, Jason Ludwigson, Ruth Nissen

- I. Minutes from 01-14-2026 approved
- II. Old Business
 - A. Combined committee planning in 2026. The Green Step Committee and Natural Resources Advisory Group are now combined into the Sustainability and Natural Resources Committee. Confirmed current membership and discussed the possible need to adjust meeting times.
 - B. La Crescent Tree Steward Training May 2nd 2026. There is no cost to participate and individuals can sign-up at [MNTS X1001 MN Tree Steward Training | University of Minnesota](#)
 - C. 2026 MnDOT Landscape Partnership Project. Location(s) are still under consideration. Screening for Truss Specialists property and the addition of prairie on the slope across from Du be Kind are possible. The project could provide up to \$8000 for plants/trees.
 - D. 2026 proposed prairie establishment projects. Proposed areas are: Steep section of S 2nd street, the city out lot south of Apple City Smoke Shop, and Larch Ave well house area, and the corner by N 1st and Stoney Point Road.
 - E. Trail in Vetsch Park on the north end. A portion of single-track trail on the north end of Vetsch was rerouted by the city off of private property in 2025. There have been attempts by trail users to return the route to the previous trail. The rerouted trail needs to be revisited to foster use of only public property.
 - F. Project and grant updates
 1. Solar on Public Buildings Grant. This was awarded and solar installed on the pool building in August 2025. Considering project sign proposals, and a battery system to store excess energy.
 2. Solar on Public Buildings Grant. Solar will be installed on Wieser Park Pavilion. It will be the first Net Zero La Crescent City building.
 3. Solar on Public Buildings Grant. Solar will be installed on Stoney Point Wellhouse. Working with Clearway Solar to amend community solar subscription allocations.

4. Outdoor Recreation Grant. This grant provides funds at Wieser Park to construct a walking path and poured-in-place playground equipment, pickleball courts, and a zip line. Existing equipment will be replaced in 2026. Concrete work is out for bid.
5. EV chargers. Working with MPCA and ZEF energy, the grant partially funds 4 plugs to be installed February 2026 on South 1st St. across from the Fire Department. La Crescent is along the corridor designated for chargers.
6. Carbon Reduction Program. Funds will purchase a police cruiser and fleet vehicle, while 2027-2029 funds will be used for LED Lighting on Walnut Street, and 2029-2030 funds for Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) at Redwood Street East and South 11th mid-block crossing
7. Eagles Bluff Park Prairie Dry Bluff Prairie Signs. Signs are completed and ready for installation after thaw..
8. Shared bike station. Drift Cycle, Inc partnering with the city and Bike Shop will establish a shared bike station near the bike/ped bridge. There is an opportunity for advertising sponsors.

G. CPL Grant Projects

1. Stoney Point Phase I. The initial area will be sprayed one more time in Spring 2026, and then trees planted in Fall 2026. The fall planting will use potted trees, and then seedlings will be planted in spring 2027. Need to redesign trail(s) in this area.
2. Stoney Point Phase II. This is for the area south of and below Stoney Point Road toward 7th St. Approximately 7 acres will be mowed. Neighbors have been notified. The forestry mowing has started and dead ash has been cut. Need to discuss whether to reforest this area.
3. Blufflands CPL grant. This is the grant for cutting and treating invasive species. A quote has been received and the cutting will cover Stoney and Vetsch.
4. Pine Creek Stream Restoration. The walk-through was completed. Brush has been burned. Tree planting will occur here in the spring for Arbor Day planting if the area is dry enough. Trees included are swamp white oaks, lindens and chinquepin oaks.

H. La Crescent Sustainability and Resilience Plan Team. A public outreach meeting was held January 13 and draft action plans were presented. The planning team has two more meetings over the next two months. Community Meeting for the draft will be on May 19.

III. New Business

- A. Bluebird houses. The school Conservation Crew led by Travis Lehrke (6th grade teacher) is building blue bird houses to install on city property.
- B. Active Transportation Action Plan Update/Review. The draft is posted on the city website and is open to public comments/feedback.
- C. Additional discussion items- future needs
 1. Water bars on a heavily eroded trail in Vetsch. This is on the public works list.
 2. Spring weeding of the boulevard islands by the highway. This could be a volunteer activity.
 3. Thinning and pruning of existing remnant orchard in Vetsch Park. Vision for this area is discussed. This includes preserving the existing trees and replacing dead trees. Jason will meet with someone from Extension about this orchard.
 4. Discussed selectively opening areas around small oak trees. This project needs a field trip to look at areas being considered.
 5. Spring clean up Kistler Park and Veterans Park native plantings. Burn decision on Kistler will be made based on ability to remove landscape fabric. Need to try to reduce the switch grass in Veterans Park .
 6. Winter work day cut and treat Black Locust Red Apple trail entrance Eagles Bluff Park is under consideration
- D. MN Green steps water challenge. Review community outreach actions, regulatory actions, infrastructure actions @ [Impact 26: Water Challenge!](#) One idea is to do a mailing of a postcard about storm drain adoption and WinLaC will fund a postcard mailing.
- E. 2023 and 2025 ReLeaf Grants/Applications. 2025 ReLeaf Grant Application was not selected for funding. The state had \$7,248,200 to award, and received requests for \$23,427,299.31 in funds.
- F. 2026 City Tree Plantings and Boulevard Tree Program. The city will have 89 boulevard trees for this program including 19 Chinquapin Oak. Boulevard Tree Applications will open the first week of March. There will be priority for S 6th St requests.
- H. An ecological monitoring site has been established by the MN DNR to monitor long term vegetation changes in the flood plain on Shore Acres.
- I. Organics recycling grants. There is some exploration of MPCA grants to fund a site in collaboration with Houston County.

J. Blazing Star Award application. The Conservation League of Minnesota runs this award to acknowledge conservation efforts. Due to other projects, this may not be pursued.

K. Eden Prairie Sustainability in Action Series. Considered this outreach about sustainability efforts.

L. Fruit Acres, Inc. option agreement to purchase 40 acres. The intent of seller is to keep this area as a public park and it is adjacent to North End Park. Discussed ideas for naming. City has received dollars toward purchase and has sought a grant from the DNR.

M. Other informational items.

1. Annual spring thaw signs need to go up.
2. There are plans for another Green Corp application in 2026-2027
3. Webinar series on birds:
<https://extension.umn.edu/event/wildlife-webinar-series-all-about-birds-your-land-bird-habitat>
4. MN master naturalist programs are posted

N. Other items of business. Summary of 2025 Natural Resources Advisory Group Activities are attached.

IV. Next meeting: A survey of availability will be sent to committee members

Natural Resources Advisory Group 2025 Summary of Activity

The following includes highlights of NRAG activity in 2025:

Provided input on the Stoney Point Forestry Habitat Restoration Project, particularly community outreach and trail needs.

Participated in buckthorn removal on Wagon Wheel Trail and Eagle Bluff.

Updated the Trail Maintenance Guidelines to reflect practices. NRAG members periodically evaluated park trails and reported downed trees, and assisted in trail clean-up. Provided input regarding water bars to address erosion on the wide trail on the south side of Vetsch.

Organized and advertised 2 days of volunteer efforts to pull garlic mustard in Vetsch Park.

Participated in removal of Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*) from Vetsch park prairies.

Provided input on Phase 2 of the Forestry Habitat Restoration Project and the Blufflands Grant Application.

Reviewed Boulevard tree applications.

Maintained the Frank J. Kistler memorial park pollinator gardens - weeding, mulching, and removing landscape fabric. Members hosted pollinator garden sites for the Parade of Gardens.

Reviewed the tree species list included in the new Tree Ordinance.

Discussed planned use and future management issues with the trail extension from S 7th St to Stoney Point Road.

Followed progress of Pine Creek Restoration project.

Hours of Logged Activity by NRAG members and community members, 2025

Activity	NRAG Hours	Community Member Hours
Garlic Mustard pulling (2 days) *	5	5
Frank J. Kistler Pollinator Gardens * (fabric removal, weeding, mulching, transplanting)	41	6.5
Invasives - Eagle Bluff* (buckthorn, round leaf bittersweet)	2	2
Invasives - Vetsch* (wild carrot)	3	4.5
Invasives - Wagon Wheel Trail*	2	2
Trail Maintenance - Eagle Bluff*	5	20.5
Trail Maintenance - Vetsch/Stoney*	1.5	

*City employees participated

In addition - 26.5 volunteer hours were logged by Tree Stewards in 2025.