

TO: Park & Recreation Commission Members  
FROM: Bill Waller, City Administrator  
Chris Fortsch, Administrative Assistant  
Jon Steffes, Summer Recreation Director

DATE: March 13, 2024

RE: Meeting Notice

Monday, March 18, 2024

5:30 p.m., Wieser Park Pavilion at Wieser Park  
1817 County Road #6, La Crescent

#### AGENDA

1. Consideration of meeting minutes – February 5, 2024.
2. Val Green, DNR Forestry will be in attendance at the meeting to review the Habitat Plan that was recently completed for the Stoney Point/Vetsch/Vollenwieder property. A copy of the Plan is included.
3. Review Eagles Bluff Park map – Map the Experience.
4. Review upcoming 2024 summer recreation season/activities/programming, and the increase in pay for lifeguards at the Aquatic Center.
5. Update on the Blue Lake Canoe/Kayak access and the Dog Park project. Memos on each of these projects are included.
6. Review 2023 summary of activity for the Natural Resource Advisory Group.
7. Information is included on improvements at the Apple Blossom Overlook Park, a Winona County Project.
8. The City will be submitting an Outdoor Recreation Grant to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for improvements at Wieser Park. The grant will include new playground equipment and 3 additional pickleball courts. Information on the playground equipment is included.
9. Review of the draft of the Root River Trail Extension Plan, a copy of which is included.
10. Update on the Area Transportation Partnership application and the Technical Assistance Funding the City has received from MnDOT. Information is included.
11. Update on \$500,000 grant that the City received from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for stream improvements at Pine Creek. Information is included.
12. The suggested date for the next Park & Recreation Commission meeting is Monday, May 20, 2024. The meeting will be held at the Wieser Park Pavilion.
13. Additional discussion items.
14. Adjournment.

Please call either Chris or Bill at 895-2595, or e-mail us at [cfortsch@cityoflacscent-mn.gov](mailto:cfortsch@cityoflacscent-mn.gov) or [bwaller@cityoflacscent-mn.gov](mailto:bwaller@cityoflacscent-mn.gov), if you will not be able to attend, have questions, or need more information. Thank you.

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members  
Park and Recreation Commission Members  
FROM: Bill Waller, City Administrator  
DATE: February 7, 2024  
RE: Meeting Minutes  
February 5, 2024

The La Crescent Park and Recreation Commission met at 5:30 p.m., on Monday, February 5, 2024, in the Wieser Park Pavilion at Wieser Park. The following members were present: Jon Steffes, Paul McLellan, Maseray Bangura, Patti Martell, Marge Loch-Wouters, Diana Adamski and Sarah Wetterlin. Also in attendance were Teresa O'Donnell-Ebner, Chris Fortsch, Tyler Benish, and Bill Waller.

1. It was the consensus of the Commission to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2023 Park and Recreation Commission meeting as presented.
2. The Commission discussed the proposed dog park project, and reviewed the draft of a site plan for a dog park located adjacent to Chestnut Street. Discussion followed from members of the Commission, and input and comments were received from individuals that attended the meeting. Representatives from the DeLacy Family Foundation were in attendance at the meeting, and asked several questions regarding the Chestnut Street plan and the earlier plan located adjacent to Stoney Point Road. Foundation representatives indicated that if the City selects the Chestnut Street location as the site for the dog park, the Foundation would need to re-evaluate the Foundation's financial commitment to the project. Following further discussion, it was the consensus of the Commission to recommend to the City Council that the dog park be located at the Chestnut Street site.
3. An update was provided on the 2024 summer recreation season. The Commission was informed that due to the availability of lifeguards, the school parties that are normally held when the aquatic center opens may need to be cancelled, and that the opening of the aquatic center may also be pushed back by a few days. The availability of lifeguards will also prohibit evening swim lessons, and will require that the aquatic center close at 5:00pm on weekends. The Commission discussed the hourly rate of pay for lifeguards, and is recommending that the City increase the rate of pay for lifeguards and reimburse lifeguards at the end of the season for the costs associated with obtaining and maintaining their certification as a lifeguard.
4. The next Park & Recreation Commission meeting will be March 18, 2024. The meeting will be held at the Wieser Park Pavilion.
5. There being nothing further to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:43 pm.

LaCrescent Park (Stoney Point/ Vetsch/ Vollenwieder) Habitat Plan 12-2023; V. Green  
DNR Forestry

Approximately 109 acres

The majority of the "natural" woodland would be classified as a Central Hardwoods forest type.

This type is actually hodge-podge containing most of the native hardwoods in this region. The area has seen repeated harvests and is comprised of these species (not in order of importance) including Basswood (*Tilia americana*), Sugar (hard) Maple (*Acer sacharum*), Green Ash (*Fraxinus Americana*) (dead from Emerald Ash Borer), Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*), American elm (*Ulmus Americana*), Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*), White Oak (*Quercus alba*), Pin Oak (*Quercus palustris*), Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*), Shagbark Hickory (*Carya ovata*), Bitternut Hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), Red Elm occasionally (*Ulmus rubra*), pockets of aspen (both Quaking and Bigtooth Aspen (*Populus tremuloides* and *Populus Grandidentata*), Boxelder (*Acer negundo*), Paper Birch (*Betula papyrifera*), Ironwood (*Ostrya virginiana*), scattered Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*) and even a few Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*). Some of the small oaks are actually quite old but stunted. Age and size are not always related.

All size classes from seedling to mature sawlog are represented. However, there is a noticeable and predictable lack of oak seedlings because they need full sunlight to survive.

The elm component of larger trees died out when Dutch Elm Disease (DED) came through many years ago. It is caused by a member of the sac fungi (*Ascomycota*) affecting only elm trees, and is spread by the elm bark beetle. Although believed to be originally native to Asia, the disease was accidentally introduced into America and Europe, where it has devastated native populations of elms that did not have resistance to the disease. We still get elm regeneration and have some elm even reach sawlog size (> 12" dbh), but when the trees get large enough and we have wetter years, the disease proliferates again. However, since dead elm is the best place to find morel and oyster mushrooms, keeping an elm component is desirable.

Some scattered Siberian Elm (*Ulmus pumila*) exists. This is a non-native and can be considered invasive. Many of the large ones are dying.

Nearly all Butternut have been decimated by Butternut Canker, another imported disease similar to DED. Butternut canker disease affects only Butternut trees and occurs when the *S. clavigignenti-juglandacearum* fungus enters the tree and causes cankers to form on the trunk, branches, or exposed roots. Canker development on the trunk usually girdles the tree, leading to canopy dieback and eventual tree mortality. There are some Butternut trees in the park that seem to be overcoming the disease. It is likely they are hybrids; confirmation of that is difficult. Hybrid crossing is usually with Japanese Walnut; the resulting tree called "buarts" or buart-nut (*Juglans. ×bixbyi*). The mast value of the nuts is present whether they are hybrids or not. The wood is very similar too.



The ash component has died from Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) so ash will not be a viable component in the foreseeable future.

This woods contains an unusual amount of Black Cherry. While Black Cherry is a beautiful wood, SE MN is north of its natural range for best form/growth, but some of these are surprisingly large and straight. Cherry commonly has growths called burls caused by a fungus called black knot of cherry.

Main shrub species include Red Osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*), Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*), several species of Viburnums (*Viburnum spp*), Nannyberry (*Viburnum lentago*), Highbush Cranberry (*Viburnum trilobum*) Prickly-ash (*Zanthoxylum americanum*) and Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*) (especially on the ridge). There are others too; identification in the dormant season can be hard.

The understory contains an unusually large amount of Highbush Cranberry which is great because not only does it have flowers for pollinators but berries for birds and small mammals as well. However most, if not all, is actually a non-native cranberry (*Viburnum opulus* var. *opulus*) as confirmed by TJ Boettcher).

Sugar Maple and Basswood, are the most shade-tolerant tree species meaning they can regenerate and grow in shaded conditions. A central hardwood forest is fully on its way to the climax type (i.e. shade tolerant and self-perpetuating) in the process of natural succession.

There is some evidence of past harvesting (that is true everywhere around the area) approximately 35-40 years ago judging from the stumps' condition. Most often harvesting was take-the-best-leave-the-rest ( aka high-grading) so the remaining forest becomes dominated by poorer individuals and less desirable species such as elm and Boxelder.

Invasive exotics include Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tatarica*, *L. morrowii*, *L. x bella*, *L. maackii*), Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*) and Oriental Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*) and Siberian Elm (*Ulmus pumila*). Buckthorn and Honeysuckle are the most numerous. The bittersweet is concerning because it is actually pulling down trees on the south end of the park.

[See attachments on each species.](#)

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) is not woody so requires a different and multi-pronged approach. However, it may NOT be worth the battle at this point.

#### Actions:

Chemicals are one tool in the tool kit of vegetation management. There are mechanical methods (ex. Hand cutting or pulling, brush mowing on less steep sites), prescribed fire, and prescribed

grazing that can be used as well in conjunction with some other method. There is no silver bullet, and treatments are not one-time events.

One point to remember with exotics is to treat your higher quality sites with the least problems first (*protect what you have*). **REDUCTION** is the key because total eradication will not ever be possible. The goal is to keep the number low enough to minimize the impact on native plants.

Cutting any vine off (ex. Grape) of desirable trees is a good idea. Chemical treatment is only suggested on the bittersweet. Be cautious of poison ivy vines because the oil is active all year long so susceptible people can get the rash even in winter. Cut vines several feet above ground so you can see at a distance that particular one has already been cut.

*See attachment DOW individual plant treatment.*

### Plantings

Several nice tree plantations were created around 25 (?) years ago. In the hardwood ones, a little release of a few individual oak stems will help favor the oak component. The conifers are a nice addition for diversity. The White Pine (*Pinus strobus*) and Northern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*), aka Arborvitae, would be difficult to successfully plant now. High deer predation would be a big issue.

### "Scrub"

This old orchard area was just allowed to grow in naturally; woody invasive exotics are very heavy!

A decision should be made about the desired future condition in this area. Much of it is flat enough for something like a Fecon mower or a heavy-duty brush mower. Using a tool like that will allow for access to use herbicides. Grazing with goats **MIGHT** be possible using trails for some fence lines and hand-cutting in other fence lines. Grazing is a tool in the tool box in appropriate settings. Undoubtedly there is a **LARGE** amount of seed in the ground so treatment will be for multiple years and probably using several methods.

Before planting in this area, the invasives really need to be under good control. Adding desirable plants too early makes continued treatment of the invasives more difficult. Some natural regeneration of desirable plants will occur.



## Final thoughts

Aspect plays a large role in plant communities. North-facing slopes are shadier and more mesic than south-facing slopes. It is easier to manage for oak on the sunnier slopes.

**Doing nothing really IS doing something.** Ecosystems are dynamic and will change with or without human activity. With activity we can guide some of the change.

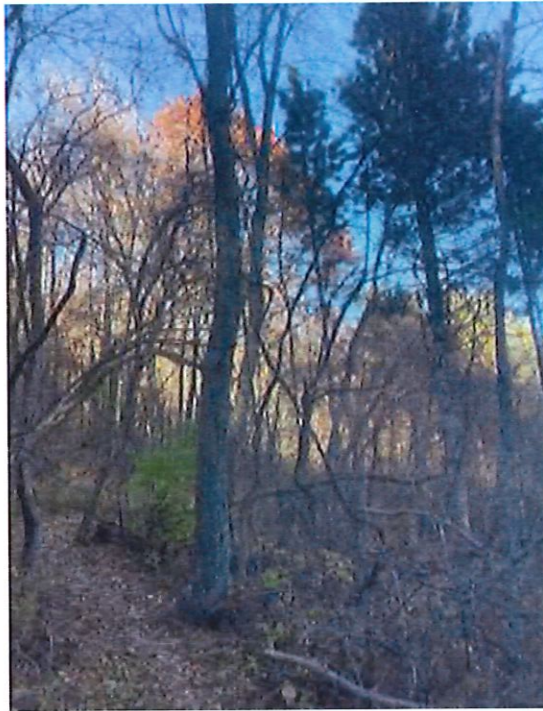
First decide **WHAT** you hope to accomplish and potential major road blocks (ex. citizens against cutting or treating any vegetation). There are grants from time to time that may assist your efforts once you have decided on a plan or area for action.

Scheduled walk-throughs with citizens may increase the "buy-in" on your decisions or even just increase awareness and use of the park.

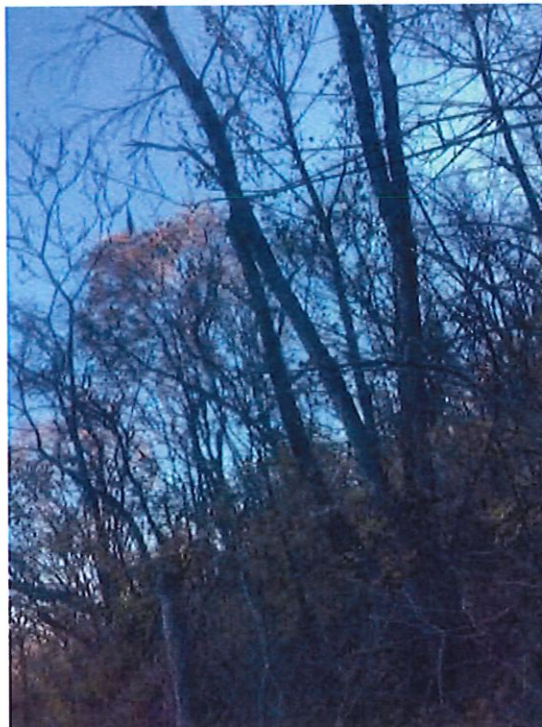
Very heavy Oriental Bittersweet on the south end; it is pulling down trees



A relatively healthy Butternut, mid slope  
with heavily-cankered ones nearby



Dead/dying ash trees-use caution; these  
trees are especially brittle





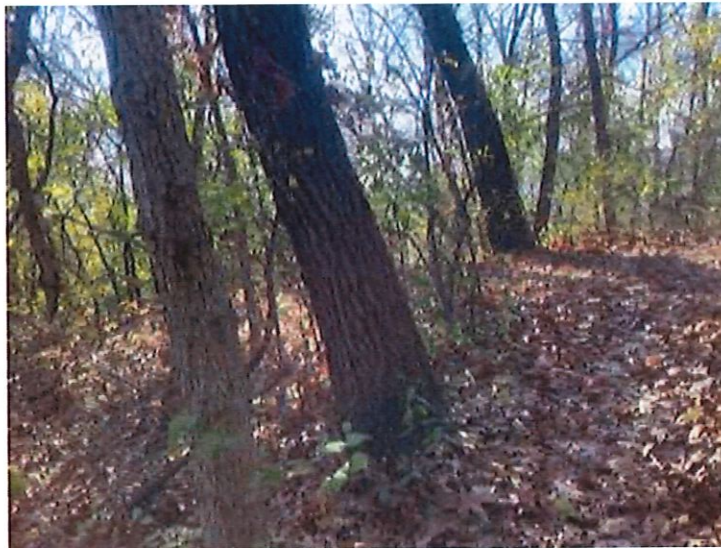
Numerous cranberry seedlings



Black Cherry with a burl



White Oak (left) & Red Oak (right); it is very likely these are the same age



Stand on north end dominated by nice Red Oak with a relatively small number of invasives; start work in areas like this first rather than in the most heavily-infested areas



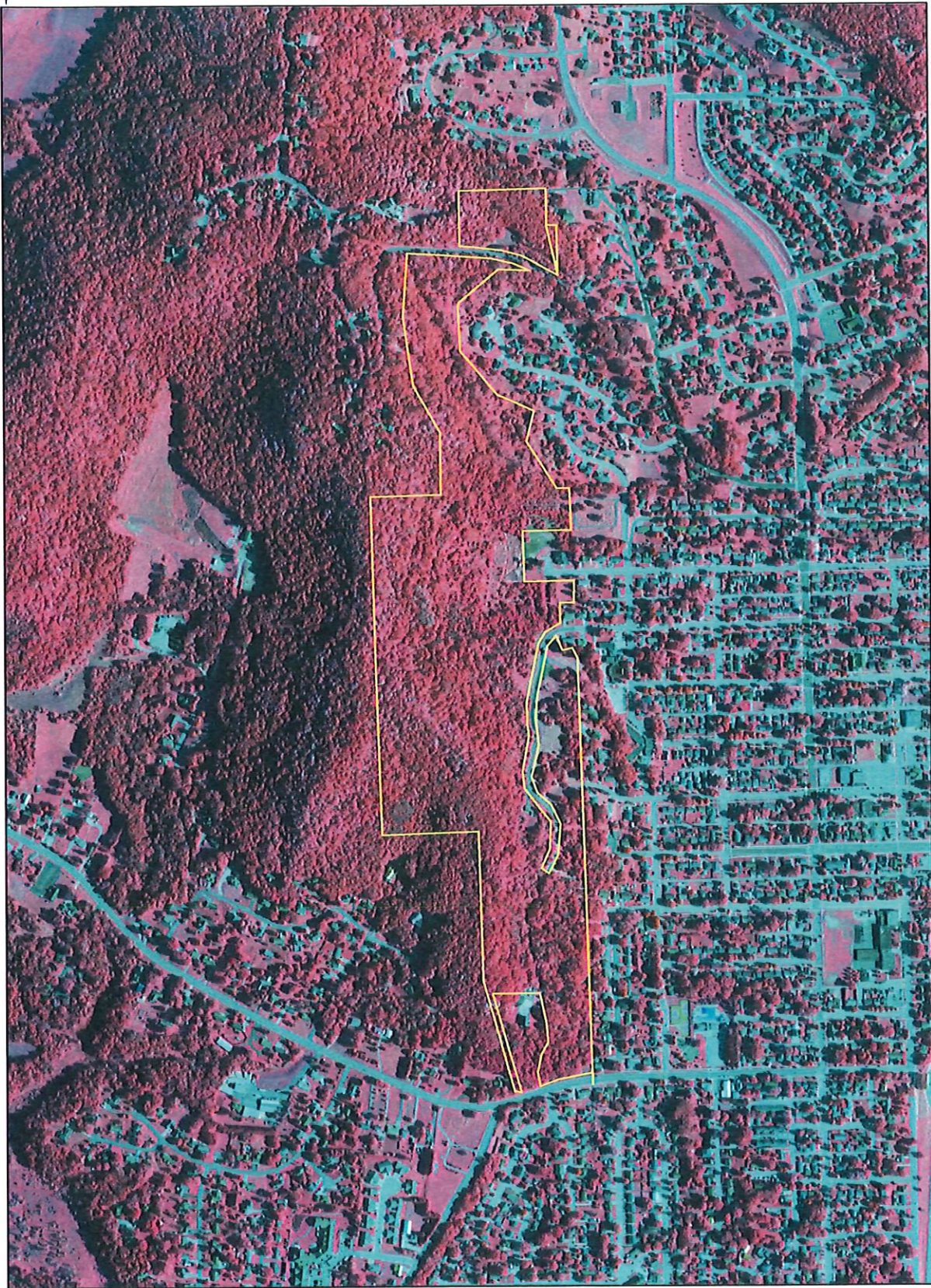
Rock outcrop towards south end



\*\*\*\*\*

The following maps show the area with different background photos. The first is recent color infrared (CIR), next is 2011 CIR, next is Lidar to show terrain, then 1991 B&W, last is a non-referenced 1952 photo.





1 inch = 917 feet





MN DNR USGS

1 inch = 917 feet



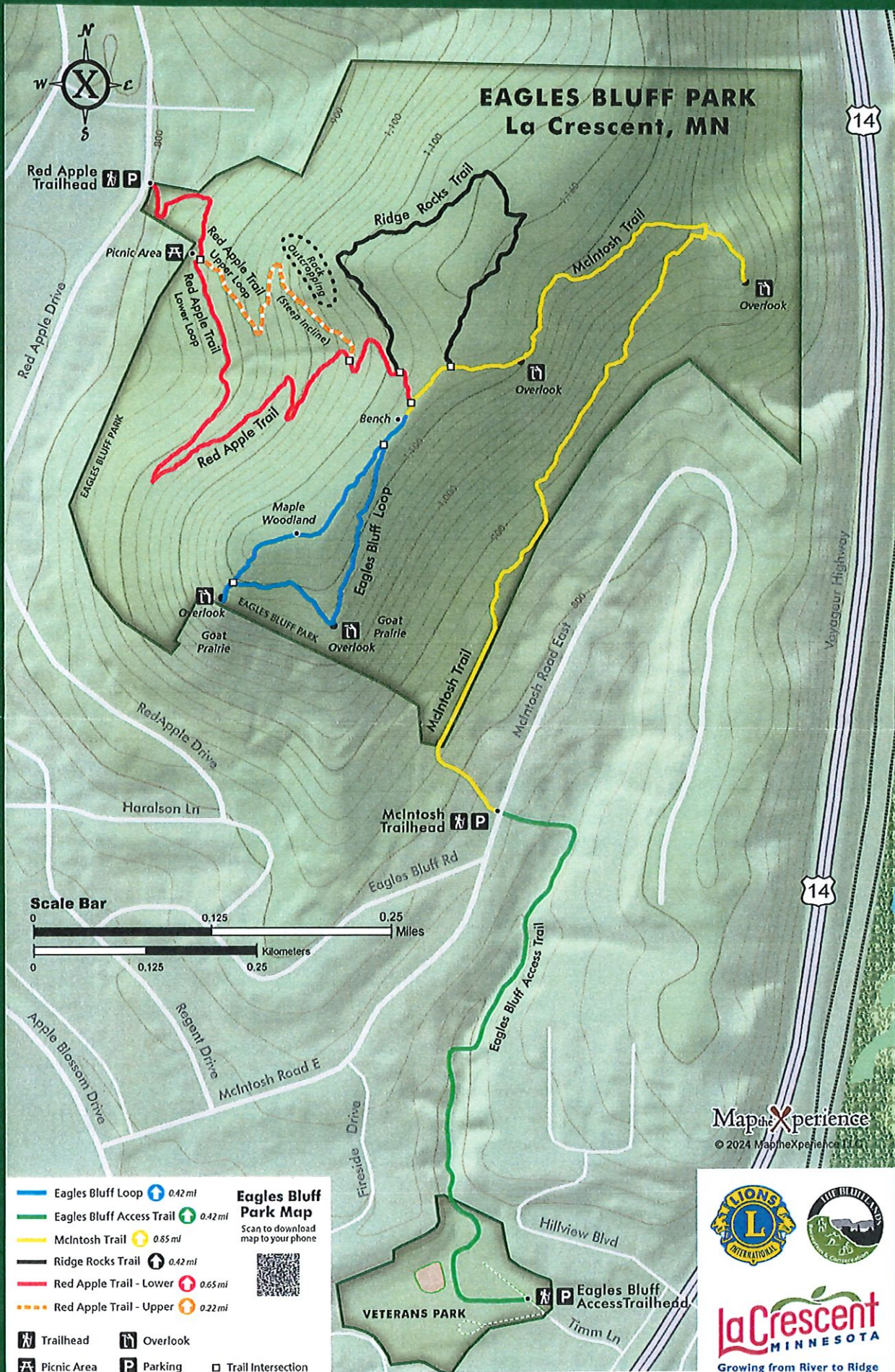


1 inch = 917 feet



1 inch = 917 feet






Thank you to the Boy Scouts Troop 33, La Crescent Area Healthy Community Partnership, Statewide Health Improvement Partnership, and the Houston County Public Health Department for their efforts to develop the trails in Eagles Bluff Park.



# 5



TO: Park and Recreation Commission  
FROM: Tyler Benish, Public Works Director   
DATE: March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
RE: Canoe/Kayak access at Blue Lake update

The City Council approved the following for the installation of a canoe/Kayak dock and launch at Blue Lake.

Dock, railing, bench, and EZ kayak launch  
Coulee Region Docks- \$17,773.50

ADA Concrete Ramp, parking and dock Landing  
Wieser Brothers - \$17,520  
Handrail estimate from Wieser-Doric - \$4,000

Riley Schuldt has raised \$19,201 for the project; the funds have been donated to the City. Riley and volunteers will assist with the installation of the Dock and assist city staff to landscape and restore the area.

The project will start this spring and is expected to be completed mid summer.



TO: Park and Recreation Commission  
FROM: Tyler Benish, Public Works Director  
DATE: March 13, 2024  
RE : Dog Park -Chestnut St. update

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler", is written over the "FROM:" line of the letterhead.

The City Council has approved quotes for the dog park fence and stormwater improvements for the Chestnut Street site.

Zenke inc. will be installing a manhole structure with 120 feet of 24-inch pipe. -\$19,780

River Valley Fence LLC will be installing 840 feet of fence as well as three 4-foot gates for access and two 8-foot gates for maintenance. - \$15,120

City of La Crescent staff will remove necessary trees prior to April 1<sup>st</sup> to not disturb wildlife nesting and level the site. Peyton and volunteers will assist with the installation of the fence and assist city staff landscape and restore the area.

Peyton Jerue has raised funds for the project, some of the funds had been spent on the site preparation of the S 7<sup>th</sup> street property. Peyton has a remaining balance of \$4,105.

The project will start this spring and is expected to be completed mid summer.

## Natural Resources Advisory Group 2023 Summary of Activity

At the start of the year, the focus areas for the Natural Resource Advisory Group were identified as: invasive species control, overlook preservation, goat prairie maintenance, and forest habitat health. Additional areas were added during the year.

Invited individuals with extensive experience with buckthorn control and prairie restoration to meetings to share expertise. They represented the work of the Friends of the Marsh and Friends of the Blufflands. The DNR forester, Val Green, also attended a meeting to provide information on forestry plans and invasive controls.

Collaborated with the City to retrace park property boundaries in order to inform trail decisions.

Coordinated Arbor Day activities with the La Crescent Public library.

Provided feedback on City of La Crescent Tree Ordinance revisions.

Documented Trail Maintenance Guidelines which were formulated at a stakeholder meeting, and provided these to the Parks Commission.

Hosted the Migratory Bird Day event on May 20 in Vetsch Park.

Designed signage for pollinator identification for Frank J. Kistler Memorial Park with link to online guide. Additional signage designed for sensitive areas in Stoney Point.

Planned and participated in work days for garlic mustard removal in the spring, inviting community involvement.

Participated in work days for buckthorn removal in the fall, trail maintenance, and Frank J. Kistler Park native plantings.

Completed on-site reviews: 1) S 7th street proposed Dog Park area, 2) erosion concerns in Vetsch and Stoney; 3) trail viability and usage in Vetsch and Stoney; 4) off and on trail walk-through of Vetsch and Stoney with DNR forester.

Discussed approaches to developing a plan to monitor forest health with the DNR forester - in keeping with the City Parks Plan.

Increased outreach efforts through informational articles.

### Hours of Logged Activity by NRAG members and community members

Activity	NRAG Hours	Community Member Hours
Garlic Mustard pulling (3 days)*	18	6.5
Kistler Pollinator Gardens	33	
Migratory Bird Day (prep and event presence)	31	
Seeding Prairie*	7.5	
Trail Maintenance*	11.5	
Buckthorn Removal*	12	4.5

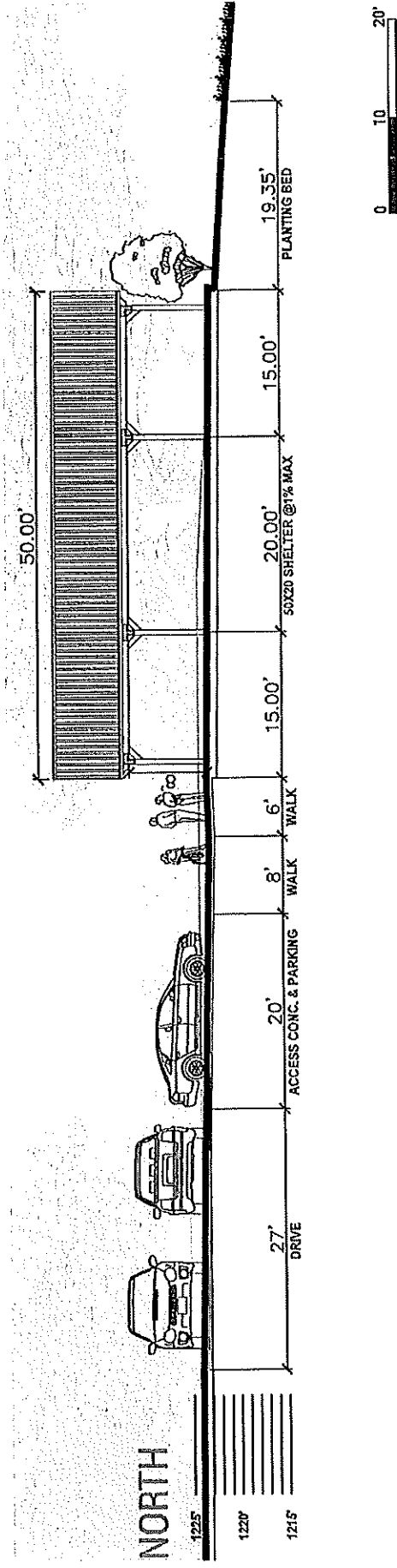
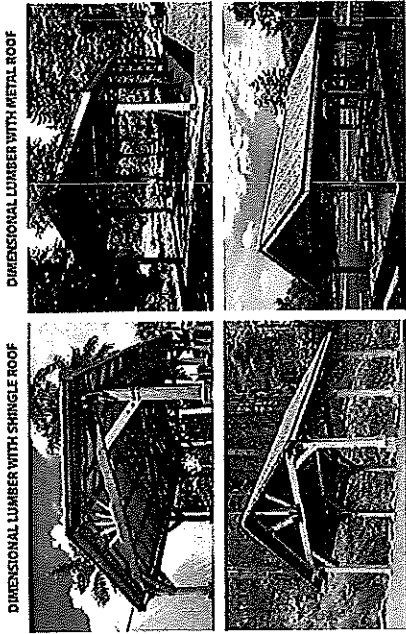
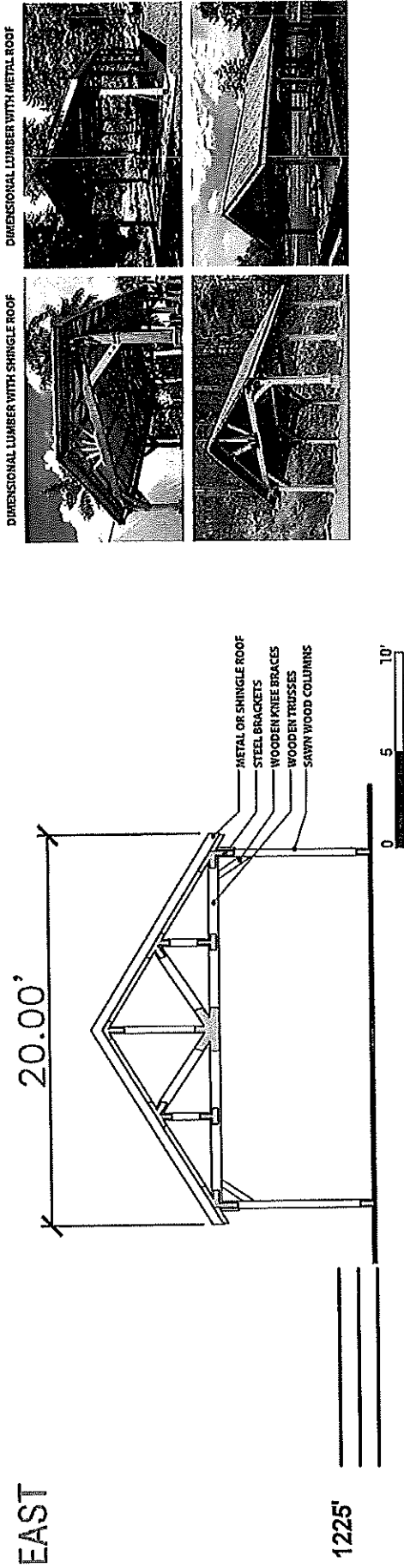
\* City employees also participated

Additional trail and prairie maintenance completed by community volunteers - hours unknown.

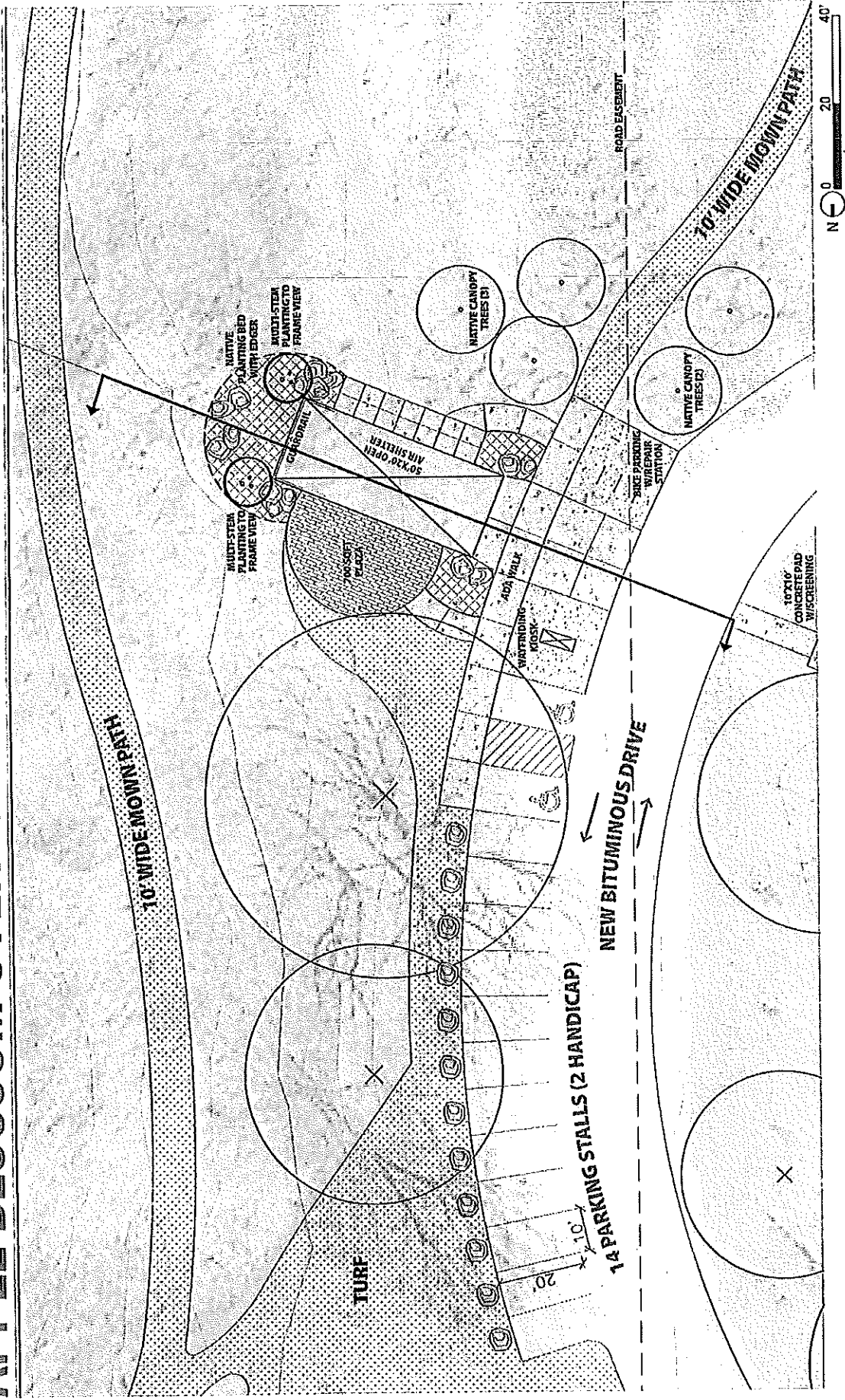


#7

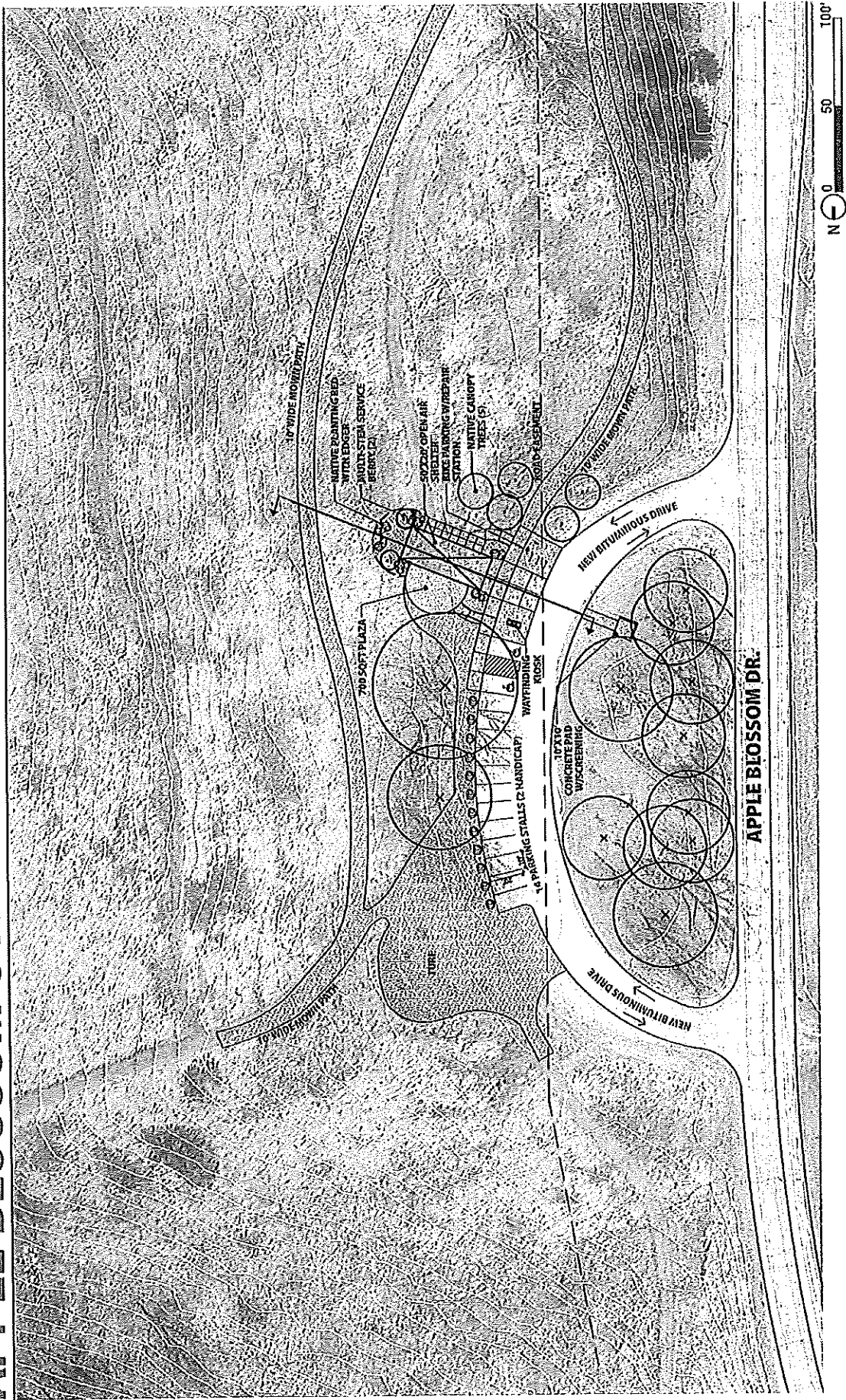
# APPLE BLOSSOM OVERLOOK: SECTION ELEVATIONS



# APPLE BLOSSOM OVERLOOK: ENLARGEMENT

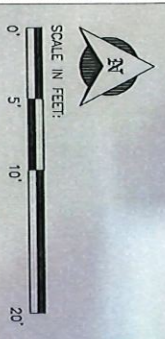
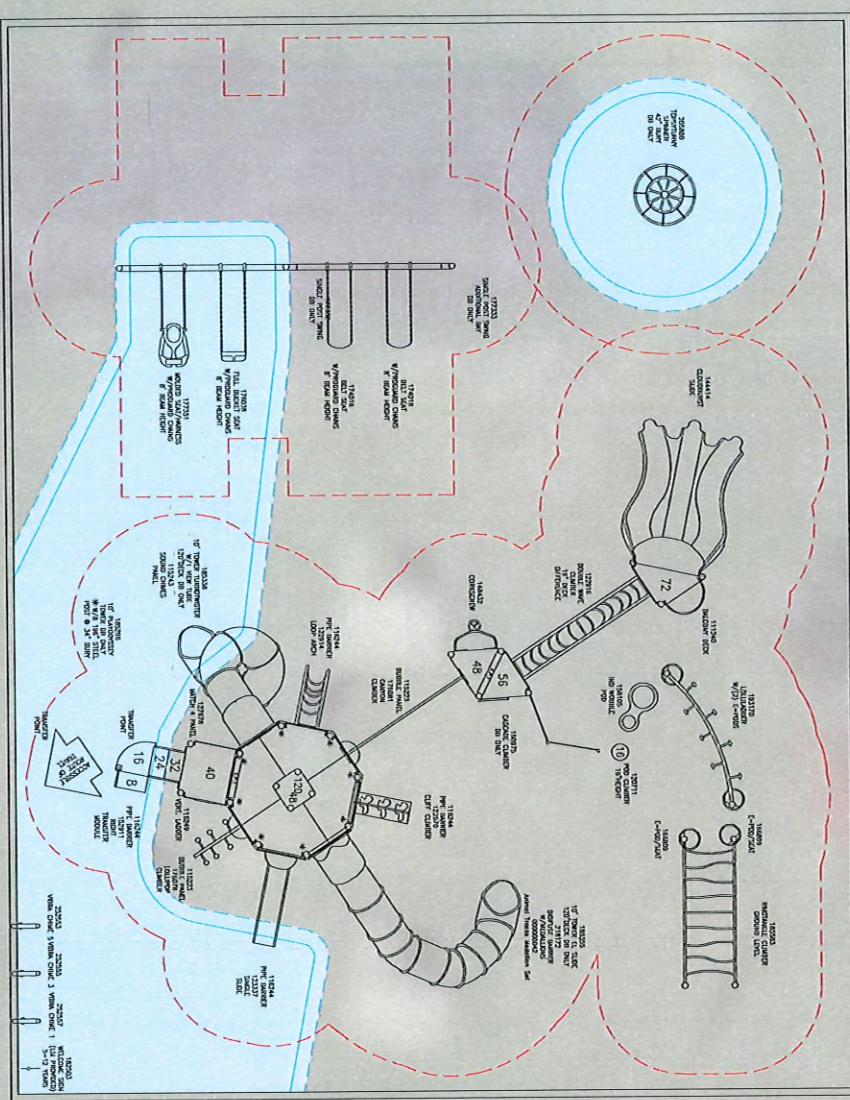


# APPLE BLOSSOM OVERLOOK SITE PLAN





#8



CONTAINER DETAILS	
TOTAL CONTAINER AREA	4377 SF
ASTM SAFETY SURFACING TYPE	ENGINEERED WOOD FIBER AND POURED IN PLACE
TOTAL PIP AREA	1117 SF
TOTAL EWF AREA	3260 SF
TOTAL PERIMETER	271 LF
FINISH TYPE	6"X12" CONCRETE CURB
EDGING TYPE	TOP OF CURB
<b>SITE PREPARATION REQUIREMENTS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MAXIMUM OF 1% GRADE CHANGE ACROSS CONTAINER</li> <li>• NO PRE-INSTALLED DRAIN TILE OUTSIDE OF 4 FEET OF PERIMETER</li> <li>• DRAIN TILE STUB TO BE PROVIDED IF DRAIN TILE IS REQUIRED</li> <li>• NO DRAINAGE AGGREGATE PRE-INSTALLED</li> <li>• NO FABRIC PRE-INSTALLED</li> <li>• MINIMUM CONTAINER SIZE NEEDED DENOTES THE INSIDE OF CURB DIMENSION</li> </ul>	

5-12 AREA	
TOTAL ELEVATED PLAY COMPONENTS	10
TOTAL ELEVATED COMPONENTS ACCESSIBLE BY RAMP	0
TOTAL ELEVATED COMPONENTS ACCESSIBLE BY TRANSFER	8
TOTAL ACCESSIBLE WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE COMPONENTS	8
TOTAL DIFFERENT TYPES OF GROUND LEVEL COMPONENTS	6
REQUIRED 0	0
REQUIRED 8	8
REQUIRED 8	8
REQUIRED 8	8

flagship  
recreation

FLAGSHIP RECREATION  
1123 UPPER 33RD ST N  
LAKE ELMO, MN 55082  
763-550-7860  
FLAGSHIPPLAY.COM  
@FLAGSHIPPLAY

WIESER MEMORIAL  
PARK PLAYGROUND

1817 County Rd 6,  
La Crescent, MN

SALES  
REPRESENTATIVE:  
TIM TRUELSON

DESIGNED BY:  
AO  
2/22/24

1/4" = 1'-0"

SHEET  
LS101

THIS PLAY AREA & PLAY EQUIPMENT IS  
DESIGNED FOR AGE RANGES AS NOTED  
ON PLAN.

landscape  
structures





**landscape  
structures**

**Wieser Memorial Park**  
LaCrescent 022024 • 2.22.2024

**flagship**  
recreation

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#9

# Root River Trail Extension Houston-Hokah-La Crescent Trail Plan



Root River Trail Extension  
Citizen Exploratory Committee

March 8, 2024



HOUSTON COUNTY  
MINNESOTA



## Houston, Minnesota

The Best of Bluff Country

Root River Trail Extension  
Houston-Hokah-La Crescent  
Trail Plan

<u>Table of Contents</u>	<u>Page No.</u>
Acknowledgements	ii
Plan Partners	ii
Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
Exploratory Committee Origin/Purpose/Function	3
History-Background of Trail/Previous Planning Efforts	4
Root River State Trail Extension Master Plan – Houston-to-La Crescent, 2011	5
Public Outreach – 2023-24	7
Alternative Routing	8
Method for Acquiring Property	9
Trail Implementation Funding Options	10
Next Steps	11
Appendix A – Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate	

## Acknowledgements

### Root River Trail Extension-Citizens Exploratory Committee

- Houston County – Joe Thesing, Ben Horn, Jason Kraft
- City of Hokah – Jake Olson, Kevin Walther
- City of Houston – Jay Wheaton,
- City of La Crescent – Dick Wieser, Larry Stryker

### Houston County - Board of Supervisors

Allison Wagner, Board Clerk/Economic Development Director

Sam Jandt, Houston County Attorney

Eric Schmidt, County Surveyor

### City of Houston – Mayor, City Council

Michelle Quinn, Clerk/Administrator

### City of Hokah – Mayor, City Council

Lindsey Martell, Clerk/Administrator

### City of La Crescent – Mayor, City Council

Bill Waller, City Administrator

Larry Kirch, Community Development Director

Hein Bloom, Houston County resident

Christina Peterson, Houston County resident

Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota

Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota

SMART – Southeast Minnesota Association of Regional Trails

Minnesota Department of Transportation – Active Transportation Program

### Plan Partners

There are multiple organizations and entities that contributed to the formulation of this Trail Plan. The primary plan partners are Houston County and the cities of Houston, Hokah, and La Crescent. Each of the entities contributed to the extent they were able with Houston County and the City of La Crescent being able to commit staff resources to the planning effort. All the entities contributed meeting facilities and were committed to exploring the possible extension of the Root River Trail by entering into a formal Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate.



## Executive Summary

The Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate (MOA) signed by Houston County and the cities of Houston, Hokah and La Crescent allowed for the creation of an eight member citizens committee with two representatives from each governmental organization. The MOA called for the creation of a trail plan which would be drafted by the committee. The committee of citizens discussed the name of the committee and came up with the Root River Trail Extension – Citizens Exploratory Committee. The committee had no illusions that a trail would ever be built but that one was generally a desirable thing for the county, the three cities and for southeast Minnesota. The committee specifically used the word “Exploratory” to underscore the 40 years of previous efforts and that if a trail was a certainty, it would have been completed already.

This trail plan is an exploration of the previous planning efforts and a path forward for the possible extension of the Root River State Trail. In reviewing the previous three master planning documents, the most recent in 2011 regarding the specific extension from Houston to La Crescent, the committee noted that an ad hoc group met for 12 years before becoming part of the County Economic Development Authority as a subcommittee. That subcommittee met from 2004 to 2010 when a more formal master planning process was undertaken in 2011 which resulted in a master plan that was approved and one that meets the statutory requirements in Minnesota.

The Citizens Exploratory met for a little over a year to formulate a process for preparing the trail plan. The trail plan was open ended under the MOA as to its content and format. The committee determined that the trail plan, under the MOA need not take 12 years or even seven years and that the 2011 Root River State Trail Extension Master Plan Houston to La Crescent, 2011 was the approved plan and that a committee trail plan would simply augment that master plan. The trail plan would provide a mechanism to update what has transpired over the last 12-13 years and provide s community members and state and federal agencies and other stakeholders with a renewed path forward with the most likely action that the trail would be pursued in phases.

This trail plan acknowledges and confirms that the 2011 Master Plan is approved and there is no need to recreate that plan. The next step for the communities is to move forward on the implementation of the 2011 Master Plan by having conversations with landowners and working in partnership with the three communities and the county.

It doesn't matter which segment of a Root River State Trail gets built first, just that there is a concerted effort over the long term to see the project completed. It is hoped that it does not take another 21 years like the Wagon Wheel Trail or another 40 years from the initial Root River Trail Plan. The original land acquisition from the rail road the late 1970s was born in controversy and concern. The proof is in the pudding, perhaps, that connecting communities within a region is good for the visitors and the communities themselves.

## Introduction

The cities of La Crescent, Hokah and Houston, have long been wanting to connect their communities utilizing the Root River State Trail. Houston County has supported the trail extension in a variety of ways over the years as well. The Minnesota DNR finalized a Trail Master Plan in 2011 for the extension of the trail. However, completion of a trail has been complicated for a variety of reasons including wetlands, floodplain, habitat restoration areas, wildlife management areas, MnDOT right-of-way, railroad right-of-way, federal and state ownership, private ownership, and others. A model for completing the existing Root River State Trail was through a Joint Powers Agreement amongst cities in Fillmore County.

The City of La Crescent and Houston County has allowed its staff to co-lead the coordination of trail planning efforts. The Root River Trail Extension-Citizens Exploratory Committee works alongside La Crescent's Community Development Director and Houston County's EDA Director. An eight-member citizen committee makes up the RRTE-CEC and represents the three cities and county all working toward developing a plan and strategy to complete the trail.

The value of the Root River State Trail to the region as a recreation corridor and economic driver is well known. In the short time since the opening of the Wagon Wheel Trail Bridge in La Crescent, there has been a visible and dramatic increase in people biking and walking in the community. The business community has confirmed that the increase bicycle and pedestrian use had had a positive impact on their businesses. Through careful planning and project management, it is hoped that an agreed upon Root River Trail corridor can be identified and pursued over a number of years. The committee has stressed emphatically that any property acquisition or property interest be handled entirely through a willing seller/willing buyer approach.

This "trail plan" is a requirement of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to Jointly Cooperate executed by and between the County and the three cities. More information on the MOA is included in other sections of this document and a copy of the fully executed MOA is attached as an exhibit to this trail plan. The content of the trail plan was undefined by the MOA. The RRTE-CEC determined that there was not a need to recreate the 2011 DNR Trail Master Plan as that plan meets the Minnesota statutory requirements for preparation of state trail master plans. This planning document summarizes previous planning efforts, describes alternative routes within the corridor as well as provides an evaluation and recommendations for trail routing options. The trail plan presents options for funding the trail and working with property owners who are interested in seeing the trail come to fruition.

The idea of a trail extending from Fountain to La Crescent has been around for more than 40 years. The trail exists in Houston heading west. Positive impacts and negative feelings of the trail are well established. Previous trail planning efforts have included much public outreach over the last four decades.

This plan reaffirms the strong commitment to the willing seller/willing buyer approach to working cooperatively with any property owner who is interested in working with the three cities and county to bring a trail to reality. The trail plan also outlines the next steps for moving the plan forward.

## Exploratory Committee Origin/Purpose/Function

The most recent effort to explore the possibility of extend the Root River Trail began in 2020 with a meeting between the City of La Crescent, Houston County and the Minnesota DNR. At that meeting there was discussion of past efforts and the best way to move forward. The outcome of the meeting was that a Joint Powers Agreement should be drafted and pursued by the communities. The City of La Crescent offered to commit staff resources to the project.

Tragically, the City of La Crescent's Community Development Director, Terry Erickson passed away in a mountain biking accident in Winona in June of 2021. Terry's passing was a loss to the Winona community, Southeast Minnesota, La Crescent, and this project. Terry was involved for several years in La Crescent and assisted the city in many projects including obtaining funding for the Wagon Wheel Trail. With the loss of Terry, the Root River Trail extension project stalled out until mid-2022.

In 2022, Houston County and the City of La Crescent began discussions to create a Joint Powers Agreement. The discussions were primarily between the County Attorney and City Attorney. The result of the discussions was the formulation of a Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate. The MOA was executed in September of 2022 by the City of Houston, City of Hokah, City of La Crescent and Houston County. In October of 2022 each entity appointed two members to serve on a committee to create a "trail plan." The committee began meeting monthly in the Fall of 2022.

Early on, the committee reviewed the MOA and conducted a tabletop workshop to create a game plan for creating the trail plan. The committee agreed to work by consensus, did not create a chair or vice chair and did not create bylaws. The committee felt that time was better spent on the trail plan rather than administrative process. The task at hand was the trail plan. The committee agreed to name the committee the Root River Trail Extension – Citizen Exploratory Committee. The committee chose that name because the committee felt that the creation of a trail was not a forgone conclusion and that the committee was simply exploring the completion of a trail system. That exploration would come through drafting a trail plan.

The committee approved a Project Charter which spelled out the role of each community, the role of the committee and the role of the staff. The committee next worked on a Fact Sheet and the City of La Crescent created a web page on the city's site to post information and resources for the project. The Committee spent several meetings looking at aerial photos and ownership information in the trail corridor. After meeting for approximately 18 months, the committee decided on the table of contents of the trail plan and to have staff draft a planning document. This document serves as the "trail plan" that is a requirement of the MOA.



## History-Background of Trail/ Previous Trail Planning Efforts

The Root River State Trail was authorized in 1971. In 1979, the Chicago, Milwaukee, Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad was abandoned and therefore the trail planning could be undertaken. The DNR ultimately acquired 49 miles of the 100-mile corridor. Fifteen of those 49 miles were designated as a Scientific and Natural Area. Thirty-five miles were made into the Root River State Trail from Fountain to the Money Creek Woods. The balance of the abandoned rail corridor was transferred to the abutting property owners.

A 6.7-mile extension of the Root River State Trail to Houston was made part of a subsequent planning effort in 1998, nearly 27 years after the original authorization of the trail (Houston Extension of the Root River State Trail Master Plan, 1998). The trail was constructed in 1999 to the Houston Trailhead Park and Houston Nature Center. This extension brought the trail to a total of 41.7 miles in length and when added to the Harmony-Preston Valley trail brought the total trail length to 59.2 miles.

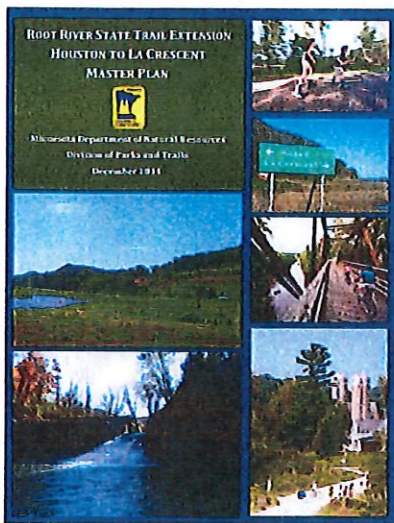
The Root River State Trail was constructed where the state kept ownership and was not completed east of Houston where the property was transferred to abutting property owners.





## Root River State Trail Extension Master Plan – Houston-to La Crescent, 2011

In December of 2011, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources approved the Root River State Trail Extension Master Plan. The master plan fulfilled the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, Section 86A.09 for the administration of the extension of the Root River State Trail. The plan covered the distance from the existing trail terminus in Houston to La Crescent. The trail extension was authorized in Minnesota Statutes, Section 85.015, Subdivision 7 in 1992 as one part of the Blufflands Trail System. As noted in the plan, groups in Houston County began working with the Minnesota DNR in 1992 to extend the trail. In 2004, the informal group was formed as a committee under the county's Economic Development Authority (EDA). That committee (the Houston County Trails Subcommittee) met for five years. The 2011 planning process and resulting plan evolved from that 5-year effort by the Houston County Trails Subcommittee and was folded into the Master Plan.



The 2011 Master Plan for the extension of the Root River State Trail consists of seven chapters. Chapters are devoted to the planning process, purpose and scope; potential trail uses; trail alignment in segments/subsegments; trail management, natural resources, history and cultural resources; and implementation. This document intentionally does not try to recreate the existing approved Master Plan and reader is encouraged to peruse the 2011 Master Plan which can be found on the City of La Crescent's RRTE-CEC webpage as well as on the Minnesota DNR trails website.

Throughout the last forty years, there has been both positive and negative viewpoints to the extension of the trail system. As the plan notes "Concerns were addressed regarding many issues with trails on private property: liability, trail maintenance, wildlife management, hunting, and safety issues. Other topics included avoiding displacement of rare species and whether a trail would bring economic benefits to the area." The central issues remain, trails on private property, liability, hunting, trespass, and safety. Displacement of rare species or more aptly, habitat loss, will be mitigated as it is a requirement of any trail construction.

The economic benefit of trails is undisputed. Minnesota, now has 588.5 miles of paved state trails. Nation-wide there are 25,000 miles of these types of trails with another 9,000 miles being planned. A coast-to-coast 3,700-mile-long Great American Rail Trail is coming closer to reality. Communities are still clamoring for trail extensions to their communities. Rampant crime does not happen on the trails. Community members who did not want the trail eventually say that they were wrong. A good example is a high school class-project video from the community of Lanesboro where an outspoken trail critic, comes around to facts not fears. The trail is a good thing for their community.

How does a private property owner then co-exist with a trail and avoid liability, possible trespass issues and safety concerns? The answer lies along those 588.5 miles of existing paved trails, 41.7 of which are in the Root River Valley. The issues are real but the answer is that, the issues are manageable or not as



bad as feared. The 212-page Root River Trail Master Plan from 1978 also provides a detailed illustration of the careful consideration that was given to abutting property owners to evaluate trail impacts to properties along the trail. The 1978 plan gives ample illustration how the state worked closely with private property owners to relocate trail sections to both the benefit of the property owner and trail user.

As the 2011 Master Plan states, the recommended trail uses are the same as the rest of the Root River State Trail and include; bicycling, hiking, walking, running, X-country skiing, and similar uses. These user groups are recreation enthusiasts and good stewards of outdoor recreation facilities. Hunting will be allowed except where regulated by community ordinances. Snowmobiling will be allowed between Houston and Miller's Corner. Horseback riding will be accommodated on portions of the trail where sufficient right-of-way is available.

DRAFT

## Public Outreach – 2023-24

The extension of the Root River State Trail to Hokah and La Crescent had its origins in 1992 with a Houston County subcommittee of the Economic Development Authority in 2005. That subcommittee met for approximately five years. Meetings were posted and open to the public. The 2011 master planning process for the extension of the Root River State Trail had two public meetings to gain input on the master plan. The summary of public comments is included in the appendix to the 2011 master plan.

### 2011 Root River State Trail Extension Houston to La Crescent Master Plan Process Chart

#### **Trail Planning Process Chart**

##### ***Who's Involved***

- Houston County EDA Trails Subcommittee
- National Park Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- University of Minnesota
- DNR Resource Managers
- Community Leaders
- Scenic Byways
- Elected Officials
- Other Agencies
- Citizens
- Adjacent Landowners
- Trail Users

The 2011 approved DNR approved master plan involved the list of communities, agencies, community leaders, landowners and the general public presented in the chart.

Under the MOA for this Trail Plan, it was understood that public outreach continues to be a basic requirement of any trail planning process. Early in the planning process, during a roundtable discussion, the following stakeholders were identified: Houston County, the three cities, townships, landowners, Southeast Minnesota Association of Regional Trails (SMART), Minnesota Parks and Trails Council, Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, Harmony Trails Commission (Gabby Kinneberg, President – Preston), Root River Trail Towns, Bluff Country Scenic Byway, MnDNR, MnDOT, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Rails to

Trails Conservancy, CPKC Rail, snowmobile clubs, landowners, Houston County residents, County Engineer, La Crescent Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, Houston Chamber Commerce, Houston Nature Center, National Owl Center.

The City of La Crescent created a resource page on the city's website under the City Government Tab, and under the Root River Trail Extension-Citizens Exploratory Committee: [Root River Trail Exploratory Committee \(cityoflacrescent-mn.gov\)](http://cityoflacrescent-mn.gov) for the work of the committee and a repository of information related to the Root River State Trail. Information includes the agendas and minutes from the committee meetings, copies of the 1983, 1988 and 2011 DNR Master Plans, the MOA, a Frequently Asked Questions information sheet, and committee member information.

The draft and final Trail Plan will be posted on the committee webpage. Public input from the general public and stakeholders will be summarized in the document. The MOA requires that the Trail Plan be presented to the County Board and the city councils of the three cities.

## Alternative Routing

The 2011 Root River State Trail Master Plan to extend the trail from Houston to Hokah to La Crescent broke the 18 miles of possible trail into five segments. The segments include connections between La Crosse and La Crescent and connections within La Crescent as Segment 1. The Wagon Wheel Trail from the West Channel Bridge/Sportsman Landing to downtown La Crescent took over 21 years to complete with multiple funding sources and years of grant writing. Segment 2 from the Wagon Wheel Trail/Bridge Miller's Corner. The master plan recommended the trail be placed between Highway 26 and the Kansas City and Southern Rail Road tracks along the east side of the highway.

The City of La Crescent has completed four phases of the Wagon Wheel Trail and the City of La Crosse, with federal money is building a bicycle-pedestrian bridge across the West Channel of the Mississippi providing a safer and more direct route from/to Wisconsin's state trail system and La Crosse's city trail system. The City of La Crescent completed an Active Transportation Action Plan in 2023 to assist in determining a safe route from the Wagon Wheel Bridge to Miller's Corner. That plan confirmed the route identified in the 2011 Master Plan, a route between the highway and the rail road tracks with a separated path. The city then sought funding at the end of 2023 to build a portion of the path from the Wagon Wheel trail to S. 14<sup>th</sup> Street with federal Transportation Alternatives (TA) funds. That project was not funded but the city will continue to seek funding for a multi-use path to Miller's Corner. Segment 2 can be broken down into one or two phases depending on funding availability and coordination between the railroad (now CPKC) and the County, City of La Crescent and the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Segment 3 is from Miller's Corner to Hokah and a preferred trail alignment is not identified. The three options remain the same, use of the former rail corridor for most of the route as well as Minnesota Highways 16 or 26/County Road 7 in the state or county right-of-way. Close coordination with Houston County, the state DOT, property owners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the DNR will be needed to acquire and construct a trail. Connections within Hokah are part of Segment 3.

Segment 4 is from Hokah to Mound Prairie. The most desirable, from a trail user perspective and natural area perspective is to use the abandoned rail corridor.

Segment 5 is from Mound Prairie to Houston. Potential alignments include the general corridor of the abandoned rail corridor, to highways and along the Root River.

As noted in many other sections of this trail plan, working cooperatively with landowners, local government and state and federal agencies is a necessary component of any of the segments.

Routing will be determined by evaluating the 2011 Master Plan and informal conversations and formal discussions with all the property owners whether private or publicly owned. It is one thing for the communities and citizens to want to complete the trail in order to realize the benefits (physically, socially and economically) and another for all the landowners to see the same benefits.



## Method for Acquiring Property

At the outset of the committee meetings, the committee participants unanimously agreed that any property acquisitions would be done without condemning property. The committee was adamant in this fundamental parameter or principle. The committee reflected on the past use of condemnation in the Root River Valley to acquire property and the committee unequivocally rejected the notion that condemnation would be used. While condemnation is typically associated with government overreach, there may be tax advantages to a property owner whose property is condemned in terms of acquiring a replacement property. Regardless, the committee decided to take this off the table and any property acquisitions for trail purposes would only be done with willing buyer/willing seller approach.

The committee also discussed the history of property acquisition discussions/activities in the Root River Trail corridor. In previous discussions, if there was opposition to the acquisition of a piece of property in the corridor, it seemed to put the entire trail project on indefinite hold. The committee determined that if there were willing sellers in the overall corridor, the acquisition should move forward. The completion of a trail will never occur if the project is stopped because of 1 or 10 property owners not wishing to participate. For example, if there were 100 parcels to acquire and 10 property owners were not interested in selling, the committee stated that the other 90 properties should be acquired through the willing seller/willing buyer approach. In this way, the committee felt that alternative properties such as road right-of-way would then be pursued for acquisition. Just as there is highway right-of-way used from Houston to Rushford, that may have to be the case with segments from Houston to La Crescent.

Typically, property acquisition starts with a conversation: Is a property owner interested or not? Perhaps they are not interested in selling now but maybe someday? Or yes, I will sell if my neighbor sells or, sure, if you can get that strip from DOT, I will work with you. If you can go around at the edge of my field, then I will think about it. Regardless of the positive or negative interest, an outright purchase may not be necessary. Maybe the owner will give a right of first refusal that would give the buying entity the first right to match an offer if the property is ever sold. Property owners also have the ability to donate or sell permanent easements for trail segments. An easement or outright sale of land gives the property owner assurance that they are not liable for accidents or injuries on the trail as an easement can provide for recreational immunity to the underlying property owner. Each property owner has to decide for themselves if they are a willing seller or not. There may be tax benefits for an owner who donates property or donates an easement for trail purposes.

Readers of this Trail Plan should know that the Root River Trail Extension – Citizens Exploratory Committee would like to hear from landowners of their interest or non-interest in selling a parcel or selling an easement for trail purposes.

The committee discussed ways to purchase or obtain an “interest” in a property.

- 1) Granting a Right of First Refusal to a buyer
- 2) Entering into an Offer to Purchase with a buyer
- 3) Executing a Purchase Agreement with a buyer
- 4) Granting a permanent easement to a buyer

The actual transfer of the fee title to a property is typically done via a Warranty Deed or Quit Claim Deed. Some land is purchased/sold on a “Land Contract or Contract for Deed” where the transaction is completed once the final payment is made.

As part of the discussion of ways to acquire property, the following general real estate transfer methods were briefly mentioned. The project is a very long way out from acquiring any property and it was noted that the Trail Plan had to be approved by the County and the three cities before the project moves along. There is no funding for acquiring any property at present and one of the Trail Plan’s next steps is the identification of possible funding sources for the acquisition and construction of the trail.

### **Trail Implementation Funding Options**

The 2011 master plan does not provide a list of possible funding sources but simply states that “State trails are typically funded through a variety of sources that include state bonding appropriations, federal Transportation Enhancement (TE) funds and federal trail grants.” The landscape for funding has improved in recent years with the advent of Federal Transportation Alternatives (TA) funds, and federal discretionary transportation programs such as RAISE funds, Safe Streets 4 All funds, and Connected Communities funding.

For many state trails, the most likely source for trails has been through the State of Minnesota Capital Budget process either as a request by state agencies or local government. This funding source is known as state bonding appropriations or “State Bonding Bill” funding approved by the state legislature every other year. The Minnesota DNR also has several trail grant programs and grants for park improvements that could be used in a city park for trail head improvements. Federal trail grants are now available through the reauthorization of Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON) funding which hadn’t been funded for over a decade.

With funding for trails being a competitive process along with funding constraints, it is likely that land acquisition for the trail will take several years. Funding for the construction of a trail will take multiple years and will have to be done in segments. Most trails now are funded in segments as projects are generally too big to fund all at one time. This will be the case with the extension of the Root River State Trail. The trail can logically be broken down into phases with funding coming over multiple years.

The committee will collectively work to seek funding for land acquisition and construction over the next several years.



## Trail Plan - Next Steps

The draft plan will be presented to the governing bodies of Houston County and the cities of Houston, Hokah, and La Crescent. Once that step is complete, it is recommended that Houston County, the City of Houston, the City of Hokah, and the City of La Crescent enter into a Joint Powers Agreement. This is the method that is most commonly used in Minnesota by many communities who wish to work together to complete a multi-use recreational trail between their communities.

The 2011 Master Plan outlines nine next steps. Some of these next steps are complete while others are part of the design and construction phase and considerations for long-term maintenance and installation of wayfinding and cultural and natural resource informational kiosks. Item #1 is complete. Items #2, 3, and 4 are really one step. The feasibility of any trail alignment begins and ends with landowner conversations. Item 5 is noted above, funding can be sought for land acquisition now and funding for construction can be applied for as property is secured for a particular phase. For Item #6, this item tends to precede funding as funders want to see that preliminary engineering and design is already complete for a particular phase. Items 7 and 9 are typically done in tandem as construction must include signage for safety and funding can be sought for installation of wayfinding and kiosks for interpretive signage. Ongoing maintenance and stewardship (Item #8) will primarily be a state responsibility (DNR/DOT) for portions of a trail segment that are owned and operated by the state whereas there may be some trail segments that are city or county maintained

1. Complete the master plan.
2. Explore feasibility of each alignment.
3. Initial informal landowner contact.
4. Formal landowner contact; complete acquisition process.
5. Seek funding.
6. Trail engineering and design.
7. Construction on one or more segments, while the processes of negotiation and design continue on others.
8. Ongoing maintenance and stewardship.
9. Orientation and Interpretation.

Maintain membership in SMART

Each community should become a member of the Root River Trail Towns organization

Maintain membership in the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota

Appendix A  
Memorandum of Agreement to Jointly Cooperate

DRAFT



#10



District 6 Rochester  
2900 48<sup>th</sup> St. NW  
Rochester, MN 55901

February 22, 2024

Larry Kirch  
City of La Crescent  
315 W Main St  
La Crescent, MN 55947

Dear Mr. Kirch,

The District 6 Area Transportation Partnership (ATP-6) would like to thank you for the submittal of your application, *MRT to Root River Trail Connector Phase 1*, as part of the 2028 Transportation Alternatives (TA) Program solicitation. Unfortunately, your application did not receive a high enough prioritization from the selection committee to receive TA funding.

We encourage you to either apply for the FY 2029 TA solicitation, or to consider the new Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) which opens in the spring of 2024.

Below is a list of the projects that were selected and the amount of awarded funding. The ATP-6 attempts to use all available TA funds to fund the highest-ranking projects. Please contact District Planning Director Kurt Wayne ([kurt.wayne@state.mn.us](mailto:kurt.wayne@state.mn.us)) if you have any questions.

- Wabasha County – Wabasha Kellogg Trail Bridge - \$1,500,000
- City of Northfield – TH 19 Trail Improvements Project - \$600,000

On behalf of ATP-6, I wish you well in your pursuits for funding this project.

Sincerely,

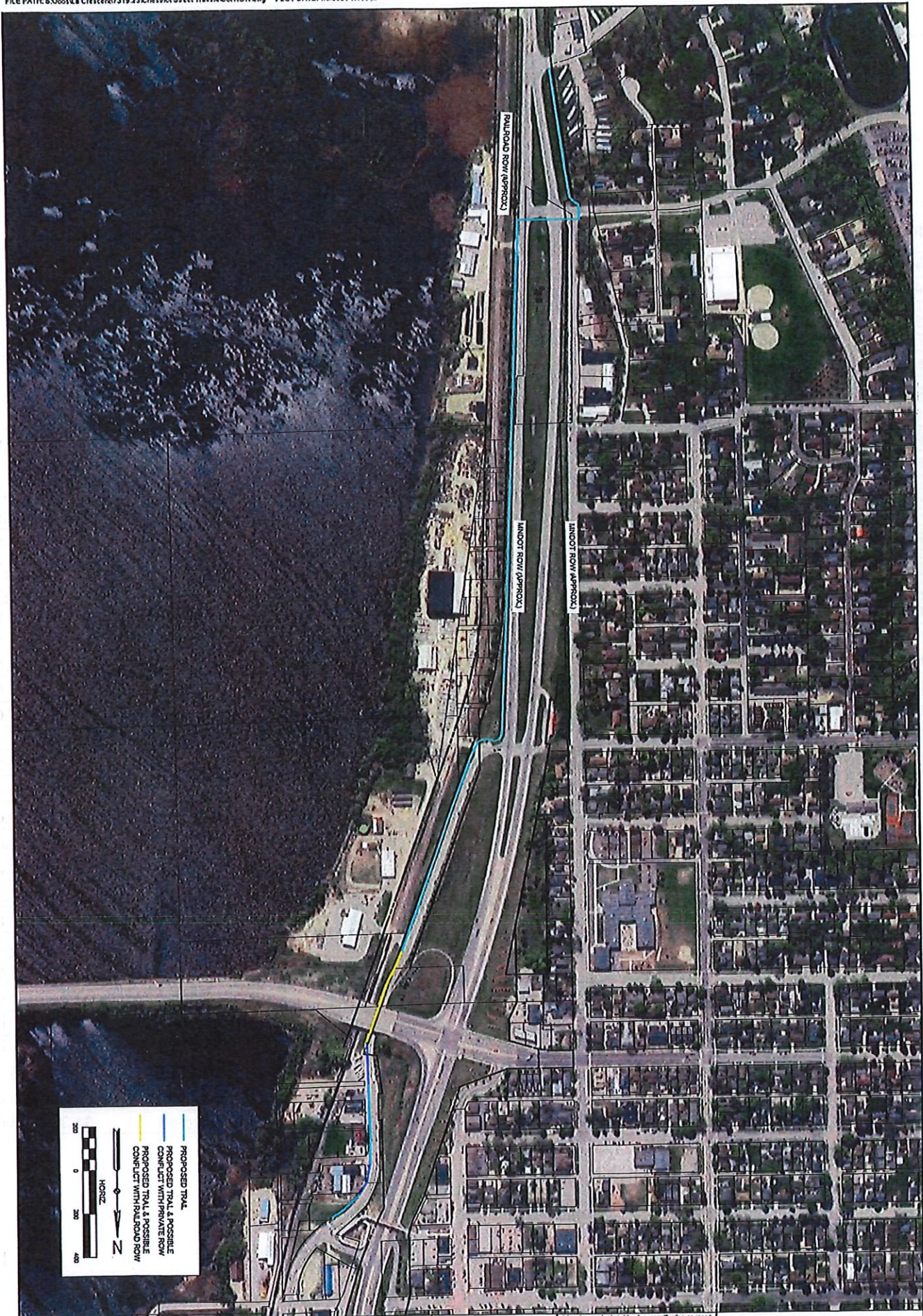
**Greg Paulson**  
Digitally signed by Greg Paulson  
Date: 2024.02.22 14:42:25 -06'00'

Greg Paulson  
Area Transportation Partnership Chair  
District 6 Assistant District Engineer – Program Delivery

CC: ATP-6, Mark Schoenfelder, Fausto Cabral, Kurt Wayne, John Kahoun

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## La Crescent receives grant for Pine Creek project



La Crescent sustainability coordinator Jason Ludwigson says the project will involve multiple goals, which include narrowing the stream, removing trees along the bank, and stabilizing the bank. (WEAU)

By [Dashal Mentzel](#)

Published: Mar. 11, 2024 at 5:44 PM CDT



LA CRESCENT, Min. (WEAU) - La Crescent received \$500,000 from the Minnesota DNR to restore the water quality of a section of Pine Creek just west of downtown.

"Pine Creek has a couple of different pollutants. Sediment is the primary one we're trying to tackle with this project. The others include e-coli and water temperature in pine creek being too high," says La Crescent sustainability coordinator Jason Ludwigson.

Ludwigson says the project will involve multiple goals, which include narrowing the stream, removing trees along the bank, and stabilizing the bank.

"One is to speed up the water so that when there is flooding that sediment isn't deposited in the stream. The banks along the stream are quite high. When there's high water, that sediment and soil along the stream washes into the stream with flooding. So we'll try and create some floodplain

Ludwigson adds there will be plenty of engineering work beginning soon.

"There will be construction work or there will be removal of soil. There will be grading. There will be tree removal. There will be restoration later on with planting of native prairie grasses along the stream," says Ludwigson.

Ludwigson hopes that this can be a catalyst for other property owners both upstream and downstream on Pine Creek.

"We can restore this section we're going to work on in Pine Creek. But the stream management and water quality land use along the upper and lower stretches of Pine Creek make a difference as well.

The goal is for work on the project to begin in the next few months and to be completed in 2027.

The project was first planned in 2021, and after failing to receive a grant for the project in 2022, the Minnesota DNR awarded this grant to La Crescent last year.

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### Three La Crescent Banks Paying Record High Interest - See the List

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# \$500,000 TO RESTORE PINE CREEK HABITAT



SASKIA HATVANY PHOTOS, RIVER VALLEY MEDIA GROUP

Golfers play at Pine Creek Golf Course, named after the creek that flows through it. La Crescent received a \$500,000 grant to restore the creek, which has been found to have high levels of sediment.

## DNR grant to address water quality, trout habitat in La Crescent

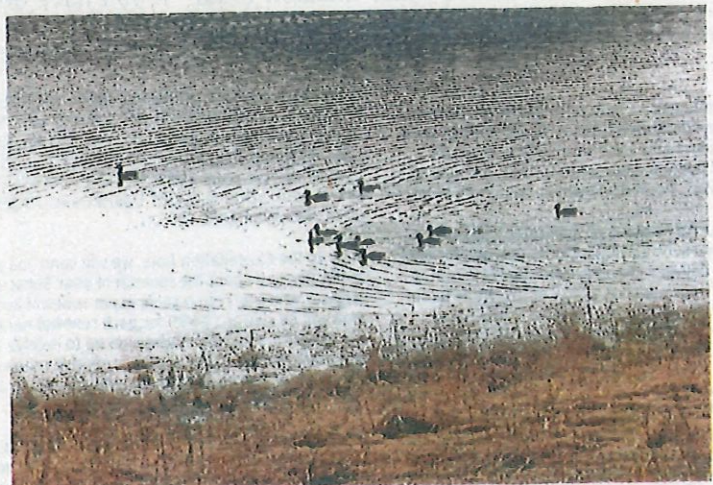
**CADEN PERRY**  
caden.perry@lee.net

The city of La Crescent will soon begin work to restore the water quality of Pine Creek as officials seek to improve the habitat for cold water trout.

A \$500,000 Minnesota DNR grant will be used to fix high sediment deposits that have lowered the creek's water quality for cold water trout and restore floodplain banks that have washed away over the years. Better public access trails for hikers and recreational fishers also will be built.

Funds were awarded through the state's Conservation Partners Legacy Grant Program.

According to the Minnesota Pollution



Birds flock to wetlands fed by Pine Creek on Thursday in La Crescent, Minn.



# Restoration

From A1

Control Agency, sediment solids and water temperature in the restoration zone are at unsafe levels due to water stress on soils and habitat damage.

Rock rapids, large boulders and a narrower stream are all part of the restoration plans to fix the sediment pollution.

"The design of narrowing the stream channel and using features in the water, particularly in the water, speeds up the flow so that sediments aren't dropping,"

said La Crescent sustainability coordinator Jason Ludwigson. "If you get slow water then they just deposit instead of carry through."

The project will restore 2,625 linear feet of Pine Creek and add 50 feet to the stream. Floodplain banks also will be re-created for future high water events.

The current banks are extremely steep and have no floodplain benches for excess water. By digging out the more gradual banks for a new stream, the city can use the old stream path as a floodplain bench at the same time.

"What is typical now when there is high water is trees in the

water and other things will carve out banks and rip away those banks, which contributes to more sediment in the water," Ludwigson said.

To ensure more stability in the banks, excavators will cut down nearby trees and create "toe wads," sections of trees embedded under hard bank corners that add structure to the shores.

Other trees will be replanted along the creek away from flood benches and stream banks. With a more tree shade, water temperatures will be less vulnerable to heat from the sun.

## Helping trout

With the restorations, the city hopes water temperatures and quality will stabilize. Pine Creek is not a source for drinking water, but is habitat to many cold water trout species.

Cold water trout are highly sensitive to temperature, and parts of Pine Creek are too warm for some fish to pass.

By mitigating sediment deposits, the project aims to stabilize and return the creek to colder temperatures that trout thrive in. A total fish study of Pine Creek has not happened recently, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and

Trout Unlimited have expressed interest in conducting studies while the restoration develops.

Fish population could take a dip in the first year, but that is expected and accounted for with any stream change.

"Change in the landscape with these projects is very dramatic," Ludwigson said. "Sometimes that's kind of shocking for members of the public, but the projects are rooted in really good science in what the streams should be doing."

A project start date is yet to be determined, but the funds will expire on June 20, 2027.