

Natural Resource Advisory Group

5.9.2023 Minutes

Present:, Betsy Knowles, Marge Loch-Wouters, Jason Ludwigson, Ruth Nissen, Randy Urich, Bill Waller

I. Old Business

A. Minutes from 4/20/2023 Approved

B. Garlic Mustard Volunteer Events

1. Pull dates of 4/22, 5/1 and 5/4 - almost blooming at last date
2. Nine volunteers worked for a total of 26 volunteer hours
3. Ideas for next year include: initially setting multiple sequential dates and times to pull, focus around Earth Week, see if volunteers are available through Scouts, high school groups, United Way. Explore the possibility of using public transit to transport school age volunteers.

C. Migratory bird day update - May 20, 7:00-10:00 a.m. Vetsch Park

1. Ruth has written news release and will update flier
2. News release and photos will go to Bill (City posting), Marge (La Crescent Together posting), Betsy (Tribune/HCN)

D. Tree Ordinance

1. Jason presented a draft ordinance which he has compiled as well as sources which have been referenced, which include existing ordinances, zoning, and national sources.
2. Discussed specific questions which he presented (using MN Tree Care Program standards, using NRAG as Tree Board).
3. Members will review and send comments directly to Jason as soon as possible so that a revised version can be reviewed before our next meeting.
4. Interest was expressed in running another Tree Steward Training in the fall of 2023.

E. Kistler Park cleanup and sign

1. The gardens were cleaned of dead material on May 2 and May 6
2. There is some plant loss, and the sites are being evaluated for replacements. A city resident has offered seedlings of liatris, meadow blazing star, butterfly milkweed, purple coneflower and showy goldenrod. Diane Waller also has native plants available for filling in.
3. The power lines in the Veterans planting need to be marked.
4. Once the plants have been removed/replaced, additional mulch is needed.
5. The identification sign has reached the final design and will be made.

F. Work plan and trail maintenance meeting notes

1. The trail maintenance meeting notes were discussed and unanimously approved. They are attached at the end of the minutes.
2. The trail maintenance notes will be part of the June agenda for Parks Commission.

II. New Business

A. Proposed dog park off South 7th Street

1. Discussed the project size, removal of trees and impact to vegetation.etc.
2. NRAG will meet onsite at 3:45 on May 23 to evaluate.

B. Other

1. Val Green suggested late summer or early fall for forest habitat evaluation.
2. Bill noted that the west boundary of Vetsch has been surveyed.

Next meeting: [May 23 at 3:45 pm at dog park location on S 7th St.](#)
[No June meeting, July meeting date TBD](#)

Respectfully submitted, Betsy Knowles

Attachment - Trail Maintenance Meeting notes 4/3/23

Present: Jason Ludwigson (City Sustainability Coordinator), Pat Wilson (Friends of the Blufflands), Ruth Nissen (Natural Resource Advisory Group), Marge Loch-Wouters (Park & Rec Commission/Natural Resource Advisory Group), Theresa O'Donnell-Ebner (City Council/Park & Rec Commission), Amelia Meiner (Houston County Environmental Services), Bill Waller (City Administrator), Betsy Knowles (Natural Resource Advisory Group)

Defining Trail Maintenance: Many aspects of maintenance have been identified, including:

1. Clearing fallen trees off trails
2. Mitigating erosion
3. Maintaining trail width (addressing encroachment)
4. Invasive species control
5. Maintain overlooks
6. Maintain goat prairies
7. Improving sight lines
8. Developing and maintaining signage

Clearing fallen trees off trails:

City maintenance crew.

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

Maintaining trail width; Mitigating erosion; Improving sight lines:

City led volunteer group

Process: Trail volunteers, together with Jason Ludwigson, develop proposals for specific projects, which include a detailed description of work to be completed and location on map. The proposal is reviewed by the Natural Resources Advisory Group (NRAG), and needs approval by NRAG and the city before implementation. NRAG will guide maintenance in a way that preserves the resource for all types of users, and in accordance with the Parks Plan. The trail work will be done by crews of volunteers under the direct supervision of city staffer Jason Ludwigson (Sustainability Coordinator). All volunteers must have a waiver on file with the City and it must be updated every 6 months.

Invasive Species Control; Maintenance of overlooks; Maintenance of goat prairies

Natural Resource Advisory Group

Process: Projects are identified by NRAG which are reflective of the Group's Council approved work plan. The work is completed by members of the NRAG, and/or city employees, and/or volunteers (as long as they have a waiver on file with the City.)

Developing and maintaining signage

Responsibility and process was not defined

Project work focus for 2023

Trail work will focus on cutting back encroaching vegetation along trails (like the nettles crowding out the path on Eagle Bluffs' Red Apple Rocks Trail)

Invasive species control in Vetsch Park will focus on spring garlic mustard pull and fall buckthorn control. Sweet white clover on Stoney Point will be addressed in a similar fashion as in 2022.