

The prescribed burn scheduled for the Slough Woodland Area on November 25, 2017 was not quite successful due to patchy fuel. Conditions were not dry enough, so burning was difficult. We will try, again, in the spring. Prior to doing so, we need to gather more grasses and clear out more shrubs in the area. A lot of brush makes it hard for the flames and fire to move. Maple leaves and leaves of the other types of trees present do not burn well, like oak leaves.

Fall Burn: ComEd Prairie, November 30, 2017

Dana Sievertsen of PHNRC was present during the prescribed burn led by ComEd and managed by Stantec at the ComEd Prairie on November 30, 2017.

The prescribed burn was patchy, but extremely successful. It was a learning experience to see how ComEd and Stantec controlled the burn. Stantec had a crew of 8 to 12 people with four people on ATVs with water tanks. They made 20 to 30-foot strip burns, and two crews worked on each side of the main path. A lot of thatch burned. Completed within 2 hours.

PHNRC followed-up after this burn by placing 80 pounds of seed on one of our workdays. It will be interesting to see how the prairie fares after late summer.

Stantec commented that they could not believe the ComEd prairie was a third-year prairie project because it was so well developed and, once again, testimony to the work we put into our projects. The ecological value has increased and invasives are under control.

ComEd's intention is to burn the Remnant Prairie this Spring. They are aware of the Remnant Prairie's proximity to the Chicago Executive Airport. They are also not opposed to burning the ComEd Prairie, again, this year. They are recommending that the Remnant Prairie should be burned frequently.

The Nature Preserve End of Grant Wrap-Up

We have expended all the funds for the Nature Preserve Grant. We will now complete a grant write-up, which is due February 10, 2018. The write-up will be like the Grant Report we completed last year and will include Sam's Eagle Scout Project and involvement from the entire community along with photos.

The Nature Preserve Interpretative Signage – we have the stakes and mounting posts but do not have the final verbiage for the actual interpretative signs. Once the files are completed, Dana will provide them to the Commissioners and the Park District for approval then pass them on to Blue Raven Creative for production. The ground needs to thaw, too, before installing the stakes and mounting posts. In the meantime, everything has been paid for.

The plan ID signs (permanent placards measuring 3" x 4") are hand-chipped slates and have been purchased to identify plants, shrubs and trees. Nancy has hand-lettered the species on the slates. One of our volunteers, Seth, has been working with Agnes on Wednesday mornings putting out seed and placing some of the markers in the Nature Center.

All the seed has been planted in the Nature Center. A few of the plants, such as Woodland Ephemerals, will need years to mature, so it may seem confusing to have a marker without the product showing, but it serves as a reminder of where the seed was placed.

As mentioned at the PHNRC Meeting of November 9, 2017, Emerald Landscaping reviewed the stepping stones, which have settled six to eight inches in the creek. They will prop the stepping stones by placing heavy river rock underneath them. The stepping stones are currently functional, but need to be tweaked. This re-visit is covered in the Grant.

The Prospect Heights Public Library is creating storyboards to be placed along the Nature Center path. They are having an unveiling along with the Prospect Heights Park District of the storyboards on Saturday, March 31, 2018. They plan to place little steps from the parking lot to the beginning of the storyboards on the Nature Center path. The unveiling of the storyboards will occur with other activities on March 31, including the Annual Egg Hunt. Our interpretative signs must be installed by March 31, 2018.

NEW BUSINESS

Seed/Greenhouse Program: Status Report

Agnes stated we have collected over 90 pounds of seed this past season. In 2016, we collected 110 pounds of seed. We purchased seed with grant funds and personal income another 40 pounds of seed, mostly Little Bluestem, to augment the seed mix.

We received a generous donation from Bruce and Pam Haerr of a few pounds of Bluestem.

We had a great seed collection workday at Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards on Saturday, October 21, 2017. We came back with a whole van load of seeds that we collected and what PCPS had previously collected for us.

The Greenhouse Program will begin end of February/early March 2018. We are looking to purchase a new, permanent Greenhouse from personal funds that measures 12' x 18' and provides hook-ups for electricity and heat. The investment is worthwhile as it provides a controlled environment for propagating and growing seed.

Winter Work Projects

Focus: We are scaling down on the plants this year and instead focusing on area management and invasive management. We need to focus our work with species that we do not have, species that are difficult to grow and species that take a long time to mature. We are also focusing on growing cooperative relationships with other organizations. For example, with Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards, we grow plants for them and in turn receive their help (work) in transplanting our plants.

Projects: This weekend (January 14), we will be working at Izaak Walton by the border where the trail starts and goes into the Elmhurst Road basin to remove dead Ash Trees by the trail, which are posing a safety hazard. We also need to eradicate a Siberian Elm invasion. There are nice oak trees in the area that are trying to survive. More sunlight would help the vegetation and help to eradicate invasives. The workday will also involve clearing the area around Elmhurst Road of debris.

Agnes and Dana will be meeting with Dino of the PHPD to review the work planned and removal of the Ash Trees.

Other projects will be at the Slough for buckthorn eradication, Nature Center and possibly Heron Pond. For the year, the Sedge Meadow will have our full focus for eradication of the teasel infestation. Managing invasives will be our #1 Priority for this year.

Progress Reports

Heron Pond: Agnes and Dana visited Heron Pond a few weeks' ago. The tree that had fallen into the pond was removed, which is a shame because it was a great habitat for the Cormorants, Herons and turtles. Not all the neighbors agreed on having the tree in the pond. Did they remove it or an agency?

Also, trees have been removed along the creek bank. Some of the trees were snag trees, which provides shelter and housing for birds. Other trees removed were live trees. This area is where we planted native plants to stabilize the shoreline. Further, a sizeable area was mowed. However, we should have marked where we planted.

Was all of this a MWRD project or did the private homeowners hire someone? PHPD confirmed it was not them.

Christina Ferraro will be addressing Heron Pond at the PHPD's board meeting on Tuesday, January 16. We need to know what we are doing there. If we continue to work at Heron Pond, it should be designated as an area managed by PHNRC.

We understand that half of Heron Pond is owned by the Homeowners Association and the other half is owned by the Park District. There are property lines and a plat of survey of where the Park District property begins and ends. This happened on Park District property. However, MWRD has jurisdiction, an easement and they can do anything associated with the creek.

Saint Alphonsus: St. Alphonsus has an all-volunteer Garden & Landscape Ministry. They collected their own seed from the wetland area in front of the church property and, also, attended some of our seed collection workdays to collect seed. We assisted them with placing all the seed in the retention basin, and the Garden Ministry placed plugs. This is a nice area to showcase for other areas that have detention, swales or standing water to illustrate you can vegetate these types of areas. The planting also decreases flooding.

Tully Park: The Tully Park Neighborhood spent several fall evenings gathering seed from plants they planted in the spring, like Blue Lobelia, Cardinal Flower, Rye Grass, Monarda, Purple Coneflower, Rubeckia and Mint, to name a few. Wendy processed the seeds as taught by Agnes, and the Tully Park Neighborhood spread them on Sunday, January 7, 2018 because the weather included snow/rain. The Tully Park Neighborhood hopes to have an invasive removal and burn workday this winter.

Regarding the Harvest Bible Church complex, Wendy Dewar met with Dan Peterson and the new building inspector. The management company that presented the original plans at the City Zoning Meetings was fired; apparently, some of the things they told us were untrue.

Regarding the detention system, the system is designed to keep one foot of water in the bottom and, supposedly, native wetland plants were planted. However, the City does not know if this was done nor do they know why the depth of the water that has been detained in the basin is at least three feet. Mr. Peterson promised to consider these issues. Wendy expressed concern that with the area having more water than designed, the plants may not survive. Mr. Peterson said he would consider it.

Regarding the outfall, it needs clean-up and repair, the responsibility of which is with the contractor until the church is authorized to occupy the building. Then the outfall is the responsibility of the City. Mr. Peterson assured Wendy that the City would require the contractor to repair and clean the outfall and add a trash screen, if necessary, to keep the garbage that flows into it from the basin from reaching the creek.

A tree screen was supposed to be planted as tall and thick enough to hide the building from view. This has not yet been resolved. The issue of moving the electric lines along the property line has prevented planting the types of trees and density of trees originally promised. There appears to be no solution to this.

Summer Interns Discussion

Our anonymous donor has re-upped a third time to pay for a PHNRC Summer Intern. It is truly remarkable and commendable that someone would do this and do it continuously. It is a huge benefit to the program. We wish our donor was not anonymous so that we could provide appropriate accolades.

Based on the terms of the Grant, one summer intern was provided the first year. It was a good experience, and a lot of work was accomplished. The second year, we had two summer interns, so not only was a lot of work accomplished, but time afforded having an educational component. This made a huge, positive difference in accomplishing our objectives.

We have spoken with Christina Ferraro. PHPD has not decided if they will fund a second intern for this summer. Therefore, PHPD funding for a summer intern is not something we can count on.

PHNRC must determine how we may have funding for an annual summer intern so that we can be assured of this resource. Should we arrange a fund or host an annual fundraising event? Another option is talking with PHPD or the City to fund a summer intern as a permanent position.

Peter Falcone advised us to install a summer intern expense into our budget. Peter had previously advised Agnes and Dana of the City's current financial status, which does not look great for any additional requests. Therefore, we must stress the benefit of an annual summer intern for the Commission and for the Community.

2018 Budget

The fiscal timeframe for our budget is May 1 – April 30. Our current 2017-2018 Proposed Budget is \$5,500 for expenses and the Grant of \$5,000 for a total budget of \$10,500. However, we are unsure if we will receive the Grant of \$5,000. Therefore, we must line our priorities, formulate our numbers and include a letter with our proposed budget to the City emphasizing our goals and objectives, provide data and reasons for our financial requests, and state why investing in the PHNRC is valuable to the community.

PHNRC has \$2,400 left in our current budget. Therefore, we could utilize this remaining money by April 30, 2018; many of the items listed in our budget are reusable. Whatever money is left over by April 30, returns to our general fund. We then focus our request for \$4,500 in 2018 for payment of a summer intern. We can also request or apply for a Grant from the City.

Application for a ComEd Grant, a matched fund, is due around March 15, 2018. The theme this year is pollinators. Project ideas for the ComEd Grant are: add to the green space in the City of Prospect Heights; Somerset Park; the detention basin of Somerset Park; add a boardwalk to the wet areas of the Slough; beautify the derelict areas of the Prospect Heights Park District.

Sean McMillan majored in landscape architecture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In his senior year (2016), Sean designed a plan for Somerset Park including water filtration to capture water run-off, a bike path, usage of plants as Phyto mediators, constructing a pavilion, etc. We could follow Sean's exact blueprint for his idea and begin Phase I of the project by stabilizing the shoreline along McDonald Creek at Somerset Park.

The addition of a boardwalk to the wet areas of the Slough could be a potential Eagle Scout Project.

The PHPD Master Plan has three categories of parks – community-based, neighborhood-based and two other divisions, which one covers derelict properties. One of the derelict areas is School Street Park located behind Dave's Auto along Palatine Frontage Road. It is owned by IDOT and leased by the PHPD.

There are also some properties along the ComEd Right of Way that are leased by the Park District and have a bike path, tennis courts, etc. One property owned by IDOT but currently not leased is located right across from the School extending from Kiwanis Park to Schoenbeck Road. This property is 3.5 acres of land right behind the Prospect Heights sign and across from the school. We could naturalize this land and create a path for the kids to use to walk to school. We could perhaps combine projects of Somerset Park and Kiwanis Park (7 acres of land to naturalize). Kiwanis Park has a problem of soil erosion.

We need to compile a list of potential projects and present it to the City and PHPD to see if there is any interest. We then prioritize what we need, especially having the interns and a bonus of applying for a Grant. The costs are \$4,500 for an intern and \$5,000 match for the grant with the Park District for a total budget request of \$9,500 from the City. We then slash our budget, re-use what we can, utilize our remaining funds from last year's budget and fund on our own what we need.

Dana will prepare the letter to accompany our Proposed 2017-2018 Budget.

We will start with the letter and then have a discussion with elected officials. Is the PHPD interested? If not, could the City fund the full \$10,000 Grant request? Commissioners approved this approach.

By our next meeting of February 8, 2018, we should know if the City and PHPD will participate in the Grant. By then, all Commissioners should have an idea of what the Grant proposal should look like and come prepared to our February 8 meeting decide, formulate a plan and then apply for the ComEd Grant by March 15.

Burn Permits for 2018

Dana will apply with the EPA for Spring and Fall 2018 burn permits. The areas we are interested in burning this coming year are very small sections around the Slough (planting areas) and areas around 9 Marion and 7 Hillside. Tully Park is not a mature enough area to burn.

Journal Articles

The Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission Year in Review Journal was released in December 2017.

The volunteer workday notice for Sunday, January 14, 2018 was released today.

Prospect Heights Public Library / Prospect Heights Park District Programs

Starting January 1, 2018, we are combining the Library and Park District Programs.

Last night, released the first announcement for the Nature Speaks Talk on January 23, 2018 by Stephen Packard on “Rare Animals, Rare Plants, Rare People – Adventures in Chicagoland Conservation.” Stephen is not only a remarkable speaker, but a gifted storyteller. Therefore, we anticipate the room to be full.

The Bird Walks will return in the Spring. The Bird Walks have been successful and will be a regular offering.

Our PHNRC website has been updated to include the webpage for Allison Sacerdote-Velat. Allison is a leading authority on Green Snakes and our next Nature Speaks presenter on April 19, 2018.

Dr. Gerould Wilhelm rounds-up our summer Nature Speaks program on June 28, 2018. Dr. Wilhelm is the Director of Research at the Conservation Research Institute in Cedarburg, Wisconsin and will speak on “Consilience, Concinnity, and the Way.”

We need to focus on potential new speakers. Commissioners are requested to submit ideas.

Garden Clubs

PHNRC (Agnes, Jill and Ed) spoke at the January 4, 2018 meeting of the Prospect Heights Garden Club. We felt it went well. An outcome of the meeting was a potential invitation from the Arlington Heights Garden Club to present our Slough Presentation at one of their Monday evening meetings.

We received stipend of \$50.00 from the Prospect Heights Garden Club. Upon inquiry to Peter Falcone on how to manage, he advised to place it into our City account.

Also, the Northtown Garden Society, Rodgers Park, Illinois, meets the first Thursday of the month and, also, requested us to present our Slough Presentation in April 2018. This is a broader audience.

Earth Day – Sunday, April 22, 2018

PHNRC is scheduled to have a volunteer workday on Sunday, April 22, 2018. This is also Earth Day.

Jill reminded the Commissioners that PHNRC desired to have a week of robust activities around Earth Day and could begin by having special guests, like Kurt and Rick, at our sites on April 22. Instead of a workday, we could have talks and tours by the experts.

Commissioners should think of ideas for Earth Day week and discuss at the February 8 meeting.

McDonald Creek Commission Meeting – January 23, 2018

Jill Moskal volunteered to be present at the MCC Meeting of January 23, 2018 for PHNRC representation.

Dana will speak with the MCC Chairman, Cathy Brady, to inquire if their January meeting could be rescheduled. The MCC January Meeting falls on the same night at the Nature Speaks presentation by Stephen Packard.

Visitor's Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, February 8, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary