



Park Notes

A newsletter of the Friends of St. Paul and Ramsey County Parks
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Aichinger receives Public Service award

Cliff Aichinger, Administrator of the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District received the 2011 Public Service Award from the Friends at their Annual meeting in June.

The Watershed District has a long and positive history of promoting environmental practices that benefit parks, trails and wetlands. They pioneered innovative and cutting edge techniques in managing water and improving and enhancing water quality and wildlife habitat. They were the first watershed district to use an ecosystem wide approach by using native plants in restoring adjacent uplands as well as shoreline and wetlands.

The District restored the Lake Phalen shoreline, removing rip rap and replacing it with native plants. And, for the District, partnering is the name of the game. The Phalen project included partnerships with the City of Saint Paul and Ramsey County correctional facility nursery and local schools.

When restoring the pond on McKnight Road, the Sod Farm and Market Place Pond on Little Canada Road community members participated. Through a partnership with the University of Minnesota's Carp Research Project they are researching methods to reduce and remove invasive species and restore and improve lakes, streams and wetlands.

The District has completed projects in several Ramsey County Parks including Battle Creek, Fish Creek Open Space, Beaver Lake and in open space along several creeks.

Straumann Park Volunteer of the Year

Rich Straumann was named 2011 Friends of the Parks Volunteer of the year at the June Annual Meeting at Tamarack Nature Center on June 23.

Rich has been an advocate, a leader and a hands-on volunteer on behalf of Ramsey County and Arden Hills parks. He has been a member of the Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Commission since 2003, serving as Chair from 2005 - 2010 and currently serving as Vice Chair.

Carley and Estes honored

Rich has walked or biked to the far corners as well as the busy congested areas of the County and is using his experience to create change. He has worked to promote and create environments that are safe and convenient so people can integrate physical activity into their daily routines, making the healthy choice the easy choice. Thanks to his work, communities are being connected, not divided, and County residents and visitors enjoy safer places to bike and walk.

George Carley and Gretchen Estes were recognized at the Friends annual meeting for years of dedicated service to Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.

George, a Como volunteers since 2000, is most active as part of Como's special events. If you have attended Holiday Magic, Zoo Boo or Japanese Lantern Lighting in the last 12 years, you have benefitted from Georges' electrical expertise which ensures a safe and effectively illuminated evening event. People may not always realize that their occupation or hobby can be a real volunteer asset. George has been generous in sharing his highly specialized skills to promote the park he loves.

Ninety year old Gretchen Estes has volunteered nearly 3000 hours over the last 15 years. She proves that age need not be a barrier to contributing fully to the community. She as been a public educator at the Marjorie McNeely Conservatory, a sales assistant at the gift shop, a special events assistant for the Music Under Glass and World Under Glass music series and was one of the first to support the Victorian Teas in the conservatory when they began in the mid 90's.

Gretchen exemplifies one of Como's primary goals: creating a warm and welcoming environment for visitors.

St. Paul Port Authority land swap moves forward

After months of wrangling the Saint Paul City Council approved a land transfer from the Port Authority to satisfy requirements of a variance they received in 2008. The Friends spoke in opposition to the Port Authority proposal.

Back in 2008 the Port Authority wanted to move Upper River Services from its present location on the south side of the Mississippi River across from downtown St. Paul to a new facility at South Port Barge Channel. At the time, although the move came with a steep public price tag, \$2 million from the Department of Transportation and \$1.5 million of Port Authority funds, it seemed like a very good plan. The current Upper River Services facility has a distinctly messy, industrial look and most people agreed with the then Port

Authority management, that there was a higher and more aesthetic public use for the land. Saint Paul agreed to the construction of the new facility but with conditions. The Port Authority would donate 2.6 acres of land including the quarter mile of Mississippi River shoreline to the park system and they would restore 18 acres of wetlands in the area. And two other parcels of land were also to be transferred to the City for parkland.

The new barge facility was built and it is now useable. That is the only part of the agreement that has been kept. No land was transferred, the wetlands were not restored and Upper River Services (URS) has not moved. New management at the Port Authority turned out to have a new plan. They no longer wanted to move URS but rather decided to leave them right where they are. They will attempt to lease the new facility to other river users. And since URS would not be moving, they could not transfer the land. They proposed to give the city small parcels of land scattered along the river rather than provide the city with pieces of land that could help create a more accessible river for park and recreation users. That is when the Friends balked and took their complaints first to the Port Authority then to the City Council.

Some of the land ultimately offered to the city will provide opportunities for future park and trail development but, from the Friends' perspective, it is not as high quality as was the original proposal. The Council also is requiring the Port to do the wetland restoration that was part of the original agreement.

“The City should change its procedures so that conditions of a variance be met prior to permits being issued,” said Friends Executive Director Peggy Lynch. “The City procedures should protect the citizens and assure that agreements are kept. That did not happen in this case.”

Construction in County Parks

Summer brings renovation, renewal and additions to the Ramsey County Park system and the construction season is in full tilt. Under way are:

- Four new picnic shelters with improved trail connections in Keller Park;
- Construction of a boat launch and dog park at Otter Lake;
- Redevelopment of Turtle Lake Park;
- Construction of a new picnic shelter at Battle Creek Park;

Land acquisition is also underway for land next to Island Lake in Shoreview. Ramsey County, in cooperation with the City of Maplewood and the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District, purchased 70 acres next to Fish Creek.

Buckthorn Pull at Priory Preserve

The County is also working to address the failing roadway between Vadnais and Sucker Lake. The road is badly deteriorated and in places it is so narrow between the lakes that upgrading and replacing the road is not an option. The county is working to have a trail with off-trail fishing access where the current road is. Automobile traffic will be routed around the lakes rather than between them.

Fall is the perfect time to tame the buckthorn attempting to take over wooded areas and now is a great time to volunteer your time. On Saturday, October 1 from 9:30 – 12:00 volunteers will be removing buckthorn from the Priory Preserve in Maplewood. Meet at the Montana Avenue entrance adjacent to 2563 Montana. Call the Maplewood Nature Center to register by September 26 at 651-249-2170. Wear gloves, long-sleeved shirt, long pants and sturdy shoes. Leave the flip-flops at home. Groups including kids 11 and up are welcome but don't feel you need to be a group to help.

Crosby Lake gets new management plan

Crosby Lake, a floodplain lake in Crosby Lake Farm Regional Park just off Shepard Road in Saint Paul, should see significant improvements in its water quality during the next decade under a plan developed by the Capitol Regional Watershed District (CRWD).

The plan was developed by a technical advisory and citizen advisory group that began meeting in the fall of 2010 to develop management goals and actions to preserve and improve the lake and the quality of water flowing into the Mississippi. Crosby receives storm water diverted away from the bluffs and that water can contain sediment and pollutants such as phosphorus from fertilizers applied to area lawns.

**The Friends of Parks & Trails
in Saint Paul & Ramsey County
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