

Park Notes

A newsletter of the Friends of St. Paul and Ramsey County Parks
1621 Beechwood Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55116 651- 698-4543
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Bluff project completed

*If anyone had said it would
be this hard, would we have
embarked on this project?
You bet!*

City council approves resolution

Done at last! Three years ago the Friends won a grant from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCMR) to restore ecological health to a 5-mile stretch along the Mississippi River from Emerald to Highway 5. The accomplishments far exceed the gray hair and the sweat and tears:

- 1) The entire area was mapped to identify which areas could be accessed by volunteers and which required professional teams.
- 2) An inventory of native plants was completed.
- 3) Buckthorn and tartarian honeysuckle were removed from 199 acres.
- 4) Information about buckthorn was provided to the public through dozens of newspaper articles, news conferences, community meetings, a portable display, the Friends' newsletter and web site (www.friendsoftheparks.org) and a color brochure distributed through the *Villager*, *Midway Monitor* and *St. Anthony Park Bugle*.
- 5) The affected neighborhood learned more than they ever wanted to know about controlled burning for environmental restoration.
- 6) Five weed wrenches were donated to ACE Rental 1668 Grand Ave. for free use by residents removing buckthorn on private property.
- 7) A long term management plan was developed to guide the city's efforts during the decades to come. Available electronically at www.friendsoftheparks.org/plan.html.
- 8) The project was done on time, under budget.

WHEREAS, The Friends of the Parks and Trails initiated the Mississippi River Bluff Restoration Project, through grant monies from the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, in response to the invasion of the exotic plant known as buckthorn which decreased the biodiversity, natural habitat and native plant species, while increasing erosion, on the River Bluff; and

WHEREAS, the Mississippi River Bluff Restoration Project incorporated the strengths of area organizations, district councils and the Saint Paul Department of Parks and Recreation to educate the community and involve neighbors in eliminating buckthorn from public and private lands; and

WHEREAS, through this coordinated effort, the Mississippi River Bluff Restoration Project removed 199 acres of buckthorn over the 3 year grant period, thus allowing the return of native plant species, birds and other wildlife to the River Bluffs; and

WHEREAS, the Friends of the Parks and Trails persevered through many obstacles, succeeded in accomplishing their grant objectives and have committed to work beyond the grant period to ensure the future ecological health of the River Bluffs against exotic, invasive plants;

Environmental burn fizzles

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul City Council would like to honor and thank the Friends of the Parks and Trails for initiating and organizing such a massive project to preserve the ecological health of one of our most valuable resources, the Mississippi River, through the protection of the River Bluffs.

What if you gave a bonfire and no one brought the matches? That is a bit what it felt like when the Friends canceled the environmental burns scheduled along the Mississippi River as part of the plan to control exotic and invasive species along the bluff. Since burning is the preferred method for ridding an area of buckthorn seedlings, a series of controlled burns were included in the management plan. Burns were planned for this spring.

In preparation for doing a burn in the heart of the City, the Friends attended numerous neighborhood meetings and provided essential information to the community through meetings and news coverage. Some residents were quite anxious, fearing a run-away blaze. Most of those concerns were answered and all of the affected District Councils voted to support the management plan. The Friends assured the community that the burns would take place only when wind and humidity conditions were ideal. While the neighbors' concerns were that there might be a wild fire, the burn contractor's biggest concern was that there simply was not enough fuel on much of the site to sustain a fire. So, once the burn plan was in place the contractor anxiously watched weather conditions. On days when the humidity was right, the winds were too strong, too light, or from the wrong direction. In the end, the conditions were not met before spring rains arrived and the area greened up. The burn was not completed.

"Of course we would have preferred to get the burn in this spring. But, we told the community we were careful and would not move forward unless conditions were perfect. We were true to our word, and everyone in the neighborhood knows a whole lot more about the use of fire as a method of environmental restoration. We accomplished much of our goal even though we were never able to actually strike that match," said project manager Cindy Schwie.

Banovetz receives Public Service Award

Vadnais Heights Mayor Sue Banovetz was presented the Friend's 2002 Public Service Award at the annual meeting in June. The award is presented annually to an elected official who has done an outstanding job of protecting and improving parks and trails in the county. Banovetz is just that kind of community leader.

Banovetz' public service for parks began after the City of Vadnais Heights conducted a community satisfaction survey. The survey made it clear that improvements to parks were very important and walking and jogging were dominant recreational activities. Banovetz joined the park commission the next year and began pushing for the improvements her fellow citizens wanted. Two years later she was elected to the city council and in 1996 she was elected mayor. During her years of service Banovetz has seen the development of Kohler Meadows Park and Community Park was completely redeveloped. The City has improved trails, sidewalks and paved shoulders on Highway 996, County Road E, LaBore Road, County Road F and Centerville Road. Several shorter connecting trails are scheduled for completion this summer. The City worked with the St. Paul Water Department and Ramsey County to make the trails around Sucker Lake open and available to the public.

Bob Garrett named Park Citizen

Without volunteers, community park systems would simply not work as well as they do. Bob Garrett sets the volunteer gold standard. Garrett devotes

Bob Garrett, Como volunteer

much of his “retirement” to carry out programs at Como Park. Since he began his involvement in 1999, he has devoted hundreds of hours to the Zoo and Conservatory programs.

Garrett assists in training and supporting other volunteers. He has been a member of two national studies and is trained to make accurate records of his animal observations. His records are used by the Zoo staff and national team of experts as they work to gain knowledge of these wild, captive animals.

Garrett assists with the largest fund raising event of the year, the Halloween ZooBoo, doing everything from data entry and proofreading to performing as a costumed character.

As Volunteer Coordinator Karyn Thompson put it, “Bob is dependable, thorough and willing to assist with any project. He is indispensable to the activities at the Como Park Zoo and Conservatory.”

Other volunteers who were recognized at the Friends’ annual meeting for their volunteer commitment to parks and trails were Candace E. Petersen, Bill Peterson, Corrine Larson and Richard Kramer.

Candace Peterson served on the North St. Paul Parks and Recreation Commission for 13 years. She instituted the Park Fund to receive donations for parks, organized the Park Clean-up and has donated untold hours to improve and protect North St. Paul’s parks.

Bill Peterson volunteers to maintain and groom the little league fields at Dunning Park. He helps train umpires, provides clinics for coaches and chairs a group of volunteers who developed a coaches manual establishing a code of conduct for coaches, umpires, parents and participants.

Corrine Larson is another of Como Park’s amazing volunteers. A retired educator and life-long learner, Larson has never stopped teaching. She uses her creative talents to design and create new activities for the public.

Richard Kramer heads the Friends of Lake Phalen. He never misses an opportunity to improve the park. He has done grant writing and is affectionately called a “pit bull” when it come to securing funding for important park projects.

Samuel H. Morgan Trail

Sam Morgan was a giant among people who support parks and trails. In recognition of his life- time of service the Saint Paul City Council endorsed naming the East Bank Mississippi River Regional Trail from Highway 5 to Chestnut Street the Samuel H. Morgan Regional Trail. The trail will be dedicated in a ceremony adjacent to the trail on Friday, September 20. We will provide more information about the ceremony and the celebration of Sam’s life and accomplishments as plans are finalized.

Vento, Hauser, Dunham and Andresen join board

Andrea Vento is a Saint Paul native and lives in Maplewood. She recently retired from Qwest/US West after thirty years. There she built and managed a half-billion dollar business unit and represented the Company in national industry forums. Vento is active in local community organizations and is a long time supporter of the work of the Friends. “I am enthusiastic about the challenges facing

Really hate buckthorn?

Then a T-shirt that says, "*Die buckthorn Scum*" is just the thing. Go on line at www.justaddwater.ws/merchandise.htm to place your order.

Volunteer opportunities:

the Friends and am committed to moving our agenda forward," Vento said. Vento is the sister of former Congressman Bruce Vento, one of the nation's strongest and most effective environmental spokespeople until his death just over a year ago.

Steven Hauser is a computer scientist who owns his own company, Steven Hauser & Associates, Inc. They provide database and systems administration consultation for large business systems. He is active with the Ayd Mill road issue and is working to get hiking and biking paths in the Ayd Mill Corridor. He is a daily user of the Mississippi River trails and flood plain, the main reason he has chosen to live in St. Paul's Highland Park neighborhood.

Trudy Dunham is the project director of the Center for 4-H Youth Development at the University of Minnesota Extension Service. One of her major projects has been GoCyberCamp, an online natural resources science and art "camp" for 8 - 12 year-olds. She is on the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission and is active in the League of Women Voters. She enjoys sailing, gardening, genealogy, and home improvement activities.

Craig Andresen returns to the board after a 2 year 'vacation.' Andresen is Mr. "anti-buckthorn". He has been involved in most of the buckthorn removal and restoration projects in Ramsey County during the last few years. He is a get-it-done kind of guy who really loves the environment and has committed his work and volunteer efforts to environmental restoration. Andresen is truly a "tree hugger", one of the best kind.

July 16, (Tuesday) 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Help maintain the Lake Como shoreline. Weeding is the name of this job description.

July 22, (Monday) 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Assist in the up-keep of new plants along the Mississippi River Bluff at Desnoyer Park. Meet between Eustis St. and Pelham Blvd. at the Bluff.

July 30, (Tuesday) 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Assist in weeding around new plants along the Mississippi River Bluff at the High Bridge. Meet at the Smith Aveune High Bridge on the south side at the intersection of Smith and Cherokee. Call 651-266-6458 for more information about these volunteer opportunities.

**The Friends of Parks & Trails
in Saint Paul & Ramsey County
1621 Beechwood Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55116**

**CHANGE SERVICE
REQUESTED**