



Park Notes

A newsletter of the Friends of St. Paul and Ramsey County Parks
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Public Service Award to Rep. Rick Hansen



Representative Rick Hansen, who represents much of Dakota County, received the 2009 Public Service Award at the Friends Annual meeting in recognition of his strong environmental record. Hansen is an eco-leader at the State Capitol, serving on the Outdoor Heritage Council and guiding the Legacy bill through the House.

Legislation with Hansen's finger prints on it include funding for the Minnesota Conservation Corps which engages youth and young adults in building skills while working to enhance natural resources, parks and trails. He championed legislation to protect urban forests including securing funding to help control Emerald Ash Borer.

Hansen played a pivotal role in winning passage of legislation to update the Mississippi River Critical Area program. (See article below) "Without Hansen's leadership this bill simply would not have happened," said Marilyn Lundberg, Friends' board member and long term advocate for water and steep slope protections. "This was a complex bill with a complicated and sometimes confused opposition. Hansen not only took this issue on, he hung in there until the work was done. As a board member and resident of a river community, I only have praise for his effectiveness."

Legislation to protect the area surrounding the Mississippi River, the Critical Area, finally became law after years of increasing difficulty in protecting the area and conflicting forces with quite different visions for the river and its management.

Over 30 years ago Governor Quie signed an executive order providing a high level of protection for the area adjacent to the Mississippi as it runs through the Metro area. This executive order has guided development along the river. Since St. Paul has seventeen miles of river corridor, this legislation and its protections are particularly important in the Saintly City.

The bill was carried in the House by Rep. Rick Hansen and in the Senate by Sen. Katie Sieben.

This legislation will provide a level of protection for the river that was intended by the executive order, however, the executive order process can make enforcement very difficult. Under the new law the Department of Natural Resources will hold public hearings and develop implementing rules. The Friends and other river lovers will continue working through this process to ensure that scenic views, water quality, steep slopes, flora and fauna are protected. Future newsletters and mailings will keep our members up to date on developments.

Critical Area bill becomes law

Tunnel Vision



Thanks to volunteer park users in northern Ramsey County the tunnel under North Lexington/County J/ near the North Rice Creek Reserve Dog Park will soon be sporting a new look. Thanks to the leadership of Susan Schoon, soon lemons will be squeezed into lemonade.

The tunnel has long been plagued with unsightly graffiti. Since people seem determined to leave their mark on the flat surfaces, Schoon came up with the idea of creating a community mural using volunteer artists. Her theory, based on the experience in other communities, is that when an area is cared for instead of looking abandoned, those who would deface the property with sprayed graffiti, leave it alone.

Schoon has engaged a community of artists of all ages who are helping design and create the mural. A 6th grader, Ana Face, came up with the initial ideas and designer Christopher Bohnet is merging concepts from throughout the community to develop a piece of art with meaning to those who use the park.

“This is about animals, plants, creatures, buildings, whatever - how we live together and create community,” said Schoon. “My intent is to create something really beautiful and wonderful down there.”

The project has no budget for supplies such as paint, brushes, scaffolding, and use of a generator. If you want to get involved by participating in or supporting this project e-mail tunnelvisioncommunity@yahoo.com and join the Tunnel Vision Community on Facebook.

Susan Moyer Volunteer of the year



Park volunteers honored

Susan Moyer was named the Park Citizen of the year for her tireless work at Battle Creek Regional Park. Moyer has been the Earth Day clean up coordinator for eight years. She coordinated all the site leaders and kitchen staff for the event. She secured donated food and beverages from local merchants while managing the logistics for the event. This year 300 volunteers collected 5600 pounds of trash. Moyer seems to have the Huck Finn touch. Volunteers from as far away as Duluth participated in the litter clean up.

During Moyer’s eight years as coordinator over 20 tons of refuse have been gathered from the park and properly disposed of. The Friends heartily thank Ms Moyer for her dedication and hard work on behalf of Battle Creek Park.

Tom Kayser has served on the Saint Paul Parks and Recreation Commission for six years, serving as vice chair, committee chair. He is now applying his organizational and legal skills to creating and advising the work of a new non-profit, the Saint Paul Parks Conservancy, whose mission is to raise funds to enhance and expand parks and recreation opportunities throughout the community.

Mae Kindler is a Como Park Zoo and Conservatory volunteer, contributing 657 hours of time and talent in support of education and special event activities. In 2006 she was a costumed volunteer at the ZooBoo and graduated to assist with event planning and volunteer lead. She is a highly valued Como volunteer.

Ruth Fagen is a Como Park volunteer who has logged over 1000 hours in service to the zoo and Conservatory. She is an education program assistant and plant and animal interpreter. She devotes most of her time to supporting class instructors. Her nominator said, “Ruth’s positive attitude, kindness and commitment to Como’s success make our sometimes chaotic classes go off without a hitch.”

Chase Davies brings a life-time in environmental education to her volunteer work at Mississippi School and Como Park. She has served as an education interpreter, family educator and outdoor gardener aide. She assists the zoo keepers with Como's Blandings Turtle Study at Croby Park, taking regular trips to log the endangered turtles' location and condition. Davies is also active with the Saint Paul Audubon and regularly recruits other birders to work with and mentor students on a bird study led by Josh Leonard, a science teacher at Como Senior High.

Deb Robinson works tirelessly to improve and maintain Como Park in her role on the Environment Committee of the Como Community Council. She served on the Como Lake Shoreland Task Force to guide the shoreland restoration, which has improved the water quality, reduced goose populations around the lake and esthetically enhanced this area of the park. She spearheaded creation of the Como Woodland Outdoor Classroom. To date over 100 students have used the Classroom for natural science studies.

First enhancement for Dickerman Park

Dickerman Park will finally get what it has coming. Well, it will get a little bit of what it has coming. To start with, a bus shelter prominently featuring photos of neighborhood people will be erected adjacent to the park, a first installment on what will, hopefully, be a much more dramatic project.

Tiny Dickerman Park, a narrow swath of land along University Avenue between Fairview and Aldine, was once part of a spectacular vision for the Avenue. In 1909 the Dickerman Investment Company and Griggs, Cooper and Company donated the land to the city to create a grand, tree lined boulevard reminiscent of the glorious tree-lined European Boulevards.

That vision faded and in time the park was despoiled with a parking lot, fences, business signs, the annual Y Christmas Tree sale, and random walkways. Few who passed it would have guessed it was a city-owned park. But the original Dickerman vision flickered to life again in 2002. The Friends initiated a series of meetings engaging the neighbors and businesses in discussions of what this tiny patch of misused public space could become. The Dickerman family, led by Kent and Ariel Dickerman raised \$45,000 and the Saint Paul Star Board awarded \$30,000 to cover initial redesign of the park and a demonstration project.

It has taken seven years, or if you calculate it the other way, 100 years, but at least a small part of the vision is now coming to life. Further development of the park will occur in conjunction with development of the Central Corridor.

Undoubtedly the lesson of this project is that worthwhile projects can take a while. Sometimes too long. But keep the faith, who knows, the grand boulevards of Europe may yet be put to shame by University Avenue. Hey. We have time.

Gators water trees

You may have seen them and wondered what those large green plastic bags are surrounding newly planted trees in Ramsey County. They are called Tree Gators. They hold twenty gallons of water. After they are filled it takes them five to nine hours to leak the water around the base of the tree, thus ensuring that the water stays right where it is most needed, available for the new roots of the young trees.

Park systems have long struggled to get sufficient water to new trees, resulting in expensive and unfortunate loss of many trees during dry spells. Sending a truck around to dump water on them is impractical because if the tree is watered quickly,

most of the precious water runs away. Slowly watering trees at a rate that the soil can absorb the water is simply too time consuming. Tree Gators to the rescue.

Last year the Friends learned about the availability of the Gators. Primarily with funding from the bequest to the Friends from 'Sunray' (Paula) Culp, all trees contributed to parks through the Friends received it's own gator.

"We are optimistic that this new watering system will greatly reduce the damage done to young trees during these dry spells," said Executive Director Peggy Lynch. "The County and cities who accepted the Tree Gators are pledged to fill them. This is a great example of how a bequest can be used to enhance the work of the Friends.

Worried about Emerald Ash Borer?

Pause a moment!!

Should you follow the admonition of the billboard ads and call a tree service and treat your tree? Please don't.

Worried about Emerald Ash Borer? Now is a good time to pause, take a deep breath and learn the essentials of the dreaded bug and larva. But the first order of business is to start learning, and probably begin thinking of planting a replacement tree. It is not to start treating your tree.

Emerald Ash Borer, or EAB as it is called by its sworn enemies, is deadly to all native ash trees. The experience of other communities shows that it is likely to cause the death of the majority of the thousands of ash trees throughout Minnesota.

So far the only known infestation in the metro area is confined to a small area of St. Anthony Park near Highway 280 in Saint Paul. All of the ash trees in that area have been thoroughly inspected and all infected trees on public and private land have already been removed. Purple kite-like traps that attract the EAB are now hanging on ash trees throughout the city. They are checked for any stuck bugs and in the fall will be removed for a more complete inspection. That will tell us if the EAB has spread and to where. In the mean time, there is simply no need to treat.

It takes several years for EAB to kill an ash tree. If the bug is found outside the St. Anthony area this fall, residents will have ample time to make an informed decision on whether or not to treat their tree. In the meantime, don't haul wood up to the cabin. That is a primary method of transporting the bugs. Everyone who loves trees wants to help. Control of firewood transport is the most important thing to do just now.

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