



Park Notes

A newsletter of the Friends of St. Paul and Ramsey County Parks
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Buckthorn Still there and growing strong.



Communities across the state continue to fight against the alien invader, buckthorn. The battle was joined about a decade ago when it was declared a noxious plant and can no longer be legally sold in Minnesota.

Legal and believed desirable nearly a century ago, it was widely sold by the nursery trade and touted as hardy, able to grow under nearly all soil and weather conditions, and early to leaf out in the spring and late to drop it's leaves in the fall. Unfortunately all of those desirable traits were identical to its undesirable traits. This hardy little tree simply out competes the natives, crowding out more desirable vegetation and leaving behind a mono-culture that is not good for man, nor beast, and certainly not for birds. Birds love the blue/black berries. Unfortunately they are a diuretic and have little nutritional value for our feathered friends.

Saint Paul recently reported the work Parks have done to control buckthorn. Between September 2008 and August 2009 they cleared 41 acres.

Indian mounds Regional Park	15
Crosby Farm Regional Park	12.36
Swede Hollow	7.47
Como Regional Park	3.46
Henry Park	2.3
Highwood Nature Preserve	.55
Mississippi River Boulevard	.18

Removal work cost \$33,750, which was grant funded. Volunteers helped haul and stack brush at all locations, which the Parks Department figures was worth an additional \$30,000.

The most desirable method for keeping Buckthorn from growing back is a controlled burn. Unfortunately, in an urban area, conditions need to be absolutely perfect to do these environmental burns. Burns scheduled along Mississippi River Boulevard were cancelled because of dry or windy conditions. Ramsey County Parks also had to cancel burns at Battle Creek.

Ramsey County has focused much of its efforts on keeping buckthorn out of areas previously cleared. They also have initiated a Buckthorn Brigade

Friends to celebrate 25 years

training program to train volunteers to assist in removal efforts. Two volunteer projects, one at Tamarack and an on-going project at Snail Lake have used the Brigade.

Homeowners have an important role to play in beating back this pest. If you have a buckthorn hedge, have it removed this fall. Since the fruit stays on the tree late into winter, birds transport the seeds far and wide. Only you can prevent your buckthorn from spreading its evil seeds. Remove it.

The Friends will celebrate 25 years of advocating for parks, trails and open spaces in Ramsey County at an anniversary celebration May 23, 2010. Save the date and help us celebrate our shared achievements.

The years seem to have flown by since the Friends were first born in a meeting in a private home in 1985. Some of the highlights include:

- 'No net loss' of parkland in both Saint Paul and Ramsey County which stopped the practice of allowing development on park land.
- Establishment of park commissions for Saint Paul and Ramsey County so there is a formal process to gather citizen input.
- Inauguration of the annual tree sale with donations of over 6000 trees to communities around the metro area.
- Removal of buckthorn and restoration of the Mississippi River Bluff to its more natural environment.
- Installation of a safe bikeway on the I-35E bridge.
- Restoration of Pickerel Lake by the Metropolitan airports Commission as mitigation for filling at the Saint Paul Downtown Airport.
- Support the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant site as a park.

Watch for more information about our birthday in upcoming issues of *Park Notes*.

Vision needed for TCAAP

Plans for the Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAAP) are again up in the air. Housing and commercial development plans have been derailed by enormous environmental clean-up costs and a down economy, potentially opening the door again for further park development.

The plant, located within the City boundaries of Arden Hills, is heavily contaminated. The standard for clean-up for residential uses is much higher than is the standard for park land, and that translates to dollars. Clean up for development of 1000-1500 residential units would cost close to \$150 million. The cost to clean up the area for passive recreation would be between \$8 and \$15 million. Recently the Ryan company, the developer selected by the city, withdrew from the project citing the clean-up costs. The Arden Hills City Council voted to dedicate about 475 acres to park land and open space. The Federal government plans to sell the property in the summer of 2010.

A brief history

The Twin Cities Ordinance Plant was established in 1941 as part of the War Department's government-owned, contractor-operated war materials

“We need a new vision for this property. The cost of cleanup and the transportation connections for any development are problems. Those issues simply do not exist if become a passive park and open space. This could become a premier Regional Park.”

Planned giving

Tamarack Nature Center

production program. During its tenure as a munitions plant over four billion rounds of .30 and .50 caliber cartridges were produced. At its peak in 1943 26,000 people were employed, more than half women. Production ceased in July 1945 and the Army’s contract for arms was put on standby.

In 1950 the arsenal resumed production due to the Korean War and it was again placed on standby in 1958. But its military career was not yet over. In 1963 it was renamed the Twin cities Army Ammunition Plant and small arms were produced for the escalating Vietnamese conflict. When production ended in 1976, the plants’ life as a armaments production facility were over, but significant soil and water contamination remained. Between 1981 and 1989 there was significant environmental remediation. The area was declared a ‘superfund’ site and is now Minnesota’s largest such site.

In the mid- 1990’s the federal government began consideration of plans for divesting US Army ownership of the site. Representative Bruce Vento formed a committee to consider alternatives. The recommendations that followed were dubbed ‘The Vento Plan’. The Vento re-utilization committee recommended about 1,500 acres for a regional park reserve and considered the Minnesota National Guard as a good interim caretaker for the natural areas. That plan was thwarted when the Guard was granted a 99 year lease for the 1,500 acres to use for training.

The Friends have been active players in the debate since 1989. The Friends' *Plan for Parks, Trails and Open Space* recommended acquisition for a trail connection for Rice Creek through the TCAAP for canoes and a linear trail for pedestrians and bikes. Subsequently the Friends backed the transfer of 113 acres from the US army for the Rice Creek trail.

When sitting down to prepare your will, remember the Friends; it does make a difference. The recent bequest by Paula Sunray Culp enabled the Friends to match the contribution of trees that our members donated to parks. That means that the trees planted this year were much bigger than trees planted in previous years. The Culp bequest also funded ‘tree gators’ to assist the parks department in keeping newly planted trees watered. Next spring the Culp donation will pay for 100 new trees in Ramsey County parks.

One bequest, hundreds of trees for the future. Ms. Culp’s donation will live on for decades.

Bequests can be made in cash, securities or other assets and they may be deducted from estate taxes. The Friends is a 501c3 nonprofit organization.

Redevelopment of Tamarack Nature Center is underway with the award of contracts for the Nature Play Area and the Children’s Garden. The Garden House project, 1,500 square foot, handicapped accessible Garden House will have doors on all sides that can be opened to make an open air pavilion. It will include a small kitchen, an evaporator and area for maple

Now's the time for trees

These are not puny saplings and they are Minnesota Hardy. Thanks to the bequest of Paula Culp, any tree that is donated to a park within Ramsey County will be upgraded to a larger tree.



sugaring. There will be an observation platform to view the ample syrup evaporation process.

The holidays are just around the corner and now is the time to think about gift giving. Consider a gift of a Tribute Tree. A Tribute Tree is one that you give in honor of someone and it is planted in a park by city staff. Voila! No gift-wrapping! No shipping! No spending hours at the mall! AND it is perfect for that person who already has one or two of everything you can think of and can afford.

Even better, a tree is a gift that will be enjoyed by the birds and critters just as much as it is appreciated by the person you are recognizing. Such a deal. Everyone benefits: you; your friend; the Friends; the park system; and our shared environment.

Tribute trees cost \$75 each or three for \$200. A hand stamped holiday card announcing your gift will be sent to the person you wish to honor. Park staff will plant the tree next summer and by late summer we will send a map showing its location. To purchase your gift tree, please use the form included with *Park Notes*, or download an order form from the Friends' website at www.friendsofthparks.org.

Trees may be donated for planting in Ramsey County Parks, and in Apple Valley, Arden hills, Blaine, Brooklyn Park, Cottage Grove, Eagan, Falcon Heights, Lauderdale, Little Canada, Maplewood, Mendota Heights, North Saint Paul, Roseville, Saint Louis Park, Saint Paul, Shoreview, Vadnais Heights, White Bear Lake, White Bear Township and Woodbury.

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