



November 2013

Park Notes

Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County

1621 Beechwood Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55116



Work resumes on Rules for Mississippi River Critical Area



The Friends have been involved in the Mississippi River Critical Area process for many years and will continue to monitor new rules the DNR is now developing. In the 1970's, two governors designated the Mississippi River corridor a Critical Area by Executive Order. The Metropolitan Council then made the Mississippi River corridor through the Twin Cities a permanent Critical Area. Executive Order 79-19 contains a framework that guides the planning and zoning of metro area governmental units along the Mississippi corridor.

In 2007, the Friends proposed a bill to update Minnesota Statutes regarding the Critical Area program. What started out as a bill to include some Critical Area definitions in law, such as bluffs, ended up with a task force, a study, and later legislation to develop state rules for the Critical Area. The DNR started developing the rules in 2009, but didn't finish before the time allotted by the state to develop rules ran out, and the rule-making stopped.

New legislation in 2013 removed the time limit for the rules, and rule-making is again underway. The DNR is now meeting with cities and others to get input on draft rules. The DNR hopes to have the rules adopted by the fall of 2014 but has many steps to go through before that can happen.

These new rules will govern how and where building will take place in the Mississippi River corridor. This means how high and close to the bluffs and Mississippi River buildings are allowed. Ironically, the definitions the Friends requested were in Minnesota Statutes, but were deleted when the resumption of rule-making was authorized. Now the definitions used over the years in local governments' to reduce ordinances can change reducing protections. Under the Executive Order buildings are required to be set back 40 feet from the bluff line, one of the changing definitions. Under the proposed rules, some buildings could be built as close as 20 feet. This would be a step backward.

The bluffs constantly erode. If a building is only 20 feet from the bluff now, how far will it be from the bluff in 20 years? If anything, bluff setbacks should be increased not reduced. There are many places that had been built close to the bluff before the Critical Area regulations. We can see places where the bluff has fallen away over the years, and buildings are now dangerously close to the bluff. It would be best if all units of government in the corridor had regulations requiring 40 foot setbacks so it would not be a hardship on anyone to keep them in place.

The Friends will monitor the draft rules as they progress. For more information email Marilyn Lundberg, mardonlun@hotmail.com.

Boulevard Tree Inventory

by Rachel Coyle, Urban Forester, City of St. Paul, and Jeanne Weigum



Faced with the second tree species catastrophe in a generation, Saint Paul embarked in 2013 on a massive inventory of city boulevard trees. The purpose was to identify the number, species, size and health of trees on public boulevards. The die-off of the stately elms that began forty years ago is now followed by the rapidly spreading disease spread by Emerald Ash Borer. With 120,000 boulevard and parkway trees in the city, creating the initial inventory is a daunting task.

Saint Paul Forestry, with the help of iTree software (developed by the USDA Forest Service) has developed street tree assessments by planning district. The reports come from the tree inventories and are used by Saint Paul arborists in planning for future boulevard plantings.

The forestry division has completed 80% of the inventory or about 100,000 trees. The inventory will be used to schedule tree trimming, budgeting and long-term planning including projecting future losses due to both Emerald Ash Borer and Dutch Elm disease. In the summer of 2012 some species of trees suffered defoliation from Japanese Beetles. If we have several summers in a row like 2012, those species may become vulnerable to other diseases and the city may need to cease planting certain varieties.

The inventory will be the best source of information for the forestry department

The trees that comprise the urban forest of Saint Paul provide a variety of benefits. Trees are our largest source of green infrastructure and enhance the landscape by providing shade to homes, roads and parking lots. They also provide color, beauty and character to the community. Trees also provide benefits behind the scenes, such as the interception and storage of rainwater and carbon, the reduction of noise pollution and have even proven to reduce crime and stress.

In February, the Friends donated \$4,000 to St. Paul Forestry to assist with the completion of the boulevard and parkway tree inventory. Prior to the Friends donation it was reported that the inventory was about 60% complete. Since then the Forestry unit has been able to further efforts and complete an additional 20% utilizing full time and part time staff, an intern and volunteers.



To view some of the survey results visit <http://stpaul.gov/index.aspx?NID=4581>.

IN MEMORY OF TWO PARK GIANTS

Patrons of local parks bid farewell to two giants this fall. Bob Nethercut, manager of the Metropolitan Regional Park Commission for 13 years, and Bob Piram, superintendent of St. Paul Parks and Recreation for 26 years, both died in September. They put their stamp on the park system in a way that will live on for generations. Their contribution to the community is their living tribute.

Everyone at Friends of the Parks offers their condolences to the families of these fine individuals.



Bob Nethercut was instrumental in the creation and expansion of one of the largest regional park systems in the country. He approached the Legislature in 1974 to seek funding to establish the regional park system. That system now includes 51 parks and park reserves, more than 300 miles of interconnected trails, and seven special recreation areas in the seven county metro area.

Over the years, Nethercut secured about \$120 million to expand the regional park system which helped make the park system what it is today. Regional parks in Saint Paul include: Harriet Island-Lilydale, Crosby Lake – Hidden Falls, Como, and Phalen Parks. Regional parks in Ramsey County include: Battle Creek, Long Lake, Keller, Bald Eagle, and Snail Lake Parks.

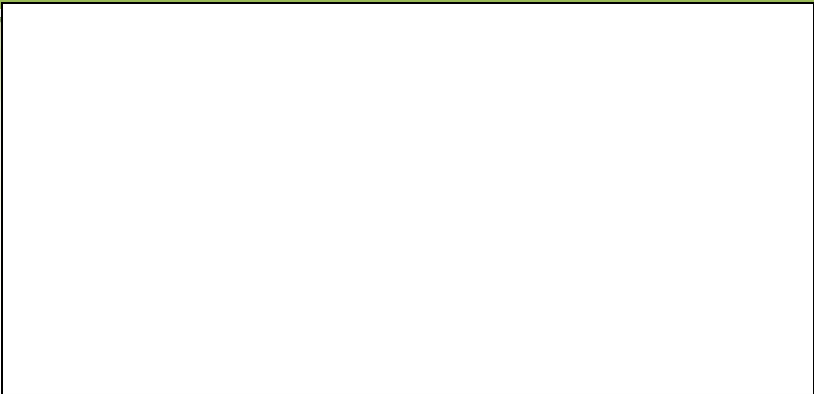


Bob Piram worked to establish the regional park system, but his emphasis was on the St. Paul park system. Bob influenced what we take for granted today, according to Mike Hahm, current St. Paul Park's Director. Many of the parks along the Mississippi River in St. Paul were established when Piram was park director. He also orchestrated the merger of the Como Park Zoo and Como Conservatory into a single nonprofit entity.

Thanks to Piram's work, one decision made long ago and enacted into legislation, is a gift to Minnesota families that just keeps on giving. This was the decision to make admission to the Como Park Zoo and Conservatory free. No one even knows to say thank you for this gift, but it was Piram who brought it about. Bob was an environmentalist, protector of water quality, and was a big part of creating our park systems as we know them now. His imprint will long outlast this generation and our shared memory of his work.

1621 Beechwood Avenue

CHANGE SERVICE
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A Wonderful Legacy

Como Conservatory

The Friends Tribute Tree program is a wonderful way to honor the loss of a loved one or to bring lasting meaning to a special event. I speak from personal experience. When my husband died in 2012, I suggested donations could be made to the Friends for Tribute Trees in his memory. The Friends' Tribute Trees were planted in Lilydale Park and in Acacia Cemetery, where he is buried. These trees are a living reminder of him and a lasting legacy. I am very grateful to the Friends for this opportunity.

Marilyn Lundberg



Bob Piram at one of his favorite spots!

For 100+ years, Como Park has been a favorite place for the residents of Saint Paul and nearby communities. The Como Conservatory is a half acre indoor and outdoor facility with different wings dedicated to a variety of plant life, such as bonsai trees, ferns, orchids and seasonal flowers. The zoo features a seal island, a large cat exhibit, a variety of aquatic life, primates, birds, African hoofed animals and a fabulous polar bear exhibit. The Zoo & Conservatory are open year round. During the winter, the zoo and conservatory are open from 10AM until 4PM. And best of all, admission is free to the public!

