Agenda

Minnetonka Park Board

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. Minnetonka Community Center - Minnehaha Room

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call

_____Isabelle Stroh	_____David Ingraham
_____Korey Beyersdorf	_____Ben Jacobs
_____Ella DiLorenzo	_____Katie Semersky
_____Anne Hanley	_____Chris Walick

3. Reports from Staff
4. Approval of Minutes
    A) March 1, 2023
5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda
6. Special Matters
7. Business Items
    A) Park Habitat Restoration and Maintenance Plans - Purgatory, Hilloway, and Ford Parks
    B) Consideration of the 2023 Park Board Strategic Plan
8. Park Board Member Reports
9. Information Items
10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items
11. Adjournment

Board Vision:

A city with outstanding parks and recreational opportunities within a valued natural environment.

Board Mission:

The mission of the Minnetonka Parks & Recreation Board is to proactively advise the city council, in ways that will:

- Protect & enhance Minnetonka's natural environment
- Promote quality recreation opportunities and facilities
- Provide a forum for citizens interested in our parks, trails, athletic fields and open space.

Minutes
Minnetonka Park Board
Wednesday, March 1, 2023

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

Park board members present: Ella DiLorenzo, Anne Hanley, David Ingraham, Ben Jacobs, Katie Semersky, Isabelle Stroh, Korey Beyersdorf and Chris Walick.

Staff members in attendance: Mike Funk, Kathy Kline, Matt Kumka, Kelly O'Dea, Sara Woeste and Leslie Yetka.

Chair Walick called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

3. Reports from Staff

Recreation Director Kelly O'Dea announced that there was an addendum and he introduced City Manager Mike Funk.

Funk thanked the park board for serving the community and he welcomed the newest members.

4. Approval of Minutes

Jacobs moved, Semersky seconded a motion to approve the meeting minutes of Feb.1, 2023 as submitted. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

5. Citizens wishing to discuss items not on the agenda

There were none.

6. Special Matters

There were none.

7. Business Items

A. Skate Park Feasibility Final Study

Park and Trail Project Manager Matt Kumka gave the report.

Walick thought the Glen Lake Activity Center was a really good spot for the skate park. He questioned what the liability situation was and if the city would be responsible for someone getting hurt at a skate park.

Kumka answered that recreation is covered by the League of Minnesota Cities. It would be the same liability risk we have for our existing skate park. A lot of neighboring cities also use them.

Walick wondered if these parks can be modified or changed over time so they don't become stale to the users.

Kumka replied that after having conversations with world-class builders, his understanding was that skate parks are quite changeable over time. It's not inexpensive but you can make changes as necessary to update it. The construction techniques are really impressive these days and the skate park features can last a long time.

Walick questioned if parks like these accommodate bikes, rollerblades, scooters, etc.

Kumka answered that the park would be designed for skateboarding but bikes, rollerblades and scooters could use it.

Stroh asked what would happen to the existing skate park in Glen Lake.

Kumka said the obstacles would be removed and they will either give them to an organization or scrap them.

Stroh wondered if the mural would get moved as well.

Kumka replied that staff hopes to maintain the mural. The muralist was aware that we were making big changes and they understood that it wasn't meant to last. He would probably be happy to come and paint another one.

DiLorenzo pointed out that Kumka talked a lot about student groups and young people advocating for this. She wondered if there was a way to get their voices in on some of the planning process or artwork. It would encourage buy-in from this younger generation that seemed interested in it.

Kumka has been considering a design process that would involve the local community as much as possible. The kids at Minnetonka Middle School East are very excited about this potential project. He thought the consultant would make room for that input during the whole process within reason.

Jacobs asked if there are any options for having the playground over there.

Kumka said they haven't looked at it too closely. There is a water treatment plant there and it would be a tight fit. They would have to get creative and consider what size the playground could be. Some engineering might have to be done to fit a potential playground in nearby.

Ingraham said the actual footprint of the play structure is a lot smaller than the park.

Kumka replied that is correct because it's essentially a big sand pit.

Semersky loved this project philosophically because it's a growing sport. We received amazing feedback saying this is what the younger community wanted enhanced. She

questioned what the timeline is like moving forward because to a kid, this is taking a while.

Kumka said that if everything was to go as originally intended they would hire a consultant in the next couple of months and design would take place in 2023 and go into 2024. They would do some bidding sometime over the winter or early spring of 2024 and begin construction in 2024. They would try to wrap all that up and pour the concrete before the snow in late 2024.

Semersky asked if he sees risks to that.

Kumka answered that there are always risks. There are usually surprises in terms of engineering and things that could slow pieces down. The worst case scenario would be that we are building in 2024 and it goes on hold until 2025. A ribbon cutting then would be in the spring of 2025.

Hanley commented that the plan said we would try to manage the storm water. She would be happier if it was a little stronger because she is assuming all the junk from that will go into Glen Lake.

Kumka said he has worked a lot with the local water shed districts and he could see a potential partnership in terms of some green infrastructure associated with a space like this; they are creating a lot of impervious surface. In meeting the expectations of our residents in terms of being ecologically sensitive, he would like some sort of demonstration storm water feature in this scope of work here.

Hanley replied that if it was free, she would be all in. It takes her breath away on how much it is going to cost because you could have two or more miles of trails for that. She was happy that there might be some grants to pay for part of it. It's expensive and it puts us in the situation where we would need to update it as more things are invented to keep it cool.

Ingraham thought it was a very good review of options and ideas. Early on, a goal was to have a regional skate park but we don't have feasible space to do that. He asked what the footprint was for the examples of skate parks that were used.

Kumka wasn't sure but he thought the feasibility report lists a bunch of the local parks and their square footage. The criticism he heard about the skate park in Eden Prairie was that its total square footage is really large in terms of the usability but the actual skating surface has a lot of void space in the park. That means the square footage isn't quite accurate when it comes to those considerations. He pointed out that 20,000 square feet is the skateboarding industry standard.

Ingraham asked if there was any consideration with the recommended location to eliminate the strip of parking adjacent to the existing park to increase the footprint. That strip is mostly used for Hennepin County Medical Center's ambulance staging and isn't really used other than that. There is a big topographical difference between 4,000 square feet and 11,000 square feet; there is no way parents would be able to observe their kids skating at both sites unless you build a tower. With having two spots, you are creating two distinctly different environments which might be good but that may not be ideal for parents.

Kumka heard the separate nature of the two was a value in terms of the two skate communities. Typically, parents would only watch the younger kids and the older kids sort of begin skating to get away a little bit. In terms of an analysis of the overall site, if they hire a consultant, everything would be on the table. If they needed to have conversations about those parking spots, they would start the process at that point.

Ingraham explained that from a safety perspective, he assumed kids living on the opposite side of Excelsior Boulevard will want to get there. Right now, the only controlled crossing is a flashing light by Lunds and Byerlys. Kids are going to want to cross earlier if they are coming from east of the park area. It would be very advantageous to see if the county would let us put in another controlled crossing because that is a really busy street and people don't pay attention when they are on the road. Lastly, during ball games, the parking overflows into the Lunds and Byerlys parking lot. Parking is going to be more of a challenge if the skate park is popular during games.

Kumka said part of their scope of design would be traffic and pedestrian analysis; it would also include parking and potential parking impacts.

Beyersdorf thought staff has done an amazing amount of research and analysis on this. She was glad to see that there was a lot of thought around the different locations. She thought the Glen Lake area was a good idea and she agreed with Ingraham about potentially looking at maybe switching the parking area to where the playground is. That would give you one large space for the skate park. Kids have told the park board what they are looking for. As a board, they have to think about the community as a whole and take into consideration what the younger kids want and need. There are so many recreational pieces made for adults and we don't really take into consideration what the younger folk's need, especially kids that don't play organized sports. She thought this was something they really should consider. She is completely for this and is really glad they are doing it.

Stroh asked if Glen Lake Groomers had any perspective on where their parking is or how their business is going to be impacted.

Kumka said they met with the owner early on in the process and informed him that they would be looking at this particular site for a skate park. They have their own dedicated driveway and their own dedicated parking behind their building.

DiLorenzo commented that she doesn't skate but she could see herself hanging out in this space if there was green space or something in between. She asked if there was a way to make it informational to explain where the water is coming from and where it is going, and then also give information about the green space. It would be creating something for people to do that don't skate especially if that park is being taken away or moved.

Kumka said they are always looking for opportunities for education and tasteful interpretation. Especially with some of these green infrastructure type concepts or the use of native plants.

Walick said there is going to be a lot of unique planning involved. He is very excited about this because it is another thing for the youth and they've advocated for it. Sometimes it

seems like it is taking forever or the cost is high, but they are learning that is kind of the way things go for quality changes.

Jacobs moved, Beyersdorf seconded a motion to proceed with the Glen Lake Activity Center site and move onto the next steps with community involvement. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

B. Tennis Court Resurfacing (Junction/Linner)

Kumka gave the report.

Hanley asked if it was possible to require people to switch to the quieter paddles.

O'Dea explained that enforcement would be challenging.

Hanley commented that neighbors and people who use Lone Lake Park can hear the pickleballs until they get over the ridge; it has changed the nature of the park experience. She read the comments and there was a lot of passion about how noisy it is. She wondered if they could prove that with different equipment, it might not be so horrible.

Kumka thought what people experience now with hearing or seeing pickleball is what the expectation will be for the near future. Staff isn't in the position to assure the local residents that we could somehow enforce quieter equipment.

Hanley said you could request it but she wasn't sure if anyone would buy it.

Stroh commented that we already have troubles with the dogs so she feels like people are not going to consider other's perspectives and use the quieter paddles.

DiLorenzo understood that this was a very important topic to stakeholders living next to these parks. However, she thinks about accessibility and the people who live in Minnetonka that don't own a home or can't afford to play at a community center. She wondered where they are supposed to play because a lot of our parks exist within a neighborhood context. She asked what steps could be made moving forward that are more inclusive for people who don't own a home in Minnetonka.

Kumka replied that our parks are for everybody, not just the people who live nearby. Maybe the strategy moving forward would be to look at other opportunities like making improvements to existing facilities. They could also make a study regarding the wholesale addition of a dedicated pickleball style facility in one of our larger parks. It could replace an existing recreational facility of some sort such as a skating rink. Staff has floated the idea of assessing skating rinks in the future but they don't have a solid list of sites that they would like to assess.

Walick appreciated staff engaging the residents. He thought this sampling looked like it was two to one, in favor of keeping the courts as tennis courts. He questioned if staff thought that was representative of the broader community.

Kumka explained that it is hard to say because staff tends to hear from folks who want additional pickleball courts, but then they get justifiable concerns from neighbors of a potential site once they reach out to them.

Jacobs thought that they need to take a deep dive and continue to explore places because it is growing like crazy. A lot of local churches and other places are starting drop-in pickleball sessions. These two parks and maybe a community park in general might not be the right way to go about it.

Walick said if it had not been for the resident engagement they probably would've approved this because they hear how much people love pickleball. They want to serve the community and with this sampling they found out that people don't want pickleball courts in their neighborhood parks due to noise, safety, parking and congestion. He wants to respect that.

Ingraham wasn't opposed to the recommendation but if they follow it, he predicts that pickleball courts will never be added in a neighborhood or community park. He believes there would be a similar response in other neighborhoods. It would be hard to say it isn't loud because he's sure the homeowners on the north side of Lone Lake Park don't leave their windows open because the balls are noisy and they are only a quarter of a mile away. It would be great if we could find a way to meet the need for pickleball but it will be hard to do that unless it gets a lot quieter.

Jacobs asked if there is a noise ordinance there.

Kumka explained that the pickleball noise does not come close to our 100 decibel ordinance.

Jacobs asked if there was an ordinance for the hours of play.

O'Dea didn't think there was one.

Jacobs wondered because he has seen people there at 6 a.m. during the summer.

Beyersdorf questioned what the plan was to start looking for more places since there is such a want for more pickleball courts.

Kumka responded that the plan is to do their best to find an appropriate spot for it.

Ingraham mentioned Crane Lake.

Kumka said somewhere near the highway in some sort of an outlot or something that the city owns or acquires might work.

Beyersdorf asked if there is a timeline.

Kumka replied that it is a priority but there is no active timeline.

O'Dea commented that there were a lot of people who said they wanted pickleball during the Parks, Open Space and Trails (POST) Plan. Staff wanted to at least assess the neighborhood parks individually as they came up on the replacement schedule in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Stroh added that nobody wants them in their backyard so they have to find an alternative solution.

Ingraham moved, Jacobs seconded a motion to recommend the resurfacing of existing tennis courts as they exist today. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

C. 2023 Park Board Strategic Plan

Recreation Director Kelly O'Dea gave the report. He mentioned that the Friends of Minnetonka Parks had suggested edits to look at in addition to staff's edits.

Vision & Mission:

Walick appreciated the work and thoughtfulness of the Friends of Minnetonka Parks. He writes a lot of reports and he always leans towards being more concise to make it easier to understand. He felt a lot of the suggested changes made it a little wordy. He suggested using conserving and restoring throughout the document instead of protecting and enhancing because in terms of nature they seem to be more in line with the mission.

Hanley liked the use of conserve and restore in the document and she was okay with a little wordiness. She was in favor of most of the changes in green because it emphasizes that amenities in parks includes natural stuff and not just the built things.

DiLorenzo thought conserve and restore were appropriate with natural resources. She didn't know if she loved the word healthy because it is a vague word but she thought biodiverse was too specific to natural resources. Biodiverse is the natural environment but she also thinks about creating recreational opportunities.

Hanley asked if she liked that.

DiLorenzo replied that she liked biodiversity because it was more specific than healthy. She is trying to express that there should be a tension between taking care of natural resources but also making sure there is space for recreational opportunities to still exist or coexist with it. She liked the word biodiversity overall.

Ingraham questioned if the vision was intended for parks and recreation facilities only. This is a park board document so it is related to the scope of what they do which is parks and facilities. If you strike the word recreational facilities, it takes out the focus on Gray's Bay Dam, the athletic field and other facilities. He thought it was intended for the parks and recreation facilities so some stuff adds more words than they need. He liked biodiverse but he believes there is a difference between a biodiverse natural environment and a healthy natural environment. Biodiverse talks about how everything goes together like plants; healthy is how humans interact with the natural environment. He is fine with either word but he wouldn't want healthy to go away. Either protect and enhance or conserve and restore are a good way to go. To him, he views the natural amenities and enjoyment of natural amenities as part of recreational opportunities so he doesn't know if they need to be specifically called out.

Stroh questioned if some of these more tailored changes would be better in a separate document. Things like conserve and restore would definitely belong here but she thought

there should be a balance between the human and natural elements. Maybe some of the natural things could be in a separate set of goals and objectives in the document.

Beyersdorf asked if we have changed our name because the document says the mission of the Minnetonka Park and Recreation Board and she thought it was the Minnetonka Park Board.

Semersky added that their scope is both. She thought it was misleading if you only call out parks.

O'Dea said it is more about the recreational facilities and opportunities within the parks. An example is the Williston Fitness Center because it is a recreational facility not located in a park. That is why it is not under your purview.

Hanley asked if city staff is responsible for The Marsh and the Williston Fitness Center.

O'Dea explained that staff reports to the city council. The park board scope is parks, trails and open space.

Semersky commented that the vision and mission statements are intended to be short, memorable, concise and easy to ready. She thought they were too wordy as they are currently written. She supports being simple and concise so it's easier for them to remember and repeat to people when they are describing what they do as a group.

Stroh said that the vision and mission have to encompass a lot of things so keeping those vague might make more sense.

Ingraham thought the original draft was good and some of the suggested edits were very good. He liked the rewording on objective five about aligning with the goals or recommendations of the Natural Resource's Master Plan (NRMP) and the POST Plan. On objective two, he thought their edit changed the intent of that objective. He read it as the implementation of the stewardship program, not just the execution of the master plan. Those are two different things but it depends on what we want. He thought some of the emphasis on amenities and calling them out separately was unnecessary but he is fine with leaving it in if others feel they should be articulated separately.

O'Dea asked if there were any comments about the second or third bullets under the mission because there was a lot of verbiage added.

Ingraham views the natural amenities as part of our recreational opportunities. He thought it got wordy when you add judiciously curating to it.

DiLorenzo thought the overall focus on nature and the fact that parks and recreation includes natural spaces is an important thing to think about moving forward. Sometimes people think it has to be a park or some physical thing but it could also be a native grassland you can enjoy and that is biodiverse. She liked the emphasis but thought they could change a few words instead of all the suggested changes.

Beyersdorf said on the second one you could just say, "Promote quality inclusive recreation opportunities and natural amenities."

Goal: To protect natural resources and open space

Ingraham asked Natural Resources Manager Leslie Yetka if objective two was saying something different than what was intended.

O'Dea questioned if it was the stewardship program versus NRMP.

Yetka said historically the stewardship program is what they refer to as their restoration program in our parks. The NRMP is a much broader plan that encompasses more than what they do in our parks. The intent was to focus on the activities that are mostly taking place in our parks, which is the stewardship program. If you are interested in expanding to the NRMP in general, it encompasses what they are trying to achieve.

Hanley asked if there is a stewardship plan to refer back to.

Yetka said the stewardship plan is our NRMP. It's a bit confusing because this has been a terminology that has been in existence for many years. When they say stewardship program, they mean our habitat restoration program. That is a big component laid out in the NRMP but the master plan encompasses more than just habitat restoration.

Ingraham learned last night at the sustainability commission meeting that the park board involves things in the park, not things in the city. That would lean towards stewardship program versus NRMP.

Hanley added that maybe it's the parks portion of the NRMP because then there is actually something you can look at.

Ingraham questioned if that is the stewardship plan.

Yetka confirmed it was.

Hanley commented that you can't find the stewardship plan if you search the website but you can find the NRMP. From a usability standpoint, it seems helpful to call it something you can find in a database.

Ingraham said he is fine either way. He was referring to the No Mow May Plan, which is part of the natural resources area. However, he found out it wasn't something they would talk about because people mow their own lawns and they take care of parts of the city that aren't in the park areas so it is much broader than that.

Yetka added that it would be private property.

Jacobs questioned what the correct one to use is.

Yetka said you could say, "continue to review and comment on implementation of the natural resources stewardship program as guided by the NRMP." It is covered either way and she isn't worried that the intent would be lost. If you want to include the NRMP as something people could find on the website, you could incorporate it in here and have both of them mentioned.

Ingraham liked the rewording on objective five.

Beyersdorf looked up the definitions of conserve, protect, restore and enhance to see what the difference was between using those words. Protect and conserve are basically the same thing but she pauses when using restore instead of enhance. When you use restore, it makes it into an action item and it's saying that you have to restore it or fix it. If you use enhance, it can be kind of anything. They are basically the same word but she thinks if you use restore instead of enhance that it is trying to get us to do something by putting it in here.

Hanley added that the city has made a big commitment in money, time and volunteer hours to restore by getting rid of the buckthorn and the garlic mustard. She thought that was worth saying.

Beyersdorf wondered if it is also an enhancement because you can enhance things by restoring them.

Hanley commented that enhance could also mean planting flowers.

Beyersdorf replied that if we say restore, we are limiting our ability to enhance. Its wordsmithing so just changing the wording can change the meaning a little bit.

Walick added that this is a general guiding principal and not a legal binding document. He thought either way would probably be ok.

Hanley voted for the word restore.

Stroh thought restore got changed in a lot of different places throughout the document. Putting it in there a couple times to honor the work with the buckthorn would definitely be something to consider, but changing it throughout the entire document might limit it. Enhance could be more general and it might include more of the amenities such as the skate park that we are considering for the parks.

Ingraham thought restore was very specific and it's saying you need to fix it. There is a lot of things that we need to fix so he thought it was a good word to use. He thought the word restore fits inside the word enhance. He gave an example of putting in a wooden viewing thing along the creek; they wouldn't be restoring anything but they would be enhancing it. He personally liked the word enhance because it is broader. He thought protect and conserve were pretty interchangeable.

Hanley explained that the whole section was about natural resources and open spaces. She felt that the goals, "To renew and maintain parks and trails" and "To provide quality athletic and recreational facilities and programs" could easily encompass things like a gazebo or a skate park. The first goal doesn't need to encompass everything and there are other goals or objectives that it could go under.

Goal: To renew and maintain parks and trails

Hanley asked if seven will give them permission to work on the dog topic.

O'Dea responded that it is part of it.

Semersky asked if you need to call out the dog topic anywhere to be more specific because it is a heated topic.

O'Dea explained that the off-leash piece is part of the park ordinance and they are looking at updating the entire ordinance. It wouldn't be specific to dogs because they would be looking at updating other things in the ordinance too.

Ingraham thought the addition to objective six from the submitted comments about aligning with the POST Plan and NRMP was fine.

Jacobs thought both of the additions were fine.

Goal: To provide quality athletic and recreational facilities and programs

DiLorenzo thought there was a lot of interest in natural resources. If we are going to invest in skate parks and other things, she thought we should also apply that same appreciation and interest into nature. It could be a really positive thing and it would show that we are trying to be more inclusive about those principals.

Goal: Enhance long-term park board development

Semersky and Hanley supported those changes under the six objectives.

Semersky questioned if anything was expected from them with the Ridgedale Commons opening.

O'Dea answered that they would love for them to show up at the ribbon cutting. Construction is anticipated to be finished at the end of May. We are going to start programming in the building and we will have other programs in the park area such as the farmers market.

8. Park Board Member Reports

Walick said with all the snow in the last couple of weeks, the city did an awesome job clearing the roads and making it livable.

9. Information Items

Kids' Fest

Woeste gave the report.

Ingraham said the lines were really long but he didn't hear anyone complaining.

Recreation Services 2023 Summer Brochure

Woeste gave the report.

2022 Natural Resources Annual Update

Yetka gave the report.

10. Upcoming Park Board Agenda Items

O'Dea gave the report.

11. Adjournment

Jacobs moved, Beyersdorf seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 p.m. All voted "yes." Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Kline

Kathy Kline
Recreation Administrative Coordinator

Minnetonka Park Board 7A
Meeting of May 3, 2023

Subject:	Park Habitat Restoration and Maintenance Plans - Purgatory, Hilloway, and Ford Parks
Park Board related goal:	To protect natural resources and open spaces
Park Board related objectives:	Continue to review and comment on the implementation of the natural resources stewardship program
Brief Description:	Presentation on park habitat restoration and maintenance plans for Purgatory, Hilloway, and Ford Parks

Background
In 2019, city staff began developing an updated Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP), which was adopted by the City Council in December, 2021. The plan helps fulfill a recent council strategic priority and key strategy of developing and implementing long-term plans to mitigate threats to the natural environment.

Three main goals identified in the plan are to:

1. Improve the quality of habitat in Minnetonka parks and open spaces, striving for more resilient and sustainable ecological systems while providing multiple benefits to the community.
2. Manage and improve the community forest ecosystem on both public and private lands, including natural woodlands and the altered ecosystem of the traditional managed landscape.
3. Engage the public to support ecological restoration and management on public property, and promote voluntary application of practices on private property.

As part of the next phase of implementing the NRMP, City staff are now developing park restoration and maintenance plans based on priorities identified in the NRMP. Draft plans have been developed for Purgatory, Hilloway, and Ford Park. Purgatory and Hilloway Park have been identified as priority parks for restoration plan development. Ford Park has been selected to receive a restoration plan due to an on-going Forestry led effort that involves a significant partnership with Hennepin County.

Summary
A significant component of the NRMP includes the Natural Resources Stewardship Program, which focuses on an ecological systems-based approach to restoration and management of habitat in parks and other public lands. Table 4.2, Appendix A, and Appendix B of the plan outlines prioritized parks for restoration, general restoration goals (e.g. target plant community, restoration phasing), and estimated budgets, respectively. This phase of implementing the NRMP is to develop more specific and detailed Habitat Restoration and Maintenance Plans for the high priority parks identified in Table 4.2.

The purpose of a park habitat restoration and maintenance plan is to take a more granular look at a park's varying ecological units, identify current conditions, develop target plant communities, and coordinate available resources to improve ecological diversity and plant community resilience. The plans presented were developed recently and are currently providing the basis for guiding seasonal field activities for city staff,

volunteers, and city contractors. Information in these plans will also be used to inform future park master planning efforts identified in the recently adopted Parks, Open Space, and Trail (POST) plan, and which is currently on-going at Purgatory Park.

These plans are considered "living documents" and will be updated regularly or as needed. For Purgatory and Hilloway Parks, volunteer cohort meetings were coordinated and attended by Park Habitat Stewards, Adopt-a-Spot volunteers, and all others who have spent their time and energy working to improve our natural resources in these parks. Staff will continue to work in close collaboration with volunteers and park stewards from Friends of Minnetonka Parks and other interested stakeholders to refine and evolve these plans as on-going restoration activities inform future decision making. These plans are currently included in the GIS-based mapping and tracking tool that allows city staff and key volunteers to monitor and adjust restoration efforts as needed.

Staff will present a summary and key elements from the Purgatory Park, Hilloway Park, and Ford Park Habitat Restoration and Maintenance Plans to the Park Board for feedback and answer any questions that arise.

Recommended Park Board Action
Receive presentation and approve park habitat restoration and maintenance plans

Attachments
- Draft Purgatory Park Restoration and Maintenance Plan
- Draft Hilloway Park Restoration and Maintenance Plan
- Draft Ford Park Restoration and Maintenance Plan

Purgatory Park Restoration and Maintenance Plan

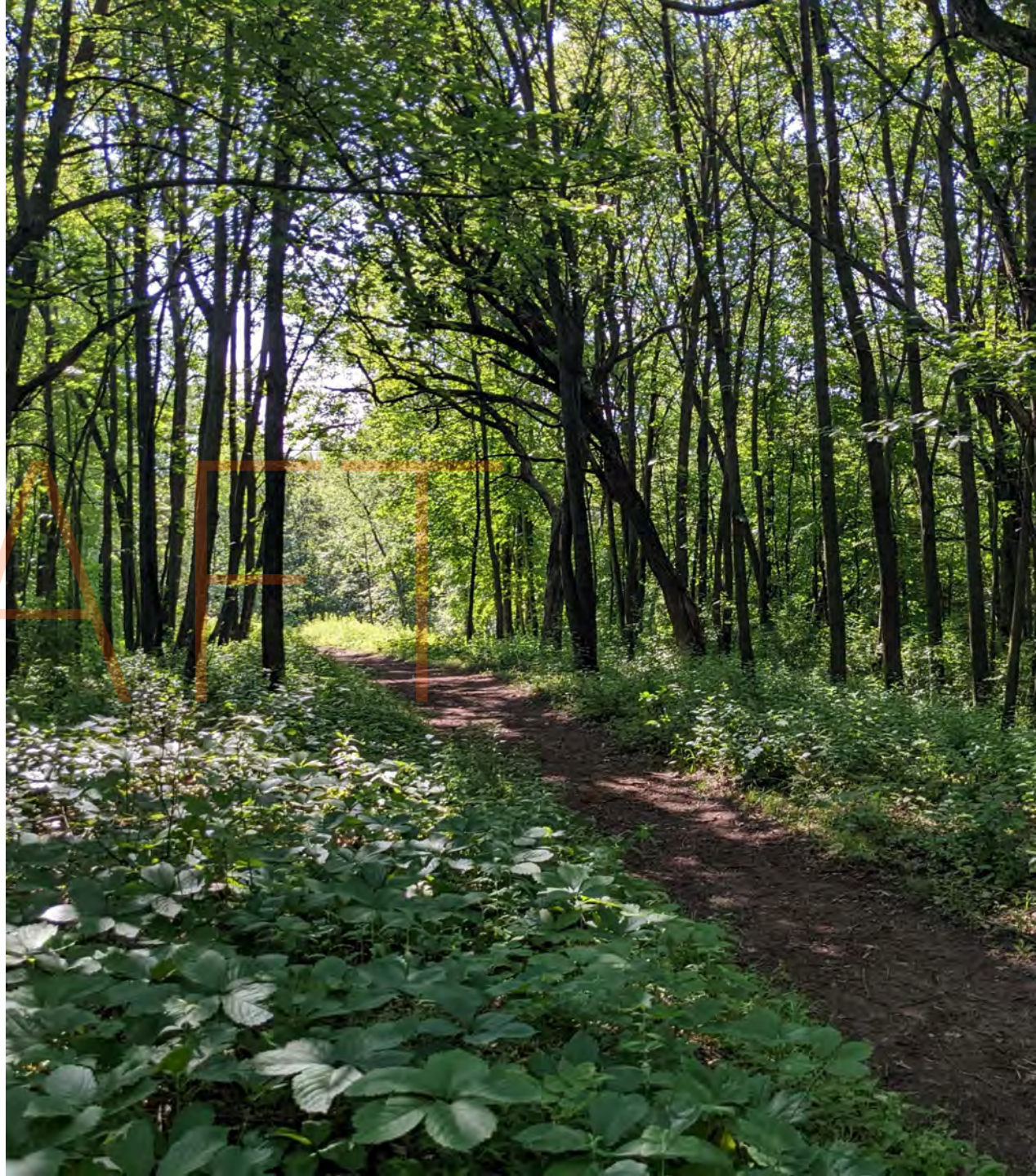
DRAFT

Developed by Minnetonka Natural Resources Staff and Park Volunteers

2023

Purpose of this Document

- To present a restoration vision for the park.
- To serve as a public communication tool describing the goals and processes for ecological restoration in Purgatory Park.
- To be a practical planning and management tool for Minnetonka natural resources staff and park volunteers.
- To describe detailed restoration and management strategies for individual management units within the park.

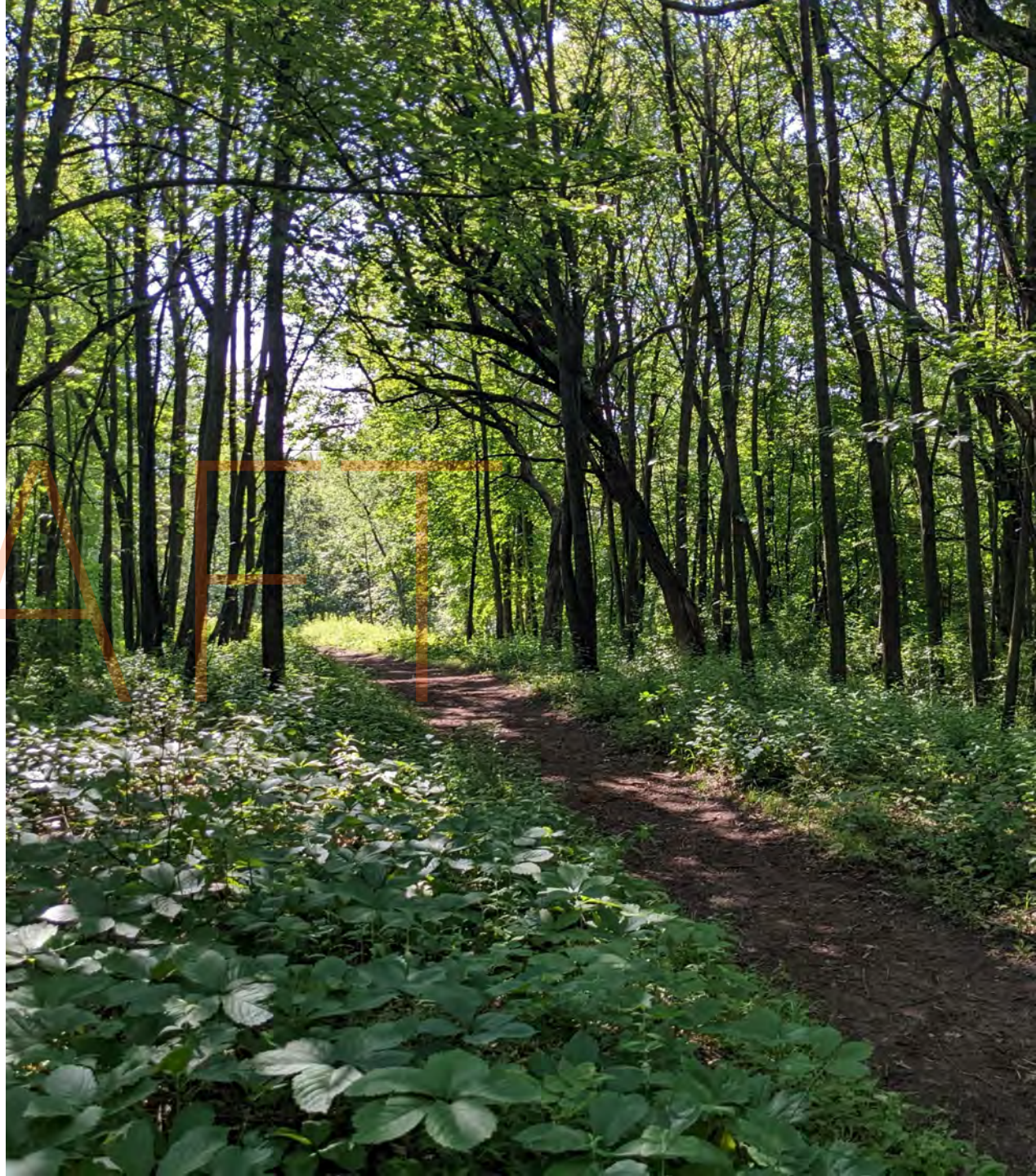


Opportunities and Challenges - 2023

Purgatory Park provides an opportunity to demonstrate the successful restoration of a suburban park using science-based restoration methods and best practices. The park exhibits a variety of plant communities and important topographical features including a remnant and restored prairie, creek corridor and wetland, oak savanna, oak woodland, maple-basswood forest, and mesic deciduous woodland. Broadly, the park and its plant communities will transition to grassland and fire-dependent systems, more tolerant of droughty conditions, and will help ensure that the park as a whole is more resilient to climate change.

Maintaining a variety of habitats will allow for the movement of species within the park, and the shifting boundaries of communities as the climate rapidly changes. The proposed adaptive management actions will also result in a nature-based, biodiverse experience for all park visitors to enjoy and appreciate. This plan systematically assesses each plant community and area in the park via a comprehensive plan, and provides a road map to restore each area.

The goals and objectives in the plan will be accomplished through a collaborative effort with city staff, hired contractors, and community volunteers. The restored plant communities and adaptive management process will be a catalyst for lessons learned and their application to other Minnetonka and regional parks.



Notes from Park Assessment - 2022

- Minnetonka is in a good position to act thoroughly and deliberately toward restoration. However, proceeding thoughtfully and carefully through the restoration process provides better results that can significantly reduce long-term maintenance.
- There is a great opportunity for restoring isolated **ephemeral wetlands** within the park. It is very difficult to restore large cattail wetlands in Minnetonka because many are connected to stream corridors that continually are continually disturbed through changes in hydrology and moving water distributes floating invasive plant seed. Isolated ephemeral wetlands can easily be restored and maintained because their hydrology is stable and because they are isolated from floating invasive plant seed.
- Former agricultural and pastured areas of the park on south facing slopes without desirable canopy species represent a ideal opportunity for **oak savanna restoration** while high-quality remnant **prairie** can be easily enhanced through the addition of flowering perennial diversity.
- The restored prairies in the park are dominated by native grasses at the cost of forb diversity. Forbs should be further introduced to improve habitat and increase biodiversity. This would require the disturbance of the prairie soil through grazing, spot spraying of herbicide, or haying/mulching, prescribed burning and the introduction of seed.
- **Deer browse** is currently inhibiting the regeneration of many native plant species in Purgatory park. It is recommended to continue harvesting deer and to pursue increasing the number of deer removals in order to protect the regenerating native plant communities.
- **Green ash trees** within the next three years will die throughout the park (and park system) due to the emerald ash borer. An important window of time exists for guided plant community evolution just after their death.

Target Plant Communities

Target plant communities are the plant communities for which restoration is directed.

Why do we develop and map target plant communities?

It is important to set goals (in this case target plant communities) in order to efficiently direct work. Target plant communities have been determined by assessing the following:

- Growing conditions including soil type, topography, aspect, moisture levels, light levels, existing vegetation, invasive species, existing wildlife and extent of browsing, and extent of human disturbances
- Ecological communities at the time of European settlement (approximately 1848) as mapped by the MN DNR
- Contextual influences such as neighboring land uses, climate change, invasive species, regulations, budget, and staffing

Experienced ecologists have evaluated the above listed information and determined which communities will best thrive under current conditions and with the resources available for their management. A process called adaptive management will be implemented as restoration proceeds to allow for management flexibility:

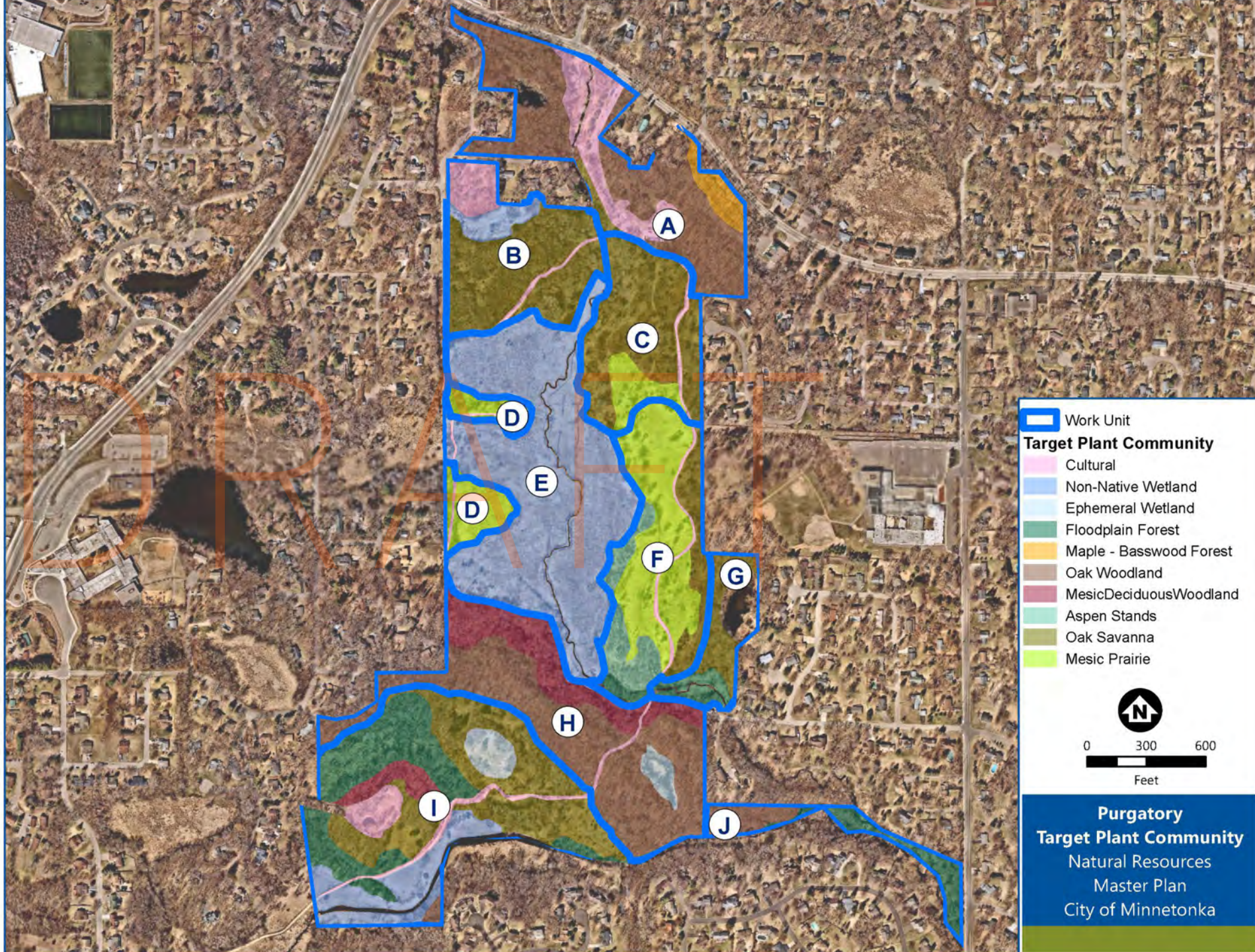
- Initial restoration actions are taken.
- Observations are then made as to the communities' reaction, and appropriate next steps are then determined.
- The target community is kept in mind through this process, and if necessary, the target can be shifted as caused by field conditions evolving and/or new restoration science is developed.

The ecological communities of Purgatory Park experience many impacts that challenge the establishment of a diversity of native plants and animal habitat. Primary factors influencing the park today include:

- The extremes of wet and dry conditions exacerbated by climate change along with our warming winters.
- Invasive species including common buckthorn, garlic mustard, leafy spurge, and reed canary grass.
- Extensive use by people and pets that causes disturbance of vegetation and wildlife.
- Deer and earthworm browse.
- Limitations of budget and man-power.

These impacts are mitigated for in the restoration processes described below, by park design, and through park policies.
The target communities mapped for the park are not set in stone. They are subject to be modified if restoration activities expose unforeseen conditions, climate change creates plant communities unsustainable or low in diversity, and target plant lists may change due to new understanding of key species that enhance plant community resilience. As restoration processes proceed it may be determined that different target plant communities are appropriate.

Target Plant Communities



The following pages describes the restoration and maintenance process for each ecological community.

Oak Savanna

Goal: To regenerate a diverse, drought tolerant, maintainable ecological community to be economically maintained by City staff through burning, mowing, and limited herbicide application. Oak savanna consists of tree canopy of 5% - 20% of fire-dependent tree species.

Initial Regeneration (year 1)

- Forestry mow or cut and herbicide paint invasive species and the shrub layer including sumac, wild plum, and other native shrubs (unless easily avoided). Native shrubs will naturally regenerate.
- Remove fire intolerant trees including but not limited to Siberian elm, green ash, American elm, box elder. This may include native trees such as basswood, ironwood, and maple.
    - Retain trees 12" DBH+ for desirable species including oaks, black walnut, hackberry, apple, and black cherry. Remove structurally weak trees and those with heavy tops (lollipop trees).
    - Retain small oaks if discovered.
    - Consider retaining non-invasive trees within 20' of trails to provide shade. Remove Siberian elm, buckthorn, and fruiting box elder in this zone.
- Once per month during spring and summer of the first growing season spot mow herbaceous invasive species to prevent flowering and to force regrowth that will accept herbicide in the fall.
- Cut buckthorn resprouts in mid-late summer to force regrowth.
- Overspray buckthorn resprouts with herbicide in fall and again the following spring.
- If native cloning shrubs like sumac and prickly ash cover inhibit ground level diversity, they may also be herbicide treated or regularly mown.
- Plant scattered oaks and other fire and climate adaptive trees as appropriate during the fall of year 2 or the spring of year 3, after the first prescribed burn is performed. Tree canopy should generally cover no more than 20 percent of the plant community to foster enough vegetative fuel for fire management.
- Provide an herbicide treatment to buckthorn and other woody plants the spring after forestry mowing (year 2). Then seed native herbaceous plants. Plant plugs of species that do not readily repopulate from seed.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the savanna each spring to determine management needs for the year. Determine if additional tree removal is necessary to build enough herbaceous matter to carry fire.
- Seed native herbaceous plants in the spring after buckthorn resprouts have been treated. Include plugs as a seed source for species that do not readily establish from seed.
- Once per month during the growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the project area and spot mow or spot treat invasive species (as appropriate per species).
- As necessary mow seeded areas to cut back annual weeds.
- Water new trees during dry periods.
- Overspray buckthorn resprouts in fall.
- Remove additional trees as necessary in the fall/winter.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the savanna and determine management needs for the year. Write a brief management plan for that year. Determine if additional tree removal is necessary to build enough herbaceous matter to carry fire.
- Twice per year walk the savanna and treat invasive species by spot mowing in the summer and spot herbicide treatment in September.
- Burn on a sporadic schedule as appropriate. On average this could be about every third year and can occur during any season which enough fuel has accumulated.
- Remove additional trees as necessary in the fall/winter.

Aspen Stands

Goal: To prevent aspen stand expansion limited to their 2022 extent and transition aspen stands to open oak woodlands or oak savanna as aspens mature and die.

Initial Regeneration

- Manage buckthorn, undesirable trees (such as Siberian elm and buckthorn), and aspens spreading into the prairie through mowing, grazing or by hand removal with stump herbicide treatment.
- Once per month during the growing season spot mow herbaceous invasive species to prevent flowering and to force regrowth that will accept herbicide in the fall.
- Overspray buckthorn resprouts in fall and again the following spring.
- If desirable plant oaks or other later successional trees within or along side the aspen clone.
- The following season mow buckthorn resprouts and herbaceous invasives during the summer and foliar treat in the fall.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the aspen stands each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- Seed native herbaceous plants in the spring after buckthorn resprouts have been treated. Include plugs as a seed source for species that do not readily establish from seed.
- Once per month during the growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the project area and spot mow or spot treat invasive species.
- Water newly planted trees during dry periods.
- Overspray buckthorn resprouts in the fall.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the aspen stands and determine management needs for the year.
- Twice per year walk the aspen stands and treat invasive species by spot mowing in the summer and spot herbicide treatment in September.

Oak Woodlands

Goal: To regenerate an open woodland dominated by oak species and other fire dependent woody species with approximately 50 – 70 % canopy cover, and to establish and maintain a diversity of herbaceous understory species.

Initial Regeneration

- Remove green ash, Siberian elm, and fruiting box elder.
- Girdle and basal treat fruiting box elder and Siberian elm within the woodland. Assess other potentially non-desirable trees for removal including select native species impacting significant white or bur oaks.
- Forestry mow or cut and apply herbicide to the stumps of invasive species, especially buckthorn and Tartarian honeysuckle. Goats may also be used to impact woody invasives, but this requires consistent grazing for several years to control invasive woody plants.
- Once per month during the growing season spot mow herbaceous invasive species to prevent flowering and to force regrowth that will accept herbicide in the fall.
- Cut buckthorn resprouts in late summer to force regrowth.
- Overspray woody invasives resprouts in fall and again the following spring.
- Herbicide treat invasive herbaceous plants in the fall.
- Plant within the canopy gaps while creating canopy cover goals created by tree removal or tree attrition, trees including white oak, bur oak, and climate adaptive species such as hickories.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the woodlands each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- Seed native herbaceous plants in the spring or autumn after buckthorn resprouts have been treated.
- Also plant plugs as a future seed source for species that do not readily establish from seed.
- Once per month during the growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the work unit and spot mow or spot treat invasive species.
- Water newly planted trees during dry periods.
- Overspray buckthorn resprouts with herbicide in fall.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the woodlands and determine management needs for the year.
- Twice in the summer spot mow invasive species, then spot herbicide treat invasives in September.
- Include burning as a management tool if enough fuel builds on the woodland floor. Reseed post-burn to increase diversity.
- Monitor for tree attrition and replace if desirable native seedlings are not establishing in the area.

Maple-Basswood Forest & Mesic Deciduous Woodlands on North and East Facing Slopes

Goal: To regenerate the ground plain vegetation of the existing maple-basswood forest and allow for the regeneration of sugar maples and other fire-intolerant hardwood species, and for other north facing slopes to establish a complete canopy cover with a diversity of species that naturally regenerate, along with a diversity of herbaceous species on the ground plain.

Initial Regeneration

- Remove green ash along trails.
- Girdle and basal treat fruiting box elder, Siberian elm and white mulberry within the woodland.
- Forestry mow or cut and herbicide invasive species, especially buckthorn and Tartarian honeysuckle.
- Once per month during the growing season spot mow herbaceous invasive species to prevent flowering and to force regrowth that will accept herbicide in the fall.
- Cut buckthorn resprouts in late summer to force regrowth.
- Overspray buckthorn resprouts in fall and again the following spring.
- Herbicide treat invasive herbaceous plants in the fall.
- Plant within the canopy gaps created by tree removal or tree attrition, trees including sugar maple, red maple, white oak, bur oak, and climate adaptive species such as hickories.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the woodlands each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- Seed native herbaceous plants in the spring after buckthorn resprouts have been treated. Also plant plugs as a future seed source for species that do not readily establish from seed. This may be done the second or third year after buckthorn removal.
- Once per month during the growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the work unit and spot mow invasive species.
- Water newly planted trees during dry periods.
- Overspray with herbicide buckthorn resprouts in fall. Fall is also the best time to apply herbicide to invasive herbaceous plants.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the woodlands and determine management needs for the year.
- Twice per year eradicate invasive species by spot mowing in the summer and spot herbicide treatment in September.
- Monitor for tree attrition and replace if desirable native seedlings are not establishing in the area.
- Planting to diversify the forest may be necessary well into the future, especially if deer populations persist.

Ephemeral Wetlands

Goal: To regenerate and maintain a diversity of native plants with minimal invasive species.

Initial Regeneration

- Treat herbaceous species throughout wetland with herbicide. Do this in the spring or fall when reed canary grass will more readily accept herbicide due to cool temperatures.
- Allow invasives to re-grow into the summer and allow seed from seed bank to germinate.
- Treat the regenerating vegetation after approximately two months of growth and again in the fall (depending on start date). Lightly till or scrap soils after fall treatment to expose additional seed bank.
- Apply herbicide to regenerating vegetation the following spring.
- Seed with appropriate seed mixes in the late spring/early summer. Include plugs as a seed source for species that do not readily repopulate from seed.
- Mow the seeding the first growing season if annual weeds thickly cover emerging native plants. This will allow light to get to the native seedlings.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the wetlands each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- As necessary mow seeded areas to cut back annual weeds
- Once per month during the growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the work unit and spot mow or spot treat invasive species as appropriate. Fall is the best time to apply herbicide to invasive herbaceous plants.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the wetlands to determine management needs for the year.
- Twice in the summer spot mow invasive species, then spot herbicide treat invasives in September.

Non-Native Wetland (shallow & deep marsh)

Goal: Because of the consistent disturbance of the vegetative community from excessive stormwater inundation and the disturbance from pollutants such as deicing salts and nutrients, a full restoration of a marsh community is not feasible currently. Instead, the goal is to control aggressive invasive species that are a seed source to spread into adjacent native plant communities.

Yearly Maintenance

- Every spring inspect the wetlands to determine management needs for the year. Primary invasive species to be controlled include Phragmites australis, purple loosestrife, thistles, and buckthorn. Others may be identified upon inspection.
- Twice in the summer spot mow invasive species to prevent them from going to seed and to force lush regrowth.
- Spot herbicide treat invasives in September.

Floodplain Forest

Goal: To regenerate a diverse floodplain ecological community, tolerant of occasional water inundation and a goal canopy cover of 50 – 100% canopy with minimal invasive species.

Initial Regeneration

- Remove green ash and box elders along footpaths.
- Girdle and basal treat Siberian elm and any other trees determined to be undesirable within the forest.
- Forestry mow or cut and apply herbicide to the stumps of woody invasive species, especially buckthorn and Tartarian honeysuckle.
- Treat herbaceous species throughout forest floor with herbicide. Do this in the spring or fall when reed canary grass will more readily accept herbicide due to cool temperatures.
- Allow invasives to re-grow into the summer and allow seed from seed bank to germinate. Once per month spot mow herbaceous invasive species.
- Cut buckthorn resprouts in late summer to force regrowth.
- Herbicide treat invasive herbaceous plants and woody plant resprouts in the fall.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the floodplain each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- Once per month during the growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the project area and spot mow or spot treat invasive species.
- Cut buckthorn resprouts in late summer to force regrowth.
- Herbicide treat invasive herbaceous plants and woody plant resprouts in the fall.
- Seed with appropriate seed mixes in the early fall on the second year.
- Plant trees including silver maple, American elm, cottonwood, swamp white oak, river birch, hackberry and sycamore in the fall of the second year while maintaining goal canopy cover.
- Water trees during dry periods of the third year.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the floodplain to determine management needs for the year.
- Twice in the summer spot mow invasive species, then spot herbicide treat invasives in September.
- Monitor for tree attrition and replace if desirable native seedlings are not establishing.

Prairie

Goal: The prairies within Purgatory Park have undergone initial restoration and are now into the long-term maintenance phase while smaller areas of erosion and invasive species pressure should be addressed. The goal for these communities is to increase forb diversity and limit invasive species and woody encroachment. Prescribed burning should be performed on a sporadic cycle every several years.

Initial Regeneration

- Remove Siberian elms and box elders. Girdle larger trees away from trails or footpaths to limit disturbance when necessary.

Yearly Maintenance

- Every spring inspect the prairies to determine management needs for the year.
- Twice in the summer spot mow invasive species such as leafy spurge, reed canary grass, and Canada thistle to prevent them from going to seed and to force lush regrowth, then spot herbicide treat invasives in September.

Diversification

- Forbs should be introduced into the prairies for additional vegetative diversity. This can be done through seeding or the planting of plugs. Spot treatment of herbicide, mowing or haying, grazing, and burning will create disturbances like those made by animals such as a gopher or prairie dog. Plant into these disturbed areas.

Hilloway Park Restoration and Maintenance Plan

Developed by Minnetonka Natural Resources Staff and Park Volunteers

2023

Purpose of this Document

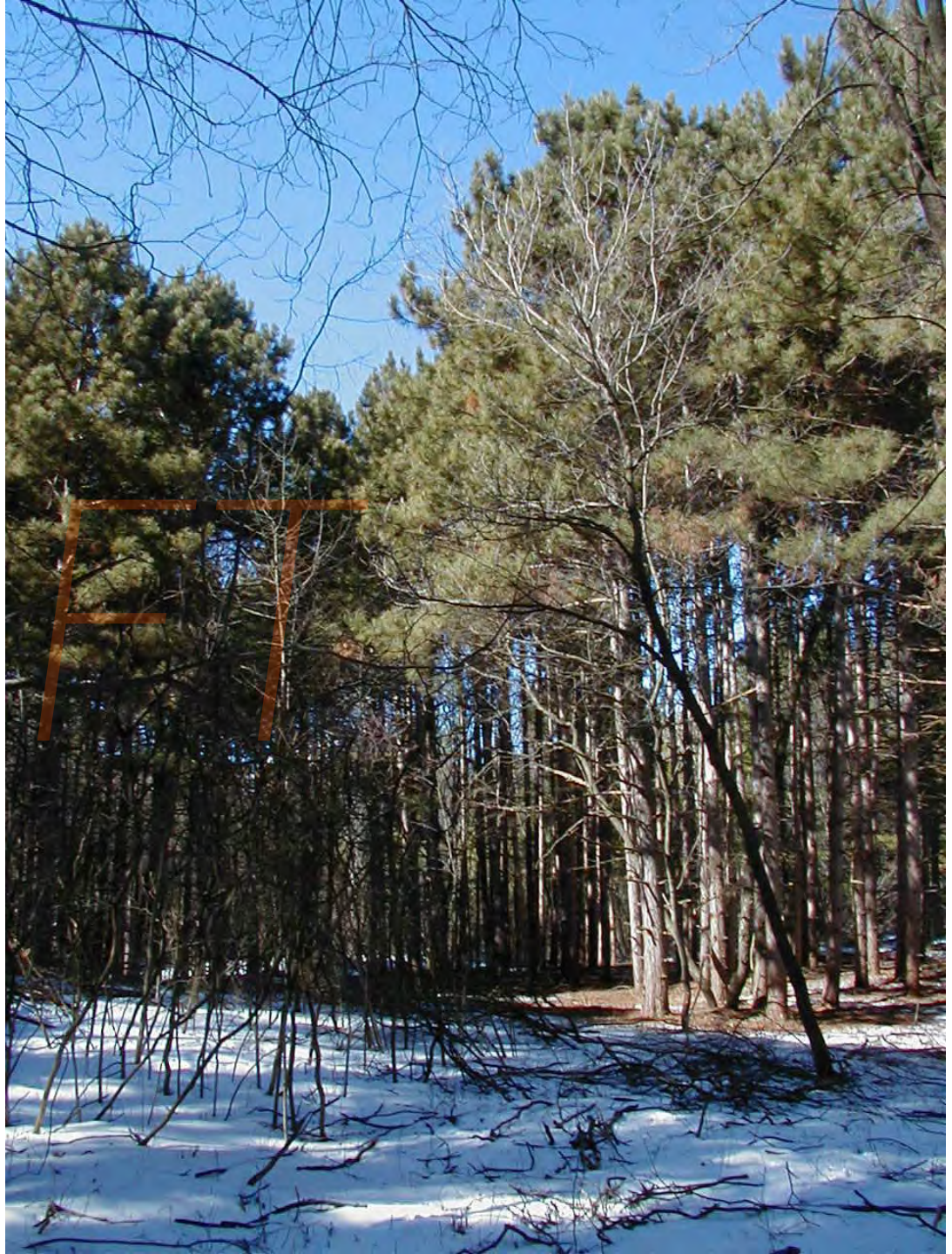
- To present a restoration vision for the park.
- To serve as a public communication tool describing the goals and processes for ecological restoration in Hilloway Park.
- To be a practical planning and management tool for Minnetonka natural resources staff and park volunteers.
- To describe detailed restoration and management strategies for individual management units within the park.

Opportunities and Challenges - 2023

Hilloway Park provides an opportunity to demonstrate the successful restoration of a suburban park using science-based restoration methods and best practices. The park exhibits a variety of plant communities and important topographical features but has been heavily impacted by invasive species and past land use practices. The park features a mature pine plantation stand that provides a very unique park user experience as well as mixed aspen stand and a rare fen wetland. Broadly, the park and its plant communities will transition to mixed deciduous woodland and fire-dependent systems, more tolerant of droughty conditions and invasive species pressures, and will help ensure that the park as a whole is more resilient to climate change.

Maintaining a variety of habitats will allow for the movement of species within the park, and the shifting boundaries of communities as the climate rapidly changes. The proposed adaptive management actions will also result in a nature-based, biodiverse experience for all park visitors to enjoy and appreciate. This plan systematically assesses each plant community and area in the park via a comprehensive plan, and provides a road map to restore each area.

The goals and objectives in the plan will be accomplished through a collaborative effort with city staff, hired contractors, and community volunteers. The restored plant communities and adaptive management process will be a catalyst for lessons learned and their application to other Minnetonka and regional parks.



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The ecological communities of Hilloway Park experience many impacts that challenge the establishment of a diversity of native plants and animal habitat. Primary factors influencing the park today include:

- The extremes of wet and dry conditions exacerbated by climate change along with our warming winters.
- Invasive species including common buckthorn, garlic mustard, and reed canary grass.
- Extensive use by people and pets that causes disturbance of vegetation and wildlife.
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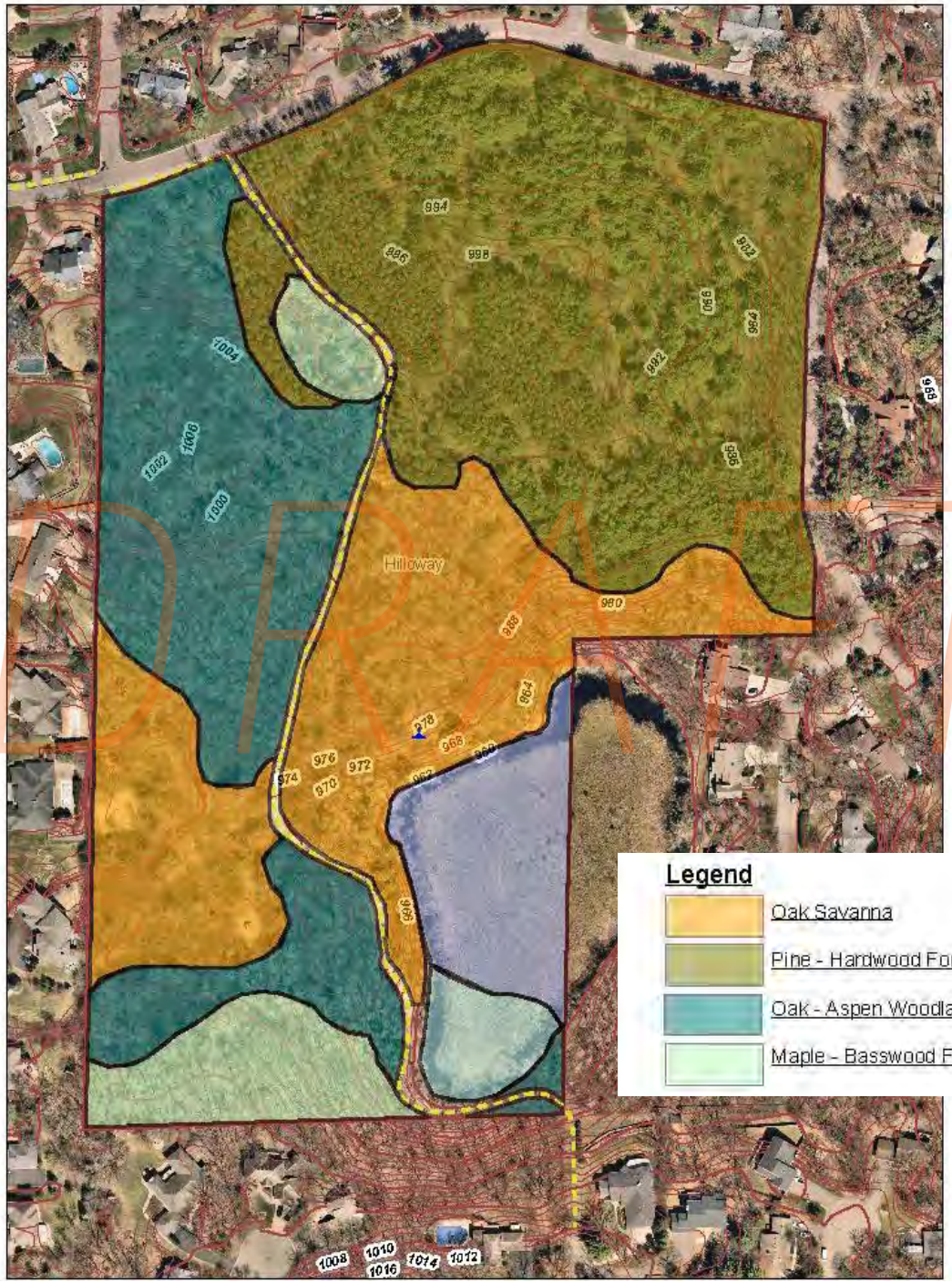

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Oak Savanna

Goal: To regenerate a diverse, drought tolerant, maintainable ecological community to be economically maintained by City staff through burning, mowing, and limited herbicide application. Oak savanna consists of tree canopy of 5% - 20% of fire-dependent tree species.

Initial Regeneration (year 1)

- Forestry mow or cut and herbicide paint invasive species and the shrub layer including sumac, wild plum, and other native shrubs (unless easily avoided). Native shrubs will naturally regenerate.
- Remove fire intolerant trees including but not limited to Siberian elm, green ash, American elm, box elder. This may include native trees such as basswood, black cherry, and maple.
    - Retain trees 12" DBH+ for desirable species including oaks, black walnut, hackberry, apple, and black cherry. Remove structurally weak trees and those with heavy tops (lollipop trees).
    - Retain small oaks if discovered.
    - Consider retaining non-invasive trees within 20' of trails to provide shade. Remove Siberian elm, buckthorn, and fruiting box elder in this zone.
- Once per month during spring and summer of the first growing season spot mow herbaceous invasive species to prevent flowering and to force regrowth that will accept herbicide in the fall.
- Cut buckthorn resprouts in mid-late summer to force regrowth.
- Overspray buckthorn resprouts with herbicide in fall and again the following spring.
- If native cloning shrubs like sumac and prickly ash cover inhibit ground level diversity, they may also be herbicide treated or mown.
- Provide an herbicide treatment to buckthorn and other woody plants the spring after forestry mowing (year 2). Then seed native herbaceous plants. Plant plugs of species that do not readily repopulate from seed.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the savanna each spring to determine management needs for the year. Determine if additional tree removal is necessary to build enough herbaceous matter to carry fire.
- Seed native herbaceous plants in the spring after buckthorn resprouts have been treated. Include plugs as a seed source for species that do not readily establish from seed.
- Once per month during the growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the project area and spot mow or spot treat invasive species (as appropriate per species).
- As necessary mow seeded areas to cut back annual weeds.
- Water new trees during dry periods.
- Overspray buckthorn resprouts in fall.
- Plant scattered oaks and other fire and climate adaptive trees as appropriate during the fall of year 2 or the spring of year 3, after the first prescribed burn is performed. Tree canopy should generally cover no more than 20 percent of the plant community to foster enough vegetative fuel for fire management.
- Remove additional trees as necessary in the fall/winter.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the savanna and determine management needs for the year. Write a brief management plan for that year. Determine if additional tree removal is necessary to build enough herbaceous matter to carry fire.
- Twice per year walk the savanna and treat invasive species by spot mowing in the summer and spot herbicide treatment in September.
- Burn on a sporadic schedule as appropriate. On average this could be about every third year and can occur during any season which enough fuel has accumulated.
- Remove additional trees as necessary in the fall/winter.

Oak- Aspen Woodland

Goal: To diversify the current aspen-dominated stand to include more deciduous hardwoods for a 50% to 85% canopy cover and invasive species resistant shrub and ground plain herbaceous layer.

Initial Regeneration

- Manage buckthorn, undesirable trees (such as Siberian elm, seed bearing box elder, and buckthorn) through mowing, grazing or by hand removal with stump herbicide treatment.
- Once per month during the growing season spot mow herbaceous invasive species to prevent flowering and to force regrowth that will accept herbicide in the fall.
- Overspray buckthorn resprouts in fall and again the following spring.
- The following season mow buckthorn resprouts and herbaceous invasives during the summer and foliar treat in the fall.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the oak-aspen woodland each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- Plant within the canopy gaps while creating canopy cover goals created by tree removal or tree attrition, trees including white oak, bur oak, and climate adaptive species such as hickories.
- Seed native herbaceous plants in the spring after buckthorn resprouts have been treated. Include plugs as a seed source for species that do not readily establish from seed.
- Once per month during the growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the project area and spot mow or spot treat invasive species.
- Water newly planted trees during dry periods.
- Overspray buckthorn resprouts in the fall.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the woodland and determine management needs for the year.
- Include burning as a management tool if enough fuel builds on the woodland floor. Reseed post-burn to increase diversity.
- Twice per year walk the woodland and treat invasive species by spot mowing in the summer and spot herbicide treatment in spring or fall.

Maple-Basswood Forest

Goal: To regenerate the ground plain vegetation of the existing maple-basswood forest and allow for the regeneration of sugar maples and other fire-intolerant hardwood species, and for other north facing slopes to establish a complete canopy cover with a diversity of species that naturally regenerate, along with a diversity of herbaceous species on the ground plain.

Initial Regeneration

- Girdle and basal treat fruiting box elder, Siberian elm and white mulberry within the woodland.
- Forestry mow or cut and herbicide invasive species, especially buckthorn and Tartarian honeysuckle.
- Once per month during the growing season spot mow herbaceous invasive species to prevent flowering and to force regrowth that will accept herbicide in the fall.
- Cut buckthorn resprouts in late summer to force regrowth.
- Overspray buckthorn resprouts in fall and again the following spring.
- Herbicide treat invasive herbaceous plants in the fall.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the woodlands each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- Seed native herbaceous plants in the spring after buckthorn resprouts have been treated. This may be done the second or third year after buckthorn removal.
- Once per month during the growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the work unit and spot mow invasive species.
- Plant within the canopy gaps created by tree removal or tree attrition, trees including sugar maple, red maple, and climate adaptive species such as hickories.
- Water newly planted trees during dry periods.
- Overspray with herbicide buckthorn resprouts in fall. Fall is also the best time to apply herbicide to invasive herbaceous plants.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the woodlands and determine management needs for the year.
- Twice per year eradicate invasive species by spot mowing in the summer and spot herbicide treatment in spring and fall.
- Monitor for tree attrition and replace if desirable native seedlings are not establishing in the area.
- Planting to diversify the forest may be necessary well into the future, especially if deer populations persist.

Pine – Hardwood Forest

Goal: To enhance pine stands and allow for the natural regeneration of pines and other desirable hardwood species to resist climate change impacts and protect the unique user experience. Enhance diversity of herbaceous species on the ground plain where possible to resist invasive species disturbance.

Initial Regeneration

- Remove or girdle and basal treat fruiting box elder, Siberian elm and other non-desirable soft-wood species within the forest.
- Forestry mow or cut and herbicide invasive species, especially buckthorn and Tartarian honeysuckle.
- Remove excessive dead/down material from storm damage or previous forestry operations for safety and future maintenance operations
- Once per month during the growing season spot mow herbaceous invasive species to prevent flowering and to force regrowth that will accept herbicide in the fall.
- Cut buckthorn resprouts in late summer to force regrowth. Overspray buckthorn resprouts in fall and again the following spring.
- Herbicide treat invasive herbaceous plants in the fall.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Thin pine species, no more than 5-10% yearly, to remove trees of poor health or structure and promote healthy tree growth response. Work to be performed on frozen soils
- Consider prescribed burning to eradicate woody undesirables and rejuvenate soils and ground plain.
- Inspect the woodlands each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- Seed native herbaceous plants in the spring after buckthorn resprouts have been treated. This may be done the second or third year after buckthorn removal.
- Once per month during the growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the work unit and spot mow invasive species.
- Plant within the canopy gaps created by tree removal or tree attrition, trees including, and climate adaptive species such as oaks and hickories. Water newly planted trees during dry periods.
- Overspray with herbicide buckthorn resprouts in fall. Fall is also the best time to apply herbicide to invasive herbaceous plants.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Continue pine thinning efforts in perpetuity.
- Eradicate black locust stands and control re-sprouts. Create restoration plan specifics for these areas of black locust disturbance.
- Every spring inspect the woodlands and determine management needs for the year.
- Twice per year eradicate invasive species by spot mowing in the summer and spot herbicide treatment in spring and fall.
- Monitor for tree attrition and replace if desirable native seedlings are not establishing in the area.
- Planting to diversify the forest may be necessary well into the future, especially if deer populations persist.

Ephemeral Wetland

Goal: To regenerate and maintain a diversity of wetland buffer and wetland native plants with minimal invasive species.

Initial Regeneration

- Remove non-desirable wetland buffer trees such as seed bearing box elder, green ash, Siberian elm to increase sunlight to ground plain.
- Treat herbaceous species throughout wetland with herbicide. Do this in the spring or fall when reed canary grass will more readily accept herbicide due to cool temperatures.
- Allow invasives to re-grow into the summer and allow seed from seed bank to germinate.
- Treat the regenerating vegetation after approximately two months of growth and again in the fall (depending on start date). Lightly till or scrap soils after fall treatment to expose additional seed bank.
- Apply herbicide to regenerating vegetation the following spring.
- Seed with appropriate wetland buffer seed mixes in the late spring/early summer. Include plugs as a seed source for species that do not readily repopulate from seed.
- Mow the seeding the first growing season if annual weeds thickly cover emerging native plants. This will allow light to get to the native seedlings.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the wetland each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- As necessary mow seeded areas to cut back annual weeds
- Once per month during the growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the work unit and spot mow or spot treat invasive species as appropriate. Fall is the best time to apply herbicide to invasive herbaceous plants.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the wetlands to determine management needs for the year.
- Twice in the summer spot mow invasive species, then spot herbicide treat invasives in September.

Fen

Goal: To regenerate and maintain a diversity of wetland native plants with minimal invasive species.

Initial Regeneration

- Treat herbaceous species throughout wetland with water-safe herbicide. Do this in the spring or fall when invasives will more readily accept herbicide due to cool temperatures.
- Allow invasives to re-grow into the summer and allow seed from seed bank to germinate.
- Apply herbicide to regenerating vegetation the following spring.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the wetland each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- Once per growing season (May 15 – October 15) walk the wetland and spot treat invasive species as appropriate. Fall is the best time to apply herbicide to invasive herbaceous plants.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the wetlands to determine management needs for the year.

Non-Native Wetland (deep marsh)

Goal: Because of the consistent disturbance of the vegetative community from excessive stormwater inundation and the disturbance from pollutants such as deicing salts and nutrients, a full restoration of a marsh community is not feasible currently. Instead, the goal is to control aggressive invasive species that are a seed source to spread into adjacent native plant communities.

Yearly Maintenance

- Every spring inspect the wetlands to determine management needs for the year. Primary invasive species to be controlled include Phragmites australis, purple loosestrife, thistles, and buckthorn. Others may be identified upon inspection.
- Twice in the summer spot mow invasive species to prevent them from going to seed and to force lush regrowth.
- Spot herbicide treat invasives in September.

Ford Park Forest Restoration Plan

Developed by City of Minnetonka 2023

Purpose of this Document

- To present a forest restoration proposal for Ford Park.
- To serve as a public information tool.
- To describe detailed restoration strategies.
- To be a planning and management tool for Minnetonka natural resources staff.
- To serve as an assessment snapshot in-time and to evaluate future restoration activities.

Notes from Park Assessment

- The majority of the forest in Ford Park is mixed oak woodland and the over-story is dominated by mature white and red oak trees. These mature oak trees are slowly dying and creating gaps in the canopy (due to drought or excess rain seasons, compounded by disease and Insect outbreaks such as oak wilt and two-lined chestnut borer). There is minimal oak regeneration occurring due to intense light and space competition predominantly from buckthorn. However, there is sporadic natural regeneration of boxelder, American and Siberian elm, and black cherry. These species will one day dominate the forest canopy if forest restoration does not occur.
- Buckthorn removal will be at the core of creating the conditions for a future mixed oak woodland in Ford Park. Buckthorn stems dominate the entire understory and shrub layers of the wooded space, creating minimal light and space for natural regeneration of native species. Buckthorn will be removed by a combination of forestry mowing and herbicide applications, and then ongoing herbicide maintenance.
- Once the buckthorn is removed, trees and shrubs can be planted to create a multi-layered forest canopy. The goal is to plant a mixed oak woodland much more diverse than what you see today. Thus, more adaptive and resilient to a changing climate and offering greater ecosystem services. Natural regeneration will be encouraged by thinning less desirable trees such as boxelder and elm, therefore creating ideal light conditions for oak regeneration. Even further, woodland seed mixes will be laid to diversify the forest floor, decrease erosion, and inhibit invasive species.
- The two acre vacant parcel is a degraded prairie dominated by smooth brome. The smooth brome will be removed and an oak/hickory savannah will be installed. Native seed will be laid for diverse grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Climate adaptive species such as oak and hickory will be sporadically planted.
- There is an ephemeral creek that leads to a degraded wetland that would benefit from restoration. The goal will be to restore this riparian habitat to its natural state utilizing seed mixes and planting trees, including the control of invasive species. Additionally, flood tolerant trees such as tamarack, bald cypress, and white cedar can be planted to create habitat and create screening for nearby residents from Hwy 169.

Target Ecological Communities

Target ecological communities are the plant communities for which restoration is directed.

Why do we develop and map target ecological communities?

It is important to set goals (in this case target ecological communities) in order to efficiently direct work. Target ecological communities have been determined by assessing the following:

- Growing conditions including soil type, topography, aspect, moisture levels, light levels, existing vegetation, invasive species, existing wildlife and extent of browsing, and extent of human disturbances
- Ecological communities at the time of European settlement (approximately 1848) as mapped by the MN DNR
- Contextual influences such as neighboring land uses, climate change, invasive species, regulations, budget, and staffing

Experienced foresters have evaluated the above listed information and determine which communities will best thrive under current conditions and with the resources available for their management. A process called adaptive management will be implemented as restoration proceeds to allow for management flexibility. Then, initial restoration actions are taken. Observations are then made as to the communities' reaction, and appropriate next steps are determined. The target community is kept in mind through this process, and if necessary, the target can be shifted.

The ecological communities of Ford Park experience many impacts that challenge the establishment of a diversity of native plants and animal habitat. Primary factors influencing the park today include:

- Invasive species including but not limited to common buckthorn, garlic mustard, and Siberian elm.
- Diminishing mature oak canopy due to an increase in Insect and disease pressures.
- Changing and variable climate, which adds stress to oak trees and makes them more susceptible to insect or disease.
- Non-desirable tree population decreases light availability at the mid-story to ground level.
- Deer and earthworm browse.
- Limitations of budget and labor availability.

These impacts are mitigated for in the restoration processes described below, by park design, and through park policies.
The target communities mapped for the park are not set in stone. As regeneration processes proceed it may be determined that a different target ecological communities are appropriate.

Target Communities

Ford Park - Target Plant Communities

April 27, 2023

Trails

Restoration Activities

City Staff, Seeding

Minnetonka Parks

Legend

Oak - Hickory Savanna

Mixed Oak Woodland

Ephemeral Stream Bed

Pond Shoreline

Trail

1:1,891

0 87.5 175 350 ft

0 25 50 100 m

The following pages describe the restoration and maintenance process for each ecological community.

Mixed Oak Woodland

Goal: To regenerate the ground plain and mid-story vegetation typical of an existing oak woodland, including establishment of over-story oaks and other hardwood species with a goal of 70 - 80% canopy closure by planting a diversity of species.

Initial Regeneration

- Remove all Siberian elm, black locust, and green ash trees and treat with herbicide.
- Thin 50 - 75% of the boxelder trees, including selective thinning of American elm, over-stressed black cherry, and dead oak trees.
- Forestry mow or stump cut and herbicide treat invasive species, primarily buckthorn and some Tartarian honeysuckle.
- Overspray buckthorn re-sprouts in fall and again the following spring with herbicide, including the treatment of invasive herbaceous plants in the fall.
- Lay native seed appropriate to light and soil conditions in the fall.
- Plant trees and shrubs in spring of 2024 with five year goal of 300 – 500 stems per acre. Mortality will need to be considered and without deer protection, it is estimated to be around 50% (deer protection measures can be taken to reduce mortality at an expense of time and money).
- Overstory trees to plant: white oak, bur oak, swamp white oak, chinkapin oak, N. pin oak, bitternut hickory, shagbark hickory, sugar maple, red maple, black walnut, and American basswood. Lower to mid-story species such as American hazelnut, nannyberry, elderberry species, dogwood species, American plum, black chokeberry, witch hazel, blue beech, ironwood, eastern wahoo, serviceberry, etc.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect woodlands each spring and fall to determine management needs for the season.
- Water tree saplings during dry periods and assess other maintenance needs.
- Overspray buckthorn and less desirable tree re-sprouts with herbicide spray in the fall, including treating invasive herbaceous plants.
- Continue to manage the woodland for insects and disease, risk trees, and assess ground layer for ideal light conditions and make tree thinning recommendations.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Inspect the woodlands every spring to determine management needs for the year.
- Spot herbicide treatment annually or bi-annually in the fall.
- Continue to manage the woodland for insects and disease, risk trees, and assess ground layer for ideal light conditions and make tree thinning recommendations.

Oak/Hickory Savanna

Goal: To regenerate a diverse, drought tolerant, maintainable ecological community to be economically maintained through mowing and limited herbicide application.

Initial Regeneration (year 1)

- Mow smooth brome grasses followed by two herbicide treatments in two-week increments.
- Perform a light surface till and follow up with seed laying of grasses, fords, and shrubs in the fall.
- Plant oaks and hickories at about 25 trees per acre, including other climate adaptive trees and shrubs as appropriate. Tree canopy should cover no more than 20 percent of the plant community to foster light conditions for grasses, forbs, and shrubs.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the savanna each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- Bi-monthly during the growing season walk the project area and spot mow or spot treat invasive species
- As necessary mow seeded areas to cut back annual weeds and assess whether or not burning is appropriate for site.
- Water trees during dry periods.
- If native cloning shrubs like sumac and wild plum cover more than 20 percent of the plant community, they may also be herbicide treated to maintain herbaceous vegetation diversity.
- **Long-term maintenance (years 4+)**
- Every spring inspect the savanna and determine management needs for the year. Twice per year walk the savanna and treat invasive species by spot mowing in the summer and spot herbicide treatment in September.
- Assess site for a sporadic burn schedule and whether or not it is appropriate.

Pond Shoreline

Goal: To regenerate a diverse floodplain ecological community with minimal invasive species.

Initial Regeneration

- Remove all Siberian elm and green ash trees and treat with herbicide.
- Remove 50 – 75% of boxelder trees, including selective thinning of American elm or other less desirable trees.
- Forestry mow or stump cut and herbicide treat invasive species, primarily buckthorn.
- Overspray buckthorn re-sprouts in fall and again the following spring with herbicide, including the treatment of invasive herbaceous plants in the fall.
- Lay native seed appropriate to light and soil conditions in the fall.
- Plant flood and drought tolerant trees and shrubs in spring of 2024, including climate adaptive trees such as tamarack, bald cypress, and northern white cedar to screen Hwy 169

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect pond shoreline each spring and fall to determine management needs for the season.
- Water tree saplings during dry periods and assess other maintenance needs.
- Overspray buckthorn and less desirable tree re-sprouts with herbicide spray in spring and fall, including treating invasive herbaceous plants.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Inspect the shoreline every spring to determine management needs for the year.
- Spot herbicide treatment annually or bi-annually in fall.

Ephemeral Stream Bed

Goal: To regenerate and maintain a diversity of native plants with minimal invasive species.

Initial Regeneration

- Forestry mow or stump cut and herbicide treat invasive species
- Treat re-sprouts and other invasive herbaceous species throughout stream bed with herbicide in fall when area has no standing water.
- Lay seed mixes in the fall.
- Plant shrubs and trees as a seed source for species that do not readily repopulate from seed.
- Thin forest if necessary along stream bed to allow light to get to native seedlings.

Short-term maintenance (3 years)

- Inspect the stream bed each spring to determine management needs for the year.
- As necessary mow seeded areas to cut back annual weeds
- Spot treat invasive species as appropriate in fall.

Long-term maintenance (years 4+)

- Every spring inspect the stream bed to determine management needs for the year.
- Spot treat herbicide invasive plants in September annually or bi-annually.

Minnetonka Park Board Item 7B
Meeting of May 3, 2023

Subject:	Consideration of the 2023 Park Board Strategic Plan
Park Board related goal:	Enhance Long-Term Park Board Development
Park Board related objective:	Annually assess the park board strategic plan
Brief Description:	The park board will review park board strategic plan mission, vision, goals and objectives and implement desired changes for 2023.

Background

In 2001, the park board worked with an independent consultant to establish a process for developing and annually refining a strategic plan. As a result of this endeavor, board members developed goals, objectives and specific action steps designed to meet the board's mission and vision developed earlier in the process.

Attached is the draft 2023 Park Board Strategic Plan. Updates have been made by staff to reflect input provided by the park board at the March 1, 2023 meeting. The park board will consider adoption of this document at the May 3, 2023 meeting.

Discussion Points

- Does the park board desire any changes to the 2023 Strategic Plan

Recommended Park Board Action: Review the 2023 draft Strategic Plan and consider adoption.

Attachments

1. 2023 Strategic Plan with edits

Minnetonka Park ~~& Recreation~~ Board
2023 Strategic Plan - DRAFT

Vision:
An inclusive city with outstanding parks and recreational opportunities within a healthy and biodiverse natural environment.

Mission:
To proactively advise the City Council, in ways that will:

- ~~Protect~~ Conserve and enhance Minnetonka's natural environment
- Promote quality and inclusive recreation opportunities, natural amenities and facilities to meet the needs of all
- Provide a forum for public engagement regarding our parks, trails, athletic facilities and ~~open space~~natural resources
- Adhere to the goals and strategies of the Natural Resources Master Plan (NRMP) and the Parks, Open Space, and Trails (POST) Plan

Goals and Objectives (order does not reflect priority):

Goal **To ~~protect~~ conserve natural resources and open space**

Objective 1: Provide feedback to assist staff in decision-making regarding natural resources and open space
Objective 2: Continue to review and comment on the implementation of the natural resources stewardship program as guided by the NRMP
Objective 3: Review and provide feedback on strategies and funding to enhance natural resources and open space
Objective 4: Promote the city's efforts of ~~protecting~~ conserving and ~~enhancing~~ restoring the community's natural resources by creating awareness and supporting educational opportunities and volunteerism
Objective 5: Provide guidance that aligns with the goals and recommendations of both the NRMP and POST Plan on balancing the conservation of natural resources with providing high quality recreational opportunities~~in balancing the protection of natural resources with providing quality recreational opportunities and facilities~~

Goal **To renew and maintain parks and trails**

Objective 1: Participate in the park & trail projects process and make recommendations to the city council
Objective 2: Conduct an annual review of park dedication fees
Objective 3: Identify areas of the city that are deficient of adequate park or trail amenities
Objective 4: Review the city's Trail Improvement Plan and consider trail projects that will encourage outdoor recreation and improve mobility in the community
Objective 5: Review conditions of park facilities, fields, ~~and~~ amenities, and natural resources to inform park investment plan projects and priorities
Objective 6: Review and provide feedback on updated wayfinding and park signage
Objective 7: Review park rules and ordinances as needed
Objective 8: Review and provide feedback on the Purgatory Park Master Plan

Goal **To provide quality athletic and recreational facilities and programs**

Objective 1: Perform an annual review of the Gray's Bay Marina operations plan
Objective 2: Anticipate, review and respond to community needs not previously identified
Objective 3: Review policies related to the operation and management of park facilities to determine if changes are needed.
Objective 4: Ensure that park amenities, recreational facilities and programs address future community needs and changing demographics

Objective 5: Conduct a review of the athletic field fee schedule developed for 2023 and make recommended adjustments for 2024

Objective 6: Offer a full range of programs for people of all ages, ability levels, and economic and cultural backgrounds ensuring all have the opportunity to participate in both athletic activities as well as cultivating appreciation and interest in the natural world within our parks

Objective 7: Responsibly maintain our parks, trails and recreational facilities, while fairly balancing user fees with general community support

Objective 8: Receive and provide input and guidance on the skate park design

Goal **Enhance long-term Park Board development**

Objective 1: Review and recommend Capital Improvements Program for 2024-2028 related to parks, trails ~~& open space~~and natural resources restoration

Objective 2: Increase community and city council awareness of park board projects through the online project page and community outreach

Objective 3: Encourage board member involvement in annual park board and city related ~~activities such as the farmers market~~special events and park habitat restoration events

Objective 4: Continue to explore new ideas and strive to build community for those who work, live, volunteer and ~~play~~ recreate in Minnetonka

Objective 5: Actively explore and enhance partnerships/engagement opportunities with other agencies ~~including~~ such as the City of Hopkins and community-based organizations

Objective 6: Annually assess the park board strategic plan

Minnetonka Park Board Item 9
Meeting of May 3, 2023

Subject:	Information Items
Park Board related goal:	N/A
Park Board related objective:	N/A
Brief Description:	The following are informational items and developments that have occurred since the last park board meeting.

Summer Registration

Registration for summer recreation programs began March 8. 4,100 registrations were processed online, over the phone and in person over the first two weeks of registration. Registration for summer swimming lessons begins on May 10. Some of the popular summer programs include: tennis lessons, senior yoga, youth soccer league and the Park Adventures program.

Upcoming Park Projects

New playground equipment will be installed at Gro Tonka and Linner parks. Gro Tonka equipment is scheduled to be installed and open by May 19th and Linner will follow.

The tennis and basketball courts at Linner park and tennis courts at Junction park will be reconstructed this summer. Removals will begin in May and paving completed in June, then the courts have to cure for 30 days before the color coatings are applied. The courts are planned to be open for play by early August.

Park Signage Update

The Park Board reviewed overall park signage at the October 7, 2020 park board meeting, which included 1) park monument signs, 2) rules and regulations, and 3) educational or interpretive signage. Replacement and maintenance of signs was also discussed. A second meeting on March 3, 2021 covered sign design standards and an interpretive sign plan. Since that time, city staff have worked to develop sign design standards for all three types of signs, and have initiated sign replacement and installation projects in several locations:

- Ten new interpretive signs are planned for Lone Lake Park, of which three have been fabricated (focusing on trees, monarchs, and loss of biodiversity). The remaining seven are in draft form, with a goal of being installed this year. All signs adhere to the city's communication principles of using plain language and covering topics that are accessible and broadly applicable to the general public. The Friends of Lone Lake Park provided feedback on the general signage plan (general topics/themes, locations, initial drafts), however have expressed recent concerns on the final draft of the first three signs regarding themes and specific content. City staff feel the themes and content adhere to city communication principles and align with city goals, including the Natural Resources Master Plan. One concern regarding a Native American reference is being reviewed by an outside agency at this time.

- Park entrance monument signage will be bid for fabrication and construction this summer. This signage project will consist of several signage iterations to be installed at primary, secondary, and additional park entrances. Primary and secondary signage used at entrance drives and heavily

used trail entrances will consist of a limestone veneer base with an elevated metal park name element and the additional park entrance signage will feature two faux wooden posts.

- Park rules signs are updated as needed as signs become worn or hard to read.

Skate Park Feasibility Study Update

The final Skatepark Feasibility Study Report was pulled from the April 17, 2023 City Council meeting agenda and will return to the Park Board for further discussion. Due to the upcoming Community Facilities Study and other site selection considerations, a revised Skatepark Feasibility Study Report, with new staff recommendations, will be presented to the Park Board at a future meeting.

Minnetonka Park Board Item 10
Meeting of May 3, 2023

Upcoming 6-Month Meeting Schedule				
Day	**Date**	**Meeting Type**	**Agenda Business Items**	**Special Notes**
Wed	6/7/23	Regular	• 2024-2028 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) • Outdoor rinks overview	
Wed	7/5/23	Regular	•	No meeting
Wed	8/2/23	Regular	•	
Wed	9/6/23	Regular	• Joint Study Session w/Council & Tour	5:30 pm start
Wed	10/4/23	Regular	•	

Other meetings and activities to note:

Day	Date	Description	Special Notes
Saturday	5/20/23	Mountain Bike Opener event	Lone Lake Park
Thursday	6/1/23	Ridgedale Commons Grand Opening/Ribbon Cutting	Ridgedale Commons
Tuesday	6/6/23	Farmers Market	Ridgedale Commons
Saturday	6/24/23	Summer Fest	Civic Center Campus

Items to be scheduled:

Climate Action & Adaptation Plan