



Addendum

Minnetonka Park Board

Meeting of November 3, 2021

ITEM 3B – NATURAL RESOURCES MASTER PLAN UPDATE

- Attached is feedback received to-date from the Minnetonka Matters public engagement platform, along with feedback from the Friends of Minnetonka Parks and the Friends of Purgatory Park received after the packet was distributed.

ITEM 3C – LONE LAKE PARK MULTI-USE MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAIL METRICS

- Attached is the Lone Lake Park Singletrack 2021 Annual Review submitted by the Friends of Lone Lake Park after the packet was distributed.



**Item 3B – Natural Resources
Master Plan Update**

-
- Attached is feedback receive to-date from the Minnetonka Matters public engagement platform, along with feedback from the Friends of Minnetonka Parks and the Friends of Purgatory Park received after the packet was distributed.

Summary Report

22 October 2021 - 03 November 2021

Minnetonka Matters

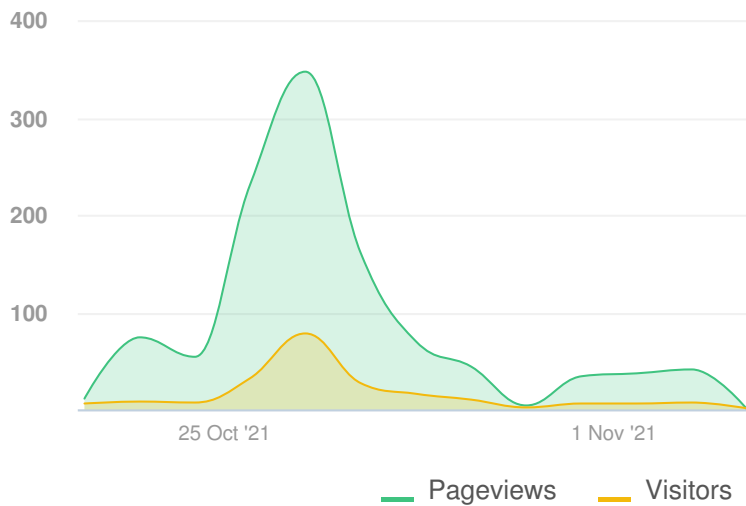
PROJECTS SELECTED: 1

Natural Resources Master Plan

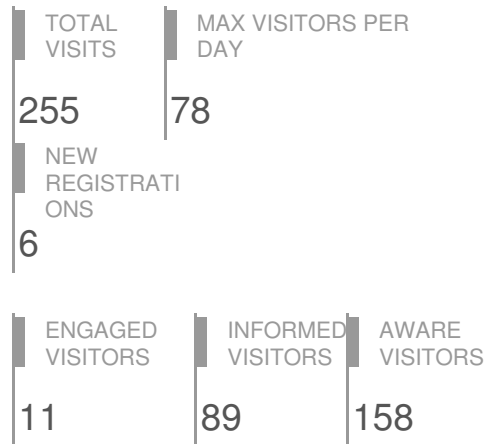
FULL LIST AT THE END OF THE REPORT



Visitors Summary



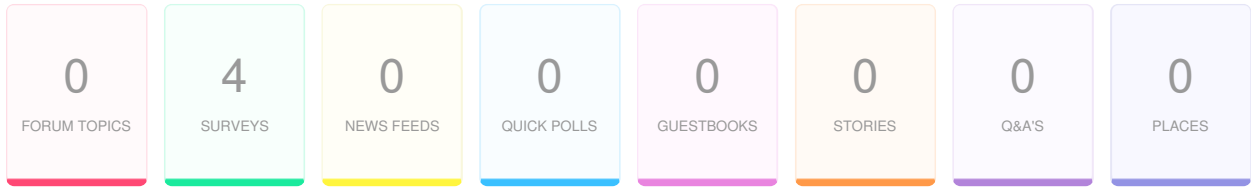
Highlights



PARTICIPANT SUMMARY

ENGAGED	11 ENGAGED PARTICIPANTS			(%)
	Registered	Unverified	Anonymous	
INFORMED	Contributed on Forums	0	0	0
	Participated in Surveys	11	0	0
	Contributed to Newsfeeds	0	0	0
	Participated in Quick Polls	0	0	0
AWARE	Posted on Guestbooks	0	0	0
	Contributed to Stories	0	0	0
	Asked Questions	0	0	0
	Placed Pins on Places	0	0	0
	Contributed to Ideas	0	0	0
	<i>* A single engaged participant can perform multiple actions</i>			<i>* Calculated as a percentage of total visits to the Project</i>
Natural Resources Master Pl... 11 (7.0%)				
ENGAGED	89 INFORMED PARTICIPANTS			(%)
		Participants		
INFORMED	Viewed a video	0		
	Viewed a photo	0		
	Downloaded a document	40		
	Visited the Key Dates page	0		
AWARE	Visited an FAQ list Page	0		
	Visited Instagram Page	0		
	Visited Multiple Project Pages	79		
	Contributed to a tool (engaged)	11		
	<i>* A single informed participant can perform multiple actions</i>			<i>* Calculated as a percentage of total visits to the Project</i>
Natural Resources Master Pl... 89 (56.3%)				
ENGAGED	158 AWARE PARTICIPANTS			
		Participants		
INFORMED	Visited at least one Page	158		
AWARE	<i>* Aware user could have also performed an Informed or Engaged Action</i>			<i>* Total list of unique visitors to the project</i>
Natural Resources Master Pl... 158				

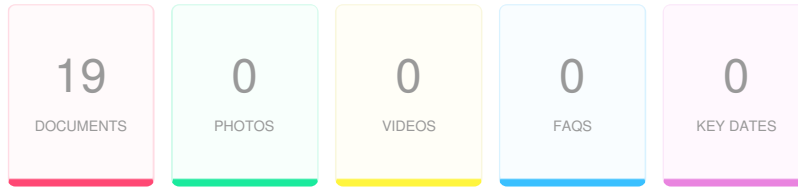
ENGAGEMENT TOOLS SUMMARY



SURVEYS SUMMARY	
4	Surveys
11	Contributors
19	Submissions

TOP 3 SURVEYS BASED ON CONTRIBUTORS		
10 Contributors to Chapter 1. Goals and Objectives	3 Contributors to Chapter 4. Natural Resources Management Strategies	3 Contributors to Chapter 3. Issues and Opportunities

INFORMATION WIDGET SUMMARY



DOCUMENTS	
19	Documents
40	Visitors
220	Downloads

TOP 3 DOCUMENTS BASED ON DOWNLOADS		
23 Downloads	22 Downloads	32 Downloads
Chapter 3_Natural Resources Issues and Opportunities_DRAFT.pdf	deleted_document	Appendix A_Park Management Strategies for Select Parks_DRAFT

Chapter 1. Goals and Objectives	22-Oct-2021 - 02-Nov-2021		
	Survey Response		
Date of contribution	Goal 1. Improve the quality of natural habitat...	Goal 2. Manage and improve the community forest ecosystem...	Goal 3. Engage with people...
Nov 01 21 03:53:29 pm	This all sounds good. The last component, revisiting habitat quality assessments and prioritization of parks, is an important part of the process. What was good five years ago often needs adjustment.	Bio-diversity is crucial going forward. With a changing, warmer climate, and an increase in pests and plant diseases, we just don't know which species will thrive going forward. We need them all, not just the highly desired species we have focused on in the past. I grew up in Minneapolis when mature American Elms arched over all the boulevards. We know how well that worked.	All good.
Oct 26 21 07:34:58 am	Adding more green spaces and natural areas as opposed to keep building more and more and keep losing natural areas is very important to mitigate climate change and help protect native species.	I like the idea of species diversification in lawns. The city should be encouraging people to not get rid of leaf litter as well to improve soil health, nutrient cycling and to benefit insects and other wildlife.	I agree with this, and I think it would be beneficial to add full or at least part time staff to help with this, provide more workshops and training, especially as volunteer groups such as "friends of parks" groups keep growing.
Oct 26 21 09:53:23 am	These are good high level goals.	This goal seems to have an overlap with Goal 1 and is confusing to me. Maybe Goal 1 should address public lands and Goal 2 should address private land.	
Oct 26 21 09:56:06 am			
Oct 26 21 11:23:19 am			Love the idea of incentives to foster adoption of restoration. Encourage pollinator friendly lawns instead of the typical suburban grass that needs loads of water.
Oct 26 21 12:32:19 pm	I like the goals set forth but I think residents need to be updated on progress more frequently	The idea of a perfect lawn needs to change in Minnetonka.....it is far from perfect for our native insects. Turf grass is highly over rated.	I have participated in habitat restoration in a Minnetonka park. It would be beneficial to recap the current condition of the area(s) to gage the long term benefit.
Oct 27 21 04:54:16 am			
Oct 27 21 06:32:57 am	How will you do this with the current budget? What percent increase will you be requesting? How many new staff positions will be created to tackle so many issues?	This goal is about the forest ecosystem, so I don't see what lawns have to do with it. Maybe a separate goal should be developed that addresses turf grass in both public and private areas.	A completely new way of recruiting and managing volunteers is necessary. That should be part of this goal. If that appears somewhere else, then ok. I do see the Appendix D, but that overarching structure goal needs to be stated in one of the big goal sections.
Oct 27 21 09:27:08 am	I agree	I agree	I agree
Oct 31 21 11:44:23 am	no concerns or comments	no comments or concerns	this goal is CRITICAL if the other goals are to be achieved.

Chapter 2. Natural History and Current Conditions

Date of contribution	Contributor Details
Oct 26 21 09:57:48 am	<p data-bbox="305 394 1453 474">Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?</p> <p data-bbox="305 474 1453 617">This section is informative. I like map 2.8, where parks are indicated on the map. It would be nice if parks were indicated on every map. It's hard to locate small parks when they aren't identified by name.</p> <p data-bbox="305 617 1453 709">All of the data in this section is in contradiction to the survey finding on p. 14: Most of Minnetonka's natural areas are in good or excellent condition.</p>
Oct 26 21 10:23:42 am	<p data-bbox="305 709 1453 886">There is a lot of good information in this section. I wish all the maps identified the parks, like map 2.8 does. It's difficult to locate small parks when they're not identified on the maps.</p>

Chapter 3. Issues and Opportunities

Date of contribution	Contributor Details
Oct 27 21 06:45:37 am	<p>Please share your comments or concerns. What do you like? What is missing?</p> <p>I like the ideas of reducing the heat island effect with trees/plants. I look forward to seeing islands of green in large parking lots, such as Ridgedale. BTW, on p. 25 of the chapter, a bullet reads "continue to protect city staff from extreme heat and storm events." What does this mean? I don't think this goes in a master plan.</p>
Oct 26 21 10:02:13 am	<p>This section seems very comprehensive in its list of opportunities, but it seems overwhelming. Does Minnetonka's NR dept. have the resources to do all of these things? If not, which ones will they do? It would be nice to see more specific action plans, broken down by park, with at least general timeframes and budget.</p>

Chapter 4. Natural Resources Management Strategies

Date of contribution	
Please share your comments on Section 4.1 - Public Property. What do you like? What is missing?	Oct 27 21 09:56:46 am I'm glad to see a public, formal way to prioritize restoration for parks. But I have to say that this set of ambitious goals will never be carried out by the current department, which is underfunded and understaffed.
Please share your comments on Section 4.2 - Private Property. What do you like? What is missing?	The photo of the homeowner's rain garden couldn't have been taken in Mtka. When we asked how the city could help us create one, we got shuttled to the 9 Mile Creek Watershed District. NO help whatsoever. I hope that changes, but without better resources to this dept, it will not. I hope to see better support for homeowners who are trying to do the right thing. Too late for us...but a good idea. Will native plant sales be resumed? Hope so.
Please share your comments on Section 4.3 - Climate Change. What do you like? What is missing?	This is again, not going to happen with your overworked staff. Who really has time for these observations/monitoring activities? Casual observations won't be good enough. Is there a designated person? I also wonder about leading by example. It is a good wish list goal to have, but how will Mtka actually get to this point?
Please share your comments on Section 4.4 - Policies and Ordinances. What do you like? What is missing?	Considering the last Planning Commission and City Council discussion of the Tree Ordinance, I do not have high hopes for new, more restrictive ordinances. The city seems too concerned about what developers think to actually care about the long term environmental issues. How will your department handle this? Can you educate the members of council and commissions?
Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Partnerships. What do you like? What is missing?	I hope that the development of a new volunteer program structure will be a process that includes the very volunteers you hope to keep and increase. We are stakeholders who want input into a process that will affect our time and efforts. Can you create a steering committee of sorts that can work together on this?
Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Education and Outreach. What do you like? What is missing?	Admirable, but, once again, how can the current staff do all these things? We can't even get the buckthorn workshop on video to share in the off season!
Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Volunteer Engagement. What do you like? What is missing?	One thing that is missing is including volunteer groups in the development of a new process. Without our input, staff will be missing a huge part of the info gathering. This also seems incredibly time consuming and ambitious. Along with all the other efforts, how will staff actually carry this out? For example, right now there is a lot of momentum in the Friends of Parks groups, but we are being told to put on the brakes while the city figures out how to handle it. You might lose volunteers that way; people may go on to find other things to do while they wait for answers to "can I adopt this area of this park?".
Please share your comments on Section 4.5 - Technical Assistance and Incentives. What do you like? What is missing?	Who will come to people's homes to provide technical assistance? Is there a restoration landscaper on staff and/or one that has time for this? Cost sharing would be an incentive, so that is pretty easy to carry out, but planning a yard's restoration is more time consuming and requires someone with broad expertise.
Please share your comments on Section 4.6 - Planning/Research/Monitoring. What do you like? What is missing?	That is a lot of plans! Again, sorry to sound like a broken record, but who has time to do this? For years I've heard nothing but "we don't have time" or "I'm the only one and I'm too busy." How exactly will this change?



FoMP's Response to the City's NRMP
October 31, 2021

I. Needed City Overarching Goals to Ensure the Success of the NRMP

We believe that city goals are necessary to ensure the success of the plan. We suggest that the city consider the following:

- A. A dramatic increase in city funding for high quality nature spaces (amenities) in our parks.
- B. Restructuring the Natural Resources Division as a stand-alone department apart from the Public Works Department at the same management level as the Recreation Department and adding a position of grant writer/restoration ecologist.
- C. More strategic use of volunteers by the city to work to restore high value areas as demonstration sites and adopt-a-spot areas.
- D. Much stronger city driven public education and outreach.
- E. Guaranteed execution of the plan with proven deliverables by city leaders.

*This document [NRMP] sets a framework for restoring biodiversity in Minnetonka.
The success of this effort is up to the citizens of Minnetonka to support city
leadership in directing financial resources to natural resources management, NRMP, pg. 6.*

II. The Need for a Bold City Driven Vision and Transformational Plan with an Action Agenda and Metrics

*Minnetonka has only one site of biodiversity significance. This is the case because of land development since European settlement; first through the process of establishing agriculture and then urbanization, people have greatly altered Minnetonka, eliminating plant and animal species and degrading habitats. This has occurred throughout Minnesota and the United States. Minnetonka is now at a point of understanding how this effects our quality of life. We may choose to **restore some of the** original biodiversity, but requires **consistent funding**. It must be understood that **continual management** is necessary to restore biodiversity because of consistent degrading forces – from invasive species, to over browsing, to soil alterations, to climate change. NRMP, pg. 6.*

We agree with many of the ideas and initiatives contained in the proposed plan. And we appreciate that staff agrees (see above) with our assessment (*FoMP Interview Report*, March, 2021) that our parks are in serious decline and need immediate and significant attention. The last Natural Resources Restoration and Management Plan (prepared for the City in 1995-1996) also noted “that all vegetation types are seriously



deteriorated or deteriorating throughout the city.” We all (residents, park users, city government and businesses) share responsibility for this decline. Our basic question is:

How will the city successfully work on so many needed initiatives without a compelling vision to guide the actions described and an organization with more significant resources available to accomplish the tasks?

The gap between ideas in the plan and the resources currently available to solve the issues is daunting. To start to close this gap we believe the proposed NRMP could develop an inspiring vision that makes a stronger link between how people have degraded our parks over time and our role in reversing the process not just managing what is left better. It could also make a stronger link between the vitality of the natural amenities of our parks and the character of our city and its economic and social quality of life. Finally there may need to be significant financial and human resource investment in our parks and Natural Resources Division. These financial and organizational investments need to be considered.

The plan could state the size of the changes needed that staff have articulated more consistently to drive home the need for leadership, new thinking and financial support. We are concerned as the plan sometimes takes an *incremental approach* to the issues we face in our parks when what is needed is a *transformational approach*. (See language above highlighted in red for examples of incremental language. These words could be replaced by *restore significant amounts, dramatically increased funding* and *transformational leadership* which would change the message in the quote). The language needs to be more consistent throughout the document pointing to what really needs to happen for the plan to be fully realized. The reversal of this decline is in our hands. We believe that Minnetonka should consider taking a more bold leadership approach to the restoration and preservation and celebration of our natural amenities as they differentiate us from many other cities in our area and are at the core of our city’s character.

We offer to help the city revise the report to one that moves **FROM** a report that is mostly incremental in its language **TO** one that describes a bold leadership role in revitalizing our parks, the ecology of our city and defining its character; a transformational change perspective to close the gap between what is needed and what currently exists. This will clarify for residents what is at stake and what needs to happen to ensure its success. **Doing only a little more programmatically, adding a few dollars to a budget or relying mostly on volunteer labor, means that we may merely be slowing down the degradation of our parks and revisiting this issues for the foreseeable future. Is now the time to take bold action to break the cycle of decline and make a lasting and positive change to our high quality park spaces?**

The report could be edited following the ideas in this **From To Chart** ensuring that language that describes the transformational change that is needed to surmount the concerns raised in the report are addressed with foresight, energy and resources. FoMP is excited about the opportunity to contribute further to this plan and dedicated to the work needed to transform our parks making Minnetonka a true leader.



From: Incremental Change	To: Transformational Change (Leadership Position)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The city views its parks as in decline like those of other cities and there is nothing we can do but slow down the eventual slide (like other cities) to mediocracy and beyond. • Minnetonka views its parks as just one element of its social and economic fabric and not as a core element. • The city makes only incremental investments in our park's natural amenities. • Minnetonka uses volunteers to provide stop gap help in stemming the decline of our parks. • The city's Natural Resources Division is a part of the Maintenance Department and below Recreation in the management hierarchy constricting its perspective and limiting its voice in city policy decisions. The Natural Resources staff continue to have no representation to the Park Board so cannot make any recommendations. They have no seat at the table. • Community education efforts place much of the heavy lifting in our parks on citizen volunteers and citizen science to stem the decline of our parks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minnetonka demonstrates a strong leadership position in restoring and preserving our natural amenities setting a new standard for other cities and becoming a magnet for visitors, new home owners and business. • Minnetonka demonstrates that its parks and their high quality nature areas (amenities) are central (core) to our prosperity and future. • Minnetonka funds natural amenities and recreational amenities in a more equitable way requiring a transformation in budgeting and resource allocation creatively using city resources and external grants. • Minnetonka forms true partnerships with residents and resident groups to reshape funding for park projects and the use of volunteers to focus on projects that matter ecologically and are noticeable and important to the community. • The city's Natural Resources Division is a peer of the Recreation Department in the organizational hierarchy and a stand-alone entity and includes a new position of city restoration ecologist/grant writer. The Natural Resources staff have representation to the Park Board and submit funding requests. Natural Resources has a full seat at the table. • The city takes a much stronger role in assisting residents with the heavy lifting through increased public education as to the importance of our parks and ecological systems and supports and celebrates resident efforts and volunteerism with city resources and ongoing ecological research.

III. Section by Section Comments

Overall Comments

- The report is full of generally good and needed ideas. What will it take to adequately fund this plan? Staff this plan? Measure the success of the plan? Gain community support for the changes required to make the plan a success?
- What is in the current plan is really good. The proposed document is much less specific and strategic.
- The plan states that a high percentage of residents believe that the natural areas in our parks are in good condition. Clearly more education and outreach is needed since the evaluation of natural areas demonstrates otherwise. FoMP has stated repeatedly and the current NRMP states that, “most citizens have a very limited understanding of the ecological condition of the city’s natural resources,” Current NRMP, pg. viii. We do not expect our residents to be experts but we can do far more to educate them so that they are better equipped to judge the health of our parks and make informed decisions about their views and actions.
- As an invested community stakeholder group, FOMP could not help but notice our name missing from the engaged volunteer groups listed in the Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP) draft document.
- I don’t see anything specific about labeling park preserves and other parks with their appropriate designations. The language for preserves is especially important so we don’t lose them to recreational development. We also need designation labeling for all parks so that park descriptions and signage can explain and reinforce what different parks are for and the park’s rules for usage.
- There seems to be a lack of volunteer engagement during the development of this plan.
- FoMP’s on-the-ground knowledge can bring key insights to the park specific recommendations regarding opportunities and restoration priorities especially in Appendix A.
- Comparing the new NRMP draft to the previous plan has led to a list of questions which are listed below:
 1. What did we learn from the last twenty years of restoration work? Were we in maintenance mode or trying to restore?
 2. What are we going to do differently in terms of budget or methods to achieve desirable outcomes and move the restoration of our parks into maintenance mode?
 3. Have we incorporated the latest scientific research in regards to restoration management into the NRMP (Natural Resources Management Plan)?
 4. Have we implemented the recommendations from the previous NRMP? One example is the detailed plan for working with volunteers. Will staff incorporate these ideas into their new volunteer structure?
 5. What is still remaining to accomplish from the last NRMP?
 6. How will we monitor for desired outcomes? Have we monitored for desired outcomes in the past?



- FoMP is keenly interested to learn how budget and/or restoration methods will change to reach desired outcomes due to the poor biodiversity and quality ratings in many park areas.
- The current plan (1995-96) has very specific information on volunteers and a plan for volunteering. It could be cut and pasted into the proposed plan. Has anyone bothered to go back and read that plan? Why reinvent the wheel when what is there is very good and not just covering volunteers?

Chapter 1 - Intro/Goals and Objectives

- Good high level goals, Goals 1 and 2 seem to have a lot of overlap and are confusing to me. Maybe Goal 1 should focus on public land and Goal 2 on private land?
- The plan sets natural resources management goals and priorities – what is the time frame for the plan? 5, 10, 15 years? At most the plan should cover 10 years. We suggest a set tenure for the new plan, perhaps 10 years.
- Climate mitigation – what about the impact of increased forest cover and other natural plant communities because of natural resources management practices in parks and other natural areas?
- This plan says that it doesn't address water resources because it's addressed in the 2019 Water Resources Management Plan. However, throughout this document there are many references to wetlands – invasive species like purple loosestrife. How will this plan work in conjunction with the Water Resources Management Plan? Storm water runoff (flooding) is impacted by land management practices on public and private lands.
- The 2021 Parks Open Space and Trail Plan has connections with the Natural Resources Plan. The connections between the various plans should be shown in this plan.
- Why is the community forest ecosystem given its own goal – what about all the other plant ecosystems that are found in Minnetonka such as wetlands? All of these systems are interconnected. Also, it gives an objective to identify strategies to manage storm water but the introduction says that storm water is not a part of this plan.
- The draft plan talks about an objective to promote species diversification in lawns – the primary focus should be to reduce lawns and replace them with more natural plant communities. Focus on sustainable lawn care education so residents consider reducing fertilizer, pesticide, and water use.
- Goal of promoting voluntary application of practices on private property – this has been encouraged for decades however most individuals do not apply these practices – need to look at cost- share, and other financial incentives to change behavior – I have recommended that the storm water drainage fee be modified depending to what degree the private landowner is implementing natural resources management strategies on their property.

Chapter 2 - Natural History/Current Conditions

- Interesting, though depressing, information about the decline. Map 2.8 is helpful, on which individual parks are identified on the map. Because it is hard to locate small parks, it is good to identify individual parks on the map.
- There is contradictory information here about the health of the parks. Here it says they are in decline. In another section it says that city residents are split on their view of their health and in another area it says the city is doing a good job managing the health of the parks. What is the health of the parks? Perhaps the city could use an external expert to render an opinion? The objective regarding limiting tree removal between Nov 1 and March 31 for the northern long eared bat conflicts with what forestry says that this is the best time to remove oaks that have been impacted by oak wilt and other diseases. Staff need to make sure that urban forest/tree strategies are very clear especially for the private landowner.
- Regarding the Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment of City Owned Property, who, where and how were the natural resources investigations performed to create the Plant Community Inventory? More specifics on this inventory will be essential – if the plan covers 5 to 10 years, then there needs to be comprehensive data on all areas owned by the city.
- Current Status of Wildlife in Minnetonka. There needs to be official survey data for wildlife species in Minnetonka to guide future management priorities. There are other wildlife surveys that are conducted: Audubon Christmas Bird Count, has the DNR had volunteers do the annual frog/toad survey in Minnetonka? What about annual butterfly count?
- Improve wildlife habitat in Minnetonka parks by looking at management plans to see where turf can be removed to increase native plantings.
- What other types of human disturbance have also occurred within Minnetonka – further residential and commercial development has impacts on natural communities – what about the impact of human use on natural communities in Minnetonka?
- The plan says that there are natural resources staff that have expertise in wetlands and water quality management – in the beginning of the plan it states that wetlands and water resources are addressed under the Water Quality Management Plan – it is extremely important that surface waters and wetlands are integrated into the overall natural resources management plan – all the natural resources are interconnected.
- I think it is very important to be very clear on any conclusions drawn from the 2021 Parks and Open Space Planning Process – only a very small segment of Minnetonka’s population was involved in the surveys and other strategies for collecting information.
- The Natural Resources Division has \$1.6 million annual budget to support activities – is that enough? Shouldn’t the need be pointed out that it will be extremely critical to increase spending to achieve the ambitious goals being put forth?

- Goals/Objectives. I am looking for more active verbs. It isn't enough to Identify and Promote. Words like Develop, Restore, Redesign, Educate would be stronger.
- Please update information in map key on p. 4 to describe oak openings and barrens as oak savanna. The three plant community descriptions are used and this is confusing.
- The color coding in Table 2.1 is not consistent with color coding in Appendix A.
- Section 2.4, p. 14. No mention of survey data for rusty patched bumble bee in Lone Lake Park.
- iNaturalist data cited is inaccurate because endangered and threatened species have location data obscured. There are multiple confirmed sites (multi-year) documentation of the rusty patched bumble bee not reflected in this report. This report should have robust management recommendations for threatened and endangered species.

Chapter 3 - Natural Resource Issues/Opportunities

- A very thorough list of opportunities, but overwhelming. Does Minnetonka have the resources to do all of this? If not, is there a separate document with specific plans?
- Why was no official data used to determine the current status of wildlife? Using iNaturalist isn't really reliable because it is hit and miss.
- RPBB comment: any lawn replacements **must use plants that the RPBB is known to forage on.**
- Minnetonka is not unique in having a dedicated NR division. Burnsville, Apple Valley, Chanhassen, St. Louis Park, and Andover are others (and there could be more). Just like Mtkka's is housed in Pub Works, other cities house theirs in Park/Rec, Pub Works, Maintenance, etc.
- Some good ideas here, but "more aggressively manage existing invasive species" is weak. We should be working to eradicate them. Also, FoMP could be mentioned here.
- Develop a climate adapted tree list! It is encouraging that a suggestion from FoMP made it into the plan (the discussion was held when the Tree Ordinance was in front of the Planning Commission and Council).
- Enforce an ordinance. Will the council actually go for that? Typically, residents are told that enforcement is impossible because of staffing.
- YES to more \$ to work on invasive species! This will be necessary for quite some time, given how much work there is to do in parks and other public land.
- Continue to use volunteers, but make sure they are working on **coherent plans** in the parks and remember they can't do it all. Most major projects will need contractors to get it started and then volunteers can maintain it.
- Strengthen landscape ordinance (and clearly tie in the Tree Ordinance?)
- Target assisted migration/planting of southerly plant species in cultural areas in parks, heat island locations, not restored, natural areas.



- iNaturalist is a platform that could be used as the ‘pest detector’ program suggested for volunteers to scout new invasive species. This was proposed to NR staff in 2015.
- p. 22 “staff diligently control invasive species”. This would be more accurately stated as manage (not control).
- Please replace suggested clover in lawns to a native species.

Chapter 4 - Natural Resources Management Strategies

- A thorough list of strategies. We’re most interested in how the public can get involved volunteering in the parks. A fellow FOMP member has sent an email to you about this.
- Nice description and photos on p. 33!
- Improve eroding footpaths? We thought they were unmaintained. What about rogue bike trails?
- We’re concerned about encouraging clover in lawns. What if it really is invasive? (See comment in Ch. 3.)
- Table of Misperceptions is good and should be emphasized as part of a public education program.
- Once buckthorn is removed (fully removed and daubed), volunteers could be engaged to adopt areas, monitor new growth and remove it. This is a perfect “Adopt an Area” opportunity.
- Two statements that begin “Lead volunteer efforts to...” not sure what that means.
- You promise “technical assistance” – how will staff provide this when they are already too busy to do just about anything we ask?
- In that right column of the chart, 5th row it says, “Develop a climate adaptation and mitigation plan” and I thought the Sustainability Commission would be working on that as part of the Climate Action Plan. They should say they will work with the SC.
- Table 4.2. Change Meadow Park and Hilloway Park to 2 for Volunteer Involvement (established Friends group and organized volunteerism in each park)
- You need to expand City tree sale to include gravel bed grown and bare root trees.

Appendix A: Park Management Strategies for Select Parks

- Is the focus of Appendix A to be vague recommendations or do these recommendations have teeth? Given the extensive research showing that low diversity promotes low stability, the target plant communities should attempt to be biologically diverse, especially on the ground layer, to help reduce invasibility. Monitoring for diverse outcomes should reduce maintenance costs over the long-term. Target plant communities should also anticipate climate changes and adapt to more resilient communities over time.



- The first paragraph states: Detailed management plans should be developed for each site with specific direction on techniques, phasing, and budgets for management efforts. Question: Will you be referencing the current (2000) NRMP that includes detailed methodologies and specifications, missing from the new plan?
- Please include missing nonprofits in Partnerships, p. 41: Friends of Cullen Nature Preserve and Bird Sanctuary, Friends of Minnetonka Parks.
- Also noted in Restoration Priorities is the removal of pioneer trees. Question: Will this priority be included in the park-specific plans and budgets?
- Jidana Park. “Severe foot traffic has disturbed the soils down to Minnehaha Creek.” Comment: Add compaction from camp vehicle traffic. Hickory Island is not accessible by public trails. Comment: extensive footpaths through cattails providing access to island. Target Plant Community. Opportunities - mention of existing boardwalk trail. This is a recreational feature (not an opportunity)
- Table 4.4 Pollinator Species – right. Replace bee lawn photo with sample planting in heat island. A bee lawn does not improve natural resource quality nor is a ‘key piece’ in climate adaptation.
- How will staff ‘empower volunteers’ going forward? (p. 42). Many of the park evaluations note in the Restoration Priorities that *intensive ground cover restoration is needed*. Question: What new strategies will be employed that haven’t been used to date to increase ground cover diversity and plant cover?
- Opportunities in Big Willow. “Extensive buckthorn management has been ongoing for years” Comment: what opportunity does this provide? “Potential for additional recreation trails in lower quality areas to the north.” Comment: This is a recreational opportunity, not a natural resources restoration opportunity. Both ‘opportunities’ noted for this park are not opportunities for improving the park’s ecology. Target Plant Community. Comment: The last NRMP noted that Big Willow was primarily historically savanna. Why is it recommended to keep the highest quality area west of the parking lot as an oak forest when the last assessment indicated that it should be restored to an oak savanna?

Here are the comments to the section regarding Purgatory Park in Appendix A. It would be helpful to include the definitions or descriptions of the target plant communities as an addendum to the Natural Resources Management Plan.

Purgatory Community Park and Preserve

Community preserve with a passive recreation focus showcasing a number of habitat and plant communities including a remnant and restored prairie, flood plain and creek, and a treed ridge dominated by oaks. It is a highly utilized park with an informal off-leash dog area and extensive informal trail network.

Condition Summary

- Unique shortgrass prairie remnant near the eastern side of the park has woody encroachment which is greatly reducing the diversity and viability of the prairie remnant.
- Large tallgrass prairie restorations have created a diverse core within the center of the park, but are showing signs of becoming less diverse due to dominance of big bluestem, overuse from off-leash dogs, dog walkers, installation of benches within the prairie that have changed traffic patterns, and woody encroachment.
- Surrounding woodland areas contain pioneer trees, invasive species, and disturbed areas.
- Unique restored sugar maple basswood forest next to Excelsior Blvd with substantial buckthorn encroachment on the eastern side and along the old trolley corridor.
- On-going buckthorn management has occurred but prioritization of certain areas should be undertaken to reduce impacts to higher quality areas and turn managed areas to maintained areas.



Center tallgrass prairie looking south with main trail on the left, showing widening of interior footpath and trampled prairie from dog walker gathering spot

Challenges

- Buckthorn - nearly all parts of the woodland portions of the park have been infested and have ongoing management efforts or are currently infested.
- Invasive Amur maple is becoming dominant, especially within eastern portion of the park and interior area south of the main parking lot.
- Reed canary grass and cattails dominate the wetlands.
- Foot traffic and off-leash dogs have caused disturbance and erosion within restoration areas and along creek banks.
- Extensive network of informal trails with increased widening and erosion.
- New areas of disturbance and subsequent invasive species and erosion from structural installations such as benches and stairs located on the prairie remnant knoll slope.



Bench installation and woody encroachment on the prairie remnant

Opportunities

- Continued management of the restored tallgrass prairie area. Prescribed burning to knock back undesirable woody species as they move into the prairie. Remove existing Siberian elms and other pioneer tree species from the prairie. Strive for continued diversification of forbs by interseeding after disturbance events.
- Continue management of the unique shortgrass remnant prairie by removing woody encroachment and augment for species richness.
- Expansion of restored areas offer an opportunity to create one of the bigger diverse prairies in Minnetonka.
- Higher topography areas dominated by large oaks and black cherries should continue to be controlled for buckthorn and seeded and monitored for ground layer vegetation return. New oak regeneration should be protected from deer browse.
- Designate key restoration areas such as the tallgrass prairie area as on-leash to minimize dog damage.

- Allocate the low quality northwest section of the park as designated new off-leash area and restore areas on the northwest hill to shortgrass prairie.
- Restore and selectively close eroded and widened foot-paths.

Restoration Priorities

- Open up and restore areas where pioneer and Siberian elm trees dominate on the northwest side of the park to provide a new off-leash dog area.
- Expand existing restoration areas in the eastern portion of the park to connect prairie/savanna plant communities with the restored school forest.
- Increase diversity within the established prairie and savanna core of the park to build resilience and promote stability in the face of disturbance.

Return this area to on-leash only to allow for restoration.



Birdseye view of the Northwest corner of the park showing vegetation dominated by Siberian Elm and Buckthorn



Item 6C – Lone Lake Park Multi-use Mountain Bike Trail Metrics

- Attached is the Lone Lake Park Singletrack 2021 Annual Review submitted by the Friends of Lone Lake Park after the packet was distributed

Lone Lake Park Singletrack

2021 Annual Review

Friends of Lone Lake Park

Friends of Lone Lake Park continue to have concerns about this trail.

- Our main concerns are that the proposal that was accepted by the Park Board and City Council and the reality of the finished trail are different in key areas.
- First, tossing to the side the cut branches and debris that was removed to make way for the trail. This is called side casting.
- Second, berming trees up one side (up to 2 feet in many cases), which deprives the tree of air and also potentially leading to disease.
- Third, the trail is not a beginner level trail, as promised.

Please ask staff these questions.

- Why were changes made to the criteria for side casting, berming (harming) trees, and course difficulty?
- Why did the staff not post those changes and explanations on the city's project page?
- What are the explanations for leaving debris and dirt, building berms on trees and making the trail difficulty higher than promised?
- How quickly can the side casting and berming of trees be corrected?

The Details and photos

- The rest of the pages are references to the trail plan, photos and details about these concerns. Refer to them as needed.

Side Casting

- The Final Bike Trail Proposal states in Section 7.2: Avoid side casting of soil in order to prevent the growth of invasive species, working soil into the rolling contours of the trail.
- Side casting of soil is problematic, as stated. But also side casting of other debris and branches can make it more difficult for spring ephemeral floral resources to grow. These early flowers are essential to support the native bees, including the Rusty Patched Bumblebee, when the queens emerge from their ground hibernation.

Map of my route



- On October 4, I took 46 photos showing side casting and 11 showing trees that are bermed up on one side.
- I entered at the west entrance of the main MBT trail, walked to the 16 mileage marker, walked up the footpath to the return MBT trail at marker 8, and followed it back to the same west entrance. This is slightly less than half of the trail's length.

The next 9 slides show side casting of cut branches.



















The next 4 slides show bermed trees. The left is the group of birches that were released. See how the bases of the birches are not covered in soil.



Berming trees can lead to disease.







A complete tree inventory was taken along the trail.

- There are many more bermed trees than the photos show.
- Are bermed trees noted in the inventory?
- If not, can staff add that information so they can return and release the berms from the trees?

The trail difficulty as described in the plan.

- In 3.2 of the Final Mountain Bike Study it says “The focus on developing a predominantly easy and intermediate mountain bike trail system would be to support a robust user-group, including younger riders, families and a variety of ability levels, including beginners.”
- This trail is labeled as more challenging than originally planned.

In contrast to the promise in the plan, this trail is not for beginners.

• Share the trail and be respectful to all users.

Ride at Your Own Risk:

- This trail is physically and technically challenging and exposes users to risks and hazards.
- Watch for sharp curves, loose and slippery surfaces, rocks, fallen branches and trees.
- Pay attention at all times and use appropriate equipment for the terrain.

In case of emergency, call 911 and give the dispatcher the number of the nearest location marker.

Friends of Lone Lake Park believe the staff should be held to their promises.

- Some of the members of the Park Board and City Council voted to accept this trail plan based on its promises.
- Why were changes made to the criteria for side casting, berming (harming) trees, and course difficulty?
- Why did the staff not post those changes and explanations on the city's project page?
- What are the explanations?
- How quickly can the side casting and berming of trees be corrected?