

Wilderness in the City

Preserving urban natural spaces

July 2016

www.wildlebanonhills.org

wildernessinthecity@gmail.com

Newsletter - Vol. 03

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Summer in Nature

No hurry ~ sit back...listen to the murmur of water, watch the clouds float across the sky.

Happy Summer Days!

Elections 2016 - Dakota County Commissioners

Local elections have direct impact on our "close to home" natural resources, our parks, and our quality of life.

Your Vote is your Voice * Make sure your voice is heard!

Learn About the Candidates

Wilderness in the City provided a questionnaire to each candidate which focuses on parks and natural resource management.

Responses received will be posted on our website on or before July 31.

Four of the seven Dakota County Commissioner seats are on the ballot this November; two of these will also be included on the **August 9** ballot for the primary election.

This is the first Dakota County Commissioner election since the Lebanon Hills Master Plan update was approved in 2015 by the current commissioners on a 5-2 vote despite overwhelming public opposition.

Going forward, how that Plan is implemented, including potentially the controversial paved bikeway through the park, will be determined by elected commissioners—they have discretion on funding for development, natural resources, and other pertinent areas of park management.

The current Board of Commissioners:

- Approved a 2016 Parks budget with more than \$16 million for new greenway bike trail development vs. \$500,000 for natural resources.
- Since 2001 has not approved adequate funding or resources to reverse the downward trend of natural resources in Lebanon Hills or other Forever Wild parks.

Find Your District and Polling Place: <http://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us/>

Early/Absentee Voting is underway: Stop by your City Hall and vote now, or apply for absentee ballot online at www.mnvotes.org and click on "Other Ways to Vote".

Results from the 2016 Dakota County Residential Survey found that the majority of residents believe protecting and managing high-quality natural areas is very important or essential.

It also found that almost half (46%) of residents believe the County government does a poor to fair job of listening to residents.



August 9 primary will determine which two candidates from both Districts 3 and 4 will be on the November 8 ballot.

District 3 -- Lilydale, Mendota, Mendota Heights, and portions of Eagan

- Thomas Egan (incumbent) - N/A
- Scott D. Johnson -- votescottjd.com
- Janine Hudson -- votejanine.com

District 4 -- Portions of: Eagan, Inver Grove Heights, and Rosemount

- Joe Atkins -- joeatkins.com
- Greg Buck -- buckforcommissioner.com
- Holly Jenkins -- vote4jenkins.com

The following candidates will be on the November 8 ballot.

District 5 -- Burnsville

- Dave Giles - N/A
- Liz Workman (incumbent) - N/A

District 7 -- Apple Valley and portions of Rosemount

- Chris Gerlach (incumbent) - N/A
- Donald Post - N/A

Natural Resources Events and Updates

Dakota County Parks, in partnership with Wilderness in the City and Conservation Minnesota, hosts a monthly Natural Resource Work Night at Lebanon Hills from May through September. These events are a fun and informative way to help restore and preserve the park, and build a community of stewards for future generations.

2016 Schedule of Events

Join us for any or all of the remaining scheduled work nights!

Wednesday, Aug. 10, 6-8pm - Native Planting in Buck Pond Restoration Area

Thursday, Sept. 8, 6-8pm --Tentative Prairie Seed Collection

Late Sept/Oct -- Buckthorn training and 2nd annual BUCKTHORN BUST!

Schedule subject to change ~ check the Volunteer page of our website for updates.

For additional information and to register for events, go to www.dakotacounty.us and click on "Jobs and Volunteering"



2nd Annual Garlic Mustard Challenge - A Huge Success!

A sincere thank-you to all of the volunteers who came out this spring to participate in Garlic Mustard removal at Lebanon Hills.

Garlic Mustard is an aggressive invasive plant that has a serious impact on the health of the ecosystem at Lebanon Hills and the community beyond.

This year, park volunteers logged close to 700 hours in this critical effort. Native plants and their pollinators have been given significant support through the removal of garlic mustard from approximately 200 acres at Lebanon Hills.

Thanks to the Natural Resource and Park staff for their ongoing commitment to this important work.



Natural Resource Management System Plan

Dakota County is in the process of developing a county wide plan. This includes a long-term vision for management of natural resources (for the next 20 years), and an outline for short term steps (for the next 5 years).

- On Monday, June 13, staff and consultants conducted a public open house, with photo board displays and a presentation.
- As part of the presentation, attendees were asked to answer questions with multiple choice responses
- There was open and engaging discussion between attendees and staff/consultants on various elements of the Plan.

It was encouraging to see community members involved in the discussion early in the planning phase, before final decisions are made. We look forward to seeing the influence of community involvement in the final Plan.

NEXT STEPS: Implementation options for this comprehensive plan, including cost estimates, is expected to be presented to the Board of Commissioners in August for their direction. Additional public meetings are expected.



In 2000, the County developed a comprehensive natural resource management plan; however that plan was not implemented in a manner which successfully reversed the downward trend of natural resources.

Wilderness in the City strongly encourages the County Board to dedicate resources which will allow staff to successfully implement the new Natural Resource Management Plan.

Photos: Open House, June 13

Park Visitor Services Plan...the Future of Forever Wild?

Dakota County is developing a Parks Visitor Services Strategic Operations Plan (VSSOP) to guide recreation amenities, events, outdoor education, volunteerism, rentals, customer service and marketing.

The VSSOP provides a ten-year outlook on how to strategically enhance visitor services to increase use of the Dakota County Parks System.

As part of the research phase, a Park Visitor survey was mailed to 5,000 randomly selected households in Dakota County in Fall of 2015. A total of 896 surveys were completed.

When asked why residents do visit:

- 94% visit because they enjoy out-of-doors natural settings
- 91% feel safe in the parks or on the trails

When asked what keeps people from visiting:

- 50% strongly or somewhat agree they do other things with their leisure time
- 36% strongly or somewhat agree they are not familiar with Dakota County Parks and Trails

More than 9 out of 10 respondents agreed that benefits of parks include:

- Improves physical or mental health and fitness
- Protects natural resources and water quality
- Improves quality of life in the county
- Creates places for scenic landscape views
- Preserves large areas of open space
- Increases property values

Public Engagement: The VSSOP is centered on an inclusive process that encourages all residents and stakeholders to participate. The research phase began last Fall, shortly after the Lebanon Hills Master Plan was approved, and the county had received two-years worth of public input.

A representative from Wilderness in the City asked if comments received on Lebanon Hills would be included as part of the research for the visitor services plan, or did they want people to comment yet again.

The consultant responded that they were just beginning to review the comments, and public input received would be included as part of the research for this Plan.

Reality Check: At the May 26 County Planning Commission meeting it was confirmed that comments received on Lebanon Hills were not used for the research report.

Creating A Shared Vision

Guiding Principles: A fundamental truth that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behavior.

Vision Statement: Intended to serve as a clear guide for choosing current and future courses of action.

Draft guiding principles for the Visitor Services Plan were created by staff and consultants and presented to the Board of Commissioners for their consideration at the June 14 Physical Development Committee.

By comparison, draft guiding principles and a vision statement for the Natural Resource Management Plan were developed by staff/consultants and presented to the public at an open meeting for discussion and revision, prior to being presented to the Board.

Wilderness in the City strongly urges the County to engage people early in planning stages, and not after the fact, when decisions have already been made.

"Bring me in early, I'm your partner. Bring me in late, I'm your judge."

Next Steps:

Staff will put together different "packages" of visitor services that reflect what was learned from the research.

July-Aug: Engage Community on Concepts

Aug 25: Planning Commission Concept Review

Sept 13: County Board Workshop on Concepts

Opportunities for public comments are expected through the county website, discussion sessions and other events.

Additional information about the VSSOP can be found on the County's website. Go to www.co.dakota.mn.us/parks/, click on Planning, then "Park Visitor Services Plan.

For your consideration...

When you think...

Natural Resource Based Recreation

...what does it mean to you?

Some of the many recreation opportunities at Lebanon Hills



Birding



Painting



Exploring

Critter Corner

We are excited to introduce "Critter Corner"! Information relating to critters who make their homes in urban natural areas.



Monarchs need our help!

Grow flowers that provide Nectar—an important food source. Some flower cultivars do not provide Nectar, check with your greenhouse. Also, ask whether the plants have been treated with neo-nicotinoid pesticides, known to be toxic to numerous Insect species including Butterflies.

Plant Wildflower gardens; eliminate herbicide and pesticide use—despite “safety” claims, these chemicals are designed to be toxic and have not been “proved” safe by EPA.

Become a citizen scientist -- learn more at:
<http://www.learner.org/jnorth/monarch/>

For more information on Monarch Butterflies,
 visit: MonarchWatch.org

The Monarch Butterfly is North America’s queen of the Lepidoptera (the order of Insects Monarchs belong to). With its relatively large size, about 10 centimeters, Monarchs are one of our largest Butterflies. Monarchs are bright and beautiful with their black veined, orange wings with white spots on the rim. They are like flying Flowers adding beauty and grace to our neighborhoods, parks, prairies and fields.

Monarch adults are stunning in their orange, black and white “plumage”. The coloration of the adults is due to wings made of thousands of “scales” containing orange or black pigment. The white on their wings is due to the way light is reflected from the scales. Adult Monarch coloring is designed to act as a warning to would-be predators. Monarchs become toxic to predators by sequestering or storing toxins from the Milkweed (*Asclepius species*) plants that they eat as caterpillars. Milkweed is the only plant Monarch caterpillars eat. Milkweed contains toxins called cardenolides, or cardiac glycosides, which are toxic to predators. This makes Monarchs very distasteful or unpleasant. Adult Monarchs eat nectar from many types of Flowers.

Monarchs have a number of predators throughout their lifecycle. Other insects such as Ants and Spiders eat Butterfly eggs and larva, Wasps lay their eggs in Caterpillars and Pupae, Birds will eat Caterpillars and some can eat adult Butterflies. Despite feeding a number of other species throughout their lifecycle, Monarchs survived and thrived for millennia. Now, though, likely due to a combination of human influences (herbicides/pesticides, mowing practices, increases in agriculture eliminating habitat and climate change), Monarch populations are in steep decline, so much so that conservation organizations such as the Center for Biodiversity have petitioned the US Fish and Wildlife Service for “threatened” listing of the Monarch Butterfly.

Thanks to Women Observing Wildlife-MN for providing this report.
 To learn more, contact Catherine Zimmer at wow-mn@usfamily.net

Wilderness in the City Advocacy * Stewardship * Outreach



Become a Supporting Member!

Yes! I want to help *Wilderness in the City* protect urban natural areas and the wilderness character of Lebanon Hills for future generations of people and wildlife.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$25 Wildflower | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Oak Savannah |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Lakes and Wetlands | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 A Legacy of Nature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Amount | |

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 City/State: _____ Zip: _____
 Email: _____
 Phone (optional): _____

Checks payable to **Wilderness in the City** can be sent to **1130 Tiffany Pt., Eagan, MN 55123.**

*Wilderness in the City is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Donations are 100% tax-deductible.
 Thank you for your support!*

Our Mission

Wilderness in the City is dedicated to preserving and enhancing natural urban areas for future generations of people and wildlife.

What We Do

- Advocate** for preservation of urban natural spaces for the benefit of future generations of people and wildlife.
- Promote** Lebanon Hills as a unique destination.
- Support** natural resource stewardship projects.
- Engage** the next generation of stewards.
- Inform** you when decisions are pending and how you can take action.