

Bringing people together to learn more and help shape the conversation about Our Wilderness...Our Future.

Central Greenway Connectivity Study - Approved

*Our sincere thanks to those who commented on the draft Central Greenway Connectivity Study. **Your voice made a difference!***

In response to comments received, revisions were made to the Study including:

- Maps, which previously showed a bike route through Lebanon Hills, were modified to show bike routes around the park; the route through the park was removed from maps and illustrations.
- References describing a bike route through Lebanon Hills were removed from the body of the text.

Wilderness in the City acknowledges the revisions that were made and approved by the County Board. We support the approved Study and encourage timely completion of the greenway routes, which will provide safe options for people to bike or walk to Lebanon Hills.

With these revisions, the Study complies with the Board's 6-1 vote (*March 2015, Physical Development Committee*) that the Connector Trail will not serve as a segment of the Greenway network. The Study also complies with the 2015 Master Plan which states that "Greenways bring people to the park, but will not continue through the park. Greenway connections will be made around the outside of the park."

Going Forward: With the status of the connector trail changed from being the "HUB of the greenway network" to "does not serve as a segment of the Greenway network"—together with adoption of the Greenway Study showing a complete bicycle route around the park—we have good reason to pause. We strongly urge the County to revisit the original intent of the connector trail, and move forward in a manner that complements the character of Lebanon Hills, rather than changes it.

Lebanon Hills – A Top Ten Minnesota Attraction!

Chosen by USA Today Readers, our special Lebanon Hills shares this "Top Ten" recognition with other iconic destinations including the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, Voyageurs National Park, and North Shore Scenic Drive. *We couldn't agree more.* What sets Lebanon Hills apart from the others—this wilderness setting is located just 10 minutes from the Mall of America. **Escape to nature, close to home.**



An Event from Wilderness in the City

OUR WILDERNESS OUR FUTURE

Community Discussion

Tuesday, November 14
 6:30-8:30pm
Lebanon Hills Regional Park Visitor Center
 860 Cliff Rd, Eagan, MN

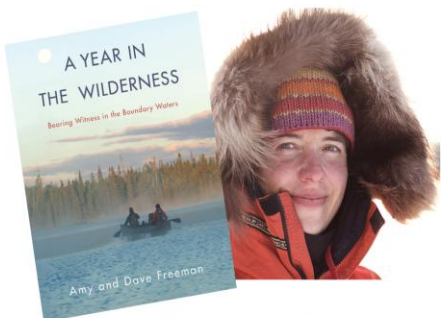
Amy Freeman

2014 National Geographic Adventurer of the Year

A Year In The Boundary Waters

Amy, along with her husband Dave, recently completed living for a year in the Boundary Waters (BWCAW) to raise awareness of threats to and to advocate for the preservation of this beloved wilderness destination in Minnesota.

Presentation and Book Signing



Lebanon Hills Regional Park Natural Resource Projects

Restoration Update, Q&A, and Discussion
 With Dakota County Natural Resource Staff

Sponsored By

Dedicated to preserving and enhancing natural urban areas for future generations.

give TO THE MAX
 NOV. 16, 2017

Thank you for remembering
WILDERNESS IN THE CITY
 in your giving this year!

- What's Inside...**
- ✓ Managing Invasive Buckthorn
 - ✓ What's up with "ELF"?
 - ✓ Forever Wild Decision Makers
 - ✓ Needed: A Parks and Natural Resources Commission
 - ✓ Preserving Nature Close to Home
 - ✓ Northern Cardinals—and more!

*Event is free and open to the public.
 Doors open at 6pm; seating is limited.
 Light snacks and beverages will be provided.*

Managing Invasive Buckthorn - It's Up to All Of Us

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

A sincere thank you to the volunteers and Dakota County staff who participated in recent buckthorn hauls at Lebanon Hills. Your help gathering this invasive plant into piles where it can more easily be removed is truly invaluable. Wildlife, native plants and park visitors all will benefit from your efforts!

Next Steps: For the piles gathered, County staff will now either use a chipper, or controlled burns, to fully remove this hauled buckthorn from the park.

Managing buckthorn is an ongoing effort, and seed banks remain viable for several years. Join us for the 2018 buckthorn hauls and invite others!



Why is buckthorn such a problem?

- Out-competes native plants for nutrients, light, and moisture
- Degrades wildlife habitat
- Threatens the future of forests, wetlands, prairies, and other natural habitats
- Contributes to erosion by shading out other plants that grow on the forest floor
- Serves as host to other pests, such as crown rust fungus and soybean aphid
- Forms an impenetrable layer of vegetation
- Lacks "natural controls" like insects or disease that would curb its growth

Help our urban woodlands and wildlife habitats.

1. Do you have buckthorn in your yard? Learn what you can do at: www.dnr.state.mn.us and search "buckthorn"
2. Organize neighborhood buckthorn pulls—make it a fun social event!
3. Contact your cities and ask them to implement a comprehensive buckthorn management plan.

Wilderness in the City encourages the Dakota County Board of Commissioners to dedicate a long-term source of funding to assure successful management of buckthorn throughout Lebanon Hills and our "Forever Wild" Parks System.

In Lebanon Hills and throughout Dakota County, buckthorn and other invasive plants are choking our oak forests. Without ongoing active management, the result will be degraded habitat that does not support a diversity of wildlife and low quality nature-based recreation.

In 2015, in response to public demand, Dakota County undertook a broad effort to begin managing 700 acres of buckthorn at Lebanon Hills in the eastern section (preserve zone) of the park. Without commitment to actively manage these acres, this aggressive invasive plant will grow back at a concerning rate, which has already started in areas previously cleared.

To date, there are no efforts being made to manage buckthorn throughout large segments of the 2,000-acre park, specifically those areas west of Pilot Knob.

What's up with "ELF"?

Dakota County collects annual host fees from several landfills located throughout the county. These revenues are accumulated in the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund, referred to as "ELF".

The current balance is roughly \$35 million; annual revenues vary but are estimated at \$7 million per year. In December 2015, the Board passed a resolution authorizing the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund to be used in a manner that "protects, preserves and enhances" the environment. How these funds are ultimately invested is at the discretion of the Dakota County Board.

A Dakota County Board Decision

It's well known that a long-term funding commitment is needed to successfully manage buckthorn.

- Grants do provide valuable short-term funding for designated areas; however, they cannot be relied upon as a long-term source of funding.
- **The Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF) would provide a long-term source of funding to ensure ongoing management of buckthorn for all 2,000 acres at Lebanon Hills and the entire Forever Wild parks system.**

We will continue to monitor use of these funds and keep you informed.

Dakota County Parks: Forever Wild

Part of the Metropolitan Regional Parks System, Dakota County owns and operates three Regional Parks (Lebanon Hills, Lake Byllesby, and Whitetail Woods) and two Regional Park Reserves (Miesville Ravine and Spring Lake). These landscapes were preserved because they contain natural resources of regional significance such as lakeshore, wetlands, forests, native prairies and groundwater recharging areas—and serve to complement amenities found in other park systems including State, City, Federal and private recreation facilities.

Who Makes Decisions for Forever Wild Parks?



Dakota County

- One of ten Regional Parks implementing agencies throughout the metropolitan region
- Works closely with the Metropolitan Council on issues pertinent to regional parks
- Creates and implements master plans for regional parks
- To be eligible for Met Council funding, projects within master plans must meet the council's criteria

Metropolitan Council

- Establishes policy and funding criteria for the regional parks system as defined by the Council's 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan
- Determines whether or not funding request for projects are compliant with Council policy
- If deemed appropriate with their criteria, approves funding as requested

State Legislators

- Vote Yes or No to funding requested by the Met Council and Park Implementing Agencies, such as Dakota County

Your Voice

- Has no defined role in the decision making process.

A strong commitment to the ongoing management of natural resources throughout our parks system has been missing for far too long. It's time for that to change.

Wilderness in the City is advocating for the establishment of a Parks and Natural Resources Commission to advise on all issues relevant to our "Forever Wild" Parks system.



Dakota County residents have, for decades, documented in residential surveys and other public input that taking care of our environment is a priority. Despite this evidence, natural resource management for our Forever Wild parks system has been neglected. If this trend continues, the result will be degraded woodlands and wetlands, low-quality habitat for wildlife, and diminished nature-based recreation and education opportunities.

Going forward: A viable Parks and Natural Resources Commission should be established for Dakota County to reverse this trend and protect our environment.

Learn more about how you can help at:
www.wildernessinthecity.org/take-action

Decision made now will impact the future of:

- Education opportunities for the next generation of natural resource stewards
- High quality nature-based recreation hard to find in parks filled with built amenities
- Large open spaces for valuable wildlife habitat, including pollinator and butterfly gardens, otherwise diminished by a built environment
- Spending for ongoing maintenance of built infrastructure and other pertinent park issues such as staffing, programs, marketing and environmental stewardship.
- *For Lebanon Hills, a viable Parks and Natural Resource Commission would play an important role as decisions are made regarding implementation of the 2015 Master Plan, including the controversial Connector Trail.*

Consider Lebanon Hills Visitor Center



Phase 1 Improvements with public involvement maintained an abundance of native plants



Phase 2 Improvements without public involvement replaced native plants with turf (treated with chemicals) and cement.

Critter Corner - The Northern Cardinal



The Northern Cardinal has a wide range from Central America to northern Minnesota. The Northern Cardinal male is easy to spot in his resplendent red feathers; the female is lovely in her more subtle red-accented, brown feathers. Both have a black face and stout red-orange bill. The Cardinal's song is one of the most familiar and

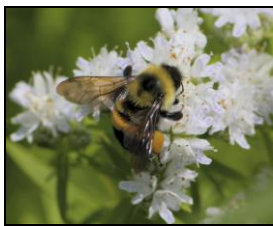
pleasant, and the female is rare among birds in that she sings as well. Their contact call, that is, their check in with each other, is a loud, metallic chirp.

Cardinals don't migrate. They survive the winter in dense thickets and low shrubs eating seeds and fruits including dogwood, wild grape, buckwheat, grasses, sedges, mulberry, hackberry, blackberry, sumac, tulip-tree, and corn. Cardinals eat many kinds of birdseed, particularly black oil sunflower seed. They also eat beetles, crickets, katydids, leafhoppers, cicadas, flies, centipedes, spiders, butterflies, and moths, which are particularly important protein for their chicks.

The male Cardinal is a fierce defender of his territory. In addition to frequent song, male Cardinals will sometimes attack their reflection on glass surfaces, sometimes for long periods of time.

Cardinal populations are steady but, as with most wildlife, we can help them by providing appropriate and pesticide free food and habitat, keeping cats indoors and adding film or tape to windows to prevent collisions (despite this bird's defensive nature). For more information, see the American Bird Conservancy website. Thank you to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology for information used in this article.

Critter Corner is provided by: Women Observing Wildlife-MN



Preserving Nature Close to Home

Wilderness in the City envisions:

- ❖ A legacy of parklands with healthy ecosystems for year-around, nature-based recreation and education opportunities.
- ❖ Enhanced wildlife habitats in an otherwise developed urban setting.
- ❖ Natural spaces, close to home and accessible to all, that offer respite from the built world around us.

Our origins and our deepest roots lie in Lebanon Hills Regional Park and, through community outreach, advocacy, and natural resource stewardship, we will continue our work to protect and preserve the unique character of this park, which has offered visitors a genuine sense of wilderness for decades.

To help preserve open space throughout the metropolitan regional parks system, we are strongly advocating that **Parks and Trails Legacy Funds** be used for preservation of natural areas, as people intended when they voted of the Legacy Amendment. Currently, the majority of spending is for building new or expanding existing infrastructure.

Wilderness in the City is an all-volunteer, 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Your tax-deductible donation goes directly to helping us achieve our mission.

Thank you for your generous support.

Wilderness in the City - Become a Supporting Member!

Yes! I want to help preserve urban natural areas and the wilderness character of Lebanon Hills for future generations of people and wildlife.

\$25 Wildflower \$50 Oak Savannah \$_____ Other Amount
 \$75 Lakes and Wetlands \$100 A Legacy of Nature

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone (optional): _____

Donate online at www.wildernessinthecity.org or submit checks to
Wilderness in the City, P.O. Box 211453, Eagan, MN 55121

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 space for the benefit of future generations of people and wildlife.

Support natural resource stewardship projects and build a community of stewards.

Inform you when decisions are pending and how you can take action.