

**Bringing people together to learn more, join the discussion, and help shape the future of our wilderness.**

## Central Greenway Connectivity Study - Approved

*Our sincere thanks to those who commented on the draft Central Greenway Connectivity Study. Your voice truly 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 only around the park; the route through the park was removed from maps and illustrations.
- Language describing a bike route through Lebanon Hills was 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."

**Going Forward:** Given that 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!

What an honor to see Lebanon Hills Regional Park recently recognized as a Top Ten Minnesota Attraction, along with other iconic destinations including the Boundary Waters, Voyageurs National Park, and North Shore Scenic Drive. 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.**



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!

An Event from Wilderness in the City

# OUR WILDERNESS OUR FUTURE

## Community Discussion

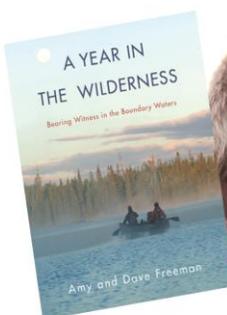
**Tuesday, November 14**  
**6:30-8:30pm**  
**Lebanon Hills Regional Park Visitor Center**  
 860 Cliff Rd, Eagan, MN

## 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.

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 hauling 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](http://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 plans 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 County Board passed a resolution that ELF 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 documented 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.**

*Going forward, we will continue to monitor and keep you informed of the use of these funds.*

# Dakota County "Forever Wild" Parks System

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. Regional Parks complement amenities and services found in other park systems including State, City, Federal and private recreation facilities. Dakota County Parks motto is Forever Wild.

## Who Makes Decisions for Forever Wild Parks?



### Dakota County

- One of ten Regional Parks implementing agencies throughout the metropolitan region
- Responsible for all areas pertinent to regional parks including infrastructure, stewardship, programming, staffing, etc.
- Creates master plans for regional parks which must comply with Met Council policy to be eligible for Council funding
- Determines which projects within Master Plans to implement and seeks available funding opportunities

### 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 project funding requests made by implementing agencies are compliant with Council policy
- Approves project funding as requested by park implementing agencies if deemed to meet Council criteria

### State Legislators

- Vote Yes or No to State funding requested by the Met Council and park implementing agencies

Currently, your voice has no defined role in the decision-making process for Forever Wild parks. It's time for that to change. **Wilderness in the City is advocating for the establishment of a viable Parks and Natural Resources Commission to advise on all decisions relevant to our "Forever Wild" Parks system.**



Decision made now will impact the future of:

- Education opportunities for the next generation of natural resource stewards
- High-quality, nature-based recreation accessible to all ages and abilities
- 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 Parks and Natural Resource Commission would play a vital role as decisions are made regarding the 2015 Master Plan, including the controversial Connector Trail.*

For decades, Dakota County residents have documented in residential surveys and other public input that taking care of our environment is a priority. Yet historically, 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—the very things that set Forever Wild Parks apart from others.

Recently, due to public pressure, there has been an increase in resources dedicated to restoration. To help ensure that continues—to help protect Forever Wild natural resources for the benefit of now and future generations—people must be involved in the decision making process. Learn more at [www.wildernessinthecity.org](http://www.wildernessinthecity.org)

### Spotlight on 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 impervious 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](http://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.