

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

Central Greenway Connectivity Study: Revised and Approved

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

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

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

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

Wilderness in the City acknowledges the Dakota County Board for the revisions made and approved in the Greenway Study dated October 31, 2017.

We support the adopted Study and encourage timely completion of the greenway bike routes leading to and around Lebanon Hills.

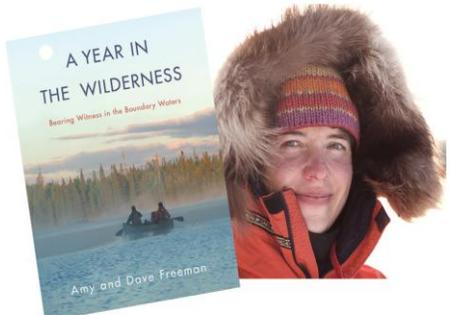
Amy Freeman

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



This revised version was formally adopted by the Dakota County Board on October 31, 2017. The approved 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. It also complies with the 2015 Master Plan which states "Greenways bring people to the park, but will not continue through the park."

Going Forward: With the status of the connector trail changed from being the *HUB of the greenway network* to *no longer serving as a segment of the Greenway network*—together with adoption of the Greenway Study showing a complete bike network 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.



What's Inside...

- ✓ Managing Invasive Buckthorn
- ✓ How "ELF" can help
- ✓ Decision Makers for Forever Wild
- ✓ Missing: A Parks and Natural Resources Advisory Commission
- ✓ Preserving Nature Close to Home
- ✓ Northern Cardinals—and more!

Lebanon Hills Regional Park Natural Resource Projects

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

Sponsored By



forever wild PARKS

Wilderness in the City
 Dedicated to preserving and enhancing natural urban areas for future generations.



Thank you for remembering
 Wilderness in the City
 in your giving this year!

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
- Seed banks remain viable for several years, requiring ongoing and vigilant management

How you can 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.

Outstanding Issue to Watch

In Lebanon Hills and throughout Dakota County, buckthorn and other invasive plants are choking our oak forests. Without ongoing management, the result will be degraded habitat, low diversity of wildlife, and diminished nature-based recreation and education opportunities. Initial restoration costs increase the longer left unmanaged; however, once restored, the cost of ongoing management greatly decreases.

In 2015 Dakota County undertook a broad effort to begin managing 700 acres of buckthorn at Lebanon Hills. Going forward, these initial acres must be actively managed to prevent this invasive plant from vigorously regenerating. In addition, the entire 2,000-acre park—not just the 700 acres—is at risk of diminished quality if left unmanaged.

Here's How "ELF" Can Help

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". In December 2015, the County Board passed a resolution that ELF be used in a manner that "protects, preserves and enhances" the environment.

- The current ELF balance is roughly \$35 million; annual revenues vary but are estimated at \$7 million per year
- Estimated cost for initial restoration of woodlands = \$5,000 per acre over several years (*LHRP 2015 Master Plan, page 172*)
- Once restored, estimated cost for ongoing management = \$175 per acre per year (*LHRP 2015 Master Plan, p. 172*)

The ELF is a long-term source of funding which could be used to ensure initial and ongoing management of buckthorn and other invasive plants at Lebanon Hills—the entire park, not just the 700 acres already started—and the complete Forever Wild parks system. If invested in this manner, a significant ELF balance would still remain annually for additional environmental priorities.

It is well documented that a long-term funding commitment is needed to successfully manage buckthorn and other invasive plants. How the ELF funds are ultimately invested is at the discretion of the Dakota County Board. We will continue to monitor use of these funds, and keep you informed.

Dakota County "Forever Wild" Parks System

As 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, 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.**



Decisions 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 current and future generations—people must be involved in the decision-making process. Learn more at 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 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.