

Prospect Heights Public Library/Park District Program

Nature Speaks Program

Dana stated that the next speaker for the Nature Speaks Program on April 16, 2019 is Terry Miesle of Fermilab, and his presentation is “Chasing the Rusty-Patched Bumblebee.” Seventeen people have registered to date. Please attend.

The June 26, 2019 Nature Speaks Program welcomes Bill Kleiman, Nachusa Grasslands Project Director. Bill will be presenting “Nachusa Grasslands: 30 Years of Protecting and Restoring Habitat.”

Dana is looking to secure Daniel Suarez, Program Associate-Stewardship of the Audubon Great Lakes, to speak in the Fall. Daniel coauthored with Stephanie Beilke the first “State of the Grasslands” Report to help build a regional strategy and public support for improving our grasslands.

Grasslands offer our communities ecosystem services like flood abatement, water quality, carbon sequestration and pollinator services. Prairie restoration and better land management are improving the quality of the 63,485 acres of grassland in northeast Illinois six country region. While things may be going in the right direction, many grassland birds are still seeing their number decline and other species are just hanging on.

The mission of Audubon in the greater Chicago region is to conserve and restore nature—focusing our efforts on wildlife, habitat and public education—for the benefit of humanity and the region’s biological diversity.

With 200,000 acres of conservation land, the Chicago metropolitan area encompasses many of the finest and largest tracts of native tallgrass prairie, oak savanna, woodland and wetland left in the Midwest.

Audubon Chicago Region saves wildlife and habitat, and to keep it safe permanently we are hard at work creating a local culture of conservation. Though a small staff is ready to step in where necessary, most of Audubon's work is done by hundreds of volunteers. They include citizen scientists, land stewards, advocates, and more. Everyone is invited to volunteer.

Nature Summer Camp for Prospect Heights Park District

PHNRC (Commissioners and Interns) will be managing a nature camp for the Prospect Heights Park District during the 10th week or last week of summer camp in August for three days from morning until 3:00 p.m. Three to 11 children are anticipated to attend.

PHNRC will manage the Nature Summer Camp on August 12, 13 and 14 from 9:15 am to 12:00 pm. The program will be held two days at the Nature Preserve, perhaps August 12 and 14, and one day at the ComEd Prairie or August 13. PHPD will provide bus transportation from Morava to the prairie.

Commissioners are requested to present ideas for the curriculum, like a scavenger hunt for prairie plants and conducting creek water samplings. Jill asked if a microscope could be available, and if so, to provide an up-close look at prairie life samples.

The camp may be in August, but we must plan and organize now and ensure we have all supplies, like waders.

Bird Walks

The Spring Bird Walk dates are Saturday, April 27, 2019 from 7:30-9:30 a.m. and Saturday, May 11, 2019 from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. Lots of birds are present!

Nature Preserve Interpretative Signage

Six (6) interpretative signs have been installed, and two remain to be installed.

The sign production company has provided eight (8) legs or four more legs than required for installation of the large signs at the entrance of the trail. We will return four legs and receive a credit.

Ed inquired if a refund was possible. No; the credit will be issued because PHPD paid for these parts as they are part of the Grant. Dana believes \$300 will be credited.

Earth Week Activities (April 16 - 27, 2019)

Dana will be sending a press release tonight, April 11, 2019, for our proposed Earth Week activities starting with the Nature Speaks Program on April 16; the inaugural visit of the Wheeling High School students program on April 24; our volunteer workday on Sunday, April 21; the Bird Walk on April 27; and McDonald Creek Clean-Up on April 27 and 28, 2019.

Dana requested Cathy Brady of the McDonald Creek Commission to clarify the plans for the MCC Creek Clean-Up Project, April 20 – 28, 2019.

Cathy said they are not doing an organized event. Most of the creek is on private property. A flyer with information will be sent to residents and a request that if the creek is in your neighborhood or yard, please pay attention to your backyard and hanging branches into the creek, etc. Public Works will help pick up debris from the creek clean-up; however, Cathy feels it will mostly consist of trash clean-up.

Dana will incorporate the MCC Creek Clean-Up in our Earth Week activities' announcement.

Cathy received permission from PHPD to work at Somerset Park. Therefore, PHNRC will host a special joint volunteer workday with MCC on April 28 at Somerset Park/Country Gardens for creek clean-up, mostly removing trash, removing invasives and planting seed in the fifty (50) feet stretch that ComEd cleared last Fall (west of the seeded ComEd Prairie).

Agnes wondered if we may receive permission from PHPD to do 10 feet of shoreline stabilization on seeding of native plants. However, Cathy felt we should start first with the section that already has been cleared. Keep it conservative.

Seth said we have several bush species to replace buckthorn removal at Somerset Park and what the beavers removed. We could plant Elderberry, Button Bush or Plum bushes further from or a bit back from the shoreline. We would replace more than we remove in buckthorn.

Cathy said that PHPW will pick-up the cut buckthorn, so we would not have a brush pile.

Spring Prescribed Burns

Agnes stated that the Spring prescribed burns conducted at the Slough, Nature Preserve and Tully Park were excellent; a bit patchy in parts, but that is good for wildlife. One can see the effective results with everything coming up.

Ed said that where the burn was conducted by Elmhurst Road south of the Pavilion really visually opened up the area. The Slough's there!

Agnes said that a lot of people are walking the path, including families with children.

NEW BUSINESS

2019 PHNRC Budget Update

Dana stated that John, Agnes and Jill attended the City Council Workshop Meeting of April 8, 2019; however, nothing was discussed as the City Council immediately retired to Executive Session.

We have submitted three different budget scenarios that Peter presented to the City Council for us.

The City Council will be making a final budget decision on what they will and will not fund at their April 22, 2019. We do not really have further input on what next year's budget will bring.

Dana stated that we received a \$250 donation from Rod and Mary Ellen Siemens in support of our work and the budget funding struggles. Another Tully Park neighbor also contributed \$100.

Commissioners are always truly appreciative of donations and the consistent support from our fellow neighbors and citizens.

PHNRC Treasurer Position

The PHNRC would like a Commissioner to act as a Treasurer and keep track of our funds. Peter said the City has its own Treasurer, which position maintains funds as part of the duties. However, we could have an Honorary Treasurer who would be the point person with staff. Peter further stated that everything would stay the same way with funding from the City and donations.

Minutes of a Meeting of the Prospect Heights

John Kamysz volunteered to be PHNRC Honorary Treasurer. All Commissioners agreed.

City of Prospect Heights Election Results

The Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission congratulates Mayor Helmer, all newly-elected officials and all Aldermen from the April 2, 2019 election. PHNRC is looking forward to working with the new City administration.

Seed/Greenhouse Program

Agnes said it is a busy time of the year for us. Transplanting season is on! We have a lot of ideas for getting the transplants planted with assistance from Wheeling High School students as part of the Wheeling High School Program.

Prairie plants are germinating in the Greenhouse. Rare seed, such as short green milkweed that we acquired from PCPS, is growing. It takes a lot of work to keep the right humidity and temperature in the Greenhouse to keep the plants growing. We will need to begin purchasing potting soil and trays.

Commissioners’ Monitoring Program

Agnes said that starting in May, Commissioners should resume monitoring project sites. The sites and monitors are:

Heron Pond, the Slough & Hillcrest Lake	John Kamysz
Nature Preserve (Gary Morava)	Peter Hahn
Remnant Prairie	Agnes Wojnarski/Seth Marcus
Saint Alphonsus	Ed Madden
Sedge Meadow	Jill Moskal
Seeded Prairie (ComEd Prairie)	Dana Sievertson
Tully Park	Jill Moskal

Peter Hahn provided a report on the Nature Preserve.

Peter visited the Nature Preserve this week on a nice, windy day. The grass is growing, and the tree plantings look good. The blue beech is budding. The Spring prescribed burn did good.

Peter noticed the dump site is not expanding; it is just getting higher with branches and logs piled on top.

The PHPD is completing the work by the canopy, and it appears an irrigation line will be placed along the canopy’s drip line. Peter noticed that the new plantings have been disturbed by the construction and are hurting.

The creek erosion is really taking its toll especially along the haul road going up to the dump. You can see black soil down by the creek, and clay was piled on top of the existing top soil. It is all sloughing off into the creek. The erosion down into the creek is bad.

The new interpretative signs look great and are very informative.

The Nature Preserve really looks good. It is clearly an improvement since we started cleaning it up and maintaining it about three years' ago.

Seth has a report on the Remnant Prairie.

Seth has completed a course on butterfly monitoring so, in theory, Seth could perform butterfly monitoring at our sites. However, to be official, it must be approved by an organization. The preference for official butterfly monitoring is no site less than 10 acres.

Most of the Slough is water, so it may not be applicable to the stipulations. Also, Seth could perhaps monitor non-contiguous sites. Dana suggested a combination of the seeded prairie and the Slough.

Seth will contact Doug Taron, Curator of Biology and Vice President of Research and Conservation at the Chicago Academy of Sciences' Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum to confirm butterfly monitoring policy.

Seth and Agnes walked around the Slough. Everything looks good. Eighty to ninety percent of reed canary grass has been diminished. A few small pockets of reed canary grass can be eliminated after a few hours of management.

Until interns are funded and start working, from now until mid-May it is the best, ideal opportunity to get invasives, such as reed canary grass, and it can only be done with application of herbicide.

Proactive Nature Management Plans

Commissioners wish to look forward and, therefore, be proactive for projects, such as the recent beavers at Somerset Park.

Kiwanis Park, 712 Elm Street, just south of Palatine Expressway: Kiwanis Park has a lot of erosion, and the PHPD has had discussions on what to do about it. It is a complicated stretch. Agnes said that PHNRC would love to work with PHPD and where there is particularly erosion, the suggestion is to plant long-rooted grasses and place erosion control blankets with plugs for more stabilization. Ideally, one must have a 3:1 graded slope. River Trails had a Grant Project (\$1 million), and they stabilized over 100 feet of shoreline at the creek starting along Euclid Avenue and Wolf Road, meandering down through the bridge and then through the park area with a sled hill. It required soil to be removed and heavy machinery.

Most of the parks that have the creek in it are heavily affected by erosion. Therefore, at some point, something must be done.

Is there a small area that we can regrade by hand? Yes, we could ideally work on the creek bank in the Nature Preserve and show what could be done by hand and laying erosion control blankets with plugs.

Agnes said another location is the hill going up to where the wood is located. We could lay erosion control blankets with prairie cord grass. This is a tough grass that has 15-foot roots and can tolerate wet and dry conditions.

Jaycee Park is a wedge-shaped park on 4 Compton Lane in Prospect Heights.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation Reporting

Ad Hoc Willow Road Project Committee (Hillcrest Lake)

The Ad Hoc Willow Road Project Committee meeting of April 3, 2019 was cancelled.

When asked, Peter said another meeting date has not yet been planned, probably because no new information from Cook County and MWRD has been received.

McDonald Creek Commission Meeting – March 26, 2019

Jill Moskal, as PHNRC representative for the McDonald Creek Commission (MCC), listened to the official recording of the McDonald Creek Commission (MCC) meeting of March 26, 2019.

Creek Clean-Up Days: MCC changed the schedule of Creek Clean-Up Days to April 27 and 28 and May 4 and 5 and planned for the north and south areas of Palatine Road.

MCC is looking forward to conducting a second Creek Clean-Up in August or September when residents can see growth. However, Commissioners said they will see how the first Creek Clean-Up proceeds before planning another.

June Block Party: MCC would like to coordinate their participation in the June Block Party with PHNRC.

MCC Scheduled Meetings: Commissioners agreed to move the meeting start time from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m., mostly so Jill from the PHNRC can attend the meeting in person.

Prospect Heights Natural Resource Commission (PHNRC): PHNRC was invited by the McDonald Creek Commission to present at their March 26, 2019 meeting. Agnes, Dana, Peter and Seth were present.

Agnes said that the PHNRC wanted an opportunity to introduce our organization to the MCC and meet the MCC Commissioners, especially since Robert Rules of Order states a Commission can only meet two people at a time.

PHNRC is offering our services to the MCC. The MCC is doing so much, especially in the flood plain. PHNRC and MCC share common goals = preservation.

PHNRC is offering our help with the Creek Clean-Up days in the form of manpower, tools, etc. We are happy to help.

PHNRC publishes a monthly Journal and volunteer workday notices, so MCC is welcome to piggy-back on these communications. We have an e:mai list of 300 people comprised of residents, PHPD, City Officials, the Police Chief, etc.

Somerset Park/Country Gardens: The Capstone Project for this area was completed four years' ago. A student of the University of Wisconsin-Madison created a plan to naturalize this land. PHNRC can work with the PHPD and MCC to accomplish this plan rather than work independently.

Somerset Park could become the model for residents to refer to in maintaining their area of the creek.

Jon Kindseth suggested PHNRC advertise on the PHPL Storyboard Walk signs that PHNRC has native plants that people are viewing on the Nature Preserve Trail to provide for residents' own backyards.

Next Meeting: The next MCC Meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2019 at 6:30 p.m.

Prospect Heights Park District Board of Directors

PHNRC currently has not received any feedback from the PHPD Board on our presentation. Therefore, Dana will follow-up with Christina.

Islamic Women's Earth Day Event

The Islamic Women's Earth Day Event will be held this Saturday, April 13, 2019 from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm in Rolling Meadows. Ed and Agnes will be attending the Mayor's Breakfast and will attend this Event afterwards.

Our participation in this event was organized by our super-volunteer, Linda Wasey. Linda had been in contact with a woman from the Islamic Center, and they have offered PHNRC a booth.

PHNRC will provide two, short (15-minute) presentations at 10:30 am and 12:30 pm regarding our five sites, volunteering, workdays, etc. We will have a table, displays and easels.

Wheeling High School Update

Seth said everything is proceeding nicely with the partnership we have established with Wheeling High School. The first students' visit is Wednesday, April 24, 2019 from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. We are expecting 20 students, and they have been advised to wear pants and boots for muddy conditions.

If it rains and it is a light rain, then we can erect canopies. However, if there is thunder and lightning, then they will move into the 9 Marion garage to work and learn.

The Program consists of five dates and two classes that will take turns coming to our sites. The first class will have three visits and the second class will have two. This is dependent on the school year schedule.

Seth and Agnes will plan teaching modules taught by PHNRC commissioners and one-hour of field work. A schedule with a plan and topics will be developed.

The first two classes can be identical because we have two different groups. The first half hour will be an introduction and teach them of the importance of nature. The next 1.5 hours will be divided into two, 45-minute segments and involve transplanting seedlings, a walk around the Slough to talk about ecology, erosion and invasives, how everything is interdependent, and if you change the habitat, you change the inhabitants.

The next two Wednesdays we will continue and cover wildlife and bird migration, clearing buckthorn and lining the trail.

The last session will be held at the Nature Preserve where students will plant the actual plants they transplanted at the beginning of the program. The educational component will be how the creek in the Nature Present flows into the Slough; the watershed; where water flows and how it is important, impervious and permeable surfaces, etc.

Next year, the Environmental Studies Class will be participating in this Program. They are a more focused group and longer-term. Hopefully, with this Class, data reporting and quadrant sampling can be accomplished, if the Class had a dedicated instructor.

At first, this will be a process, and we will adjust accordingly. We will keep in mind our goals, such as education of natural areas management, and how best to achieve them for the students.

Consideration of PHNRC Meeting Locations – May through September 2019

Members discussed possibly conducting meetings outside in the summer. A sunny, open area is recommended during mosquito season.

John's vote is still to hold all meetings in City Hall Chambers, but he will abide by majority vote.

It is a challenge for staff with recording equipment. Therefore, for our May meeting, the location will be the Morava picnic table. The location for the remaining summer months will be determined on how well the May meeting is held outside.

Dana will coordinate with Patrick.

City of Prospect Heights Community Days – Saturday, June 1, 2019

Dana, Jill and possibly Peter will manage our table during this City event on June 1, 2019 from 9:00 am to 12 Noon. We will have a pop-up tent, a table, plants to give, books, display boards, artifacts, etc.

Jill suggested doing something more interactive and give-away stickers on ecology. Ed suggested bumper stickers, and they could be a version of our PHNRC logo. Our supporters could be advertising for us.

It is not a very-well attended event, like the Block Party. However, there are families present because of the Lions' Club Pancake Breakfast at the Fire Station.

Visitor's Comments

Cathy Brady, Chairperson of the McDonald Creek Commission, was present during the meeting and contributed thoughts and comments while attending the meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is scheduled for Thursday, May 9, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Morava Picnic Table (parking lot by the tennis courts).

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary