

Prospect Heights Park District Events

Dana reported that the first Fall Bird Walk will be conducted this Saturday, September 12, 2020. Seven people have registered for the first and second Bird Walks (September 12 and September 26, 2020). Marci Glinski of the Prospect Heights Park District is incredibly pleased with the responses to essentially everything we are doing.

The forecast for September 12 is a chance of rain.

PHNRC will conduct a tour of the ComEd Seeded Prairie on Saturday, September 19, 2020 from 9:00-10:00 a.m. The Prairie Tour will begin at the Bike Path and Sherwood Avenue under the power lines. Parking is on Sherwood in-between the east and west prairies.

Currently, seven people have registered, but the attendance may increase.

Like at the recent Slough Tour, we anticipate the group to be large and fragmented. Therefore, it is helpful to have two Commissioners at the back of the tour to ensure inclusion of people who may arrive late and to ensure attendees are aware of the information provided during the tour by Agnes.

Ed will issue a press release on the ComEd Seeded Prairie Tour of September 19. Ed and Dana will confer about the issuance of other press releases on future events, such as Prairie Week, Nature Speaks Program, etc. Ed is thinking of a comprehensive press release.

Nature Speaks Program

Our current Nature Speaks Program via Zoom is as follows:

September 29, 2020 (7:00-8:30 pm): Tricia Bethke, Forest Pest Outreach Coordinator for the Morton Arboretum, presenting on International Plant Health.

October 22, 2020 (1:00-2:30 pm): Gavin Pretor Pinney from England presenting “Cloudspotting for Beginners.”

November 19, 2020 (7:00-8:30 p.m.): Dr. Doug Tallamy, celebrated Author, Educator, Researcher and Naturalist, presenting “Nature’s Best Hope.”

Illinois Prairie Week – September 20 – 26, 2020

Dana released an e-mail message on September 13, 2020 announcing our Illinois Prairie Week events. Activities planned by PHNRC for Illinois Prairie Week are as follows:

September 19, 2020 (Saturday) – 9:00-10:00 am: ComEd Prairie Walking Tour
September 20, 2020 (Sunday) – 9:00 am – 12:00 pm – Volunteer Workday
September 23, 2020 (Wednesday) – 5:30 pm until Dusk – Special Seed Collection
Wednesdays

September 26, 2020 (Saturday) – 7:30 – 9:30 am – Fall Bird Walk with Mary Lou Mellon,
Bird Conservation Network

Agnes will provide prairie presentations and talks at all the events.

NEW BUSINESS

Hillcrest Lake Update

John Kamysz reported that all recent work with the Pollinator Park Project is going well. We herbicided the space in between the first portion of the Pollinator Park then planted and connected with the shoreline planting and restoration. Dana and Agnes spent more time planting.

We received rain, which was very helping, which helped the plants get a good start. It is all coming together.

We have staked a new section of the walking path. A resident requested lake access to place a paddle boat in Hillcrest Lake. Two little areas at Hillcrest Lake providing access for boat usage on the Lake. Open shore is already present.

John concluded that positive feedback from residents is continuous.

Agnes said we have done a lot since this started. The rapport with the residents is at an all-time high culminating when they ask for PHNRC car magnets for their cars!

Signage production can begin. Agnes said we have had nice conversations with residents where they expressed their ideas and thoughts about signage and information availability. They are approached on a regular basis with residents curious about the types of birds, plants and animals are present in the habitat. Producing informational pamphlets would be helpful and adding seasonal bird species to view would be special.

Dana asked if Pete Hahn could produce a waterproof bird house-type vehicle to place on a post where informational pamphlets could be available for residents to reference. We could place this vehicle near one of the boat launches at Hillcrest Lake.

Dana said a resident removed a giant tree and took the stumps, which measured 20 to 34 inches high, and placed around the bank of the Lake to create seating areas. This is another way to incorporate resident participation. Sustainability of the project is residential buy-in and ownership. We are confident we are on the right path.

Ed recommended in addition to written pamphlets to also provide green e information where a resident can scan QR codes into their SMART phones. We could also record information on our website for an interactive exchange. Agnes said the information can be updated and current.

Dana mentioned another issue that so much of the landscape has been herbicided; therefore, seed must be planted. John said this is a rough patch for the neighbors and asked if any plugs were available. John's idea is instead of planting large sections, plant along the periphery and seed behind the plantings. Therefore, residents will observe something growing (plugs). Stretch what we have with plugs and back-plant it with seed.

Agnes thought that planting the peripheries and borders are what people see, and she feels it is a great idea. Agnes will look at inventory. Agnes reminded us that plants installed right next to the road must be salt tolerant. John said plants (plugs) may also be placed along the walking path line to delineate it at the start and making the area aesthetic.

Seth said certain plants that are fast and showy, such as Black-Eyed Susan and Monarda. They also add color and people like them. Agnes said we could make the effort to seed a periphery border and a buffer strip along the trail and road for delineation.

Agnes said we have Dropseed and Little Bluestem but plenty of second- and third-year plants. Additionally, Ed suggested conducting outreach and education for residents before planting.

Again, if residents have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the PHNRC via e:mail at info@phnrc.com or via our website at <https://www.phnrc.com/contact-us.html>.

Prescribed Burns and Permit Renewal

Dana reported that we received the burn permit on September 9, 2020; therefore, we are ready to conduct fall and spring prescribed burns on all the planned areas, and they are the Home of Lauren Eisinger, 9 Marion, Morava Nature Preserve, Saint Alphonsus, the Slough and Tully Park. Dana will revise the request for the City Council and Park District to approve.

Further, we require permission from the City Council and Park District; therefore, we must get on their agendas.

Peter Falcone inquired when we would start burning in the fall, and Dana reported November.

Site Monitoring Reports from Commissioners

Per procedure, each Commissioner has responsibility to provide a status update on one of our eight (8) work sites monthly and communicate their report via e:mail to all Commissioners. At the NRC monthly meeting, questions and concerns are addressed. Each monthly worksite update is provided in meeting minutes.

ComEd Seeded Prairie (Dana Sievertson)

The Monitoring Report for the ComEd Seeded Prairie is status quo with one exception: It is all yellow. (Please refer to pages 9 and 10 of the August 13, 2020 meeting minutes for information.)

Heron Pond (John Kamysz)

John stated the Site Monitoring Report for Heron Pond is status quo. (Please refer to page 10 of the August 13 PHNRC meeting minutes for current information.)

Hillcrest Lake (Agnes Wojnarski)

The current Project and conditions at Hillcrest Lake are mentioned in these minutes on pages 3 and 4.

John commented at Hillcrest Lake when some of the trees and shrubs come down, it would be great if they fell into the Lake and remained there. For example, the dead buckthorn tree that is in the Lake on the north shoreline has become a home for a Green Heron. The buckthorn tree has also attracted turtles and frogs. John suggests leaving a bit more dead material on the sites, siting how crucial it is to the environment.

Morava Nature Preserve (Pete Hahn)

Peter Hahn provided a current site monitoring report for the Morava Nature Preserve.

Peter visited the Nature Preserve on September 6 and other times in August where he noticed the brush pile is growing larger. Logs that are cut and stacked neatly helps with the appearance. However, several logs are blocking the walking path at the brush pile. This path is utilized a lot whereas the side path by the tennis courts is rarely used and barely visible.

Peter felt it was unfortunate that the brush pile is located exactly in the middle of the Nature Preserve.

Peter said the walking paths are overgrown; therefore, they need to be cut back. John had also observed that the path is in good shape, but a little overgrown when first walking into the Nature Preserve.

Most of the plants are flowering or are finished flowering for the growing season.

The oak plantings are doing great with only one showing symptoms of disease or insect damage. Peter has observed children and family's picnic by and play in the creek.

Peter said dead trees are hazardous in the Nature Preserve. We are encouraging people to walk though the Preserve; therefore, we do not want anyone to be injured. We can cut the dead trees down but let them stay grounded. It is further noted that the large snags land along the path when it floods.

Ed said it would be an opportunity for public education. There exists a common misperception that if trees are down on the ground, it is not actively maintained. Therefore, let the public know there is a reason.

Jill suggested placing a stick with a sign on the fallen trees saying, “I’m down for a good cause.”

Seth asked if we should have a path by Marion that goes north by the street sign? It was a trail but was demolished. It is by the Cardinal Flower. Yes, a workday event. We could place the larger fallen snags strategically placed to stabilize the path.

The water levels in the creek have been low, and the erosion problem is and will remain a problem until major efforts are taken to stop the erosion. This problem is too large for the PHNRC to solve. Therefore, we need assistance from the Park District and/or the MWRD.

In summary, the Nature Preserve is much improved from past years and is frequently utilized and enjoyed by many residents.

John said when we created the walking path, we placed trenches on either side of the path to allow for water run-off. However, John observed that someone is placing logs in the trenches. This area should be open to allow the water to flow; therefore, let us keep this area clear. We can place 4 x 4’s out of the trenches and alongside the path to keep the path dry.

John is reading a book entitled The Overstory, which states that dead material in a forest is essential to everything else that goes on. We discussed felling trees in the Slough this fall, but John suggested instead of burning or removing logs and timber, we leave a little more for the insects and fungus, which is an essential part of the ecological system.

Remnant Prairie (Seth Marcus)

Seth stated the Monitoring Report for the Remnant Prairie is status quo. (Please refer to pages 11 and 12 of the August 14, 2020 meeting minutes for information.)

Remnant Sedge Meadow (Jill Moskal)

The current situation at the Remnant Sedge Meadow is the large presence of woody brush that is encroaching on the site; therefore, we look forward to ComEd coming this winter season to eradicate it for us.

Teasel is almost non-existent, which is amazing, as well as a testament to the hard work, particularly by Peter Hahn, to successfully remove this invasive species from the site.

Our first Seed Collection Wednesday this season was held on September 2 at the Remnant Sedge Meadow where Torrey’s Rush, Dudley’s rush, Dark Green Bulrush and at least seven species of sedges, including *Carex cristatella*, *Carex vulpinoidea*, *Carex normalis*, *Carex scoparia*, *Carex pellita*, *Carex brevior* and *Carex tribuloides* were collected. The exact weight of the seed collected was 1.6 pounds.

Saint Alphonsus Prairie (Ed Madden)

The Saint Alphonsus Prairie has many flowers, especially asters and grasses, in bloom.

The Saint Alphonsus Prairie is holding rain from large rain events very well.

Slough

Dana said a huge snag recently fell at the Slough near the sign and falling into one of the planting areas. It is a large snag and could encompass a winter workday. We have been leaving a lot of snags to pile, which are good for habitat.

Dana said we must evaluate the snags at the Slough for safety purposes.

John said if we bring them down, ensure they fall in the right direction. We can leave them down instead of cutting them up. It can be a nurse log. We can make piles, too, creating a place for habitat.

John also mentioned the Slough trail where it branches off from the Hillside portion into the wetland area heading toward the shelter there is another branch that goes out by the sign. The trail goes nowhere. It just stops, and there is no outlet. Therefore, it would be good to open it up so that it exits somewhere.

Dana said the origin of the trail was a recommendation from Mark Roscoe as an alternative from going through the basin when it floods. By bringing the trail up higher and parallel to Elmhurst Road, people could get around the wet or flooded area.

Tully Park (Jill Moskal/Wendy Dewar)

The Monitoring Report for Tully Park is status quo. (Please refer to page 13 of the August 13, 2020 meeting minutes for further information.)

The PHNRC workday of September 6, 2020 was scheduled at Tully Park; however, due to rain, the workday is rescheduled to September 20, 2020.

Seed/Greenhouse Program

Agnes mentioned that we have been collecting seeds. In fact, Agnes has some of the early or spring flowering plant seeds in trays. Agnes said we might have a little less seed this year; therefore, we will focus on certain species that we need instead of collecting a lot of seed.

Our Special Seed Collection Wednesday of September 9 was at the Slough. Ten volunteers participated to collect about four pounds of seed.

Ed said whenever we refer to seed and how much it weighs, most people do not grasp what this means. Perhaps we should translate it to say we collected enough seed to grow “X” number of prairie plants. Can Agnes estimate this number?

Agnes said different types of seeds are collected from different areas. For example, seed collected yesterday could seed a 4' x 10' section. Weight is different for different types of seeds. Some of the seed collected at the Slough was wet, so it was not accurate in weight. For some seeds, one-tenth of an ounce may equal 1,000 plants.

Dana said the nominee for the Volunteer Appreciation Award has been decided, so Dana will start preparing the Golden Loppers. When to present the Award is a matter of timing, perhaps our first November workday or Sunday, November 1, 2020. Jill mentioned that we need to ensure the nominee is present at the workday.

Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards Seed Collection Days

Typically, at this time of year, we are invited by the Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards to collect seeds at their site. We have not yet received the collection dates. When we do participate, we will practice social distancing. The Poplar Creek site has several species we are interested in, and Agnes is amazed at the incredible amount of seed we can collect.

PHNRC Annual Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Event

Our Annual Seed Processing and Volunteer Appreciation Event is typically scheduled the Sunday of Thanksgiving Week in November. However, we will not conduct the major event, which is a combination of seed processing, pot-luck lunch, and Volunteer Appreciation. We will postpone the Volunteer Appreciation Event at a time when we may get together to do so. It may be a Zoom Event.

We will process seed as it is dried and ready to process in small batches. The seed processing will be conducted over several days by a few regular volunteers in an area where social distancing is possible, like the garage at 9 Marion or outside for social distancing.

By the end when normally have the seed processed and start the mix and place in the greenhouse germination trays, we should be on target. When we have a genuinely nice workday, we could have a few seed processing trays available for volunteers to process.

Regarding the Volunteer Appreciation Award, we are inclined to do that as a small local event somewhere with social distancing and masks. Jill suggested encompassing the entire November or December *Journal* as a shout-out to our volunteers who consistently worked with us through these past few months during the Pandemic.

PHNRC Treasurer Report and New 2020 Budget

John provided the PHNRC Revenue and Expenses through August 20, 2020 from a report kindly provided by Peter Falcone.

John said there were no changes. We are without funds for the main budget.

We have not spent much of the Separate Budget for the Pollinator Project at Hillcrest Lake to date.

No other major expenditures.

City Civic Meetings and PHNRC Representation

Jill noted that the Ad Hoc Willow Road Project Commission has not held a meeting since February 27, 2019.

Jill further noted that the Camp McDonald Creek Commission has not met since November 26, 2019.

Jill attended the August 25, 2000 Park District Board Meeting for the first hour and learned that an architectural firm has been hired for the landscaping the Lexington Homes Project and the Park District and Library have obtained a joint purchase, operation and maintenance of an Electronic Message Center.

Announcements to the Public

Seth referred to an article of interest from *The New York Times* entitled “The Pleasures of Moth Watching,” dated August 12, 2020.

In North America, it is estimated there exists 700 species of birds and about 750 species of butterflies. Moths number more than 11,000 species with scientists regularly identifying more, particularly tiny micromoths.

Following is the link to the article: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/12/realestate/moth-watching-night-garden.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Visitors’ Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is October 8, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. Central Time.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary