

Conducting a prescribed burn this fall will help control the invasives and other work awaiting us in the east side of the Seeded Prairie. The triangle in the front which touches Elmhurst Road that no one has claimed and that we have not claimed is self-naturalizing. Therefore, we should concentrate on this area this year. Over the summer, we removed Callery Pear. With the scheduled fall prescribed burn then overseeding, this area will look as nice as the sign at Izaak Walton Park. We are hoping to obtain a lot of Indian Grass seed from the Poplar Creek Special Seed Collection Days.

Seed Collection Wednesdays

Agnes stated that we have held Seed Collection Wednesdays at the ComEd Seeded Prairie (Sept 23); Nature Preserve at Gary Morava (Sept 30); and the Remnant Prairie (Oct 7). We have experienced a successful turnout for all Seed Collection Wednesdays and have also collected a lot of seeds.

Prospect Heights Park District Events

Dana reported that the Fall Bird Walks of September 2020 have concluded.

Dana also mentioned that Jill's gift to Mary Lou Mellon in honor of her five years of conducting the Bird Walks was very well received. The gift was Hallmark 2020 The Beauty of Birds Musical Clock with Motion and Light. Although Jill was appreciative of the comment, Jill noted that the gift to Mary Lou was from all PHNRC Commissioners.

Mary Lou has committed to the 2021 Spring Bird Walks, our 6th Year, and they will be conducted in April and May as in previous years. In 2019, the dates were April 27, 2019 and May 11, 2019. However, in 2020, the Spring Bird Walks were conducted on Saturday, May 16 and Saturday, May 30, 2020 due to COVID 19.

PHNRC conducted a tour of the ComEd Seeded Prairie on Saturday, September 19, 2020 from 9:00-10:00 a.m. The Prairie Tour began at the Bike Path and Sherwood Avenue under the power lines.

Dana reported that the announcement sent by PHNRC for the tour provided the correct location on where the tour would begin. However, instructions from the Park District indicated proceeding to the Gary Morava Recreation Center. We do not feel this miscommunication impacted the participation of the tour, but two people contacted Dana, and we waited for them to arrive. Seven people registered, but four people attended. The tour was very productive because we provided a lot of information.

Dana expressed our desire for more people to attend prairie tours. We would love to see you!

Nature Speaks Program

Our current Nature Speaks Program via Zoom is as follows:

October 22, 2020 (12:00-1:30 pm): Gavin Pretor Pinney from England presenting "Cloudspotting for Beginners."

Seth informed Dana that the Library indicates a start time of 1:00 p.m. Central. Confusion could be present due to the Library closing for renovation and the transition of managing this event between two people. However, Dana will ensure correct information is provided.

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 mentioned that Illinois Prairie Week events were planned and managed. We look forward to next year’s event activities.

NEW BUSINESS

Hillcrest Lake Update

Agnes reported that many more plugs were planted in the shoreline planting and restoration area. Seth and Agnes planted more plugs on Wednesday and watered the area.

John has been watering, and Dana and Agnes have been watering utilizing the Turbo Rain tank from the back of their van. Agnes reported that the area looks good.

John inquired how much longer must the area be watered with the fall season upon us and presenting drier conditions. Agnes said we water while the vegetation is still green and flowering or until the first freeze.

Pete inquired how we will accomplish watering as our work area expands. John mentioned that neighbors have volunteered their water spigots, if needed. Dana said the Turbo Rain tank holds 120 gallons of water and can continue to be utilized. Works fine with remote locations. You do not have to water every group of plants every single year just the first year must be watered. The second year you can leave alone.

Agnes said when we seed certain areas, watering is not a requirement. The areas at the Lake (project) that were herbicided will be seeded; therefore, watering is unnecessary. Only the plugs installed from the greenhouse need consistent watering.

John commented that after the attending Tricia Bethke’s Nature Speaks Program presentation on trees (2020 International Year of Plant Health: Protecting Plants, Protecting People), John has noticed two burr oaks out front have stagmaring and look sickly. John is unsure what we can do to help the trees at this point because according to the tree presentation, the trees will be lost if we do not do anything. Hopefully, it will not spread to the other trees.

Jill mentioned that our City has an arborist. Could we tap into his expertise? John will contact the City of Prospect Heights’ Arborist. Agnes stated we need a diagnosis. Jill volunteered the services of Davey Care of Tree, if needed.

Pete said the trees are white oak and were probably planted by the City. However, what he has observed over the past year is that the trees do not receive care or maintenance. Peter also observed that someone tried to pull a tree straight up.

Pete said trees must receive regular trimming of deadwood, mulching and fertilizing. Oak wilt disease must be treated.

To date, Dana reported that we have installed 4,883 plugs between the shoreline restoration and the pilot plantings by John's house. Volunteer hours on the Project is over 250 hours. YTD volunteer work hours with PHNRC is up to 1,110 volunteer work hours, excluding the time Agnes has spent with the Interns.

Prescribed Burns and Permit Renewal

Dana reported that the burn permit has been approved by the EPA, and we received the burn permit on September 9, 2020. The City Council and the Park District have approved our prescribed burn program for the fall. We must now wait for the right conditions. We need a couple of hard frosts to occur first.

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.

Asters are in bloom, and John noticed far less Cardinal Flower this year than last year.

The paths could use some trimming.

There are a couple of piles of brush lying around, which has been there for some time. John is unsure who created them, perhaps the Park District? There is also evidence of a beaver on McDonald Creek from a gnawed tree, but no dams.

Hillcrest Lake (Agnes Wojnarski)

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

John commented that the Site Monitoring Report for Hillcrest Lake is status quo; not much new to report.

John asked Commissioners if the border taping on the first part of the project across from his house should be removed. The margins might get some foot traffic, but the core is well grown in. Recent rain has been good, but if it gets dry again, John will water. However, the grasses are changing with the weather.

Morava Nature Preserve (Pete Hahn)

Peter Hahn provided a current Site Monitoring Report for the Morava Nature Preserve.

The Gary Morava Nature Preserve, as of October 4, 2020, is somewhat overgrown with mostly native plants, which is good. Most plants have finished flowering and have set seed.

The paths are passable for mostly single file use.

The creek water level is exceptionally low, and the water is slowly moving. The creek itself is littered with debris; some of our logs used for path borders have been thrown into the creek by the steppingstones. The erosion of the creek banks is less noticeable due to the growth of plants.

The branch pile has been chipped; therefore, we now have a fresh supply of wood chips.

Plenty of cut up logs are available and somewhat neatly stacked. I do not know what the eventual use for these logs is about. They would make excellent firewood and/or path borders.

Peter is concerned that some creek slopes are so steep in some areas that they pose a safety concern. Also, another safety concern are the dead, dying trees and branches that could injure people walking through the Nature Preserve. Planning is needed to decide what course of action is required to correct these safety issues.

Do we want the Nature Preserve to be a more maintained or manicured Preserve or do we allow nature to run its course naturally?

Peter plans to clean up the creek this week and trim back the plants along the path.

Remnant Prairie (Seth Marcus)

No new information for the Remnant Prairie.

Remnant Sedge Meadow (Jill Moskal)

Jill reported that the Remnant Sedge Meadow is progressing to a fall season state.

Consideration for another seed collection was planned; however, XXX was already past its prime, so very few seeds were available for a robust seed collection.

Jill would like to mention, again, that our sign still needs to be fixed as it is hanging lopsided.

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. Ed expressed how St. Al's parishioners must deeply appreciate this beautiful natural water management asset at their church property.

Slough

Agnes said the Slough is looking good. Woody vegetation, buckthorn and Canada Golden Rod are present, and it would be good to hold a few workdays removing invasives. After the fall prescribed burn, we will reseed the area.

A lot of people are using the trail system. The foot traffic has hedged the path, and the path is landscaped; therefore, it does not currently require maintenance.

Agnes and Dana reported that we installed 2,443 plugs at the Slough and where the interns removed the cattails. The plugs are establishing themselves well. Agnes expressed appreciation to both Dana and Seth for augering holes to enable installation of the plugs. All warrior sedges that we have been planting over the year will, hopefully, compete with the cattails and other invasives.

Agnes reported on the results of the test sites of the warrior sedges. The interns planted lines of six (6) species of warrior sedges. We are monitoring (all are GPDs) how they tolerate flooding over the fall and spring floods. We are measuring rainfall events and how much underwater under for so many days survive that. Slough underwater for several days after the last rain events. A few test sites did not survive, but a few are doing very well.

On a personal note, Dana and Agnes installed a "nest" made from a plastic laundry basket filled with pine needles for the Great Horned Owls in the area on an old Cottonwood Tree 25 feet in the air and placed a motion-activated camera near the nest. Lake Arlington has nesting owls. The first night a Southern Flying Squirrel visited the nest. Chris Anchor from the Forest Preserve District confirmed the presence of this animal.

Agnes is excited on having the motion-activated camera to view other wildlife in the area.

Tully Park (Jill Moskal/Wendy Dewar)

The Monitoring Report for Tully Park is status quo.

District 214 Internship Program and Virtual Career Night

Colin and Felix first contacted us then District 214 representatives contacted us, and we provided a tour of the Slough. The District 214 Internship Program is typically 60 hours; however, due to the COVID Situation, it is reduced to 30 hours. Colin started and then Felix started after completing paperwork. Colin and Felix come on Wednesday and Friday mornings from 8:00-9:30 a.m. for Ecology lessons, education, walk, talk about ecology, plants and plant id and participating in our workday. Colin has 12 hours left, and Felix has 20.

District 214 requested us to participation via Zoom in their virtual Career Night on October 20, 2020 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. It will basically be a moderated panel discussion with professors, university and college partners, students and staff. Each panel member speaks for 45 minutes followed by a discussion and question and answer period.

What are we to present? Are they expecting information on environmental sciences? We do not have any Commissioner who has a degree in this field. However, we could talk about our organization and encourage students who are interested in nature to join our volunteer workdays. Dana will contact the Coordinators.

Agnes is familiar with the different careers in environmental science and could speak on this field. Agnes talks with the interns and is engaged with the Morton Arboretum, so she is familiar with the difference between ecologist vs. biologist vs. technician. However, Agnes would have to conduct research first, depending on the host's expectations. Ed suggested that Agnes simply speak of her passion.

Jill expressed that being on the Panel is an opportunity to make students aware of our organization and invite them to come out and join us. We have had interns that have changed their careers after working with us and learning about natural areas land management.

Path Maintenance at the Worksites

The Nature Preserve path at Gary Morava is a bit overgrown. Do we maintain it more as an aesthetic rather than letting it grow naturally in the fall? We have limited resources.

John viewed the path recently and said it was not horrible. It is not the path itself that needs maintenance at our sites, but the grass growing from the sides, which can be managed by a trim with the brush cutter. John would be happy to do it but will be incapacitated for a few weeks.

Pete was recently at the Nature Preserve (the other day and Monday) and took a hedge trimmer to the overhanging plants on the path so that nothing was brushing people as they walk by. It does not take much effort or work to trim the path. Peter did not trim anything growing close to the ground because, although it may not look manicured, it is not disturbing foot traffic on the path.

John said the weeds grow in along the border of the path that also need to be trimmed. Be careful, however; the plants outside of the path may be mowed down and will not grow back. Be conscious of what you are cutting.

Dana said we have the electric bush whacker for vertical trimming and can be utilized at any time.

Dana said at some point in time, I think it would be good for the Commissioners to walk the Slough and Morava and view the snags. Many might be border-line widow makers. We should decide what should come down over the winter. Is it something we could do ourselves or ask the Park District or Public Works for assistance?

What is the degree of maintenance we want to accomplish on the paths? Do not go over the border and accidentally trim native plants. Pete took care of the overhanging plants and was careful not to go too far in. We do not have the staff to maintain a manicured path.

John feels a manicured trail or path at the Nature Preserve would be ideal, but not so much at the Slough. Traffic is from the Recreation Center, the tennis courts, the Library patrons, etc.

Agnes and Seth will visit the Nature Preserve on Wednesday, October 14, 2020.

Seed/Greenhouse Program

Agnes has started to plant seeds in containers to be stratified for the winter.

Baptisia sprouted or germinated too soon, so Agnes has covered half of it with straw. It is an important plant. Agnes has half of the Baptisia seed waiting to germinate during the winter.

Agnes does not yet have a complete weight of seed collected to be processed. Agnes feels we may have less seed collected this year than previous years, but not to worry. We still have more seed to collect, and Agnes will make her annual purchase of Little Bluestem to augment our collection.

Agnes said we have a large bag of diverse seed donated from John's acquaintance at the Lake who does restoration work south of us. This donated seed will be planted at the ComEd Seeded Prairie.

When Pete inquired, Agnes is looking for Prairie Dock, Lobelia, Cardinal Flower, Gentian, Side oats Grama, Prairie Drop Seed, and woodland grass seeds. Woodland grasses will be reintroduced at the Slough, and we will give Tully Park grass seed for the area they cleared this year. Indian Grass will be collected at Poplar Creek the weekend of October 11 and 12.

Agnes has pocket areas that she cannot get to and do not require a full workday to collect, such as Spotted Joe Pye Weed at 9 Marion.

Dana said this year, there is a great deal more grasses that flow through the Slough, which will make a huge difference on how it burns this year. However, Agnes said there are certain patches that are just buckthorn.

Agnes said Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards and even Steven Packard said once you set back Canada Golden Rod, overseeding the area is especially important. You are re-introducing seed where it was removed. Rick McAndless said PCPS was successful with control Canada Golden Rod by cutting the seed heads, burning, and reseeding. It is all part of the plant succession, so it takes a few years.

Dana said the West end of the prairie is almost solid Grass Leaf Golden Rod with few invasions of the Canada Gold Rod. This same area was initially Teasel, Clover and Canada Golden Rod and now it, along with Thistle and Teasel at the Remnant Prairie, are all gone! It just takes time and burning is important.

Poplar Creek Prairie Stewards Seed Collection and Seed Processing Event

Agnes said we have been invited by the Poplar Creek Prairie Steward to their site in Hoffman Estates this weekend (October 10 and 11, 2020) from 9:00 a.m. to 12 Noon. We have sent notice to volunteers and appreciate any time they may afford. The seed collection is for Indian Grass. We may have another opportunity, too.

Annual Seed Processing

Agnes said we have started processing seed with the interns and Seth. We are a bit behind. Therefore, the next few workdays we will engage in seed processing. We will be fine with the seed processing by accomplishing it as we are able.

How are we managing our November Event? We will present the Golden Loppers for the Volunteer Appreciation and must decide how that will be accomplished.

We will talk about it with whomever attends the PCPS seed collection and then at our workdays.

PHNRC Treasurer Report and New 2020 Budget

John reported that nothing has changed. We do not have funds, and we have not incurred any expenses.

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. Also, the McDonald Creek Commission has not held a meeting yet this year.

Jill attended the virtual Prospect Heights Park District Board Meeting of September 22, 2020. From the August 25, 2020 PHPD Board Meeting Minutes, Jill noted the following:

The Park District has contracted with JSD Landscape Architect to create two potential designs to develop the Muir Park parcel. The Park District is considering an exchange of land at or adjacent to Muir Park. During the Executive Session, a discussion of the parameters of the purchase agreement will be discussed with the Park District's legal counsel. The Subcommittee will discuss with Lexington Homes and review preliminary designs from the landscape architect.

The Park District is considering a GMRC Feasibility Study and received a draft report from Greenplay. The Task Force will be meeting the week of September 1, 2020. The Task Force will be comprised of two Board Members and five residents.

An application for ITEP Grant for bike path renovations is being considered. The Superintendent of Finance and Planning, Annette Curtis, provided background information and the scope of the ITEP Grant application.

Announcements to the Public

No specific announcements were available for the Public.

As a reminder, the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission (PHRNC) website address is: <https://www.phnrc.com>.

Visitors' Comments

None.

OTHER BUSINESS

Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Prospect Heights Natural Resources Commission is November 12, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. Central Time. A December 2020 meeting is not scheduled.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business to come before the meeting. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Jill E. Moskal, CPS
PHNRC Commissioner and Recording Secretary