

Minutes of Environmental Concerns Committee  
March 6, 2014  
Submitted by Kathy Shea, Curator of Natural Lands

Present: Diane Angell, Gene Bakko, Nora Flynn, Jim Fisher, Mark Gelle, Kathy Shea, Pete Sandberg, Ellen Squires, Judy Stromeier, Dave VanWynen

#### Welcome and Introductions

The committee met at 8 a.m. in the Regents 426 conference room. Dave VanWynen joined the committee as the Sustainability Coordinator, a position supported by the M.A. Cargill grant.

#### Environmental Coalition Update

Two leaders of the student led Environmental Coalition, Hannah Gelle and Kelly Halpin, were invited to update us on the carbon neutrality proposal and other issues of concern to students. One of the goals of students is to have better communication among groups interested in environmental and sustainability issues. They presented a proposed referendum to determine the level of support in the student body for working toward carbon neutrality and another referendum on sustainability issues in general. The committee gave feedback suggesting that students should vote on their willingness to do something (not only general interest). After this meeting they worked on wording and decided to only put the sustainability referendum up for a vote this spring. As a post meeting note the sustainability referendum passed on March 11 with the approval of 86% of the 847 students who voted.

#### Winter Activities

The city mowed a path through the 2002 prairie to check on connections to the city sewer system on the North Ave side of campus.

The local cycling club was interested in riding “big tire” bikes through the north Prairie Loop for a race on November 9. However the race on St. Olaf lands did not happen. The main concern was the possibility of making ruts in the trails if the ground is wet. Use of the trails for a race should be cleared through this committee.

Student Naturalists led a successful winter nature walk with about 15 people during January.

#### Spring Activities

Student Naturalists will start the spring Phenology Walks on Friday, March 7. They will ask Tory Borovsky to add them to the “This Week in Science” posting that comes out every week. A spring photo contest will be organized as soon as there are signs of spring. The winning photographs are posted on the Natural Lands site, on the Student Naturalist’s bulletin board and on the kiosk at the entrance to the Natural Lands. The Stewardship office made notecards using some of the winning photographs. The notecards are used by students to write thank you notes to donors of student scholarships and for general Natural Lands related correspondence. Dave VanWynen suggested that a few of the photos be made into larger photos to put up on the walls in Regents Hall. The Student Naturalists will look into this.

### Lashbrook Park

Gloria Kiester requested that St. Olaf have a representative on the Lashbrook Board. The Friends of Lashbrook Park, the group that oversees the maintenance of the park needs new people. Because the park is across from St. Olaf property and has served as a way for students to contribute to community service, it would be good to have a St. Olaf voice. Dave VanWylen, Diane Angell and Judy Stromeyer all live near the park and will rotate attending board meetings. Meetings are scheduled for March 25 and April 22 at 7 p.m. at Emmaus Baptist Church.

### Don Nelson farm

Gene Bakko reported that Don Nelson is ready to sign the conservation easement to preserve the use of his farm for agriculture and education. He plans to sign the easement soon and then the college gift committee will examine and likely approve the gift.

### STOGROW

Kathy Shea's Agroecology class is doing a project to help facilitate planning to move STOGROW from its current location by the James Farm house to the area north of the Art Barn and the wind turbine. By moving it closer we hope to make it more visible and involve more students in volunteering. Mark Gelle is checking with Ray Larson to work out using 2 acres of land for cover crops this year. The goal is to improve the soil quality over time and hopefully to plant edible crops next year.

The M.A. Cargill grant will provide funding for the student farmers this summer and also will provide funds for equipment and other related costs.

### Combined Environmental Concerns and Sustainability Task Force

Dave VanWylen, Sustainability Coordinator, Kathy Shea, Curator of Natural Lands, Pete Sandberg, Facilities Director, and Paul Jackson, Environmental Studies Chair have a meeting with President David Anderson on March 20 to discuss having a presidentially appointed sustainability committee/task force which would coordinate communication and provide information about environmental and sustainability issues.

### Future Issues

The Mellon Grant awarded to Carleton and St. Olaf may provide opportunities for collaborative work on environmental and sustainability issues.

The Environmental Concerns Committee will meet again toward the end of the semester.