

Minutes of Environmental Concerns Committee
March 20, 2015
Submitted by Kathy Shea, Curator of Natural Lands

Present: Gene Bakko, Nora Flynn, Jim Fisher, Mark Gelle, Kathy Shea, Pete Sandberg, Kate Seybold, Judy Stromayer

The committee met at 11:30 a.m. in Buntrock 145.

Kathy passed out notecards featuring photo contest winning photos of the wind turbine and a jack-in-the-pulpit in flower. They were ordered by the Alumni Office and used for students writing thank you notes to donors. We ordered additional cards for Student Naturalists and others working on Natural Lands projects. New brochures with a map of the Natural Lands were printed. If you search the St. Olaf website for Natural Lands it is go to Academic Departments and Programs and look under Other Academic Offices, Programs and Resources. The web address after transfer to WordPress is wp.stolaf.edu/naturallands/

Spring Activities

Due to the lack of snow this winter, there was not much snowshoeing or skiing on trails through the Natural Lands. Now the trails are mostly muddy.

Student Naturalists have organized a variety of activities for spring, from Photo Contests to Phenology Walks, to hosting school visits from Open Door Nursery and helping with the Greenvale fifth grader visits. They have also been making pollinator boxes, working with Devin Lacke in Physics and decorating them with wood burning pens.

A student group organized by Henry Raether tapped maple trees in the woods south of Hwy. 19. Bon Appetite provided a way to process the syrup indoors. Proceeds were donated to a charity.

STOGROW students selected two new farmers for this summer and have been planning the garden with a goal of having a greater variety of crops, hopefully able to make more money. A hoop house will be ordered with Cargill Grant funds for the new site. It will extend the growing season.

Other Issues

Pete reported that a Community Solar Garden consisting of 15 one-megawatt gardens is being planned for St. Olaf land west of the hospital. It requires at least 5 cooperating participants, likely to include Carleton and Macalester Colleges. With a carbon offset of approximately 12,500 metric tons it will enable electricity used at the college to be carbon neutral. The payback period for the project is 20 years and it would provide about \$190,000 per year income for the college, including credits for electricity and income from renting the land. Prairie plants and butterfly gardens can be planted around the solar panels to enhance local biodiversity.

Gene reported that we have planned a new trail through the more recent forest restoration areas. He and Don Skluzacek will work this spring and summer to clear a path that can then be mowed.

Prairie burns are planned for sections of the 2001,2002 prairies north of the trail that were not burned last year.

Progress has been made on plans to donate Don Nelson's farm near Nerstrand to the DNR. The DNR plans to restore the land, over a period of years, to forest and prairie typical of the area. Northfield Shares will manage the fund set up with profits from the sale. St. Olaf students and faculty will be eligible to apply for funds to work on research or educational projects at the farm.

Discussions are continuing on having a memorial bench for Jim Farrell on the Natural Lands. Planting fruit trees on the new STOGROW site is also being discussed.

The next meeting will be at the end of the semester.