

Environmental Concerns Committee Minutes

May 17, 2018, Buntrock Commons 142, 4:00-5:00 p.m.

Submitted by Kathy Shea, Curator of Natural Lands

Present: Diane Angell, Pat Cease, Annika Fredrickson, Mark Gelle, Elizabeth Haase, Paul Jackson, Kevin Larson, Leon Narvaez, Nic Nelson, Nick Partington, Kathy Shea, Judy Tegtmeyer

Spring Semester Activities

Student Naturalists Annika Fredrickson and Nick Partington reported on winter/spring Natural Lands projects. Over the winter buckthorn removal and burning of cut buckthorn was a priority on the Heath Creek portion or the Natural Lands across from Sechler Park. With the buckthorn removed the large oaks are clearly visible and the understory had many spring ephemerals such as trout lily and wild ginger. Students have recently been removing other invasive species, such as garlic mustard.

We did a prairie burn of about 25 acres on April 26 on the 1993 prairie area north of Big Pond, the 2003 prairie south of the trail around the West Coyote Pond, and the 1994 area north of the James Farm Pond. All went as planned with the burn breaks and students workers keeping the fire in the planned burn area and a west or southwest wind keeping the fire moving. With the late spring, ice out on the Big Pond was the same day as the prairie burn and the ground was not yet completely thawed.

Other student activities included weekly phenology walks through Norway Valley, a campus cleanup, and a Natural Lands Photo Contest. Diane Angell coordinated visits of 5th grade students to the Natural Lands and Student Naturalists presented monthly lessons or field trips on the Natural Lands for Open Door preschool students. Student Naturalists also led a walk of 4th graders from Bethel Lutheran Church on the Natural Lands.

Other Issues

Kevin Larson indicated that this will be a busy summer for building projects with the construction of the ice arena and new turf for the soccer field. There will be more trucks and equipment on the roads and west side of Tostrud. Summer campers will have specific walkways to use to avoid construction.

Flaten House, on the south side of campus, was removed and Nic Nelson planted some grasses and forbs in the area. Leif Knecht is supposed to plant trees there this summer. We also plan to obtain some trees from Knecht Nursery for the CRP area west of the wind turbine.

The old compost building along North Ave. is empty and the machines have been removed. It is now used as a seasonal location for grounds equipment.

Mark Gelle reported that the developer of the new Senior Care facility west of the hospital is in conflict with the City of Northfield over the size of a storm retention pond (it is not big enough). They will have a new retention pond on the northwest side.

We were notified by Dave Otterness of an oil spill on Post land by Heath Creek. Elizabeth Haase, Director of Environmental Health and Safety, planned to notify Post. As a note, after this meeting Post is looking into the source of the oil and appreciated the notification.

Elizabeth Haase and Pat Cease were at this meeting to make sure that students working outdoors receive appropriate safety training. Just as students working in the lab receive safety training, so must students who work outdoors. The training must be documented so that if there is an accident, we can document that students received appropriate training. We provided a list of tools that students may use. At the training use of sunscreen and drinking fluids were reviewed. Students should also have cell phones with the emergency notification system with them.

Paul Jackson reported that the Sustainability Map on Google drive is being updated this summer.

Summer students working on the Natural Lands include CURI students Rebecca DeBoer and Athena Sifter who are STOGROW farmers and Carly Challgren and Allie Raduege, studying forest restoration in the tree seeding restoration areas and growth/yields in different corn varieties. Hannah Zarate and Nisha Albert are Natural Lands technicians and will focus on removal of invasive species and seed collection for future plantings. Facilities is helping STOGROW by repairing doors on the hoop house and moving the compost pile to a location along the fence line. They will also help build a compost bin with three bays, each wide enough for a front loader (7 ft wide).

We adjourned for the summer.