

# Blue Mounds State Park Citizen Advisory Group

Thursday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2017 (5:30-7:30pm)

Luverne Chamber and Visitors Bureau  
213 East Luverne Street  
Luverne, MN

---

## Meeting #1: Background, Priorities, and Outcomes

**Citizen Advisory Group (CAG) Members Present:** Jane Lanphere, Larry Lanphere, Amy Nelson, Jeanne Prekker, and Sherri Thompson

**DNR Staff:** Kathy Dummer and Elizabeth Murray, PAT Regional Management; Chris Ingebretsen, PAT Park Management; Rachel Hopper and Arielle Courtney, PAT Policy and Planning

### Meeting #1 Summary

#### *Welcome and introductions*

DNR staff welcomed the group members and public to the first meeting of the Blue Mounds State Park Citizen Advisory Group. Each member introduced themselves, where they're from, and what is their favorite part of the park. In addition, a couple of members explained that they want the DNR to invest more in the park (focus on necessities such as potable water, not thrills) and focus efforts on this corner of the state.

#### *Blue Mounds State Park Overview*

*Presented by: Chris Ingebretsen, Park Manager and Kathy Dummer, DNR Parks & Trails Southern Regional Manager*

Chris provided an overview of the park's natural and recreational amenities, described how visitation numbers have fluctuated since 2013 due to flooding and water contamination issues, and explained the park's partnership with the Minnesota Zoo focused on preserving a genetically pure bison herd. He also touched on where campers are coming from in the summer, mainly Luverne and the Twin Cities. Kathy Dummer discussed the plans in place to help guide park management and operations. First, she discussed the existence of the park management plan, created in 1979. It focused mainly on managing the park as a "natural" park, as outlined in the federal Outdoor Recreation Act. She provided some history about why the park came to be, including that it is the best example of tall grass prairie in the state. The management plan focuses on maintaining natural features and specifies acceptable types of development. She explained that the original plan is very much in line with how the park operates today. Contact

She then described briefly the State Parks and Trails System, created in August 2015. It was developed to plan strategically for future investments in the state park and trail system given continually limited financial resources. It serves to help the DNR better align use with investment. It also breaks parks and recreation units into different categories to help identify "niches" for each area. Blue Mounds falls into a "core" park category, which generally offers traditional recreation amenities that people expect from state parks. It is further delineated into a "core-adventure" park category because it is one of the few areas of the state for outdoor rock climbing.

Contact Arielle Courtney ([arielle.courtney@state.mn.us](mailto:arielle.courtney@state.mn.us)) for a copies of the PowerPoint presentation or the Blue Mounds State Park Management Plan. A copy of the System Plan is available [online](#).

### *Setting Goals*

#### *Why are we here?*

The group then discussed the priority topics and issues they wanted to bring forward. Prior to the meeting, group members sent a list of their priorities to DNR staff. We reviewed this list and further added on. Priorities discussed are as follows (in no particular order):

- Interpretive programming
  - Keep the bison buggy idea moving forward
- Fix interpretive center
  - Rotten beams need to be replaced and other aesthetic upgrades are needed at the building
  - Need estimate of cost to fix building
- Promoting the park/getting the word out
  - Rebrand/re-sign park entrances, buildings, make directions clearer
  - Marketing and advertising park events and programs (social media, website, newspaper, table tents, digital billboard)
  - Cross-promote local attractions to park visitors (radio or app announcements)
- Supporting and expanding recreational opportunities
  - More camping
  - Kayaking
  - Winter trail use (xc ski trails, snowshoeing, winter hiking)
  - Enhance playground near picnic area
  - Butterfly garden
- Water issues
  - Water infrastructure
  - Mound creek – creek bottom restoration to ensure usable water recreation resource
  - Rallying support to get funding secured to solve water contamination issues, etc.
  
- Hear from park staff about what are their priorities for the park

#### *What do you hope will be the outcome of this process?*

The group discussed what they hope will be the result of this meeting process between January and April. The following are their expected outcomes, in no particular order:

- Propose new ideas and areas of engagement in order to see the park better used by people of all ages
- Sharing of thoughts and ideas
- Ideas for park improvements
- A plan to support the park and its growth
- State investment in additional resources for the park to support and expand attendance
- Increased visitation
- Increased group awareness about how they can advocate for the park
- Partnerships and roles that can accomplish ideas (individuals, businesses, sponsorships)
- Proactive members – consider the idea of establishing a park friends group
- Learn about cost-sharing options that have worked elsewhere to inform our efforts

### *Determining Process*

This part of the meeting was dedicated to understanding what the group's priorities are for the following three meetings, identify who might be willing to help plan the meetings, and how the group would like to see meetings run.

Specifically, the group mentioned the following preferences for meeting processes:

- Park staff should identify their own list of "top 10 priorities" for the park to share with the group
- More public input, possibly through a survey (discussion on this point indicated that the group might benefit more from doing a targeted survey of visitors later on)
- Clearly identify action items, how to accomplish them, resources needed, and people involved for each item
- Maintain ongoing communication during and after this process; identify plan for staying engaged

### *Expectations for DNR during this process*

- E-mail meeting notes
- Make sure everyone is on the same page
- Better communication about meeting logistics
- Send agenda at least one week in advance

### *Group meeting expectations*

- One person speaking at a time
- Acknowledge that this is a safe environment to talk and respect different ideas
- Be flexible with the agenda
- Promptness
- Materials – provide more meeting copies for public
- Let the press know about meetings earlier

### *Questions for the DNR*

- Drinking water – How long would it take to get the work done? We are hopeful that the problem will be solved by 2018.
- Is there any flexibility in the DNR's budget to support more interpretive resources? Flexibility and/or reallocation is feasible.
- Why did bison buggy project not work? The project is not dead. Although a few of the issues were that a licensed staff person needed to operate the buggy and sustainable funding for such a position was difficult to identify.

### *Next Steps*

- Get a head start on the Friends group idea – Jeanne will do some research on this topic
- DNR will get a list of top priorities from all park staff
- DNR will send out agenda and working topics for each of the next three meetings at least one week in advance
- DNR will create an online resource for documents shared at these meetings

### *Future Meetings*

Future meetings will be held from 5:30-7:30pm at the Luverne Chamber and Visitors Bureau on Thursday, February 9<sup>th</sup>, Thursday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, and Thursday, April 27<sup>th</sup>.

### *Public Comments*

- What can we do to partner with the park? How can we rally troops? (With organizations like IMBA, is there an opportunity to share equipment or services?)
- What can DNR present to special interest groups (mountain bikes specifically) for partnerships?
- Solve the water issue

### *Meeting Evaluation*

CAG Members completed a meeting evaluation.