

Blue Mounds State Park Citizen Advisory Group

Thursday, March 9th 2017, 5:30-7:30PM

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

Meeting #3: Water infrastructure and associated recreation opportunities

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

DNR Staff: Kathy Dummer, PAT Regional Management; Chris Ingebretsen, PAT Park Management; Arielle Courtney, PAT Policy and Planning; and Steve Hennessy, Acquisition and Development Coordinator

Meeting #3 Summary

Welcome and Meeting Goals

DNR staff provided a brief overview of the meeting and introduced Steve Hennessy, Acquisition and Development Coordinator. Steve manages the Mound Creek restoration project and coordinates related environmental review work.

Mound Creek Restoration

Steve shared a presentation of the design work for the creek restoration, explained the context for restoration choices, and described some of the environmental review, assessment, and permitting requirements that will occur moving forward.

Design work is approximately 50 percent complete. A draft of the design was displayed at the meeting, but hard copies will not be available until the design is finalized. However, many benefits and aspects of the restoration were discussed.

Project goals include:

- Restore recreational trail connectivity across Mound Creek
- Restore Mound Creek to natural channel design
- Restore native plant communities with the basin

Project benefits include:

- Reduce erosion and related nutrient and bacterial loading
- Improve fisheries and aquatic organism habitat
- Improve native flora and fauna

Restoration design features:

- Restored channel is planned to be 5 ft deep, 15-20 ft wide, similar to other areas of the creek.
- There will be several oxbows and the creek will mimic a meander that are observable in other areas of the creek.

- There will be a connecting pedestrian trail across the creek area and a new trail bridge that looks similar to others seen in state parks across the state. The bridge will be sturdy enough and large enough to accommodate staff vehicles for maintenance work and it will be accessible.
- Rocks will be placed strategically throughout the stream to create riffles that will manage water flow.

Environmental Assessment

Steve discussed some of the environmental assessment requirements that are already underway. Details are below.

- FEMA approved \$1.8 Million for creek restoration.
 - FEMA only provides 75% of the 1.8M they approve. Funding not released until environmental assessments are approved.
 - State money is also available for flood disaster relief.
- There are two required environmental review processes (FEMA manages a federal environmental assessment and we manage a state environmental assessment worksheet (EAW) for moving ahead with the restoration project).
- State EAW process will have public input opportunities.
 - The purpose of the EAW is determine if an environmental impact statement (EIS) is required for the project.
 - The public review process will invite public comments to address the accuracy and completeness of the information, potential impacts that warrant further investigation, and the need for an EIS.
- Timeline is hard to predict, but work has already begun.
 - Hope to wrap-up all environmental assessments by early fall.
 - Feasible to see construction begin in winter, and continue through 2018.
 - Construction process – 12 months (weather dependent).
 - Area should be useable in 2019 if timing is right.
 - Extreme weather events during construction are a concern (erosion and sedimentation during construction), best management practices will be implemented to reduce the potential for erosion and sedimentation during construction.
 - First priority of the restoration is to get new vegetation growing as soon as possible.
- Permitting occurs after environmental assessments are final.
 - Several of the required project permits: DNR waters, wetland conservation act, and army corps.

Presentation Questions

- Will the new bridge be flood-resistant?
 - The bridge will be constructed above 100 year flood stage, with an accessible trail leading to one side of bridge.
 - Debris is more of an issue than high water levels.
- Is there a possibility to have a historical bridge moved to park?
 - Rocks from the destroyed dam can be integrated in different ways into the restoration.
- Will there be enough water flow to support recreation (e.g. kayaking)?
 - Possibly with higher water events, but not generally.
 - Boulder riffles important to maintain stream flow

- Riffles hold elevation of stream – keeps turbidity from getting to high and makes room for good habitat.
 - The area will technically be classified as wetlands.
- Will the water quality be tested during and after restoration?
 - The MN Pollution Control Agency is responsible for water quality testing. They routinely test water bodies and we have results for Mound Creek from 2015, but haven't seen 2016 results. It takes 10 months after they test before results come to us.
- What kinds of fish might occupy the creek post-restoration?
 - Most game species not likely to be present (mainly due to endangered Topeka Shiner); but Blue Gills can be found in Mound Creek.
 - Stocking of additional fish also not likely.

Expanded Day Use Are Recreation Opportunities

The group brainstormed some possible ideas for the day use area next to where the creek restoration will take place. There is an opportunity to do something new or different with the current space following the restoration.

Ideas

- Nature play area
 - Look at the existing play area in town near elementary school
 - Consider a theme – specific to prairie and water
- Picnic shelter for shade – open sides
- Amphitheater for events (e.g., similar to past Teddy Roosevelt event)
- Move the interpretive center to this area
 - There was also a suggestion to add the interpretive area on to the existing contact station.
- Trail center/warming house
- Butterfly garden, native plants for viewing and education
 - Flower garden
 - Interpretive opportunities related to this (bird garden, 3 sisters garden for cultural history)
- Tetherball, gaga ball
- Wooden platform or pier out to wetland
- Pedestal grills instead of current fire rings
- Add power in area (for shelters/amphitheater)
- Beach – big sandbox
- Beach – nature playground
- Beach – picnic tables/sun umbrellas
- Beach – Could another building replace beach house? There might be some washout issues.

Related Comments

- Some enjoy the feel of the interpretive area up near Manfred house and would like to keep interpretive opportunities in that space.
- Interns for bison tour
- Visitor center – launch for bison buggy
 - Needs to be staffed – not empty

- Doesn't need to be staffed – just be open and self-guided
- Ways to have open air interpretive displays
- Interpretive interns – funding
- Master naturalists provide capacity

Challenges

- Slope and grade of area
- Wet ground
- Burning will need to occur for grasses and other shoreline vegetation to keep soil healthy
 - Might be difficult area to burn - consider mowing or goats?
- Money
- Area still part of national historic district (how does this play in or does it?)
 - Reuse options for dam's Sioux Quartzite rocks, such as for climbing boulders, posts, base of bridge, along stream itself, shore fishing location, riffles, etc.

What ideas do we agree on?

- 2 picnic shelters (1 rentable, 1 non-rentable) to use for cookouts, family gatherings, fundraisers
 - Install pedestal grills and power source
 - Picnic tables
- Possibly some new games like tetherball

Priority to do something with Manfred site

1. People are interested in maintaining interpretive opportunities in the area near the Manfred house. Options include:
 - Replacing Manfred house – open air interpretive displays, warming house
 - Trail center
 - Critical to have more community engagement on these ideas

General priorities discussed

- Drinking water available
- Complete creek restoration
- Focus on re-envisioning the Manfred site, with a focus on interpretation
- Re-envision the day use recreational area near Mound Creek
 - a. Day use area should focus on family-oriented and group recreation and infrastructure

Expectations for Meeting #4

There was some discussion about members' experience with the process so far in context of what their expectations are for the last meeting.

Concerns discussed include:

- Some members feel like there was little opportunity to influence decisions, that plans were already underway.
- Discussion about how to proceed and keep ideas and communication moving forward.
- A comment was made about how the group feels like they are a mouthpiece for DNR information.

Focus areas to build on

- Friends group: Consider establishing a 501(c)3 non-profit organization to make some of these ideas happen more efficiently and allow for community members to raise funds for the park.
 - What's the vision?
 - Recruitment is key
 - Clear goals for the group
 - Engage at the fair
 - Learn from other Friends groups
- Manfred house: Get more community input on ideas, and come up with some options that focus on history and interpretation. This topic is significant enough to need its own attention.
- Day use recreation area: Get more community input on ideas shared tonight and make it happen.
- Marketing/communication: Better market the park, its amenities/activities, and engage more community members in these decisions.

Meeting Evaluations

CAG Members completed a meeting evaluation.