



ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COUNCIL
City of Bloomington Parks and Recreation
Regular Meeting

RCA Community Park – Small Shelter
Wednesday, October 9th, 2024
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.

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I. CALL TO ORDER at 4:34 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL –

Anne Crecelius, Marne Potter, Adam Fudickar, Dave Rollo, Cathy Meyer, Denise Gardiner, Bill Jones, Jeff Ebran, Dave Parkhurst, Angie Shelton
Staff: Heidi Shoemaker, Rebecca Swift, Joanna Sparks, Brandon Olson

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 2024

IV. AGENDA

A. Appearances

A-1 Public Comment Period
No Public Comment.

B. Old Business

B-1 Vegetation Management Updates

Joanna Sparks, Green Space Manager, shared updates with the group. Japanese stilt grass season has ended. Making progress, especially at Griffy, with two full time staff and two seasonal staff working on the project. Invasive species management requires going back year after year to the same areas. Keeping an eye out for other invasive species as well including spotted lanternfly and Japanese chaff flower.

Rebecca Swift added there were spotted lanternfly traps on park property set by Indiana Department of Natural Resources. No reports of the insect have been found on park property, but they have been reported in Monroe County and we have tree of heaven which is a main host plant.

Sparks mentioned tree of heaven is an invasive species of focus. This winter, staff will spend time mapping its location and sharing with the Department of Entomology. Sparks praised the City's GIS technology for better tracking of their work and ability to share and collaborate with other departments to improve effectiveness and communication.

Stilt grass is a prohibited plant. You cannot buy it, transport it, or trade it, but if it is already on your property you are not required to do anything about it. Sparks' team is working with Monroe County to identify and reduce invasive species and educate the public. Sparks' main species of focus are callery pear, burning bush, and Japanese barberry.

The idea was proposed to meet with CBU to put invasive plant information in utility bills and do a social media campaign. Campaigns have been done where if you remove a callery pear you can get a new tree on your private property funded by grant money. Also developing a partnership with Canopy Bloomington.

The downtown courthouse planting project funded with parking meter funds will have natives, cultivars of native plants, which are shorter and provide less ecological benefit than true native, but offer better sightlines in an urban environment. Phase 1 will start at the courthouse and phase 2 will travel down Kirkwood to the Sample Gates. They will not use annuals that will need to be dug up and replanted each year. Spring bulbs are not invasive and will still be a part of the project. City property is on the street side of the sidewalk. The County manages the rest of the courthouse grounds.

Sparks' team will also be partnering with the Monroe County Public Library to rescue native plants to give to the community.

C. New Business

C-1 Griffy Brown Trout Discussion

Dave Kittaka, District Fish Biologist, IDNR; Dan Carnahan, Fish Manager, IDNR; and Nate Steffensmeier Assistant Biologist, IDNR addressed the board. Kittaka gave an overview of the project. A couple years ago, IDNR fish hatchery diversified their program and started growing brown trout to be released in northern Indiana. Kittaka has been surveying Griffy Lake and over the last 10 years it has developed a trout zone. It is less than 70 degrees water temp in the summer and at least 5 parts per million oxygen. The program they would like to start at Griffy Lake is a fall stocking in the beginning of November. This stockings sole purpose is to provide a different fishing opportunity for anglers. The plan is to add 10 fish per acre. If Griffy Lake passes on the opportunity, the fish will be stocked elsewhere.

Brown trout are not native, but not invasive. Griffy Lake was drained in 2012 and IDNR stocked over 250,000 fish (bluegill, red-ear sunfish, channel catfish, and black crappie) the first year. Since then, they have also found species they did not stock including yellow bass, yellow perch, and carp. These fish may have come from the pipe when the lake was refilled, by bait wells being dumped, or illegal stocking by the public.

Brown trout will not reproduce. The chance of them holding on past the summer is low. The plan would be to stock a low quantity with a daily bag limit of one. The fish would be around 10 inches long at

release. The brown trout will feed on insects and hopefully feeding on yellow bass, but also bluegill and white suckers. A concern was posed that the brown trout would wipe out a native fish. Kittaka stated this is not a possibility.

A question was posed about the fish dying off if the summer. Kittaka stated they may carry over the summer months and will just get bigger. Brown trout have held over at Brookville Reservoir and the Oliver Lake Chain in northeast Indiana where the water is cooler. Trout have been found up to three years old.

It was asked how often fish surveys are done at Griffy and when would we see the information after this release. Kittaka stated there is a trends survey schedule. He was unsure when the last survey was done, but thought the next survey would be in five years. In fish surveys if they find more prey like bluegill and red-ear sunfish things look pretty good.

Anglers with a trout privilege stamp would be able to catch brown trout. The funds from these stamps help fund the inland trout program.

It was asked what evidence exists that this introduction will not impact the native plants or insects. Kittaka said that at Spring Mill they stock 700-800 fish in March and by June they aren't catching them anymore. The water is still cool, but they have all been harvested. If something were to go wrong, they would not be stocked again.

The brown trout would be preyed on by eagles and by bass.

It was asked how this would affect the numbers of fisherman on the water and parking congestion. Kittaka stated if they stocked in the spring he would see a problem, but not in the off season. Kittaka mentioned the money that went in to building the walkway at Griffy Lake and that it would be nice to have fish stocked for people to catch from that location.

The council asked for studies that have looked at biodiversity before and after an introduction, but IDNR said those types of studies weren't available yet. They said the trout aren't in the water long enough to do a specific study.

IDNR needs to know where the fish will be stocked. They do a lot of planning and promotion so the public knows before the introduction. The Council decided to look for more research and get back with the DNR on Friday, October 18.

C-2 Education Update (Griffy Interpretation Signs, Guided Tours, Nature Days)

Swift thanked the council for voting on the interpretive signs. Five new interpretive signs will be added to Griffy Lake Nature Preserve along the new trail. Heidi Shoemaker, the new Natural Resources Coordinator, will be working on these signs over the winter. Signs will be 250 words or less, photo forward, and have a QR code to link to OuterSpatial. For accessibility, each sign will also have an audio file. Swift encouraged the council to visit RCA Park to look at the signs that have been recently installed.

A self-guided tour about the history of Bloomington's waterways is being created and will be supported by a website. A discussion about Griffy being removed from the list of backup water sources was started. Consultants in long range planning studies sometimes switch Griffy's designation and the most

recent decision was to remove it as a backup drinking water source. Swift requested a copy of this study be shared with Swift and Shoemaker.

Shoemaker shared Griffy Lake Nature Days have had no cancellations due to weather and we have reached over 400 students there. One date was rescheduled due to rain for Leonard Springs Nature Days. These will wrap up at the end of October and then resume in April. Swift added this is the 19th year for Leonard Springs Nature Days and the 16th year for Griffy Lake Nature Days with the support of the Raymond Foundation and the Summer Star Foundation.

Sparks shared volunteer events and education opportunities. Phase 2 of a tree planting is scheduled for Ferguson Dog Park after planting 70 trees with volunteer help last October. Hoping to plant 70 more trees with the help of 30 volunteers. On October 17, volunteers will be planting trees at Lower Cascades Park. Long term goals are to transition some turf to forest to reduce mowing. There will also be a Halloween tree planting at White Oak Cemetery with 100 trees. Gillian Field, Outreach Coordinator, is organizing Weed Wrangles. Recently hosted an AP Botany class to learn about water quality, plants, and removed invasive purple winter creeper. Working on Bird Town Indiana accreditation through Bird City Network and with partnership with Sycamore Audubon Society. Also interested in pursuing Bee City, USA.

A suggestion was made to put QR codes in planter boxes so if someone sees pollinators in our plantings they can take a photo and share it directly with us. Brandon Olson, Natural Resource Specialist, has projects set up in iNaturalist for visitors at Griffy, Park Ridge, RCA, and Roger's Family to share insect sightings.

Swift added that Earth Day will take place again on April 19 at Switchyard Park.

C-3 Griffy Lake Nature Preserve – Insect Study Updates

Brandon Olson, Natural Resource Specialist, used iNaturalist to allow visitors to submit insect sightings at Griffy Lake over the summer. Brandon and a staff of two seasonal employees have recorded 478 species of insects using the iNaturalist submissions from the public but also trapping methods including and malaise trap, black lighting, drop traps, and water sampling. The iNaturalist project had 758 submissions from citizens. The team identified an American bumblebee that is on the vulnerable list. They also found an eastern Hercules beetle. Olson is currently compiling the report mapping the points in GIS. Brandon plans to have Megan Murphy at IU look over his report.

Swift added that the Griffy Lake master plan was updated in 2008. Since then, sections are being updated. We have already updated birds, reptiles, and amphibians. We have updated the trails inventory. Now we are working on insects which were omitted in the 2008 plan.

Olson added that aside from BioBlitzes he could not find record of another park in Indiana doing this type of intensive insect inventory.

Swift added Ecologic has an inventory of plants and Olson will place his insect maps over the plant maps to see how they relate. There are green and blue ash trees in the park which Hercules beetles rely on so it's good to keep a check on emerald ash borers too.

Olson will hopefully have the report in time for the February 2025 meeting.

C-4 Deer Management at Griffy Lake Nature Preserve

Swift shared community feedback was heard and Griffy Lake will not close over Thanksgiving weekend. The deer reduction will take place November 16 and 17 and again on November 23 and 24. The entire preserve will close from 11pm on Friday through 5am on Monday. Security will make sure all access points are secure. All hunters pass a proficiency test and screening through White Buffalo to participate. Hunters will be in tree stands and shooting down. News releases and social media will notify the public. The reduction is necessary to maintain biodiversity and a healthy deer population. There are no natural predators left for deer in Indiana. Meat harvested from this reduction can be kept by the hunter or donated to Hoosier Hills Food Bank. Ecologic studies show the understory is rebounding since doing deer reductions. The reduction is usually 40-50 deer a year. Swift announced Steve Cotter will give summary reports to the group in February.

C-5 Project Updates (Gateway, Hopewell, Building Trades, Power Line Trail)

Gateway is on track to be completed in November. Light installation will be happening soon. Hopewell will also be finished in November with a soft opening since it will be winterized shortly after. The official ribbon cutting will be in the spring. Swift will coordinate an ERAC tour once construction is finished. Phase 1 of Building Trades will improve accessibility with funding from ARPA (American Rescue Plan). Will improve north/south pathway and remove boardwalk that is not ADA compliant. A request for bids will go out at the end of the year. Public comment just closed on the Power Line Trail. Swift is meeting with the design company, Aztec, to try to get 90% of plans ready. This trail will run on Duke easement from Switchyard Park to RCA Community Park. This trail will also connect to other multiuse paths.

C-6 December 2024 Meeting Agenda Items

Cathy Meyer would like to know more about the algae at Miller Showers.

Council would like to discuss City utilities that have overlapping management with Parks.

Bird Town Indiana update.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

NEXT MEETING: WEDNESDAY, December 11th, 2024

Switchyard Park - Pavilion