



University of Wisconsin-Madison
Lakeshore Nature Preserve Committee
Facilities Planning & Management
Preserve Staff Reports – September 25, 2020

DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Gary Brown, Director

As we move into our sixth month under the COVID pandemic, I want to thank all of our amazing Preserve staff and volunteers that have helped keep the Preserve open and as operational as possible during these stressful times. We have seen a significant uptick in the number of people visiting the Preserve over the summer, even with the pandemic restrictions in place. We have now changed our open hours to sunrise to sunset in an effort to manage use of the fire circles which remain closed to help prevent unauthorized gatherings and the spread of the virus.

We continue to remain optimistic with students now back on campus and classes are being taught both on-line and in-person. Unfortunately, with their return, we have had to pause in-person teaching for two weeks both inside and outside in the Preserve to help manage the spread. We hope that we can get back to in-person teaching after September 25th and should have more information before our meeting this week to inform us on how we are to proceed.

Stay well and wear your masks!

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT – Laura Wyatt, Program Manager

Permits issued since our last meeting on June 25, 2020:

- 2020-13 – FWE561-Wildlife Techniques-Pauli
- 2020-14 – EnvirSt 600-Last Child in the Park-Anke
- 2020-15 – Geo 538&930-Naughton
- 2020-16 – Agr 370 Grassland Ecol-Gornick
- 2020-17 – Bacteriology – Yishai (grad std) – mycorrhizal colonization of urban &rural oaks
- 2020-18 – Ecol 460-tree ID-Webert
- 2020-19 – Ecol460-gradient analysis-Webert
- 2020-20 – Btny370-Grassland Ecology-Stecha
- 2020-21 – Btny370-Grassland Ecology-Frisch

Like so many within the UW community, Preserve staff has been innovative in their efforts to best support the Preserve during these challenging and continuously changing times. Our small, and resourceful Preserve team has joined together to accomplish a phenomenal amount of work both on the land and in support of our educational mission all while engaging others through COVID-19 approved guidelines and processes. Our team is composed of problem solvers and experienced tacticians. It was been very rewarding, and at times exhausting, to be part of such a dedicated group of individuals, all caring so much for the Preserve and taking their responsibility as “curators” of this cherished land so seriously. Kudos to the Preserve staff and the many stakeholders and volunteers who join us side-by-side.

In August we were able to hire two temporary, seasonal employees, each on a part-time basis. Heidi Belling brings a wealth of experience working with natural resources and Connor Kotte is a graduate student with the Nelson Institute. Please see their introductions in the latest issue of the Preserve e-Newsletter. Both positions are supported entirely through gift funds to the Stewardship Fund through the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association.

In September we joined with UW Transportation in a project to track visitors to the Preserve. The Preserve purchased, again with gift funds, a device which will be moved throughout the Preserve to track pedestrian and bicycle use. Transportation has several of these devices around campus and their staff will be providing us with the support to download and interpret data. We are fortunate to have many great UW partners to help support our mission.

CAPITAL PROJECTS - Rhonda James, Senior Landscape Architect

Capital Projects adjacent to the Preserve:

- The Gymnasium/Natorium Replacement project design is nearly complete. The building removal will begin soon as site clearing work began earlier in September. As noted previously, to facilitate Rec/Well's on-going operations this project has prompted the need for a temporary shed (40'x 70') on the tennis and basketball court bounding wall north of the Class of 1918 Marsh. The construction starts here in mid-September. This building will be removed when the Gym/Nat building is completed in late 2022 or early 2023.
- The Vet Med Addition project design is also nearly complete and will start construction likely in spring 2021. Note that both of these major construction projects (Gym/Nat and Vet Med) are being closely coordinated. Please watch for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic detours along Observatory Drive and in the general area over the next two years.
- A Landscape Master Plan for the Willow Creek area has begun. The creek from Campus Drive to Lake Mendota and approximately 20 feet on both sides will be studied for renovation of the creek shoreline, pedestrian crossings, stormwater manage and revegetation per the Campus Master Plan.

Capital Projects within the Preserve:

- The arbor at Eagle Heights Gardens is to be removed due to deteriorating posts. The Garden leadership team plans to re-imagine the gathering area in the coming year.
- At the University Houses Gardens, the gardeners have requested a gravel access drive to their weed pile and 4 plots beyond. We are investigating the possibilities of this request.
- Stonework around the fire circle at Ebling Circle (site #6 on the eastern tip of Picnic Point) has been replaced.
- The stonework at the edge of the steps at the lower viewing area at the end of Picnic Point has also been added.
- A new memorial bench has been added in the area of the old bath house by the UW Physical Plant Mason and Grounds Shop.

LAND MANAGEMENT - Adam Gundlach, Field Projects Coordinator

- Both Heidi Belling (Invasive Species Specialist) and Connor Kotte (Natural Areas Technician) were hired as seasonal temporary employees in August to assist with land management.
- Since the spring, staff performed weekly monitoring of Picnic Point fire circles and pit toilets and main Preserve entry points and gathering spaces to address unwanted use and safety issues, arising from increased use of the site by the general public during the on-going pandemic.
- Prairie Partners interns – The Preserve did not participate in the program for the 2020 season.
- Eagle Heights Woods:
 - a. Completed post-brush removal vegetation surveys of the Mounds Zone.
 - b. Applied Ecological Services completed invasive brush resprout control across the north slope.
- After being delayed in spring, volunteers were able to cover much of the Preserve removing garlic mustard. Mowing was performed in various areas to reduce/prevent seed production of other invasive species, such as Canada thistle, reed canary grass and other undesirable species across the Preserve.
- Completed spring and summer site assessment surveys of various management areas (Frautschi Point shoreline and Second oak project, Picnic Point, east savanna field, Willow Creek Savanna, Bill's Woods) to document response of the plant community to recent management efforts.

- Volunteer stewards have been working hard in Frautschi Point removing regrowth of invasive brush in areas cleared in previous years.
- Willow Creek Savanna – Canada thistle control across the site and spot cutting to encourage establishment of young prairie seedlings.
- Regrowth of woody species was removed from prairie plantings around the University Bay Drive and Lot 60 bioswales.
- Late porcelain berry monitoring and control work is ongoing.

OUTREACH & VOLUNTEERS – Bryn Scriver, Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator

Outreach activities:

- Preserve Summer Newsletter
- Signage and notifications: New hours (sunrise to sunset)
- Announcements: Strategic Plan and Stakeholder Meeting
- Social media posts
- University Apartments newsletter article for July-Sept (pollinator week, new hours, stone wall)

Volunteer activities:

- Invited Volunteer Stewards to return to work in the Preserve with new safety and reporting guidelines
 - 4 volunteers removing invasive plants (Frautschi Point resprouts)
 - 3 volunteers monitoring trails