

# **Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting October 27, 2022**

*MINUTES PROVIDE A RECORD OF MINNESOTA'S PARKS AND TRAILS LEGACY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS. THESE MINUTES WERE DISCUSSED IN THE DECEMBER 8, 2022 PTLAC MEETING, REQUIRING SOME EDITS FOR CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL ON FEBRUARY 23, 2023.*



APPROVED

## Parks and Trails Legacy Advisory Committee Meeting

Thursday, October 27, 2022

10:00 AM-3:00 PM

In person at Whitewater State Park,

And virtual via WebEx

### Updates and Announcements:

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, December 8, 2022

**Meeting Host:** Met Council

**Meeting Location:** Bunker Hills Regional Park

### Action Items:

- DNR staff will post the approved meeting minutes on the LCC website.

### Meeting Minutes:

**Members:** Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson (Absent), Alysa Delgado Misfeldt (Absent), Steve Dubbs, Janice Erickson, Cecily Harris, Alexandra Houchin (Absent), Gina Hugo, Cathy Jordan, Matthew Lindaman, Sumbal Mahmud (Absent), Allison Mark (Absent), Dolf Moon, Jon Oyanagi, Jim Shoberg, Heather Stirratt, Dan Trudeau

**Liaisons:** Emmett Mullin (Met Council), Renee Mattson (GMRPTC), Ann Pierce (DNR), Laura Preus (DNR)

**Staff:** Lars Erdahl (DNR), Kaci Warneke (DNR)

**Jon Oyanagi opened the meeting, welcoming members and guests, and led the ice breaker.**

PTLAC approved meeting agenda, reviewed conflict of interest statement and member expectations/roles.

Approved August 2022 PTLAC meeting minutes.

### Coordinate with Partners Pillar – Public Art in Parks and Trails

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(Lars Erdahl)

Lars Erdahl began by giving a background and overall objectives of the Public Art in Parks and Trails Project:

- Explore collaboration with other Legacy Funds
- Invite, welcome and engage new and more diverse audiences to parks trails
- Use public art to enhance efforts to connect people with nature

Results of Phase I of this project:

- Collected a snapshot inventory
- Developed a preliminary map of public art locations
- Gathered basic info about existing art in parks and trails through staff questionnaire and interviews

Phase II goals:

- Have a more comprehensive inventory of public art within MN parks
- Define the benefits of having art within these public spaces
- Further enrich visitor experiences
- Enhance interpretive programs
- Invite, welcome and engage current and new audiences

Current deliverables for Public Art in Parks and Trails Phase II RFP:

1. Next-level inventory of public art in parks and trails
  - This includes site visits, and surveys of park staff and users
  - Update map of public art in parks and trails, and determine locations with the highest potential benefit and impact
  - Opportunity to involve PTLAC members in these site visits
2. Public art workshop for parks and trails staff
  - Develop and facilitate training for staff in how to maintain and manage art
  - Work with artists and the community to maintain and manage art
3. Artist grant program
  - Commission artists to add art into our systems
  - Public art projects will focus on themes
  - Range of grants for early to mid-career artists
4. Strategic communication and outreach plan
  - Make sure that there is a connection between all those efforts to share the story
  - Invite, welcome and increase participation by current, new and more diverse audiences
  - Maximize interpretive benefits of public art for parks and trails users
  - Advance DEI and accessibility

#### **Suggestion/Advice/Questions**

- Should this be an Arts fund project? Not Parks and Trails Fund project? What would the public think when they hear our projects are not on renovation?
  - Looking to convey certain messages like resiliency, or climate change, or cultural history of the place, something to engage people. To lay the groundwork for a stronger relationship.
- Working with art can be used as a way to convey the park's messages, like land stewardship, climate change, environmental education.
- What is the process selection for art? How do we pick artists? "I think it would be good to involve the public with the selection process. What's the grant process?"

- In the process of working out the best way to do this.
- This should be an opportunity to replace cultural insensitive pieces within our parks system.
- Definition of Public Art should be clearly stated. People's definition of what public art is might vary.
- It's a good opportunity to work and partner with Indigenous artists.
- Participatory art would be good to include in parks, it engages with the public.
- When choosing artists/art think about the accessibility of the end result, visible, physical, and sensory sensitivities should be considered.
- Consider the maintenance of the art piece, a strong guide of how to maintain the piece should be included in the plan.
- What's the end goal? Would these pieces be permanent or temporary? The art in Franconia, for example, is not meant to last.
- What's the range money being used for this project?
  - \$300,000-\$400,000
- Consider partnering with other art foundations/nonprofits, like the McKnight Foundation. They could help with the process and give additional funding.
- Consider including young artists, not just mid-career and up artists. This could be an opportunity for emerging artists.
- We could have an exhibit at the State Fair to help spread the word and engage with the public.
- Consider the materials that are being used in these public art spaces, use natural materials that are found in our local ecosystems, not plastic.
- Need to have a clear idea on who the 'diverse audience' this project is trying to attract. Who is the new target?
- How is this project advancing DEI and accessibility? What are the details that show direction?

#### **Other Feedback for Partners Pillar**

- Necessary to have a strong communication plan to accomplish these projects.
- How do we blend the built environment with the natural world?
- Potential partner could be the Clean Water Fund, our goals occasionally overlap.
- Theme idea: Invasive species, and the public's role involved with them.
- Post Land Acknowledgments within our park systems, and partner with Indigenous folks to learn traditional ecological knowledge.
- Encourage more youth involvement in our projects.

## **The Relationship Between Nature and Wellbeing**

(Introduction from Arielle Courtney, DNR; Erica Timko Olson, PhD, RN, UMN School of Nursing)

Erica Timko begins her presentation by introducing the topic of spending time out in nature and its impact on our wellbeing.

- We are in a mental health and cancer crisis

- People with mental illness have 10-25 shorter lifespan, 1 in 5 Minnesotans face mental illness, 1 in 10 young people experienced a period of major depression
- Most areas in the state lack full range of mental health services (along with cardiovascular health, cancer, diabetes, ADHD, low birth rate, etc.) people have to travel long distances to get costly care.
- Many illnesses can be cured/helped with time spent in nature. There are many ways to spend time outdoors, Forest Bathing is just one way.

**Forest bathing:** Mindful time spent outside, engaging all senses. Two main purposes; coping and elimination of suffering, and positive changes in emotional state

#### **Forest bathing benefits:**

- Health- lowers stress hormones, anxiety, confusion, fatigue, depression, decreased inflammation in CV system
- Gives Purpose- restoration, creating a connection with the environment, taking time to be mindful.
- Creates Community- responsibility towards others, greater awareness, decreased obesity, increased activity, improved diet
  - Some safety issues: wearing the correct clothing, rules of the space (Public vs. private land; state park rules vs SNA rules), as well as outside recreation experience.

#### **Forest bathing effects on people who had/have cancer:**

- Helped them connect to themselves, as well as socially, with nature, their childhood, and with loss.
- Helped escape, and find relief from burden
- Created a sense of home by making the participants feel safe, protected, and in control.

Erica's mission is to have a Wellness Trail in each county. Explaining that these trails will decrease healthcare costs, morbidity, and mortality, and save the planet.

#### **Discussion**

- How do you measure anxiety?
  - Spit tests that physically measure stress hormones.
  - Personal statements are also used to measure anxiety.
- It is important to note that the practice and benefits described for forest bathing are at the heart of Indigenous ecological knowledge and tradition.
- Are there any studies of how long nature's effects are?
  - 4-6 hours of a onetime exposure, can raise immunity, the natural killer cells.
- Do we not already have wellness trails in every county?
  - There needs to be the intentionality of the space/trail.

#### **Break for lunch**

## Biophilia & Landscape Essentials

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(David Motzenbecker, PLA, ANFT; Founder, Motz Studios Forest Bathing Experiences  
Sara Holger, Naturalist, Whitewater State Park)

David presented historical perceptions/use of forests, showing examples from folk stories and modern children's movies that explain how important forests are to our wellbeing, showing that humans have always considered the forest special and a place of transformation.

He is always asking the questions, how do we get people out in nature? And why is this important?

Our way of work is changing, despite that, 70% of humanity will live in cities by 2050 and spend 90% of time indoors.

- Many people deal with 'burnout' and this is linked to chronic stress.
- Many people are not aware of how our environment makes us feel
- We are dealing with many negative stresses

How do we manage stress?

- Limit screen time
- Make time for mindfulness
- Talk it out
- Get moving
- Get outside in nature

Many of us know that natural environment makes us feel more at ease than man made environment, nowadays we have to be more intentional with time spent outside.

**Biophilia** is the innate human instinct to connect with nature and other living beings

- David shows a pie chart of what determines our state of health, the majority of the pie chart shows that physical/social environment determines health
- Biophilic design helps create intention when planning a trail. It helps answer the question "How can we design a place that brings more meaning?" park use and its design without intention for wellbeing, can leave visitors feeling disappointed.

There are 14 patterns of Biophilic design, split into three groups: nature in the space, natural analogues, and nature of the space.

The purpose of all this Biophilic work is to create resiliency within the person, improving one's self  
The origin of Forest Bathing as a practice, is based off the Japanese art of Shinrin Yoku.

- Training provide certification in forest bathing, and prepare people to lead forest bathing walks.

The purposed plan for the Healing Nature Trail in Whitewater SP

- Includes 7 invitation spots, interpretive signs, along the trails
- Also planning a nature play area
- Invitations include 'walking the speed of a tree', using our senses to notice things, include pieces about water since it's right next to the river

One way to create wellness trails, is by looking at existing trails and assessing where the ideal spots are to create signs and turn that trail into a forest bathing one.

#### **Feedback**

- If healthcare workers and park system staff work hard to create these intentional spaces, and help guide people through forest bathing experiences, over time we could engage in all of the Biophilic State of Health determinates (Physical/social environments, lifestyle/health behaviors, medical care, and genetics) and create a positive change in our community.

#### **Sara Holger presentation on Connecting to Nature for Health Benefits**

- Sara is certified in Forest Therapy (Forest bathing)
- Doctors are starting to prescribe time in nature to patients. Recommending 2 hours minimum a week or 20 minutes a day spent outdoors. This can be as simple as taking a dog for a walk around the neighborhood.
- Working with public health, mental health, and physical health professionals to spread the awareness of prescribed nature and the benefits of it, specifically she works with Southeast Minnesota Park Rx targeting health care providers
  - Created a Facebook/YouTube videos with tutorials and resources on nature 's benefits
  - Park Rx meets online every month, always has a guest speaker, recorded sessions
- Park Rx also has events for providers, doctors and students that allows them an opportunity to get out to parks like Whitewater
- Working with campuses, universities, to teach and provide this experience

This nature trail in Whitewater will be good to serve as a pilot and/or example for the region

- Provide teacher and childcare providers with trainings
- Continue to build collaboration with colleges to promote and assist nature based immersive experiences for students
- Work with SE MN Park Rx to pilot a cohort of local mental health providers and school counselors to be trained as Nature and Forest Therapy Guides

#### **Feedback**

How does someone build /bring about a wellness trail in their county? Would an SNA work as a location?

- Depends on the land and where it is, SNAs are a good option. Could potentially create an audio piece to keep the integrity of the SNA since no interpretive are allowed within the SNA. It has to be highly planned and consider what you want people to see and feel on this trail. Also need to come up with invitations for the space that are contextually relevant.
- Since wellness trails are usually rather short, they typically do not take up a lot of space.

Spread the awareness of nature benefits to normalize it's inclusion in health practices. 8 DRAFT

- Pilot trails could be created to take inventory of what the maintenance would be, the demographics of visitors, and test out the intentionality of the signs.

## **Updates**

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### **GMRPTC**

- Commissioners finalized their funding recommendations, they are able to fully fund 14 of their applications.
- Finalizing their own bike trail design guidelines. Predicted to be released in December. This is the first comprehensive guideline update since 2017. It will detail how to build sustainable trails, step by step.

#### **DNR**

- PAT leadership team is looking into how Legacy dollars have been spent, and are having a series of meetings at looking into how we want to use it in the future. Laura Preus and Lars Erdahl have been able to connect and share info with this group.

#### **Met Council**

- Hosting next PTLAC meeting

#### **PTLAC Updates**

- Lars Erdahl discussed potential collaboration with MnDOT to talk about Minnesota Corridor trail system. Potentially discuss where trails in all our systems and the proposed Corridor trail might overlap. Instead of creating new trails, and can use existing trails for our border to border plan.
- Cathy Jordan announced that this is the last meeting that she is able to attend as she transitions out of her PTLAC member role
  - We are grateful for her valued perspectives and service.

#### **Action Items:**

- Any suggestions or ideas, please connect with Lars Erdahl or the Liaisons.
- **Next meeting:** Thursday, December 8 at Bunker Hills Activity Center

#### **Meeting adjourned**

### **Site Tour**

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#### **Wellness Trail/Forest Bathing, Wellness Programs at Whitewater State Park, Sara Holger**

Sara led the group to a picnic area in Whitewater State Park. She explains that it is the future location to develop as a forest bathing/wellness trail, describing the space and pointing out where the trail will be. Sara then leads the group in a shortened version of a forest bathing walk. Inviting the group to engage the senses and encouraging them to walk slowly through the space. A tea ceremony is held at the end of the session to thank the forest for all it does, and the people who participated in today. Special thanks to Sara and the staff at Whitewater for their hospitality.