

From: [Paul Herr](#)
To: [Transportation Commission](#)
Subject: Overview of the Sauk Creek Greenway by Paul Herr
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Overview of the Sauk Creek Greenway by Paul Herr

Dear Transportation Commission:

I've spent the past 30 years walking with my dog and family in the Sauk Creek Greenway. I am an engineer, geologist, environmental consultant, and former owner of a 250-acre oak forest in Southern Indiana. The day we moved to Madison, our next-door neighbor, the President of the Sauk Creek Neighborhood Association, assigned me a duty. She said, you are going to be the person in charge of the Sauk Creek greenway and Walnut Grove Park for the Association. I took this assignment very seriously and have watched over the park ever since.

The Greenway is currently crisscrossed by 2 miles of informal walking trails that I have helped to maintain. My family and I have participated in annual Earth Day cleanups, garlic-mustard pulls, and educational activities to learn more about this mature hardwood woodland and the native and invasive species within it. We also walk the creek bed in search of Native American artifacts like arrowheads and hide scrapers. The serenity of the greenway is often interspersed with the tapping of woodpeckers, croaking of frogs, and the squeals of children playing in the woods.

I have also been the City Engineering Department's eyes and ears in the greenway. For example, whenever trees have fallen across the City's sewer-maintenance road, I have alerted my Alder and the Engineering Department. I also report occasional vandalism to the Police Department.

I view the greenway as a precious urban oasis for native plants and animals and a natural classroom for learning about human-caused environmental damage. This oasis is under attack and the native ecosystem is being tattered. Flash floods rage through the greenway after heavy rains, pushing tons of sediment downstream. These are unnatural floods are precipitated by poor City planning – like the lack of retention ponds upstream. Majestic oaks near the creek channel are being undermined and killed. The creek channel is now littered with their hulking remains. The City has recently changed its terminology from "Sauk Creek Greenway" to "Sauk Creek Corridor" which may be a bad omen of things to come.

The City is planning to re-grade the creek channel and then stabilize it with rip rap (large field stones). This work is necessary and welcomed but will result in the removal of many dead and dying trees along the creek bank. Once the creek channel is cleared, re-graded and stabilized, it will also require a parallel "maintenance road" to provide long-term access for heavy equipment – another regrettable injury to the woodland ecosystem.

To add insult to injury, the City is planning to simultaneously construct a bike path (multi use path) through the greenway that will require the removal of many healthy trees. At the end of all this disruption, the ecosystem will likely be unrecognizable and unlivable for the current inhabitants.

The City's website states,

"Greater Madison is the bike capital of the Midwest. We have more bikes than cars! And more than 200 miles of scenic biking and hiking trails. Traversing the city on bike is both easy and beautiful."

The City's policy seems to be, "Build bike paths wherever you can, regardless how many trees, native species, serenity, or unhappy residents get in the way." I hope the transportation planning commission will save the day and JUST SAY NO to an unnecessary and unwanted multi-use path through the "Sauk Creek urban oasis."

Warm Regards,

Paul Herr
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