

Sustainability Committee PUBLIC COMMENT 3-21-11

My comment today is that we need to provide better stewardship of our natural open spaces. I'm glad that you address that in your plan, but we also need to push for better implementation.

I'm addressing my concerns about management of city-owned natural areas primarily to the Park Commission and the Stormwater Utility, who are responsible for managing land. There's a lot at stake. We own 6000 acres of open space. 2000 is in park development and mowed turf. 4000 is in park natural areas and stormwater management. Most of those 4000 acres are not being managed and have no plan for being managed as a natural area. In most neighborhoods, the wild land that we now own is all we're ever going to have. We have a Stewardship responsibility to preserve and restore this land so it can be an asset for future generations.

Since I retired 2 years ago, I've been an active volunteer managing park natural areas with other volunteers. I've learned some things.

- There's more public support than I realized for active management and controlling invasives. I think we should mobilize that support.
- The quality of our wild areas is also better than I thought; and making progress is easier than I expected. It's not too late, and much can be accomplished.

I'm concerned that Parks is not doing enough to maintain quality in 2000 acres of Conservation Parks, and doesn't have a program, plan or staff to deal with the 1000 acres of small wild areas scattered throughout the park system.

I'm concerned that Engineering does ^{very little} management except mowing on it's 1000 acres. They have a policy that calls for too much mowing in their new prairie infiltration greenways. At the same time, those resources should be spent by doing a better job controlling the invasive species that are a problem in mowed & unmowed areas.

This issue will be on the agenda of the Parks Habitat Stewardship Committee for discussion tomorrow at 4PM. Tentatively it will be on the BPW agenda on April 21. I'm working primarily with those two groups, but welcome others to get involved with this issue.