

GEOGRAPHIC NAMING PROPOSAL FOR CASTLE CREEK IN MADISON, WISCONSIN

FORM 2200-124 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

UPDATED PROPOSAL SUBMITTED JANUARY 9, 2015 BY PAUL NOELDNER

SUMMARY

CASTLE CREEK HAS SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL, ECOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL VALUES

The Castle Creek urban natural area waterway is an important historical, social and ecological feature of the Madison north side landscape and watershed. It flows through an urban natural area that includes woodland, ephemeral swamp, prairie, and marsh habitats. As the main component of the historic 'Castle Marsh' ecosystem that became Warner Park, Madison's largest urban park, it deserves formal public recognition and a name. The name Castle Creek is unanimously recommended and supported by public agencies, ecological groups, old-time residents, and local neighborhood contacts.

Naming Castle Creek will have a number of public benefits. It will contribute to public enjoyment as a historically and ecologically central feature of Madison's north side landscape, facilitate signage and use of this relatively undiscovered 'wild' side of Warner Park for outdoor urban nature recreation, add value and interest for individual activities like taking kids to fish and for regularly scheduled nature walks and neighborhood after school nature education that often feature the creek and surrounding habitat. Naming Castle Creek will help educate the public that this north side watershed creek and surrounding wetland area is not just some man-made ditch convenient for dumping unwanted runoff and trash. Formal naming recognition will help increase public and governmental community support for managing, protecting and restoring this - and other - remaining urban creeks and urban natural habitat. It will add to the social value as a place name with positive connotations and as a named destination for activities that contribute to the quality of life and value of surrounding mixed race and economically challenged neighborhoods.

Recent Madison Parks and Madison City Engineering initiatives to remove an artificial concrete cunette and re-naturalize, protect and restore the upper portions of the Castle Creek waterway are improving the natural beauty, sense of place and quality of life for Madison residents and nearby neighborhoods.

In summary, naming Castle Creek recognizes these efforts and values and honors the historic and ecological significance of this urban waterway.

DESCRIPTION OF FEATURE

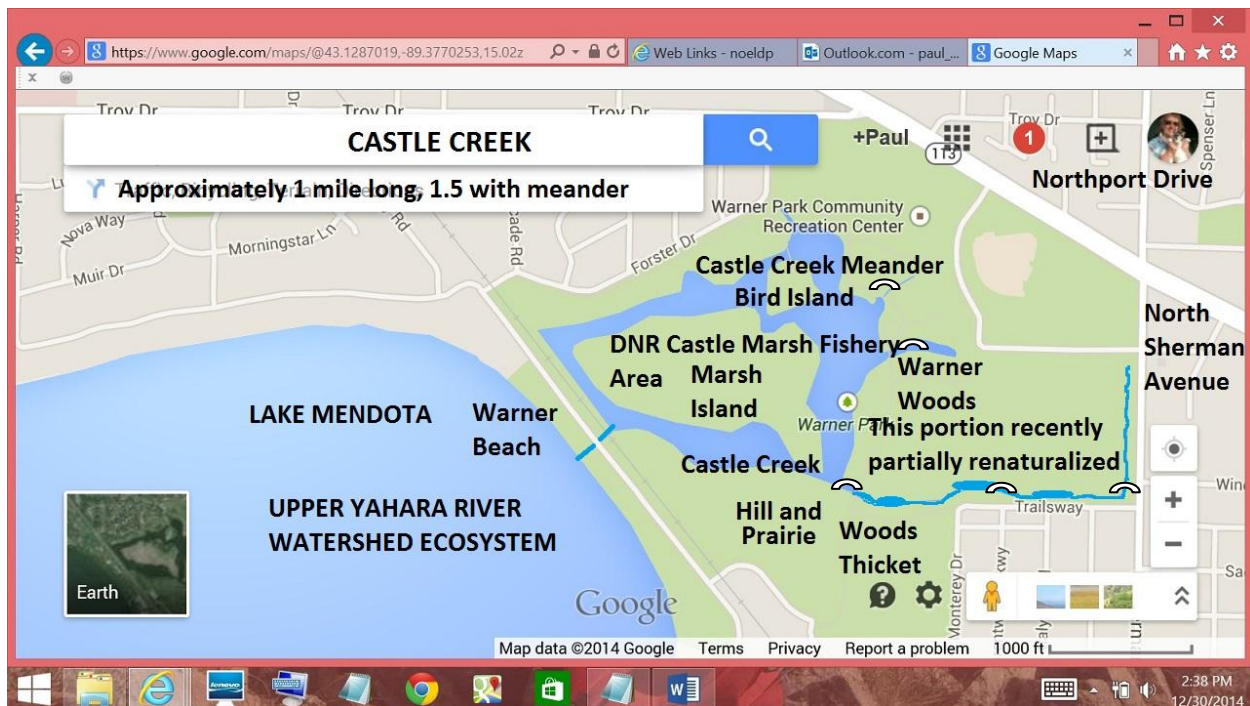
NORTHSIDE MADISON URBAN CREEK WATERWAY

Castle Creek drains an over 1000 acre watershed on Madison's north side. Historic upstream portions of the creek and areas of the marsh have been developed as business areas and neighborhoods but the entire upstream watershed area continues to drain into and contribute directly to the water flow of Castle Creek. The development of upstream portions increases the importance of the remaining stretch of Castle Creek that flows through natural habitat, both ecologically and socially.

All of the Castle Creek waterway from origin to mouth lies within the borders of Warner Park, Madison's largest urban park, managed by the City of Madison. The Warner Park area was historically called Castle Marsh and the original 1870 brick Castle farmhouse still stands on a nearby overlook.

The Castle Creek urban park waterway is approximately 1 mile long as the crow flies. With the large Warner Park lagoon meander and other creek ponds and meanders, the length is about 1.5 to 2 miles.

REFERENCE MAP



The above annotated map shows Castle Creek and the surrounding wetland ecosystem. The neighboring watershed is largely upland areas including Lake View Hill, Madison's highest point.

The upper portion of the creek runs along North Sherman Avenue near Northport Drive and along Trailway (see map above). The upper portion of the creek that lies adjacent to large Warner Park recreation fields was recently re-naturalized by removing an artificial concrete cunette. This portion now has a natural stone and earth channel with native wetland plantings, a couple of ponds, and two pedestrian foot bridges. It is a vital habitat component with small fish and other aquatic life observed all the way up the creek to the origin.

The middle portion of the creek leaves the recreation field area and continues through Warner Park Woods where spring overflow creates a large and long-lasting ephemeral woodland swamp every year with natural deadfall that attracts Pileated Woodpeckers and other native birds and wildlife. The woodland and upper creek area also hosted a pair of Sandhill Cranes this past year.

Exiting the woodland the creek flows past an oak opening with a Madison designated historic oak and park shelter and under a pedestrian and park maintenance foot bridge and willow lined riparian section that is a nature recreation and education magnet for walkers, school groups, bird watchers, families and kids. This popular gathering place will now have a name as the 'Castle Creek Bridge'.

The lower portion of Castle Creek divides into a large meander known as the Warner Park lagoon. It flows around a large marsh island and smaller restored prairie island. This portion has a variety of natural bottom structures including sand, gravel and silt, and a large bordering wetland marsh habitat. It was described in 1953 by the Dane County Conservation League as "the last good spawning ground in Lake Mendota and the only natural rearing pond in the area" as a nursery for northern pike, largemouth bass, carp and bluegills. Is recognized as an important fish habitat by the DNR and formally designated the Castle Marsh Fishery Area.

There is a major Kenton Peters designed public recreation park shelter adjacent to the Castle Creek lagoon that is used for a variety of nature recreation purposes. Two nearby inlets that drain other portions of Warner Park have pedestrian bridges that are also popular nature viewing, photography

and fishing spots, one is known as the Wedding Bridge and the other Swallow Bridge. The small island connected via an isthmus that is noted as 'Bird Island' on the map was previously used for fireworks. It is now being restored as a prairie and hosts a variety of birds and wildlife including endangered Blanding's turtles and an annual resident pair of Sandhill Cranes who raise their chick on the island.

Castle Creek exits the marsh and empties into Lake Mendota on the Warner Park shoreline near Warner Beach. This area with large Cottonwood trees, the mouth of the creek, and a sandy shoreline is a very popular picnicking, recreation, fishing, windsurfing, boating and swimming location.

In summary, though not very long, Castle Creek goes through a variety of habitats with good public access and nature recreation usage. As a measure of habitat quality, over 135 bird species have been documented in the Castle Creek ecosystem.

CASTLE CREEK OUTLET AT WARNER PARK BEACH AND LAKE MENDOTA



RECOMMENDED NAME OF FEATURE

CASTLE CREEK

The name Castle Creek was the unanimous consensus recommendation of all parties consulted, based primarily on historical knowledge of the name Castle Marsh for the creek and marsh area that now lies entirely within Warner Park. The original Castle family farmhouse built in the 1870's still stands on a small rise on Northport Drive and is being fully restored according to the current owner. The name Castle Marsh Creek was considered but everyone favors the shorter and clearer name Castle Creek.

The Wild Warner friends group is took the lead on this naming initiative. We consulted with - and received encouragement and support from - many local city and neighborhood groups and individuals including Madison Parks, Warner Park staff, Friends of Lakeview Hill, Friends of Cherokee Marsh, UW Nelson Institute and middle school with the Sherman Middle School Nature Explorers program that visits the park weekly, the Warner Park Senior Lunch group that includes a number of long-time area residents, and nearby neighborhood residents. The name Castle Creek is supported by the current owner of the original Castle farmhouse across Northport Drive that they plan to restore, and by the grandson of the original neighboring farmer who still owns the neighboring property across North Sherman Avenue.

OTHER NAMES OR SPELLINGS IN USE

NONE

The upper portion of the creek was previously referred to generically in Madison Parks documents as the cunette, prior to 2014 restoration and naturalization efforts that helped trigger this naming request. The previously artificially straightened and channeled concrete cunette base was removed and replaced in 2014 with a partially re-naturalized stone and earth creek bed with widened pools and native wetland habitat plantings that are revitalizing the creek ecosystem.

The lower portion of the creek forms a large open lagoon creek meander and wetland marsh area around Warner Park's Marsh Island. This portion of the creek is referred to generically in Madison Parks documents as the Warner lagoon. The marsh, island and lagoon portion of the creek ecosystem is officially referred to in DNR documents as the Castle Marsh Fishery Area.

REASONS FOR THIS PROPOSAL

Unnamed landscape features often go unrecognized, unappreciated and inappropriately maintained. Naming Castle Marsh will improve official recognition of its importance as part of the Lake Mendota watershed, enhance public appreciation and enjoyment, and improve appropriate ecological restoration and maintenance.

Other major reasons to name Castle Creek include historical, social, educational and ecological values and benefits.

Historical Relevance and Values:

The name Castle Creek honors the historical 1800's Castle Marsh name used on early Madison area maps and documents. John Castle was an Irish immigrant who settled on the north side farmland in the 1860's. The original brick 1870 Castle family farmhouse still stands on a small rise along Northport Drive overlooking the historic Castle Marsh area that is now Warner Park and the Castle Creek lagoon. I was able to interview the current owner. She requested that her name and a photo of the house not be included in this proposal pending restoration. She said descendants of the Castle family held a reunion at the house 10 years ago and are still in touch. She plans to restore the Castle farmhouse to historic accuracy.

The lower portions of the historic Castle Marsh area that contain Castle Creek became what is now known as Warner Park. Upstream portions have been buried and filled on over the years with urban development. The remaining free flowing portion deserves historical recognition.

Historical Research into the Castle Name provided by Mike Rewey

"Castle Marsh was named after John Castle who was born in Ireland in 1837 (or as early as 1834) who farmed close by from before 1870 through about 1910. He died in 1927. His wife was Julia Frawley (1833-1910). They are both buried in Resurrection Cemetery. Their children were: Mary (Kinney) (1863-1942), Julia (O'Malley) (1865-1944), James A. (abt 1868), Margaret (abt 1870), Agnes (abt 1873) and John Francis (1877-1947). John Francis was a Madison police officer. John Francis had children Leo Francis (abt 1901), Anna (abt 1906), Leonard William "Red" (1909-1991), Charles C. (abt 1910) and more daughter. Red ran a Service station on Park Street. James A. (abt 1868) was a coal merchant of Castle and Doyle Coal Bldg fame on State Street. I made contact with a daughter of Red, Mary Anne Castle Sobek (great granddaughter of John). She said the Castle farmhouse was the brick house that still exists next to Fire Station 10 on Northport Drive. A Castle family neighbor was the William Wood(w)ard family (Woodward Drive). William was born in Kentucky in 1820."

Excerpt from the City of Madison Parks history of Warner Park

"In the 1950's, several farms north of the railroad tracks were purchased to develop the park as a major recreational space for the growing northeast part of Madison. These purchases included part of a wetlands area known as Castle Marsh. The Wisconsin Conservation Department owned the rest of Castle Marsh. Castle Marsh was a spawning grounds for northern pike, though nearby development was making it less productive. An agreement between the Conservation Department and the City of Madison allowed for the creation of the Warner Park lagoon and the preservation of enough wetlands to support northern pike fry."

1953 Posting and Photo from Wisconsin Historical Society records



"Mrs. Alvina Niebuhr is shown holding the "winning" contribution can in the campaign to finance the purchase of a northern pike spawning and rearing area in Castle's Marsh near Warner Park. The can had been placed in Niebuhr's Bait Station. Her rivals for leadership in the fundraising campaign were Mrs. Dora (Don) Newcomb of the Nakoma Trading Post, and Mrs. Louella (Harold) Starkweather, bookkeeper at the Wisconsin Foundry and Machine Company. The Dane County Conservation League monitored the fundraising campaign."

Community Values:

The name Castle Creek honors and recognizes the importance of this urban creek as a landscape feature and place name. Having a name adds value for nature recreation by park users and passers-by, a stronger social sense of place in the natural world for kids growing up in the neighborhood, an added sense of neighborhood quality of life for residents of several adjoining neighborhoods that enjoy

views of the creek and lagoon meander, and added residential value for homeowners living in the area of a named creek (this does not include the individual submitting this document).

Educational Values:

An increasing number of nature recreation and education activities utilize the creek and surrounding ecosystem. Weekly Sherman Nature Explorer after school programs led by UW Nelson Institute student mentors often feature educational activities along this creek. Monthly Bird and Nature Walks, nature photography, families taking kids fishing, and other nature recreation activities enjoyed by hundreds of people each year feature stops along the creek habitat. The question of 'what is this creek named' comes up often from both adults and children and the kids eagerly await officially naming it Castle Creek. We will benefit from naming Castle Creek when preparing, publishing, and using nature recreation and education documents and maps, Citizen Science and Scout activities including projects such as wetland monitoring, Bluebird Trails and Bat Houses, and work days, initiatives and grants to improve and restore the quality of the waterway and habitat.

Ecological Values:

Naming Castle Creek will increase public recognition of this urban creek's importance as an integral component of the Madison area Upper Yahara lake, stream and wetland ecosystem. It is an important bird, fish and wildlife riparian habitat nursery as indicated by the DNR designation as a fishery area. This creek provides critically important Lake Mendota and Upper Yahara watershed creek and backwater riparian habitat. It has historically been a major spawning ground for a variety of fish including Walleyes and Northern Pike. Fish and other aquatic species continue to be observed in upstream portions all the way to the origin along North Sherman Avenue. Wild Warner has systematically documented a bird list of over 135 bird species using the Castle Creek ecosystem have been systematically monitored and documented. Sightings of watershed quality top indicator species such as Bald Eagle and Osprey are common and White Pelicans were recently documented using the lagoon portion of the creek. The island and surrounding habitat support a resident Sandhill Crane breeding pair and a second pair is now being seen regularly in the recently restored upstream creek area. These and other high public interest species such as Pileated Woodpeckers and Bluebirds attract ongoing interest and are the subject of news articles and nature photography. Endangered Blandings Turtles as well as Painted, Spiny Softshell, and other turtles nest in the creek border and island habitat.

Management Values:

The Castle Creek waterway, lagoon and surrounding ecosystem habitats are part of ongoing quality improvement and restoration efforts, aquatic surveys, eBird and other Citizen Science reporting. Madison Parks implements low-maintenance natural area targeted management strategies for areas along the creek and surrounding habitat. Volunteer activities include native plantings, invasives removal, and seasonal cleanups. Madison Parks manages areas adjacent to Castle Creek as low-maintenance natural areas with the goal of enhancing the nature recreation, nature education and natural habitat values. Activities for creek and watershed management and restoration and cleanup focus on portions of the Castle Creek waterway that will benefit from named references to these locations.

Resource Naming Values:

Restoration and volunteer cleanup efforts, educational initiatives and after school nature programs, bird and nature walks, and related maps, documentation, and grants all benefit from having a named creek as a key element of the designated urban natural area. This in turn helps assure long term sustainability of a healthy Castle Creek ecosystem.

Specific examples where the name Castle Creek will help document, educate and facilitate activities are Madison Parks websites and brochures, Wild Warner bird lists and brochures, the new Warner Park Northside Nature Center display, maps, kiosks and nature signage, Madison Bird City partner activities

including Madison Audubon and Wild Warner co-sponsored monthly Bird and Nature Walks, and Citizen Science initiatives including annual wetland monitoring by East High students, Bluebird Trails and other habitat initiatives, and grant proposals for fishery restoration and other initiatives.

All of these will benefit from having a formal place name designation for Castle Creek and place related ecosystem, historical and social features and activities.

ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICANCE OF NAME

The unanimous recommendation of contacted governmental agencies including Madison Parks and Engineering, Dane County contacts, Wisconsin DNR contacts, friends group contacts including Wild Warner, Friends of Lakeview Hill, and Friends of Cherokee Marsh, the Warner Park Senior Lunch group, and other neighborhood contacts is to use the name Castle Creek based on the historical reference to this area as Castle Marsh. We also considered Castle Marsh Creek but there was unanimous agreement that the shorter and easier Castle Creek was best.

The name Castle Creek is in honor of the original Castle Marsh designation of the area containing the creek and surrounding marsh on historic documents and maps and more recently by the DNR that designates the lower portion of the creek and lagoon as the Castle Marsh Fishery Area. The name Castle is the historic Madison settler family name and the Castle Marsh ecosystem area now known as Warner Park was part of their farm. The original 1870 Castle family farmhouse still stands on a low overlook just across Northport Drive and is being historically restored according to the current owner.

We were unable to find any reference to a Native American name or any other historical or current name attribution for the creek. A Google search turned up a Waunakee city park named the Castle Creek Conservancy. It is a 45 acre wetland area that contains several meanders of Six Mile Creek. Consultation with DNR and Village of Waunakee sources indicates this park name is based on the name chosen for the development neighborhood and not an official creek name.

The upstream portions of the historic Castle Marsh creek and watershed area that were developed continue to contribute to the water flow. The grandson of the original Bruns family that had the farm across North Sherman Avenue still owns the neighboring property and supports the name Castle Creek. The ecological and social loss of the upstream portions adds to the historical importance and significance of naming the remaining waterway Castle Creek. This name will honor the history and ecology by helping support further restoration and naturalization efforts and historical appreciation of the park and landscape. Castle Creek will add to Northside Madison's strong sense of place and community and enhance its value for park users, surrounding neighborhoods and nearby schools.

SUBMITTED BY

Paul Noeldner, 136 Kensington, Maple Bluff, WI 53704, 608-698-0104, paul_noeldner@hotmail.com

I am a Wisconsin native farm boy who grew up on an unnamed road near Loyal and longtime Madison area resident with a passion for promoting nature recreation, nature education, and urban natural habitat. I have had the pleasure of working with Madison Parks to get Madison certified as a Bird City and as a public groups liaison and in other parks volunteer roles. As a prior Madison Audubon board member and ongoing public outreach and education Bird Mentor, I helped initiate and continue to help lead monthly Bird and Nature Walks in Warner Park and other major urban natural areas year round.

This naming submission was facilitated by participation as a board member in the Wild Warner friends group as Education Chair, and ongoing activities helping mentor the UW Nelson Institute Nature Explorers program with UW students and neighborhood Sherman Middle School students. We visit Castle Creek and the surrounding habitats on weekly nature outings all year round during school months. These activities and public interest from adults and kids in naming the creek spurred this naming initiative.