

## **Odana Hills Park Volunteer Restoration & Management Proposal**

Odana Hills Park is a neighborhood park in a unique setting. It is adjacent to the 20-acre Odana Pond, a significant wetland habitat for birds and other wildlife. The undeveloped areas of Odana Hills Park offer significant upland habitat that complements the wetland. The Odana Volunteers propose to work as volunteers and partners with the Parks Division to promote preservation and enhancement of native plants and communities. This includes a prioritized removal of invasive species, and a replanting of native species.

Most of the work proposed below would occur within 3 years with no change to the current master plan or existing uses of the park (soccer and field sports, playground and casual play, walking and skiing, bird-watching and nature-viewing). A few LONG-TERM proposals are also identified. These would be more visible and would require additional planning and public review before proceeding. The following activities are proposed for different areas:

1-Wetland/Pond (#1 on attached map): No work is currently proposed for this area.

2-West Oak Woods: Near the Beltline exit ramp, this woods contains many fine oaks, which are being crowded by box elders and invasive species. In this woods, we propose to:

- selectively remove trees throughout the woods to preserve the large native trees
- remove seed-bearing buckthorn to reduce its spread
- selectively remove buckthorn, honeysuckle and other invasives where they inhibit native trees, shrubs and groundcover
- where the above criteria are not met, leave remaining male buckthorn to shade the groundlayer and partially suppress buckthorn seedlings, garlic mustard and other invasives. They will also provide screening from the highway in the west woods.

3-Milward Woods: East of the playfields, this narrow woods has a mixture of oaks and other species. The eastern edge has a large clone of black locust, an invasive species. In this woods, we propose to:

- selectively remove trees throughout the woods to preserve the large native trees
- remove seed-bearing buckthorn to reduce its spread
- selectively remove buckthorn, honeysuckle and other invasives where they inhibit native trees, shrubs and groundcover
- where the above criteria are not met, leave remaining male buckthorn to shade the groundlayer and partially suppress buckthorn seedlings, garlic mustard and other invasives.
- Do not remove the entire clone of black locust, but control its spread so it does not further invade the woods and adjacent open areas.
- The heavy snow of December 2012 has damaged many trees and shrubs along the ski trail and the street in this area. One element of the volunteer work will be to clean up and pile this brush for pickup by the City.

4-Dearholt Savanna – North of the pond-edge between the West and Milward Woods is a “savanna-like” strip of grasses and herbs with numerous trees and shrubs, both natives and invasives. Its north boundary is the ski trail and playground on the east half, and the mowed area on the west end. The semi-open character provides views of the pond, waterfowl and golf course. Our goal is to maintain the views with a similar mix of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants. Vegetation and habitat would be improved by reducing the number of invasives and expanding the number of natives. We propose to:

- protect & maintain signature specimen trees
- encourage or plant new native trees as eventual replacements for the ash, which are likely to

- die soon from emerald ash borer
- generally remove invasives & toxic species (e.g. black locust, buckthorn, honeysuckle, garlic mustard, burdock, poison ivy, wild parsnip)
- coordinate with park maintenance staff, so staff can control invasives with well-timed mowing, and volunteers can supplement that with hand-pulling or limited herbicide treatments
- native plants have already been added to the meadow area at the west end. Continue to add native plants to all of the current meadow areas that are mowed infrequently.
- East of the playground, there is a mowed strip between the ski trail and the meadow. LONG-TERM it is desirable to plant additional prairie vegetation in this strip. Before this happens, there will need to be a significant volunteer commitment to manage it, especially in the early years of establishment.

5-Wedgewood Savanna – North of the pond-edge between the Milward Woods and the golf course pumphouse is an open meadow with a narrow strip of trees along the pond edge. The east half is planted prairie. The west half is bluegrass meadow. One of the best points for viewing the pond is from a bench here with a mowed path to it. Our goal is to enhance and expand the existing prairie planting and maintain the woods and openings along the pond. Vegetation and habitat would be improved by reducing the number of invasives and expanding the number of natives. We propose to:

- protect & maintain signature specimen trees and view openings to the pond
- generally remove invasives & toxic species (e.g. buckthorn, honeysuckle, garlic mustard, burdock, poison ivy, wild parsnip)
- coordinate with park maintenance staff, so staff can control invasives with well-timed mowing, and volunteers can supplement that with hand-pulling or limited herbicide treatments. Late fall prairie mowing will allow volunteers to collect seed from this site.
- LONG-TERM it is desirable to plant additional prairie vegetation in the west half of this meadow. Before this happens, there will need to be a significant volunteer commitment to manage it, especially in the early years of establishment.
- Three patches of invasive black locust exist east west and south of this meadow (6), and are spreading into the meadow. We propose to save these patches in the short-term, but to control their further invasion. LONG-TERM it may be desirable to remove all three of the entire clones to eliminate the constant need for containment. That would require significant labor and resources, would require more planning, and should not be done until a plan and funding are approved for the work and for replacement plantings.

#### Implementation of Volunteer Activities:

Volunteers may use a variety of hand tools to assist in the cutting and brush handling, pruning, removal of invasive species, or other maintenance work. All pruning of desirable trees will be done in accordance with City ordinances and standards.

Where the goal is to kill and prevent re-sprouting of the removed trees, the cut stump or girdled trunk will be treated with an appropriate herbicide (supplied by Parks Division for Parks work). Treatments will be performed by a state-certified volunteer applicator, following label instructions and all city policies for pesticide application (posting signs and keeping records of use).

Volunteers approved to use a chain saw will cut down or girdle trees and shrubs that are competing with more desirable species. A chain saw may also be used to clear trails and prune trees. Cut trees and brush will be removed from trails, sidewalks, mowed areas or highly visible areas. Volunteers may leave brush where it falls, may pile brush for pickup by City crews, or may drag it back into wooded areas, as per agreement with City staff for each project area. All chainsaw work is ground work, unless the City provides special, prior approval for a highly trained climbing arborist. Volunteers approved to use a chain saw will provide their own equipment and safety gear (hard hat, eye and ear protection, chaps, steel-toed shoes, gloves) and will keep all equipment well-maintained and in safe

working order. Chain saw volunteers are expected to be experienced chain saw users, must be approved by the City, and must sign a release form.

All volunteers must sign a standard volunteer release form and report volunteer hours to the City.

The volunteers will work safely and use good judgment about the limits of their equipment and abilities.