

2018 Environmental Resources Advisory Council Annual Report

2018 Initiatives and Topics of Interest

- Wapehani Mountain Bike Park
- Griffy Lake Loop Trail
- Ferguson Dog Park Mitigation
- Griffy Lake Deer Management

Griffy Loop Trail

Early in 2018 discussion began internally about the development of a loop trail around Griffy Lake. ERAC dedicated the regular April meeting to a public input meeting for a proposed loop trail. Staff updated members of the advisory council and the public on the proposed route and then led an open discussion of the project. The meeting went well and was a great way for ERAC members to engage and interact with the public. BPR conducted a public survey about the project and respondents indicated preference for trails that are loops, 80% believe new trails would be beneficial, many expressed desire to see connections of loop trails. Majority of comments were positive with some concerns about protecting sensitive areas and possible disturbances of wildlife and habitat. Overall, respondents believe building structures to reduce impact and clearly defining a trail would be positive.

The proposed trail uses some existing trails connected by new trail system to form a loop around the lake using the causeway as the east side connection. Funding for an accessible fishing pier on the west side of the causeway has been obtained and road crossings in the design will help connect the parking area to the future loop trail.

The Mayor's strong interest in trees and trails for the bicentennial celebration has increased interest in this project and funding from a bicentennial bond has been obtained for design and development. A study was conducted and a proposed route was created. ERAC members reviewed the route and provided feedback. The trail will be almost four miles of soft surface trail and will include bridges and stairs to cross ravines.

Trail Updates

Throughout the year, ERAC members were updated by BPR staff on trail development projects. While the Griffy Lake loop trail received the most attention, other projects such as the Cascades Trail were discussed. New extension of the B-Line to the south and new east west connections will further the connectivity of all parts of our community. Many exciting projects are planned for the near future and ERAC will continue to stay updated on their progress.

Griffy Lake Deer Management

Deer management, once again was a regular discussion topic at meetings. The sharpshooting program conducted in December 2017 resulted in the removal of 62 deer from the two-square mile Griffy Lake Nature Preserve. To give vegetation time to recover the deer browse pressure needs to be low for several years. In 2018, BPR worked with Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to plan for a public hunt through the Community Hunting Access Program (CHAP). Utilizing hunters for deer control is the preferred method of IDNR. BPR applied for and received a grant to cover a portion of the cost of hiring a CHAP coordinator to plan and facilitate the hunt during the first two weekends of deer season in the fall. The CHAP hunt was expected to cost \$30,000 and grant funding would cover \$16,250 of the cost. White Buffalo was hired as the coordinator and potential hunters were contacted. Unfortunately, there were not enough

hunter applications to successfully conduct a hunt in 2018. Another hunt will be coordinated next year with the help of White Buffalo. Over 50 hunters have expressed interest in the hunt for next year.

Griffy Vegetation Monitoring

Eco Logic was hired to conduct vegetation monitoring in 2018. Data had been collected for the previous three years by seasonal staff. Now, an expert botanist is collecting data. The original monitoring included 24 transects for the first three years before the cull. Now, after the cull, eight of the original transects and 4 new areas are being monitored and plant height and density data is being collected. Plants are not expected to recover this year, but will likely take a few years with continued deer management. Monitoring will continue into the future and results will be reviewed by ERAC members.

Goat Farm Prairie Planting

A five-acre prairie planting was installed at the Goat Farm property in February 2018. Seeds purchased with the help of USFW and IDNR were planted using a seed drill loaned to BPR by Eco Logic. A cross-hatch planting pattern served to reduce a row effect and an extra loop of planting around the perimeter was intended to increase plant density to resist the infiltration of invasive plants. A seed list was shared with ERAC members to review. Throughout the year, the property was managed to encourage the growth of planted seeds and existing milkweed patches. This planting, in addition to neighboring native plant projects, is increasing the habitat corridor for wildlife including Monarch butterflies. Educational signage is planned to share information about the prairie.

Wapehani Project

Wapehani Mountain Bike Park was closed for several months while City of Bloomington Utilities Department removed the dam located in the park. Trees and plants were installed in the former lake bed. ERAC members reviewed a list of trees that were planted and were invited to visit the site during the construction period.

Outreach

Regular updates were given by staff on education and outreach in within BPR and the community such as Naturalist at Market and Nature Day programs. Information on partner programs such as Bug Fest and Sustaining Nature and Your Land Day was also shared. ERAC members participated in BPR programs, working as volunteers for Nature Days and coordinating student participation as volunteers. They also worked on their own outreach programs such as water monitoring and citizen science efforts that benefit and provide information to BPR.