



2019 Environmental Resources Advisory Council Annual Report

2019 Initiatives and Topics of Interest

- Switchyard Park
- Invasive Plant Management
- Griffy Master Plan
- Griffy Lake Aquatic Vegetation Management
- Griffy Lake Loop Trail/ Griffy Accessible Fishing Pier
- Griffy Lake Nature Preserve Deer Management

Switchyard Park

ERAC members were kept updated on progress of the Switchyard Park (SYP) completion date. Switchyard Park was officially open to the public on the 17th of November. At this time, the indoor pavilion, police substation, outdoor shelter, skate park, playground, sports courts, and amphitheater were all completed. ERAC members were especially interested in details of remediation of the site and addition of naturalization features, such as daylighting of stream sections. Soil remediation proved to be the most difficult step in the restoration process. Moreover, native trees, native seeds, and a lot of native plant plugs have been installed around the park and alongside the bridge embankments. This work has been done by Williams Creek and Eco Logic. There is a 3-year maintenance contract with Eco Logic for most of the installations and invasive plant removal in the park. ERAC members were given inventory reports on all the native plant species installed in the park.

Looking forward into 2020, establishing sod is one of the main the priorities. Contractors will be working on the two dog parks, the activity lawns, and the outdoor amphitheaters. The Pavilion is currently operational and is available to be rented. Members held their December meeting inside of the SYP Pavilion and went on a tour of the facilities. Members will continue to be updated on the progress of this park's development.

Invasive Plant Management

ERAC members were given updates on the new 'First-Saturdays Workday' program created by Bloomington Parks and Recreation. This program is hosted on the first Saturday of each month and takes place at different City parks. The program teaches volunteers about local plant ecology while providing an opportunity to give back to local parks by spending time removing nuisance species. Bloomington is fortunate to have a dedicated volunteer network that is always reaching out for group work days. To plan and organize the monthly workdays, Parks staff partnered with Monroe County-Identify Reduce Invasive Species, a coalition of Monroe County citizens aimed at reducing the environmental and economic impact of invasive species in our county through education and action. Staff reported an average of 20 volunteers for each event. Work day activities included cutting and removing invasive species as well as opportunities to learn from local plant experts. ERAC members reviewed the program calendar and suggested locations to host the monthly event.

Griffy Master Plan

The original 1984 Master Plan was updated in 2008. Parks staff has decided to update the plan by sections. This year, a complete flora section of the plan was updated. Eco Logic was hired in 2019 to complete a Tier I evaluation that included

mapping plant communities by forest type, analyzing areas susceptibility to foot traffic, identifying habitat for sensitive organisms, and categorizing community types by soils and geology, hydrology, and dominant tree species and plants in the understory layer. Eco Logic was also hired to monitor deer browse throughout the park to help inform deer management efforts. ERAC members reviewed the Griffy floral inventory as well as the deer browse monitoring results. Staff plan to update the bird, reptile, and amphibian sections of the Griffy Master Plan next year. Vegetation monitoring will continue into the future and results will be reviewed by ERAC members.

Griffy Lake Aquatic Vegetation Management

Bloomington Parks and Recreation was again awarded the Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) grant by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to control aquatic vegetation at Griffy Lake. Vegetation surveys conducted by Aquatic Control Inc. indicated a high population of the invasive species, Eurasian watermilfoil. The lake was mapped in an effort to identify the specific locations of the plant and to track any potential sources. The treatment of the target species took place in May with the chemical ProcellaCOR EC. This herbicide was previously discussed with ERAC members and approved by the City's Risk Department. A Tier II study was completed in late July to officially document the population of the plant. Aquatic Control surveyed 50 points around Griffy Lake and only found Eurasian watermilfoil present at two of those points. Aquatic Control was pleased with the efficacy of the treatment and a significantly smaller amount of chemical was needed than the previous product. In 2018, 2,100 pounds of granular 2,4-D was used to treat 20.6 acres and this year only 4.75 gallons of ProcellaCOR EC was used to treat 23 acres. Less chemical was used, but it was much more effective. ERAC members will continue to aid in the discussion of control measures to stop the spread of this invasive plant. Monitoring of the water quality and plant life in Griffy Lake will continue to be conducted by both seasonal staff, volunteers from the Indiana Clean Lakes Program (INCLP), and technicians from Aquatic Control Inc.

Griffy Lake Loop Trail / Griffy Accessible Fishing Pier

The proposed Griffy Lake Loop Trail has been routed and has been bundled with the Griffy Accessible Fishing Pier project. The Trail will connect to the pedestrian walkway and the Fishing Pier. Staff provided an updated design of the Griffy Accessible Fishing Pier from Mader Design LLC. ERAC members viewed the designs which include a raised crosswalk, realignment of the park entrance, and a semi-circle shaped shoreline access feature with fishing pier sections extending out into the lake. The structure and the surrounding boardwalk designs will connect the north and south segments of the Griffy Lake Loop Trail. ERAC members reviewed the Griffy Lake Loop Trail route and provided feedback. Bloomington Parks and Recreation hired Mader Design. to design construction plans for both projects. The proposed route is almost 6 miles long miles of soft surface trail and will include bridges and stairs to cross ravines. The proposed trail route uses mostly existing trails connected by a few new trails to form a loop around the western portion of Griffy Lake. Important connector sections include installing a trail along the top of Griffy Dam and extending the causeway along N. Headley Rd. to make room for a pedestrian walkway. Staff continues to update members of the advisory council on design plans and welcomes feedback for the project. Funding for the 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 of the Griffy Loop Trail.

Griffy Lake Nature Preserve Deer Management

Deer management, once again was a regular discussion topic at meetings. In 2019, Bloomington Parks and Recreation (BPR) applied for and received a \$25,000 grant from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) to cover a portion of the cost for the Community Hunting Access Program (CHAP) at Griffy Lake Nature Preserve. Funds were used to hire a CHAP coordinator to plan and facilitate the hunt during the last three weekends of November during deer

season. The City hired White Buffalo, who was previously hired to do the sharpshooting in 2017 that removed 62 deer. White Buffalo was also hired to coordinate the 2018 CHAP program, although not enough hunters applied to conduct the hunt last year. This year, White Buffalo sent out 327 hunter solicitations to improve application numbers. They also invited the Quality Deer Management Association, Martinsville Conservation Club, and the Paragon Conservation Club to take part. We received 65 applications from those 327 solicitations, which is roughly 20% of the total people we invited. Only 26 hunters were able to pass the proficiency screenings that were held in August and September. Participants had to hit 3 out of 3 shots within 2 inches of the bullseye from 50 yards. Ultimately 21 hunters participated in at least one of the 6 hunting days. All hunters were required to be properly licensed and have the correct permits to hunt deer with firearms at Griffy Lake. Hunters were permitted to kill one antlered deer and two without-antlers. For safety reasons, hunters were only permitted to fire downward from tree stands. BPR coordinated with Indiana University to allow for hunter access on their property near Griffy Lake. A private security firm was hired by the city to patrol the area surrounding Griffy Lake Nature Preserve, and to advise members of the public of the temporary closure of the property during the hunt. Signs were placed conspicuously at parking areas and trail heads to inform the public of the closure of the property during the weekends of the hunt. In total, 26 deer were removed from the park over the three weekends. Based on the results from the Deer Browse Survey conducted by Eco Logic, the deer browse pressure is still high and management efforts will continue until vegetation populations show signs of recovery. ERAC members support continued deer management Griffy Lake.

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 RCA Trail improvements, the Cascades Loop Trail development, and continued invasive plant management along the Rail Trail were discussed. Trail connections and development will continue to be discussed with ERAC members as BPR works on Bicentennial and BOND projects where trails are a central focus.

Outreach

ERAC members were regularly updated on the outreach activities of the department such as Naturalist at Market, Nature Days, Adopt-A-Stream/Acre/Trail, and after-school programs. Information on partner programs such as Bug Fest and Sustaining Nature and Your Land Day was also shared. Members shared their outreach efforts including MCPR programs and Bloomington High School North field trips. In 2019, Women in Nature Gaining Skills (WINGS), currently a Facebook group, was created. WINGS is a partnership between BPR, MCPR, and INDNR Fish & Wildlife. WINGS is a program meant to teach women skills that allow them to feel empowered and encourages them to seek out opportunities to spend time outdoors. ERAC members helped with 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.