



Records related to the establishment
of the Minnesota Valley National
Wildlife Refuge

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The American Forestry Association

1319 - 18th Street, N.W.

Washington, D. C. 20036

Mr. Crozier -

We held it thinking we
might be able to get it in,
but new space restrictions

Thank you for the material which
you submitted to us. We regret we
will be unable to use it in our
magazine at this time, and we are,
therefore, returning it to you
enclosed for your future use.

now make it impossible.

Thanks anyway.

Editor

AMERICAN FORESTS

CONSERVING NEIGHBORHOOD WILDLANDS

Environmental battles over the Alaska pipeline and the Disney development in Mineral King are of national concern, but as critical to all of us are community skirmishes over neighborhood wildlands. It's the loss of a nearby hillside where pasque flowers bloom or the destruction of a wooded hiking path where evening walks sooth urban irritations that really churn the stomach and raise the blood pressure. The struggles to save neighborhood natural amenities are vital to our day-to-day existence and are as difficult to win as those in the national limelight.

Attempts to conserve natural resources at the community level are extremely difficult and fraught with frustration. Increasingly higher taxes and a need for new streets, sewer systems, schools, police and fire protection compels community governments to rank with low priority funding requests for conserving the odds and ends of wild land that developers have temporarily bypassed.

Despite these restraints that seem impossible to dissolve, community wildlands can still be preserved; but it requires creative thinking and salesmanship. An example of such effort is beginning in the small Midwestern community of Burnsville, Minnesota. There a program has been started that can overcome many traditional objections and in so doing, resolve a multitude of community level environmental concerns.

Inspired by a small group of citizens, the village has started to establish a community trail system: a system which combines the growing need for recreation space with a sound, ecological approach to man's use of the land.

Burnsville, Minnesota, is a community of oak covered hills, dotted with natural ponds and edged by the Minnesota River. Located in the suburban fringe of Minneapolis-St. Paul and under the pressures of urbanization, the village has developed the growth/progress syndrome. Concerned with the rapid pace of destruction, a small group of local citizens banded together to

request the appointment of an official citizen's Environmental Advisory Commission to aid the village council. Frustrated by a point-blank refusal, they formed an unofficial volunteer group called the Burnsville Environmental Council.

Initial efforts of the citizen's council centered on local and state consideration of permits for solid waste landfill on the Minnesota River flood plain, exceptions to the village billboard ordinance and other issues that put the environmentalists in direct confrontation with Village Hall. Little progress was being made by presenting position statements at meetings and hearings. Something positive was needed.

The basic interest of the group was to preserve the natural character of the community including forested tracts and wetlands. Realizing they lacked a basic knowledge and understanding of the community's resources, they inventoried the village. They first discovered that land with the best chance for survival as open space was land that was intrinsically unsuitable for development

or already set aside for village parks, the drainage system and utility right-of-ways. The volunteers began to map these natural and man-made open space systems. Village Hall provided the basic information on location of village park lands, the storm water drainage system and the utility and highway right-of-way routes. The U. S. Soil Conservation Service provided soils maps which indicated lands the SCS considered were too steep or too wet for development.

In family rooms and kitchens, the four elements were slowly delineated on individual overlay maps. Using a desk-top, 33 mm slide viewer as a light table, the environmentalists superimposed the four overlay maps together. From the composite of overlays, there emerged a pattern of connecting open spaces that meandered throughout the community.

Seeing the corridors of open space and influenced by long time interests in hiking and cross-country skiing, the environmentalists began to visualize the possibility of creating a dual system that provides for both open

space and linear forms of recreation. Stimulated by this possibility, the group worked even harder. By closely reviewing aerial photos, they determined that there was a potential of 65 miles of trails within the community. Now pouring over literature on trail systems, the project rolled on. Within weeks, the idea of establishing a Community Trail System was in a conceptual form.

Designed as a community-wide trail system, it will be a narrow corridor of green open trail space (wooded or grasslands) that meanders throughout the village. The corridor will interlink neighborhood residential areas and tie together schools, parks, churches and shopping centers. It will connect with the state trail along the Minnesota River and other nearby community and county trails. It is a system that will, in a physical sense, make Burnsville a holistic community as opposed to those highway bisected communities that eventually become fragmented socially as well as physically. It will tie together resources, people and surroundings into a functioning, healthy system.

Costs will be minimal for the system utilizes lands that have already been designated for a primary use but where trails are a compatible secondary use. These consist of village-owned park lands and the village drainage system which includes numerous holding ponds (formerly natural wetlands) and connecting waterways. Utility and highway right-of-ways, where trails are compatible, can also be used. In other places where the connecting lands are privately owned, revised subdivision regulations can insure the preservation of the green corridors.

In most cases, it means that land developers will dedicate their required portion of land in a linear shape rather than the squared-off playfield areas that are usually set aside. Now the developer can dedicate those acres most unsuitable for building such as steep slopes or lowlands which are exactly what should be protected.

Other lands needed for the trail system but unsuitable for buildings can be protected through flood plain zoning, wetlands conservation ordinances and the purchase of scenic/access easements. In some cases, the trail space can be acquired as part of highway right-of-way

acquisitions and used to provide green space buffers between highways and homes and to screen unsightly commercial development. At the same time, the trail spaces can also be unifying elements in providing continuity of undeveloped land between parks, lakes and woods.

Simultaneously the trail system will safeguard man from the normal effects of nature and the effect of short-sighted human alteration of the natural environment.

It protects many of the physiographic, geologic, vegetative and hydrologic characteristics of the community and in so doing, assures the proper functioning of at least a portion of the community's natural systems.

The concept was described in a 35 mm slide format and shown throughout the community as a planned effort to gain wide citizen support. Organizations ranging from the Chamber of Commerce to 4-H clubs viewed the proposal in concept and gave universal endorsement. Only the local snowmobile club refused to endorse the

project. No specific reasons were given, but it was believed they feared being restricted to trails even though in the long run, it will be their only hope of continuing snowmobiling in the community.

Finally as an official beginning, the Village Council reviewed the concept, unanimously endorsed it along with authorizing the expenditure of \$10,000 for professional planning assistance. Since then, the Environmental Council has constructed, with the aid of a local Boy Scout Troop and Garden Club, the first segment of the trail system and appropriately it is an ecological-oriented interpretive trail which hopefully will help others renew their "touch" with the natural balances that still govern us.

Although the Burnsville project is still in its infancy and still may fail from lack of follow through, the potential is obvious. Other communities have requested to see the concept and are beginning their own planning. Success or failure, it has demonstrated that there is a way to save a little bit of wild American at the

neighborhood levels. A "way" that relies on ingenuity and creative planning accomplished at the local level-- an attractive alternative to the usual "big money" solutions.

The value of trail spaces is inestimable in the lives of city-bound millions. They are a step toward enriching the increasingly barrenness of urban living.



BURNSVILLE ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Kim NRC

Save our environment — it's the only one we have.

Burnsville Environmental Council
351 Maple Island Road
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337

March 1, 1973

Bloomington Environmental Commission
2515 W. Old Shakopee Road
Bloomington, Minnesota 55431

Dear Fellow Conservationists:

Enclosed is a booklet describing a proposal for the preservation and use of the lower Minnesota River in the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan area.

This great river and flood plain is a major natural resource in our community and is currently threatened with ultimate destruction by urbanization at great cost to the taxpayer for flood protection facilities.

Our proposal, calling for federal acquisition of the river flood plain, will preserve the area as open space to be used by the people as a recreational area.

We ask that you support the proposal by whatever means you can.

Very truly yours,

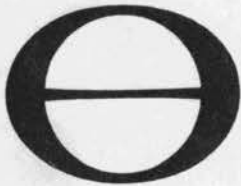
BURNSVILLE ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL

Richard D. Duerre
Richard D. Duerre, Chairman

RDD:lea

Enclosure

135-5419



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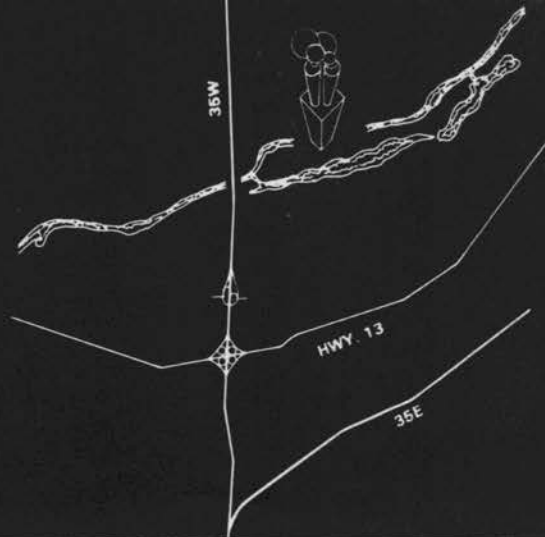
Enclosure

435-5419

B'ville

CITY OF BURNSVILLE

1313 East Highway 13 • Burnsville, Minnesota 55337



August 6, 1981

Mr. Edward Crozier
60 Oak Shore Drive
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337

Dear Mr. Crozier:

I appreciate very much the welcome contained in your letter of June 19, 1981. I look forward to working in Burnsville and I will try to help in resolving the problems mentioned in your letter.

The following corrective action steps have been taken:

1. The dump mentioned in your letter appears to have materials that have been deposited there some time ago and over a period of years. The landowner has been contacted and instructed to clean up this area. Hopefully, he will comply with our request.
2. You are correct....the owner was granted a rezoning to a Planned Unit Development in July of 1980. The grading and earthwork currently in progress is within the grading plan established with the approved Planned Unit Development.
3. The developer has been instructed to build a dike on site to prevent erosion from the grading area from spilling out onto the public street and eventually to the pond. In addition, the street has been swept and cleaned.
4. The storm water sewer pipe entering the holding pond has been repaired.
5. Your idea for a trail access to the proposed Crystal West Park is being referred to the Park Advisory Commission for their study. Attached is a plan of the proposed park and how this access system would relate to the proposed trails in that park.

Thank you again.

Sincerely,

CITY OF BURNSVILLE

James K. Spore
James K. Spore
Manager

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