



Attachment A

Parks and Recreation Department
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"Making Lincoln a Better Place to Live"



MAYOR CHRIS BEUTLER

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Lincoln Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

January 25, 2017

Dear Advisory Board Members,

I am writing to ask for the assistance of your organization in a brief strategic planning effort for Wilderness Park. The Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department has generally been following the management guidelines from the 2000 Wilderness Park Subarea Plan for the last 15 years. However, there have been some significant developments since that time, including cuts to our budget and the development of the Jamaica North Trail, that suggest a review of this plan is in order. We have also recently been able to hire a District Supervisor for Greenways and Open Spaces, Aaron Druey, and we are working to reopen the Wilderness Park shop on 1st Street, south of Pioneers Blvd, this spring. Although the budget remains very restricted, having Aaron on staff and on site provides opportunities that Parks has not had for many years.

This seems to be a good time to bring together a group of those who have an interest in Wilderness Park and who use the park on a frequent basis. We would like to review the current maintenance practices, identify priorities for upcoming work efforts, and look at possible volunteer and funding resources. We have developed a list of organizations and are now requesting that each of these groups identify an individual who can represent them by attending three meetings over the late February to early April time frame. All meetings will be held at the Pioneers Park Nature Center in the Prairie Building, 3403 W. Van Dorn Street. The dates are:

Full Group: February 22 from 3:00 to 5:00 pm

Trails and Facilities subcommittee: March 8 from 3:00 to 5:00 pm

Ecosystem subcommittee: March 22 from 3:00 to 5:00 pm

Full Group: April 5 from 3:00 to 5:00 pm

Our first meeting will include an overview of the 2000 plan, current maintenance practices and policies, upcoming projects that impact Wilderness Park, and a brainstorming session of park needs. Session two will concentrate specifically on either trails and park facilities or the park ecosystem, and participants will identify priority projects and possible volunteer and other resources that might be available. Session three will bring the full group together to review the resulting priority list for presentation to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. The priority list of projects will be used in development of the Parks and Recreation 10 Year Strategic Plan over the summer as well.

We are requesting that the FOWP provide **two individuals**, both of which would attend the Full Group meetings, and one of which would attend the Trails and Facilities subcommittee meeting, while the other attends the Ecosystem subcommittee meeting. If you would prefer to have a single representative that would attend all four meetings, that would be fine. We leave it to your judgement.

All participants will be provided meeting notes and materials which they are welcome to share with their organization, but we are asking that participants be limited to the identified individual(s) in order to facilitate working sessions and make sure everyone has a chance to be heard.

Please contact me with any questions you might have and let me know the names and emails of the individuals your group identifies when they have been selected.

Thank you,



Sara S. Hartzell, Park Planner

Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department

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BREAKING

Chris Brown, 50 Cent, many more bringing Party Tour to Pinnacle Bank Arena

http://journalstar.com/news/local/wilderness-park-users-to-help-shape-its-future/article_3f19ebd9-f890-5d88-9d9b-ec1e57b8bb85.html

FEATURED

Wilderness Park users to help shape its future

PETER SALTER Lincoln Journal Star Feb 17, 2017 Updated Feb 17, 2017



ERIC GREGORY, Journal Star file photo

A trail paralleling Salt Creek in Wilderness Park is covered with wood chips just north of Pioneers Boulevard in early

The wildest park in Lincoln needs a new instruction manual, and the city's Parks and Recreation Department is gathering a group of its users to help write it.

Over the next few months, representatives from 15 organizations, agencies and advocacy groups -- from mountain bikers to trail runners to equestrians to environmentalists -- will meet to help shape the future of the 1,470-acre park that skirts the southwest edge of the city.

"We'll talk about needs in the park, and come up with some ideas for projects," said parks planner Sara Hartzell. "We'll have to continue to think about our resources, so we can't get too crazy."

Until now, the city has been managing Wilderness Park based on a strategic plan compiled in 2000, when there was concern that development along South 14th Street would encroach on the 7-mile ribbon of trees and trails surrounding Salt Creek.

It used that plan, for instance, to guide tree removal projects and wetland restorations, Hartzell said.

But it's outdated. Since the plan was written 17 years ago, the city built the Jamaica North Trail along the east side of Wilderness Park, which has connected the north and south sections of the park and eliminated the need for some bridges.

Also, the parks department used to convene an advisory panel of park users, which would get together and suggest possible projects, like trail maintenance or tree trimming. They haven't met for several years.

"We thought it was time to resurrect that group, get everybody back together again."

And this time, it will place an additional emphasis on the park's trails and facilities. In the past, much of the focus was on vegetation and ecology. The new committee will look at both -- managing the nature inside the park, and improving the experiences of those who visit it.

Which is why the city invited cyclists, bird watchers, ecologists, runners and forestry experts to participate.

"These are folks who use the park a lot and they probably know more about it than most people do," she said.

Hartzell will gather all the users for a meeting next week, and the two subcommittees will meet separately in March. They'll get back together for a full meeting in April.

The group will have the results of a recent online survey, in which 700 people shared how often they use the park and why, what they think of its conditions -- including its signs, parking areas and bridges -- and what they see as its critical issues.

Hartzell sees a threat from invasive vegetation, including the cedar, locust and hackberry trees that are crowding out the oaks, and the poison ivy that seems to be spreading. She'd also like more restrooms at trailheads, and better signs to help park users find their way around.

Rick Dockhorn, who will represent the city's Pedestrian Bicycle Advisory Committee, plans to listen to the other members before trying to determine the park's pressing problems. But he does want to make sure it continues to accommodate all trail users.

There's been some conflict in the past. "There are horse people where they don't belong, there are hikers where they don't belong, there are bikers where they don't belong. Nobody's a saint here."

And Tim Knott of the Wachiska Audubon Society sees the park as an attraction -- and not just for owls and woodpeckers that nest there. Wilderness Park makes Lincoln more valuable to those who live here, and those thinking about moving to town.

But it could be even better. Knott wants to urge the city to expand the park to the south, beyond Saltillo Road, to beat the residential development that is bound to spread in that direction.

After the committee’s final meeting in April, its recommendations will be forwarded to the department’s advisory board. Some of the ideas will likely be accomplished with volunteer labor, Hartzell said, and others could become part of the department budget.

“This is a chance to have these environmentally educated people help us prioritize which areas we should be spending our money on.”

Reach the writer at 402-473-7254 or psalter@journalstar.com.

On Twitter @LJSPeterSalter.

MORE INFORMATION



 +2

Trail work starts, stops in Wilderness Park

- Bumper crop of plastic car body parts dumped at Wilderness Park
- Park gone wild: Wilderness trails could be closed for rest of the year
- Day campers find 31-year secret in Wilderness Park tree
- Day-campers discover mammoth tooth along Salt Creek

Peter Salter | Lincoln Journal Star

Currents