

## Forester's Report 9 29 2018

No burning permits were issued during September.

There was a consultation regarding tree issues at 2180 Charlton Road with a new property owner.

A linear area approximately 6' X 600' in the north meadow of Musser Park was mowed and sprayed with Roundup in preparation for seeding with wildflowers about the middle of November 2018.

On September 12, I met with Terri Nelson, with the Minnesota Land Trust, at Musser Park on the annual visit to see how Musser Park is being maintained. She gave us a very positive assessment. In addition, I have attached a copy of the Musser Park Management Plan that has been accepted by the Minnesota Land Trust. I recommend that the Council also accept the Management Plan to give the City a working document going forward.

Several tree tubes had to be replaced because they had been destroyed by deer antler rubbing. This fall deer destroyed three young trees in Musser Park though it is possible that the young trees may send up new sprouts that can be selected and protected in the future. Encourage your deer management plan volunteers!

Jim Naves  
City Forester

# **Musser Park Management Plan**

## **May 2017**

### **Sunfish Lake, MN**

Musser Park is a 22 acre property centrally located in the City of Sunfish Lake adjacent to the south side of Salem Church Road. The City of Sunfish Lake passed resolutions to accept the gift of land from the Estate of Elizabeth Musser and passed a motion at the December 10, 2002 City Council meeting to formally apply to the Minnesota Land Trust to hold a conservation easement for the property that is now called Musser Park.

#### **Musser Park's conservation values are described as:**

1. Rolling hills provide outstanding scenic values prominently visible from Salem Church Road.
2. Musser Park provides important publicly accessible open space that adds to the natural character of the City of Sunfish Lake.
3. The property includes relatively undisturbed natural areas that provide habitat for a variety of plants and animals.
4. This natural and scenic park provides important opportunities for the public to experience nature through observation, study and reflection in a relatively undisturbed natural setting.

Any activity on or use of Musser Park including intrusion or future development that would interfere with the essential natural and scenic quality of the Park or the visual enjoyment and use of the open and natural character of the property by the general public is prohibited. Specifically prohibited are: industrial and commercial activity, agricultural use, residential development, future right-of-way across property, mining, subdivision, structures, advertising signs, campgrounds, or picnic facilities. Existing roads, trails, and fences are maintained within the limitations of the conservation easement.

#### **Flora and Fauna**

The land of Musser Park prior to its donation to the City of Sunfish Lake was mixed use woodland and pasture. Horses and perhaps other livestock were fenced on the property. Wild animals then as now include: deer, raccoon, fox, coyote, squirrels, rabbits, mice, hawks, owls, other native birds, and typical associated wildlife. The woodlands are mostly second growth hardwoods and the trees include red oak, white oak, pin oak, bur oak, basswood, elm, black cherry, boxelder, green ash, cottonwood, poplar, eastern red cedar, Austrian pine, Scotch pine, white pine, and spruce. Invasive woody plants include: buckthorn, amur maple, and Tartarian honeysuckle.

#### **Historic and Future Park Management:**

Since the park land was donated to the City it has been minimally maintained. This means that the north meadow along Salem Church Road is mowed once each year during late summer, fallen trees/branches are regularly cleared from the walking trail, and the walking trail is mowed twice each summer. Potential safety concerns are addressed as needed.

Several projects have been completed since the Park's formation. A boulder with a plaque commemorating the gift of the park was erected, a stone bench was installed in memory of a past City Clerk, a tree was planted in memory of the people killed in the 9/11 attack, and three rustic wood benches plus twelve bluebird houses have been installed. In 2011 the Minnesota Tree Trust organized a tree planting event that installed 46 trees in Musser Park. Additional trees were installed by the City in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Other projects included collection and removal of old, damaged barbed wire fencing, an invasive buckthorn removal event, spot spraying mature seed producing buckthorn trees, and releasing both seed weevil and root weevil biocontrols that selectively target spotted knapweed (a highly invasive non-native grassland weed).

## **Future Management and Goals**

The Park will continue to receive minimal management inputs as it has since the beginning. One long-term goal is to plant additional native trees and shrubs each year, especially those that provide food and homes for native animals, birds, bees and insects. Another goal is to reintroduce native forbs, sedges and grasses with the intention of providing food and other resources for native species. Further since our local climate appears to be changing there is a desire to introduce regionally adapted native tree species that may not presently be found in Sunfish Lake that are likely to become acclimated here in the future. The reasoning is that forest resilience is greater with greater diversity and gradually bringing in a few new native species will help insure that our woodlands remain woodlands for generations to come.

### **Specific Projects:**

Plant up to 20 trees per year. These trees may be coniferous or deciduous and may include regionally adapted native species. It is envisioned that new tree plantings will create opportunities to encourage native species in areas currently dominated by invasive species. Restoration may include invasive species removal by machine, by hand, and/or spot treatment with herbicide.

An annual project to remove invasive tree and shrub species and to plant native species on an area of up to 0.5 acre per year is envisioned. Invasive species (buckthorn, honeysuckle, and amur maple) are now the dominant understory species and they have largely displaced native understory trees and shrubs. The woodland area between the north and south meadows has the worst infestation followed by the infested woodland at the south end of the Park. The most likely starting point would be within the woodland along the south edge of the north meadow. A long-term commitment to reintroducing and encouraging native understory and overstory species will require using best management practices to remove invasive species followed by planting native trees and shrubs.

Reintroduce native forbs, wildflowers, sedges and grasses in selected plots so that when they become established they become seed sources for spreading natives throughout the park and other City lands.

If bio-controls recommended by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture become available to control invasive species, then arrangements will be made to release them into the park.

**Conclusion:**

Musser Park shall remain a semi-wild natural area available and open to the public. It will be managed to retain its essential scenic woodland/grassland character into the future.