

West Street Greenspace Preservation Coalition

P.O. Box 84, Naperville, Il 60566-0084 Phone: 630-637-9283 Fx:630-717-0785



Newsletter- August 10th, 2003

Cookout at Garden Plots Aug. 23rd 11A.M.- 1P.M.

You are all invited to a Sizzling Summer Cookout at the Garden Plots sponsored by the Naperville Park District and Gerald Subaru. On Saturday Aug. 23rd from 11AM-1PM hot dogs, hamburgers, and soda will be provided. As coalition members you have all contributed to the preservation of the garden plots, so bring the family out and enjoy the afternoon on the gardens! For more information contact the Park District at 848-5000, or Coalition President George Bennett.

Reminder - Next Meeting Is / was August 13th

In case you receive this before then, the next meeting of the West St. Greenspace Preservation Coalition will take place at 7:30 on Wednesday August 13th at the Naperville Township Building. Our regularly scheduled meetings take place on the second Wednesday of every other month. As always all are welcome. If you are not certain of the location of the Township Building you may phone the Township directly at 355-2786 during business hours, or call any of the Coalition's board members.

Website Updated

Thanks to the efforts of Webmaster Elaine Fisher we can now offer members and perspective members an updated website. Complete with new features it now reflects our new mailing address, which in case you've forgotten is PO Box 84, Naperville 60566. The website now has a location where each bi-monthly newsletter will be posted, with the informative June newsletter already online. It also reflects recent coalition events such as January's "Winter Warm-Up", and has updated the list of Board Members and their positions, while offering links to local organizations. All of this can be found by visiting www.greenspace.koolhost.com.

Plant a Row for the Hungry

This time of year in the absence of emergency threats to the West St. properties, the Plant a Row for the Hungry initiative becomes one of our coalition's most important efforts. Having been founded by the Garden Writers Association of America in 1995, the Plant a Row for the Hungry program is not unique WSGSPC. However, since 2000 we have maintained a collection booth that has enabled Naperville's Plant a Row program to become one of the largest in the area. The program is again in full swing. Many thanks to the very generous

donation of new and needed signs by board member **Christine Wilkinson**, with additional help from Warren Gill.

The dedicated efforts of Loaves and Fishes volunteer Nick Stirm, and the Naperville Community Gardener's Ben Calvert resulted in more than 12,000 pounds of fresh produce arriving at Naperville's Loaves and Fishes food pantry during the 2002 growing season! According to statistics recently published in the Daily Herald, Loaves and Fishes looks to be the receipt of more produce than any other suburban food pantry in the suburbs! There actually isn't even a close second, with most suburban food banks receiving less than 10% of what is now donated because of the Community Garden Plots. This is in addition to a much smaller amount given to senior citizens. This should be a genuine source of pride for our Coalition, the Naperville Community Gardeners, and the Naperville Park District.

West St. Coalition at the Garden Plots

Over the last three years our coalition's designated "green thumb" at the Garden Plots has been George Bennett. This year, with help from Elaine and Laurian Fisher, we once again have two coalition owned garden plots which have already started to yield a substantial amount of vegetables ranging from tomatoes to broccoli. Whenever possible the produce will be donated to the Plant-A Row for the Hungry program.

Despite the appearance of routine, gardening is never uneventful, and during the early part of this growing season this once again has been proven true. Since the beginning of July the Chicago area has been hit by an abnormally large number of storms, and although Naperville has been spared the worst of them, the early summer storms were enough to overturn the donation booth on multiple occasions. Given the expense of our new signs, we became a bit concerned they might be damaged. To prevent this Fred Turek came to the rescue and with the assistance of George Bennett, he firmly anchored the booth with a secure tie line. Additional efforts by Rick Mouche have allowed the booth to remain standing through recent storms which have broken tree limbs in Sportsman's Woods and overturned portable sanitation facilities at the garden plots.

With the booth now stable it attracted one of the most unusual donations seen since its construction. One July evening nearly 4 flats of tomato plants were found lying

on the ground near the booth. Unfortunately, a day later they were still there, orphaned and rather crippled from the afternoon's sun. Instead of letting the exposed plants die, they came home that night with George Bennett and after a few days of watering, about 80% of them responded. The only problem was what to do with them? Our coalition's plot was full. More mysteriously, where had they come from in the first place?

A phone call to the Park District's Garden Plot Program Manager answered these questions. It seemed the Growing Place Nursery had a number of unsold tomato plants, and not wanting to abandon them they contacted the Park District, who then suggested they be left at our donation booth. The Park District's program manager was very pleased to know that the plants had been recovered, and readily donated an unused plot to the West. St. Coalition for the purpose of planting them. After a few hours of work the plants are now growing at their new home in the ground less than a hundred yards from where they were left two weeks ago.

Coalition to begin Prairie Restoration

One of our long-term objectives has been the gradual upgrade of the prairie plants found at the garden plot's wetlands. This area, although used for commercial farming until the early 70's, has not been plowed for more than two decades, and has garnered a federal "wetland" designation granting it a certain amount of anti-development protection. However, the law does allow protected land to be developed provided that additional land is found at a variable ratio greater than 2:1. This sounds promising, but with the value of land in central Naperville as high as it is currently, this protection remains incomplete. Especially since the adjacent garden plots have no such attached prohibition. The Coalition believes that an eventual restoration of this area to indigenous prairie plants will help insure it remains forever undeveloped.

Treasurer Wendy Mouche is spearheading the coalition's restoration efforts, still in their infancy. Wendy is also a naturalist who conducts tours of the prairie located on the grounds of Batavia's Fermi-Lab, and is very knowledgeable when it comes to our area's flora and fauna. Her work has already resulted in the preliminary approval to start initial restoration by the Park District's Central Foreman Carl Gorra. To begin with, flowering prairie plants such as Black-Eyed Susan will be planted. Hardy and easy to grow they will draw attention to themselves when their bright yellow flowers bloom in the second year after planting.

Acknowledging the importance of this effort, a small amount of funding has been approved by the WSGSPC Board for the procurement of an initial planting

Far more difficult, but vital to the restoration of a prairie, will be the elimination of non-native plant species which restrict the growth of rare prairie plants. Since less than .01 percent of the original Illinois prairie still exists, many of the plants found in the Garden Plot wetlands are

actually native to Europe rather than Illinois. One of these European invaders, which become dominant when grasslands are removed from active management, is teasel *Dipsacus laciniatus*. It is becoming dominant at the garden plots, and Wendy Mouche has slated its removal for stage 1 of the area's restoration. Teasel is an aggressive exotic species prohibited from use as a landscaping plant by the DuPage County building code. Since it reaches a height of 6 or 7 feet, teasel is easy to identify.

A complete restoration of the wetland area will take place over many years and require greater resources, financial and volunteer, than the WSGSPC can currently muster. Periodic burning of an area remains one of the best management tools for a prairie, but this is expensive. Anyone interested in becoming involved with this project should please contact Wendy Mouche through the Coalition.

Coalition Members Canoe the Fox

On Sunday July 20th three Coalition Board Members, children, and a guest set out to canoe the Fox River from a point north of Norway, Illinois to Dayton's hydroelectric dam near the Fox's confluence with the Illinois River. The water level was high and during the course of the trip 25-30 foot high white cliffs made for a scenic afternoon. These cliffs are geologically similar to the far larger cliff found on the Illinois River known as Starved Rock. We finished before the storms hit.

Although this trip was not an official Coalition event, any avid canoeist (or casual canoeist) interested in participating in a similar day trip next summer (or perhaps this fall) would be most welcome. Just send us a note and we'll be in touch!

Working to Undo "Mission Creep"

Towards our mission, we generally work towards "... keep it green, and no more construction, lights, pavement or new high intensity uses. No reduction in trees, and additional uses should utilize the green or natural values of the properties." . Further to our previous report, Fred Turek has been working with the Park District to get them to undo various "creepages" in this area. Specifically, the expansion of the fence on the off season storage area (building and fenced area in the southeast portion of Sportsman's Park, the expansion of activities and storage (dumpsters etc.) outside of the fenced area at that same place, a higher powered light on the south end of Sportsman's Park, and expansion of what was supposed to be just a chip pile in Garden Plots into a larger operation including earthmoving. These 4 items also conflict with previous agreements which the Park District made.

Springbrook Prairie Visitors Center

Additional information promised in the last newsletter concerning changes at Springbrook Prairie is not yet available. Because of its proximity to the West St. properties, and similarity of habitat, additional information will appear in future newsletters when it becomes available.

Greenspace Coalition Information

Mission Statement *The West Street Green Space Preservation Coalition resolves to defend the existing green space west of and adjoining West Street against incompatible development and encourage and promote programs and amenities that foster conservation, honor historical tradition and preserve the area for passive use.*

More on Our Mission Our focus is to not lose any greenspace ground on the 4 properties on west side of West Street. (Garden Plots, Sportsman's Park, Von-Oven Scout Camp, Soccer Fields/Forest on Oswego. Support current uses that keep it green, and no more construction, lights, pavement or new high intensity uses. No reduction in trees, and additional uses should utilize the green or natural values of the properties.

Contact Information

See info in letterhead
Our web site is: www.greenspace.koolhost.com

Board of Directors

Dan Bennett	George Bennett 357-0289
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Newsletter Content: George Bennett, Fred Turek, Wendy Mouche & Others

Newsletter Editor: Fred Turek

Public Relations: Dan Bennett

Special Consultant: Teresa Ryan

Webmaster: Elaine Fisher

Membership

Membership is open to all individuals, families and organizations who would like to support our mission (see mission statement). Dues are \$10 or your choice of a different amount (lower or higher) A membership application is available to facilitate joining. *The WSGSC is always careful to note that its viewpoints on individual topics do not necessarily reflect those of individual members and member organizations.*