

Summary of JM Resident Responses to Request for Comments from Wendy Ward

August 24, 2023

Compiled by Eileen Hunter

Anonymous:

- 1) I'd like the hollow to be free of buckthorn and other unwelcome brush with diverse tree species ranging from young to mature and dead trees removed.
- 2) Chemicals are fine if used sparingly when necessary. Heavy equipment is fine and necessary considering the amount cleanup required. Clearcutting large areas of trees seems unnecessary. The city may need to purchase a brush mower which could be used on other city property. I would volunteer to operate a brush mower if allowed. Seeding seems more realistic vs. plantings due to cost.
- 3) All Marine residents will be encouraged to assist going forward. I see this land stewardship as Marine directed and owned.
- 4) Other experienced Marine residents are better at addressing this.
- 5) The area needs obvious improvement that can have immediate impact with the existing grant. We should take advantage of this opportunity now. I agree with Critical Connection's assessment of the hollow.

Dennis Reynolds:

Regarding the Hollow Grant and Management Plan, I'd like to share a few of my thoughts. For those of you who don't know me, I am a former Jackson Meadow resident (we owned the first house on the left as you entered JM until about a year ago) and still own a vacant lot in Jackson Meadow. I have a Masters of Landscape Architecture and have led large design teams (nationally and internationally) where the teams often provided recommendations to manage, preserve, enhance and create significant natural environments. I have found the following three design principles to be helpful when working with natural environments to create desirable sustainable ecosystems:

- **Moderation:** Focus on moderately redirecting and modifying the ecosystems with the "lightest available touch". Nature doesn't like dramatic change. Aggressive changes to natural environments typically require significant upfront and recurring investments in time and money, and in the long-run, often fail in spite of the dramatic efforts. The question I would ask is, "Are they truly sustainable natural environments if they require our significant and constant alteration and management?"

- **Incremental Implementation:** Nature doesn't like sudden change. Nature needs time to adjust to moderate changes to its systems. Incremental implementation allows nature to adjust while you are able to observe what is effective and where you need to modify your strategy. Slow, steady and consistent is much more effective (both short-term and long-term) than sudden and quick "silver bullet" solutions.
- **Working with the existing systems:** Nature is a powerful force. You are much more likely to be successful if you work "with" the natural systems and not try to force a certain, preconceived outcome. In the end, even with a significant, on-going investment of time and money nature often perseveres in the direction it naturally wants to go.

I would urge my friends in Jackson Meadow to take up Wendy's offer for a tour (in small print at the bottom of Eileen's email)(Wendy is one of our excellent City Council-persons and is copied above) and observe what she has been able to do with her property. It is consistent with the three principles I described above. It is impressive what one person (working virtually entirely by herself), with a very minimal investment in money, has been able to achieve with her 12 acre parcel, guiding diverse and sustainable, natural/native environments.

Leah Parham:

I agree completely Dennis! Thank you for sharing. We have shared our thoughts on this with Wendy as well.

Leah Moss Parham

Phil Bourne:

I have walked through this area since first coming to Marine in 1997. I have watched the progression of buckthorn and prickly ash through the woods and watched as it has filled the understory. I assume the intent of the management plan is primarily to attempt to control the buckthorn and prickly ash and believe that oak savannah may not be the best long term vision for that area. In WOB (south America area) and in the north meadow, land has been cleared and burned to create an oak savannah. In both places, sumac has taken over after clearing and in WOB, even after prescribed burns. Personally, I appreciate the forest with all of the different species of plants, animals and the cozy comfort of all of the tree species. I agree that invasive should/could be addressed but believe that they should be specifically targeted with other species remaining. A gentler approach is preferred to the mechanized industrial craziness that went on in the north meadow, at WOB, and is currently going on at the Masumoto (sp?) property to the west.

I would also support the let nature sort it out approach. I have watched this progression in the forest in south west New Hampshire and the forest went through it's natural progression and is returning from open crop/grazing land at the turn of the 20th century to the oak beech forest that once occupied the area in precolonial times. There has been almost no intervention by man and wildlife has flourished. The limited amount of buckthorn is confined to areas where man has cleared at the periphery of the forest.

Phil Bourne (2):

Thanks Dennis. Good points.

Rick Benson:

I agree with Dennis as well. I look at what happened on the north side which I understand was supposed to be natural prairie and it turned into mostly sumac taking over. Rick

Douglas Dieter:

My name is Douglas Dieter.

We live at 182 Sandpiper Ln. with access to, and preferred view of the "Hollow". We love Jackson Meadow and the wonderful neighbors.

The info. meeting @ Harold's house was a real eye opener for....My wife Merry and I.

Admittedly, we are not knowledgeable about the history of this proposal but...at 1st glance this looks like, clear cutting forest land...with unknown consequences.

Thereby, we agree with Dennis and consider incremental moderation a better long range game plan.

Thanks for the opportunity to voice an opinion.

Juanita Ikuta and Geoff Schodde:

Geoff and I offer the following feedback on the Hollow with gratitude for the many opportunities to learn and participate as community members and prairie stewards. We would like our full/unedited comments to be attributed to us.

context

Lee E. Frelich's, Ph.D., Director, University of Minnesota Center for Forest Ecology, Forest Ecology presentation has moved us to better understand the impacts of anthropogenic versus hands-off approaches to management and subsequent successional dynamics. We're learning that there is a concept of deferred succession where humans can manage landscapes toward a certain objective. But that spurs questions. What point in time are we restoring this to, and do we want to keep it there or let it experience succession? Our philosophy on ecological stewardship may lean toward light-handed approaches to management given the unknown variables of our climate. We're preparing ourselves for a huge paradigm shift! Thanks to Professor Frelich.

Professor Frelich has authored 200 publications with 275 coauthors from 25 countries. He is listed among the top 1% of all scientists in the world (ecology and environmental category) by the Web of Science.

questions

Regarding the Hollow, I'm questioning if there is a shared ecological stewardship vision that the City of Marine on St. Croix and Jackson Meadow residents hold in order to provide the foundation to make ecological decisions. What does stewardship mean to our community as a collective, and what does it look like?

position

Perhaps less aggressive approaches to stewardship of the Hollow are more appropriate, taking incremental actions so nature may adjust and go where it wants to go.

Bill Smitten:

Good Morning Eileen,

There are only a few (6) others (yourself included) that spend as much time year-round or certainly during the fall and winter hours back in the Hollow than me in the Kubota pushing back the encroaching forest and clearing deadfall on the trails. The forest is clearly aging out. The deadfall off trail impedes any travel other than staying on the trails. The "widow makers" are prolific along with buckthorn, prickly ash, and honey suckle making any such management of the hollow nearly impossible. Management burning at this point would likely end catastrophically given the right dry conditions. The Hollow needs a professional "re-set". I agree with much of the proposal. I am open to retaining a few "other" trees in the process. This is a no-brainer to essentially have an outside company come and clean/remove and thin out the forest to have it become healthier in both the short and long term. That there is any concern over what, who and how it would get managed post this clean up is simply silly because at this point there is NO MANAGEMENT of the Hollow there is only trail upkeep which is on-going by JM peeps. Any funds, like we have secured, to put into the hollow are well spent and only add to beautify/restore this City amenity.

Kristina Smitten:

- 1) What do you want this area to look like for you and generations to come? [A healthy forest ecosystem that is primarily managed by mimicking the natural cycles of fire.](#)
- 2) Carefully look at pages 10-14 where it is proposed what to remove, how to remove (including chemicals), fire and mowing recommendations, and replacing/replanting recommendations. [Fully support CCES's analysis and recommendations. They are highly respected landscape ecologists, and their technical opinion is echoed by others in the field.](#)
- 3) Think about how and if we will be able to continue this (or any other) management plan; meaning who will be writing grants for 2-12 years [This is City property and the City contemplates how the management of this and other open space areas are part of the planning and budgeting process](#), how will Jackson Meadow residents physically be able to keep up with prescribed work regimes [Again, this is City property that Jackson Meadow residents have been primarily the stewards. This should not lead to an assumption that it is up to Jackson Meadow residents to manage this landscape.](#), is taxpayer money sustainable for this [Again, this is a City question but right now nothing is being done by the City to](#)

maintain the forest health. If fire is able to be used, it will be more cost efficient than other management strategies. Hired prescribed burns are typically a single day worth of work and recommended in forest environments every few years., etc.

4) How does long term management of the Hollow fit into phased management of other JM areas, and how do we pay for this 5-20 years out? This is not a responsibility of Jackson Meadow residents to manage. Jackson Meadow residents are likely willing to continue to support management through volunteers and use of equipment, but it is not appropriate for JM to budget for it.

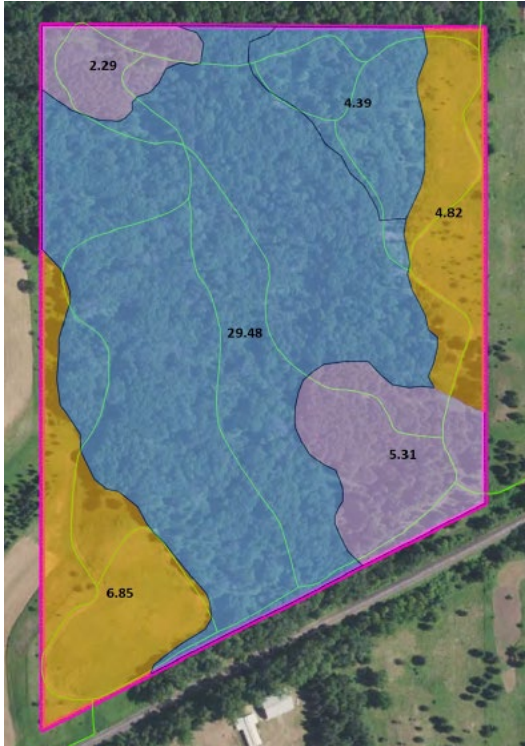
5) Is the assessment of this area as "degraded" "decayed" and "stagnant" agreed upon? Absolutely. The forest is significantly degraded and continuing to become a less healthy ecosystem. Very limited light is able to penetrate to the forest floor. A person would find it very difficult (and unsafe) to walk off the trail and into the forest due to invasives and downfall.

Finally, ask yourself what does stewardship mean, and what does that stewardship look like? Stewardship is supporting a healthy forest with predominantly native species and managed through mimicking the natural cycles of fire. Allowing natural systems to thrive with minimal intervention.

Eileen Hunter and Stuart Krahn:

Thank you for your request for comments from JM. Below are my and Stuart's comments:

1. Thank you for seeking feedback on this project and for your passion for tending the City's public lands.
2. The proposed plan for the Hollow management identifies 3 main areas: (A) Red pine stands (purple) of 7.6 acres; (B) Degraded Southern Mesic Oak Woodland (blue) of 29.48 acres; and (C) Degraded Southern Dry Prairie (yellow) 11.67 acres.



3. The proposed plan calls for \$155,515 to be spent.
4. Of this amount, \$145,515 (94%) is allocated to (a) removing **non-native**, invasive understory of buckthorn, prickly ash, and honeysuckle; (b) treating stumps after cutting, (c) using burning, forestry mowing, overseeding, and selective tree planting to encourage native plant and tree seedlings to re-establish native plants; and (d) removing deadfall.
5. \$10,000 (6%) is allocated to the “select removal of mature [native] trees” including box elder, red maple, basswood, elm, black cherry, aspen, and birch. (Page 3, Task 3B) **This aspect of the plan should be deleted. Native trees should be left alone, but the invasive understory should be removed. Special care should be taken to identify the few areas where young native saplings have been able to grow, and those saplings should be marked and protected.**
6. **This is not a plan to “clear cut” the Hollow,** and the \$10,000 allocated to cutting mature native trees can and should be re-allocated to additional native tree planting.
7. The treatment of the prairie remnant in the North Meadow is completely different than the work proposed for the Hollow. **The red pine stands will not be touched. No native trees will be cut.**
8. The grant application was written to obtain funds to remove the non-native invasive understory. It was approved by DNR experts in landscape ecology, who uniformly agree that invasive woody plants like buckthorn, prickly ash, and non-native honeysuckle have profoundly degrading effects on native forest ecology by shading young, desirable native saplings.
9. The proposed course of treatment of the non-native, invasive understory has been studied, approved, and successfully used throughout the northern US to restore native forests.
10. **Experts agree that the non-native, invasive understory does not allow native trees and plants to germinate and grow and leads to degraded, decayed woodlands where non-natives introduced through commercial landscaping dominate.**

11. **There does not appear to be any published, peer-reviewed literature that advocates a “let nature take its course” approach to non-native, invasive understories. That’s why the DNR gave the City this grant.**
12. JM residents have been clearing the non-native, invasive understory from the Hollow for 25 years. From 2000 to ~2010, JM residents successfully burned at least 50% of the understory most years. But for this work, the Hollow would be a thicket of 25’ tall buckthorn bearing fruit to be spread up and down the valley.
13. The Hollow is full of older native trees – but it has relatively few young, successional native trees due to the shading effects of the non-native, invasive understory.
14. The best young native trees in the Hollow are in areas that were previously covered by buckthorn that was eliminated by JM residents over the past 25 years.
15. This grant gives the City of Marine an incredible opportunity to make enormous progress in setting back the non-native, invasive understory and reinvigorating the chances for the Hollow to return to a native state.
16. Leaving the non-native, invasive understory will mean more buckthorn, prickly ash, and honeysuckle and fewer if any native trees for generations to come – and this approach will result in the proliferation of seeds to be carried by birds throughout the area.
17. The City should appoint a task force of interested citizens to develop a 30-year plan for continuing the work to restore the Hollow to its native state after this work is completed. This task force can track progress, consult with landscape ecologists, continue to leverage DNR funds for necessary work, and coordinate volunteer citizen efforts. JM residents would surely step up to serve.
18. JM will almost certainly be able to take the lead on burning projects that are part of the management plan given our deep experience with burning in the Hollow.
19. Thanks again.

Mary Fernstrum:

I am in favor of using the grant to eliminate invasive plants in the Hollow. Peter and I participated in Hollow burns and trail building so have been part of the twenty five years of clearing. This work was done almost 100% by JM folks. It was a good time to share the work and see the results. It was one of the early ways we built the community we have today. Mary Fernstrum

Chloe Ramey and Eric Doyle:

[Responding to request for comments from Eileen Hunter] Thanks for reaching out. Not having much knowledge on this topic yet, I defer to those with stronger views. Yours and Stuart’s comments seem reasonable to me based on my cursory understanding of native restoration and the need for human intervention to cure human invasion. I agree that the small amount of money allocated to clearing natives should be reallocated and don’t have much to add on the plan for non-natives.

Michelle and Shannon Pieper:

Oh, thank you for sharing your comments with the group, Eileen. As usual, you and Stuart not only see things clearly but are able to communicate clearly as well. I have been writing draft after draft for the past several days and now I'm under the gun and Eileen has thrown me a lifeline 😊

Wendy, I am in complete and total agreement with everything Eileen said, as is Shannon.

Nels Peterson:

While I have concerns with the ongoing required burn efforts for the Hollow (this will most likely be the same crew as always), my distaste for the current state of the Hollow and belief that efforts to contain buckthorn like Andy's valiant effort aren't sustainable outweigh those concerns.

Evan Johnson:

I am generally in support of the approach taken in the CCES management plan. Here are some of my thoughts:

- In conversation with CCES's Amy Husveth, I was interested to hear that, unlike many places, the Hollow is an area where it's "restored" condition is one that can also be successful under the upcoming effects of climate change. We would not be "fixing" something only to lose it again to global warming

- leaving aside the stand of red pine, when I look at the aerial images (see attached) of today and 1957 (and 1938 and 1968), I am struck by what seems to be a dramatic change in the density of the growth in Area B (the dry-mesic oak woodland). I believe thinning this area is a significant part of the CCES plan, and it seems to mirror what was there almost 100 years ago

- there seem to me to be strong parallels between what I read in the CCES planning for Area B and the successful work that Wendy Ward showed us she is doing at her property. There are a few key differences (e.g., use of herbicides, timeframe, size of crew), but it struck me the desired results are not so different: reduce the invasives, remove what's dead, clear space for sunlight/new growth, burn where you can, keep coming back and doing it again

- moving fast vs. moving slowly: in many ways, what the CCES plan does in several years doesn't seem completely different to me than what a fire often does in hours—and this is an ecosystem that was built around fires moving through regularly

Two final thoughts:

I wonder if part of the challenge around this is as much about the communication process as it is about the details of the management plan. Too many people seem to feel, fairly or unfairly, that they were not part of the discussion. The result is that we are spending less time focused on the content of the proposal and more on the way the process has unfolded.

And lastly, I think a fundamental, but missing, piece to all this conversation is a clear definition of what—together—we mean by "stewardship." I have asked this question a number of times over the last few years, but have never been pointed to a consistent, shared answer.

If we don't have that shared starting point, how can we hope to arrive at a consensus on how to best move ahead?

