

**MINUTES**

**Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, November 17, 2016

**Location: Belle Isle Flynn Pavilion**

**No quorum at 9:00 a.m.**

Meeting called to order at 9:10 a.m.  
Roll Call and Excused Absences

**EXCUSED ABSENCES**

Michele Hodges  
Michael Curis

**PRESENT FOR BIPAC**

Co – Chair Rev. Lonnie Peek	chaired today’s meeting
Bryan Barnhill	
Bud Denker	
Sommer Woods (arrived at 9:27am)	Quorum established

**DNR STAFF PRESENT**

Ron Olson  
Karis Floyd  
Jacob Brown  
Darlisa Rickman  
Kale Leftwich  
Amanda Hertl  
Heide Frei

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

No quorum was present at the time of review, to approve the October 20, 2016 minutes. The October 20, 2016 minutes will be reviewed at the December meeting.

## **PRESENTATION: OAK WILT CONTROL IN BELLE ISLE PARK**

### **Heidi Frei, DNR, Parks and Recreation – Stewardship**

**Introduction:** At the October 20, 2016 meeting Chief Olson, DNR, informed the group that the staff had identified oak wilt on Belle Isle. Oak Wilt is an invasive infestation of oak trees.

Heidi Frei, DNR-Stewardship works statewide regarding the Oak Wilt and led the assessment of Belle Isle.

The presentation reviewed the following regarding Oak Wilt:

- The basics of oak wilt, how it spreads and its transmission.
- Examples of treatments that have been done within other state parks.
- Maps that depict the extent of the Oak Wilt impact on Belle Isle and an outline of treatments.
- Oak Wilt is an invasive, fungal disease that rapidly kills red oaks
  - This disease could affect white oaks as well; however, red oaks are more susceptible. Once a red oak is infected it will die (usually suddenly)
  - The disease spreads in two ways; either aboveground, spread through pressure pads and insects or underground via root grafting.
- Trees must be removed and destroyed or the infection will continue to spread.
- Certain characteristics make it easier to identify oak wilt. Often wilted leaves will drop early in the season, July through September. You may also see cracks forming on the bark. Early detection is critical due to the nature of how it spreads.
- This disease spreads rapidly if left unmanaged. Treatment must address both above and below ground transmission. It is estimated that 90% of transmission occurs underground; however, the initial infected tree is usually above ground. To effectively control, both means of the infection needs to be addressed.
- Management of oak wilt involves determining the extent of the root system, which can be far reaching depending on the size of the infected tree.
- Examples of how Oak Wilt has affected trees at Hoffmaster State Park and Waterloo were discussed.
- There is no cure for oak wilt, only preventative (Fungistat) treatments.
  - An injected treatment is performed every two years with no guarantee that the treatment will work.
- Protection of the oak resource on the island is critical. To prevent further loss, removal of spore producers and installing root graft barriers is imperative.
- Flatwoods forest is 200 acres total. Oak Wilt has infested and directly impacted 47.9 acres. These areas include four distinct zones where we know we have oak wilt and five single trees that are infected.

- ZONE 1: Located off Central. There are lots of dead Ash and Silver Maple trees in this area. There are also other things going on in this zone such as bacteria wetwood, standing water and hydrology issues. We do know oak wilt is there, due to positive lab samples.
- ZONE 2: Sandwiched between the Nashua Trail and Tanglewood Road bed. There has been a lot of oak wilt found in this zone.
- ZONE 3 and 4: Oak wilt was found in these zones, not yet to the extent as other areas.

## **BELLE ISLE OAK WILT PLAN**

- Zones 1, 2, 3 and 4: Protect uninfected forest from root grafting (root graft barriers). A portion of zone 1 has large oak loss. This area also includes other species including Ash. There are many other causes of tree loss in this area including hydrology, road fill and other diseases. This area should be isolated from quality Red and White Oak trees on east end of island.
- Zones 2, 3, 4: Inject select trees that are not yet affected. Not certain at this time if we can inject every tree would like to try.
- Landscape trees: Preventative treatment will be done to prevent additional loss in the day use areas.

**Chief Olson** noted that problems with invasive species are not unique to Belle Isle. He referenced other parks that have had issues with invasive species. Chief Olson stressed the need for all to understand there are things that must be done.

**Bryan Barnhill** inquired about the overall prognosis on the number of infected trees, the length of time it would take to remedy the situation and what the overall assessment of the health of all the tree species on the island is.

*Heidi Frei further explained that it's difficult to give an exact number of trees affected. There are many things going on - especially in zone 1.*

During the assessment, bacteria wetwood was found in zone 1 and in another location by the zoo. There are hydrology issues in zone 1 as well. While going through zones, there were at least 100 trees discovered that we know or very strongly suspected to have died from Oak Wilt this year. The numbers are somewhere between 100 (low end) and 150 (high end) that have been infected (and died) by oak wilt. The infected trees will have to come down and be removed so they don't develop pressure pads and infect other trees.

Trees that died several years ago from oak wilt, bacteria wet wood or because they have been suffocating in several feet of water can stay. They will not form pressure pads and are no longer a viable host for the disease and can stay as long as they are not hazardous to park users.

**Bryan Barnhill** questioned how many trees have been infected and is likely to die.

*Heidi stated that the exact number is unknown. DNR staff is working to establish the number infected. We still have to determine the extent of the root systems. The inability to access many of the areas makes it difficult to assess how many trees have the potential to die from oak wilt. The DNR did not become aware of the problem until September 2016. Once aware of the situation, survey efforts and collaboration with forest resources began immediately. The team surveyed as much as possible and came up with a number that they felt confident about. That's the 100-150 referenced earlier.*

*Heidi Frei responded to Bryant Barnhill's question about the overall assessment of the trees by reminding us that the Emerald Ash widely affected the forest, however, she is very impressed with many of the other areas.*

**Bud Denker** asked about the time frame in which work should happen this winter.

*Heidi Frei explained that they want to handle things in the spring before the damage affects neighboring trees. Early detection will be the focus moving forward.*

**Lonnie Peek** asked if we have a problem.

*Heidi further explained that we have 200 acres of forest and nearly 50 acres have been impacted by Oak Wilt. That is a pretty significant number; however, it's not the only thing going on.*

Heidi was asked (and agreed) to come back in February to give an update.

**Audience Question:** Have you checked the oaks in the picnic area?

*Heidi Frei responded that the focus was on the woods. The Day Use Area was more like a "windshield" survey. Only one tree was found with an issue.*

**Audience Question:** Concerns were expressed about the barrels behind the police station.

*Heidi Frei stated that they are white oak. They don't usually die from oak wilt – not likely, but we will still keep a look out.*

**Bud Denker** commented that it's a good thing that the DNR is here managing the park. We may not be aware or able to deal with the issues otherwise.

## GENERAL UPDATES

### *DNR Law Enforcement Update*

#### **Sgt. Dan Bigger, Acting Lieutenant - District 9**

- Lt. Shaw sends his apologies for not being able to be present.
- Sgt. Bigger will be leaving in December to go back to the Lansing area where he is assigned. Sgt. Bigger believes he accomplished a lot during his time here at Belle Isle.
- Next month Sgt. Bigger will introduce the new Lieutenant for District 9. Now, there will be a consistent contact person.
- LED is seeing more park patrons having positive interactions with Law Officers.
- Law Enforcement Division started issuing “after action” reports to identify issues and concerns for park patrons, event patrons, park staff and officers. This will continue next year.
- Sgt. Bigger requested a 2 week time period to help transition things over to the new Lieutenant.
- Officers are still making a few stops for traffic violations; otherwise, things are going well.

**Lonnie Peek** asked Sgt. Bigger to discuss the components of the Law Enforcement Team.

*Sgt. Bigger explained that law enforcement is made up of DNR Conservation Officers and MSP Officers. Often the Coast Guards assist with events. Communication with officers and park staff is very frequent. Issues are addressed through phone calls and/or emails. Communication is important and it's getting better as we move forward.*

**Lonnie Peek** asked if there are interactions with the Detroit Police Department.

*Sgt. Bigger replied yes. Then explained that they don't usually come on the island, however, they assist with coordinating traffic etc. on the other side of the bridge.*

**Bud Denker** mentioned that an officer saved a man's life on the Belle Isle Bridge less than a month ago.

**Chief Olson** stated the officer Richard Cardenas will be honored with a plaque and certificate at the next meeting. He was unable to attend due to his responsibilities during the opening of deer season.

**Sgt. Bigger** mentioned that the Harbor Master and Ranger Theresa Bryant where also instrumental in assisting with the life saving measures.

## ***Infrastructure***

**Amanda Hertl** reported on various infrastructure and project updates:

- Summary of the Belle Isle Park Trails Master Plan – finished in October 2016
- DNR hired Smith JJR to help develop a trail development on Belle Isle
- They started in the summer working the staff and public
- Plan will be available on the Belle Isle website in about a month
- Team: Belle Isle Staff, Stewardship, Trails Committee and Amanda

### **Goals:**

- Locate the Iron Belle Trail Head on Belle Isle
- Look at the island and recognize opportunities and constraints and develop a foot trail around the perimeter of the island.
- Look at developing a trail system through the 200-acre wet-mesic flatwood forest
- Community Engagement: a meeting is scheduled for October 24, 2016 at the Flynn Pavilion
  - Approximately fifty people attended
  - In general, there was a lot of energy and excitement
- Recommendation was made to use the lighthouse parking lot as the southern terminus of the Michigan Iron Belle Tail.
- Next year, we will develop a plan to create the trailhead
- Smith Group JJR recently completed an assessment of the flatwoods and looked at how the hydrology has been changed over time with development in the park. Next year, we will start a grant that will look at the restoration of the flatwoods area.

**Lonnie Peek** asked for clarification about the lighthouse area. Will the DNR disturb the tranquility of the lighthouse area?

*Amanda shared that the trailhead will be in the parking lot area, thus not disturbing the lighthouse area. The lighthouse will be visible from the trailhead, but we will not be building anything near it.*

## ***Park Operations Update***

**Karis Floyd, Belle Isle Park Manager,**

A monthly update was given on park operations; staff has completed winterizing the Casino outside restrooms. The Bus Stop Shelter is the only restrooms open at this time.

## ***Outreach and Upcoming Events***

**Darlisa Rickman**, Outreach and Events Coordinator, Belle Isle Park, reviewed the 2016 upcoming events. The following upcoming events were noted:

- Approximately seven events and seven weddings left for the 2016 season.
- First Harvest Festival – Saturday, October 29, 2016

- All tents on the park participated/ all venues open
- Approximately 900 attended, great turnout
- It was windy but nice weather
- There were hay-rides, donuts served, popcorn and hot cider
- Senior Power Day had a well-attended event yesterday

The following upcoming November and December events were noted:

- |  |                        |
|--|------------------------|
| ● 11/19 Stewardship Saturday (Nature Zoo)                | 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. |
| ● 11/20 Girls on the Run (Scott Fountain – Casino Way)   | 9:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  |
| ● 12/02 BIC Fundraiser: Bite of the Amazon (Aquarium)    | 5:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m. |
| ● 12/09 Holiday Stroll (Aquarium, Dossin, Conservancy)   | 4:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.  |
| ● 12/14 Senior Power Days - Holiday Celebration (Casino) | 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. |
| ● 12/17 Stewardship Saturday (Nature Zoo)                | 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. |
| ● 12/31 New Years’ Eve Run (Casino)                      | 3:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.  |

**PUBLIC COMMENTS** (3 minutes each)

Stephanie Donaldson                    **Ms. Donaldson** discussed the success of the November 16, 2016 Senior Power Day event. Stephanie stated that the event was well attended. Stephanie also stressed that there was great interaction between seniors and all units of Law Enforcement (i.e. DNR and MSP Officers)

**OTHER ITEMS**

Lonnie Peeks                                Ron was featured on WDIV “Making a Difference”. Feature aired multiple times. Good feedback was received regarding the show.

Ron Olson                                    Beginning in February we will be preparing for the year in review with the Detroit City Council. Chief Olson will update the committee about the date as it approaches.

**Next BIPAC Meeting:**                December 15, 2016, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m., at the Belle Isle Casino

Motion to Adjourn

Moved by:                                Lonnie Peek  
 Seconded by:                            Ron Olson  
 Meeting Adjourned:    10:27 a.m.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Michele Hodges

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ronald A. Olson, Chief

Date: \_\_\_\_\_