

Minutes of the Arboretum Advisory Council

August 3, 1998 in Sexton Commons

Members Present: Mr. Gordon Bailey, Mrs. Dorothy Johnson, Fr. John Kulas, Mr. Scott May, Dr. Peter Olin, Fr. Paul Schwietz, chair.

Members Absent: Dr. Gordon Brown, Dr. Gary Deason, Mrs. Nancy Diedrich, Mr. Tom Kroll, Dr. Cheryl Knox, Ms. Janette Monear, Mrs. Sarah Pruett, Mr. Ron Weinholt.

Meeting Summary: The fund-raising and promotion committee is working out details of our membership drive with two major events this fall on September 26 and October 10. The education committee co-hosted two conferences this summer, the second to develop environmental curriculum specific to Saint John's. The management committee reported on plant, butterfly and bird inventories being done this summer in the Habitat Restoration Project.

Assignments: Everyone needs to help with promotions with the fall events.

Fund-raising and Promotions Committee

Membership drive: Dorothy Johnson, chair, reviewed three pages of materials for the membership drive beginning this fall. The Saint John's alumni office is aware of these events and will include them in their promotional materials. The **dedication of the kiosk** will take place on Saturday, September 26. There will be a speaker at 11 a.m. with several tours included during the day. The events will be on the prairie: the guest speaker, a reenactment of Fr. Bruno Riss' claiming Indianbush for the monks, Native Americans drummers, and hopefully a buffalo! Janette Monear is loaning us a tent, and Bailey Nurseries are sponsoring the event. We plan to have books available—from the Bookstore--and displays from each of the three committees. Scott May is chair of the event.

On **Homecoming**, the arboretum will have a stand near Mary Hall to promote memberships and raise awareness of the natural arboretum. Tours will also be offered during the day. We will also sponsor a 5K run and walk that morning as a promotion.

The bus drop-off is completed, and the grading is completed for the prairie addition and the kiosk site. The kiosk is under construction this week, and the prairie was planted in mid-July.

Artwork. Fr. Fran Hoefgen has graciously offered his photos to be used for promotional cards. There will be four sets of four different pictures from Saint John's. The cards will be printed by friends in Hastings for the event, and they are donating the labor to the arboretum.

Br. Simon Hoa has done four stunning watercolors of prairie plants as a set for a poster, prints, and cards. We will use these for major donors and for higher priced sales items.

(Our tentative membership goal is to have 250 members by the end of the year.)

Sagatagan Seasons. Colin Robertson, the new editor this year, has the summer issue of the Sagatagan Seasons ready for the printers. It will be out in a week. This issue features an article by Ron Weinholt. The fall issue will come out on October 1, before Homecoming.

Education Committee

Br. Doug Mullin joined the group to report on the workshop, Teaching Naturally, which we co-sponsored with Twin City Tree Trust. There were about thirty teachers, K-12, in attendance, with nine local teachers who were pre-selected to develop curriculum specific to Saint John's and three age groups. The groups were primary, intermediate, and high school. Each group will write a unit for woods, wetland, and prairie. There will be activities for each unit to be done in school beforehand, here at Saint John's, and then back in the classroom. Activities will be appropriate to the age group and support the state's graduation standards. Two of the groups have already done their preliminary work, which needs to be edited and put into a cohesive format before they can be duplicated for various schools. Brother Doug expects to have this done this fall. The committee still has to resolve questions about how the materials will be distributed and updated.

This educational project was made possible by a donation of \$3,000.00 from Saint John's University, which matched funds that Twin City Tree Trust raised for the workshop.

Management and Restoration Committee

Several inventories are going on this summer in the Habitat Restoration Project. Chris Thompson, a senior, is inventorying **plant species on the prairie**. In addition to identifying the species present, Chris has mapped out the prairie into 18 zones in order to identify the plant diversity, and he is also documenting the phenology, when plants bloom; over several years this will provide us important information. We have identified 126 species present; 24 of which are nonnative. This work is proving to be an encouraging report of the progress of the prairie, since the original planting in 1991.

Chris is also identifying **birds** in the area and, to date, has identified 68 species present. We have also discovered skinks in the savanna, which are a small reptile, like a lizard.

Noah Whiteman, SJU '98, is identifying **butterflies** present on the prairie and comparing the list to a study completed in 1995 by Aaron Wachaloritz, SJU '96. Noah has identified 24 species, 4 of which were not present in 1995. In a general comparison of the two studies, he has noticed more skippers--a small butterfly present now. This is probably due to having changed our fire management regime in 1995 from burning the whole prairie at once, to burning approximately a third each year. Thus, the whole prairie is burned over a three-year span. There were 27 species present in 1995.

Noah is also inventorying the vegetation in the upper ten acres of the **wetlands** near the Gemini Lake. Included in this is the study of the hydrology of this area, which has a strong surface water flow and significant seeps (ground water). The wetlands were first ditched in the 1870s; the last time was in the 1940s to allow meadow hay to be cut for livestock. The Department of Soil and Water Conservation, Department of Natural Resources (Water division), and the Fish and Wildlife Service are all willing to partner with us in the study and restoration of the hydrology and vegetation of these wetlands. For the most part the wetlands vegetation is a healthy sedge meadow, but the disturbed areas are full of European reed canary grass. The goal of this study is to determine the best plan of action for future management of the area.

Our **restoration efforts** were somewhat set back by a significant amount of weeds in the savanna and prairie. The savanna has not been planted yet in order to further prepare the area for seeding. Care is being taken not to hinder the oaks or the large areas of the native Pennsylvania sedge. Ten species of native grasses and 47 forbs were seeded in the five acres of prairie near the kiosk and entrance road. There are about three thousand prairie flowers to be planted yet.

The **prairie garden** will contain over two thousand plants representing one hundred different species. It will be arranged from xeric—dry, mesic—medium, to wet. There was a good discussion about arranging these plants naturally, with spring, summer, and autumn plants intermingled and separated according to their moisture requirements. It proved to be a timely discussion since we plan to begin planting in two weeks.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Fr. Paul Schwietz, O.S.B.
Arboretum Director

The next meeting of the advisory council is Monday, November 2 at 2:00 p.m. in Sexton Commons.

We will not meet in October since we have the membership drive events.