

July 5, 2021

To: Mayor Mitch Reynolds and Members of the La Crosse Common Council

From: Chuck Lee, Board President
Friends of the La Crosse River Marsh

Re: 2022-2026 Capital Projects Budget
(City Planning Commission Draft 6/7/20)

The *Friends of the La Crosse River Marsh* Board of Directors strongly support item # 551, "Marsh Hydrological Study & Implementation," in the 2022-2026 Capital Projects Budget. (p. 9 under "Flood Control, Harbors, and Waterfront") We urge your continued support for this, the second year of a major project in the La Crosse River Marsh.

The *Friends of the Marsh* has worked closely with the city to develop this project, defining priorities and scope, conducting a search for an environmental engineering firm to analyze, plan, and implement changes, and serving as a consulting and liaison agency for the project itself.

SmithGroup, Inc., out of Madison, has a team of specialists working on three priority areas, including: 1) Analyzing the flow of water through the marsh and developing structures to facilitate the storage of flood water during periods of Mississippi River floods and heavy rain events and outflow when hydraulic conditions allow, establishing seasonal high and low water levels; 2) Reducing trail inundation, closures, and maintenance; and 3) Improving/increasing emergent plant communities and enhancing/protecting the floodplain forest, to be achieved through invasive vegetation control, planting, and the water level changes brought about in item #1 above. Please note that each of these priority areas includes analysis, planning, and implementation, in priority order.

These three goals will greatly improve the "wetland services" performed by this marsh. It can store more floodwater during periods of high water. During dry periods, the lower water levels will help "re-set" aquatic vegetation. The recreational trails will be closed less often and require less maintenance. Protected and enhanced vegetation will promote greater biodiversity.

This is the first time in our history that the La Crosse River Marsh has been analyzed as a wetland system that serves the community. The city is to be commended for its willingness to undertake such a project. Please give this budget item your full support.

I will be pleased to respond to questions and/or provide additional information. Contact me at friendsofthemarsh@gmail.com or 608-785-2205.