

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN

Friends of the Blufflands

AND

City of La Crosse Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department

This MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING is hereby made and entered into by and between Friends of the Blufflands, hereinafter referred to as FBL, and City of La Crosse Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department, hereinafter referred to as City.

PURPOSE:

This MOU sets forth the understanding between FBL and the City for the purpose of cooperating and defining the roles of each organization.

OBJECTIVE:

FBL and the City have the mutual goal to enhance the conservation and habitat value of Hixon Forest and the Blufflands. This MOU is intended to act as a guide for continued cooperation between FBL and the City. This document may be amended by mutual agreement from time to time as the parties may desire. It is not intended to be a legally binding or enforceable document in any respect, and nothing hereinafter creates any legal obligations of any kind for FBL and the City.

INTRODUCTION:

As a Department of the City of La Crosse, the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department is dedicated to managing parks owned by the City of La Crosse for the benefit of the community. The parks provide for a variety of uses and activities, including outdoor recreation as well as simple and quiet exposure to nature that many seek for physical and mental well-being in their increasingly hectic modern lives. The City recognizes high public demand for diverse outdoor experiences, as illustrated by increasing use on existing trails, events and public meetings, which for many includes experiencing the wonder of an intact vibrant native ecosystem. The City is interested in providing a variety of outdoor experiences in existing and new parks. The City recognizes a system of high-quality trails and a vibrant ecosystem within the parks contribute to local and regional economies and quality of life.

FBL is a 501(C)3 nonprofit established to promote sound conservation practices in Hixon Forest and the surrounding Blufflands and to be a voice for a wide variety of bluffland users who value the area for recreation as well as the habitat it provides. Through this MOU or subsequent agreements FBL will provide support, volunteer labor and/or funds to the City for accomplishment of these activities.

The public increasingly recognizes that actively promoting physical activity in a natural setting has significant value for health. FBL and the City share a common interest to provide these resources to residents.

STATEMENT OF MUTUAL GOALS:

- Manage and maintain areas of high conservation value.
- Direct use to designated trails and away from environmentally sensitive areas.
- Provide a variety of sought-after user experiences, including a variety of trails with differing user restrictions.

- Reduce conflicts between different user groups.
- To limit the density of trails to prevent loss of habitat and aesthetic value.
- Provide consistent public education and information, including meetings, events, and signage.
- Enhance enjoyment and the health benefits of being in nature by supporting educational activities.
- Develop a Master Plan for future management of area blufflands.
- Work together to identify and secure funding to support restoration efforts. Funding sources include direct funding, private donations, volunteer contributions and grants.

The Primary actions for accomplishing these goals may include:

The City is committed to:

- Work with FBL to identify appropriate partnership opportunities and jointly pursue such projects contingent on availability of funds and personnel.
- Encourage continued participation between FBL and City officials in the development of mutually beneficial work projects and educational activities.
- Continue to recognize the need to protect the conservation value of City-owned land while promoting recreation.
- Facilitate introductions between FBL and other stewardship groups so that multiple groups can work together towards enhancing the experiences of a wide variety of users.
- Include and utilize the technical expertise of FBL when planning activities for Hixon Forest and the Blufflands such as making trails, implementing forest management plans, reforestation, restoring remnant prairies, planting, and maintaining new prairies, and controlling invasive species.
- Review this agreement with FBL annually for the purpose of making revisions as necessary.

The Friends of the Blufflands is committed to:

- Assist the City in the development of a Master Plan for bluffland management. Assist as requested with related tasks such as user group survey development.
- Work with the City to identify appropriate partnership opportunities and jointly pursue such projects contingent upon availability of funds and personnel.
- Produce a 5-year work plan for bluffland management and update annually. The later years of the plan will have less detail than the early years. Any proposals for new restoration projects would be included in the plan. The plan will also include estimated costs for the planned work.
- Provide labor and resources as available to preserve and enhance the areas of Hixon Forest and area blufflands that have high conservation value. Identify and coordinate volunteer work projects and other efforts to achieve conservation goals. Provide at least 800 volunteer hours per year of in-kind services toward these projects.
- Provide an annual summary of work completed, including volunteer and equipment hours.
- Provide technical assistance and professional services for conservation and education projects and activities.
- Provide technical expertise and assistance in the planning and development of new trails and other outdoor recreation amenities.

- Assist in monitoring projects over time to obtain quantitative measures of success.
- Work with the City to create a history of bluffland habitat restoration work and update annually as additional work is completed.
- Plan, update and assist in the design and installation of educational signage.
- Assist the City in project management of contracted work.
- Provide damage assessments for weather-related events.
- Encourage its members to work with local City officials to discuss and identify opportunities for cooperative work on mutually beneficial projects or activities, when appropriate.
- Obtain City approval prior to implementation of any new conservation or educational projects, trail construction or maintenance, or publication or distribution of any printed material regarding recreational or other uses on public lands.
- Review this agreement with the City annually for the purpose of making revisions.

It is mutually agreed and understood by all parties:

1. The cooperators will develop management plans for ongoing conservation projects located within City Parks Land as part of this MOU, which will be reviewed and updated annually.
2. The cooperators will jointly seek funding/grants to assist with all aspects of natural habitat improvement in the Blufflands.
3. NON-FUND OBLIGATING DOCUMENT This instrument is neither a fiscal nor a funds obligation document. Any endeavor or transfer of anything of value involving reimbursement or contribution of funds between the parties to this instrument will be handled through separate contracts or agreements.
4. COMMENCEMENT/EXPIRATION DATE. This instrument is executed as of the date of last signature and is effective through May 1, 2024, at which time it will expire unless mutually extended by written agreement.
5. NON-AGENCY PROVISION. It is understood that the City and Friends of the Blufflands are independent parties and are not agents of each other.

Designated Points of Contact and Signatures:

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