

Cedar Lake Park Natural Resources Management Recommendations

recommended by the Cedar Lake Park Working Group
for inclusion in the Cedar-Isles Master Plan

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During the Cedar-Isles master planning process, discussions about [community input](#) and long-term stewardship by neighborhood and regional groups led to the formation of the Cedar Lake Park Working Group to develop a set of goals focused on protecting and enhancing land in Cedar Lake Park. This group requests that the CAC include these goals in the Cedar-Isles Master Plan, as an important complement to the [CAC's Water Quality Subcommittee's Goals](#) for protecting and enhancing water quality.

According to MPRB's "Parks for All" Comprehensive Plan, "By nearly all scientific accounts, Earth is amidst the sixth significant extinction event in global history. Species diversity is dropping precipitously around the world, with plant and animal extinctions likely occurring daily." In 2019, [scientists concluded](#) that today there are [three billion fewer birds](#) in North America than 50 years ago—a loss of almost 1/3 of all birds. Insect populations are [drastically declining](#). In a [recent study](#) scientists found a "terrifying" decline in flying insects and concluded that "We cannot put off action any longer, for the health and wellbeing of future generations ... It is essential that we halt biodiversity decline now."

Volunteer Park Stewards at Cedar Lake have long understood the necessity to care for our natural resources, which enhance our quality of life and ensure our very survival. The current crises of climate change and declining biodiversity make the Cedar Lake Park Association's Nurture Nature philosophy more relevant than ever: "With more stress being imposed upon natural ecosystems by increasing urbanization, our future will depend on redeveloping cities which function more harmoniously with nature."

As stated in the Park Board's [Natural Areas Plan](#) [pp. 5-6]:

"Natural areas are vital to city residents and park visitors for several reasons besides the economic value they provide. Wetlands and forested areas along rivers and streams help reduce downstream flooding, and prairies and forests on the landscape absorb huge quantities of rainfall, which in turn shrinks the amount of runoff and eroded sediment that reaches a watershed's streams and lakes...natural landscapes recharge groundwater and return the majority of precipitation to the air (through evapotranspiration), resulting in less runoff and associated erosion, water pollution, and flooding. Natural areas also absorb and store carbon from the air, helping to reduce greenhouse gasses. Schools, organizations, and families use natural areas to learn about the natural world; this is especially important for young children who otherwise spend more time making virtual connections indoors. The quality of life in urban areas is better simply because natural areas give citizens and visitors places to stroll, bike, take in the scenery, or simply relax in a natural setting."

The goals proposed by the Cedar Lake Work Group will strengthen efforts to sustain biodiversity and adapt to climate change while offering nature-based recreation in Cedar Lake Park as part of the Chain of Lakes Regional Park. These goals reflect Cedar Lake Park's location in the [Chain of Lakes Important Bird Area](#) and align with the Park Board's approved [Parks for All Comprehensive Plan](#), [Ecological Systems Plan](#), and [Phase II Natural Areas Plan](#), as well as the [Minneapolis Stormwater Management Plan](#) and the [Natural Areas/Wetlands Subcommittee's Recommendations](#) to the MPRB Board of Commissioners for Natural Areas Management.

Land Management Goals

Goal: Manage natural resources in and adjacent to Cedar Lake Park as an ecologically healthy landscape for people, plants and wildlife, by developing and implementing (as stated in the Park Board's Phase II Natural Areas Plan) a detailed Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) for Cedar Lake Park.

- Build staff expertise and capacity for effective natural resources management by adding ecologists, biologists and other qualified technical personnel.
- Expand staff and institutional capacity and skills to increase and sustain volunteer engagement in restoration and management.
- Improve the health of existing tree stands and expand the tree canopy with native and adapted North American species.
- Establish diverse native and adapted native plants for each type of plant community.
- Support pollinators and other wildlife by minimizing use of any pesticides by any agency, and evaluate opting out of MMCD treatments to protect the [food web](#).
- Use non-toxic best management practices to control invasive species whenever possible.
- Strengthen and protect a terrestrial and aquatic food web (including littoral zones) with diverse native species of site-appropriate trees and plants.
- Monitor informal trails and lake access points and take action when necessary to protect wildlife habitat and prevent or mitigate damage to the shoreline and plants.
- Acquire remnant SWLRT land for use as an undeveloped natural area with site-appropriate native and adapted vegetation.
- Design and locate appropriately-scaled service corridors that blend with the natural environment.
- Manage trash/refuse and address sanitation needs year-round with high-quality, well-maintained facilities, while considering aesthetics and the visitor experience in addition to accessibility for people and vehicles.
- Adopt a measurement system to monitor, evaluate and report the ecological health of Cedar Lake parkland (in addition to existing water quality reporting) on a regular basis.
- Implement a policy and procedure for quickly mobilizing to address immediate threats such as jumping worms.

Master Plan Level Goals

Goal: Prioritize the need to maintain ecologically thriving parkland as the foundation of recreational opportunities for park visitors.

- Establish metrics for carrying capacity of the natural resources linked to recreational activities and amenities (such as boats, docks and beaches) to ensure sustainable usage.
- Maintain and stabilize native plant communities and prevent erosion using trails, natural borders, and designated access points and activities.
- Design low-profile naturalistic signage to provide way-finding and park guidelines.
- Formalize a natural/soft surface low-impact trail network for pedestrians that protects plant communities and wildlife habitat.
- Direct bikers to regional bike trails (Cedar Lake, Kenilworth, and Grand Rounds) with signage and other tools.
- Minimize human artifacts and limit built structures in the Park, and design and site amenities within the context of the natural environment and a natural shoreline.

Goal: Maximize and restore habitat (terrestrial and aquatic) to improve the health of the parkland and lake and ensure healthy spaces for wildlife and nature-based recreation.

- Enhance natural areas to ensure high-functioning native and adapted plant communities.
- Conduct bi-annual wildlife inventories to determine populations, trends and threats, as part of a comprehensive biological and ecological monitoring program.
- Establish and maintain natural areas in a manner that prioritizes the protection and enhancement of habitat for wildlife likely to use the areas.
- Apply best management practices to reduce threats to birds and other wildlife, including reducing lighting and noise pollution, with expanded protections during nesting and migration periods.
- Apply science-based monitoring and protocols to minimize pesticide use.
- Address physical barriers to access by mobility-challenged park visitors, in appropriate locations and while minimizing hardscape.

Goal: Provide inclusive and innovative programming that builds community and connects diverse park visitors with each other and to Nature while protecting the natural environment.

- Establish and use effective outreach and communication channels to inform visitors and the general public about events, programs, and other park activities.
- Use outreach and communication channels, including an updated [MPRB webpage](#), to inform and educate people about the park as a natural area.
- Maintain and support existing nature-based programs for youth (such as the School Forest) that inspire, educate and equip people to become stewards of our parks.
- Reduce barriers to program participation by people of all abilities.
- Partner with organizations to conduct outreach and offer programs, including nearby neighborhood associations (e.g., Cedar-Isles-Dean, Bryn Mawr, Kenwood), stewardship groups (e.g., Cedar Lake Park Association, Friends of Cedar Lake, Friends of Cedar Lake Point Beach), and others (such as the Loppet Foundation, Audubon Chapter of Minneapolis, and environmental justice organizations).
- Recognize and actively support volunteer Park Stewards and organizations in their efforts to positively impact ecological function.

High-Level Regional Park Goal

Goal: Achieve broad community understanding and support of the environment and ecological challenges at Cedar Lake Park, factors impacting biodiversity, and ways people can help protect our parklands.

- Maintain a low-impact pedestrian trail network with naturalistic signage, fencing and other cues of care to protect plants and wildlife habitat.
- Implement strategies and practices to limit the spread of invasive species into natural areas, such as establishing buffer zones, limiting access, and selectively removing fruiting species.
- Work with the community to develop and deliver site-specific and seasonal nature-based education programs and outdoor events (e.g., naturalist, birding, canoeing).
- Promote enjoyment of Cedar Lake Park for its unique character as a naturalistic environment.
- Encourage and enable visitors to help protect Nature, manage trash, and reduce damage.
- Educate people about the “leave no trace” approach to recreation: take only pictures, leave only footprints.