

GN Issues Committee 2018 Annual Report to the AGM March 26, 2019

The Issues Committee (consisting of GN members Martha Munz Gue, Marty Drut, Hugh Armstrong, Dave McKenzie, Tina Regehr, Dwayne Myers, Gerry Ehlert and John Slater as well as advisor Rob Gardner) met on three occasions during the year; January 26, March 6 and November 5; with much of the discussions at the meetings focused on environmental aspects of revising the City's Municipal Development Plan. Also, small group meetings were held to finalize the Wildflower Brochure, organize the World Water Day/Week display, and discuss and carry-out the GN/City projects. The committee also conducted much of its communication by email and phone.

In 2018, the priority issues that were discussed included:

1. MH City Municipal Development Plan (MDP):

- a. Following the meeting in Dec 2017 with Robert Sissons, City's Planning Department, Martha continued correspondence with Robert by email and phone to express GN concerns with the environmental issues in the proposed revision of the MDP.
- b. Martha held a meeting at her house on April 27th for preliminary conversation and planning concerning the Kitchen Table Conversation Guide available on the website www.mymh.city
- c. Martha also met with the GN Board on May 1st to familiarize the Board members with the Guide.
- d. Martha and Tina also met with SEAWA directly and at their Forums to help focus the GN issues.
- e. On April 18th, Martha, Dwayne and John attend the Brier Run development meeting with the City Land & Business Support as well as the Parks & Recreation Department to discuss the proposed development plan. The City's contractor from Calgary presented the details of the proposed plan with emphasis on the site being an integrated community for families of all ages with a school, recreation parks, natural areas, commercial and industrial areas.

2. Riparian Areas along the River and Creeks:

- a. **Riparian Health Assessment** of the SS River: In 2017, Marty completed the grant project report and database documenting the current flora and condition of the riparian zone along the river from the TransCanada Bridge to Ranchlands and Waste Water Treatment Plant. He would now like to update the report and database with the comments received and the available visual graphics and pictures.
- b. **GN/City Parks Department Project:** The Society volunteered to continue the task concerned with beaver protection of trees as well as monitor invasive plants along the south side of the SS River. To start with, a survey was conducted downstream from the TransCanada Bridge to the Medicine Hat Public Library. On the basis of this information, tree wrapping was done in Kiwanis River Park with over 90 trees wrapped. The effort was then shifted to Police Point Park with 87 trees wrapped and NW Riverside Trail with 12 trees wrapped (total 204 trees wrapped).
- c. **Seven Persons Creek Riparian Restoration:** SEAWA received grant funding to undertake a project involving health assessment and restoration of the riparian land along the SP creek from the SS river and upstream to areas in the Cypress County. The SEAWA funded report documents the condition and vegetation along the creek's riparian zone. Restoration work is to continue this coming year.

3. Invasive Species:

- a. **Baby's Breath:** Eradication activities in Police point Park and adjacent off-leash entrance area continued for a seventh year to eliminate the invasive plant. About 435 plants were dug and/or sprayed with herbicide when necessary. Also, Baby's Breath plants were dug from along the trails in Northeast Crescent Heights (24 plants) and Southeast Hill (8 plants).
- b. **Leafy Spurge:** Extensive amount of Leafy Spurge was found along both sides of the SS river from the TC bridge to Ranchlands Environmental Reserve due to the spreading of the plant seeds by the 2013 June flood. The City Parks Dept did undertake some selective spot spraying of Leafy Spurge in Police Point Park.

- c. **Black Henbane:** Over the past few years, Black Henbane has been spotted along the river riparian reserves; and removed when reported. This year, John found one plant in Police Point Park along the east boundary of the golf course, which was then dug.
 - d. **Flowering Rush:** Over the past few years, Flowering Rush has been found along the river in Strathcona Island Park near the boat ramp, and north of the city in Mitchell's Ranch. This noxious weed is very hard to eradicate so the locations were reported to the City's Park Department and Alberta Government.
 - e. **Dame's Rocket:** Removal of these invasive plants from Police Point Park as well as other reserves is an ongoing endeavour.
 - f. **Ranchlands Phase 2F&G:** After four years (2013-2016) of GN assisting the City's Land and Business Support Department with removing Baby's Breath and Leafy Spurge from Ranchlands, the City contracted the work to MATRIX Solutions Inc in 2017. GN is still very much concerned with the ecological and archeological significance of this area; particularly with protection of the endangered plant species Tiny Cryptanthus.
 - g. **Invasive Plant Species Workshop:** There is a growing problem with invasive weeds in back alleyways, street sides, boulevards as well as vacant lots and parks. At the last meeting, Marty suggested that there be a focus on removing invasive weeds by having public information workshop(s). Martha said that for educational awareness perhaps MH College, MH Public Library, City Parks Dept and SEAWA might like to help sponsor the public session(s). Gerry mentioned that the public should be aware of the financial cost with the increase of invasive weeds due to neglect and not managing the problem as well as the ecological harm to native prairie and coulees, so Gerry offered and wrote a Discussion Paper on the way-ahead, and he and Marty had further discussions and plan to hold the first public event on Saturday May 4th at the Nature Centre.
4. **Other Project Activities:**
- a. **Wildflower Brochure and Website:** The subcommittee consisting of Martha, Dwayne and John together with Rob Gardner and Cathy Linowski held numerous meetings to finalize selection of the pictures and names for the Wildflower Brochure. The pictures and names were then assembled into the brochure format by Judith Golub in Edmonton. In addition, Dwayne developed a website with all the wildflower pictures www.hatwildflowers.weebly.com which has been well received. With the grants already received from the Medicine Hat Horticultural Society and the Alberta Native Plant Council, the brochure were printed locally by Prime Printing. Except for about 200 copies, the first 5000 copies of the brochure have been distributed through many locations such as the Nature Centre, Parks, tourist visitor centres, schools, nurseries, and during events and walks. It is recommended an additional 2000 copies of the brochure should be printed and ready for distribution this spring.
 - b. **Butterflies Database and Website:** Dave McKenzie has spearheaded this project by conducting field surveys over the past few years. So far, he has logged over 250 hours performing this task but anticipates that it will be necessary to conduct the surveys for at least five years to establish a meaningful database due to yearly and seasonal variations. Nevertheless with Dwayne's assistance, they have developed a website www.mhbutterflies.weebly.com with pictures and names of the observed butterflies according to season. Expansion of the database and website may be considered for dragonflies, damselflies and bumblebees.
 - c. **Trash Removal:** GN participated in the City wide cleanup of Police Point Park on April 21. Also, GN conducted cleanup of the Ranchlands Environmental Reserve and River shoreline on October 6th. Nine volunteers, including two from SEAWA, collected about 15 bags full of trash and wooden pieces and plastic stuff. Also GPS locations and pictures were recorded of eight very large items such as frig, freezer, BBQ, old boat trailer, hide-abeed, tires and barrels; and smaller items such as sink, chair, metal nesting barrels and other trash.

Other issues discussed included **pesticides** affecting honey bees and pollinators; reducing use of **plastic bags & bottles**; **alternative transportation**; **renewable energy** such as wind & solar power; climate change, Saamis Archeological Coulee Site and **conservation and protection of critical habitat**.

The committee looks forward to input and participation by other GN members concerning the issues mentioned above as well as any other environmental issues.

Respectfully submitted by
John Slater and Martha Munz Gue; Co-Chair of the Issues Committee