



Title: Six Mile Marsh Prairie Trail and Interpretation Design Briefing

Prepared by: Name: Laura Domyancich-Lee
Phone: 952.641.4582
ldomyancich-lee@minnehahacreek.org

Purpose: At the July 22, 2021 Policy and Planning Committee Meeting, staff will provide a briefing on design development for the Six Mile Marsh Prairie pedestrian trail and interpretive elements at approximately the 50% design phase.

Background: In 2011 and 2012, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) purchased two former farmsteads in Minnetrista totaling 210 acres, and that property is now known as the Six Mile Marsh Prairie Restoration. Formerly eroded slopes and drained wetlands were converted into tallgrass prairie, wetland, and oak savanna habitats that have prevented 12 tons of sediment from entering Six Mile Creek, which runs just south of the property, and the perennial cover's filtration has kept 120 pounds of phosphorus out of downstream Halsted Bay. Over the last nine years of focused investment in this restoration, the site has become a migratory stop-over or home to an array of wildlife.

The original capital project contemplated the future construction of a public access trail within the site that would connect to the Dakota Rail Regional Trail which runs along the property's western boundary. With the restoration now well-established, MCWD is moving forward with plans to design and construct the pedestrian trail and develop site interpretation.

Summary: At the July 22, 2021 PPC Meeting, staff will present the proposed alignment for the pedestrian trail and conceptual plans for interpretive elements. Based on guidance provided by the PPC in January and feedback from recent community engagement, design has been underpinned by a sensitivity to the natural character of the site and the goals of providing a valuable user experience through thoughtful trail design and creative interpretation while limiting disturbance.

The proposed trail alignment follows natural contours across the rolling prairie which allows users to sense the expansiveness of the site while reducing trail construction grading, and thus, potential erosion and increased cost. The aggregate trail is planned to cover approximately one mile within the site as it meanders through the tallgrass prairie and around pocket wetlands, leads to a gathering space near the historic barn, and offers views of Six Mile Marsh and Six Mile Creek beyond its eastern terminus.

Interpretation on the site will follow design standards implemented within the Wassermann Lake Preserve. The design team is proposing informative signage at two trailhead locations: one at the regional trail connection and one at the parking area near Halstead Drive. Historical and cultural interpretation with text, narrative, and imagery at the historic barn will be complemented by more expressive and engaging forms of interpretation at two key locations along the trail. The interpretive planning effort presents an opportunity to not only define the unique natural elements of the site, but also contextualize the site in the broader scope of MCWD's work in the Six Mile Creek-Halsted Bay Subwatershed.

This strategy will be outlined at the July 22 meeting with supporting imagery and examples.