

Stewardship Network Notes

16 June 07

New Center

The Stewardship Network meets the second Tuesday of the month at Bruegger's Bagels on North University, UM--Ann Arbor Campus, from 7:30 to 8:30 AM. The same topic is repeated on the third Thursday of the month at The Nonprofit Enterprise at Work (NEW) Center, 1100 N. Main, Ann Arbor, from 12:00 to 1:00 PM.

Topic: Lake shore and river wetlands restoration

Faye Stoner, Washtenaw County Parks Naturalist

Scott Tyrell, Southeast Michigan land conservation volunteer

The bad news: Wetland mitigation is almost impossible to achieve.

Social, political, legal reasons for the failure of wetland mitigation

- Farmers are exempt from the Michigan wetlands law, thus the majority of wetlands follow the typical succession from natural areas to drained farmed land to development.
- Developers are required to monitor the wetland for only five years.
- Permit requirements are inconsistent from site to site. Furthermore, the State picks and chooses whom to monitor and how closely to enforce permit requirements.
- Well-intentioned but unwise restoration efforts usually result in monocultural water's edge fringes.
- Property owners' goals differ from conservationists' preservation and restoration goals. Waterfront property owners want a clear view, sandy beaches, docks.
- Metroparks mow to the river shore, destroying wetlands.
- Sewage discharge and fertilizer run-off clogs rivers with Eurasian milfoil that chokes out the natives, and reduces recreational enjoyment.
- Dams built for power production have altered both waterside and underwater ecology. They were built on rivers with the greatest grade change; thus have destroyed most of the quick-river ecology. Many are so old that they no longer even provide much flood control because of sedimentation.

Natural reasons for the failure of wetland mitigation

- muskrats and invasive or opportunistic cattails dry out wetlands
- geese tear up restoration plantings

A sop of good news

Personal property protection and restoration does not require a permit.