

Proposal to the  
Ann Arbor Parks Advisory Commission

for a City-Wide, City-School Interpretive Natural  
History and Outdoor Education Component to  
The Department of Parks and Recreation

Introduction

All through its history, starting perhaps with Ann's arbour or the grove of burr oaks that still line Division Street, the inhabitants of Ann Arbor have sought to maintain their ties to the land. They have shown a remarkable commitment to setting aside parkland and wildlife areas. The city owns 1,700 acres of parkland. The school system owns another 890 acres of land, 268.10 acres devoted exclusively to nature study. We own this land in common because we fought for it, voted for it, and paid for it, and we did all these things because we knew how important these oases of nature were to our individual and collective physical and mental health. We have more recently begun to realize the importance of accessible natural areas to our understanding of environmental processes and issues. Such understanding is a necessary ingredient for making wise decisions as to the future of our city and our world.

To better utilize and protect this hard-won land resource, it is necessary to provide a practical and effective program to help people of all ages understand and feel comfortable with the out-of-doors. Many people will not fully enjoy or even undertake an excursion into these natural areas unless accompanied by an "expert" leader. Lack of knowledge of natural interrelationships, names of observed features and other facts, and fear of the unknown and poorly-understood hazards often result in a decision not to attempt any outings at all. A coordinated program geared to providing interpretation of the environment would enable people to discover the joy and pleasure provided by their natural world and realize their responsibility for maintaining its integrity.

In summary, Ann Arbor owns many acres of parkland. The city possesses the human resources to address community-wide environmental education needs, including an excellent program in the public schools, many active community natural history organizations, and a fine university. Ann Arbor also commands citizen interest in and support for preserving and interpreting its land resources. What Ann Arbor lacks is an environmental interpretive program that would harness and integrate all these resources. We think this is a major shortcoming. We submit the following proposal to the Ann Arbor Parks and Recreation Department to fill that gap.

## Proposal

### IT IS HEREBY PROPOSED THAT:

- I. There be added to the mission of the Department of Parks and Recreation an interpretive natural history and environmental component.
- II. There be appointed, by the Mayor subject to the advice and consent of Council, an advisory committee of qualified citizens who shall be responsible for:
  - A. development of the program,
  - B. development of an annual budget, and
  - C. selection of a naturalist who shall be responsible for the management of the component.
- III. The program be developed in a series of three phases which would include:
  - A. Phase 1
    1. appointment of the citizen's advisory group,
    2. development of an annual budget, and
    3. selection of a director who shall be a recognized naturalist.
  - B. Phase 2

Purchase of necessary capital equipment, including, but not limited to, a vehicle capable of serving as a mobile classroom properly equipped with field equipment making educational opportunities available to citizens in:

    - (1) public housing projects,
    - (2) senior citizen centers, and
    - (3) shopping centers.
  - C. Phase 3

The establishment of a Nature Center in a public location, adjacent to public lands with a natural environmental interest. This center would become the headquarters location for the program and provide a setting appropriate for exhibits, study, and natural/environmental research.

IV. Funding for this program be sought from appropriate non-governmental sources including, but not limited to:

- A. local corporate citizens,
- B. foundations,
- C. local philanthropists,
- D. establishment of the Ann Arbor Natural History Association, and
- E. fund-raising efforts conducted with the endorsement of public agencies, institutions, and officials.

V. Funding as secured in Item IV above to be used for equipment and materials while salary and expenses of the director/naturalist be the commitment of the city of Ann Arbor.

Proposed Budget

First Phase

Income Source

Naturalist Salary:

Level 1: \$19,400-\$22,600

Level 2: \$22,600-\$27,000

Level 3: \$26,000-\$31,200

City

Equipment 500\*

Private

Books 200\*

Private

Car 700

City

Utilities 15

City

Answering Service  
(Sanyo 9902) 210\*

Private

Printing and Supplies 300

Private

Exhibit 500

Private

Second Phase

Additional Equipment 1,000\*

Private

Bus 1,000\*

Private

Renovation 2,000\*

Private

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\*One-time expense.

		<u>Income Source</u>
Maintenance of Bus and Operation	.75/mile	City
Third Phase		
Interpretive Nature Center	150,000 (?)	Both

### Summary

The city of Ann Arbor, its citizens, and its institutions as well as its history, represent a commitment to the preservation and enjoyment of natural resources and environmental settings. The time is appropriate to now expand that commitment to include an understanding of that setting and those resources through environmental education.

Such an expansion of commitment--and public policy--can be realized through the type of effort above described.

The endorsement of the Department of Parks and Recreation, support of the City Council, approval of the Mayor, and cooperation of the citizens of Ann Arbor is urgently recommended.

## Addenda

### Possible Naturalist Duties:

1. Program and lead with the help of volunteer naturalists.
  - a. Interpretive walks in city and school nature areas. These can be of a general nature or tailored to specific needs and requests.
  - b. Program and arrange with the public schools or AATA for transportation for thematic program such as:
    - (1) Geology of Ann Arbor
    - (2) Early Ann Arbor
    - (3) Water Resources in Ann Arbor
    - (4) Ecological Issues
      - a. waste disposal
      - b. development
      - c. ecological threats (toxic waste, air quality, etc.)
    - (5) Visits by Interested Groups (Senior Citizens, Scouts, Public Housing Residents, etc.) to Ann Arbor Resources, such as the University of Michigan Exhibit Museum, Botanical Garden, Local Farms, etc.
  - c. Develop a resource file.
  - d. Offer community education classes and workshops.
  - e. Arrange for slide presentations or other contributions by resource people.
  - f. Advise school and park site committees.
  - g. Provide docent training.
  - h. Write articles of natural history interest for the local paper.
  - i. Set up exhibits at various locations, perhaps with the cooperation of teachers working with their students.
  - j. Drive the bus.