Comments that Resulted from the 45-day Public Comment period (April-June, 2019)

1. Wilderness in the City

DATE: June 10, 2019

TO: Mr. Joseph Walton, Senior Ecologist, Dakota County Parks via email: joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us

FROM: Holly Jenkins on behalf of Board of Directors, Wilderness in the City via email: hollyj@wildernessinthecity.org

RE: Lebanon Hills Draft Natural Resource Management Plan

Dear Mr. Walton,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Natural Resource Management Plan (NRMP) for Lebanon Hills Regional Park.

The draft plan does an excellent job of detailing a wealth of information and thoughtful recommendations for Lebanon Hills to reach its greatest potential with a diversity of healthy habitats. These habitats encourage a variety of species to inhabit Lebanon Hills, and create a more aesthetically pleasing and unique environment for park visitors, unlike what is available in more intensively developed parks.

We are appreciative of the steps Dakota County has already taken by surveying and inventorying existing natural resources, implementing management and restoration activities, and engaging the local community in the park through events and volunteer opportunities.

While we are pleased to support the goals and recommendations established in the draft NRMP, certain language in the plan is vague resulting in concerns over the long-term ecological health of the park. To help assure successful implementation of the plan with minimal conflict in years ahead, we suggest the following edits and additional points of clarification for the NRMP.
Despite the inclusion of natural resource management as an important part of each park master plan, the 2008 recession severely slowed implementation of natural resource management on County lands when providing other urgent County services became a higher priority. Municipalities across the County also cut back on natural resource spending at this time. Because of this, the quality of the park’s plant communities and wildlife habitat slowly degraded. Despite setbacks, the County increased investment in natural resource management in 2013 by tripling the dedicated management staff.

Rationale: Toward the goal for increased accountability, past actions should not be misinterpreted.

- The statement implies the quality of natural resources degraded because the 2008 recession required a reallocation of funds from the parks natural resources program to other urgent county services.
- This is not entirely true as there are funding sources for parks and natural resources which cannot be re-allocation to other urgent county services, including funds from the 2008 Legacy Amendment, a conservation amendment.
- The County decided to allocate more than 85% of its parks and trails legacy appropriations for regional trail development instead of toward the goals for natural resources management program as prioritized by the then current 2001 LHRP Master Plan.
- "The delivery of regional trails was prioritized to realize the benefit of approved Federal Transportation construction grants totaling $5.8M. .... The five year funding target for Metro Council derived Park and Trail Legacy funds remains unchanged at about $5,820,000. The target is allocated to greenway/regional trails (87%) and natural resource program funding (13%). " ~ 2013 Parks CIP
- Had these funds gone toward restoration within Forever Wild parks, rather than toward new built infrastructure, natural resources throughout LHRP would be in much better shape today.
- Going forward, we urge the County to allocate at least 50 percent of parks and trails legacy dollars to natural resource restoration projects which will improve Lebanon Hills and other parks, and meet the expectations of voters.

Insert language (page 1):
"The list of past park planning efforts includes the following: a Lebanon Hills Regional Park Natural Resources Management Plan (2000), the Dakota County 2030 Park System Plan (2008), the Lebanon Hills Regional Park Master Plans (2015, 2001, 1980), and the County Natural Resource Management System Plan (2017) for management of parks, greenways, and conservation easements over the next 20 years."

Rationale: This section fails to acknowledge the 1980 or 2001 Lebanon Hills Master Plans and therefore misrepresents the public's investment in past planning efforts.

- Lebanon Hills has a well documented history prior to the 2015 Master Plan showing the long-
held vision and public support to preserve the park as a high-quality natural destination.

- The 2015 Master Plan presumes to build from those previous plans—not disregard them, and therefore a complete record of previous master plans should be provided.

**Revise and Insert language in Section 5.6, page 153:**

**5.6. Preserve Zone / East Segment Management:**

"The Preserve Zone encompasses the largest area of the park and offers the most extensive overall ecological diversity. The area is characterized by a cross-section of all of the major plant communities, ecotonal areas, and pond/lake system that are found within the park. Given its ecological diversity relatively rugged terrain, and large land mass, this area of the park is best suited for a strong focus on outdoor education, interpretive programs, and a variety of natural trail experiences.

Although the remainder of the park is perhaps less ecologically diverse, it does not diminish its value as natural open space that is worthy of the same level of protection as that of the Preserve Zone. Throughout the park, restraint toward expanding the existing development areas is essential."

**Rationale:** The "East" section of the park was defined in the 2001 master plan as the Preserve Zone; this important concept should be respected, not disregarded. Given the context of this NRMP, it is valid to incorporate this relevant language.

**Revise language on Page 217:**

**Additional Trails per the Master Plan** should be evaluated for ecological impacts. If and when more trails are installed deemed necessary, strive to reduce their footprint and impacts as much as possible by following sustainable trail best management practices and environmentally-friendly surfaces. In the Center Segment, evaluate existing trails for sustainability; produce a trail plan and design for new trails that is more sustainable. If additional segments of trails are deemed necessary, equal distances of existing trail segments should then be removed from the system and restored. The long-term goal is to remain at, or decrease, current mileage of trails.

**Rationale:** A net increase in trail mileage will further degrade the park and challenge the successful restoration of LHRP. Currently there are approximately 58 miles of trails throughout the park. Trails provide great recreation opportunities for park visitors, and that has been well accommodated. Trails also fragment and divide wildlife habitat, yet that has not been given due consideration.

**Insert/Edit language on**

**Page 214 Proposed Capital**

**Improvement Projects**

- Showing due restraint for expanding the development footprint will allow the public to enjoy the park without compromising its inherent natural qualities—therefore, only those facilities necessary to support nature-based recreation and education should be considered.

- If new Natural resource data has been collected since the 2015 master plan was adopted that indicates significant natural resource impact, this data will be used during the to
determine site selection and design process.

- Capital improvement projects that are deemed necessary should meet the highest standards for sustainability resulting in an improved, rather than diminished, natural setting.
- New CIP projects, as per the approved master plan will tend to expand upon already existing use areas to limit potential for development creep. Thus, new use-area locations within the park should be avoided, an infrequent occurrence. This "concentrated use-area" strategy is better suited for wildlife conservation, plant community diversity, and visitor experience.

**Rationale:** One of the largest threats to the beloved natural character of Lebanon Hills is expanded capital development, yet the existing language in the NRMP is weak with regard to recommendations for capital improvements, ongoing management, and natural resource staff authority. The suggestions listed above are a starting point—the bare minimum—of what should be included in this section in order to assure that natural resources are at the forefront of decision making.

**Edit page 202:**

"Plan Consistency—restoration is consistent with existing plans, including infrastructure improvements proposed in the Master Plan; projects with many future development impacts, for example, would rank lower. Proposed infrastructure projects will be viewed through a natural resource lens to help assure impacts will be avoided.

**Rationale:** "Projects with many future development impacts" should not take place within the boundaries of Lebanon Hills. Preserving the highest remaining natural areas in the region was the basis for 1974 legislation which established the metropolitan regional parks system. These special places provide nature-based opportunities, crucial habitat for wildlife, and help to mitigate the impacts of climate change for now and future generations. More than ever, our communities benefit from natural areas, and they should not be diminished.

**Edit page 231:**

"The NRMSC sets an expectation of restoration work being approximately 80 percent funded by external funds. Implementation will proceed as projected, but the rate may be slowed depending on whether or not the County is able to receive external grant funding. If external funding falls short, the existing Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF) and the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund will provide reliable funding sources. Thus, implementation of the NRMP can proceed as projected without needing to increases property taxes or user fees.

**Rationale:** Ongoing neglect to the natural resource base of Lebanon Hills is contrary to public priorities, and delayed implementation of the NRMP will result in higher costs in the future. The County has readily available funds through their Parks and Trails Legacy appropriations which alone could provide full funding for implementation of the NRMP. In years ahead, the cost to restore and manage land is minimal compared to the cost for capital development and associated ongoing maintenance expenses.

**Key Points Needing Additional Clarification**
"Balancing" recreation and natural resource management

(Historical, natural resources have been compromised in pursuit of "balancing" with recreation—in fact, many agree that management of the park has been unbalanced with respect to the natural environment. Now, the NRMP offers a critical shift. As it is implemented, decisions for future built amenities should allow natural resource management to take precedence.

- Lebanon Hills provides an abundance of recreational opportunities, including: a children's play area, a swimming beach, retreat center and facility rental, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, camping, canoeing/kayaking/paddle-boarding, equipment rental, geo-caching, ice skating, sledding, equestrian use, mountain biking, hiking, trail running, swimming, picnicking, fishing—and more.
- Infrastructure to accommodate recreation has been the primary focus of planning and funding for decades, while management of natural resources has been neglected.
- The focus now must shift toward natural resource restoration and management, outreach and programming to achieve desired "balance."
- After the park is restored and the public has an opportunity to experience Lebanon Hills in an ecologically healthy state—only then should discussions for additional recreation development be considered.

Increase the decision-making authority of Natural Resources Staff

The plan appropriately allows Natural Resources (NR) staff to work with other departments to minimize impact of development projects. It falls short, however, in that it prescribes NR staff to identify how a project can have the least impact—essentially giving a green light to all projects despite potential impacts.

- Instead, NR staff together with outside ecological consultants must have authority to recommend against projects, not just determine how to make them least impactful—because sometimes least impactful allows extensive construction and diminished habitat.
- NR staff must be included throughout the planning process for capital development, providing natural resource data and alternative proposals, when necessary, to avoid impacts.
- Development projects, when deemed appropriate, should always leave Lebanon Hills in a better ecological state—never diminished.

Clarify "Public Vision" for LHRP

Chapter 2 of the NRMP plan references the 2030 Park System Plan as it relates to Lebanon Hills as: "This chapter describes a vision based on what citizens most wanted from County Parks. The vision as it applies to LHRP is... Adding some paved walking and biking trails to link existing areas and lake loop trails, enhancing existing destinations, expanding four-season use, and strengthening resource stewardship."
Additional background:
- The 2030 Parks System Plan was created by staff and consultants and envisioned Lebanon Hills as the hub of the greenway bike network.
- This hub vision swayed far from the 2001 Master Plan which by comparison was created with citizens, had broad public support, and prioritized the natural environment.
- To achieve this new "hub" vision, a Lebanon Hills master plan update was required.
- The update, a contentious two-year process, resulted in the 2015 Lebanon Hills Master Plan update which was overwhelmingly opposed by the public.

LONG-HELD VISION for LEBANON HILLS
- The original 1980 Master Plan stated "it is the intention of this report to advocate total design that will cause as little damage to the ecology of the area as possible. Extra effort should be made to design all manmade facilities in the park to be as unobtrusive as possible to avoid adulteration of the natural beauty of the area.
- The 2001 Master Plan vision is "to provide a balance between human use of the park and its ecological preservation and protection. This vision reflects the simplicity of the outdoor experience being sought in the context of an ecologically healthy natural landscape."
- The unique, natural character of Lebanon Hills remains part of the public's vision today based on findings from County surveys and public comments received from the 2015 Master Plan.

Public Engagement will be Crucial as Plans are Implemented in Years Ahead
As the NRMP, the 2015 Master Plan and the 2017 Visitor Services Plan are implemented in years ahead, it is crucial that the public have meaningful opportunity to participate in the process before decisions are made.
- The 2015 Master Plan serves as a concept; as it is implemented details will make a significant difference.
- There is no advisory body for Dakota County which focuses solely on parks and natural resources during the implementation phase of master plans to help ensure details adhere to public priorities.
- Meaningful public engagement throughout implementation of these plans will help to (1) ensure balance of all pertinent park services, (2) be mindful of fiscal constraints, and (3) help prevent built recreation amenities from continuing to be prioritized over natural resource management.

In conclusion, a 1994 letter to Dakota County from the DNR stated "Lebanon Hills is a significant natural resource in Dakota County because it is the last remaining large habitat of this type in northern Dakota County. It is elevated in importance each time development takes place in the surrounding area and the rest of the county." Clearly, Lebanon Hills level of importance has grown significantly since those words were delivered.

We are grateful for the efforts put forth in this Natural Resources Management Plan—a blueprint and exciting glimpse of the park's true potential—and look forward to continuing our efforts with the County to support Lebanon Hills as a top destination in the metro area.
2. Maryann Passe, Eagan, MN

DATE: June 10, 2019
TO: Joe Walton, Senior Ecologist, Dakota County Parks
CC: Dakota County Board of Commissioners
RE: Lebanon Hills Draft Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP)

I am so appreciative of the decision by Dakota County to undertake this effort and the expertise of Joe Walton, Tom Lewanski and the other natural resource staff for their professional and thorough execution and production of this proposal.

My greatest concern for this plan is Dakota County's schizophrenic management of Lebanon Hills Regional Park. On the one hand every effort is made to claim available funding to invest in the park - which has and continues to be (based on funding requests) primarily to expand built infrastructure in the park. On the other hand, excellent natural resource staff have been hired, natural resource restoration projects undertaken, and this plan developed.

I see no clear vision for the management of Lebanon Hills Park. In many, many ways the park's Master Plan, Park Visitors Plan, and this Natural resource Management Plan are in direct conflict with each other. And, all plans are written so vaguely that Dakota County decision makers can go in any direction at any time without "literally" being in conflict with any of their conflicting plans.

In the past, from my observations of county management of Lebanon Hills, I see only a lack of vision, a lack of understanding of the gem of urban nature that we have in Dakota County, and, in so many ways, a disregard for the public's repeated response of desiring natural resource preservation being at the top of their priority list. Yet, here the county has developed this natural resource plan that is a blueprint for the vision that should drive every decision regarding Lebanon Hills to be Forever Wild.

I sincerely ask the county to put some strength into this plan:

- Add precise wording that specifically prioritizes natural resource preservation whenever park projects are considered.
- Add wording that specifically empowers Natural Resource staff with decision-making in all consideration of projects of any kind in the park.
- Add wording to declare the natural resource staff as the visionary leaders of the park in charge of protecting and enhancing the natural resource treasures in Lebanon Hills over all other considerations.
Doing this does not mean there can be no projects or development within the park. It means that all projects and development must be undertaken through the lens of natural resource restoration and preservation.

- YES enhance accessibility.
- YES increase visitors.
- YES add programming.

But every trail, every amenity, every project must be envisioned, planned, funded, and implemented in the name of the best Dakota County can do for Lebanon Hills natural resources.

This document is an incredible opportunity to take Lebanon Hills to its full potential as an amazing urban natural oasis. A park that so many, many other urban communities would be desperate to offer their citizens. The county’s natural resource staff are some of the best in the Twin Cities - the county administrator was wise to hire them. But this document needs teeth and I am sure the Natural Resource staff knows exactly where and what wording needs to be added to get Lebanon Hills to this potential.

I encourage County management to take this opportunity, have the courage to declare natural resource prioritization as your direction, trust your incredible natural resource staff, and let them lead Lebanon Hills Park management for the next five-to-ten years. The results will be amazing and your foresight in prioritizing, restoring, and preserving Lebanon Hills natural resources will be something our community and our children will appreciate, and cities near and far will envy.

Regards,

Maryann Passe
1249 Balsam Trail E
Eagan, MN 55123

3. Mary T'Kach, Inver Grove Heights, MN

June 9, 2019
Mr. Joe Walton  
Project Manager, Lebanon Hills Natural Resources Management Plan  
Dakota County Western Service Center  
14955 Galaxie Avenue  
Apple Valley, MN 55033  
Email address: joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us

Dear Mr. Walton:

Dakota County has a unique opportunity to restore and preserve an incredibly valuable community asset known as Lebanon Hills Regional Park however under the current proposed Natural Resources Management Plan (NMRP) for this park, too much is left to chance. Restoring and protecting the native ecosystems of this land is paramount to protecting this unique natural resource.

As a thirty-plus year resident of the county I watched the park face one development project after the other (paths, buildings, parking lots, even pipelines). Each project was a “minor” development with good intentions. Unfortunately, all these smaller good intentions have had huge unintended negative consequences and created an ecological mess. It’s time to put the natural areas of Lebanon Hills Regional Park back to their pre-development condition and forgo additional development or extensive remodeling of existing buildings and parking lots until the natural areas of the park have been fully restored. This may seem unsuitable to park planners and development staff, however until funds are adequately prioritized for restoration of native ecosystems, the integrity of the park will continue to be compromised and the full NRMP cannot be realized.

I support the NRMP which emphasizes restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, but the plan falls short because it does not include language that requires natural resource management to take precedent over capital development projects. I would like to see language in the NMRP that absolutely prioritizes putting restoration and protection of native ecosystems and natural resources at the core of all decision-making for Lebanon Hills Regional Park and for the Forever Wild Parks System.

This type of work will take a commitment to funding and therefore I encourage the county to use the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund, the Environmental Legacy Fund and other sources such as federal and state grants. Perhaps another land conservation/restoration type bond referendum is needed.

We have a moral responsibility to restore and protect a unique natural resource for today and for the future. I urge the board and staff to not step away from this responsibility and unique opportunity.

Sincerely,

Mary T’Kach  
7848 Babcock Trail  
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077

Cc: Commissioner Joe Atkins
Good Afternoon,

I have the following comments on the Lebanon Hills Draft Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP):

1. The plan should cover all of the nearly 2000 acres of Lebanon Hills. As a long time resident and visitor to Lebanon Hills I have noted that all of the park has deteriorated markedly from the state existing when I first encountered the park in the 70’s. Buckthorn is the main problem. (Actually all park acreage needs work – otherwise we should turn the parks over to something like the Nature Conservancy along with the budget)

2. The hiking trails in LH are also very eroded, the newer ones as well. The crushed limestone fixes are ineffective and don’t last past the next heavy rainstorm. This is putting silt in the bottom lands – additional silt.

3. No noticeable effort at controlling invasives occurred before 2013. Recession was not the cause of neglect as this has been the habit up to that point. We are doing good things today.

4. The priority of Legacy funds needs to be restoration and control of invasives. Until very recently the Legacy money was being spent on development, sometimes grandiose and unneeded.

5. Development projects need to be compatible with preserving the ecological goals of the public.

6. Almost all present recreation in the park requires ecological management be it swimming, fishing, hiking, skiing, birdwatching, and so on. The only major investment that is not ecological is the RV campground. This is paid for by the taxpayers and used by visitors many of whom are 6 months and a day tax avoiders. For the most part the campground is a country unto itself with respect to the park. They don’t stray far from their vehicles.

In summary I am very happy that there is a project to address invasives and restore the park to a natural and native space. I think most users are glad to see the restoration progress in recent years. Forever Wild is a slogan for Dakota County Parks and was a good recognition of what the public and taxpayers want when adopted. Unfortunately the slogan was only marketing for a long stretch but is being made part of the ethos of the land management as shown by the natural resources plan.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Mike Fedde, 1662 Norwood Dr, Eagan
Date: June 10, 2019

TO: Joe Walton, Project Manager, joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us

RE: Comments on the Lebanon Hills draft Natural Resources Management Plan

The draft NRMP for Lebanon Hills Regional Park is an excellent document that will provide essential information for decision makers as future investments are made to this unique natural resource treasure located in close proximity to the majority of Dakota County residents. I am in support of the draft as written, with a number of important caveats:

- In the past, the balance between built, recreational developments and natural resource management and restoration activities has been tilted toward building “new stuff” which threatens the quality of the natural environment and creates an ongoing requirement to maintain and repair these developments. For a period of time, at least ten years, the County should forgo building “new stuff” in Lebanon Hills and should continue to implement the natural resource restoration projects that are described in the NRMP.

- When, in the future, built projects are proposed for Lebanon Hills, the County’s Natural Resource staff should have a much stronger voice, if not a veto power, in the decision-making process. In recent years, the County has wisely assembled an extremely skilled and dedicated Natural Resource staff. The County Board, as well as the County’s administrative staff, must listen to and allow the recommendations of the County’s Natural Resource staff to be at the forefront of decision making!

- The residents of Dakota County have overwhelmingly stated that they value the quality of the natural environment that Lebanon Hills provides. They want it to be maintained as a natural oasis near the center of population in the county. We are fortunate to enjoy an abundance of municipal parks that provide intensive recreational uses. We are most fortunate that Lebanon Hills provides opportunities to enjoy, relax and restore the sense of calm that the quality of the natural environment offers to the current and future generations of the county.

Thank you for opportunity to comment on the NRMP and for producing such a comprehensive plan! Please listen to the comments and concerns of the residents of the county before initiating built projects that detract from the natural environment of Lebanon Hills.

Sincerely,

W. Barry Graham
4670 Parkridge Drive
Eagan, Minnesota 55123
6. Paul Mandell, Inver Grove Heights, MN

June 6, 2019

To: Joe Walton, Dakota County Parks From:
Paul Mandell
8320 Cleadis Ave., Inver Grove Heights, MN 55076

RE: LEBANON HILLS PARK NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PLAN
Comment Period

I am someone who served on the Citizens Task Force for the 2001 Lebanon Hills Master Plan but saw little in the way of improvements. I was then even more dismayed when in 2013, the County’s new Lebanon Hills Master Plan showed a significant shift in focus from the natural to construction of many amenities already found in the surrounding local parks, with high capital costs and mere guestimates for the costly maintenance tails. This would come to the detriment of natural resources restoration budgets that had already suffered from the 2008 recession. I am convinced that it is these natural resources that underlie both the popularity and regional significance of this park. Worse yet, despite the nearly unanimous opposition from the public over two comment periods, the County leaders remained committed to the six-mile long, all-season, paved bike thoroughfare, a far cry from the passive connector trail recommended in the 2001 plan to serve those within the park. The argument for the trail continued to come down to resolving accessibility for those with disabilities or limited mobility, as well as families with small kids; despite the fact that if built as a bike transportation link using federal monies, the design would follow standards deemed appropriate for travel at twenty miles per hour, hardly a system conducive to those with limited mobility or small kids.

After the County’s vote, we were led to believe that this paved trail would be carefully studied for its’ environmental impacts once the Natural Resources Management Plan was done; and that any negative impacts would then be addressed via either mitigation or a redesign. The only concession the County Board made to the public outcry was to allow for the greenway, intended for those commuters or serious bikers merely looking to get from one part of the county to another, to be re-routed around the park. However, they kept the six-mile long paved trail bisecting the entire length of the park, now dubbed the “connector trail”.

While I applaud the depth of scientific analysis throughout the draft LHP Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP), with examination of the water systems, vegetation, wildlife and even micro-systems, I find it almost incredulous that so little is said about the paved trail. While the
NRMP raises concerns regarding the already excessive number of trails bisecting the park, some already so degraded that they pose a threat to the very health of the area, the Plan barely touches on the 'connector trail'. Nor does it address the implications of servicing the trail in winter with plowing and the use of sand, salt or other chemicals, through a park strewn with water bodies, many of which are already seriously degraded due to human activity. The Plan does little to dispel the fears of many that the proposed, six-mile long paved trail is a threat to the very life of the park.

I do want to be clear in expressing my appreciation for the depth with which the Plan examined most of the issues, despite its failure to do so for the biggest looming threat of all, the paved trail, especially if built using federal dollars and built to federal standards. I find many of the conclusions in the Plan to be excellent and well based in their analysis, and really appreciate the financial analysis which, for nearly the first time, put forth real numbers and very serious concerns about the level of funding needed to actually make headway toward permanent restoration of the entire park. While all know that construction capital costs will always be higher than the proper and comprehensive restoration of the natural resources in the park, it has only been since the public outcry repeatedly cited the on-going degradation of the park as their top three priorities for Lebanon Hills that the County Board has begun to at least start putting serious money into the natural resources of the entire system. That said, their commitment comes up shy of what is needed in just Lebanon Hills if they are ever to get ahead of things.

It would be my hope that the Plan would create a consensus around commensurate commitments from the County Board in doubling down with Parks and Trails Legacy Funds and far more out of the County Environmental legacy Fund (ELF) for the restoration of the natural environment at an accelerated and dramatically increased level, focused on taking care of what we have before incurring more costs through new redundant facilities that could be perceived as 'extras'.

With the Greenway now routed around the park, given the concerns for excessive trails, as reported in the Plan I would also hope that County Board might re-examine the need for the bikeway and look instead toward an accessible trail connecting one of the trailheads to a few key features in the park for a comparable but more easily accessed loop trail, matching the success of the new McDonough Lake loop trail.

In the end, the County needs to commit far more financial resources toward a complete and total restoration of the park in order to get ahead of the current and persistent level of degradation evidenced throughout most of the park, if necessary putting things like the unpopular bike trail on permanent hold while focusing on restoration of the park. Only then will the many visitors continue to come to Lebanon Hills, able to appreciate the unique attributes our County's flagship park offers.

If I had to make one comprehensive statement on the overall Management Plan, it would be that the Plan reads like it can’t be critical or call into question anything in the most recent Lebanon Hills Master
Plan—even though that Master Plan strayed from the earlier 2001 Master Plan and, as environmental assessment occurs, I would expect the Management Plan to give a serious impact analysis of all plans.

7. Linda Quammen

Hi Tom,

It was good talking to you about the Lebanon Hills Park Master Plan on Friday night.

I'm glad that the county is addressing some of the very real problems of our regional parks.

As a longtime Dakota County Natural Resources volunteer and resident (30+ years), I've enjoyed Lebanon Hills Regional Park in all weathers and seasons, hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, botanizing and just sitting looking out at one of the lakes or prairies. I love having such a beautiful, wild area for rest and relaxation within a few miles of my home and I count myself lucky.

Over the years, especially the past 5-7, I've seen the park change due to many stresses. The most harmful to the park, and the most difficult, but important, to solve are the invasive plants (and animals) that are beginning to overgrow and destroy natural plant communities and ecosystems.

Restoring the park is a wonderful goal that I wholeheartedly agree with. I'm glad to see the removal of buckthorn, probably the most noticeable change of the first 3 years of the park restoration. However, I'm growing concerned that "restoration" may mean something very different to me than to Dakota County. At the meeting there was a slide showing that 600 acres have been "restored" (if I recall correctly). I can't point to any spot in the park, other than Buck Pond, that I would call "restored", though. Certainly, some restoration activities have been taken, like forestry mowing of buckthorn. But I hope that those areas, having been mowed, aren't considered "restored." In fact, most look worse, due to resprouting after 2-3 years, than before. I don't think they can, under anyone's definition, be considered restored (and so, moved along the timeline to "maintenance.")

And other invasives are just as destructive as buckthorn, if less noticeable to most people. Crownvetch, Burdock, non-native Plantain, Reed Canary grass, Queen Anne's Lace, Ground ivy, Barnyard and other grasses are infiltrating and taking over everywhere in the park. We have been fighting off Garlic Mustard and trying to reduce Japanese Hedge Parsley with some success but the host of invasives that are not being addressed, as far as I can see, seem destined to take over everything, including any territory ceded by buckthorn, under the current plan. How does the county plan to address these non-buckthorn invasives?

Sincerely,

Linda Quammen
8. Thor Westra

Joe,

Nice to meet you last Friday.

Comments / Notes, in no particular order or preference.

1. Restoration is challenging work that needs upfront and continued investment and the plan accounts for that approach. Without continued investment, restoration will take much longer or be impossible.

2. Controlling the deer will be important. Maybe there are creative ways to both keep hunting, and to further control deer. For example, let hunters shoot the "big bucks", and use sharpshooters to cull females. Don't make it an either/or decision. Hunters hate it when sharpshooters kill big bucks that the hunters were willing to pay to pursue.

3. Studying the progress of the restoration and using the park as a research "lab", of sorts, could benefit other parks or even large landholders who want to combat invasives, etc. So, my point is that the park could be a good resource to try new techniques and innovate. I think the County's experience could be useful to influence future legislation and/or future investments from public officials to combat invasives. (I would like to see a law that requires landowners to remove all buckthorn, but that is probably a dream and unrealistic.)

4. I like the park having cultural use areas. Expansion of those areas could help with growing demand, HOWEVER, the park is a unique, semi-wild tract of land in an urban area, which deserves its own place and the LH Plan looks to make that wild place continue, and that is good. What we don't need is 1600 acres of picnic tables and swimming beach, etc.

5. Growth on the mountain bike area has been very attractive, and it will be difficult to make that area "wild" again given current and expected future use. I bike, so I like that part of the park. I think that the invasives need to be addressed and maintained but I don't know that this part of the park can be a true "wild" area again with the intensive use by bikers.

6. Use fire, instead of chemicals, wherever responsible and possible to assist with restoration, and maintenance.

Joe, thanks for your work on the park and the plan. It is a big and important job.

Thor

7. Pat Cummens, Eagan, MN
Dear Joe,
Thank you for the presentation updating us on the natural resource restoration plans underway at Lebanon Hills Park and the overview of the Natural Resources Management Plan (NRMP). I commend Dakota County on the acknowledgment of the importance of the value and nature resources of LHRP and the recent restoration efforts and encourage the long-term commitment to this effort. It goes without saying that without a long term commitment to this effort, it is simply a wasted investment. The natural resource management plan is good and an important guide for future activities. I like the way the areas are broken into manageable management units that can be matched up with grant and other funds as they become available. My concern about the plan is that the principals and activities outlined in the plan will not find their way into county policies and abided by and instead will be overridden by misguided plans and desire for prioritizing physical development over restoration.

The role, positioning and influence of the natural resource plan must be strengthened and considered a higher priority in determining appropriate future development activities. In other words, the potential impact of any planned development must be evaluated and that information must inform the decision whether a development project should go forward. The way it stands now, development decisions are made outside of this lens, and instead the staff is restricted to trying to do their best to minimize the impact of already approved development on the natural resources. This is approach is backwards, particularly in a park like Lebanon Hills, there the draw is to the unique natural environment, a rare treasure in a growing urban area.

Therefore, the natural resource management plan and the experience and insight of the staff of the natural resources team at the county must be elevated to influence development decisions. It is imperative that they not just have a seat at the table and do the best they can to minimize negative impact on the natural resources of the park. They must have a voice and the natural resource management plan and county policies must be updated to institutionalize and clearly define the priority role natural resource restoration and preservation play in the decision making process for development projects.

Sincerely,

Pat Cummens, Eagan MN

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8. Kevin Grass, Burnsville, MN

Hi Joseph;

I have lived in Dakota County since Cedar Ave was a dirt road into what is now called Apple Valley. Bicyclists are way too intrusive to allow any farther into the park. The State’s and County’s idea for a GREEN TRAIL idea is absurdity. The moving of white lines on the side of the roads to make the shoulders
wider for bicyclist is dangerous, there now is not room for two semi's to meet. That's all on the County when not if an accident happens. The dirt trails around the lakes and ponds are awesome, the paved loop gives the wheelchairs a chance to enjoy.

Keep technology out just manage the woods and the land please.

Thank you
Kevin Grass
13615 Oakland Dr.
Burnsville, MN.
6514341636

9. Linda Knutson, Eagan, MN

For over 20 years I have been enjoying the natural habitat and scenery at Lebanon Hills park. It is peaceful and restorative to the soul, mind, and body. I see wildlife often as I walk or ski through the park. I love that the ground is dirt and I can run and walk on it without my knees aching as they do on concrete or asphalt. I love that there is a place like this in the middle of the cities to get away from manmade materials and get close up with God made materials.

In addition to providing Nature-based recreation and education, Lebanon Hills offers habitat for a wide variety of wildlife species that use the park, including species of greatest conservation need — badger, Blanding’s turtle, red-headed woodpecker, rusty-patched bumblebee, red shouldered hawk, river otter, tiger salamander, oven bird, brown thrasher, monarch butterfly, leadplant moth, Dakota Skipper, prairie skink, green snake, and plains pocket gopher, among many others. In addition, staff developed a list of over 100 species that have potential to either occur in the park, but have not been observed yet, or have the potential of being restored to the park.

- The natural resources management vision for LHRP is to manage water, vegetation, and wildlife to conserve and increase biodiversity, restore native habitats, improve public benefits, and achieve resilience and regionally outstanding quality, now and for future generations.
- The draft Plan develops approaches to set a course for sustainable native plant communities within the park, which is critical toward preserving the unique natural character of Lebanon Hills.
• I strongly support efforts to help Lebanon Hills achieve its full potential as an exceptional oasis of high-quality natural resources to benefit now and future generations of people and wildlife.
• Thank you!
  Linda Knutson

  1257 Dunberry Lane
  Eagan, MN 55123

10. Barb Zeches, Eagan, MN

I am a frequent visitor to Lebanon Hills Park and I want you to know that as for the future of the park we need to continue the restoration that has been taking place as the number one priority. As I walk, run and ski in the park I can see how healthy it is becoming where work has been done to remove buckthorn, replant native plants and ensuring water quality. Please continue in that direction. We need to keep this Park natural and wild for future generations to enjoy. The last thing we need is spending money on pavement and buildings.

Having this Park in the Twin Cities is amazing. Please do not ruin it!

Barb Zeches

4526 Oak Chase Way, Eagan

11. Jim Jenkins, Apple Valley, MN

Mr. Joseph Walton, Project Manager

Mr. Walton,

I am very happy that the current draft plan has placed an emphasis on maintaining the natural resources for this unique park going forward.

I was a Stakeholder representative as part of a group of individuals with specific interests in the development of a revised Master Plan in 2001. The Dakota County
Commissioners chose this group to work with an experienced outside coordinator to update the original Master Plan which was approved by the County Board.

This effort included the input from all of the Stakeholders and resulted in a document that wasn't perfect, but a reasonable compromise for all involved. We worked together and were proud of the results.

The language emphasized the overarching importance of developing and restoring the natural environment that made this Park unique from most other parks. It acknowledged that most trails and areas were to remain natural and would not be suitable for everyone. Again, we were pleased with the results and proud we could assist in developing a plan which documented in detail and "spirit" how this particular park was unique from others.

Within two years, I discovered that a design consultant had been retained by the county to revise the Master Plan and suddenly there were proposals for much "hard surface" and building development, including outdoor music and entertainment areas, etc. I was very disturbed that this Master Plan could be violated so easily and ignore the major principals that were agreed upon. As the years have gone by I have seen major movements and funding toward the built environment. Often I have seen these proposals move rapidly forward even after user surveys have clearly supported maintaining the emphasis on restoring the natural environment.

So, I have concluded that the County has "followed the money" and that they have emphasized the built environment because that money is more available and easier to obtain. Thus the proportion of funds for hard development has far exceeded the funds for natural restoration. Also, it was very difficult for the average person to review the funding in a transparent manner. It is difficult to identify the amount really spent on the natural environment.

Therefore if we are to have confidence in this latest emphasis on the natural environment versus hard surface / built environment, I believe we must have a transparent way to review the budget in advance to assure that the number one priority for obtaining funds and expenditures for using the funds will be on Natural Resources.

I live near the park and have enjoyed it for over 30 years. I hope this NRMP can move forward in this positive direction.

Respectfully Submitted,
12. Brad Blackett, Apple Valley, MN

I am writing from my North Woods haven, a family cabin handed down to me that sits on the Shores of Lake Superior. I have periodic cell coverage here. I am not sure you will get my comments in time.

There is something to be said about what we hand down to the generations. If development continues to encroach upon our natural areas soon there won't be anything left.

Perhaps not in our life time but certainly seems to be the case of our societies insatiable appetite to build bigger and better as well as consume everything in the name of progress.

We are losing our senses. If something else needs to be built then buy the extra land and place the development there.

Say what. There is no more land of natural quality to build that user convenience ... then you have just proven my point. We do not have enough natural areas as it is.

For future generations we must manage, and regenerate what we have already harmed ... not the opposite by over developing engineered roads, parking lots, bike trails, shelters - you name it.

Efforts should be made to inventory, evaluate every acre of Dakota Park land and assess how much has been already harmed.

I believe for every acre converted to development an equal or better resource should be obtained and protected, by purchasing additional lands.

Enacting a moratorium on further capital improvements in Lebanon Hills Regional Park would be a first step. If it takes Metropolitan Council to suspend further "Park Improvement Funding" to be implemented then so be it.

Enough development, focus on the future, fund the restoration and regenerative efforts to higher levels and provide additional resources and effort to make that happen system wide.

Brad Blackett, 457 Reflection Rd, Apple Valley, MN 55124.
To whom it may concern:

I am writing to voice my opposition to the continuing Drama surrounding LHRP. This has been an ongoing assault on the Environment of our precious LHRP. I believe the County Commissioners and the Parks dept. have hijacked the when process. They have disregarded what the people want. That was proven about 3-4 years ago when the Commissioners decided to fast track a new "Master Plan of THEIR liking without so much as a public commenting period, which of course was forced upon them by the people. The people spoke. 96% of the people rejected the new Master Plan as being too aggressive. Well it is. Why do we need all this fake educational stuff in the park?? Isn't the whole idea of being a Park is that people experience it in it's natural state? In my opinion they have ruined this Park already. The more they draft plans the more unnatural it becomes.

Then there's the loss of very important habitat. That speaks for itself. Then there's upkeep which I'm sure will end up being paid by the very people opposing this. Btw, what's the point of a public commenting period if your just going to ignore the opposition, which is exactly what happened last time. I have no confidence in our Commissioners to do the right thing. Which IS to listen to the people!!!!!!! I cannot stress this enough. Remember you all work for us, We The People, and don't forget that. So obviously my vote on anything besides 25% Stewardship of this Park is a big fat NO on more unnatural spaces period. Also what ever happened to that original Stewardship of 25%? Its now down to 1% of your pie chart. What's up with that? The people have spoken over and over. Why won't anyone listen?

Sincerely,

Mary and Robert Kanuit

Dakota County Taxpayers 24 years.

Do we have a say?

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Joe,

I’m not sending you any canned message. This one is straight from me.

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14. Barry Johnson, Apple Valley, MN
Over the last few weeks I did some bushwhack hiking in Lebanon Hills. I stumbled into large areas where - to my surprise and joy - buckthorn had been cleared. Wow, so this is what the park looked like decades ago!

Better managing the natural resources of the park is so much more important that putting down asphalt trails/roads, constructing new buildings, or adding and expanding parking lots.

I hope that the parks natural resources take precedent over more capital projects.

Barry Johnson
13064 Eveleth Ave
Apple Valley MN

15. **Jill Danner, St. Paul, MN**

Good Day Mr Walton,

I understand the ecology at Lebanon is being looked at. I missed the notice about the meeting on Friday night.

I support keeping Lebanon natural and representative of the natural environment that should be there. I support hiking trails, canoe and horse trails.

I do not support bike trails. I would support a mile long looped trail that was handicap accessible but not a trail that runs through the entire park. I do have a husband that is disabled and I would never push him through the entire park.

I hope more environmentally correct development continues that supports current usage. It is my favorite place to ride my horse.

Jill Danner
791 Ottawa Ave
St Paul, MN 55107

16. **Laura Hedlund**

Date: June 6, 2019
TO: Joe Walton, Project Manager, joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us

RE: Comment for Lebanon Hills draft Natural Resources Management Plan

I appreciate the focus on the Natural Resources Master Plan for Lebanon Hills Regional Park and I encourage Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

To minimize potential conflicts with successfully implementing this NRMP, I urge the county to:

• Suspend development of new built amenities—especially the controversial 6-mile asphalt bicycle route through the park.

• Fully fund the plan by pursuing grants and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).

• Continue planning the regional bike network around Lebanon Hills as approved in the Central Greenway Connectivity Plan.

• Explore innovative ways to connect land and all people.

• Gather information about how the walking on asphalt differs from walking on natural paths in terms of physical and mental health

• Gather information about the health consequences of asphalt including: the average cancer rates of people who work with asphalt, etc

• Gather information about the impact of asphalt trails on the Rusty Patch Bumblebee, other pollinators as well as other small creatures.

• Study how the complex microbiome of Lebanon Hills Regional Hills would be impacted by asphalt trail.

• Study impacts on water.

• Look at a map of Dakota County – how much land has been “developed?” How many opportunities are there to walk on asphalt? How many opportunities for natural trails?
• As all life is connected, how we relate to the natural world is a matter of choice. Given the natural complexities of the soil, we deny our children their birthright when we offer asphalt trails versus natural trails.

Sincerely,

Laura Hedlund
1364 Wilderness Run Dr
Eagan, Minnesota 55123

Dakota County Park and Advisory Committee 1998 to 2004

17. Patrice Callahan, Teacher at the School of Environmental Studies

Lebanon Hills Regional Park is near and dear to my heart. When my children were growing up we often ran over to the park to hike or swim. On long summer days we would spend hours wandering around the myriad of trails. Later, my grandchildren experienced their first camping trip at Lebanon Hills Regional Park campground. We spent the weekend hiking, swimming, paddling and camping before heading back to work on Monday. This beautiful natural wonderland right here in Apple Valley is an amazing opportunity to staycation! Over the years we have noticed the buckthorn taking over large swatches of Lebanon Hills and we are happy that the management plan continues to address removal of this and other invasive species in the park. We are especially excited to see the planned return of the beautiful open oak savanna. Thank you for your hard work and dedication to this urban wilderness!

18. Patricia Ryan, Eagan, MN

Dear Mr Walton,
Lebanon Hills is a beautiful more wild appearing park, unique in that way, compared with all other parks in Dakota County. I encourage Dakota County to complete the NRMP plan and allow Lebanon Hills to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

I do not want it to look like the spoiled Spring Lake Park which Dakota County decided to “develop” recently from the lovely piece of land from which it was formed.

In that light:

• Do not build the controversial 6-mile asphalt bicycle route through the park.
• Fund future plans by pursuing grants and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).
• Route the regional bike network around Lebanon Hills as approved in the Central Greenway Connectivity Plan.
• I am a nurse and understand accessibility and the accessibility laws. Accessibility is a “fluid” issue and does not mean that every mobility challenged person needs to have access to every park! I fully support the county providing accessibility in a manner that does not take away from the NRMP, which will then provide all visitors the opportunity to experience the park’s beautiful and healthy natural environment.

Sincerely,

Patricia Ryan
1590 Mallard Vw
Eagan, MN 55122

19. Jean Oberle

I am pleased to support the Lebanon Hills NRMP. Language that prioritizes natural resources in decision making needs to be included in the final version in order to strengthen the plan.

Sincerely,

Jean Oberle

20. Anne LaGoo, Hastings, MN
While this is a draft letter - I support it 100%. I regularly use Lebanon Hills equestrian trails and do not support additional building or development of this park.

I am pleased to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The plan falls short, however, of including language that would allow natural resource management to take precedent over capital development projects, which compromises the parks natural resource base and threatens successful implementation of the NRMP. Language, therefore, must be included in the plan which prescribes that management of Lebanon Hills and the Forever Wild Parks System will put natural resources at the forefront of decision making.

Further, to minimize potential conflicts and to allow the park to realize its potential, I urge the county to:

- Take care of what we have, but suspend new development or expansion of built amenities until Dakota County's natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state—only then can the impacts of capital development projects truly be known.
- Fully fund the NRMP by pursuing grants, and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).

The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we've historically seen, and I urge Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills Regional Park to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

Sincerely,

Anne LaGoo
102 Riverdale Dr
Hastings, MN 55033


Mr Walton,
I am happy to learn of the NRMP and support the plan which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills. This is consistent with the general public priorities for this park beautiful, natural park.

I feel the plan falls short in that it does not include language that would allow natural resource management to take precedent over capital development projects. I am not in favor of the capital development, which compromises the parks natural resource base and threatens successful implementation of the NRMP. Language, therefore, must be included in the plan which prescribes that management of Lebanon Hills and the Forever Wild Parks System will put natural resources at the forefront of decision making. (and NOT capital development).

Further, to minimize potential conflicts and to allow the park to realize its potential, I urge the county to:
- Take care of what we have.
- Suspend new development or expansion of built amenities until Dakota County's natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state. Only then can the impacts of capital development projects truly be known.
- Fully fund the NRMP by pursuing grants and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).

The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we've historically seen, and I urge Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills Regional Park to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

Sincerely,

Jean Hewitt
4860 Wellington Ct
Eagan, MN 55122

22. Bruce Goff

I live right across the street from Lebanon Hills and run or walk my dog almost every day in the park. I am pleased to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The plan falls short, however, of including language that would allow natural resource management to take precedent over capital development projects, which compromises the
parks natural resource base and threatens successful implementation of the NRMP. Language, therefore, must be included in the plan which prescribes that management of Lebanon Hills and the Forever Wild Parks System will put natural resources at the forefront of decision making.

Further, to minimize potential conflicts and to allow the park to realize its potential, I urge the county to:

- Take care of what we have, but suspend new development or expansion of built amenities until Dakota County’s natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state—only then can the impacts of capital development projects truly be known.
- Fully fund the NRMP by pursuing grants, and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).

The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we've historically seen, and I urge Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills Regional Park to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

Bruce Goff

23. Bernard Friel, Mendota Heights, MN

Dear Mr. Walton

I write to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we've historically seen, and I encourage Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

To minimize potential conflicts with successfully implementing this NRMP, I urge the county to:

- Suspend development of new built amenities—especially the controversial 6-mile asphalt bicycle route through the park—until the county natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state. Only then can the true impacts of that and other construction projects be realized.
• Fully fund the plan by pursuing grants and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).
• Continue planning the regional bike network around Lebanon Hills as approved in the Central Greenway Connectivity Plan.
• Revisit opportunities to increase accessibility for mobility challenged visitors within the park using the best practices for sustainable design. I fully support the county providing accessibility in a manner that does not take away from the NRMP, which will then provide all visitors the opportunity to experience the park’s beautiful and healthy natural environment.

Sincerely,
Bernard P. Friel

750 Mohican Lane
Mendota Heights, MN 55120

(651) 454-3655

24. Mary Wierschem

Yikes, the changing and destroying of Lebanon hills just doesn’t stop. Its incomprehensible why this park can’t be left alone. Forever wild is a joke.

25. Robert Chase, Roseville, MN

Dear Mr. Walton,

I am pleased to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The plan falls short, however, of including language that would allow natural resource management to take precedent over capital development projects, which compromises the parks natural resource base and threatens successful implementation of the NRMP. Language, therefore, must be included in the plan which prescribes that management of Lebanon Hills and the Forever Wild Parks System will put natural resources at the forefront of decision making.
Further, to minimize potential conflicts and to allow the park to realize its potential, I urge the county to:

- Take care of what we have, but suspend new development or expansion of built amenities until Dakota County's natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state—only then can the impacts of capital development projects truly be known.
- Fully fund the NRMP by pursuing grants, and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).

The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we've historically seen, and I urge Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills Regional Park to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

I appreciate all your efforts to keep our park as close to "wild" as you can.

Sincerely,

Robert Chase
2558 Beacon Street
Roseville, MN 55113

WE DO NOT INHERIT THE EARTH FROM OUR ANCESTORS,
WE BORROW IT FROM OUR CHILDREN. Native American Proverb

26. Pat Stevesand

Mr. Walton,

Please ensure more resources are used to improving the natural state of this park as opposed to capital development.

The current plan falls short of including language that would allow natural resource management to take precedent over capital development projects, which compromises the parks natural resource base and threatens successful implementation of the NRMP.
Language, therefore, must be included in the plan which prescribes that management of Lebanon Hills and the Forever Wild Parks System will put natural resources at the forefront of decision making.

Thank you for keeping this jewel, a jewel, and not simply another less than valuable park.

Pat Stevesand

27. Suzanne Savanick Hansen, South St. Paul, MN

Date: June 7, 2019

TO: Joe Walton, Project Manager, joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us

RE: Comment for Lebanon Hills draft Natural Resources Management Plan

I grew up skiing in Lebanon Hills park and am pleased to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The plan falls short, however, of including language that would allow natural resource management to take precedent over capital development projects, which compromises the parks natural resource base and threatens successful implementation of the NRMP. Language, therefore, must be included in the plan which prescribes that management of Lebanon Hills and the Forever Wild Parks System will put natural resources at the forefront of decision making.

Further, to minimize potential conflicts and to allow the park to realize its potential, I urge the county to:

- Take care of what we have, but suspend new development or expansion of built amenities until Dakota County's natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state—only then can the impacts of capital development projects truly be known.
- Fully fund the NRMP by pursuing grants, and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).

The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we've historically seen, and I urge Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills Regional Park to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.
Sincerely,

Suzanne Savanick Hansen  
1007 15th Ave N  
South St. Paul MN 55075

28. Jim Brudney

Date: June 7, 2019

TO: Joe Walton, Project Manager, joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us

RE: Comment for Lebanon Hills draft Natural Resources Management Plan

I am pleased to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The plan falls short, however, of including language that would allow natural resource management to take precedent over capital development projects, which compromises the parks natural resource base and threatens successful implementation of the NRMP. Language, therefore, must be included in the plan which prescribes that management of Lebanon Hills and the Forever Wild Parks System will put natural resources at the forefront of decision making.

Further, to minimize potential conflicts and to allow the park to realize its potential, I urge the county to:

- Take care of what we have, but suspend new development or expansion of built amenities until Dakota County's natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state—only then can the impacts of capital development projects truly be known.
- Fully fund the NRMP by pursuing grants, and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).
The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we’ve historically seen, and I urge Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills Regional Park to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

Sincerely,

Jim Brudney

Concerned Citizen Formerly of South Minneapolis
Frequent visitor to Lebanon Hills during visits to TC.

29. Shannen Espelien, Savage, MN

Date: June 7, 2019

To Whom it May Concern,

I am pleased to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The plan falls short, however, of including language that would allow natural resource management to take precedent over capital development projects, which compromises the parks natural resource base and threatens successful implementation of the NRMP. Language, therefore, must be included in the plan which prescribes that management of Lebanon Hills and the Forever Wild Parks System will put natural resources at the forefront of decision making.

**Personal note:** In our Twin Cities community, we are very fortunate to have many picnic and play spaces for children and structures to support the needs of the families that are served. What is becoming less prevalent are natural spaces that support the creatures that are native to the area and the plant species that thrive natively as well.

As time goes on, we find that more natural spaces are being removed to make way for areas that are more manicured and structured by humans, but unless we sustain the ecosystem as best we can, we will ruin the outdoor spaces that we hold dear and the structures we build will have less use as being outdoors will not bring the joy it currently does.

There are numerous studies about the health and wellness benefits of natural outdoor spaces, even one done in a hospital that patients heal faster when they can see natural spaces from the window of their hospital room. In our time where health costs are increasing and wellness measures across the board are decreasing, we cannot afford to take out what is naturally pleasing and healing to humans to make way for manicured and concrete structures. Even something built with sustainability in mind that cuts down the natural habitat of the ecosystem around us is not working toward the wellness of the community as a whole.

Further, to minimize potential conflicts and to allow the park to realize its potential, I urge the county to:
• Take care of what we have, but suspend new development or expansion of built amenities until Dakota County’s natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state—only then can the impacts of capital development projects truly be known.

• Fully fund the NRMP by pursuing grants, and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).

The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we’ve historically seen, and I urge Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills Regional Park to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

Sincerely,
Shannen Espelien
4457 River Bend Pl
Savage, MN 55378

30. Chris Erickson, Lakeville, MN

Date: June 7, 2019

TO: Joe Walton, Project Manager, joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us

RE: Comment for Lebanon Hills draft Natural Resources Management Plan

I am pleased to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The plan falls short, however, of including language that would allow natural resource management to take precedence over capital development projects, which compromises the parks natural resource base and threatens successful implementation of the NRMP. Language, therefore, must be included in the plan which prescribes that management of Lebanon Hills and the Forever Wild Parks System will put natural resources at the forefront of decision making.

Further, to minimize potential conflicts and to allow the park to realize its potential, I urge the county to:
• Take care of what we have, but suspend new development or expansion of built amenities until Dakota County's natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state—only then can the impacts of capital development projects truly be known.
• Fully fund the NRMP by pursuing grants, and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).

The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we've historically seen, and I urge Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills Regional Park to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

Sincerely,

Chris Erickson
18971 Inlet Road
Lakeville, MN 55044

31. Sue Schedin, Beldenville, WI

Hi Joseph,

I am pleased to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The plan falls short, however, of including language that would allow natural resource management to take precedent over capital development projects, which compromises the park's natural resource base and threatens successful implementation of the NRMP. Language, therefore, must be included in the plan which prescribes that management of Lebanon Hills and the Forever Wild Parks System will put natural resources at the forefront of decision making.

Further, to minimize potential conflicts and to allow the park to realize its potential, I urge the county to:

• Take care of what we have, but suspend new development or expansion of built amenities until Dakota County's natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state—only then can the impacts of capital development projects truly be known.
• Fully fund the NRMP by pursuing grants, and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).
The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we've historically seen, and I urge Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills Regional Park to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

I am a frequent visitor on the equestrian trails at Lebanon and, therefore, I support the park's potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

Thank you!
Sue Schedin
W5329 County Rd. N
Beldenville, WI 54003

32. Gary Sheets

Date: June 7, 2019

TO: Joe Walton, Project Manager, joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us

RE: Comment for Lebanon Hills draft Natural Resources Management Plan

I am pleased to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The plan falls short, however, of including language that would allow natural resource management to take precedent over capital development projects, which compromises the parks natural resource base and threatens successful implementation of the NRMP. Language, therefore, must be included in the plan which prescribes that management of Lebanon Hills and the Forever Wild Parks System will put natural resources at the forefront of decision making.

Further, to minimize potential conflicts and to allow the park to realize its potential, I urge the county to:

- Take care of what we have, but suspend new development or expansion of built amenities until Dakota County's natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state—only then can the impacts of capital development projects truly be known.
- Fully fund the NRMP by pursuing grants, and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).
The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we've historically seen, and I urge Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills Regional Park to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

33. Valorie Jackson, Eagan, MN

Date: June 7, 2019

TO: Joe Walton, Project Manager, joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us
RE: Comment for Lebanon Hills draft Natural Resources Management Plan

I am pleased to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we've historically seen, and I encourage Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

To minimize potential conflicts with successfully implementing this NRMP, I urge the county to:

- Suspend development of new built amenities—especially the controversial 6-mile asphalt bicycle route through the park—until the county natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state. Only then can the true impacts of that and other construction projects be realized.

- Fully fund the plan by pursuing grants and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).

- Continue planning the regional bike network around Lebanon Hills as approved in the Central Greenway Connectivity Plan.

- Revisit opportunities to increase accessibility for mobility challenged visitors within the park using the best practices for sustainable design. I fully support the county providing accessibility in a manner that does not take away from the NRMP, which will then provide all visitors the opportunity to experience the park’s beautiful and healthy natural environment.

Sincerely,
Valorie Jackson  
549 Hawthorne Woods Drive  
Eagan, MN 55123

34. Peggy Pasillas, Inver Grove Heights, MN

I am pleased to support the NRMP which emphasizes the vital importance of restoration and ongoing management of natural resources throughout Lebanon Hills, which is consistent with public priorities for this park.

The NRMP sets into motion a vital shift from what we've historically seen, and I encourage Dakota County to complete the plan and allow Lebanon Hills to achieve its potential as an exceptional oasis of quality natural resources.

To minimize potential conflicts with successfully implementing this NRMP, I urge the county to:

- Suspend development of new built amenities—especially the controversial 6-mile asphalt bicycle route through the park—until the county natural resource staff and outside ecology professionals deem the park to be in a healthy ecological state. Only then can the true impacts of that and other construction projects be realized.
- Fully fund the plan by pursuing grants and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).
- Continue planning the regional bike network around Lebanon Hills as approved in the Central Greenway Connectivity Plan.
- Revisit opportunities to increase accessibility for mobility challenged visitors within the park using the best practices for sustainable design. I fully support the county providing accessibility in a manner that does not take away from the NRMP, which will then provide all visitors the opportunity to experience the park’s beautiful and healthy natural environment.

Thank you for your consideration.

Peggy Pasillas  
9928 Rich Valley Blvd  
Inver Grove Heights, MN 55077

35. Jason Bass, Rosemount, MN
Date: June 7, 2019

TO: Joe Walton, Project Manager, joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us

RE: Comment for Lebanon Hills draft Natural Resources Management Plan

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Sincerely,

Jason Bass
14802 Del.Delmar Ct
Rosemount, Mn

36. Brent Beal, Rosemount, MN

Date: June 7, 2019
TO: Joe Walton, Project Manager, joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us  
RE: Comment for Lebanon Hills draft Natural Resources Management Plan  
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- Fully fund the plan by pursuing grants and also using existing sources of conservation funds, including the Parks and Trails Legacy Fund and the Dakota County Environmental Legacy Fund (ELF).  
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Sincerely,  
Brent Beal  
15555 Dapple Circle  
Rosemount, MN 55068  

37. Leslie Pilgrim, Mendota Heights, MN  

Date: June 7, 2019  
TO: Joe Walton, Project Manager, joseph.walton@co.dakota.mn.us  
RE: Comment for Lebanon Hills draft Natural Resources Management Plan  

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Sincerely,
Leslie Pilgrim
 Mendota Heights/Dakota County