



# Friends of the Mississippi River

360 North Robert • Suite 400 • Saint Paul, MN 55101 • 651/ 222-2193 • [www.fmr.org](http://www.fmr.org)

*Working to protect the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities area*

July 15th, 2009

Carrie Wasley, Chair  
St. Paul Parks and Recreation Commission  
25 West Kellogg Blvd  
St. Paul, MN 55102

Chair Wasley and Commissioners,

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is a local non-profit organization that works to protect and enhance the natural and cultural assets of the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities. We have 1,400 active members and 3,200 volunteers who care deeply about the river's unique resources.

As a member of the Lilydale Regional Park Design Advisory Task Force, we have worked closely with the St. Paul Parks and Recreation Department and others to shape a meaningful plan for the future of Lilydale Park. We regret that because of multiple conflicts, we may not be able to attend tonight's meeting. But in lieu of our attendance, we write today to and encourage your approval of the Lilydale Regional Park Master Plan, and highlight two particular considerations among many for your attention.

**Erosion Control.** We think it is important for the City to have a deliberate strategy to stabilize numerous areas of erosion throughout the Park. The May 2009 Natural Resources Management Plan for the Park notes that some areas of erosion threaten private property, and create impacts on the railroad tracks. Others may pose long-term threats to areas around the clay pit, Vento's View and the waterfall along the brickyard trail. The Natural Resources Management Plan recommends that,

To better understand the extent of ravine erosion ... a more detailed field review should be conducted that specifically inventories the location and severity of erosion features, as well as identify significant contributions, if any, by stormwater sources or individual site drainage from roof tops and yards located near the top of the bluff or adjacent to clay pits....Depending on the activities included in such a project and the level of detail provided through the work, we estimate that cost for this activity would likely range from approximately \$11,000 to \$15,000. (page 67)

We think such an analysis is critical to shoring up key resources within the park and ensuring they remain generally intact for future generations. As such, we hope that the draft you forward to the City Council will recommend conducting this detailed field review in

the near-term, and following up with implementation of recommended erosion control projects in the long term.

**Off-Leash Dog Park.** We have been impressed with the careful consideration city leaders, as well as key park supporters have given to the potential location of an off-leash dog park on the site. Still, no amount of care can create consensus where none is destined to exist.

The proposed 8½ acres is a small fraction of the total size of Lilydale Park. It is located on an area currently dominated by a dozen or more five to ten foot high mounds of concrete, debris, dirt and trees, in dire need of remediation.

We believe that a dog park can exist in reasonable harmony with the park's general ecology, and in particular with the Mississippi River. The dog park will not extend to the shoreline, and thus will not directly impact the river. Moreover, we believe the character of a dog park fundamentally is the same character found elsewhere in Lilydale: that of a natural park.

We concur with those who say that Lilydale has some particular challenges around the perception of safety in an expansive and isolated setting. The existing boat launch parking has well-known security issues. Some in our organization have experienced things that were at least unnerving in isolated context of the park. The introduction of some additional eyes and ears may, in fact, attract newfound volunteers and stewards for the park.

The combined Harriet Island-Lilydale Regional Park has two parallel personalities. Harriet Island, St. Paul's civic front yard at the heart of town, is the "more urban" part of the park. Lilydale is Harriet Island's "more natural" counterpart, an incredible natural and cultural oasis steps from downtown. We believe this Master Plan provides a strong and coherent basis to move Lilydale Park forward as the natural setting it begs to be.

As we refine our vision and put it into action, St. Paul is wise to err generally on the side of smaller-scale amenities and a more natural setting. If we are smart and careful about the decisions we make in the years to come, we can ensure Lilydale Park becomes the incredible natural and sustainable legacy that so many know it can be.

Friends of the Mississippi River would be happy to be a supportive partner in the implementation of the Master Plan in any way possible. Please call our River Advocate Bob Spaulding anytime at 651-222-2193 with questions, ideas, or comments.

Best regards,



Whitney L. Clark  
Executive Director