Friends of Asylum Lake,

Well here we are at mid-summer and time to update you all on events related to Asylum Lake Preserve:

A. In the spirit of the council’s desire to get more volunteerism at Asylum Lake, the opportunity to partner with "Fall into the Streets" day of service is here. There are several dates possible but Friday October 10th or October 17th from 1-4 p.m. are best.

Based on past discussion with the management committee two projects stand out:

1. Thinning of the volunteer oaks in Savanna 2
Choice 1 fits into the overall management plans for the area but will require council approval, WMU landscape staff support for larger trees, preliminary selection of trees to be removed by qualified personnel and some follow up work by crews to chip or haul the brush.

2. Picking trash off the north shore of the preserve.
Choice 2 is surely needed and will require little planning or support, but also is not the most engaging or educational for the volunteer group.

If either of these are scheduled for the preserve, I would appreciate assistance from council members or neighbors to pull this off (supervision, snacks, prep and clean up...).

B. The topic of a "Long View" retreat was discussed recently and due to the busy summer and fall schedules by most members, January of 2015 the 17th, 24th or 31st were some choices. We could have this at an indoor WMU site from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with lunch and snacks included. Tell me what you think!

C. Recently a customer complained of a minor dog bite from an off leash dog. I have talked with the customer and alerted Animal Control as well as WMU Police about the event details. There was a general breakdown of communication and no one at WMU was made aware of this incident by the other agencies involved (Animal Control, Kalamazoo Police). There has been some limited enforcement by Animal Control over the last weeks.

D. The MDNR based out of Rose Lake requested an Asylum Lake Use request to pursue a duck banding project at the preserve.

E. I am in contact with Bill from Wildtype to discuss the next phase of management. He has only a small amount of spraying left on the last project. Bill indicated that area 3 (forest 1 west of main trail to the point) is an area that will give us great ecological benefit especially closer to the water. We will need to give Bill a budget total and decide if the brush burning is important part
of this phase. We did not burn in the last phase and we did not get any kickback from the public. I will work with Tim to determine the balance in our ecological management budget and set an amount that will leave us with some surplus going into next year.

F. I have tours of Asylum Lake scheduled with students, wellness groups and staff in August, September and October.

G. On request of the management committee I have reviewed the native planting at the Spillway to Beach path. While the tall sweet clover is most obvious, the understory contains a good diversity and number of natives. In addition, several of the opportunistic natives, Wild Rye, Grey head coneflower, rudebeckia are blooming and will provide seed this fall for the site. Rather than loose this seed or cut back our slower natives in mid-summer, I am in favor of mowing next spring to reduce the height and encourage the understory to rebound. The only other option here is selective hand cutting, this should not be done with a large group as it could result in excessive trampling damage to the new growth of the understory.

H. The bird study proposed by Dr. Sharon Gill has been approved at the preserve.

I. The fence project along Highpoint has not progressed beyond the weed spraying stage as of now. I will follow up with the farm and garden crew.

J. The north fence line with Stadium Drive Apartments and Winchell Apartments has been compromised again in 2 places. The boat reported on the lake weeks past is chained to an apartment in Stadium Drive Apartments near one of the breaks. Tim Holysz and Tom Edmonds are meeting to discuss this fence issue.

K. I have been working with Mark Hoffman and Kevin Faust, the GIS student, to copy archive city aerial photos of the Asylum Lake Colony Farm site from 1950-55 (as well as Kleinstuck and Oakland Drive and East campus). Now that we have digital copies thanks to Greg Anderson at The Welborn Geography Lab, we hope to stitch these photos together to give us a last picture of the facility intact.

L. I found a 4 pound African sulakta tortoise someone carelessly released at the preserve. I found this wonderful animal a new home with a seasoned Terp owner.

M. We are continuing to mow trails as well as the area for the geoscience field class. We will stop mowing the field class sites at the end of Summer II.

N. I will be leading a Lifelong Learning Class this fall. we will visit all the preserves and natural areas over 5 weeks, we will visit Asylum Lake on October 1st.
We have a preserve use request by the WMU Medical School to do a wilderness medical training exercise at the preserve in September. Tyler has agreed to walk the trail with the organizer to help them avoid sensitive areas and use the preserve appropriately for this event.

That is all for now, I hope you all are enjoying this amazing Michigan summer to the fullest!

Respectfully,

Steve Keto