

UNIVERSITY OF
WISCONSIN
MADISON

7 October 1998

Professor Robert O. Ray, Chair
Campus Natural Area Subcommittee
Department of Forest Ecology and Management
119 Russell Laboratories
Campus

Bob
Dear Professor Ray:

On behalf of the Lakeshore Path Task Force, I am pleased to transmit our report entitled "Considerations for the Aesthetic and Environmental Management of the UW-Madison Lakeshore Path". Also attached is the recent article "Temin's path: A serene trail is dedicated to one of its remarkable users", authored by Mr. Terry Devitt from the 9 September 1998 issue of Wisconsin Week. This literary piece begins with the observation that "To take the aesthetic measure of UW-Madison, one needs to know the Lakeshore Path." The views expressed by Devitt echo those held by the task force.

The Lakeshore Path Task Force met on a regular basis over the Summer and early Fall of 1998. Our deliberations led to the conclusion that every effort must be made to maintain and preserve in perpetuity the unique attributes of the Lakeshore Path. The challenge for present and future generations will be the preservation and protection of this extraordinary and cherished component of the UW-Madison campus.

Our remarks are focussed on aesthetic, environmental, and management considerations. The latter will require the attention of those who are charged with stewardship responsibilities. To quote from the report, "Critical to the long-term preservation and protection of any natural area is a comprehensive and well-developed management plan." The task force strongly believes that clearly stated goals and objectives are necessary for the foundation of any management plan, and for framing the general philosophical approach for the plan's development. We have included at the report's end our observations related to the safety issues and related management guidelines that we feel must be transmitted and considered by all those who might be empowered to make decisions about the future of this special setting. Please note that the task force sees this cover letter as an integral and non-separable component of the report, and asks that it be treated as such.

We hope that this report might be seen as a guide or template not only for the path, but for how the university will responsibly approach the planning, management, use and supervision of its other natural resources. The report is intended as a beginning, not as a final statement. Its value to the university, to the greater community and to the campus' natural resources themselves will accrue over time as it becomes enshrined in our collective wisdom.

We thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important dialogue.

Sincerely,

Bill

Professor William P. Morgan, Chair
Lake Shore Path Task Force

Attachments (2)

Department of Kinesiology
School of Education

Considerations for the Aesthetic and Environmental Management
of the UW-Madison Lakeshore Path¹

*(A Report of the Lakeshore Path Task Force)*²

7 October 1998

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Lakeshore Path provides a scenic and peaceful place for people to bike, walk, talk, and reflect without the interference of motorized traffic, street noise or industry. The experience is heightened by the quieting effects of tree covered walkways which provide the perception of wildness, shade from the direct sun, habitat for birds and other wildlife, and shelter individuals from the visual invasion of constructed facilities.

Scattered openings among the wooded corridor provide visual contact with the lake as well as enhance the sound of waves against the shore. Sights of waterfowl and aquatic life as well as vistas that are enhanced by winters' snow and icescapes which offer important elements for restoration of body, spirit and soul.

The path structure should encourage bicyclists to reduce speed and restrict other vehicular traffic preserving an unhurried character to the corridor. Places to sit, watch, think and reflect along the way are valuable attributes in urban environments where opportunities are increasingly rare. The lakeshore path is distinct from all other areas on the main campus and its qualities serve a vast number of campus users. These qualities along the Lakeshore Path must be maintained and preserved in perpetuity.

Critical to the long-term preservation and protection of any natural area is a comprehensive and well-developed management plan. This must include an articulated strategy for its implementation along with clear and unambiguous delegation of responsibility and authority plus the identification of responsible individuals and communication channels and contacts. The Lakeshore Path and its environs are no exception. Indeed, due to its unique attributes and the demands placed on it by its diverse users, it is without question that the development of its management plan should be given the highest priority.

The path, with its location on often precarious topography in close proximity to Lake Mendota, presents ample research and other opportunities for the formulation of creative and innovative management approaches and solutions for site management. The challenges are many. For example: how can runoff into the lake be minimized to preserve water quality; how can water absorption on the path be increased without compromising its use; how can erosion of steep embankments be controlled; how can native plant communities be preserved, restored and extended; how can the path's surface be maintained in a manner that minimizes impact on the environment; how can use of the path itself be maintained in a sustainable manner; how can the university community be educated about balancing the needs of a natural area and its users; how can enjoyment and appreciation of the aesthetics and the natural beauty of the path and the lakeshore be guaranteed for future generations; how can the path be managed for multiple use without jeopardizing the enjoyment of individual users?

Pedestrian and bicycle transportation considerations must by necessity be included as an integral part of the management strategy for the path. The path, constructed so that it follows a relatively level grade, is isolated from other than pedestrian/bicycle traffic, and provides a fairly direct northern route for travel between the east to the west ends of the campus. Perhaps the most unique and attractive aspect of the path

¹ For purposes of the task force's discussions to develop this report, the definition of the Lakeshore Path was considered to be from the Picnic Point gate on the west, to the Limnology Building on the east.

² The task force considers the report's cover letter (dated 7 October 1998) as an integral and non-separable component of the report itself, and therefore asks that it be treated as such by the reader.

is its near sanctuary atmosphere that it offers its users, whether they be on foot or on their bicycles, for the purpose of transportation or diversionary leisure. It therefore functions as a pleasurable alternative transportation route for many in the university community, as well as for others in the extended community. Thus, long-term strategies need to be developed and implemented which protect the safe transit and well-being of its diversity of users, while preserving the very qualities that make the path so special to them.

Obviously, the management of different segments of the path need to be addressed according to their physical conditions, current use patterns, and environmental and aesthetic considerations. Physical actions identified as necessary to satisfy a particular core objective but which would conflict with a higher order objective would not be viewed as consistent with long-term sustainability of the path. The following hierarchical articulation of core management objectives shall be considered whenever management activities of the path are contemplated.

1. Protect, preserve and restore natural elements (e.g., soil conditions, native fauna and flora communities, lake/shore interface) adjacent to path corridor.
2. Provide opportunities for quiet relaxation, recreation, contemplation and aesthetic enjoyment--in an environment free from motorized transit modes.
3. Provide pleasurable transit along the path for walkers and cyclists, as well as for others who use the path for health and fitness and commuting (e.g., joggers, strollers, bikers).
4. Provide opportunities for restoration and management research as well as practice.

(N.B. Although it is recognized that the safety of path users will need to be addressed, some approaches may well be inconsistent with the primary objectives identified within this report and in those cases would be unacceptable. Examples of incompatible safety approaches include the use of artificial lighting where none presently exist, or the introduction of impermeable surfaces on the path itself. As with all other possible actions which would result in a physical impact on the path, each suggested safety measure must be thoroughly evaluated to ensure that it is not contrary to the preservation of the path's natural and aesthetic values.)

Lakeshore Path Task Force

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