

Final Report and Budget

Restoration Exhibit at Forest Park Nature Center

Peoria Heights, Illinois

As noted in our Grant Application, the Restoration Exhibit involved 4 phases; Planning and Research, Design, Construction, and Evaluation. What follows is a brief overview of these areas of the project.

Planning and Research:

We looked closely at visitor and public perceptions and opinions about natural area restoration. We found that the topic had widely disparate opinions among those visiting the Nature Center. A majority of visitors realize the need for some type of land management to maintain the biological health of our woodlands, however only a small percentage of these visitors realize what work is entailed in doing so (Prescribed burning, mesophytic tree thinning in oak-hickory, tree thinning in Glacial Drift Hill Prairies, etc). On the other end of the spectrum were the small percentage of visitors who were opposed to restoration. The basis for their opposition was a view that human beings should not have an active role in the ecology of our natural areas. Unfortunately, this viewpoint is one that had taken hold in the headlines of our local newspaper. In essence we found ourselves having to interpret ecological restoration from a defensive point of view.

We then researched our restoration sites and formulated our interpretive design for the exhibit. Given the goal of developing an understanding of the restoration process, we needed to highlight easily comprehended examples of how ecological restoration benefits the biological health of our natural areas. We chose to focus on erosion, and how restored healthy woodlands prevent erosion through development of diverse and extensive root systems. Conversely, woodlands without restoration activity loose herbaceous groundcover, allowing for more sheet erosion. This concept, we felt, was one of the easiest concepts for visitors to understand. It also lent well to interpretation through visual media.

Design:

We chose to design a major part of the exhibit as a mural showing a cross section of soil in a healthy, diverse woodland system. Visitors can see that a majority of the tree's roots are at the surface, while the herbaceous vegetation found in healthy woods tends to have deeper root systems. This layering of the roots in a healthy natural area provides an underground diversity that is usually hidden to visitors. This diversity provides increased soil stability, increased biodiversity, and increases the water infiltration rates, lessening water runoff, and substantially reducing erosion.

We also wanted to design into the exhibit a means for visitors to find out more about topics raised in the exhibit. We purchased an imac computer to use as a informational kiosk. This will allow us to incorporate timely multimedia programs on various aspects of restoration. Many of these programs are written by our own staff as HyperCard Applications.

We also wanted the exhibit to include a means for visitors to become involved with the restoration process. A section of the exhibit serves as a "Point of Purchase" display for Peoria Wilds, a project of the Volunteer Stewardship Network that focuses on the restoration of the wooded areas owned by The Peoria Park District.

Construction:

Staff artist, Jane West-Walsh, designed and constructed the mural, while Mike Miller, Chief Naturalist, created the photographic elements, and interpretive wordings for the exhibit. Mike also developed programs for the imac computer.

Evaluation:

The exhibit will be continually undergoing interpretive content evaluations. Given the type of media that were used (mural, photographic and computerized), the exhibit lends itself well to updating.

Budget:

Attached is a budget describing the funding of this exhibit. We are requesting \$911.57 from the Illinois Wildlife Preservation Fund to assist with this project

Suppliers	Description	Grant Request	PPD Matching	Total Amount
Jeffrey Alan	Supplies	\$ 73.84		\$ 73.84
Lowes	Supplies	\$ 39.43		\$ 39.43
Connecting Point	Computer		\$ 989.00	\$ 989.00
Bradley University	Photographic Reproduction	\$ 96.00		\$ 96.00
Rex Camera	Photographic Reproduction	\$ 53.70		\$ 53.70
Dick Blick	Supplies	\$ 27.36		\$ 27.36
Technicraft	Exhibit Graphics	\$ 275.00		\$ 275.00
Anthro	Computer Cart		\$ 129.29	\$ 129.29
Rex Camera	Photographic Reproduction	\$ 25.00		\$ 25.00
Jeffrey Alan	Supplies	\$ 46.24		\$ 46.24
Contracted Staff	Wages			
Jane West Walsh	30 hrs @ \$9.00/Hr	\$ 275.00		\$ 275.00
Mike Miller	20 hrs @ \$15.00		\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00
Totals		\$ 911.57	\$ 1,418.29	\$ 2,329.86