PROPOSALS FOR THE CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF

THE ELOISE BUTLER WILDFLOWER AND BIRD SANCTUARY

1980

This paper has been drawn up by the Friends of the Wildflower Garden, Inc., an organization of private citizens who, for the past 28 years, have contributed much time and money in cooperation with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Department towards the development and preservation of the Eloise Butler Wildflower and Bird Sanctuary. This group of private citizens has a keen and vested interest in this unique preservation of land. Believing that our relationship to this area should periodically be reviewed, we have compiled these statements.

I. This Garden was created in 1907 to provide an educational site in the Twin Cities area where citizens - students of all ages, educators, and tourists - could conveniently experience the diversity of indigenous Minnesota flora.

II. This Garden, to be truly educational, should remain an environment containing as many of the plants Non-woody and woody) that are truly native to Minnesota as can be managed in a setting approximating a natural wilderness. Emphasis should be placed on those plant species occuring within a 150 mile radius of the Twin Cities - including adjacent portions of Wisconsin and Iowa. which plants are missing?

In evaluating the present status, we propose that a plant census of the site be conducted and evaluated during the 1981-82 growing seasons.

III. This Garden should include a collection of plants grouped symbiotically in as many natural environments (woodland, bog, prairie, etc.) as is feasible to this site. However, we firmly believe that it is better to maintain one or two environments well, than many poorly.

IV. This Garden will require a continuing management, which we hope can be minimal (or at least leave that appearance) and which will favor techniques that do the least environmental damage.

The preservation of an extensive collection of flora will always require some suppression of aggressive species for the protection of less hardy ones. A reasonable balance of species within the total collection is desirable. Some native Minnesota flora will never be feasible at this site.

V. The educational value of this Garden is enhanced by a diversity of animals and birds - migratory and resident. Plans for planting changes should always consider encouraging this diversity.

VI. The educational role of this Garden dictates the identification of all flora species by their scientific name primarily - and where appropriate by a regionally popular name. We suggest that where non-indigenous species are identified they be indicated in some manner (perhaps by signs in a different color).

VII. This Garden in the years since its inception has served several purposes which are no longer appropriate. One of the most notable has been the use of some areas as testing grounds for the hardiness of garden exotics (a role now better served by the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum). Therefore we propose that future management of this area should gradually eliminate the exotic species during the decade of the '80s.

VIII. This garden is a unique environment. To protect this, we suggest that the unmanaged areas surrounding the present Garden (and associated with it in the Park Board action of 19) be preserved as an unfenced semi-wild buffer zone. A future possibility would be to manage certain limited portions of this outer area to stop the natural woodland development in order to show the different stages a Minnesota savannah passes through in becoming a woodland.

Realizing well that all this is not a simple project, we, The Friends of the Wildflower Garden, Inc., now, as in the past, are prepared to help but not to replace, the Park Board in the achievement of these goals.

Realizing also that this particular garden cannot be the whole picture of virgin Minnesota, we would urge groups of citizens around the state to work to establish in their own counties, gardens of the plants native to that area. Thus could be established a network of preserves that could collectively recreate the picture of a virgin Minnesota.