

SAVE OUR SANCTUARY!

Brightwood Park

FriendsofBrightwood.org



Friends of Brightwood Park a NJ non-profit corporation

- ▶ **Our vision:** a vibrant revitalized nature preserve with educational and passive recreational opportunities for all ages.



Photo by Lloyd Marks, MD

Per our by-laws, voting members serve two important roles:

1. Elect our Board of Directors; and
2. Help determine the direction of our organization for the coming year.

The issue for direction of FOBP in 2021 is:

Should FOBP become a fundraising organization to support our efforts to revitalize the park as a nature preserve in partnership with the Town?

2008 Stewardship Plan for Brightwood Park

prepared by ecologist Michael Van Clef for the Rahway River Association

Van Clef was called upon to:

- ▶ Map out the different types of wildlife habitats;
- ▶ Assess the degree of environmental degradation and its causes;
- ▶ Determine the extent of native plant loss versus invasive species; and
- ▶ Develop a plan to restore the park.

Van Clef described the park as “a natural oasis in a highly developed portion of NJ.”



Photo by Chuan Chu Chou

Challenges to Eco-Health of the park in 2008:

- ▶ **Invasive plant “infestation”** - 28 non-native plants in 55% of the park - Van Clef suggested it would take about 3,400 hours of manpower to address this problem.
- ▶ **Ponds in need of restoration** - algae blooms and silting
- ▶ **Deer browse**

Van Clef proposed strategies to improve the ecology of the park:

- ▶ Fencing to enclose the park to address deer browse;
- ▶ Eradication of invasive plants and follow-up maintenance over a period of years;
- ▶ Foster native plant regeneration;
- ▶ Create a wildflower meadow habitat;
- ▶ Restore the lakeshore shrubland with native plants; and
- ▶ Encourage volunteer stewardship by local students.

Van Clef recommended improvements:

- Bubblers and treatment for the pond;
- Deeper channel between the two ponds with a wooden pedestrian bridge;
- Wetland habitat for the small pond to address nutrient build-up;
- Surface refuse clean-up.



Photo by Kevin Redden

Unfortunately, the plan was not implemented.

2 ecologists evaluated Brightwood Park in June and July 2020 - 12 years after the Stewardship Plan.

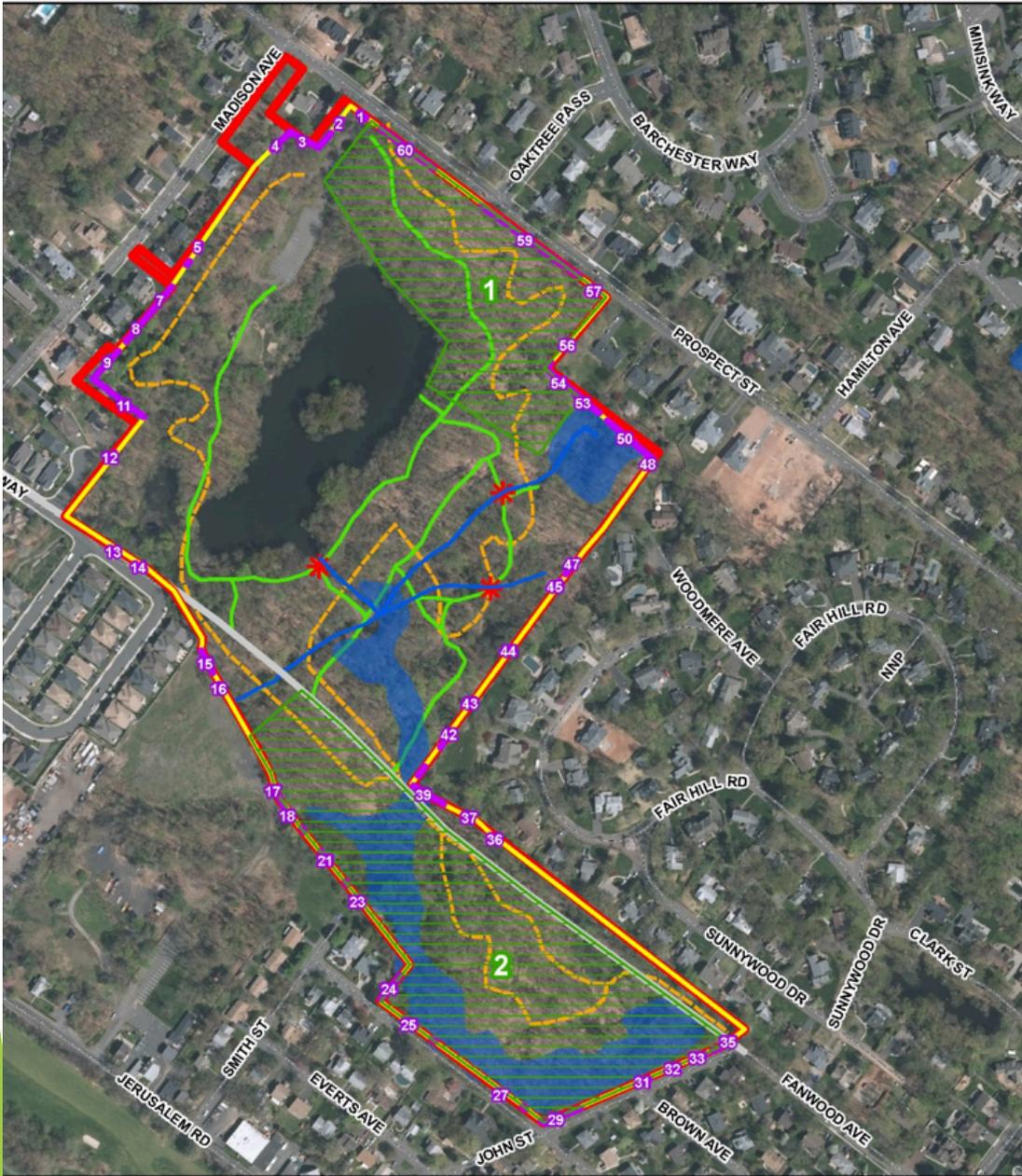


June 30: Michael Van Clef

July 1: Emile DeVito

Stream crossing utilized by mountain bikers at the Park.

Vegetation was cut, and stream bank damage is occurring



FoHVOS New Jersey
Invasive Species
Strike Team

**Ecological Mapping of
Brightwood Park
Westfield, NJ**

2015 Aerial Photography

Legend

-  High Quality Areas
-  Fence Damage Areas
-  Fence Line
-  Park Boundary
-  Unimproved Access Road
-  NJDEP GIS Wetlands
-  Streams
-  Bridge Over Stream

Park Trails

-  Proposed Bike Trail
-  Existing Trails



0 250 500 Feet

There are two high quality areas of forest with minimal invasive plant infestation.

In undisturbed areas of the forest, there are old hardwood trees including some oaks at or over 200 years.

This makes the park regionally significant and unique.



Wetlands were not all identified in the DEP GIS - as it was not a formal delineation.



Photos by Jeffrey Scheininger

Good News from the ecologists:

The park's ecology can be significantly improved to a healthy forest ecosystem if:

- ▶ Invasive plants are removed;
- ▶ Deer are excluded from areas where native plants are to be regenerated; and
- ▶ Bikers are excluded from the high value areas, wetlands, and stream crossings.

FOBP has used the Stewardship Plan as a blueprint:

- ▶ In the last five months of 2020 FOBP members have volunteered almost 400 hours in the park:
- ✓ Removed invasive plants including knotweed, wisteria, amur honeysuckle;



✓ Removed several tons of surface trash:



- ✓ Engaged the community through an educational program for pre-schoolers in collaboration with the Westfield Recreation Department and reached out to the Westfield public schools to encourage use of the park for ecological learning.



Park Health 2021



When the weather and Covid 19 permits:

- Clean-up days in the park to address surface trash; and
- Sessions to cut down non-native plants.



Education 2021

Nature Walks, Story time, Arts and Crafts for Pre-Schoolers

- occasional classes until after Covid and targeting mid-year rollout

Teen Photography Contest

- Entries due June 30. Announcement to go out shortly

Westfield Art Association Plein Air Day in the Park

- May 1, 2021

Yoga, Pilates and Movement Classes- all ages

- Target start date April, weather permitting

Project Collaboration with Scouts

- Coordination in progress. Participation begins this winter!



Painting by Vickie Williams

Historical Perspective 2021



Continued research of the former residents of the park site

- Make outreach to descendants of families to collect an oral history
- Highlight one former individual or family in each issue of the FOBP Newsletter
- Complete research by December 2021

Develop map-based guide to locate former structures

- Produce a print handout and on-line version

Hope for the future:

Continue removal of trash and work on eradication of invasive plants in collaboration with the town.





Create a wildflower meadow adjacent to the pond to attract butterflies, bees and other pollinators

Restore lake shore shrub habitat

Once invasive plants are eradicated, small shrubs and trees can be planted along the shore.



Restore lake to health and reverse eutrophication



Photo by Kevin Redden

Should FOBP become a fundraising organization to support our efforts to revitalize the park as a nature preserve in partnership with the Town?

- Town budget unlikely to address many of the needs in Brightwood Park;
- Town has shown interest in collaborating with FOBP on projects;
- Forest in Brightwood Park has potential to be restored;
- Lakes are in great need of aerators and treatment;
- Wildflower garden plays vital role in attracting biodiversity.

Why tie our efforts in park to its use as a nature preserve?



Photo by Chuan Chu Chou

Per Emile DeVito:
“In such a tiny park,
ecological restoration is
not compatible with
active recreation in the
same spot.”

Park Infrastructure and Fund-raising Committee(s)

- ❖ Study needs of park;
- ❖ Determine costs of proposed projects;
- ❖ Collaborate with town;
- ❖ Research and apply for grants such as might be available from NJCF Parker Grants, Green Acres, Union County, and Westfield Foundation;
- ❖ Fund-raise up to 50% of project costs to partner with town.



Photo by Chuan Chu Chou

Meeting Wrap-Up:

**THANK YOU FOR
JOINING US!**

**Brightwood Park has a
bright future!**

**Please consider
volunteering!**

Lawn signs will be available soon

