



## **MNP by the Numbers and 2014 Achievements**

### **Mission**

Mequon Nature Preserve Inc.'s (MNP Inc.) mission is to be a guiding example of land restoration by returning an urban/suburban area to pre-settlement conditions and establishing an environmental education conservancy and natural habitat that inspires exploration and cultivates stewardship, encouraging visitors to get off the path.

### **MNP History**

In 2002, the City of Mequon announced a partnership with the Greater Milwaukee Foundation and the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust to establish Mequon Nature Preserve. The goal was to create a premier site for nature-based recreation and outdoor environmental science education. To reach this goal, the City raised funds through public and private sources to acquire the land and develop the Preserve; the Foundation served as the banker handling all private donations; and the Land Trust carried out all real estate transactions and managed the property for 10 years. Today, a conservation easement has been placed on the land protecting it from development forever.

Accomplishments to date include the following:

- Purchased 438 acres of land between May 2002 and September 2005. The site had two farmsteads, a building that served as a church, three wood lots and the remainder was in agriculture.
- Built a five-mile long trail system that includes turf and gravel trails and several boardwalks and a bridge. About two and one-half miles of the trails have a hard gravel surface; the remainder has a turf surface. All trail slopes are under a six percent grade recommended for accessibility.
- Renovated a 12,000 square foot building to sustainable standards that now houses education programs for people of all ages, community events, and MNP offices. Major renovations were carried out between July 2006 and August 2007. The building is known as the PieperPower Education Center.
- Started an aggressive program to restore a native hardwood forest and wetlands that covered the land prior to European settlement starting in the early 1800's.
- Developed a k-12 outdoor education program that serves children from throughout the area. Post secondary students use MNP for field work and research.

Today, the City of Mequon leases the land and buildings to Mequon Nature Preserve, Inc., a tax-exempt entity, for \$1 annually. In turn MNP Inc. carries out an environmental science program using the Mequon Nature Preserve's land and its restoration work as a laboratory. Integral to the education experience is students' involvement in land restoration tasks, monitoring, and research. MNP Inc. does not receive City of Mequon tax revenue to operate its programs. All funds must be raised from charitable sources.

### **Facts about MNP with 2014 Accomplishments**

1. Plans guiding Mequon Nature Preserve's development

- a. Master Plan, 2006. The Master Plan set a number of goals that include restoring the beech-maple hardwood forest, which is a 150 year endeavor, and establishing a premier site for environmental education and research.
  - b. Land Restoration Plan, 2011. This five year plan gives month by month guidance for restoration strategies and tasks. It is up for renewal in 2016.
2. Mequon Nature Preserve Site. Basic information about its 438 acre site and 2014 achievements
- a. Land in Buildings: 15 Acres  
 Almost all of the land that is now known as Mequon Nature Preserve was previously farmed. Barns and a home remain on the property from its agricultural past.
    - i. Stauss Farmstead – 9 acres
    - ii. Bacher Barns and grounds – 2 acres
    - iii. PieperPower Education Center and parking lots – 3 acres
    - iv. Batzler Barn and grounds – 1 acre
  - b. Land in agriculture. 257 acres  
 What land that is not undergoing restoration is leased to farmers. As MNP Inc. raises funds needed to restore land now in agricultural production, MNP Inc. will remove land from agriculture and expand its land restoration work to cover additional acres. Income from leases goes toward maintaining buildings and funding programs.
  - c. Land in restoration and management. 166 acres  
 The land restoration program is comprehensive and multi-faceted. It includes removal of invasive species through hand pulling, rotary mowing, forestry mowing, burning, and herbicide treatment; planting native trees, shrubs, and plugs; removing drain tile systems; and conducting scrapes to restore the historic hydrology. The 166 acres undergoing restoration includes 23.8 acres of wetlands. Another 1.2 acres of wetlands are located on a farmstead outside of a restoration area.  
  
 There are three remnant hardwood woodlots, which cover 23 acres. The Gengler Woods includes five champion trees: Sugar Maple (7' CBH); Swamp White Oak (10.5' CBH), Basswood (6.5' CBH), Sugar Maple (5.75' CBH) and White Oak (9.5' CBH).
  - d. Trails, Observation Tower and other site amenities  
 MNP's five-mile-long trail system takes visitors through woods, wetlands, and wild flower prairies. About one-half of trails have a gravel surface and the remaining segments have a turf surface. All slopes are under six percent, an ADA accessibility standard. Trails are open to the public, without charge, from sunrise to sunset 365 days a year.  
  
 The Teacher's Observation Tower is located near the center of MNP. Its top viewing deck is 40 feet high where two telescopes are mounted. An observation deck, a small amphitheater, and an observation platform, all overlooking the Streich Family Wetlands, are easily reached from the PPEC parking lot. Wheelchairs designed for outdoor use on uneven surfaces are available. A total of eight individuals can be accommodated on a golf cart tour.
  - e. Planting and land management activities in 2014
    - 1,000 native shrub/tree seedlings planted
    - 6,000 native herbaceous plugs planted

- Foliar herbicide treatments applied to all re-sprouted buckthorn growth
  - Over a ton of non-native plants (garlic mustard and dame's rocket) were removed in April.
  - Controlled burn conducted on 15 acres
  - Selectively mowed sweet clover and Canada thistle on 80 acres
- f. Wetland work in the center of MNP in 2014
- Removed tile that drained 25 acres.
  - Planted native wetland plant plugs along wetland margins.
  - Translocated 900 blue-spotted and tiger salamander eggs from wetlands surrounding Pike Lake into Harvey's Woods ephemeral pond.
  - Wisconsin Waterfowl Association scraped about 2 acres as part of restoring the Hidden Wetland system.
  - Constructed 3 snake hibernacula.
- g. Monitoring restoration progress
- Students and volunteers, trained by staff, monitored terrestrial and aquatic vegetative species, birds, pond invertebrates, amphibians, and water quality.
  - Bird species: 144 spotted, an increase from 68 in 2007
  - Fish species: 11 native species up from zero in 2007.
  - Herpetiles: 2 turtle species, 1 snake, 1 toad, 6 frog, and 2 salamanders identified.
3. PieperPower Education Center (PPEC) Building
- a. The building, 12,000 square feet in size, was purchased in 2005 as part of the purchase of the 30 acre Spirit Life parcel.
  - b. Building renovations started July 2006 and were completed in August 2007.
  - c. The building was renovated to sustainable standards which included the use of products and equipment that improve air quality and conserved water and energy. This included the installation of a photovoltaic array and a wind turbine that produce about one-half of the building's electricity.
  - d. Parking lot was reconstructed in 2011 creating bio-retention areas in the parking lot islands and installing porous pavement on the east side of PPEC
  - e. Added a second garage to house educational equipment November 2012
4. Environmental Education in CY 2014
- a. Number of student contacts onsite – 3,560
  - b. Number of student contacts off site – 5,070
  - c. Number of educational institutions participating – 126
5. Community Outreach Attendance and Visitors in 2014
- a. Adult Education program attendance - 1,775
  - b. Public Events - 6
  - c. Summer Camps - 2
  - d. Winter Frolic - 800
  - e. Run Wild 5 K run/walk – 300
  - f. Visitors in 2014 – est. 25,000. This includes those using trails from sunrise to sunset 365 days a year; MNP events, student and adult programs; voters using PPEC polling place; and programs provided by partners.
6. Participating Partners and Volunteers
- a. Concordia Wisconsin University – 150 students (6-8 hours per student)

- b. UW Milwaukee - 23 students
  - c. Milwaukee Area Technical College, North Campus - 10 students
  - d. Restoration Rangers - 10 community members attend weekly
  - e. Internships: 2 students for six month period
  - f. Eagle Scout projects completed - 5
  - g. Volunteer hours for 2014: 3,461
7. Awards/Recognition
- a. Wisconsin DNR Invader Crusader awarded to MNP Director of Education and Restoration, Jason Nickels
  - b. Wisconsin DNR Innovation in Urban Forestry awarded to MNP and City of Mequon
  - c. Southeastern WI Invasive Species Consortium Garlic Mustard Pull-a-Thon awarded to Mequon Nature Preserve
8. Governance
- a. MNP Advisory Board under OWLT. MNP began its work in 2004 as Mequon Nature Preserve Advisory Board under the aegis of the Ozaukee Washington Land Trust. OWLT was responsible for managing the land and buildings.
  - b. MNP Inc. Formed. The volunteers who served on the MNP Advisory Board formed a corporation that took over MNP management July 1, 2011, ending OWLT's management of the MNP site. MNP Inc. was granted tax exempt status in July 2011.
  - c. MNP Inc. Lease with City of Mequon. MNP Inc. entered into a 30 year lease with the City of Mequon, December 2011. MNP Inc. is responsible for carrying out an environmental education program, restoring the land, and providing public access through a trail system.
  - d. Board of Directors. MNP Inc. is governed by a 12 member board made of community leaders with a broad array of skills and experience. The members include Jim Bell, chairman, Robert W. Baird, ret.; Fred Geilfuss, Foley & Lardner, vice chairman; Christine Nuernberg, secretary/treasurer, community volunteer; Clay Frazer, Eco Resource Consulting; Michelle Gaeth, Fiserv; Mark Murphy, HydroTech Innovations; Nathan Otero, US Bank; Bruce Ramme, We Energies; Kevin Shafer, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District; Lee Szymborski, govHRus; Steve Tews, Robert W. Baird; and John Treffert, Village of Thiensville.
  - e. MNP Inc. staff. The staff of 5.5 FTE's includes Executive Director Kristin Gies; Development Director Kay Amland; Education and Land Restoration Director Jason Nickels; Restoration Manager Emily Biagi; administrative assistant Amy Wegener, and facilities manager Bruch Roehner.
9. Contact Information
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