

# NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN



CITY OF SOUTH BEND  
**VENUES PARKS & ARTS**

January 9<sup>th</sup> 2020 revision





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# OUR VISION

TO MANAGE RESOURCES UNDER JURISDICTION OF THE SOUTH BEND VENUES PARKS & ARTS DEPARTMENT TO HELP ENHANCE AND MAINTAIN THE ECOLOGICAL HEALTH OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE SOCIAL WELL-BEING OF HUMAN POPULATIONS.

Four basic principles support this vision:

1. Natural resources can be managed to provide for human use and a healthy environment.
2. Resource management must be focused on principles to reduce the need for single resource or single species management.
3. Stewardship, the involvement of people working with natural processes, is essential for successful implementation.
4. South Bend Venues Parks & Arts cannot achieve this vision alone but can, by its management processes and through cooperation and assistance from others, be a significant contributor to its achievement.

With all our global issues and broad-based strategy, we must remember to understand individual places and how people feel about them, and weigh each detail in their management, design, construction and long-term use

# OUR PROCEDURES

South Bend Venues Parks & Arts shall act responsibly in the public interest in managing its lands and natural resources. There shall be a conscious and active concern for the inherent value of natural resources in all VPA's plans, actions, and programs.

1. Natural resources under control of VPA shall be managed to support the mission of the department, while practicing the principles of multiple use and sustained yield, using scientific methods and an interdisciplinary approach. The conservation of natural resources and active recreation need not and shall not be mutually exclusive.
2. Watersheds and natural landscapes, soils, woodland, fish and wildlife, and protected species shall be conserved and managed as vital elements of VPA's natural resources program.
3. VPA actions that affect natural resources within the jurisdiction of the Board of Park Commissioners shall comply with all policies of the City of South Bend, St. Joseph County and the more stringent of applicable Local, State and Federal law.

4. VPA decision makers shall stay informed of the conditions of natural resources, the objectives of natural resources management plans, and potential or actual conflicts between VPA actions and management plans and the policies and procedures herein.
5. VPA Department lands are available to the public for enjoyment and use of natural resources, except when a specific determination has been made that site conditions prevent such access for safety or security reasons or that the natural resources will not support such usage.
6. To assist in the management, study, or monitoring of natural resources, Federal, State and Local officials and natural resources management professionals shall be permitted access to natural resources after proper safety and security measures are taken.
7. If natural resources under VPA control are damaged by a hazardous substance released by another party, that party is potentially liable. Funds recovered by VPA as a result of natural resources damage claims shall be used for restoration, replacement, or acquisition of equivalent natural resources.
8. Enforcement of laws primarily aimed at protecting natural resources and recreation activities that depend on natural resources is an integral part of a natural resources program and shall be coordinated with or under the direction of the Superintendent or manager for the affected area.

## IDENTIFIED TOPICS OF CONCERN

as identified by the Ecological Advocacy Committee

### **AQUATIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

- Maintain/improve water quality
  - Water quality testing
- Protect/maintain wetlands, ponds, rivers and streams
- Create/restore/maintain natural vegetation buffers
- Use best management practices when applying fertilizers/herbicides
- Best practices techniques for properties adjacent to natural aquatic resources
- Bank management and stabilization, including attention to the practices determining the creation and maintenance of the River Windows project.

### **EDUCATION**

- Increase public awareness and outreach
  - Develop interpretive signage
  - Neighborhood reach
- Develop nature programs and events to promote city values
  - Develop programs in conjunction with the SB Community School Corp.
- Include rec. opportunities as educational tools

### **LAND POLICIES**

- Identify properties based on ecological value
- Balance recreational use with environmental responsibility
- Expand/improve trail infrastructure and nature viewing areas
- Control erosion and restore degraded properties in select areas
- Establish a policy to protect city parks while striving to acquire additional land
- Citizen Scientist involvement

Responsible practices for outdoor lighting that include concerns for the night sky and wild life impacts

### **MANAGEMENT OF TREES**

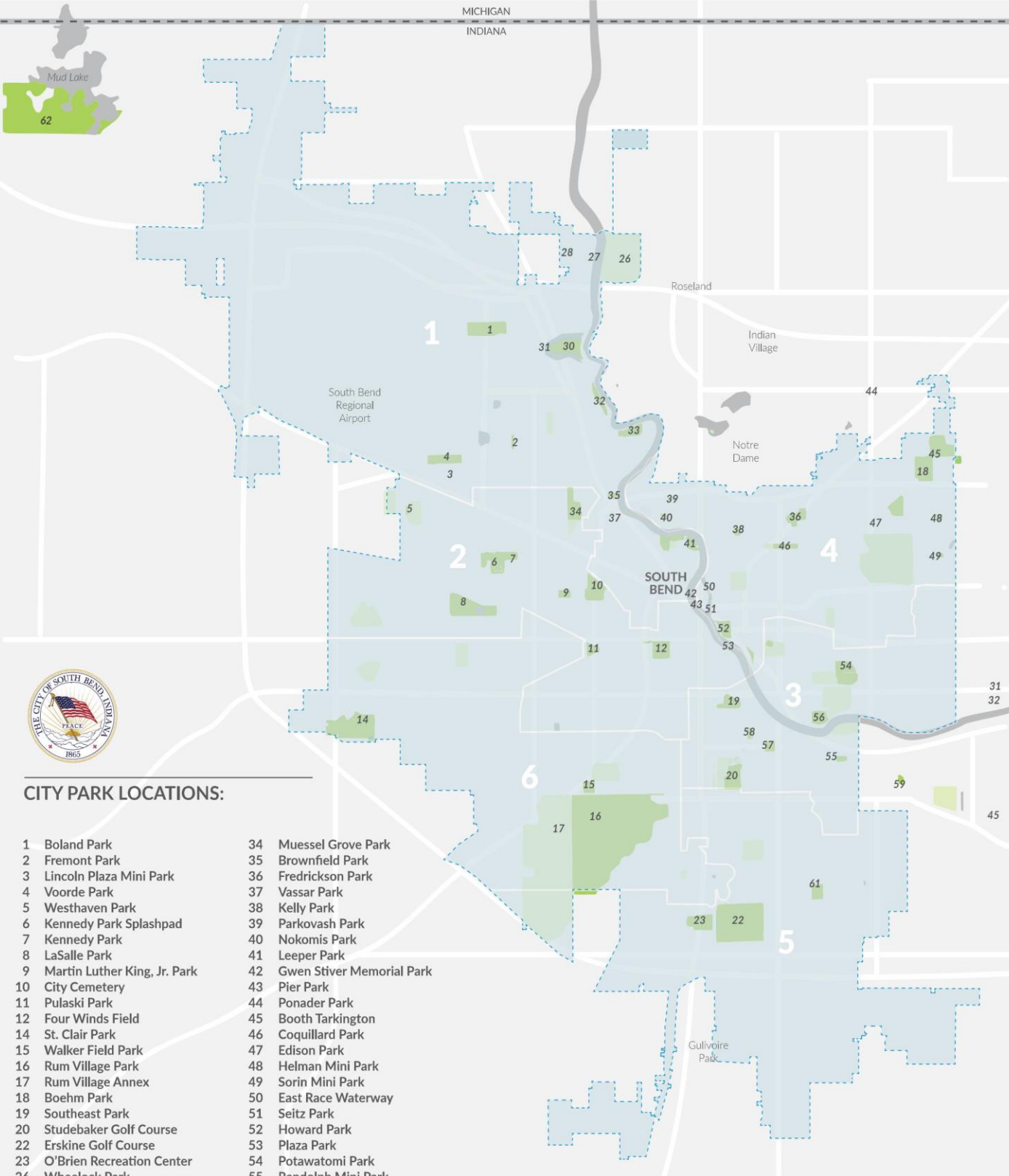
- Tree removal/trimming standards
  - Education efforts on why these standards are used
  - Include a hazard tree protocol
- Comprehensive tree maintenance policy
  - Species to plant
  - Standards for care
- Replant and restore native trees to maintain diversity
- Preserve microhabitats that support wildlife (downed trees, standing dead trees, etc.)
- Manage and control invasive tree species

### **VEGETATION MANAGEMENT**

- Remove/control invasive species
- Maintain/promote/restore native plant species
- Monitor/protect listed species
- Preserve habitat which supports wildlife
- Best practices for mowing and chemical application
- List of native plants and tree species for preferred planting.

### **WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**

- Monitor/protect native wildlife
- Nuisance wildlife management
- Maximize biodiversity with habitat enhancement
  - Support butterflies, moths and birds by planting native food sources



**CITY PARK LOCATIONS:**

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 Boland Park                  | 34 Muesel Grove Park                               |
| 2 Fremont Park                 | 35 Brownfield Park                                 |
| 3 Lincoln Plaza Mini Park      | 36 Fredrickson Park                                |
| 4 Voorde Park                  | 37 Vassar Park                                     |
| 5 Westhaven Park               | 38 Kelly Park                                      |
| 6 Kennedy Park Splashpad       | 39 Parkovash Park                                  |
| 7 Kennedy Park                 | 40 Nokomis Park                                    |
| 8 LaSalle Park                 | 41 Leeper Park                                     |
| 9 Martin Luther King, Jr. Park | 42 Gwen Stiver Memorial Park                       |
| 10 City Cemetery               | 43 Pier Park                                       |
| 11 Pulaski Park                | 44 Ponader Park                                    |
| 12 Four Winds Field            | 45 Booth Tarkington                                |
| 14 St. Clair Park              | 46 Coquillard Park                                 |
| 15 Walker Field Park           | 47 Edison Park                                     |
| 16 Rum Village Park            | 48 Helman Mini Park                                |
| 17 Rum Village Annex           | 49 Sorin Mini Park                                 |
| 18 Boehm Park                  | 50 East Race Waterway                              |
| 19 Southeast Park              | 51 Seitz Park                                      |
| 20 Studebaker Golf Course      | 52 Howard Park                                     |
| 22 Erskine Golf Course         | 53 Plaza Park                                      |
| 23 O'Brien Recreation Center   | 54 Potawatomi Park                                 |
| 26 Wheelock Park               | 55 Randolph Mini Park                              |
| 27 Riverside                   | 56 Veteran's Memorial Park                         |
| 28 River Manor                 | 57 Bowman Cemetery                                 |
| 30 Pinhook Park                | 58 Ravina Park                                     |
| 31 LaSalle Landing Park        | 61 Marshall Park                                   |
| 32 Woodlawn Park               | 62 Elbel Park                                      |
| 33 Keller Park                 | 63 Gov. Joe Kernan Park<br>(formerly Viewing Park) |

- - City of South Bend Parks
- Districts



## ECOLOGICAL ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

The Director of the Rum Village Nature Center is the assigned staff member to coordinate assignments and agenda for the Ecological Advocacy Committee (EAC). Volunteer team members provide as-needed input guidance, council and advisory opinion on planning and development issues that directly affect the department's natural state or environmentally sensitive properties.

The EAC oversees the formulation and updating of an Ecological Action Plans (EAP) to broadly cover the entire system. This one of the primary actions undertaken at the request of the Board of Park Commissioners.

This team offers extensive expertise in Forestry, Resource Management, Botany, Site Development Planning, Administration, and Natural Resources and Wildlife Management.

## OUR EDUCATION

The long-term success of the South Bend Venues Parks & Arts' natural resource management efforts is dependent on support from staff, our park users, the general public and the policy makers who ultimately have control over these operations. To garner this support, it is imperative to educate these groups in the details and benefits of all elements of responsible stewardship of our natural resources. This education should be thought of as a never-ending process, not as a short-term goal to accomplish and then cross off of a list. It must become second nature to park management and all park staff to educate our community in the department's resource management goals whenever opportunities present themselves. Education must be a key ingredient in any viable resource management effort.

The education component of the EAC should specifically include three different target focuses:

1. Instill a sense of ownership in the Resource Management Plan by the VPA Department and staff.
2. Develop and include Resource Management education in the department's programs targeted to the public.
3. Educate and involve local, regional and state policy makers in this effort

## SENSITIVE NATURAL ZONES

directly under VPA control

The primary objective in natural zones is the protection of natural resources and values for appropriate types of enjoyment while ensuring their availability to future generations.

Natural resources will be managed with a concern for fundamental ecological processes as well as for individual species and features. Site managers will not attempt solely to preserve individual species (except threatened or endangered species) or individual natural processes; rather, they will try to maintain all the components and processes of naturally evolving park ecosystems, including the natural abundance, diversity, and ecological integrity of the plants and animals.

Just as all components of a natural system will be recognized as important, so will change be recognized as an integral part of the functioning of natural systems. The South Bend Venues Parks & Art Department will not seek to preserve natural systems in natural zones as though frozen at a given point in time.

Interference with natural processes in park natural zones will be allowed only:

- When directed by the Board of Park Commissioners
- In some emergencies when human life and property are at stake, or
- To restore native ecosystem functioning that has been disrupted by past or ongoing human activities with advisory council and guidance from the Ecological Advocacy Committee.

Ecological processes altered in the past by human activities may need to be abetted to maintain the closest approximation of the natural ecosystem where a truly natural system is no longer attainable. Prescribed burning is an example. The extent and degree of management actions taken to protect or restore park ecosystems or their components will be determined in light of management objectives and prevailing scientific theory and methodologies.

Evolving plant and animal populations, and the human influences on them, will be monitored by the department naturalist to detect any significant unnatural changes. Action will be taken in concert with other jurisdictional agencies in the case of such changes based on the type and extent of change.

In the natural zone there may be situations in which an area may be closed to visitor use to protect the resources. This may be accomplished under the Executive Director's discretionary authority.

## SENSITIVE NATURAL ZONES

not directly under VPA control

The operations of South Bend Venues Parks & Arts operate on several spaces not under our direct control. Operations along the riverbanks, especially on those properties not formally owned by the city or by the South Bend Venues Parks & Arts, are one example. In these areas we will act as responsible partners and insure our own operations are in compliance with all regulations and the guidelines. We will work to form cooperative partnerships to coordinate guidelines with other municipal, county, state and federal agencies.

## PARK RECREATION ZONES

Park recreation zones are managed and maintained for intensive visitor use. Accordingly, roads, walks, buildings, and other visitor and management facilities may occupy much of the zones, and the natural aspect of the land in the zones has been primarily altered. These are referred to as impacted acres. Green infrastructure will be encouraged as part of these developments as one tool to mitigate ecological impact.

In recreation zones adjacent to natural zones, management will aim at maintaining as natural an environment as possible, given the use of the zone. Such management may involve the manipulation of natural resources, but any manipulation will be the minimum necessary to achieve the planned use.

Actions which may affect managed and maintained active use spaces will be evaluated for their impact on the zone. If substantial natural resources are involved, the Executive Director of VPA will activate the EAC to provide recommendation. If the proposed actions or impact is negligible and natural resources remain essentially unchanged, the Executive Director's normal management team will guide the process — reserving the expertise of the EAC for sensitive and significant projects.

Example: An underground utility easement is requested for Howard Park. The proposed route does not alter the impacted acreage of the park and has little to no impact on the flora or fauna of the park. In this example, the department's normal management team will work with the utility to minimize any possible adverse impact. Mitigation issues will be zero to modest and will be addressed by agreement prior to the Board authorizing the easement.

## INVENTORY & MONITORING

The South Bend Venues Parks & Art Department will assemble baseline inventory data describing significant natural resources under its stewardship and will monitor those resources to detect or predict changes. The resulting information will be analyzed to detect changes that may require intervention and to provide reference points for comparison with other, more altered environments.

## PLANNING

for natural resource management

Each park with natural resources to manage will have a Resource Management Plan (RMP) prepared and periodically updated by the Director of the Rum Village Nature center and approved by the Executive Director and the Board of Park Commissioners. Updates will be published to coincide with the Department's five-year Park and Recreation Master Plan (2018 is the last year of the current plan).

The RMP will identify, define, and program the monitoring, inventory, research, mitigation, and enforcement activities required to perpetuate park natural resources and natural processes, achieve the park's purposes and objectives, and regulate the use of the park.

## RELATIONSHIP TO PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

Park research needs will be documented as they are discovered. Research will be conducted to further park objectives as found in planning documents.

Research activities will:

1. Provide a sound basis for policy and guidelines
2. Develop effective strategies to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on resources and visitors
3. Determine causes of resource management problems
4. Predict impacts of resource uses and related activities



5. Develop methods to restore damaged resources
6. Further understanding of ecosystems and document their components, condition, and significance

## CONDUCT OF RESEARCH

The South Bend Venues Parks & Art Department will cooperate with other public and private institutions to establish cooperative park study efforts where specialized expertise exists which can be of significant assistance to the Department in conducting research and where the opportunity for research and study in the parks offers the institution an equally significant benefit to its programs.

In recognition of the scientific value of parks as natural laboratories, investigators will be encouraged to use the parks for scientific studies when such use is consistent with Department policies or site objectives and purposes.

Research activities that might disturb resources or visitors, that require the waiver of any regulation, or that involve the collection of specimens may be allowed only pursuant to the terms and conditions of an appropriate permit.

Manipulative or destructive research activities generally will not be permitted within parks. Exceptions may be granted if the impacts will be short-lived, the park is the only area where such research can be conducted, the value of the research is greater than the resource impact, or the research is essential to provide information for resource management.

## PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH DATA

The results of all scientific activities conducted in the parks will be made available to park staff, the scientific community, and the public through both technical publications and popular media. Department specialists will be encouraged to publish their research findings as well as to include such findings in public interpretive programs.

Information on the locations of extremely fragile natural resources or those subject to vandalism will not be included in final studies and reports for public distribution.

## COOPERATION WITH OTHERS

South Bend Venues Parks & Arts will pursue opportunities to improve resource management by cooperating with public agencies and private landowners. Recognizing that cooperation with other land managers/owners can accomplish ecosystem-stability and other resource management objectives where the best efforts of a single manager might fail.

VPA will develop agreements with other federal, state, and local agencies, and private landowners where appropriate to coordinate plant and animal management activities. Such cooperation may

involve coordinating management activities in two or more separate areas, integrating management practices to reduce conflicts, coordinating research, sharing data and expertise, exchanging resources through transplants, establishing native wildlife corridors, and providing essential habitats adjacent to park boundaries.

In addition, South Bend Venues Parks & Arts will seek the cooperation of others in minimizing the impacts of outside influences, controlling noise, maintaining water quality and quantity, eliminating toxic substances, preserving scenic views, improving air quality and preserving wetlands.

# SENSITIVE PARK PROPERTIES

The city has 56 properties that it manages. 15 of them are 2 acres or less (pocket parks). As stated before, all the properties are important, but some need additional attention in terms of their management. Special attention should be paid to creeks (Bowman Creek in Ravina Park, Juday Creek in Ponader Park), the St. Joseph River, wetlands (at Elbel Park, flood plains at Howard Park), older growth trees, and the following locations:

## **ELBEL PARK/GOLF COURSE**

Auten Road at Quince Road - 313.24 acres

- Wetlands
- Flora
- Fauna
- Topography
- Forest

## **ERSKINE PARK/GOLF COURSE**

Miami Road at Ireland Road – 120 acres

- Wetlands
- Sizable tree
- Topography

## **FREDRICKSON PRAIRIE**

1300 South Bend Avenue. – 14.24 acres

- Clay Cap remediation
- Native Prairie and pond system

## **HOWARD PARK**

Jefferson Blvd. at St. Louis Blvd. – 11.49 acres

- River
- Riparian area

## **KELLER PARK**

Riverside Dr. near Sheridan Ave. - 16.91 acres

- River
- Wooded area

## **KENNEDY PARK**

Olive St. at Westmoor St. – 38.56 acres

- Trees – large number of sizable oaks

## **LASALLE PARK**

Washington St. at Camden St. - 39.80 acres

- Small lake

## **LEEPER PARK**

Michigan St. at Park Ln. – 25.72 acres

- River
- Trees
- Gardens

## **MUESSEL GROVE PARK**

Wilber St. at Vassar Av. – 17.26 acres

- Remnant oak savannah
- Trees – large oaks

## **O'BRIEN PARK**

Michigan St. at Walter St. – 17.02 acres

- Trees – large American Beech trees
- Topography - Relic glacial footprint

## **PINHOOK PARK**

2800 Blk. Riverside Dr. – 42.69 acres

- Oxbow lake
- Trees
- Flora/Fauna
- History

## **PONADER PARK**

Maple Ln. at Douglas Rd. – 10.38 acres

- Juday Creek

## **POTAWATOMI PARK**

Mishawaka Av. At Greenlawn Av. – 62.18 acres

- Trees
- History
- Vernal ponds

## **RAVINA PARK**

Indiana Av. At Lebanon St. - .40 acres

- Bowman Creek

## **RUM VILLAGE PARK**

Ewing Av. At Gertrude St. – 160 acres

- Trees
- Flora/fauna
- Topography
- History

## **VETERAN'S MEMORIAL PARK**

Twyckenham at Northside Blvd. – 16.11 acres

- River
- Trees

## **WHEELOCK PARK**

20400 Darden Rd. – 72 acres

- Juday Creek introduction



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