



NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION NEWS – PRINTABLE VERSION
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A2GOV.ORG/NAP – NAP@A2GOV.ORG – 734.794.6627



NAP's first staff members.

Protecting and restoring Ann Arbor's natural areas and fostering an environmental ethic within the community.

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Coordinator's Corner: Acorns, Saplings, Old Trees, and Light Gaps



Dave reading Aldo Leopold to the group at a Woodcock walk.

It's part of the cycle of the forest: trees mature, spread out their branches, and dominate that part of the forest canopy. Younger trees, unable to bask in the sun, wait in the old tree's shadow, until finally, the big tree succumbs to lightning, or wind, or disease, or maybe just old age. A light gap forms, and now it's time for the next generation of trees to have their chance to take over.

And so it is here at NAP. After 28 years, this old tree is moving on, making room for others to spread their branches. In February 2022, I will be retiring from NAP. When I arrived in Ann Arbor, a young sapling only 31 years old, I found an environment full of potential. The voters had just overwhelmingly passed a millage that included a new program called Natural Area Preservation, and I



was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to create, envision, and grow that program from the ground up. I remember being shown my newly constructed office in an unused small corner at 415 W. Washington and told, "We're not really sure what you're supposed to do, but here's where you get to do it." And I remember the first time I attended monthly meetings of the local chapters of various environmental groups who had actively supported the millage: the Sierra Club, the Audubon Society, and the Michigan Botanical Club. No one knew me, but when I introduced myself to the group as the newly hired NAP Coordinator, I got a big round of applause from the room. Ann Arborites were hungry for NAP, and eager to volunteer to help in any way they could.



Being new to Ann Arbor and its 2000+ acres of existing City parkland, plus countless other natural areas, I needed help to come up to speed quickly. Volunteers were ready. That first summer, they started surveying plants in all those different sites. The first staff I hired were three botanists to lead the effort and train the volunteers. Following that success, we later added surveys of butterflies,

breeding birds, frogs and toads, and other herps. The more we learned about the ecological treasures of various parks, the more we realized where we most needed to direct our stewardship efforts: targeting invasive species in our highest-quality sites, reintroducing fire where appropriate, and maintaining trails wherever they were eroding away. The staff grew, as did the corps of volunteers, and I moved out of the field and into the office to oversee and direct the whole operation.

I've often said that one of the best things I did at NAP was to hire good people,

and I'm proud of the long list of NAP alumni who now populate much of the ecological restoration positions in southeast Michigan and beyond. They are far too numerous to list (well over 200!) but ask around as you encounter



professionals in this field, and you'll be amazed how many of them have a connection to NAP. Of course, even more numerous than the NAP staff alumni are the NAP volunteers, past and present, who number in the thousands and extend the "NAP Network" far beyond Michigan and the Midwest.

Ann Arbor was the first City in Michigan, and one of the first in the U.S., to have anything like a NAP program. I remember attending national conferences of the Natural Areas Association and the Society for Ecological Restoration, back in the 1990s. I'd tell colleagues



from state and federal agencies about all the exciting work we were doing with invasives control and prescribed burning and they'd often ask with surprise, "You're doing this in a City park system?"

Thank you, Ann Arbor, for the tremendous opportunity you have given me these past 28 years,



the chance to create and grow NAP, from the tiny acorn of an idea to the mighty oak that it has now become. I realized early on that our real mission at NAP was to reconnect the public with their parks. We'd never be able to hire enough staff to do all the stewardship that was needed. And even if we could, we wouldn't want to.

Robin Wall Kimmerer said it best in

her keynote address at the Stewardship Network conference a few years ago: "What's broken is not just nature, but our relationship with nature." If, during my tenure at NAP, we've been able to facilitate a little bit of healing of that broken relationship, then I can feel good about what we've accomplished here.

NAP is in good hands: dedicated and talented staff, eager and competent volunteers, and a supportive public. I used to feel like NAP was the new kid on the block but now, as I look around, I realize that I'm one of the old-timers in the City, and NAP is no longer a young

sapling. We've put down some deep roots in this community, and those should keep us solid regardless of whatever strong winds lie ahead.

As for me, I'll be around. Ann Arbor is still my home, although I have recently fallen in love with our little cabin on 10 acres of oak and pine on a non-motorized lake in northeast Michigan. A small house fire at our home in Ann Arbor (and a global pandemic) pushed us up there about 15 months ago, and my wife and I have been working remotely for much of the past year, making the 3-hour commute back here when needed. Those of you who know me best won't be surprised to hear that, although I'm leaving NAP, I'm not putting down my drip torch. In fact, just the opposite! I have clients throughout the lower peninsula of Michigan who need a Burn Boss and prescribed fire. I'm pleased to be able to take what I've learned in Ann Arbor about restoring nature with fire and sharing it with folks throughout the Midwest.



My last day at NAP will be sometime in February. If you have time, stop by to say Hi, or drop me an email, or call/text me (734.845.0634). Or, if you're up in Alcona County next summer, stop by and we'll sit by the campfire and tell stories about our time together at NAP!

With Deep Gratitude,

Dave Borneman



NAPpennings

Contribute to NAP's Scrapbook for Dave!

NAP staff is preparing a scrapbook as a gift for Dave! Would you like to include a message? A memory or anecdote? Do you have some photos or artifacts (like news clippings) you're willing to share? We are certain Dave will be delighted by your contributions. You can either email us directly (NAP@a2gov.org) or fill out this form. (<https://tinyurl.com/DBScrapbook>)



[January Stewards' Circle](#)

Tuesday, January 11, 2022, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. (Followed by happy hour nearby!), **Veterans Memorial Park Meeting Room**

All are welcome to join this monthly discussion group where local stewards (like you!) gather to ask and answer questions, swap stories, and share knowledge in an informal setting. We look forward to chatting with you about how you “do” stewardship! **This month's topic:** Soil and invasives. Soil plays a vital role in ecosystem health, so one Steward asks: What are invasive plants doing to the soil? After the discussion group, join us for a happy hour just up the street at HOMES Brewery to further connect with other land stewards!

Thank you!

Many thanks to the groups who volunteered with NAP recently. We could not make such a difference without you!

Boy Scouts Troop 7 Ann Arbor

Staff Updates

Farewell...



Ashley Keesling

Conservation Worker

From my time working at NAP I have gained skills and appreciation for native landscapes that will last a lifetime. Some of the best times I have had while working at NAP include spending time in the beautiful wet meadows at Furstenberg Nature Area, seeing several species of ladies tresses orchids, and finding a very cute yellow spotted salamander. I will not miss hiking through patches of Hackelia! I hope to continue assisting occasionally at

workdays and send much love, gratitude, and best wishes to the staff and volunteers at NAP.



Dave with his daughter before a Buhr wet meadow burn.

Events

Barton Nature Area Stewardship Workday for MLK Day of Service

Monday, January 17, 2022, 1 – 3 p.m.

In 1994, Congress designated the Martin Luther King Jr. Federal Holiday as a national day of service. Each year, on the third Monday in January, the MLK Day of Service is observed as a "**day on, not a day off.**" MLK Day of Service is intended to empower individuals, strengthen communities, bridge barriers, create solutions to social problems, and move us closer to Dr. King's vision of a "Beloved Community." #MLKDay You're invited to help us protect and restore this nature area for the benefit of the whole community. Meet us at the Barton Dam parking lot on Huron River Dr ([map](#)). Pre-registration through VolunteerHub is encouraged; please stay home if you are feeling ill. NAP continues to monitor recommendations from health officials, volunteers registered for events will be notified in advance of any changes to the workday. Please wear long pants (we recommend layered clothing in winter) and closed-toed shoes and bring a water bottle and leather gloves if you have them. All minors should be accompanied by a guardian. Tools and know-how provided. Register [here](http://tinyurl.com/Barton011722). (<http://tinyurl.com/Barton011722>)

Winter Nature Walk at Furstenberg Nature Area

Sunday, January 30, 2022, 1-2 p.m.

A winter walk can be just the thing to lift our spirits and access the healing power of nature. Join us for the first of three winter walks. Furstenberg Nature Area is a 38-acre park on Fuller Road, west of Gallup Park. Enjoy wetlands, woodlands, prairie, and oak savanna on this nature walk with a staff naturalist from Natural Area Preservation (City of Ann Arbor). Learn about native plants and trees, invasive plants, ecological restoration, and lots more. Make sure to dress for the weather (we recommend layered clothing in winter) and bring a water bottle. Meet us at the Furstenberg parking lot off Fuller Rd ([map](#)). Register [here](http://tinyurl.com/FurstenbergWalk013022). (<http://tinyurl.com/FurstenbergWalk013022>)

Volunteer Stewardship Calendar

Check out our volunteer opportunities and other events at a2gov.org/NAPEvents, and/or view and register at vhub.at/NAP.



Dave with staff member Triona, and Don Botsford at a volunteer appreciation event in 1996.



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