

Brooks Nature Area Minutes

March 19, 2026

Members present: Justin Miller, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, Patty Hoch-Melluish, Brian Huggett, Christy Benson, Erin Skidmore, Lauren Bruggeman, Ian Campbell and Janet Schoenmeyer

Technical advisor present: Jim Coury

BNA volunteer workers present: Don Jewett and Jeff Crone

- A. **Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the January 15, 2026 meeting were approved.
- B. **Agenda Approval:** The March 19, 2026 agenda was approved.
- C. **Public Comments** — Guests: Durrie Parker and Dave Fhaner
 1. Durrie Parker spoke in opposition to the proposed data center and distributed pamphlets detailing its potential negative impact on the surrounding area.
 2. Dave Fhaner expressed concerns about the proposed data center and noted that BNA is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. He voiced fears that the park's future could be jeopardized if the data center is built.
- D. **Treasurer's Report:** Patty Hoch-Melluish reported park funds totaling \$31,094.67 as of March 19, 2026.
- E. **Controlled Burn:** Brian Huggett reported that Blue Heron Ministries won the bid for the 2026 controlled burn, submitting the lowest of three bids. The organization also received a letter of recommendation from the Indiana DNR. Justin Miller noted that he will notify board members of the burn date and will ensure that orange cones and barriers are placed in the parking lot to alert visitors.
- F. **Invasive Species Management:** Patty Hoch-Melluish noted that the Board can address invasive species management in the fall. Funding from a future Ford contribution may be used to support the effort if volunteer labor is insufficient.
- G. **20th Anniversary Events:** Erin Skidmore reported that she, Christy Benson, and Janet Schoenmeyer met to plan celebration events for BNA's 20th anniversary. The first event is scheduled for Saturday, May 9, and will feature a bird program presented by Seth Chapman (Birds with Seth). Specific timing and costs are still being finalized. An open house is planned for October and will include cider, donuts, cookies, and apples, along with a pumpkin carving contest. The Board approved a budget of \$500 for the two events.
- H. **Luminary Walk Recap:** Erin Skidmore reported that the February 7th Luminary Walk was a great success, drawing approximately 300 attendees. She plans to repeat the event next year.
- I. **Proposed Data Center — Wilder Creek Meeting Recap:** Erin Skidmore and Don Jewett summarized the March 18 meeting at Wilder Creek regarding the proposed data center. Discussion centered on how the Board might formally register its opposition, including a Letter to the Editor in the Marshall AdVisor, addressing the Marshall City Council, or submitting a letter to the City Manager. Justin Miller will consult with the City Manager regarding the Board's rights and report back. Brian Huggett reminded members that a 2020 survey of the BNA wetland confirmed that there is a **fen** on the property. Prairie fens are rare wetlands and are home to threatened/endangered species including the Mitchell's Satyr butterfly and Massasauga rattlesnake. Disturbance of the prairie fen and threatened /endangered species heightens concern about potential development nearby.

- J. **Park Boundaries / LDFA Development:** Brian Huggett reported no new developments regarding park boundary matters related to the LDFA development.
- K. **BNA Facebook Page:** Erin encouraged board members to email her any photos taken at BNA for posting on the BNA Facebook page.
- L. **Trail Relocation:** Brian Huggett reported that no decision has been made regarding relocating trails to align with the controlled burn boundaries.
- M. **Trail Counter:** Brian has not yet identified a trail counter that meets BNA's needs at a reasonable price.
- N. **Tree Planting List:** Jim Coury will compile a list of beneficial trees to be planted at BNA in October.
- O. **Tree Cage Removal / Bird City Project:** Lauren Bruggeman suggested beginning to cut cages from trees that have outgrown them, with a volunteer work session proposed for the following Sunday at 1pm.
Erin agreed to serve as BNA's representative for Marshall's Bird City project.
- P. **Technical Advisor:** Ian Stewart agreed to assist the BNA with developing a BNA email address and cloud storage to help with long-term record maintenance. However, he cannot serve as a technical advisor at this time.
- Q. **Announcements:**
- Justin Miller shared the sad news that Parks Maintenance Supervisor Bob Henning has passed away. Board members expressed their condolences and sorrow over this unexpected loss.
 - Jim Coury presented Patty Hoch-Melluish with a check for \$1,000 to support the BNA prairie burn. Board members expressed gratitude and appreciation for his generous contribution.
 - Ian Campbell reminded everyone that the MACC tree planting event will take place on April 26.

R. Adjourn

Recording Secretary,

Janet Schoenmeyer