

Untaming the wild

Wilderness Park must not crumble to slowly expanding urban sprawl

GRAHAM JOHNSON is a graduate student in German, environmental and social studies, and is Co-Director of the University of Nebraska Environmental Resource Center.

Wilderness Park is nationally recognized as one of the best examples for flood management for an urban setting. The Salt Creek that has flooded Lincoln many times in the past still flows, but since the 1970s, the Wilderness Park section south of town has encased it in a forest of dense trees and grasses.

This foliage, along with wide buffer areas of agriculture and the natural meander of the Salt Creek, combine to create a highly absorptive and effective means for flood control near the park and downstream.

Furthermore, this extremely lush and protective area has since been the habitat for hundreds of species of birds, mammals, amphibians and insects. Nowhere in Lincoln is biodiversity as rich as it is in Wilderness Park.

Wilderness Park is a recreation and educational area for those who want to

experience "wild" nature, but may not have the opportunity to travel far. The park hosts bicyclists, hikers, horseback riders, naturalists of many sorts, and the youth population of Lincoln for field trips and summer activities.

Now, all of these attributes of Wilderness Park are under severe threat of the expanding girth of Lincoln. Wilderness Park, as well as the entire Lincoln/Lancaster flood plain are becoming victims of unsustainable and manipulated expansion.

Development of the city is good, but "development" is not what Lincoln is pursuing. Rather, Lincoln has become the victim of incongruent, dislocated growth and expansion.

"Development" implies a different meaning than simply "expansion" or "growth."

"Development" means evolving into something better. To "expand" or to "grow" implies an increase in size, but not necessarily something's evolution into something better.

Flowers develop. Weeds and cancer grow and expand.

Sprawl faces Lincoln just as it faces: Minneapolis; Seattle; Portland; Omaha; Austin, Texas; Boulder, Colo. and the rest of the medium to large cities in this country. The question of

how to manage development for the long-term rests in the hands of the local citizens, city managers and planners and private and public enterprises.

Each city is unique and therefore must remedy their unique situation in the best way they see fit. But there are also overarching principles and practices that are becoming universally understood and fall under the umbrella of "sustainable development."

In Lincoln, applying sustainable philosophies and practices means developing the city with the long-term future in mind, but acting in the short term with a comprehensively responsible approach.

As it now stands, the anticipated urbanization on the east side of Wilderness Park (including a high school, industry, business offices, lighted ball parks, and residential) will continue to apply significant pressures upon the attributes of Wilderness Park and its environs.

This will cause the parks dynamics to change severely.

Animals around the park, that are accustomed to grazing farmland will be pushed in and confined, forcing them to graze on park foliage. Migratory tendencies for other animals and insects will be reduced because of

“

Development of the city is good, but 'development' is not what Lincoln is pursuing. Rather, Lincoln has become the victim of incongruent, dislocated growth and expansion.

a decrease in habitat.

Light and noise pollution, toxic effluents (including but not limited to oil, gasoline, and rubber residues), and solid wastes will flow freely into the park and into the Salt Creek from adjacent buildings, industry, and the proposed underground gasoline holding tanks.

Increased amounts of impervious surfaces (parking lots, streets and roofs) will send more rain faster into the Salt Creek along with large amounts of silt (fine mud).

This increased rate and amount of water and silt will damage not only the park, but Lincoln's Haymarket and Waverly are also under threat of property damage.

Increased population near the park

will apply internal pressure as more people visit and use the park.

All together, the situation looks grim, especially increased development continues as planned.

The loss of biodiversity, the loss of floodwater retention, the loss of "naturalness," the loss of agricultural land, the loss of serenity.

The tarnishing of a gem.

We are not alone in Lincoln when it comes to issues of development and sprawl.

Lincoln is a big place and there are plenty of other places to develop, besides adjacent to Wilderness Park.

The preservation of Wilderness Park could be as much of a national example just as its creation was for flood control in the 1970s.

EARN \$260 IN 1 WEEKEND

MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY ASSISTING MEDICAL RESEARCH

You can be part of a medical research study at MDS Harris and earn **\$260 IN 1 WEEKEND**. By participating, you can help improve the quality of life for people around the world. If you meet the criteria below, call us at **474-PAYS** to learn more.

- men
- 19 to 45 years old
- nonsmokers
- availability: one weekend

Harris testing pays. Call **474-PAYS** today!

MDS Harris

Together, We're Making Lives Better

621 Rose Street, Lincoln
www.mdsharris.com/rcrt/recruit.htm

In the rush to meet graduation requirements, don't get trampled underfoot.

If you missed out on a class, there's still a chance to get your degree on time with UNI's College Independent Study Program. Enroll now and complete the course by August 6th to ensure a seat at commencement.

Call UNI's College Independent Study at 472-4321 to avoid the agony of defeat.

Division of Continuing Studies • Department of Distance Education
www.uni.edu/conted/disted

MISSING COURSES?

DON'T SQUASH

YOUR CHANCES FOR AN AUGUST GRADUATION.

UNI's most popular courses in:

- Accounting
- Ag ECON
- Art History
- Broadcasting
- Classics
- Ecology
- Economics
- English
- Finance
- Geography
- History
- Human Development
- Management
- Marketing
- Mathematics
- Nursing
- Nutrition
- Philosophy
- Physics
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Sociology

Nebraska

The University of Nebraska is an affirmative action/equal opportunity institution

dailyneb.com