



The Web Site of The Sacramento Bee

This story is taken from [Sacbee](#) / [Community News](#) / [Roseville News](#).

Push for open space ratchets up

Lincoln urged to hire manager

By Jennifer K. Morita - jmorita@sacbee.com

Published 12:00 am PST Thursday, February 7, 2008

A neighborhood group that organized to preserve roughly 200 acres of wetlands and riparian habitat in western Lincoln wants to become a citywide champion of open space.

Although residents are still working to complete the proposed plan for a nature center, trails and stream restoration along Markham Ravine, its members say wildlife and natural open space are at risk as Lincoln grows and that the city needs an experienced professional to manage preserved land.

"We're trying to broaden our focus to encompass all of Lincoln's open-space areas. We're looking for a name, and we're also looking for new members," said Sue Hamman, a member of the loosely formed committee.

The group's push for the Markham Ravine Nature Area began as a feud over a pool of water.

Every time the city tried to drain a detention basin in the Teal Hollow neighborhood, residents plugged it back up to keep what they thought was a year-round pond and home to ducks, beavers and other area wildlife.

After city officials explained the basin was there to control flooding, residents formed a task force to create the Markham Ravine Nature Area – an \$8.5 million project to establish a four-mile trail system, build a nature center and restore the natural habitat along the Markham watershed.

Now, the ambitious plan is nearing the end of its lengthy environmental review. If all goes well, the project could go out to bid in either February or March 2009.

But after five long years, membership in the all-volunteer task force has dwindled, leaving the remaining handful to reassess their goals.

"We're in a transition period," Hamman said. "I'm hanging on because I love the open space of Lincoln and what it gives to me. ... We have this natural habitat and wildlife, and we need to preserve it and restore it."

In addition to adopting formal bylaws and electing officers, group leaders are considering whether to apply for nonprofit status.

While they try to broaden its scope and attract new blood from other areas of the city, Hamman said they will continue to push for progress on the Markham Ravine Nature Area.

Public Works senior civil engineer Ray Leftwich said he anticipates sending the final environmental study to the City Council for certification within the next couple of months.

Sometime in June, the city will find out whether its application for a river parkway grant from the state is successful. Officials are relying on grant dollars to fund much of the Markham Ravine project.

Leftwich said city staff members hope to propose spending \$739,000 on the project during the next fiscal year, including \$350,000 in grants.

"If we don't get approved for grants, the project will continue to get (delayed)," Leftwich said.

Previous attempts to win the coveted grant money were denied.

"It's a very competitive process," said Foothill Associates Manager of Planning and Design Ed Armstrong, a consultant hired by the city to develop the Markham Ravine master plan.

If Lincoln does win state funding for the project, the city will have to provide matching dollars or forfeit the grant.

The matching dollars typically would come from park impact fees paid by developers when they pull building permits.

"Guess what's not happening right now," Leftwich said. "There's very little revenue coming from developer impact fees right now, just like everywhere else in California.

"But if we get approved for grants, we'll find matching funds."

Last year, frustration over a lack of progress led Bill Plumb – the Markham Ravine group's founder – to step down as its informal president.

"I didn't feel the city was being responsive in getting some things through," Plumb said. "We've been working on the nature area project for five years, and they still haven't been able to get any funding to implement it."

In addition, Plumb said the city was supposed to hire an open-space manager who would oversee maintenance of roughly 1,200 acres of public natural land in Lincoln.

Instead, many of the duties have been divided among various Public Works employees, who have other responsibilities.

Having an open-space manager would enable the city to intervene earlier when nature areas are threatened, instead of waiting until a crisis develops, said Plumb, who cited damage by Lincoln's rising beaver population as an example.

"They're building dams left and right. We've lost significant amounts of oak trees over the last four years," he said. "In some ways, Markham Ravine is less of an ecological, riparian habitat than it was when we started the project five years ago.

Now, the city is developing a beaver management plan, said Public Works Operations Manager Doyle Champlain.

Beavers that are destroying property or infrastructure in Lincoln, such as bridges or culverts, will be trapped and exterminated.

This fiscal year alone, county and federal trappers have caught 10 beavers just in the Markham Ravine area.

Meanwhile, Champlain and his crews have been putting up plastic "beaver guards" to discourage the critters from gnawing on young trees.

"They can outwork my crews," Champlain said. "I need two guys and a backhoe to keep up with just one of them."

Hamman echoed Plumb's concerns about the need for an open-space manager, saying, "There are moments when I'm equally frustrated."

Funding, however, remains a problem.

City Councilman Tom Cosgrove said eventually the city will need to create the new position.

"We've got quite a bit of open space and it's kind of getting to that point, but it's new territory for us," he said.

"That means, there's another area we have to budget for, and we have to look at what our priorities are."

Armstrong and Leftwich added that the environmental review for a project like Markham Ravine takes a long time.

"Getting the environmental documents prepared for a project along environmentally sensitive areas like creeks and wetlands take a lot longer and are more time-consuming than a lot of the public realizes," Leftwich said.

Still, whenever Cosgrove speaks to groups about community involvement, he points to the Markham Ravine Neighborhood Committee.

"To me, they're an absolutely stellar example of how folks in the community can work in a way that takes something that was a neighborhood concern and turn it into a very positive outcome for the entire city," Cosgrove said.

"Expanding into a citywide group is a big step for the group that in the long run will benefit all of Lincoln."

Go to: [Sacbee](#) / [Back to story](#)

This article is protected by copyright and should not be printed or distributed for anything except personal use.
The Sacramento Bee, 2100 Q St., P.O. Box 15779, Sacramento, CA 95852
Phone: (916) 321-1000

Copyright © [The Sacramento Bee](#)