

December 4, 2007 - Friends of North Point

The following is a continuation of the process from the Nov meeting. The following items were discussed and then pair wise comparison voting on each item was conducted. Results follow:

I. Organizational/Group Camping (Boy/Girl Scouts, 4-H, churches, school field trips, etc)

1. No change (no reservations needed for group use) **(10)**
2. Need reservations with a maximum # allowed **(35)**
3. Need reservation and a fee is charged **(30)**
4. No organization camping allowed **(1)**

Some participants stated they needed more information such as who is managing the camping and what the maximum number per night would be.

J. Maintenance Options

1. No change (Boy Scout as caretakers, county provides dumpster April – Nov) **(41)**
2. Adopt a Park – volunteer run **(29)**
3. County staff/road commission/prison worker program/contract out to private firm **(15)**
4. Property owner **(1)**

Some stated it would be good to get others involved in the property. Others stated they needed to know who would own the land and who was making the decisions on the property management.

K. Marketing Options

1. No change (sign at entrance, on County website (www.vbco.org/northpoint.asp), word of mouth) **(29)**
2. Limited/to no cost (get information on more websites (tourism, City, Township, etc), put on County road map and region bike map, press releases, etc.) **(37)**
3. Minimal cost (design, print and distribute brochure) **(20)**
4. Extensive cost (billboard, ads in newspapers, other media advertising) **(0)**

L. Programming Options

1. No change (none offered) **(0)**
2. Develop a curriculum associated with using North Point (history –facts concerning South Haven and Van Buren County; Geology – glacier activity, dune formation; Ecology – development of forests from beech/maple to oak/pine(succession); bird watching; measuring dune movement; Respect for nature – being quiet; Writing – narratives, poems, etc) **(14)**

Set up naturalist guided tours of the property; provide curriculum and information on website so that everyone could learn about North Point; partner with Sarett Nature Center on curriculum and tours (Sarett already offers dune related programs).

SWMLC

Nate Fuller from the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy was asked to inform the group about SWMLC and conservation easements. SWMLC is a non-profit land trust working in 9 counties in SW Michigan. Visit www.swmlc.org. SWMLC is interested in North Point and there are many ways that SWMLC could be a partner to help protect and preserve the property. SWMLC owns land and can accept donations of land. Often SWMLC will ask for an endowment to help fund the long-term stewardship of the land. SWMLC will also accept conservation easements on properties. A conservation easement is stronger than a deed restriction because SWMLC acts as a third party to monitor the easement for perpetuity. An easement with the SWMLC can be very flexible to meet the needs of the County. With an easement, the County would remain the property owner. The County could continue to allow public access and use. The easement would specify natural and managed areas. The uses allowed in the natural areas could include maintaining current trails, controlling invasive species and replanting vegetation. The uses in the managed areas could include replacing or upgrading buildings, cutting firewood, campsites, parking, etc.

A member of the group asked if SWMLC would consider accepting a conservation easement or the land as a donation without an endowment. Nate said that would be up to the SWMLC Board of Directors to decide.

The group asked if SWMLC would prepare a plan for the property that would be best for the site in terms of balancing the intensity of use and the protection of the natural features. Nate said he would have to talk to the Executive Director.

Next Steps

A one-page list of options/alternatives was prepared in an effort to get all ideas on one page. This can serve as a starting point to flesh out alternatives. The group discussed how to proceed with creating alternatives. Some wanted to work in smaller groups and others wanted to remain in the larger group. The majority wanted to remain in one large group to discuss alternatives and share information.

The next meeting was set for Dec 18 at 6:30 pm in Lawrence at the Van Buren Conference Center.