

## Intro- Schuneman Marsh Preserve Management Plan

Ever since we have had access to the Schuneman Preserve land, the Chapter has strived to improve the wildlife habitat it offers. A report from the mid-1970s stated “The objectives of the Agassiz Chapter respecting the marsh are two-fold:

1) Preservation and improvement as a wildlife sanctuary; and 2) Compatible development of facilities to make the area broadly useful to local schools as an ecological study area.” The concept of what constitutes “improvement” has varied over the years, following trends and members’ interests. In the 1970s, six ponds were excavated with the financial assistance of the MnDNR and other agencies. Similarly, an evergreen windbreak was planted along the north edge, adjacent to the county road. In 2001, native prairie was planted on the upland area south of the evergreens, again with financial assistance from the MnDNR using volunteer labor from Chapter members. By 2004, we were looking to address the wetland portion of the Preserve and started a master planning process, tapping the professional skills of some Chapter members.

In February 2006, the draft Schuneman Marsh Restoration Project Plan was prepared, including summary lists of Restoration Projects (broken out by ecosystem) and estimated costs. As was said in the 1970s, “The slow development of Schuneman Marsh has been partly by design, to provide time for study and thoughtful planning, but more recently has been due to a lack of funds and needed help.” That is still true. It didn’t take long for us to look for another partner, and were pleased that the Minnesota Board of Soil and Water Resources was interested in partnering with us in restoring the marsh as a wetland mitigation bank, to be used to replace wetland impacts from public road projects. That process is just beginning, but we expect the restoration will generally follow the [ideas presented in our draft plan](#). As restoration activities begin, we will post an update here, to explain the changes in the Preserve. We expect those changes to include a prescribed burn to remove the dead grasses; restoration of the natural hydrology by undoing some of the lateral drainage ditches, restoration of native wetland vegetation, and replacement of the evergreens with oak savanna plant community. The Preserve will remain open to the public during most of this time of change, but access may be restricted during periods of active restoration activity. Questions about the project may be sent to Jyneen Thatcher, Chair of Marsh Management Committee. ([jyneen.thatcher@mnwcd.org](mailto:jyneen.thatcher@mnwcd.org))