Happy New Year!

2025 was another year of significant restoration progress in Hilloway Park. The most noticeable change is the web of new trails west of the main trail. These trails provide access to almost eight additional acres in the park. Being newly cut, the trails have some sharp stems sticking out of the ground, so be careful, but make sure to get out there to enjoy the new trails!

Thank you!

In 2025, 28 individual volunteers provided 143 hours of work in Hilloway Park. We worked mostly around the fen, the areas we've worked in previous years, to remove invasive plants and planting replacement seed.

We at Friends of Minnetonka Parks (FoMP) can only say, **Thank you, Volunteers!** Your commitment is one of the factors that convinced the City of Minnetonka to dedicate resources to improve Hilloway Park. Our work is bearing fruit in the form of more beautiful vistas, a wider diversity of native plant species, and, I believe, a greater variety of bird species.

Hilloway Heroes 2025

Audrey Peterson
Blair Sander
Carissa Bethke
Carolyn Ondrey
Chris Peterson
Cindy Kist
Colleen Sieps
Christie Boeder
Dana Minion
Dave Sandford
Elle Jackson
Frank Harvey
Gwen Myers
Jan Bohline
Jan Sellman
Janet Sandford
Jim Hammill
Kate Amendt
Linda Rosaaen
Luke Peterson
Marcie Hamel
Mary Steinbicker
Mike Bennett
Paula Riggi
Sabrina Harvey
Saumer Kinsey

2025 in Review

January – April

In late 2024 and early 2025, the City of Minnetonka Forestry Department thinned pines in the pine woodland, removed diseased ash and excess deadwood, and cut and treated invasive black locust trees.

The City installed a “doggy station” near Hilloway Road West.

Below are pictures of the results of work performed by the Minnetonka Forestry Department in early 2025.

East and west of the main trail at the Hilloway Park entrance. The City Forestry Department removed pines, ash, and deadwood in both areas.

Black locust stumps along Byrnes Road. Stumps were cut high so they could be identified for herbicidal treatment. Later in the year, they were cut to the ground and treated.

Black locust logs will be used by a landscaper. Black locust is rot-resistant and good for fenceposts and other outdoor structures.

Deadwood removed from the ephemeral wetland.

Southeast corner of Hilloway, previously covered with deadwood and invasive plants.

May – June

From late May to early June, volunteers provided **41 hours of work**, concentrating on removing garlic mustard, Dame's Rocket, and narrowleaf bittercress near the fen. There did not seem to be as much garlic mustard in Hilloway as recent years, possibly because of more sunlight reaching the ground or the presence of garlic mustard aphids. However, there was an increase of Dame's rocket – something we'll have to work on in 2026. Also, narrowleaf bittercress is increasing in the park; fortunately, it's an easy plant to pull.

Dame's rocket

Garlic mustard

Narrowleaf bittercress

July

In July, the City Natural Resources Department mowed the area east of the main trail that was first mowed in 2023 plus some additional area. This mowing weakened the buckthorn resprouts. Herbicide was applied to this area in October.

August - December

From August through December, volunteers worked **90.5 hours** removing common and glossy buckthorn, ash, and prickly ash near the fen, and broadcast buckthorn replacement seed.

In October, Matt Kumka and Paul Schiller, employees of Minnetonka's Natural Resources Division, mowed new trails on the west side of the park. This allows access to almost eight additional acres in the park, which are showing a remarkable germination of prairie grasses and wildflowers that were seeded in 2024. The City also installed a "photo station" in this area, so that park visitors can take photos of restoration progress and upload them to the City.

Paul and Matt preparing to mow.

Bottlebrush grass west of the main trail.

Views of new trails west of the main trail.

Other News

In the Summer 2023 Hilloway Park Newsletter, we described studies being conducted by the University of Minnesota to attempt to identify biocontrol agents for Emerald Ash Borers. In Hilloway, researchers inoculated ash trees with fungal strains. In other locations in Minnetonka, researchers used Auto-Dissemination Devices (ADDs) which attract Emerald Ash Borers and coat them with fungal spores. The beetles then fly off to infect other beetles.

Colin Peters inspects an ADD

Researchers have found that ADDs are effective in infecting EABs with fungal strains that kill them. Phase 2 of this project, designed to evaluate the effectiveness of different fungal strains, is now in progress.

An Emerald Ash Borer killed by a fungus.

What's Next

During winter months, the Forestry Department of the City of Minnetonka will continue to thin pines in Hilloway, since these trees are too close together and not healthy. Also, during the winter, FoMP and the Natural Resources Department are developing plans for 2026 restoration. If you have suggestions for restoration, please submit your ideas to hillowaypark@gmail.com or Matt Kumka at mkumka@minnetonkamn.gov.

How You Can Help

If you can't donate your time at our scheduled events, there are still many ways you can help. To learn more and/ or get started volunteering, see the contact information at the end of this section. **(Note: all volunteers in the park are required to sign a release form with the City and FoMP).**

- **Park monitor:** Walk the park frequently and monitor the emergence and location of native and invasive plants. This information (including photographs!) can be used to educate others about the park and help manage invasive plants. These contributions could be featured on our **Facebook page**, **web page**, or newsletters.
- **Adopt-a-Spot:** Your role will be similar to a park monitor, except you will 'adopt' a section of the park (the size and location of your choosing) and commit to managing invasive plants, planting desirable native plants, watering, etc.
- **Volunteer on your own:** If you aren't ready to adopt a spot but would like to work on habitat restoration, see the contact information at the end of this section.
- **Donate to Friends of Hilloway Park** by clicking **here**. You can specify that you want your donation to go to Hilloway Park.
- **Are you a photographer or graphic artist?** We would appreciate your help with our newsletter and website.
- **Write or call City of Minnetonka staff** to thank them for the work that they have done for our parks. Send your thanks and ideas for improvement to your city council representative and one or more of the following people:
  - Leslie Yetka, Natural Resources Manager
  - Matt Kumka, Park and Trail Project Manager
  - Paul Schiller, Natural Resources Technician
  - Josh Obermeyer, City Forester

To learn more or get started volunteering, contact Sabrina Harvey at hillowaypark@gmail.com or 952-456-2891. She will help you define an area or project to work on, inform you of best practices for restoration and disposal of plant material, get equipment and supplies, sign required release forms, and show you how to log volunteer hours with the City and FoMP. We look forward to working with you and THANK YOU!

hillowaypark@gmail.com
https://www.facebook.com/hillowaypark
https://www.mtkaparks.org/hilloway.html

Friends of MINNETONKA PARKS