



Friends of the Thurston Nature Center

*When we see land as a community we may begin to use
it with love - Leopold*

2013 marks the 45th ANNIVERSARY OF THE THURSTON NATURE CENTER

Thurston Nature Center History and Tradition

What was once described as a “waste area,” 47 years ago, has turned out to be worthy of a cultural heritage site. The sheer spirit and momentum of the community, at the time of its founding, to take this site and make it into a treasured nature preserve, should never be forgotten or taken for granted.

It all started in 1966 by local residents, students, educators, ecologists, ornithologists, arborists, ichthyologists, government officials, local business, and so many other various interested and involved members of our community. It was a time when the White House was actively sponsoring a “National Youth Beauty and Conservation Program” which some at the time considered being slightly radical and progressive. Lady Bird Johnson, considered the Environmental First Lady, emphasized “clean water, clean air, clean roadsides, safe waste disposal and preservation of valued old landmarks as well as great parks and wilderness areas.”

In May of 1966, Mrs. Johnson was a key player in the White House Conference on Natural Beauty and Conservation that convened, and was coordinated by Laurance S. Rockefeller. She opened the conference with a question: “Can a great democratic society generate the drive to plan, and having planned, execute projects of great natural beauty?” The conference added momentum to the national conservation movement and resulted later that year in a film (“We’re On Our Way”) depicting 7 projects in the United States. One such location was the Thurston Nature Center.

At its premier in Washington, DC, special guests of the First Lady represented our community: eleven-year-old Thurston Elementary School student Julie Ann Weinhold

(Burdick), the Ann Arbor School Superintendent Scott Westerman, and University of Michigan School of Natural Resources professor and conservationist Dr. Bill Stapp.

The initial efforts of the 1960's in moving 15 truckloads of debris, planting 4,000 trees, providing trails, bird houses, outdoor display cases, benches, and signs has been our heritage. But it is the love of so many volunteer care takers over the past 4 decades to conserve this gift that has made it continue to blossom. Who can forget our 25th anniversary celebration and the efforts of so many, especially Diana Dyer. What we have learned is that through working together, involving our youth, and respecting this gift of nature we have managed to keep this old original "mud flat" alive and evolving.

Moving Forward and Goals for 2013

Moving forward in 2013, as Friends of the Thurston Nature Center we have pledged to commit ourselves to continue to meet, as a minimum the following duties:

- Manage the Thurston Nature Center as a natural environment for the benefit of the Ann Arbor Public Schools to educate students and the community about plant and animal species indigenous to Michigan (support the AAPS Environmental Education Program and "Green school" program).
- Maintain the Thurston Nature Center (a Conservation Education Reserve and National Wildlife Foundation Certified Wildlife Habitat) for all community members to appreciate nature, use and enjoy on an equal basis

In addition The Thurston Nature Committee has established the following specific goals and objectives for 2013.

1. Reach Out Campaign

- Increase awareness and participation within the schools, residential neighborhoods, and business, civic and government communities.
- Upgrade the TNC Web Site <http://www.thurstonnaturecenter.org>
- Improve our interactive communication (a dynamic, two-way flow and exchange of information).

2. Major Stewardship Efforts

- Protecting and expanding our inventory and catalog of trees
 - Re-energizing the "Adopt-a-Tree" Program
 - Launch the "Tree Pals" Program
 - Create an on line database of TNCs inventory of trees and their individual history/story
- Rescuing our trees
 - Removal and Control of invasive plants (i.e. Garlic Mustard, Buckthorn, and Phragmites)
 - Clear brush and remove plants close to trees that are competing for nourishment and light

3. Restoration of the Pond Ecosystem

- Finalize Pond Restoration Plans

- Formalize engineering plans and cost estimates
- Obtain/Raise Funds

Now is the time to not only celebrate and honor the past 47 years, and to continue to meet our daily nature center tasks, but to also **re-energize ourselves to meet the significant challenges of executing the plan to restore and preserve the heart of the nature center, the Thurston Pond**. We are at a stage in the evolution of our pond ecosystem and entire nature center to either continue to carry out the original dreams and goals of our forbearers or let the spirit die and the nature center quietly perish.

What You Can Do to Help

This all seems simple and straightforward, but the volunteering time and effort to accomplish these challenges will take an undertaking the magnitude of our forbearers. We need everyone's assistance – help with your mind, body, and soul.

- Join the mailing list (**see box below for how**).
- Let us know what you think. We welcome ideas and all suggestions
- Volunteers are needed to help manage and maintain the Thurston Nature Center.
- Help us raise the “oomph” as later this year we will launch the “Save the Pond” campaign and will need to raise funds to restore our pond
- Contact **Frank Commiskey** at frank@thurstonnaturecenter.org (734-369-0992), or **Emily Eisbruch** at emily@thurstonnaturecenter.org or **Colin Brooks**, TNC Committee Chairperson, at colin@thurstonnaturecenter.org

Join the Email List To Stay Involved

We want you to stay in the loop on the exciting things happening at the Thurston Nature Center.

Go to www.thurstonnaturecenter.org
and click the **Join Email List** link on the left

or

Email **Frank Commiskey** at frank@thurstonnaturecenter.org or **Emily Eisbruch** at emily@thurstonnaturecenter.org and request to be added to the list.

Thanks for your interest and involvement.