



**ACME TOWNSHIP**  
**YUBA CREEK NATURAL AREA STEERING COMMITTEE**  
**Thursday, April 1, 2004, 7:00 p.m.**  
**Acme Township Hall**  
**6042 Acme Road, Williamsburg MI 49690**

**Call Meeting to Order at 7:17 p.m.**

**Members Present:** Dan Morrison (Chair), Bob Carstens, Voss Guntzville, Dan Hanna, Jason Hullman, Stan Malaski, Ron Reinhold

**Members Excused:** John Heiam, Matt McDonough, John Pulcipher

**Staff Present:** S. Corpe, Office & Planning Coordinator/Recording Secretary  
T. Henkel, Buildings & Grounds

**Topics for Discussion:**

- A. Review any concerns about current YCNA Management Plan:** Morrison found a report written by Hood last year suggesting that the committee get together again to see how YCNA management is going. His family has been enjoying the area, and he personally has received advice that for the most part we shouldn't do too much to the area if we want to keep it natural. However, there are some things that should be done.

Hullman mentioned that all of the property boundary signs are facing inwards towards his property, which may actually be causing trespassing because people cross his boundary to see what the sign says. Henkel noted that there are also orange boundary stakes going up around the property too. Hullman feels that orange signs will not be aesthetically pleasing and would prefer that they be used for the eagle nesting area boundaries only. Henkel stated that brown and bright signs are being used in eagle areas, and that John Pulcipher likes the orange stakes because they can be seen from a distance. The stakes are spaced 75 – 100' apart, and seeing them early can help keep people on public property. Henkel can change the colors of the stakes near the Hullman property if he wishes. Reinhold suggested that the side facing Hullman be painted a more natural color, leaving the bright color facing inward into the nature reserve. Hullman wasn't sure this would be as pleasant for hikers, either.

Hullman has also noted that there are two clear-cut paths and people have on occasion driven vehicles back there. He suggested that barriers be erected periodically along the paths to prevent this activity.

The committee also discussed the fact that during the Fall 2003 hunting season, someone sawed some branches off of the trees to make shooting lanes. It might be desirable to put up some signs that recognize that hunting is allowable but that tree trimming is not.

**B. Comments from Tom Henkel, Buildings and Grounds**

Henkel pointed out the signs he had made to welcome people to the YCNA at the entrances on Bennett and Yuba Roads. Some committee members were concerned about the size of the signs (approximately 6' x 4'), but they will be near the entrances. The signs aren't finished yet, and are awaiting the addition of the new township logo.

One of Henkel's concerns is that the management plan does not specifically prohibit snowmobiles. The committee may have felt that by prohibiting wheeled vehicles they had eliminated all possibility of any motorized activity. In general the group seemed to want to discourage snowmobiles. Henkel did have the stickers he made for attaching to the boundary posts made up to say "no snowmobiles." Henkel read from the the Management Plan, which prohibits any wheeled vehicle whether motorized or not, excepting wheelchairs. Carstens suggested "no motorized vehicles" to try to also eliminate the use of power boats and

snowmobiles. The prohibition against wheeled vehicles should also be maintained to eliminate use of pull-carts (so baiting materials can't be brought in). Carstens asked if this includes strollers.

Henkel asked about the west lower meadows and if they will be maintained as meadows. The group would like to do so. Mowing is necessary to maintain certain areas as grasslands, according to Carstens. It may also help maintain a diversity of species. Some birds nest in trees, and some nest in grass. If mowing is done early or late in the season, the grass would grow out a little by the time the weather warms and nesting begins. Henkel is using a brush hog to help prevent woodland encroachment. Reinhold suggested measuring and mapping the meadow areas so we know what size they currently are. Future caretakers will then understand the original intent for the area.

Henkel made a map and numbered various fields for reference purposes. He feels it is not worthwhile maintaining the one near the eagle's nest, as woodlands incursion is fairly progressed there. Woodlands are also taking over near the Amos Farm. There are some rolls of old, rusted barbed wire laying about occasionally that need to be removed at some point. Perimeter fences may also need some maintenance, but in some cases the fences that are present don't follow boundary lines, and may be on private property.

Henkel's understanding is that meadows only need to be mown once every three years, according to some Internet research. He has learned that simply leaving them alone is not a good option.

Reinhold noted that Henkel has mown a path on one of the southwestern slopes. This wasn't originally planned, but he does like it and hopes it continues. He found some interesting vegetation during an annual flower survey that wasn't otherwise present. Henkel was following what he thinks was an ancient farm trail while trying to safely move the tractor around. Henkel has some benches that can be installed as well.

Morrison was at the lookout area along US 31 where there has been discussion of having a fairly developed turnout deck. He thinks it might be as well to keep this area fairly natural with perhaps just a bench or two. Henkel has enough frames for 15-20 benches if new lumber is purchased. He thought about placing them at intervals along the mown path, and about perhaps a picnic table in the woods. Reinhold recommends keeping a table near, but not in, the woods due to mosquitos. Henkel is willing to place the benches wherever the committee suggests. Some suggested that any picnic tables be kept near the parking areas, not only for safety but to keep trash near the entrance areas rather than in the woods. One concern about having many tables at the Yuba Rd. parking lot would be whether they would attract parties. Carstens pointed out that Saylor Park is close by for picnickers. If there is evidence of heavy partying found (empty bottles, etc.) access to the park might be restricted at night. This might be another reason not to encourage a turnout deck, which might also encourage groups to congregate. The group decided not to put up picnic tables in or around the YCNA.

Henkel and Carstens have staked out the eagle nest perimeter area. Yuba Creek water quality testing is under way. Seven sites are being tested. Carstens feels it isn't a good trout stream right now, as he sees a lot of silt in the water. Corpe needs to download data, and will send it to the Watershed Center for analysis. Hullman would like a copy as well.

Most boundaries have been marked at this point and should be completed this summer. Henkel is attaching markers to trees where possible and to posts where necessary. John Pulcifer is reportedly fairly happy with the enhanced marking along his lot lines that has been done, and is asking the County to mark the line between his property and Maple Bay Farms similarly.

Henkel would like to come up with a water-resistant sign board for the park entrances where the YCNA rules can be posted. Reinhold feels the Committee should decide on a format for the rules that will be suitable. Malaski suggested that the DNR might have plans for nice information kiosk.

The building at the Yuba Road parking lot is being used for township equipment storage after Henkel removed the internal partitions. He placed old firehose dryers over the windows for added security, as they seemed to fit well. Reinhold asked if the shed should remain there long-term. The committee felt that it might be somehow useful in the future.

- C. Discuss signage and GT Conservancy memorial Marker:** Reinhold asked how much the entrance signs cost; Henkel responded that they cost \$300 each. He also noted that the major donors who helped provide matching funds were promised a sign of some sort to recognize their contribution. Morrison feels that this is the Conservancy's responsibility. They received the donations and should have a record of the giving. Anyone who donated \$1,000 or more was promised some recognition. Carstens stated that in other similar circumstances there is often a bronze plaque. Attaching one to a boulder would be nice. There are likely quite a few names. Morrison will call Matt McDonough to clarify who is responsible for having the sign made and try to get the project moving quickly. Carstens asked if the plaque would be at the overlook or at the Yuba Road parking lot. He feels that perhaps more of the big donors might stop at the overlook to see the eagles rather than going to park and hike the area. Hullman suggested sending a letter to the donors asking them where they would most like to see the sign erected. Reinhold would like it where there will be pedestrian use and people will stop to read it. Malaski suggested putting a note in the newsletter to let people know what will be happening in the YCNA this summer. Carstens volunteered to write an article for the spring newsletter edition.
- D. Funding for Improvements:** Henkel stated that he budgeted \$4,000 for signs for the YCNA this year, and has only used \$1,000 to date. There is a total of about \$3,800 left out of slightly over \$5,000 budgeted this year available for projects.
- E. Parking Lot** Reinhold asked what can be done with the old asphalt in the parking lot. Henkel noted that he is putting brush and clippings into the old brine pits to both store it and to fill the pits in. The Sweetwater Evening Garden Club is using some of the resulting compost for their projects. Perhaps old asphalt could be ground up and recycled for some other use. Hullman suggested that it could become a gravel-like surface for the parking area, or sold/traded to a local paving firm for reuse. Reinhold wondered if it's possible to rent an asphalt grinder, and if some of the material could be used to semi-pave the path to the lookout. Morrison wondered if DEQ would have a problem with removal, and if so if there would be a problem with reuse in another area. Henkel is thinking that because the parking lot is so close to the creek, a lot of silt fencing would have to be installed. It would be wise to check with the Drain Commissioner's Office and with DEQ about any potential concerns or requirements. Guntzviller has a brother who works with these sorts of issues and might be able to provide some advice.

Reinhold suggested starting to do some serious investigation, as we may need to identify sources for grant funding if costs will be significant.

- F. Removal of electric poles:** There are about a dozen power poles that the committee would like to remove. We need to make a contact with someone at Cherryland Electric about removal of the unneeded electric lines. It would be unwise to re-use the poles because they

have a lot of attachments and may have creosote or other chemicals in them. There are probably plenty of people who would be glad to have the old poles, however.

- G. Removal of invasive plant species (i.e. Autumn Olive):** Hullman noted that the Autumn Olive has taken over in the lookout area east of US 31. Some sort of chemical will have to be used. Guntzviller has heard of a chemical that you can dab on the stump left after you cut down one of the trees that will kill off the root systems but doesn't have to be widely broadcast over the other vegetation. There is too much Autumn Olive to totally eradicate, but it can perhaps be managed. Carstens stated that the olive crops from the trees can sustain various birds through the winter. Guntzviller stated that we just want to remove enough of the trees to prevent them from crowding out native species. Reinhold asked at what level the vegetation should be cut to prevent the "pungee stick effect" (personal injury). The committee would like to hold a work bee for this project. Morrison knows a wide group of families that would be interested. Adults would handle the chemicals. Guntzviller said that the most important thing is to use the chemical on each tree cut; untreated cut trees will cause several more to spring up. If the territory is marked in advance, it should take 15 people or so about a day to clear the desired area. Guntzviller will talk to the folks at Wilbur Ellis to find out more about how and when the chemical should be used. The group felt it would be wise to undertake this project in April. Henkel suggested asking Knopf about whether the township's insurance coverage will be in force for this project (volunteers using chemicals and power tools.) The group will try to get together in the evening of Tuesday, April 6 at the top of the hill at the overlook on US 31 about 5:00 to begin work. Tom has some power tools that can be used.
- H. Installation of bluebird houses:** The committee would like to install about 15 bluebird houses to start and may ultimately have around 100. Guntzviller has a powered post hole digger, and Henkel has some posts that can be used. Hullman suggested that when everyone is on site on April 6 for the work bee they can discuss some possible installation sites. Carstens suggests that they be placed at the base of the hill and where there are nearby open spaces, and near the Yuba Road parking lot. Morrison recalls that they should be spaced about 100' apart, as the bluebirds are somewhat territorial, and facing to the east for morning sun exposure. Morrison may also be able to obtain several wood duck boxes to place in the cedar swamp. Carstens says that there are several other species that might use the same size box as well, including flickers and kestrel. Malaski noted that the boxes will need to be cleaned out yearly.
- I. Ordering and planting native trees:** The GT Conservation District sells native trees, shrubs and plants, but the ordering deadline for this year is tomorrow for mid-April delivery. Malaski suggested that we plan now to plant next year. Hullman asked how new plantings would be watered. Guntzviller and Malaski mentioned a product called "Terra-Sorb" that you can treat the seedling roots with. It stores water for extended release to roots for up to five years, and works well even in drought years. Guntzviller says that the Conservation District may also have a tree planter that helps place the seedlings properly in the soil. Planting trees will likely be a multi-year project.

Reinhold asked what steps the group might like to take to develop a parking area at the overlook. He outlined a process for deciding what to do and where, and some sort of concept design made. Henkel pointed out that consultation with MDOT would be desirable regarding a driveway permit, and whether curbing and deceleration lanes would be required. Corpe volunteered to talk with local MDOT officials to find out what the considerations might be, and noted that she believes there are significant construction plans for this section of US 31 within the next several years. Morrison is concerned because the more developed an area it becomes, the more likely it is to attract partying or loitering. Hullman is concerned that the character of the turnout remain very natural and does not become overdeveloped.

Malaski asked Corpe what tasks were promised in our grant applicaton. Corpe will have copies of the application made and distributed to refresh everyones' memories.

**J. Public Comment:** None

The next meeting was set for Thursday, May 6 at 7:00 p.m. At that time the group should discuss a budget to request from the Board for the 2004-05 budget, including costs for trees and possible overlook engineering/consulting. Other ideas might include a creek reclamation program. Malaski stated that he believes Trout Unlimited might be a good resource in this regard. Reinhold mentioned that Sherrin Hood went to a course regarding grantwriting before she left the township, and the course materials are available at the township hall for study.

**Meeting adjourned at 9:25 p.m.**