



FNHA Newsletter



*Brooks-Hummel Nature Preserve, Fayetteville, AR
(Maps of the Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve and of the surrounding area courtesy of John Goddard)*

FNHA Continues Work to Protect Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve

On June 5, 2007, the Fayetteville City Council agreed to purchase nearly 14 acres for a city park to be named the Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve. FNHA helped raise contributions from over 160 families, individuals and organizations to cover the \$167,000 down payment plus another \$12,500, for a total of \$179,500, to put toward the \$495,000 purchase price, which would be paid over the next five years.

We became aware of the opportunity to save the property, which was top-ranked in FNHA's Urban Forest Conservation Assessment, when it was put up for sale and a group of neighbors became interested in conserving it as a public natural area. Hugh Kincaid led the

neighbors in a fund-raising effort, which FNHA joined. Local businesses helped with publicity and contributions, the media gave the campaign extensive coverage and the mayor and city council supported including the natural area in their vision for Fayetteville in the 2025 city plan.

On November 6, 2007, FNHA was granted a conservation easement by the City of Fayetteville, “to ensure that the Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve will remain forever predominantly in its present condition as a nature park preserving the natural habitat as much as possible. . . .” The City retained the right to “construct, maintain and repair trails, picnic areas, benches and other park amenities which . . . are compatible with a city nature park.” It also retained the right “to construct small parking lots near access areas” and to maintain, repair or replace the existing city sewer main and retain an easement to install a future water main.



*14-Acre Urban Preserve: Brooks - Hummel, Fayetteville, AR
(Maps of the Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve and of the surrounding area courtesy of John Goddard)*

More than eleven years later, in early February, 2019, FNHA members learned of a proposal to use some of the recently-approved Fayetteville bonds to build a multi-use trail through part of Brooks-Hummel. A Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette article noted that:

"Another connection to the greenway would go behind Evelyn Hills Shopping Center. The Sublett Creek Trail, planned at \$1.28 million, would start from a new signaled crosswalk at Poplar Street and College Avenue. It would go behind the businesses on College and the shopping center. Spurs would go through the Brooks-Hummel preserve, and an on-street bike way is planned to run along Lakeridge Drive at Lake Lucille."

FNHA board members reacted with considerable dismay to this plan. While we support improved public access to Brooks-Hummel, we would prefer to see any trails come to the edge of Brooks-Hummel and leave the property in a more wild state for activities such as bird-watching and hiking. A multi-use trail and probably night-time lighting could easily destroy the small ecosystem we have worked so hard to preserve.

On March 7, 2019, FNHA president Jennifer Ogle and board member Tom Dureka met with three City of Fayetteville staff members whose jobs involve parks, trails and bicycle programs. The meeting felt positive and productive, with discussion of trail routes that would almost bypass the Reserve. The group walked the old forest road along the western edge of the property, which all agreed might accommodate a paved trail if it were built narrower than the city's typical multi-use trail. It was suggested by city staff that a portion could be put on piers to avoid cutting into the hillside at the south end.

The City staff also suggested that we work on a master plan for Brooks-Hummel before any trail routes are decided. Jennifer and Tom agreed. FNHA needs to decide exactly what we want this property to be used for before we plan trails. FNHA started discussions about this issue a couple years ago with the Master Naturalists, who would like to see a restored forest and meadow area, with bird blinds installed near the pond for bird watching. Their concept would provide low-impact recreation.

On behalf of the FNHA Governing Board, Jennifer wrote to both the Active Transportation Advisory Committee and later to the City Council, saying:

"Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve is often referred to as a 'natural area' by city staff and community members, and with good reason. Natural areas are protected because they have special ecological significance due to their plant and animal communities or the presence of rare species and unique habitats. With its steep east- and west-facing slopes, rock outcrops, and stream running through the middle of the property, Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve contains several distinct habitat types as well as some of the best examples of older growth forest we have in Fayetteville. Many species of native birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and plants are protected within this natural area.

The mission of the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association is to promote the conservation of Fayetteville's natural areas to balance the needs of people and wildlife for generations to come. We value the partnership formed with the city that has helped preserve our natural heritage over the past 16 years. We are a group of community members who enjoy being outdoors and connecting with nature, and so we greatly appreciate living in a city whose administration shares these values and works to provide opportunities to enjoy parks and natural areas through programs such as the shared-use paved trail system.

However, we feel very strongly while shared-use trails should provide access to natural

areas, they should not be built within them. The construction process required to build corridors on the scale of shared-use trails, whether composed of concrete, asphalt, gravel, wood, or other material, has an ecologically significant impact on a natural area and its inhabitants both during and after construction. The result of shared-use trails in a natural area would be irreparable habitat fragmentation and loss, compaction of surrounding soils, edge effects that result in greater exposure to invasive species, alteration and hindrance of water flow and infiltration, and a potentially negative impact on the ability of certain species to survive in their altered surroundings.

As Fayetteville grows and becomes more urbanized, our natural areas are becoming more important for the protection of plant communities and wildlife. As temporary stewards of this city, it is our responsibility to do all we can to protect these natural areas from unnecessary development, not only for the plants and animals that live there, but for the people who want to enjoy interacting with them today and into the future. As you consider the Active Transportation Plan Update at upcoming meetings, we urge you to recommend the shared-use trail currently proposed for Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve be removed from the plan. City staff should instead develop an alternative route around the preserve so that this precious natural resource is not impacted."

The city attorney raised concerns about both the requirements of the 2008 conservation easement and the potential disruption of wildlife and neighbors if a multi-use hard surface trail were to go through Brooks-Hummel. He also pointed out that the City has benefited from its past cooperative arrangements with FNHA.

FNHA asked the Active Transportation Committee to remove the section of transportation trail through Brooks-Hummel from the Active Transportation Plan Update, but it remained in the version they submitted to the Fayetteville Planning Commission at a July 8, 2019, meeting.

We may be discouraged, but we are not defeated. Mayor Jordan has assured us that there will be no trail construction through Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve while he is mayor and city staff have been amenable to considering alternative routes and types of trails. The Brooks-Hummel part of the Plan Update is one that will be studied further. And, in the meantime, we will be working on a master plan for the Nature Reserve.



Bush honeysuckle and privet look deceptively beautiful in bloom.
(Photo Credit - Bush Honeysuckle: Eric Hunt, Arkansas Native Plant Society, Photo Credit - Privet: Stock Image)



*Wade Colwell, Ken Leonard and Angela Houser pause from their labors at Brooks-Hummel.
(Photo Credit: Tom Dureka, FNHA Board Member)*

Battling Invasive Non-Native Plants in Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve

In the fall of 2008, Burnetta Hinterthuer, a biology professor at the NorthWest Arkansas Community College, accompanied by Joe Neal, took a group of her students to the Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve. The students found a rich variety of trees, shrubs, forbs, birds, deer tracks and a possible fox den, along with lists of invertebrates and other forest growth such as fungus, lichens and moss. As a follow-up about the ecology of the site, Hinterthuer planned to talk to the class about the old forest and about the harmful effects of introduced non-native species, which she had noted in Brooks-Hummel.

More recently, FNHA has recommended professional removal of invasives from the Reserve. But, in the meantime, we have been doing our best to remove and reduce the bush honeysuckle (*Lonicera maackii*), Chinese privet (*Ligustrum sinense*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), purple-wintercreeper (*Euonymus fortunei*) and other invasive non-native species

that threaten to choke out native plants in Brooks-Hummel. The same problem is found throughout the city on both public and private property.

In April, 2013, FNHA board member Tom Dureka led the first semi-annual Brooks-Hummel Bushwack, events that continue today – or that will resume once the Covid-19 pandemic has abated. Tom has led a variety of community volunteers, including staff of Ozark Natural Foods, Boy Scouts, Master Naturalists, University student groups, members of the Fayetteville Urban Forestry Board's Invasive Plant Committee and assorted interested community members who, together, have put in more than 500 volunteer hours since 2013.

Using a variety of methods, ranging from hand-pulling to chainsaw removal followed by herbicide application, volunteers have used loppers, handsaws, weed wrenches, Puller Bears and other tools to attack the invasive non-native plants.

The most recent incursion Tom led occurred on November 3, 2019. Tom reports that Sunday the 3rd was possibly the most beautiful day to be outside for the last quarter of that year. The small but spectacular crew consisted of Ken Leonard, President of the Arkansas Master Naturalists; Wade Colwell, with Wells Fargo and a former FNHA board member; Angela Houser, with Tyson Foods; and Tom Dureka, FNHA Board member.

Kristina Jones, volunteer coordinator with the City of Fayetteville's Parks and Recreation Department, provided the group with four loppers, two hand saws, one Puller Bear, one cooler, one first aid kit, leather and cotton gloves, safety goggles and a sign-in sheet.

The crew lopped and pulled invasive shrubs, mainly bush honeysuckle and Chinese privet, between the west bank of Sublett Creek and the steep east-facing slope from the pond area, moving south and upstream. Over a three-hour period, they managed approximately one-quarter acre intensively, and added the cut brush to existing brushpiles.

Watch for announcements of the next Brooks-Hummel bushwack or let Tom know of your interest in participating in future forays to help make Brooks-Hummel Nature Reserve a healthier place for native plant species. Tom's email is tdureka@gmail.com.



*Kessler Trail Run - Supporting FNHA and conservation initiatives since 2013.
(Photo Credit: Ironside Photography)*

Kessler Trail Run 2020

What will the 2020 Kessler Trail Run be like? Definitely not like any of the previous seven!

We had planned #8 for November 21, 2020, and hoped to be registering runners starting this month. There would be self-timed 10K and 20K runs and an after-party, as in previous years, all even better than before... And then the coronavirus pandemic hit. Everything had to be re-thought. Watch for the next FNHA Newsletter to learn how the Kessler Trail Run has evolved to fit the new reality of 2020 and to find out how you can participate!

Are you a member of the Fayetteville Natural Heritage Association?

Help our community balance economic growth and conservation priorities. Help create a land and water legacy for future generations. Conserve wildlife habitat, rural landscapes and neighborhood open space.

Sign up or renew your membership on our website at www.fayettevillenatural.org.

Memberships:

Single \$20
Family \$40
Supporting \$100
Sustaining \$250
Steward \$500
Landmark \$1000 (Lifetime)
Heritage \$5,000 (Lifetime)

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