

# Plans told for Holzhueter Farm Conservation Park in Waterloo

By Diane Graff Special to the Union | Posted: Tuesday, August 18, 2015 8:32 am

WATERLOO — Details of a proposed conservation park on the former Holzhueter farm in the Town of Waterloo were presented Monday night by Jefferson County and state Department of Natural Resources officials.

During the gathering at the Waterloo Regional Trailhead facility, some neighbors of the property located off of Island Road in the Town of Waterloo voiced concern about the lack of notification for the park planning and the short time in which to comment about those plans.

Holzhueter Farm Conservation Park is considered to be part of the Glacial Heritage Area and the Waterloo State Wildlife Area. It will be owned by the DNR and managed by Jefferson County. Planning and management will be guided by a memorandum of understanding between the two agencies.

The topography of the park provides for a variety of trail uses including mountain biking, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and nature interpretation/appreciation.

Other proposed amenities include building park facilities to accommodate picnic tables, drinking water, interpretive signs, shelters and restroom. The park would be open for deer and turkey hunting.

The Holzhueter farm was purchased by the state in 2009, Jefferson County Parks Department director Joe Nehmer told the approximately 25 people who attended the open house.

“This is not a done deal yet,” he said. “We want to hear what is on your mind.”



## PARK PLANS

PARK PLANS — About two-dozen citizens attended a meeting Monday at which they learned the details of a proposed conservation park on the former Holzhueter farm in the Town of Waterloo.

Representatives of Jefferson County and state Department of Natural Resources outlined plans for the property located off of Island Road in the Town of Waterloo. Shown above, park designer Margaret Burlingham explains details about the proposed Holzhueter Farm Conservation Park.

Margaret Burlingham, park designer, explained that the park is located between Watertown and Waterloo.

“The park itself has a great variety of topography,” she said.

On a clear day, Holy Hill, about 130 miles to the northeast, can be seen from the highest drumlin, she noted. The lower portions of the park are level and feature wetlands interspersed within farmland.

Holzhueter Farm Conservation Park lies within the lower Crawfish River watershed and the river can be seen to the east.

The property currently is about 84-percent farmland and 10-percent southern dry-mesic and mesic forest. There is a small area of open grown oaks having a savanna structure in the center of the property.

Currently, a landowner resides in the center of the park, which created some design challenges. The property would be buffered with trees.

A parking lot, with potential for larger overflow parking, is proposed for the southern end of the park, with direct access to Island Road. A road would lead from the parking lot to a trailhead to the west of the neighboring landowner.

An initial implementation plan presented to the Jefferson County Parks Committee in June included a mountain biking area. Burlingham said earlier in the year she met with Trek Bicycle of Waterloo representatives, who said the park could be one of the premiere mountain biking parks in the southern part of the state due to its diverse landscape.

Within the boundaries of the property are two large, and in places, steep glacial drumlins that provide topography of varying slopes. A centrally-located trailhead is proposed at the top of a drumlin.

The Jefferson County Parks Committee was informed in June that if the plans are approved, implementation would take several years as the mountain bike trails would be created by mostly a volunteer crew. County parks operation supervisor Kevin Wiesmann said 95 percent of the work would be done by volunteers.

One man asked how much community input was sought for the plans. Nehmer said the conceptual plans have been presented at the Glacial Heritage Area quarterly meetings for the past three to four years. Questions were raised about where the meetings are posted and what committees met to discuss the plans.

DNR representative Greg Matthew said the plans could be finalized in two weeks. They would require DNR approval and then the Jefferson County Parks Committee would need to make a recommendation to the full county board of supervisors for approval.

One member of the audience objected to having only two weeks to comment on the plans. She said it was the first time she has seen the park plans.

Matthew said the DNR was willing to extend the comment period to 30 or 45 days. He pointed out the Glacial Heritage Area did not have to hold the open house, but due to the size and interest in the project, officials decided to hold the open house to gather input.

Nehmer encouraged those in attendance to leave written comments or contact county and DNR officials by email or telephone.

According to the memorandum of understanding, a public information meeting is to be held on the proposed implementation plan and the draft plan is to be posted on the department's website for 14 days to allow for public information and comments.

Waterloo Town Board Supervisor Jim Peschel voiced concern about taking property off the tax rolls.

"We can't keep adding government land and keep up the roads," he said.

The project area for the park is 700 acres with an acquisition target of 300 acres, according to the implementation plan.

Peschel also asked about keeping the park clean of debris and who would be responsible for the extra costs. If there is debris, a service organization may be contacted for cleanup, Nehmer said.

Another resident asked about potential traffic increase on the town road and if an analysis was completed. Nehmer said no analysis was completed.

Concerns about rainwater erosion and thistle management were raised, as well.

Due to the rugged terrain and network of farm roads and trails on the property, the Glacial Heritage Area plan calls for the Holzhueter Farm Conservation Park to be used primarily for mountain biking, hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. In addition, the park may provide opportunities for picnicking, wildlife watching, nature education and photography, the plan states.