

Wabana Recreation Project

After 5 years of planning, fund raising and building, this year will hopefully find the Wabana Recreation Project completed. The new recreation facility includes a new hockey rink and lighting, a 'kiddie' rink, a new playground, pickleball, tennis and basketball courts, new picnic tables in the pavilion, and a new walking trail. The new recreation complex was built to be handicap accessible.



As the project moved into the final phase, plans included a comprehensive landscaping plan, a couple small, additional playground items and overall finishing of the grounds. Sitting benches will be added this summer to the pickleball and tennis courts, plus a couple benches for the playground as well.



A group of residents: Pam Friezen, Susan Lick, Carol Speedling and township maintenance staff, Ken Aho, worked on the landscaping plan, including 4 separate 'pocket woodland' plantings (roughly 15 feet x 20 feet) between the County Road 49 fence line and the walking trail. The pocket woodlands include a mixture of native trees, shrubs, and plants. A central larger woodland pocket is planted closer to the ice rinks. This larger area will offer community members an opportunity to support and enhance the woodland with plants, trees or benches in honor of or memorial to others. Two shade trees will be planted on the east side of the playground.



Instrumental to development of the landscaping plan has been the expertise of Matthew Picklo & Austin Steere with Itasca County Soil and Water Conservation District. It will take several years for landscaping plantings to take hold and mature. Care and watering will be crucial to the success of the plantings. Temporary fencing protection was installed to prevent damage from browsing animals.



Educational components are an important part of the landscaping plan. The plan includes permanent signage for native species present. Information on how native plants support

pollinator habitat, assist with water run-off, offer shade as well as aesthetics will be included. Local Grand Rapids High School students, and their teacher Jordyn Hellerud, participated in the project on May 20th. Community members also joined in, learning about ground preparation, planting techniques and maintenance of woodland gardens.



The Wabana Township Recreational facilities have seen significant use by township residents as well as people coming from across the county and state. Many, many thanks go out to the volunteers, donors, grantors and committee members who have made this project possible. Community volunteer labor will continue to be needed throughout the landscaping project and finishing of the playground. Plans to install the new playground pieces will take place the last week of July. Please contact Susan Lick (218) 256-9346 or Pam Friesen (218) 343-8583 if interested in volunteering with landscaping or to finish work on the playground.