

NEGOTIATING NATURE: MAKING RESTORATION HAPPEN IN AN URBAN PARK CONTEXT

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Is nature “out there” or in our heads? Recent debates in the humanities and the physical and social sciences provide convincing arguments on both sides (e.g., Cronon 1995, Rolston 1997, Soulé and Lease 1995; see also chapters by Brunson and by Hull and Robertson in this volume). But despite which side people may lean toward, most would agree that as we turn our focus from wild landscapes toward ones that are dominated by humans, “objective” indicators of nature and naturalness that can guide restoration and management efforts become more and more ambiguous.

Urban parks are places where such ambiguity reigns. In many urban parks, historic conditions of soil, hydrology, microclimate, and vegetation have been so severely modified by past human activity that even the use of the term restoration sometimes seems inappropriate (Raffetto 1993). Landscape fragmentation and adjacent land uses can also limit how well the structure and function of an ecological community can be restored and ecological processes like fire successfully reintroduced (e.g., Kline 1997). Add to these physical and biological conundrums social and political constraints such as divergent values and uses of urban parks, and the prescription for restoring and managing nature becomes a very blurry one indeed (Gobster 1997).

Yet despite these challenges, people’s desire for interaction with urban

nature is stronger than ever. Studies in urban settings have shown that nearby nature fulfills many important restorative functions, from stress reduction (Ulrich 1981) and temporary mood improvement (Hull and Michael 1995) to opportunities for inner growth and change (Kaplan 1995). Demographic analyses project that as the population becomes older, more diverse, and more urban, demand for urban nature activities like bird watching will increase significantly (Dwyer 1994). And environmental educators are increasingly advocating programs that bring urban children into contact with nature in the course of everyday experiences (Simmons 1994).

The typical landscape of urban parks—an expanse of mowed turf studded with trees—constitutes nature of one sort, especially in contrast to the surrounding cityscape. Through the process of restoration, however, these settings could offer much more in the way of wildlife habitat, species diversity, or other valued natural qualities. The question then becomes, “What form should urban nature take in a particular setting?” Despite the strong desire and appreciation for urban nature, the diversity of people’s ideas and values often makes it difficult for managers to identify the kinds of nature and nature experiences people want in a given area. This diversity of ideas and values was one of the main problems in the controversy over restoration of the Chicago-area forest preserves described in the Introduction and chapters by Helford and Vining et al. in this volume. One might guess that for an urban park the range of views could be at least as diverse.

In writing about the interaction of culture and landscape ecology, landscape architect Joan Nassauer (1997) has called the resolution of this dilemma one of “placing nature”:

Where nature *should be* in settled landscapes to improve their ecological function is a critical question for which landscape ecology suggests answers. Where nature *can be* in the enormously complex but fundamentally pragmatic cultural process of making places is equally fundamental. Science may give us normative criteria for new landscape patterns, culture will give us the realized design (5–6, emphasis in original).

Thus, even if ecologists can provide theoretical and technical input to answer questions about what goes where and how to accomplish it, the ultimate success of such efforts relies on cultural acceptance. And what constitutes acceptability makes the management of urban natural areas a real challenge. When, in the course of a planning effort for a large Chicago park, an opportunity became available to study people’s concepts of nature, we saw it as a means of answering some of these questions.

A second area we sought to examine was how a participatory planning and design process was being used to arrive at socially acceptable ways for defining, restoring, and managing nature.

Many models of participatory planning and design exist and have been described and critiqued elsewhere (e.g., Arnstein 1969, Francis et al. 1987, Innes 1996). The approach used in the case study we examined most closely parallels what landscape architect Randolph Hester and others have called "participation with a view" (Francis 1999, Hester 1999). In this approach, proactive designers and planners take a pivotal role in helping to guide the process, working together with stakeholders to achieve a synthesis of goals and a more holistic and inclusive vision. This role goes beyond that of the advocacy planner, who uses his or her expertise to reach an equitable solution for the groups involved. As will be seen in our case study, expertise is a relative concept (see also Helford, this volume). Many stakeholder groups hold higher levels of knowledge about particular restoration issues than do planners or designers leading the process, and outside experts can often provide fresh perspectives from other places and experiences. The role of participatory planners and designers also goes beyond that of a rational planner, who just synthesizes expert information from these diverse participants into a logically acceptable solution. As our study also shows, expert information often is built upon an ideological foundation, in this case strong emotional attachments to place, and thus opposed groups are not always swayed by rational solutions. As a result, participatory designers and planners must also be advocates to successfully motivate change. Finally, participatory planners and designers as envisioned by Hester and others must go beyond the role of the facilitator or conflict mediator, who may be able to work out an acceptable compromise among ideologically opposed groups but may end up with a product that lacks a unified vision and spirit. Instead, making complex decisions about which nature might be chosen among a number of alternatives requires the ability to identify stakeholder goals and knowledge about the particular aspects of a place that they value, as well as the leadership to integrate them within a broader vision of what urban nature can be. Understanding just how this process of negotiating nature can most effectively work can thus be a key to the successful implementation of restoration and management projects.

In the sections that follow, we describe our research, done within the context of an ongoing effort to provide a broad spectrum of nature experiences within a large, heavily used urban park. We first characterize the effort, including the park context and the stakeholders involved. We then describe the process of how park stakeholders are attempting to place nature and negotiate appropriate ways to design and manage it at one site within the park. From these findings, we attempt to draw some conclusions and implications for urban park and forest restoration efforts. It is our hope that this account of our experiences will provide insights that others might use in their attempts to work with diverse stakeholders toward the development and implementation of restoration goals.

Montrose Point Case Study

The context of our work is Lincoln Park, a 1,200-acre park along the shore of Lake Michigan, stretching north from downtown Chicago for six miles. Managed by the Chicago Park District, it is the largest city park in the Chicago region and one of the largest in the country. In recently completed plans, several areas within the park were identified as having a high potential for enhancement to attract wildlife and to more closely mirror the structure and species diversity of landscapes that existed in the region prior to urbanization (Chicago Park District 1997, Chicago Park District and Lincoln Park Steering Committee 1995). Based on these assessments, funds were secured to study four sites within the park in more detail and to develop plans and policies for their restoration and management. In this chapter, we focus on the largest of these sites, Montrose Point, and on a cooperative research effort with the Lincoln Park Advisory Council (LPAC) called the Montrose Point Restoration Project.

Montrose Point is an eleven-acre section near the park's northern end. Although from an ecological restoration perspective the natural and social history of the point might seem unusual, in many ways it captures the range of issues and conditions faced by restorationists in urban settings. Like much of Lincoln Park, Montrose Point is an entirely artificial creation. Constructed from landfill that was removed for new harbor and subway development and placed into the lake, Montrose Point allowed for the extension of Lake Shore Drive and development of new parkland for the expanding metropolis. Construction of the Montrose Extension began in 1929, and a landscape plan for the site was developed in 1938 by Chicago Park District landscape architect Alfred Caldwell (Nathan et al. 1991). Caldwell was a contemporary of Jens Jensen, often referred to as the dean of the Prairie School of landscape architecture.

Following the Prairie School ideals promoted by Jensen and others, Caldwell's design plan for Montrose Point used native plants in a stylized arrangement that emulated the diverse Midwestern landscape of prairie, savanna, and woodland (Domer 1997, Grese 1992). The central feature of the plan was an open, meadowlike "room" enclosed by multilayered masses of wildflowers, shrubs, and trees. From the meadow, openings through these masses toward the lake were to create a sense of the infinite. On the landward side, a similar opening was planned to create a sense of mystery about what lay beyond. In Prairie School parlance, this was known as the long view. As an abstraction of the native prairie, the meadow was to be of mowed grass, to facilitate recreational use and to act as a neutral ground plane to lead the eye toward the key views. A path around the perimeter of the site would lead parkgoers through this alternating series of densely planted masses and open views and out to a beachfront promenade (Figure 9.1).

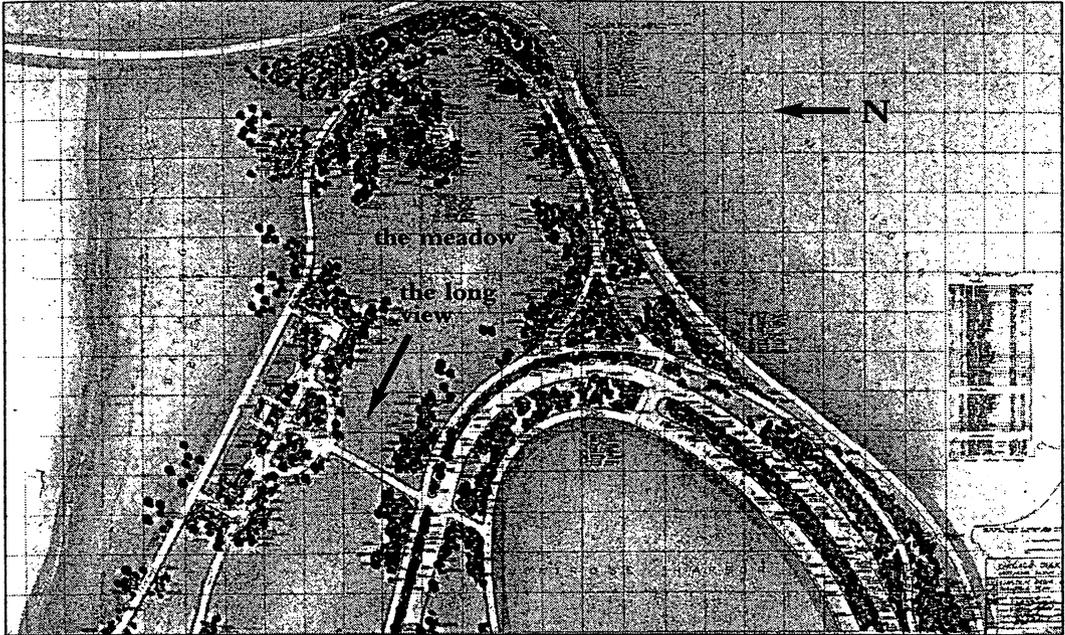


Figure 9.1. Original Alfred Caldwell Design for Montrose Point Showing Location of the Meadow and the Long View (1939). (Chicago Park District)

While this plan had a great deal of aesthetic and ecological merit, little of it was ever implemented. Shortly after its completion, the point was taken over by the U.S. Army and fenced off for use as a World War II radar station, and in the 1950s it was more fully developed as a Nike missile base as part of the Cold War strategy to protect Chicago. To screen structures and operations from park users, a row of honeysuckle shrubs was planted along the Cyclone fence, separating the site from the park proper. When the site was finally reclaimed as park space in the 1970s and the fence and other structures were removed, the landscape consisted of scattered trees—some of which may have been planted according to the original Caldwell plan—and the honeysuckle fencerow (Figure 9.2). The perimeter pathway was widened to allow automobile access to the tip of the point for fishing and picnicking, but no strategy was developed for dealing with Montrose Point until the late 1980s, when the Chicago Park District began a master planning process for the park as a whole.

But in that period between the early 1970s and the late 1980s something happened. Partly due to benign neglect of the point and partly because the point juts into the lake and away from active use areas, the row of honeysuckle became a virtual magnet for birds. This scruffy mass of vegetation became known as the Magic Hedge to birders, who regularly counted more than 200 different species there during spring and fall migrations. With the cooperation of the Park District, Chicago-area birding groups began augmenting the Magic Hedge in the 1980s by planting additional shrubs and trees, mainly nonnative honeysuckle and mulberry, to attract more birds. Also in the inter-

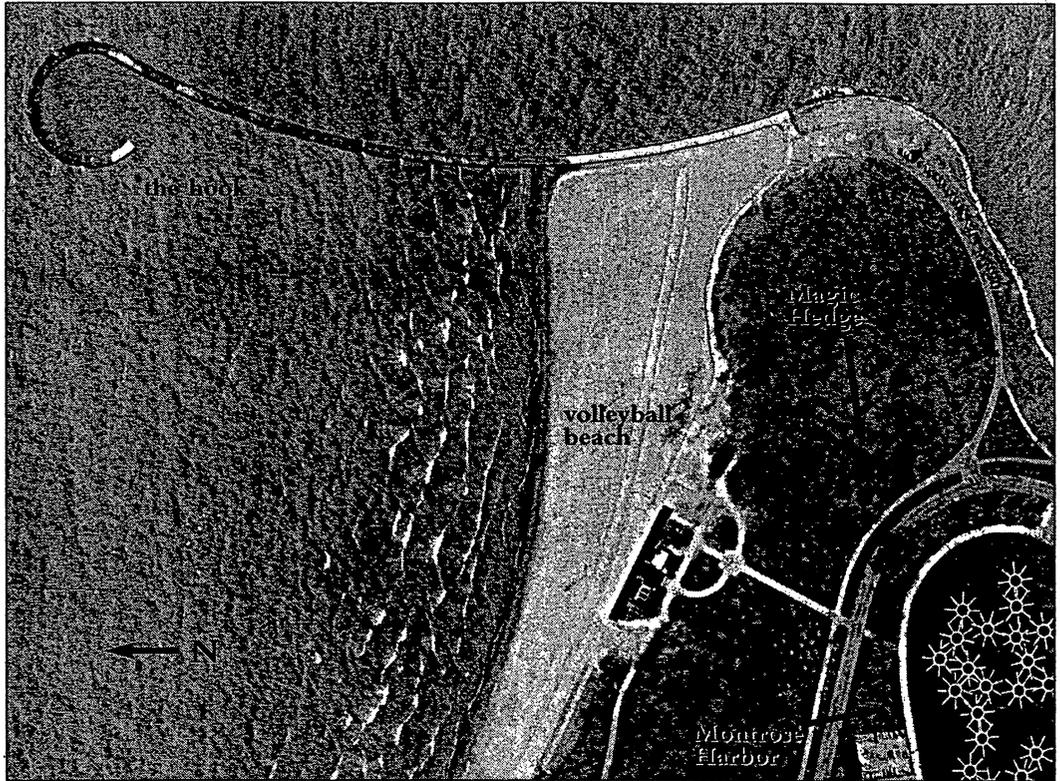


Figure 9.2. Aerial View of Montrose Point Prior to Master Planning Efforts Showing Location of Key Landscape Features (1990). (Chicago Park District)

est of accommodating the migrating birds, the Park District in the last decade has instituted a no-mow policy for the point. This policy has provided more insects and better cover for the birds and has resulted in a look distinctly different from the groomed grass found in the rest of the park. Publicity given to these habitat improvement efforts has also helped to attract birders, and today the Magic Hedge draws birders from far and wide.

With completion of the Lincoln Park Framework Plan in 1995, it became clear that Montrose Point and the Magic Hedge served unique roles in the park and that much more could be done to improve them, not only for birds but also for this expanding group of birders. At the same time, however, the planning process provided an opportunity to hear from other stakeholder groups so their views could be considered in the decision making for the point. If a more nature-oriented future was to become a reality, any implementation strategy for the plan would need to address the concerns of all stakeholders.

Stakeholders

A wide range of stakeholders have an interest in Montrose Point and its management. The two groups most directly involved in the Montrose Point

Restoration Project are the Chicago Park District and the Lincoln Park Advisory Council. Under the 1995 Framework Plan, the Park District was directed to “[e]xpand wildlife habitat with additional planting near the Magic Hedge” and “[r]estore historic landscape in manner consistent with original Caldwell landscape plan” (Chicago Park District and Lincoln Park Steering Committee 1995, 33). The Lincoln Park Advisory Council (LPAC), a nonprofit organization representing community interests in Lincoln Park, is the lead entity in the Montrose Point Restoration Project. In its formally established role as an advisory council for Lincoln Park, LPAC works with and makes recommendations to the Park District on planning and other activities. Working with a team of consultants that it established for the project, LPAC pursued its charge of directing and coordinating design, planning, and public involvement efforts. As part of the public involvement process, LPAC identified and sought input from the following three major categories of public stakeholder groups: environmental, historic preservation and design, and recreational interests.

Environmental interests. As previously mentioned, the Chicago-area birding community is an important environmental interest of Montrose Point. Composed of several organized groups and many nonaffiliated individuals, this community is focused on protection and enhancement of the Magic Hedge and its surroundings for bird habitat and birding. Environmental interests are also represented by a loose coalition of individuals from established restoration, citizen-forestry, and adjacent yacht club groups. These individuals formed the Montrose Point Stewardship Group in 1996 with the goal of ecological enhancement of the point. Their interest in the point is much more recent than that of the birder group.

Historic preservation and design interests. A chief proponent of historic preservation and design interests in park restoration has been the Chicago Park District itself. The Park District has sought to restore significant parks in their system that exemplify the Prairie Style, Naturalism, and other important movements in landscape architectural history (Chicago Historical Society 1991). Other individuals and groups such as the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois have joined the Park District in achieving this goal, and see restoration of the Caldwell plan for Montrose Point as a unique opportunity.

Recreational interests. As in most of Lincoln Park, recreation at Montrose Point and its surroundings can be characterized by a high level of diverse uses (People, Places & Design Research 1991). The long, unmowed grass of the central part of the point both encourages and discourages certain recreational users; in addition to birders, a variety of passive users such as walkers, dog walkers, and picnickers frequent this wilder portion of the park. The perimeter areas of

the point cater to a variety of other specialized recreational interests. In summer, league volleyball players use the beach along the north shore of the point, and yacht club members concentrate at Montrose Harbor, just west of the point. Anglers form one of the major recreational interests at Montrose; the harbor and the breakwater hook extending out from the point are the most popular and productive pedestrian fishing areas along the entire Lake Michigan shoreline in Illinois (Brofka and Marsden 1997).

While not included as a separate stakeholder group in the discussions, another key type of interest includes individuals and groups who see Montrose Point as a place to actively engage in experiencing and restoring nature through volunteering. These participatory interests include the Montrose Point Stewardship Group mentioned earlier, as well as a subset of the birding community that has organized under the Bird Conservation Network to work on bird habitat conservation and monitoring. Another group is focused on education and has developed an experiential learning program called Nature Along the Lake to bring elementary school children to Montrose to learn about terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Finally, there is the Montrose Point Youth Program, which involves high school students in hands-on projects to learn about the natural environment and its design and management in an urban context. All of these groups have a stake in the future design and management of Montrose Point and are seeking active involvement in the implementation of the Montrose Point Restoration Project.

Placing Nature at Montrose Point

The planning and design process began with a series of focus group discussions that were held to get a better idea of how different individuals and groups felt about the prospects of restoring the natural and historic qualities of Montrose Point. Focus groups were conducted with six stakeholder groups in the fall of 1997. Individuals for the angler and passive user groups were recruited on site. Participants for the other four groups—environmental, historic preservation and design, volleyball, and yacht club—were recruited through personal contacts with their organizations. The focus groups, ranging from two to twelve people each, were held at the yacht club adjacent to Montrose Point and were moderated by a professional facilitator. Each session began with a tour of the point followed by a guided discussion lasting about one hour and covering the following topics related to Montrose Point: uses and values, problems and concerns, and rehabilitation and change.¹

Agreement about Nature

When asked why people valued Montrose Point, focus group participants widely agreed that nature was a key element in their use and appreciation. As

these quotes exemplify, individuals of diverse affiliations see Montrose as a special natural place that provides the kinds of recreation opportunities and experiences not available elsewhere in Lincoln Park or the city:

Environmentalist/Birder: I can go out there and feel like I'm completely separate from the city, that there's nothing out there that—there's no lights. There's no aspect of any part of the city. It's just the trees and the birds and the water, just a very nice, isolated place to be.

Passive user: I appreciate the area much more since it's become naturalized. And it does offer a certain spiritual retreat from the rest of the park. It's quite removed from that.

Angler: [Besides the fishing], it's such a nice experience to come here because of the other things, the landscaping. You know you're not fishing below the generating station. There's some "fishing intangibles" here that you don't find in other places.

Accommodating Specific Uses

Within this natural context, however, most of the groups also wanted to see Montrose Point designed and managed so that their uses could be accommodated and that other uses did not conflict with their own interests. Sometimes the conflicting use was nature itself. For example, a few birders felt that the natural environment should be managed to maximize opportunities for bird viewing:

I don't know that there should be a mania for native plants here. Maybe the mania should be for what's going to feed and attract birds.

Similarly, anglers who were dismayed by the removal of an asphalt road along the southern perimeter of the point in the fall of 1996 strongly felt that any design and management plan should restore access to the breakwater hook for fishing:

Keep part of the nature intact, but still have a good area, easily accessible, parking, and still have it primarily for fishing.

Individuals in other groups also voiced concerns about the prospects of managing the site as a natural area in relation to their interests. Volleyball players, for example, found restoration activities acceptable as long as the portion of the beach they used for court space was not jeopardized. Yacht club members felt that increased popularity of the point as a natural area could make access and parking for harbor users more difficult and worsen an already seri-

ous safety conflict between cars and bike path users. Individuals in the group of historic preservationists and designers were concerned about the unique historic qualities of Montrose Point and how these could be compromised by such a diverse set of activities:

When it becomes an historic landscape it's got museum qualities but then it also has to function as a space that on the weekends in the summertime is trampled on, used, and abused. . . .

Negotiating Nature

The focus groups were invaluable for understanding how the various interests felt about the point and how they would like to see it managed. While there was a general agreement on seeing the natural qualities of Montrose Point enhanced for plant and bird species, there were equally strong feelings about balancing concerns for nature with those for human use and enjoyment. The issues raised in the focus group sessions helped begin a process of negotiating the kind of nature that will be present at Montrose Point, a process that is still ongoing.

Development of Design Alternatives

During the winter of 1997–1998, landscape designers from the LPAC consulting team worked on initial concept plans for Montrose Point. Three design alternatives were developed. Each design followed the general layout of the original Caldwell design—a central meadow surrounded by masses of multi-level vegetation and a main gravel pathway along the perimeter and out to the base of the breakwater. The alternatives varied in the treatment and species composition of the central meadow and the presence of built structures such as picnic areas and council rings (a circular arrangement of stone benches, a signature element of Caldwell's and Jensen's Prairie School designs). For discussion purposes, these three alternatives will be referred to based on their treatment of the central meadow as follows: the prairie meadow, the prairie/mowed meadow, and the mowed meadow.² One notable exception to the Caldwell design in all three plans was that the Magic Hedge would be maintained and expanded, even though its location does not correspond to the tree and shrub masses in the original design.

A public meeting was held in the spring of 1998 to involve stakeholders in a discussion of the three alternatives. Although notices of the meeting had been sent to all interested groups, birders made up a large proportion of attendees. In the course of the meeting, the designers for LPAC, consistent with their participatory role, endorsed the plan featuring the prairie meadow, which they felt maximized the natural values of the point and minimized use con-

flicts. They felt the other two plans, featuring some form of mowed meadow, would invite active uses into the area that would be incompatible with the values people were seeking at the site. The majority of the attendees also favored the prairie meadow plan, but were averse to including any built structures on the point—council rings, picnic groves, or shelters—as they felt these, too, would attract incompatible users and uses.

Park District Responses

One of the main stakeholders in the negotiation process, the Chicago Park District, remained fairly silent until after the public meeting. At that time, however, they decided that holding a focus group with their own employees could be beneficial. The Park District focus group was composed of ten staff members representing the range of Park District interests, from landscape architecture, forestry, and historic preservation to engineering, operations, and administration. Despite the diversity of interests represented, these members of the Park District staff were in broad agreement with each other and with the public interest stakeholders on many issues, including promoting nature and wildness as a primary theme for the point and accommodating appropriate uses and levels of access within that theme.

One important topic for this group concerned the balancing of restoration goals at Montrose between improving wildlife habitat and implementing the original Caldwell design. Some Park District participants, especially the historic preservation interests, differed substantially from the public interest stakeholder groups and LPAC on this issue:

Person 1: Well, I'm concerned about retaining the historic integrity of the landscape. And even though the landscape is kind of in a state of decline . . . the basic essence of Caldwell's design is still pretty much there, which is an open meadow enclosed by planted edges with certain areas that provide specific views. . . .

In the course of this discussion, it became clear that there were two main issues where the Caldwell design and the prairie meadow plan, favored by LPAC and some public stakeholders, were in conflict. The first point of contention was related to the Magic Hedge and its location with respect to Caldwell's plan:

Person 2: [The Magic Hedge] seems to interrupt the long view. But yet, in part I sense [the hedge] is what triggered us to do [this plan], and so I think there's kind of an interesting contradiction going on here. And in reality, it sounds like we are going to want to make the argument to remove the Magic Hedge and open the long view, which seems ironic to some degree. . . .

The second issue concerned the height of plants in the meadow:

Person 1: The thing that concerned me was that I saw a plan where there would be a lot of tall grasses and other kinds of plant materials in the center. And to me, it seems like they'd be much more appropriate on the edges . . . if there's tall grasses and other plant materials in the middle, then obviously you don't have a view.

A subsequent Park District working session was held in the early fall of 1998 to follow up on issues raised in the Park District focus group and to develop an internally consistent position for dealing with the design and development of Montrose Point. Participants in this larger group generally reaffirmed ideas advocated in the Park District focus group to favor elements of the Caldwell plan, in apparent opposition to some of the other groups. The general consensus was that the Magic Hedge would not be expanded; additionally, it was suggested that an opening be created at midpoint in the hedge to allow for the long view as intended by Caldwell. Likewise, the meadow would be maintained as mowed grass in the center, with taller grasses and perennials forming a transition to the perimeter masses of shrub and overstory trees (similar to the prairie/mowed meadow plan). Park District staff believed these perimeter masses would in effect create additional Magic Hedges throughout the point, deemphasizing the unique importance of the original hedge for birds.

Resolving the Conflicts

By the close of 1998, much progress had been made in placing nature at Montrose Point in terms of defining appropriate access, use, and other issues. Yet stakeholder positions regarding the central meadow and the Magic Hedge seemed further apart than ever. Part of the problem, participants agreed, was that up to this point much of the discussion had occurred within groups, with little direct interaction between groups. To help remedy this situation, a workshop was held in early 1999 to address the integration of historic preservation and nature enhancement goals for Montrose Point.

Four respected outside speakers were recruited to provide some ideas and perspectives for consideration in the Montrose plan from their fields of expertise in landscape architectural history, restoration ecology, conservation biology, and botany. Each speaker gave a short presentation at the beginning of the workshop. This was followed by a facilitated discussion focusing on questions about (1) the general structure of the landscape, (2) what to do about the Magic Hedge, and (3) how the meadow should be managed. Key individuals from Park District staff, the environmental group (largely birders), and the historic preservation and design group worked through each of the

three issues with guidance and input from the speakers and from LPAC's designers.

With respect to the general structure of the landscape, the issue of the significance of the Caldwell landscape was at the center of the discussion. Birders wondered why the Park District wanted to manage the area to be consistent with Caldwell's plan:

What are you managing for, why Caldwell? Why is he so important? This is an expensive proposition, and if there's no particularly absolute reason to use Caldwell, couldn't you do something cheaper that's just as good?

In response, one Park District historian likened the Caldwell landscape at Montrose Point to

having the *Mona Lisa* in your backyard. If somebody handed you a Leonardo da Vinci painting, would you say, "Let's just paint over this?"

As for the Magic Hedge, stakeholders presented information and made use of knowledge provided by the outside experts about plant species, bird behavior patterns, and site sustainability to argue for its preservation or dissolution. A discussion of seasonal changes in leaf cover and height variations in native shrub palettes suggested that there might be a resolution that would accommodate coexistence of the hedge and the long view. It may be possible, for example, to achieve a continuous hedge with a section of low shrubs that would afford a type of long view (albeit somewhat obstructed), especially during the leaf-off part of the year.

Above and beyond these debates, however, was the value that birders placed on the Magic Hedge. For instance, one birder spoke of the hedge as

an icon. It's a cultural icon that's so powerful you can't even imagine it. I can't talk for all birders, but lots of birders hold it sacred. You do something to the Magic Hedge, anything other than augment it I mean, I've got bail money set aside, I mean, I'll chain myself to a tree and lots of other people will, too.

In the course of this discussion, it became clear that one root of the conflict between the Magic Hedge and the Caldwell design is that both had attained the status of cultural icons among their respective interests.

The final topic of discussion, the meadow, also concluded without a clear consensus on direction but with a tendency to favor a modified version of the prairie/mowed meadow plan. Here, however, many participants, including some birders, saw the mixture of no-mow turf and low forbs described in the restoration ecologist's presentation as an attractive alternative to mowing.

From Negotiation to Policy

Following the workshop, LPAC drafted a set of policy and implementation recommendations for further discussion. The general consensus of public and Park District stakeholder groups on issues of overall management philosophy, appropriate recreational use, facilities development, and access made these recommendations relatively clear cut. Regarding vegetation management at Montrose, LPAC made the following statement:

Specific components of the landscape at Montrose Point are deeply appreciated by many people. Some view these components as cultural icons; change is not wise or needed. LPAC strives to reach consensus on issues that impact the park and park users. Consensus is not always possible. It is LPAC's method to hear as many sides of an issue as possible and make recommendations that take into consideration all sides of an issue.

Based on this philosophy, LPAC worked with the Park District over the following months to develop what both entities felt would be a final conceptual plan that all stakeholders could generally agree on. They recommended that the basic design intent of the Caldwell plan be applied to Montrose Point with several caveats: The council ring would stay out of the plan, and the plant palette would be modified to achieve sustainability, habitat, and biodiversity goals within the general, multilayered structure laid out by Caldwell. As for the Magic Hedge, the policy would be to keep it at the same location but allow modification and expansion along each end of it—replacing the dying honeysuckle, adding native plants that provide food and cover, and removing invasive weeds. Other recommendations by LPAC and the Park District followed suggestions that came out of the workshop discussion and included: select and manage shrubs within a section of the hedge to afford a long view of the landscape in leaf-off conditions; use a short grass mixture in the central meadow along with a selection of low-growing forbs to allow views across the site; surround the central meadow with bands of taller grasses and forbs contiguous to the tree and shrub masses; and provide a gravel path to the hook suitable for disabled access and smaller, mowed paths through the site for use by birders and other users of the point (Figure 9.3).

LPAC also recommended management responsibilities for areas within Montrose Point. The Chicago Park District would install and manage the central meadow, and maintain the mowed grass access paths. For the other areas, LPAC called for active participation from volunteer organizations and individuals. As mentioned in the introduction to this case study, numerous stakeholder groups are interested in actively participating in hands-on projects to implement the plan for the point, and LPAC and the Park District recognize



Figure 9.3. "Final" Design Proposed for Montrose Point (1999). (Wolff Clements and Associates, Ltd.)

that the cooperation of these groups is critical to the plan's success. Birders would take primary management responsibility for the Magic Hedge. The perimeter plantings would be designed as subunits to be planted and maintained by other stewardship groups and youth education programs. The overall landscape program would be supervised by the Park District. Both LPAC and the Park District see long-term management and monitoring of changes as a collaborative venture, and are looking to formalize the Montrose Point Stewardship Group as the primary entity through which volunteer efforts can be coordinated.

The conceptual plan was presented at a well-attended public meeting organized by LPAC in the late fall of 1999. There was broad agreement among the audience as to the direction of the plan, with the understanding that a task force of stakeholder representatives would be assembled to work with LPAC's designers and the Park District to hammer out the many details with regard to plant species mixes, signage, and the like. While support was not unanimous, the broad agreement and enthusiasm for the conceptual plan was summed up by one meeting participant, an angler from the earlier focus group who had also been a student of Alfred Caldwell:

I'm excited by what I've seen presented here tonight, and as a former student of Caldwell's I'm confident that your plan is moving in the right direction, one that parallels the tradition established by Jensen and Caldwell.

Discussion

In examining this process of negotiating nature over the last two years, we observed a continual focusing and refocusing of issues as stakeholder discussions moved from broad concepts about preserving nature to specific proposals and solutions for providing for appropriate types of use, development, access, and vegetation management. In the early stages of discussion, there was general agreement among a broad range of public stakeholder groups—environmental interests, historic preservation and design interests, passive users, volleyball players, yacht club members, and anglers—to maintain and enhance the natural qualities of the environment. Beyond this general goal, several of these groups were not interested in the details of the plan except as it would affect their ability to use the point for their principal recreation activity. This was especially true of peripheral groups like the volleyball players and yacht club members, whose interests were literally on the periphery of Montrose Point—the beach and the harbor, respectively—and who were not so much concerned with what happened on the point itself. When they felt that their

needs and desires would be accommodated by the plan, these groups no longer sought an active role in the negotiation process.

The anglers were another peripheral group, but one with a greater stake in the point since they were trying to regain a higher level of access that had been lost when the road to the breakwater hook was removed. As this is written, this group seems to have acquiesced to the idea of having an improved pedestrian path to the hook, with a somewhat closer parking area for anglers who are disabled. It will be important to continue the dialogue with this and other public stakeholder groups through the task force process that is being established, to ensure that their interests receive consideration as the plan's details are finalized.

The most problematic issues in placing nature at Montrose Point are related to vegetation, particularly with regard to what should be done with the Magic Hedge and how the central meadow should be managed. Here, discussions with environmentalists (mostly birders) and historic preservationists and designers (including individuals from public interest groups and the Park District) showed that there would be no easy resolution of conflicting ideas, and that science and other expert information were limited in what they could do to guide decision making. Rather, ideology was the overriding reason for the lack of consensus; the Caldwell plan and the Magic Hedge had become cultural icons to their respective interest groups, who remained steadfast in their quests to see Montrose Point restored as their sacred site. While this realization was a valuable outcome of the negotiation process, without a clearer idea of how to embrace these factions and move forward, the stakeholders appeared to be headed for gridlock.

According to Hester (1999), this gridlock in the planning and design process is increasingly a consequence of participatory planning, in which empowered interest groups preserve their ideologies by blocking each other's goals. A typical strategy of planners and designers is to mediate such conflicts by "dividing the pie" among the most vocal interests. The alternative chosen by LPAC was to take a more proactive approach with its recommendations for policy and implementation. From the inception of the process, LPAC and its consultant team have maintained an open yet interested stance in guiding a vision for Montrose Point. In the spirit of the original policies brought forth from the 1995 Lincoln Park Framework Plan, they continued to emphasize nature and historic preservation as the two key themes for the Montrose Point Restoration Project. These themes were generally in sync with stakeholder values. However, when stakeholders differed, LPAC took a leadership role in arguing for a direction that would uphold the integrity of these goals while attempting to meet diverse values and uses.

This "participation with a view" (Francis 1999, Hester 1999) was evi-

denced in LPAC's decisions to provide pedestrian and disabled access to the breakwater hook rather than restore road access, and to keep facilities on the point to a minimum. On the issues of the hedge and meadow, LPAC and its designers and planners did not simply divide the pie by giving the hedge to the birders and the meadow to the historic preservationists. Instead, it appeared that their decision was informed by expert information received by stakeholder groups and the outside experts during the workshop. By understanding how certain plants and plant mixes might meet various aesthetic, historic, biodiversity, bird habitat, and sustainability goals, the planners and designers came to the conclusion that the available options were not as black and white as they might have originally been cast by stakeholder groups. This put them in a better position to advocate vegetation management policies for the hedge and meadow that they felt would respect both historic preservation and ecological/birding goals.

Finally, it should be emphasized that the participatory process employed by LPAC and the Chicago Park District was one that would evolve through the course of planning and design and into actual management. In this respect, the framework for collaborative management and monitoring proposed through the Montrose Point Stewardship Group holds promise. Volunteer-based projects would be phased in over a period of years, giving the site and the concerned groups time to reflect on changes and adapt designs to better suit goals and objectives. The group itself would be an amalgamation of diverse stakeholders and thus would provide a forum for continued negotiation as well as an interface with the Park District as management and design implementation progress.

Implications for Restoration and Management Programs

Since the process of negotiating nature as it is being applied at Montrose Point has not yet come to an end, advocating its wholesale adoption by other restoration and management programs may be premature. Yet when looking at its elements in relation to those at play in the Chicago restoration controversy described in the Introduction and other chapters in this book, we see some contrasts worthy of exploration.

First, the Montrose Point Restoration Project followed from a framework plan for Lincoln Park that was grounded in a diverse set of research studies and a comprehensive planning and design process. A subsequent natural area rehabilitation plan further supported ecological restoration goals. From these efforts came the dual mission to expand wildlife habitat at the Magic Hedge and rehabilitate the historic design of Alfred Caldwell. In the Chicago restoration controversy, ecological restoration projects began and expanded throughout the Cook County forest preserves based on individual site plans and prescriptions developed by volunteer stewards in consultation with the district.

While these may have provided a vision for restoring individual sites and groups of sites, development of a formal guiding plan was still in progress at the time the controversy erupted.

Second, there was a long history of public involvement established under the Lincoln Park Framework Plan, with an open process for participating in committees and a broad-based appointed steering committee set up from the very beginning. In this way it was a more natural evolution for established and new stakeholders to be included in the Montrose Point Restoration Project; multiple ideas and perspectives could be taken into account, not only in the planning and design process but also in project implementation. In the restoration controversy, the Forest Preserve District's Citizens Advisory Council was a step in the right direction, but its timing of implementation and its composition of members may have destined it to become more of a reactive group than a proactive one. As Helford notes in his chapter in this volume, the council was not established until well after the controversy had erupted, and then was composed of appointed participants who in many cases represented polar opposites in the debate. These factors, according to Helford, have often served to increase the distance between factions rather than reduce it.

Third, as a primary stakeholder in the Montrose Point project, the Chicago Park District recognized that it, like its public constituents, was made up of a diverse range of interests. By bringing its various staff interests into the process, the Park District helped identify a broader range of considerations than would have occurred with only one or two staff from the obvious professions assigned to the project. In the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, principal involvement has been by staff whose primary responsibility is restoration and forestry. Noticeably lacking in the effort has been involvement from staff in landscape design and recreation, who play major roles in other land planning and management activities in the Forest Preserve District.

Fourth, in the Montrose Point project there was a greater diversity of stakeholders who were accepted as experts than in the Chicago restoration controversy. Planners and designers within LPAC held expertise as keepers of the vision and worked with a variety of specialists in the Chicago Park District to ensure that the dual goals of wildlife habitat and historic preservation enhancement were upheld. The environmental and historic preservation and design interest groups brought their own expertise to the table, as did outside experts who were invited to the workshop, and the critical information they provided about bird habitat, plant species suitability, and the like helped form the basis for subsequent designs and management policies. The expertise of the birders and historic preservation stakeholders, however, may have also given these groups a measure of privilege beyond those of the other stakeholder groups, which were perceived as being more solidly recreational in nature. Thus, while the interests of the various public stakeholders appear to be

accommodated in the final design and policy for the point, the privileges of expertise as discussed in Helford's analysis of the Chicago restoration controversy may have parallels in the Montrose situation in determining whose views count and whose don't.

There might be other reasons why the process at Montrose Point has progressed more smoothly than the Cook County restoration program. The Montrose Point Restoration Project is an eleven-acre site in a 1,200-acre park, while the Cook County restoration program covers dozens of sites in a countywide system of forest preserves comprising more than 67,000 acres. Additionally, the process for Montrose began before many decisions about land management and design had been made, while in the forest preserves some restoration efforts had already been in progress for twenty years. Yet many of the issues discussed here are independent of the scale, physical complexity, or timing of restoration efforts under consideration. For Montrose Point, the Cook County preserves, and many other urban and wildland sites where natural area restoration and management is being undertaken, the most vexing issues are social ones dealing with how different groups see nature and how these visions can be brought into a common focus. In these respects, we think that the lessons learned from the Montrose case study can be applied in Cook County and elsewhere.

Conclusion

The ultimate success of the Montrose Point Restoration Project and other restoration and management programs in urban and wildland areas will rely on how diverse values of humans and nature are integrated with one another. By keeping the process of negotiating nature open and by guiding it with the appropriate combination of vision and leadership, it seems possible that we can develop new and more inclusive concepts of restoration than those that hold to a single disciplinary focus. Ideas of nature conceived by ecological restorationists, historic Prairie School landscape designers, and current recreational users at Montrose Point seem highly compatible, and could form the basis of a model for restoration that is not only suited to an urban park context, but is perhaps also applicable in other locations and situations.

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Notes

1. Focus group transcripts served as the basis for analysis in this part of the case study. Each investigator independently read text passages (e.g., paragraphs) for each focus group and identified a set of preliminary themes, which were then compared and discussed until an overall coding scheme (with twenty-four different themes) was agreed upon. We then independently recoded the text passages for one or more themes and tallied the number of times each theme occurred per focus group. This process helped to organize information and guide analysis. This analysis did not include the focus groups with the volleyball players and yacht club members because no transcripts were available. This same procedure was used for the focus group with the Park District.
2. In the prairie meadow plan, the entire central meadow would be planted in tall prairie grasses and forbs and maintained by fire. A band of mowed grass between the central meadow and perimeter plantings would act as a firebreak and allow for pedestrian circulation. A council ring would be positioned on the eastern edge of the meadow for education, volunteer, and other programs. An open-air shelter at the base of the hook would serve as a storm refuge for anglers. In the prairie/mowed meadow plan, the middle of the central meadow would be mowed, with taller meadow grasses and forbs at its outer margins becoming extensions of the Magic Hedge and other new masses of trees and shrubs. A picnic area would be located on the eastern edge of the point inside the circular path. In the mowed meadow plan, the entire central meadow would be mowed. A large council ring would be located on the eastern end of the point. This plan is most like the original Caldwell plan.

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EDITED BY
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