

HISTORY & RESTORATION OF THE WETLAND

History of the Wetland

The upland/wetland mosaic of the area was created when the water levels of ancient Whitefish Lake inundated the area, depositing lacustrine (clay) sediments. Water cannot infiltrate through the clay sediment and a shallow perched water table is the result. An upland/wetland mosaic has formed over time on top of the clay lens with regionally unique flora (including skunk cabbage) and fauna. Historically, Baker Brothers, an historically prominent Whitefish family, used the area for agriculture through haying, some stream channelization, and grazing. Viking Creek, one of the tributaries to Whitefish Lake, runs through the wetland.



After several unfavorable development proposals through the years, WLI worked together with the Dan Averill family and the Friends of Wisconsin Avenue Wetlands—a group assembled to protect the wetland—to solidify a development plan that satisfied everyone's goals. The 28.8-acre property was gifted to WLI as part of the final negotiated development package. Now owned and managed by WLI, the Preserve offers the Living Wetland Interpretive Nature Trail, a comfortable respite for people who live, work, and play in the area, as well as numerous outdoor education opportunities. Bordered to the north and east by the 215-acre Murdock Nature Conservancy Easement, the Preserve makes available a large contiguous area that protects water quality and provides habitat for aquatic, terrestrial and avian wildlife.

Restoration

In addition to protecting the wetlands of the Preserve from development, the plan between WLI, Friends of Wisconsin Avenue Wetlands and the Dan Averill Family called for wetland restoration at the north end of the Preserve. The focus of the restoration is to re-create diverse habitat for wetland species. The restoration area can be viewed from the trail at the Viking Lodge Trailhead.

The meadow was cleared of timber in the mid-1990s, but still has small wetland pockets throughout that support a good variety of native wetland and wet-forest trees and shrubs. The restoration process involved planting native shrubs and trees. Fencing and plant cages were installed to protect plants from deer browse and fabric mat was placed on the ground to prevent weeds and reed canary grass from dominating the area. Weeds and invasive species are a result of earlier disturbances, and remain an ongoing management challenge.



Return to the Averill's Viking Creek Living Wetlands