

Commons Landscape Plan – An Historical Perspective

The concept of a Commons Landscape Plan is as old as Quiet Water itself. The following is a history of the common area maintenance discussion that has been compiled from records and conversations with those involved with the governance of Quiet Water.

1984 – Quiet Water was incorporated as a PUD (Planned Unit Development). Landscape Architect and association member, Brad Stangland, developed a landscape plan for the common area that called for tree planting and riparian restoration to enhance the sale of lots and heal the scars of development. The plan was sensitive to the riparian buffer and called for only native plant species throughout the development, including member lots. A native meadow grass that grew to a height of 12-14 inches was to be seeded throughout the interior common area with the intention of leaving it unmowed as a habitat for birds and other wildlife.

1985-1987 – Quiet Water sales lagged during a sluggish economy. Brad Stangland's landscape plan was abandoned.

1988 – The northern portion of Quiet Water was replatted into standard sized lots which would accommodate larger homes and year-round residence.

1989-1990 – Quiet Water CC&Rs were amended, updated, approved and recorded in Lincoln County.

1991-1994 – Numerous board discussions occurred about the need for a master landscape plan for the common areas. In the absence of a plan the riparian common area was being treated differently by homeowners and in some cases the river front had become a visual extension of the homeowner's lot. The groundskeeper was put in an awkward position between those who wanted a manicured river bank and those who wanted a natural riparian area.

1994 – The board formally requested that the DRC develop a 'master landscape plan'. At the annual meeting in 1994, the membership approved 'Policies, Procedures and Practices of the Design Review Committee' which included the statement on the bottom of page 3: "The common areas will be managed and maintained in accordance with a master plan." A specialist from the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife was consulted about recommended planting along the river. Erosion along the bank on the southern border of Quiet Water was noted and planting of trees and shrubs was strongly recommended. Planting within a 50' riparian buffer was recommended in areas where home owners approve and the plantings could continue to include windows on the river. (Memo from Mary Rothbart, DRC member, summarizing comments of Tony Stein)

1995-2004 – Lots in Quiet Water began to sell and building increased sharply. The DRC was composed of non resident members and work on a master plan was suspended due to lack of time. Work was concentrated on refining and clarifying the design standards for construction. Amendments to 'Policies, Procedures and Practices of the Design Review Committee' were adopted by the membership in 2000.

- 2004 – Trees in the common area were limbed and pruned to open view corridors, remove dead or diseased limbs and trees and make way for safety vehicles along the streets. Some members were upset with the trimming. The board again realized the need for a common area master plan and instructed the DRC to renew work in this area.
- 2005 - A Grounds Maintenance Advisory Committee was established to provide homeowner input to the Grounds Keeper and the Design Review Committee regarding tree cutting and brush removal. The ultimate goal of the advisory committee and the DRC was to formulate a set of guidelines and policies directing grounds maintenance to be presented for adoption at the June annual meeting. Work of the advisory committee stalled due to a lack of consensus and no plan was presented at the June meeting. The DRC requested help on the common area plan from Jerry Sand, landscape architect, engineer, and association member. He began a year long survey and site mapping of all common areas in the development. In accordance with his professional practices, he researched all city, county, and state regulations concerning the common areas and discovered the City ordinance relating to riparian setbacks.
- 2006 – The DRC distributed a survey to the membership to assess the wishes of members concerning maintenance of the common areas in preparation for renewed work on a master plan. Forty-nine percent of members returned a survey. Protection and stabilization of the river bank and preservation of existing wildlife habitat were identified as top priorities of most of the respondents. The DRC presented a design concept for adoption at the June homeowners meeting that called for the eventual elimination of non-native invasive grasses along the river side of the path and planting of native plants with layered root structures while maintaining view corridors to the river. After much discussion and disagreement, the vote on the plan was tabled.

Legal advice obtained when the Board sought to respond to a member's letter of demand revealed that Quiet Water was subject to the riparian setback ordinance. In Quiet Water's interest, the Board met with the Mayor and City Planner to discuss our options. The city attorney has agreed that the existing path is a pre-existing non conforming use and will be allowed to remain. We understand that we will be able to work to eliminate the canary grass, and blackberry, and other noxious weeds. The city indicated willingness for the planning commission to consider a variance for Quiet Water provided there was a plan for riparian restoration supported by scientific findings that would ensure the spirit of the ordinance which is protection of the river bank, water quality, and wildlife habitat.