

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF HOW A COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM CAN BENEFIT  
BOTH SCHMEECKLE RESERVE AND POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS**

By  
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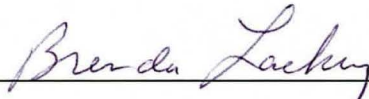
A Thesis  
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

**MASTER OF SCIENCE  
IN  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
(ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION)**

College of Natural Resources  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN  
Stevens Point, Wisconsin

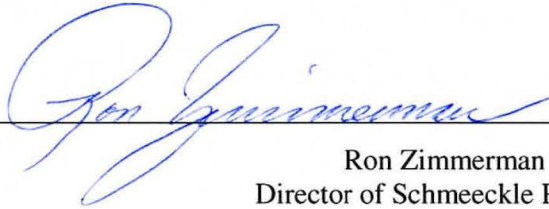
May 2013

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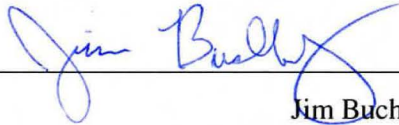
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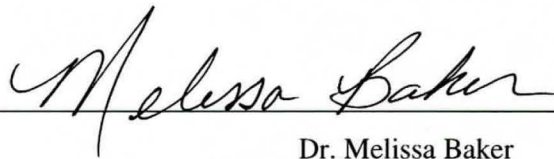
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## **ABSTRACT**

This research aimed to explore how a community involvement program can meet the needs of Schmeckle Reserve and address the motivations and barriers to involvement among potential participants. Schmeckle Reserve, a 280-acre natural area at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, has never had a community involvement program such as a volunteer or membership program. Its directors hope such a program will garner community volunteers, advocates, and donors.

Methods included interviews with community involvement program coordinators to discover their groups' successes and challenges; an analysis to determine Schmeckle Reserve's goals for community involvement; a questionnaire to identify community members' interest in volunteering at Schmeckle Reserve; and focus groups with community members willing to discuss their motivations and barriers to involvement.

The results show alignment between the reserve's goals for community involvement and participants' motivations. The research uses those results to recommend that Schmeckle Reserve strengthen its volunteer program and develop a membership program. Overall, the study also describes a planning process that could be used by other natural areas that want to develop community involvement programs.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Graduate school is no easy feat, but fortunately I had many people who supported and encouraged me along the way. Acknowledging them here is the least I can do.

My advisor, Dr. Brenda Lackey, guided me throughout my program and this thesis. I could not have asked for a more supportive mentor.

Ron Zimmerman and Jim Buchholz served on my graduate committee and as my supervisors at Schmeckle Reserve. They have a knack for fostering a collegial workplace with just the right mix of hard work and humor, with Mike Gross adding his own jokes. I can honestly say I loved going to work every day.

Schmeckle Reserve also provided the necessary financial backing to get this study off the ground.

Dr. Corky McReynolds and Dr. Melissa Baker graciously served on my graduate committee, offering valuable feedback whenever I needed it.

I am indebted to the community involvement program coordinators who agreed to talk with me. In focus groups, I met Schmeckle Reserve's most enthusiastic supporters. I am grateful for the passion and insight they shared with me.

I would not be earning my master's degree if not for my parents, Tom and Karen Parker, who always encouraged me to advance my education.

Finally, I thank my husband, Troy, for always believing in me.

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

For decades, parks, nature centers, and other nature reserves have formed partnerships with their constituencies. The benefits to the natural area can include volunteer labor, fundraising assistance, advocacy, and stronger relationships with their visitors and the community. While community involvement programs are becoming more common, a site developing a program from scratch may face challenges finding useful resources and guidelines. This study uses Schmeeckle Reserve, a natural area in Wisconsin, to explore the planning phase of developing a community involvement program.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The purpose of this study was to explore how a community involvement program can meet the needs of Schmeeckle Reserve and address the motivations of potential participants.

### **SUBPROBLEMS**

The research problem was divided into four subproblems:

1. Explore the successes and challenges that university-owned natural areas and other nature reserves experienced in developing and managing community involvement programs.
2. Determine the goals for a community involvement program at Schmeeckle Reserve.
3. Discover potential participants' motivations and barriers related to participation in a community involvement program at Schmeeckle Reserve.
4. Provide recommendations on how a community involvement program can address Schmeeckle Reserve's goals and participants' motivations.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Schmeeckle Reserve, a university natural area, has never formally involved community volunteers to support its mission. The reserve has no history of a volunteer program, membership program, or similar initiative. As the reserve plans for the future, enhanced community support is

a goal. But for the reserve and other organizations in a similar situation of embarking on community involvement program development, there are many questions to answer. What type of program should be developed? Why are volunteers needed? What will they do? Will anyone participate? Why will they participate? How can the program be designed and managed for success?

This study is significant to Schmeeckle Reserve because it recommends what type of community involvement program should be developed. Before this study, the reserve had never articulated its goals for community involvement. It also had never gathered information about community interest in volunteering or potential volunteers' motivations to be involved. This information is instrumental as the reserve develops and manages a community involvement program.

This study is also significant for other nature reserves seeking to develop community involvement programs. Results about the successful development and management of other community involvement programs can offer a guideline for sites in a similar position to Schmeeckle Reserve. This study also uses Schmeeckle Reserve as the study setting to showcase a course of action to plan a community involvement program. Other sites may find useful the results related to the reserve's goals for volunteers, the community's interest in participation, and potential participants' motivations and barriers. The study is especially significant for natural areas owned by universities because of some of the specific characteristics related to that type of ownership.

For researchers, this study is significant because it is focused on the planning phase of developing a community involvement program, an area lacking study. Current research appears largely restricted to existing programs, examining what community involvement programs do or what motivates environmental volunteers. This study focuses on the development stage.

## **STUDY LIMITATIONS**

1. This study focuses on Schmeeckle Reserve and the findings may not be applicable to all sites developing community involvement programs.
2. The natural areas with community involvement programs included in this research either are connected to a university, similar to Schmeeckle Reserve, or are known for their successful programs. Due to time limitations, the number of programs contacted was limited.
3. Schmeeckle Reserve stakeholders who were sent a questionnaire were limited to select UW-Stevens Point faculty and staff; people who have signed up for the reserve's mailing and e-mail lists; and others identified by the reserve's directors as potentially having an interest in a community involvement program.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Community involvement program:** For the purpose of this study, community involvement program is defined as a structured program to involve community volunteers in supporting a natural area. Community members' support can be unpaid labor or advocacy or donated resources such as money or tangible items. Community involvement programs can include nonprofit membership organizations, volunteer programs, donor programs, and citizen advisory boards.

**Docent:** A person who acts as a guide, typically on a voluntary basis, in a museum, art gallery, or zoo. (Docent, 2013).

**Friends group:** Friends groups are generally defined as 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations established primarily to support a specific park or other site (U.S. National Park Service, 2009).

**Schmeeckle Reserve:** A 280-acre natural area on the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point campus, managed by the College of Natural Resources and owned by the University of Wisconsin System.

**University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point:** A public university with an enrollment of 9,500 students in central Wisconsin. It is part of the University of Wisconsin System.

**Volunteer:** Someone who gives time, effort, and talent to a need or cause without profiting monetarily (Ellis & Campbell, 2005).

**Motivations and barriers to volunteering:** The personal reasons people have for voluntarily giving their time and/or personal resources in support of an entity, or for not volunteering their time or resources.

#### **ASSUMPTIONS**

1. Schmeckle Reserve has a need for volunteers and will benefit from the formation of a community involvement program.
2. Potential participants in a community involvement program at Schmeckle Reserve have personal motivations and barriers to involvement.
3. Taking into account Schmeckle Reserve's goals for a community involvement program and potential participants' motivations and barriers to involvement is necessary to develop and manage a successful community involvement program.
4. Other organizations with community involvement programs have lessons to offer for the successful formation and management of such programs.

#### **STUDY CONTEXT: ABOUT SCHMEECKLE RESERVE**

*“Some day this area will serve as an island of green in the city of Stevens Point.”*

— Fred Schmeckle, 1958

Schmeckle (pronounced *Schmee-klee*) Reserve, a natural area owned by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, was created in 1976. It is managed by and serves as a field station for the university's College of Natural Resources. The 280-acre reserve makes up two-thirds of the campus. In addition to serving as an outdoor classroom for university students, Schmeckle Reserve is open to the public. It has a visitor center, five miles of trails, and a 24-acre lake.

Schmeeckle Reserve's mission stems from three priorities defined when the natural area was first created. Its first priority is to preserve and restore native ecological communities of central Wisconsin. Its second priority is to serve as an outdoor laboratory for teaching and research. Its third priority is to serve the recreational needs of the campus and community, as long as those needs do not conflict with the preservation and educational priorities.

Schmeeckle Reserve's namesake is Fred Schmeeckle, a professor from Nebraska who came to Stevens Point in 1923. Although he taught agriculture, he believed the university's curriculum lacked a conservation focus. He reminisced that "the destruction of forests, pollution of water, and misuse of wildlife areas are factors that started me thinking something should be done to educate people in the wise use of resources" (Schmeeckle Reserve, 2010). In the 1930s, the professor began teaching conservation courses, which developed into the nation's first conservation education major and one of the nation's largest undergraduate programs in natural resources. He often took students on nature walks to the abandoned fields just north of campus that later became the reserve.

Schmeeckle Reserve's visitor center houses an information desk, a museum, a gift shop and bookstore, a cedar-sign business, and a conference room that is used for nature programs and conservation-organization meetings more than 250 days a year. It is also home to the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame, which commemorates people who have made significant contributions to the state's environmental legacy. It serves as the headquarters for the Green Circle Trail, a 26-mile hiking and biking trail that encircles the city of Stevens Point. No fee is required for entrance or for public educational programs.

Despite being a hub of activity, Schmeeckle Reserve has only two full-time employees: a director and an assistant director. To meet its staffing needs, the natural area employs about 50 part-time students each year to operate the visitor center, maintain trails, remove invasive species, craft cedar signs, and patrol trails. Student employees who excel are promoted to student-

supervisor positions. Student supervisors oversee the maintenance crew, manage ordering and inventory in the gift shop, and hire and supervise front-desk employees.

From its inception, Schmeeckle Reserve has relied on student employees to maintain operations. For budgetary reasons, the reserve largely restricts employment of students to those who qualify for the Federal Work-Study Program. The program provides funds for part-time employment to help students finance their college education. The federal program covers about 70 percent of the cost of a student's salary, while the reserve pays the remaining 30 percent (Student Involvement and Employment, 2013.). In the future, students likely will face more competition to receive work-study funding. For the past 10 years, the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point's allocation of federal work-study has remained constant and future increases are not expected (P. Watson, personal communication, January 22, 2013). For Schmeeckle Reserve, that could mean increased competition to attract work-study employees.

Schmeeckle Reserve also is subject to state budget uncertainties and limitations. The reserve is operated by the state of Wisconsin, but state funding provided only about 37 percent of its 2010-2011 fiscal year operating budget (Schmeeckle Reserve, 2011). The remaining 63 percent came from funding sources that the reserve's directors secure annually. That revenue comes from consulting work, interpretive planning, cedar sign sales, handbook sales, and gift shop proceeds. The directors also appeal annually to receive funding from student-paid activity fees through the university's Student Government Association. Sufficient funding must be generated annually "to restore and manage habitats, operate and maintain the visitor center, upgrade and build the expansive trail and boardwalk system, and provide educational programs and events that unite the community and UWSP" (Schmeeckle Reserve, 2011).

Because of its student workforce and unique revenue-generating operations, Schmeeckle Reserve has not had to depend on community volunteers to the same extent as other nature reserves. While the reserve has benefited sporadically from student and community volunteers, it has not developed a formal community involvement program. However, work-study program

shortfalls and state budget uncertainties have made developing a community involvement program more of a priority. Further, the reserve's director, Ron Zimmerman, has always believed that a community involvement program would strengthen the connection between the reserve and the Stevens Point community (Personal communication, August 28, 2011).

This research recommends how Schmeckle Reserve can most effectively and successfully involve community volunteers in its work. These recommendations will be based on the reserve's goals for community involvement in concert with what factors would motivate or prevent potential participants from becoming involved at the reserve.

## **CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this research is to determine the goals for a community involvement program at Schmeeckle Reserve; to discover potential participants' motivations and barriers related to becoming involved; and to use the goals and participants' motivations to make recommendations on how Schmeeckle Reserve can involve community volunteers.

Schmeeckle Reserve has not decided on the structure of its community involvement program, though a volunteer program and a nonprofit membership organization are being considered. Regardless of the structure, participants will be unpaid for their time or resources given and in that sense they will be volunteers. This chapter will review research pertaining to the potential benefits that volunteer involvement can offer natural areas, what motivates volunteers, and the best methods for developing and managing a community involvement program.

### **BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

About 64.5 million people, or 26.5 percent of the U.S. population, volunteered for an organization at least once between September 2011 and September 2012 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Volunteers play an invaluable role in many nonprofit organizations and government agencies. Demands on these organizations continue to increase while financial resources decrease, making volunteers even more important. An organization would not involve community volunteers if it did not expect to realize some benefits. Advantages to involving volunteers can include cost effectiveness, expanded organizational capacity, improved community relations, and enhanced service quality (Brudney, 2012).

Volunteers also are known for their success in soliciting donations to causes and organizations (Brudney, 2012). Fiscal crises facing public land management agencies have created a desire for voluntary community support organizations (Baker, Dhungel, Davenport, Leahy & Bridges, 2010). Nonprofit "Friends of the Park" groups are perhaps best known for their fundraising activities to benefit the sites they support. They are typically membership-based

organizations, so they generate revenue in annual member dues. Friends groups also have executed major capital campaigns and created endowments. Friends groups can have a fundraising advantage over government agencies, as they offer donors accountability and transparency (Cherng & Heaney, 2005).

Beyond raising money, friends groups and volunteers also build community support for a park or natural area. Volunteers or friends members can become advocates for the park. In a survey of friends groups at Midwestern National Park Service units, Baker et al. (2010) found that community education and outreach were the most important activities for these groups after fundraising. “Friends have access to key members of the community and the boards are often composed of movers and shakers who can make things happen” (Cherng & Heaney, 2005, p. 10).

#### **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**

When budgets are strained, staff are stretched thin, and tasks are falling through the cracks, managers desperate for a solution may begin soliciting volunteers. However, developing a volunteer program should begin not with recruitment but by asking why the organization wants volunteers (Herman, 2005; Ellis, 1999). Organizations should take the time to articulate why they want volunteers and determine what they are expected to accomplish (Ellis, 1999). Prior to implementing any new program, an organization assesses whether it is feasible; the same is true in developing a volunteer program. The assessment should be based on the organization’s mission and vision; the motivations of the organization and its stakeholders; and the broad goals for the program (Yallen & Wentworth, 2012). Volunteer program development should be tied to the organization’s strategic plan (Rehnborg, Bailey, Moore, & Sinatra, 2009). “Giving forethought to how and where volunteers fit within your organization’s larger mission, and how a vision for volunteer engagement fits with other strategic goals, creates a solid foundation for success.” (Rehnborg et al., 2009, p. 15).

Similar recommendations exist for friends group development. The U.S. National Park Service (2009) recommends examining what the park needs, why an organization is necessary,

and what will be improved. “It is possible to have a successful friends group, if you know what its purpose is and are willing to set up mutually determined guidelines, clear chains of authority, and open lines of communication” (Ellis, 2010, p. 176). Potential volunteers need to know why they are needed and will ask for a laundry list of projects. Matching projects with volunteer abilities is an essential step to assuring success, and early success helps ensure a viable friends group (LaPage, 1994).

Organizations should seek input from stakeholders regarding volunteer program design. Conflict between volunteers and paid staff is a serious concern, one that can be alleviated by involving employees in volunteer program design. Involving staff improves success and reduces employee resistance to volunteers (Rehnborg et al., 2009). If volunteers are known to the agency, they also should be included in program planning and implementation (Brudney, 2012).

“Participation is key to empowerment of volunteers. ... Empowerment is thought to result in increased feelings of personal commitment and loyalty to the volunteer program by participants and hence greater retention and effectiveness” (Brudney, 2012, p. 67).

Other practices recommended include gaining support from high-level officials for the program; assigning a program coordinator; providing written policies for the program; and providing a budget for the volunteer program (Brudney, 1999). From a survey of government volunteer-program coordinators, these best practices are significantly related to volunteer program success, though the findings are speculative due to the fact that volunteer coordinators may be too willing to perceive benefits emanating from their programs (Brudney, 1999).

## **VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

Those unfamiliar with the field of volunteer management may be most surprised to learn that it borrows heavily from human-resources practices more commonly associated with paid employees. Volunteer-management guides recommend writing volunteer job descriptions, interviewing potential volunteers, providing orientation and training, and giving volunteers a handbook outlining their rights and responsibilities (Brudney, 1999; Ellis, 1999). However, a

comprehensive literature review of organizational factors affecting volunteers found that “empirically, so far, only a few studies have investigated the efficacy of volunteer management practices arising from the human resource perspective, and they show mixed results” (Studer and von Schnurbein, 2012). A more contextual approach to volunteer management rather than a one-size-fits-all method may be more useful (Mook, 2012).

Another recommendation is that the organization appoints a staff member to oversee the volunteer program. The program manager should be skilled in program planning and organization; staffing and directing; agency and community relations; and budgeting and fundraising (Brudney, 2012, p. 71). Even if the staff member’s primary responsibility is not volunteer management, it is imperative that an employee be responsible for coordinating volunteers.

Research on friends groups shows other factors important for success. Commitment is important in partnerships between host agencies and friends groups. Jones (2002), who conducted a grounded theory study of friends groups that formed to support urban parks in two boroughs in England, concluded that “this form of innovative community involvement is unlikely to be successful without substantial two-way commitment on the part of both the local council and the community” (p. 305). The partnership should be institutionalized so it is sustained beyond staff changes on both sides (Cherng & Heaney, 2005).

Communication between the host agency and support groups also is key. While both organizations may be working toward the same goals, they likely follow entirely different processes, especially when the host agency is government-run (Lu & Schuett, 2012). Clear and constant communication leads to understanding, and regular meetings keep both parties moving forward (Cherng & Heaney, 2005).

## **VOLUNTEER MOTIVATIONS**

What motivates volunteers is a heavily researched area. The commonly accepted thought is that because volunteers are not paid, it is important to understand what motivates them in order

to recruit and retain them. In parks, volunteerism and outdoor recreation are increasing, while agency budgets are flat to declining (Bruyere & Rappe, 2007). “Therefore, it is important, if not essential, that volunteer co-ordinators understand the motivations and expectations of those who are to be involved, so that they might build and organize their programs around those same motivations” (Bruyere & Rappe, 2007, p. 504).

Much of the previous research on what motivates volunteers has focused on general social-services volunteers. The functional approach has been used repeatedly to study individual behavior, such as volunteering. The functional approach is a “motivation perspective that investigates the personal and social processes that initiate, direct, and sustain action” (Bruyere & Rappe, 2007, p. 505). In the case of volunteers, the functional approach suggests that people volunteer for the same activity for different reasons. Using the functional approach, Clary et al. (1998) developed the Volunteer Functions Inventory to measure the motivations underlying volunteerism. Using the Volunteer Functions Inventory, the six motivations for volunteering are:

- Understanding: To permit new learning experiences and to exercise knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- Social: Relationships with others, to be with one’s friends, or to engage in an activity viewed favorably by others considered important by the volunteer.
- Career: To prepare for a new career or to maintain career-relevant skills.
- Protective: To cope with inner conflicts or guilt, such as that of being more fortunate than others.
- Enhancement: Psychological development and building personal esteem.
- Values: To express values and put them into action.

The major drawback of using the Volunteer Functions Inventory to understand environmental or conservation volunteering is the absence of items that address motivations to benefit nature (Guiney & Oberhauser, 2009). In studies of environmental volunteers, helping the environment received the highest rating (Ryan, Kaplan & Grese, 2001; Bruyere & Rappe, 2007). Other recurring motivations identified are learning about the natural world; socialization; and getting outside. Less-often cited motivations are to express one’s values and for career development.

**Helping the environment:** In Bruyere and Rappe's (2007) survey of volunteers at a nature center, a nonprofit conservation organization, a county open lands department, and two districts of a federal land management agency, "helping the environment" was identified as the strongest motivator. "This category captures the idea that people volunteer because they want to do something that enhances the natural world" (p. 510).

**Learning about nature:** Volunteering in outdoor-based organizations offers limitless possibilities for lifelong education, and learning is a commonly identified motivation for environmental volunteers. Learning includes nature observation and learning about specific plants and animals (Ryan et al., 2001). "People volunteer because they want to learn about the natural world. Volunteering for an environmental oriented program can give a volunteer the opportunity to learn about flora, fauna or environmental issues" (Bruyere & Rappe, 2007, p. 510).

**Socialization:** Volunteers may be motivated by seeing familiar faces, meeting new people and having fun (Ryan et al., 2001). "Thus, while volunteers may be working to help the environment, the social benefits of meeting new people and developing a core group of repeat volunteers are important to their experience" (Ryan et al., 2001, p. 638). A survey of ecological stewardship volunteers in Michigan also found that social reasons predicted long-term commitment to volunteering (Ryan et al., 2001).

**Getting outside:** Perhaps obvious, volunteers in the outdoor field also simply enjoy spending time outside while volunteering. "To be close to nature" and "to be outside in a natural area" were important motivating factors for Minnesota Master Naturalist volunteers (Guiney & Oberhauser, 2009).

**Project organization:** Volunteers seek programs that will use their time efficiently, also known as project organization (Bruyere & Rappe, 2007). This factor can include working with a good leader and volunteers who know what is expected of them. "This factor shows that characteristics of a well-run volunteer programme (i.e. organization, leadership and

communication) can be critical to encouraging continued participation by volunteers” (Ryan et al., 2001, p. 638).

In researching friends groups, Jones (2002) found five other factors needed before residents feel that they can become a friends group champion: passion for the park; relevant personal characteristics such as persistence; self-efficacy; available time; belief they have skills to offer; and perception of an equal level of commitment from park officials.

## **CONCLUSION**

Volunteerism is a broad, multidimensional field, and the volunteer management profession has become a subject of research in only the past 50 years (Ellis & McCurley, 2012). There are many studies looking at who volunteers and why people volunteer, but not as many from the organizational perspective (Mook, 2012). This study describes a case in which no volunteer program exists but the organization wants to determine whether such a program is feasible, what its goals should be, and how it should be structured. Organizations setting out to develop such groups would benefit greatly from research that investigates that process.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore how a community involvement program can meet the needs of Schmeckle Reserve and address the motivations of potential participants. This study used both qualitative and quantitative methods to answer the research question. Data came from interviews with coordinators of community involvement programs to explore successes and challenges in starting and managing programs; a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis with Schmeckle Reserve's directors to determine goals for a community involvement program; a questionnaire sent to Schmeckle Reserve stakeholders to determine their potential interest in a community involvement program; and a series of focus groups with those who indicated interest in discussing their motivations or barriers to volunteering at the reserve.

### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

All University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point research projects must follow protocol established by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB). The researcher completed online training pertaining to research involving human subjects and submitted a proposal detailing the research methodology, which was approved by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point IRB committee in May 2012 (Appendix A).

### TREATMENT OF EACH SUBPROBLEM

**SUBPROBLEM 1:** *Explore the successes and challenges university-owned natural areas and other natural areas experienced in developing community involvement programs.*

To inform research into subsequent subproblems and to add depth to the overall research results, the researcher interviewed coordinators of six community involvement programs for the first subproblem. Interview questions were aimed at understanding the initial successes and challenges in forming the groups and their current status, including structure, membership, and activities. The programs contacted were chosen for one of two reasons: being affiliated with a

university, similar to Schmeeckle Reserve; or being known regionally or nationally as successful in terms of membership, activity, fundraising success, and longevity.

### **Subproblem 1 Population**

Community involvement programs affiliated with a university that were contacted were:

- Friends of the Arboretum, Madison, WI (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- Friends of the Cedarburg Bog, Saukville, WI (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)
- Friends of Toft Point, Baileys Harbor, WI (University of Wisconsin-Green Bay)

Successful community involvement programs that were contacted were:

- The Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve, Fall Creek, WI
- Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program, Tucson, AZ
- “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society/Friends of the Refuge — J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel Island, FL

### **Subproblem 1 Procedure**

Initial contact with these organizations was made via e-mail or telephone. If the best person to interview was not apparent, it was determined through discussions with each site’s staff or members. The researcher explained the study’s purpose to the contact person, and telephone interviews were scheduled. In keeping with the IRB requirements, the researcher also asked each interviewee to sign and mail back a consent form (Appendix B).

Interviews were semi-structured and included the following questions:

1. What year was the [friends or volunteer group or involvement program] formed?
2. Why was a group or program formed to support the organization?
3. How have the group’s goals changed since it was formed?
4. What is the group or program’s structure? How is it administered or coordinated?
5. Were other structures considered? Why were they not chosen?
6. How many participants are in the group or program?
7. Tell me about some of the group’s regular activities or its accomplishments.

8. What were the successes in forming a group?
9. What were the challenges in forming a group?
10. What is the group's greatest strength? Challenge?
11. How does the group or program make itself attractive to participants?
12. Where does the group get its funding?
13. What is the long-term vision for the group?

The questions were tested in a pilot interview with a friends group that supports a state property in southwestern Wisconsin. Based on that pilot and feedback from the researcher's graduate committee, the questions were modified slightly. The pilot test's results are not included in this study. During the interviews, other questions were added depending on each group's situation. All of the interviews were conducted June through August 2012. They generally lasted about 45 minutes. The phone calls were recorded, and the researcher transcribed all of the interviews using word-processing software.

### **Subproblem 1 Data Analysis**

To analyze the data collected for subproblem 1, the researcher assigned codes to words or phrases relevant to the subproblem. Coding consists of identifying passages of text that exemplify a thematic idea and linking them with a code, or a shorthand reference to the idea (Gibbs, 2007). Codes were based both on the researcher's prior knowledge of the topic and on new ideas that emerged from the data. The researcher also employed a constant comparative method, comparing similarly coded passages with each other, different codes with each other, and different interviews with each other (Gibbs, 2007). After the first interview was coded, the researcher verified her results with her graduate advisor and a member of her graduate committee. Codes were grouped into categories and the categories were named. The categories were placed in a hierarchy with a branching arrangement of sub-categories, leading to a framework of themes drawn from the data.

**SUBPROBLEM 2:** *Determine the potential goals for a community involvement program at Schmeckle Reserve.*

Research expresses the importance of knowing why volunteers are needed at a site (Herman, 2005; Ellis, 1999). The literature warns that volunteers are not free, and that having clear goals for a volunteer program will contribute to its success. With that idea in mind, the researcher aimed to ascertain the goals for a community involvement program at Schmeckle Reserve. The method chosen was a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning activity that involves identifying strengths and weaknesses internal to the organization, and opportunities and threats that are external to the organization. It is useful in clarifying the conditions within which an organization operates and it provides a systems view of the organization and the factors that affect it (Bryson & Alston, 1996). It is important to understand the context of an issue before jumping to developing strategies that address it (Bryson & Alston, 1996).

**Subproblem 2 Population**

Schmeckle Reserve's director, Ron Zimmerman, and assistant director, Jim Buchholz, participated in the SWOT analysis. The directors are the only full-time staff members at the reserve. Because of the temporary status of the reserve's student employees, the researcher decided to not include them in the SWOT analysis. At one point, the researcher also considered including two active community members with knowledge of the reserve in the SWOT analysis. Ultimately, this plan was not pursued, mostly due to the researcher's perception that those outside participants may not understand or appreciate being involved.

**Subproblem 2 Procedure**

The researcher invited Schmeckle Reserve's directors to participate in the SWOT analysis and sent them an agenda (Appendix C). The researcher facilitated the exercise in June 2012. The directors signed informed consent forms (Appendix D). After explaining the definition of community involvement program used in this research, the researcher led the directors through

the exercise to list the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to a community involvement program at Schmeckle Reserve. The directors' answers were recorded on paper. After the SWOT exercise, the researcher entered the results into a word-processing document and sent a copy to the participants for their review (Appendix E).

### **Subproblem 2 Data Analysis**

Using the full list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the researcher grouped similar responses into categories and named the categories. The researcher returned the categorized responses to the directors to verify her analysis and they responded that the analysis was accurate. In this SWOT analysis, the researcher viewed the strengths as attributes that may prove beneficial in developing a community involvement program. Weaknesses are areas in need of improvement that a community involvement program could help address. Opportunities are potential areas for improvement through the efforts of a community involvement program. Finally, threats are outside factors that are difficult to control but that can affect the organization and a new community involvement program.

**SUBPROBLEM 3:** *Discover potential participants' motivations and barriers related to participation in a community involvement program at Schmeckle Reserve.*

Because the literature expresses the importance of taking into account volunteers' motivations to attract and retain them, this study aimed to better understand the motivations and barriers to involvement among potential Schmeckle Reserve volunteers. However, because Schmeckle Reserve currently does not have a community involvement program, it lacks regular volunteers who could be studied to better understand their motivations. Thus, investigating the third subproblem involved a two-pronged approach. The first step was a screening questionnaire to identify people interested in becoming more involved at Schmeckle Reserve. The second step was a series of focus groups with those who responded to the questionnaire and expressed interest in joining a focus group.

## **Screening Questionnaire Population**

The questionnaire was sent to a purposive sample of Schmeeckle Reserve stakeholders, including:

- People who had signed up for e-mail and mailing lists to receive information about events at the reserve.
- Current and retired faculty and staff in the UW-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources; and current faculty and staff in the Biology Department and the Geography/Geology Department.
- Others identified by the reserve's directors, including people with a strong interest in Schmeeckle Reserve.
- Landowners with property adjoining or very close to Schmeeckle Reserve.

The researcher attempted to locate other stakeholders by writing a brief news release about Schmeeckle Reserve's interest in gathering public input regarding a new community involvement program (Appendix F). The news release was sent to two local newspapers. It asked interested participants to contact the researcher for a questionnaire or to join the focus groups, but the researcher received no inquiries. A similar notice on Schmeeckle Reserve's Facebook page also did not yield additional respondents.

## **Screening Questionnaire Procedure**

Stakeholders received a cover letter and a questionnaire in early August 2012. In total, 926 questionnaires were sent, 544 via mail and 382 via e-mail. Six e-mail messages were undeliverable, reducing the total of e-mail questionnaires to 376. And 152 mailed questionnaires were undeliverable, reducing the total to 392. The final combined total was 768 people who received the questionnaire.

Stakeholders with only a mailing address on file received a one-page cover letter (Appendix G), a one-page questionnaire (Appendix H), and a postage-paid return envelope. Stakeholders with only an e-mail address on file received a shortened cover letter in an e-mail message (Appendix I) and a hyperlink to fill out the questionnaire on ClassApps

SelectSurvey.NET, an online survey service provided to UW-Stevens Point students conducting research.

To protect participants' identities, each recipient was assigned a unique four-digit code. Paper versions of the questionnaire included only the code and no identifying information. Those who received the questionnaire via e-mail were asked to enter their four-digit code into the online survey. A document matching stakeholders' names with their codes was stored in a password-protected file.

The cover letter and questionnaire were revised with input from the researcher's graduate committee and Dr. Aaron Thompson, a UW-Stevens Point professor with expertise in survey design. The researcher also piloted the online questionnaire by having her committee and a fellow graduate student test its functionality.

The cover letter explained that Schmeckle Reserve is developing a community involvement program that will include volunteer and fundraising opportunities (Appendices G & I). It also invited respondents to participate in "a roundtable discussion group" to express their personal motivations and barriers to involvement at Schmeckle Reserve. The researcher perceived that respondents may be turned off by the term "focus group," so the phrase "roundtable discussion group" was used in the cover letter instead.

The one-page questionnaire contained seven questions (Appendix H). The first four questions asked about respondents' interest in joining a friends group; a volunteer program to help with work projects; a volunteer program to provide educational programs; or a program to raise money to benefit the reserve. Respondents could choose from a scale of Very Interested; Somewhat Interested; Not Interested; or I Don't Know. An open-ended question asked respondents if there are other ways they want to become involved at the reserve. Another question asked for contact information for those interested in participating in a discussion group. Finally, respondents could share their contact information to receive future updates about this new program and/or a coupon for 20 percent off one item in Schmeckle Reserve's Browse Shop.

As questionnaires were received, responses were coded and entered into a spreadsheet. Based on a modified version of the Dillman tailored-design survey method (Dillman, Smyth & Christian, 2009), a reminder postcard (Appendix J) or e-mail was sent to non-respondents in early September. A total of 344 stakeholders received a reminder e-mail. A total of 529 respondents received a postcard reminder. The postcard read, “A couple of weeks ago, Schmeckle Reserve sent you a brief questionnaire about a new community involvement program at the Reserve. We would like to hear from you!” The postcard directed respondents to the online survey in the event they had misplaced their paper version.

At the time of the original mailing, the researcher was unaware that the envelopes needed to display “Address Service Requested” in order to be returned if undeliverable. Because the U.S. Postal Service discarded any undeliverable letters, it was unknown how many questionnaires were actually received. The reminder postcard, however, displayed the address-service request. In total, 151 postcards were returned to Schmeckle Reserve, reducing the total number of potential mail respondents from 544 to 392. This reduction was not surprising based on the age of the reserve’s mailing list and the prevalence of long-departed university students’ names on the list. The actual total number of questionnaires potentially received was 768. Of that, 124 people filled out the questionnaire, a response rate of 16 percent.

### **Screening Questionnaire Data Analysis**

Responses to the screening questionnaire were coded and entered into a spreadsheet as they were received. The first four questions asking about interest in various types of volunteer programs were coded using numerals, with 1 meaning Very Interested; 2 meaning Somewhat Interested; 3 as Not Interested; and 4 meaning I Don’t Know. Responses were analyzed by calculating the percentage of respondents who were very interested, somewhat interested, not interested, and unsure. Open-ended responses also were recorded (Appendix K). They were grouped by similarity into categories. Respondents willing to participate in focus groups and their

contact information also were recorded. E-mail and mailing addresses for respondents interested in receiving future updates about a volunteer program were given to Schmeeckle Reserve.

### **Focus Groups Population**

Twenty-five screening questionnaire respondents agreed to join a focus group to discuss their motivations and barriers to becoming more involved at Schmeeckle Reserve. Of those, 19 people attended focus groups, while two responded to the focus-group questions via e-mail. Four other interested participants either were unable to attend the focus groups or did not respond to follow-up e-mails. Nine people participated in the first focus group; five people in the second; and five people in the third focus group.

### **Focus Group Procedure**

Respondents who agreed to attend a focus group were contacted via phone or e-mail (Appendix L). A series of dates and times were chosen, and respondents could choose the date that worked best for them. Participants were sent a reminder e-mail a couple of days prior to the focus group (Appendix M). The reminder said that participants should be prepared to discuss the following questions:

- Why you are interested in becoming involved at the reserve?
- What would motivate you to become/remain involved?
- What would prevent you from becoming involved?
- What do you think the reserve should do to involve community members in its work?

The first question was intended as an opening question to warm up participants to the topic, based on recommendations by Krueger and Casey (2000). No tangible incentive was provided, though focus group participants were given refreshments, also based on the authors' recommendation.

The focus groups were held in September and October 2012 in the meeting room at the Schmeeckle Reserve Visitor Center, and each lasted about 45 minutes to 1½ hours. Upon arrival, participants were asked to sign a consent form that also guaranteed their anonymity (Appendix N). The researcher introduced the research project and explained that participants were free to

share their thoughts and have a conversation with one another. The researcher also explained that no names would be included in final reports. Each session was recorded using a voice recorder. The researcher transcribed the sessions word-for-word.

### **Focus Group Data Analysis**

The researcher assigned codes to words or phrases relevant to the subproblem. The researcher also employed a constant comparative method, comparing similarly coded passages with each other, different codes with each other, and different interviews with each other (Gibbs, 2007). After the first focus group was coded, the researcher verified her results with her graduate advisor. Codes were grouped into categories and the categories were named. The categories were placed in a hierarchy with a branching arrangement of sub-categories, leading to a framework of themes drawn from the data.

**SUBPROBLEM 4:** *Provide recommendations on how a community involvement program can address Schmeckle Reserve's goals and participants' motivations and barriers.*

The researcher took into account results from the first three subproblems and the literature review to formulate recommendations on how a community involvement program can address Schmeckle Reserve's goals and participants' motivations and barriers. The recommendations for Schmeckle Reserve are discussed in Chapter V.

## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore how a community involvement program can meet the needs of Schmeckle Reserve and address the motivations and barriers of potential participants. Results of each of the first three subproblems are reported.

**SUBPROBLEM 1:** *Explore the successes and challenges that university-owned natural areas and other natural areas experienced in developing community involvement programs.*

To explore some of the successes and challenges that natural areas experienced in developing community involvement programs, six groups were interviewed: five friends groups and one volunteer docent program. The representatives interviewed were paid staff, board members, or have been involved in the group since its inception.

Community involvement programs affiliated with a public university that were contacted were:

**Friends of the Arboretum, Madison, WI (University of Wisconsin-Madison):** The UW-Madison Arboretum includes 1,620 acres, and its mission is to conserve and restore arboretum lands, advance restoration ecology, and foster a land ethic. The Friends of the Arboretum formed in 1962 to support the arboretum's mission and today has 3,000 members.

**Friends of the Cedarburg Bog, Saukville, WI (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee):** Cedarburg Bog is a southeastern Wisconsin state natural area that includes 1,656 acres. It is managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The Friends of the Cedarburg Bog formed in 2006 to support the preservation, stewardship, appreciation, and scientific study of the bog. The friends group has 150 members.

**Friends of Toft Point, Baileys Harbor, WI (University of Wisconsin-Green Bay):** Toft Point is a 743-acre state natural area managed by the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. The Friends of Toft Point formed in 2000 and has 280 members.

Community involvement programs that are considered models of success that were contacted were:

**The Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve, Fall Creek, WI:** Beaver Creek Reserve is a county-owned nature center in west-central Wisconsin. Its more than 400 acres include a nature center, citizen science center, youth camp, and charter science school. The Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve formed in 1985 and in recent years took over management of the reserve. The friends group has 1,200 members.

**Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program, Tucson, AZ:** The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is a zoo, natural history museum, and botanical garden that was founded in 1952 in Tucson. In 1972, the museum formed a docent program to train volunteers to help visitors better understand and appreciate the Sonoran Desert region. The program’s 200 educational docents participate in a 12-week training course.

**“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society/Friends of the Refuge — J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, Sanibel Island, FL:** J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge, located on Sanibel Island, is part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuge system. The 6,300-acre refuge receives 800,000 visitors annually. The “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society formed in 1982 as a friends group to support environmental education and services at the refuge. It has 1,800 members.

**Results to each question follow:**

<b>Table 1 Why was a group or program formed to support the organization?</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	To conduct political activity on behalf of state employees (and arboretum supporters) opposed to the construction of Highway 12/18.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	Work projects and fundraising were needed.
Friends of Toft Point	To prevent vandalism and illegal activities at the property. Buildings were becoming run-down, so volunteers did work projects and then formed a friends group.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	Staff wanted a nature center and realized the county could not pay for it, so a friends group was formed.

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program	An educational docent program was formed in response to increasing visitation.
"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society	To volunteer for educational programs and other projects that staff did not have time to complete.

For this research study, it is helpful to examine the characteristics present during other community involvement programs' developmental phase. Among the six organizations interviewed, a common element in the beginning stages was a catalyst for formation. The friends groups that were interviewed were formed because a group of supporters saw unmet needs at each site and felt compelled to fill the gap. The friends groups formed for a variety of reasons: to oppose a highway development project, to fundraise, to educate, to fill staffing shortages, and to help with property management. Unlike the friends groups, however, the docent program was created because the site had a need for volunteers to help with education.

<b>Table 2</b>	
<b>How have the group's goals changed since it was formed?</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	Current goal to support the arboretum by raising money and awareness.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	Goals have become more specific but are still to promote knowledge about the bog, proper recreational use of the bog, and stewardship activities.
Friends of Toft Point	Invasive species control has become a bigger issue, and the group is doing more public relations and education.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	The friends group expanded from a support role to taking over management from the county.
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program	Goals have not changed much but the program has expanded in number of participants and types of programs offered.
"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society	The friends group initially provided volunteers for education and has expanded into fundraising, including building an education center.

From the original catalyst that led to their formation, the community involvement programs contacted appear to have adapted to emerging needs over time. Several representatives said the groups initially focused on volunteering and then expanded into fundraising. The Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve even signed a contract with its county to take over management of the

nature reserve and facilities. The groups also said they evaluate ways to improve, revamping their bylaws and committees, modifying programs, and engaging in strategic planning.

<b>Table 3 What is the group or program’s structure? How is it administered or coordinated?</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	15-member board of directors with subcommittees focused on nominating board members, trip planning, native plant sale, and special events. Two part-time staff: a manager (80 percent) and an assistant (60 percent). A separate volunteer program with its own paid coordinator.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	Board of directors with a nominating committee.
Friends of Toft Point	Nine-member board of directors.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	Nine-member board of directors.
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program	Full-time manager to oversee the interpretive program and docent program. Separate volunteer program with its own coordinator.
“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society	14-member board of directors, which supervises the full-time executive director, who in turn supervises a full-time office manager and a full-time bookstore manager.

All of the friends groups incorporated as 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organizations, which offers a fundraising advantage. Friends groups, like other nonprofit organizations, are governed by bylaws and overseen by boards of directors and committees. Boards of directors play an important role in friends groups, bringing to the table fundraising skills, community connections, and dedication. The Beaver Creek Reserve representative commended the friends group’s board:

Even in those early years, those board people were very, very helpful ... because they were committed. They had to go out and talk to different community groups that they belonged to, to try to drum up membership and support.

Boards also face challenges. Friends of the Cedarburg Bog is striving to help newly elected board members get up to speed on the organization’s business. New board members receive packets of background information, and a board mentoring project is being considered. Beaver Creek Reserve has had periodic challenges with board members’ personalities or with conflicts between the friends board and a separate fundraising board.

Friends of the Arboretum and “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society (3,000 members and 1,700 members, respectively) as well as a 200-member docent program have paid staff to oversee

operations and to fundraise. Though they may be biased, the paid staff interviewed said they are effective in their positions, serving their organizations with their institutional memory, fundraising skills, and by handling organizational tasks.

<b>Table 4</b> <b>Were other structures considered? Why were they not chosen?</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	Unsure.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	None considered.
Friends of Toft Point	None considered, though it was not incorporated as a nonprofit until later on.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	Unsure, but none recalled.
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program	None considered.
"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society	Began as volunteer program and later formed a friends group.

Overall, the representatives interviewed said their organizations either did not consider other types of structures, or they were not present during the group's early days and are unsure whether other structures were considered.

<b>Table 5</b> <b>Tell me about some of your group's regular activities or its accomplishments.</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	<b>Activities:</b> Annual native plant sale fundraiser, annual restoration ecology awards program, regularly sold-out lecture series, regional and international trips, monthly newsletter, annual meeting, sponsor community events, sponsor nature photography group, April fun run fundraiser. <b>Accomplishments:</b> \$150,000 donation to fund curator position; \$250,000 donation to native garden terrace expansion.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	<b>Activities:</b> Interpretive programs; quarterly newsletter; annual meeting and potluck. <b>Accomplishments:</b> Osprey platform; grant-funded interpretive signs; grant-funded handicap-accessible trail constructed; grant-funded invasives control; watershed research and education.
Friends of Toft Point	Trail docents; trail maintenance; educational hikes; annual meeting and program; a catalog of the biggest trees in Door County.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	<b>Activities:</b> Four annual fundraising events; annual meeting and silent auction; French toast breakfast; phenology calendar with photos from the photography club. <b>Accomplishments:</b> Successful capital campaign, raising \$1 million total to contribute toward three buildings; remodeling projects; nature center exhibits.

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program	<b>Activities:</b> Daily morning bird walk, three daily grounds tours for guests, more than 70 interpretive stations, specialty seasonal walks, Saturday evening programs. <b>Accomplishments:</b> Community outreach (new nighttime bat interpretive programs at bridges in town).
"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society	Fund internship and scholarship program; fund research projects; fund signage and exhibits; lecture series, manage the gift store.

Friends groups are active in many ways, including helping with property management, hosting events, raising money, taking on capital projects, and marketing their sites. Some groups ask the site for a list of needs. "The refuge will sit down and they go over what they see as their needs that are not going to be covered by federal funding. And so they'll bring that list to us. It's usually a couple-hundred thousand dollars," the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society representative said.

The groups said they want to keep the sites natural and prevent decline. Friends groups help with property management through invasive species control, trail development and maintenance, stewardship, and preservation. Cedarburg Bog's representative said:

I think preservation of the bog is a very important thing in a lot of our minds. ... We don't want to see the thing go backwards from where it is right now, as far as biodiversity is concerned. We've got a number of threatened and endangered species living out in the bog, and we want to keep it nice for them. I think we see ourselves as trying to be effective in helping the university and the DNR with their management of the place.

Community involvement programs also offer public programs and events, including nature walks, field trips, and lecture series. In the case of the Friends of the Arboretum at UW-Madison, programs open only to friends have become so popular that they sell out immediately, thus discouraging some people from joining the group:

Everything sells to capacity, so we're not really trying to get people to come to our programs, so that's our challenge. People say, "Well, why should I join, because your programs are all filled?" There's definitely an issue there, and I agree with them.

Some friends groups have undertaken capital campaigns, raising money to build education centers. For the "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society, it was a pivotal event in their history because it formalized the group. Friends groups also help students through scholarship and internship programs. They market their sites and themselves through news releases, public

relations, and their own websites. Friends groups also conduct or fund research projects. Some examples include building deer exclosures, getting a grant for a watershed study, or funding citizen science projects.

<b>Table 6</b>	
<b>What were the successes in forming a group?</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	The longevity that ensued; original bylaws essentially intact; great relationship with arboretum director from the beginning; located on-site.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	Congenial founding members committed to effort and driven by love for bog; founding members had experience in nonprofits; used the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks handbook.
Friends of Toft Point	Preventing vandalism and illegal activities at Toft Point through friends group presence.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	Right people involved: an attorney, people with financial connections, education community. Board was committed and important in getting memberships and support. Hired a part-time volunteer coordinator.
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program	Interpretation important from the beginning; longevity of program; volunteer commitment; initial requirement for docents to take extensive natural history and interpretive training.
“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society	Unanswered.

When asked what was done well in forming friends groups, some representatives said early members either had relevant experience and skills, such as in education or fundraising, or they involved people who had the necessary skills, such as lawyers to review bylaws. Beaver Creek Reserve’s friends group shared its experience in finding people with helpful skills:

We had an attorney. We had some people that had financial connections in the community that could help with fundraising. ... We had people from the education community on that initial group. So in that regard, I think that’s an important way to go, if you can pull in these organizations that already have a vested interest in what you’re doing, so that was helpful for us.

Early members of the friends groups were strong supporters of each site. Even today, the program representatives — both paid and unpaid — who were interviewed expressed a passion for the site and its mission and a personal connection to the natural area. Early members also had a commitment to the task at hand: “I think starting out with a group that is really determined to make this happen and willing to put in the rump time around the conference table, I think that that is the most important thing,” a Cedarburg Bog representative said.

<b>Table 7</b> <b>What were the challenges in forming a group?</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	Unanswered.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	Overwhelmed by legal and structural decisions; membership form was poorly worded and confused members; ongoing discussion about whether to buy insurance; board members take time to land on their feet.
Friends of Toft Point	Not having a building to meet.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	Lack of staff and had to rely on volunteers.
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program	None recalled.
"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society	Building a strong relationship and trust between the friends group and the refuge; putting together a capital campaign.

There were no common ideas expressed in relation to the question about challenges faced while forming a community involvement program.

<b>Table 8</b> <b>What is the group's greatest strength? Challenge?</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	<b>Strengths:</b> Sold-out events; two paid employees. <b>Challenges:</b> Aging membership and recruiting younger members; economy affecting fundraising; facility at capacity for events; staff at capacity.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	<b>Strengths:</b> Focused board of directors; effective grant writing committee. <b>Challenges:</b> Getting members involved in projects; looking for a volunteer to serve as volunteer coordinator; getting committee chairs to coordinate volunteers.
Friends of Toft Point	<b>Strengths:</b> More funds available than major projects. <b>Challenges:</b> Big-tree book is slow-going; only about 15 percent of members are active volunteers.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	<b>Strengths:</b> Board is strong and enthusiastic; dedicated members. <b>Challenges:</b> Board member personality differences.
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program	<b>Strengths:</b> Being an outdoor, dynamic site keeps it interesting for volunteers; social aspect of volunteering a draw. <b>Challenges:</b> Some longer-term volunteers are not interested or skilled in working with school groups and that is now a requirement to volunteer.
"Ding" Darling Wildlife Society	<b>Strengths:</b> Strong relationship between the friends group and the refuge. <b>Challenge:</b> The economic climate and competition with other nonprofits to fundraise.

Some friends group officials lauded their members for being hardworking, passionate, and dedicated. "I've got some volunteers that are almost like full-time employees," Beaver Creek Reserve's representative said. However, friends groups also face challenges in getting their

members more involved in the organization. Cedarburg Bog’s representative expressed her frustration:

What the committee people, the chairs, don’t realize is that if you don’t have a volunteer coordinator for the whole organization, then you’ve got to be your own volunteer coordinator or get someone on the committee to do it, so that we do get membership involved. And that’s something that we are not doing as well as we could be.

Some coordinators interviewed also said they value strong relationships between their community involvement programs and the sites they support. They build those relationships through communication, attending each other’s meetings, and supporting the site’s mission. “I think the greatest strength is the really strong relationship that the friends group has with the refuge and that we truly work together as partners,” the “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society representative said. Some friends groups contacted have on-site offices. Friends groups also work within the site’s parameters, signing legal agreements and getting approval for their plans. Challenges occur in building trust, staff turnover at the site, or because property managers are stationed far from the site.

<b>Table 9 How does the group or program make itself attractive to participants?</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	Beautiful site; newsletter mailed to members and distributed throughout the county; website; press releases; gift store discounts, plant sale discount.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	Website; newsletter, public relations in the media; exhibit at events. Overall, still a “very well-kept secret.”
Friends of Toft Point	They are drawn in by the site’s beauty; the newsletter retains members.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	Reduced program fees for members; quarterly newsletter; 10 percent gift shop discount; members-only events. Successful events and good marketing. Free membership giveaways at external events.
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program	When application period is open, word of mouth recruitment done through staff, volunteers, flyers sent home with docents to their retirement communities.
“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society	Special events; public relations; communicating to donors; 10 percent gift shop discount; private donor events; newsletter.

Membership perks generally include gift-shop discounts, newsletters, and member events or trips. “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society offers a special event for major donors. “It’s wine and

cheese and the refuge manager will be there and we have a little special something for them. No gifts, but they get to feel part of a special group,” according to the representative.

Community involvement programs have experienced mixed results in soliciting new members. They reported using a variety of tactics, some of which are more successful than others. They have included a membership form in their newsletters, given away some free memberships, and exhibited their organization at events. An attractive site or facility or successful events can draw new members, while other groups struggle to get the word out about their organizations.

<b>Table 10 Where does the group get its funding?</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	Membership dues, plant sale and other events, grants, corporate sponsors.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	Memberships, grants, T-shirt sales, take donations at events.
Friends of Toft Point	Donations; a \$600 endowment to fight invasive plants and an \$18,000 general endowment to support their mission.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	Memberships, fundraising events, program fees, lodging fees, donations, grants, sponsors, planned-giving program.
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program	The museum’s education and research/conservation department.
“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society	Individual donors; family foundations; planning giving.

Friends groups raise money from a diversity of sources, including membership dues, donations, grants, event fees, sales, and planned giving programs. Friends groups face some challenges in raising money, including the economic recession, expected funding declines at the sites they support, and the need to diversify their funding sources. “This has probably been our worst year as far as raising funds. .... Going into the next 10 years, it’ll probably take us that long to recover. It’s a really, really challenging time to raise money,” a Friends of the Arboretum representative said.

With the money they raise, friends groups fund endowments, pay for programming and positions, and supplement the needs of the sites they support. Friends groups place emphasis on communicating with donors, educating them about the site, and letting them know their money is

well-invested. “It’s a challenge to always make sure that you’re doing the best job that you can do, sharing your story, getting it in front of your donors, and letting donors know that their support is making a difference,” a “Ding” Darling Wildlife Society representative said.

<b>Table 11 What is the long-term vision for the group?</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	To become more financially sustainable and to diversify how money is raised.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	Continuing to help preserve the bog, fight invasive species, helping the university and DNR with management.
Friends of Toft Point	Protect the natural habitat and help UW-Green Bay in its management; publish big-tree book.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	Continuing to successfully operate the reserve; more control over upkeep of buildings; to be the finest environmental facility in the Midwest.
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum Docent Program	Continue spreading mission of getting people to embrace and love the Sonoran Desert region.
“Ding” Darling Wildlife Society	Strengthen and enhance what is already being done; re-evaluate the education building that the friends group built; build new intern housing.

When asked about their long-term vision, the organizations said they want to continue to improve their support of their host sites.

<b>Table 12 Do friends-group members work with university students?</b>	
Friends of the Arboretum	Students used only occasionally for writing, web development, logo design. Students and volunteers (separate from friends group) work side-by-side more often.
Friends of the Cedarburg Bog	Considered seeking a UW-Milwaukee student to serve as a volunteer coordinator.
Friends of Toft Point	They would like botany students to work at Toft Point but haven’t received any student interest.
Friends of Beaver Creek Reserve	Have employed work-study students off and on.

Three friends groups affiliated with a university — similar to Schmeeckle Reserve — were interviewed. All three reported low interaction with students. However, only Friends of the Arboretum is located on campus, while Cedarburg Bog and Toft Point are some distance away. Friends of the Arboretum has used students only for intermittent projects, such as writing, web development, and logo design.

**SUBPROBLEM 2:** *Determine the goals for a community involvement program at Schmeeckle Reserve.*

The researcher facilitated a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats analysis with the reserve’s director and assistant director. The session lasted about three hours. After the SWOT analysis, the researcher condensed the results by grouping similar responses into categories (Table 13). The results are reported below.

<b>Table 13: SWOT Results Related to a Community Involvement Program</b>	
<b>Internal Strengths</b>	<b>Internal Weaknesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public visibility and accessibility</li> <li>• A green space that the community values</li> <li>• University connection</li> <li>• Connections with other community organizations</li> <li>• Property management successes</li> <li>• Successful programming</li> <li>• Low state support but diversified, entrepreneurial sources of funding</li> <li>• Full-time staff with longevity and large student staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-time staff overcommitted</li> <li>• Student staff fill needs but transient</li> <li>• Dependent on outside funds to fill budget gaps</li> <li>• Infrastructure and equipment at capacity</li> <li>• Marketing falls short</li> </ul>
<b>External Opportunities</b>	<b>External Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased funding through donations, fundraising</li> <li>• Improved staff coverage and project completion</li> <li>• Heightened community support</li> <li>• Expanded programming and events</li> <li>• Improved facilities and property management</li> <li>• Personal benefits to volunteers through participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subject to university and government policies</li> <li>• Funding sources uncertain, competitive to receive</li> <li>• Volunteers unavailable, undependable</li> <li>• Support group could present problems</li> </ul>

**Strengths**

In this analysis, strengths were viewed as positive attributes of Schmeeckle Reserve that can be built on in developing a community involvement program. They also are attributes that may be attractive to potential volunteers. Strengths that were listed were:

**Public visibility and accessibility:** The reserve has visibility in Stevens Point. It is located within the city and is displayed on tourism maps. The reserve and visitor center are open to the public. The visitor center meeting room is available for free to conservation and community groups, which raises the reserve's visibility among those organizations.

**A green space that the community values:** Stevens Point is an outdoor-minded community, and the reserve offers residents and students a quiet sanctuary and recreational opportunities. Residents who spend time recreating in the reserve develop an emotional connection to the natural area.

**University connection:** The reserve benefits from its connection to UW-Stevens Point. It is a field station of the College of Natural Resources, which lends institutional credibility and implies that the reserve exists for nature. Student involvement is also a strength, as well as the research the reserve supports. Despite being affiliated with a university, the reserve is outside the normal realm of operations and has some independence from the college in decision-making.

**Connections with other community organizations:** The reserve has connections with several community organizations. It houses the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame. It also serves as the headquarters for the Green Circle Trail. Other partnerships exist with the Aldo Leopold Audubon Society, Master Gardeners, Wild Ones, and the Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin.

**Property management successes:** The reserve exists to protect and manage native ecological communities of central Wisconsin. It also aims to acquire green space and has expanded from its original 120 acres to 280 acres today. Its habitat diversity — including a 24-acre lake, a restored wetland, and an oak savannah — is attractive to visitors.

**Successful programming:** Students majoring and minoring in environmental education and interpretation present free public natural and cultural heritage programs at Schmeeckle Reserve. They also contribute to a twice-yearly Candlelight Hike Festival, which recently has

drawn 700 to 1,000 visitors. These events have been well-attended, and they connect the community to the reserve.

**Low state support but diversified sources of funding:** The reserve is insufficiently funded by the university, which creates a justification for the need to seek financial support through a community involvement program. To make up for this budget shortfall, the reserve's directors have been entrepreneurial in diversifying their funding sources. They have raised necessary additional funding by publishing interpretive textbooks, consulting on national and international interpretive projects, and by developing a cedar sign shop. Diversified funding provides more stability in an economically volatile environment, while allowing for more flexibility in spending.

**Full-time staff with longevity and large student staff:** The reserve's director is the only director in the history of the reserve, and the assistant director was hired in 2002. This longevity has lent stability to the reserve's staffing. The directors also have cultivated many community connections. And unlike many nature centers, the reserve has a large staff because of its ability to use the federal work-study program to hire students.

### **Weaknesses**

In the SWOT analysis, the weaknesses that were identified could be challenges in the development or management of a community involvement program. The weaknesses include:

**Full-time staff overcommitted:** The reserve has only two full-time staff, and their time is largely committed to generating revenue to operate the reserve, managing the student staff, and teaching in the College of Natural Resources' environmental education and interpretation program. Their responsibilities would leave little time to coordinate a volunteer program.

**Dependent on outside funds to supplement budget shortfall:** To help supplement its budget shortfall, the reserve is dependent on two sources of student-related funding: student-paid activity fees and work-study funding. Every year the reserve's directors submit a request to the university's Student Government Association for a portion of student-paid fees. Work-study

funding is necessary to help pay for the student employees who staff and maintain the reserve. These two sources of funding are variable and becoming more competitive.

**Infrastructure and equipment at capacity:** If the reserve develops a community involvement program, there is concern about where volunteers will work and what equipment they will use. The reserve's visitor center is outdated and lacks extra space in which volunteers could meet and work. The reserve also has only one truck, and other maintenance equipment is limited.

**Marketing falls short:** The directors believe Schmeckle Reserve could benefit from increased marketing. There is a lack of identity with the university, and some people visiting the reserve are not aware they are on campus. There also is a lack of directional signs pointing visitors to the reserve, and many people are not aware there is a visitor center.

### **Opportunities**

The opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis can be considered the ways in which a community involvement program could improve Schmeckle Reserve and advance its mission.

They are:

**Increased funding through donations, fundraising:** A community involvement program could raise money to benefit Schmeckle Reserve in a variety of ways. It could bring in money through donations, an endowment, a planned giving program, or a membership program in which supporters pay dues. Fundraising could give the reserve even more diverse financial independence.

**Improved staff coverage and project completion:** Volunteers could provide continuity in staffing that is often absent with short-term student employees. They could be teamed with college students to optimize efficiency. Volunteers could assist with the Browse Shop, cedar-sign shop, and handbook sales. They also could be used for land-management projects, including invasive species control. A strong volunteer group could reduce the reserve's dependence on work-study and student activity fee funding.

**Heightened community support:** A volunteer program could expand community support for the reserve and enhance its identity. Community involvement program participants could spread the reserve's message to others. Community professionals could be tapped for their expertise. Community advocates could be cultivated to support the reserve, sharing its needs with the University of Wisconsin System and city and county government officials.

**Expanded programming and events:** Community involvement program participants could volunteer to expand the reserve's programs and events in keeping with the reserve's educational mission. The reserve could develop a friends group or docent program focused on educational program offerings. Research at the reserve could be expanded to include citizen-science projects. The reserve could host Wisconsin Master Naturalist training, creating a pool of volunteers to help meet educational goals. Master Gardener and Master Composter programs and training could be held at the reserve. Outreach could be extended through off-site programs.

**Improved facilities and property management:** Volunteers' affiliations could lead to increased potential for land acquisitions. Volunteers would provide expanded monitoring of the property for safety and upkeep. Funds raised through a volunteer program could be used to improve buildings or develop new facilities. Schmeckle Reserve could incorporate sustainability elements in its facilities, serving as a model site.

**Potential benefits to volunteers:** Volunteers also could expect to derive personal benefits through their participation at the reserve. Career experience in natural resources, social opportunities for like-minded people, time spent outside, education and training, and special events are some of the benefits volunteers could receive.

### **Threats**

The threats identified in the SWOT analysis are external to the organization and largely outside its control. They are factors to be aware of because of their potential effects on a community involvement program. The threats identified are:

**Subject to university and government policies:** The reserve is operated by the state and is subject to state laws and university policies, which can change at any time. Layers of bureaucracy limit the reserve's flexibility. University leaders could change the directors' position descriptions. The university and its foundation could thwart fundraising conducted by a Schmeeckle Reserve support organization. Conservation zoning could limit facility development.

**Funding sources uncertain, competitive:** State support for the university and the reserve is declining and uncertain. Student Government Association funding is competitive and variable. The annual operating budget and state support of the director position could decrease or disappear. The reserve competes with other community organizations, other university field stations, and the College of Natural Resources for funding. University policy prohibits the reserve from competing for corporate sponsorships.

**Volunteers unavailable, undependable:** Though volunteers could fill many roles at the reserve, their support is voluntary. They could be unreliable or unavailable. Stevens Point, as a mid-size city, may not have a large population of potential volunteers. Many organizations seek volunteers, creating competition.

**Support group could present problems:** A community involvement program may not necessarily work toward the reserve's best interests. Disgruntled volunteers could spread negative publicity about the reserve. They could take too much ownership in the reserve and try to dictate how donated money is spent or how the natural area is managed. Decision-making power struggles could occur. Members could require much of the reserve's limited staff time.

**SUBPROBLEM 3:** *Discover potential participants' motivations and barriers related to participation in a community involvement program at Schmeckle Reserve.*

### **Questionnaire**

A brief screening questionnaire was sent to Schmeckle Reserve stakeholders to explore their interest in volunteering at the reserve. A total of 926 questionnaires were sent via mail or e-mail. Accounting for questionnaires that were not received due to outdated addresses, that total was reduced to 768. The 768 recipients included:

- 489 members of the reserve's mailing list (64 percent of total).
- 249 retired or current UW-Stevens Point faculty and staff (32 percent of total).
- 30 stakeholders identified by the directors or those owning land near the reserve (4 percent of total).

Of the 768 recipients, 124 people filled out the questionnaire, a response rate of 16 percent. Of those 124 respondents, 45 percent were members of the reserve's mailing list; 48 percent were UW-Stevens Point faculty and staff; and 6 percent were other stakeholders identified by the directors.

The response rate between those who received the questionnaire via mail versus those who received it electronically also can be compared. Of the 376 who received an e-mail version, 23 percent responded. Of the 392 who received it in the mail, 10 percent responded.

Overall responses to the questions follow:

**Question 1: How interested are you in becoming a member of a Friends group to support Schmeckle Reserve?**

A total of 66 percent of respondents were either very or somewhat interested in joining a friends group, while 29 percent said they were not interested in joining a friends group (Figure 1).

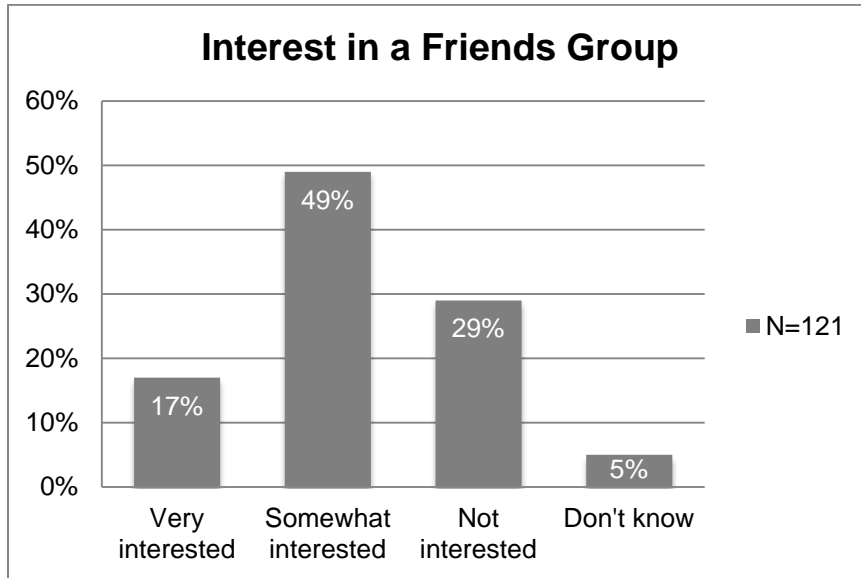


Figure 1: Respondents' interest in joining a friends group

**Question 2: How interested are you in participating in a volunteer program to help with work projects and operations at Schmeckle Reserve?**

A total of 62 percent of respondents were either very or somewhat interested in participating in a volunteer program to help with work projects at the reserve, while 31 percent said they were not interested (Figure 2). Work projects and operations can include habitat management, invasive species control, staffing the visitor center, helping with events, boardwalk and trail construction, wildlife research, and building maintenance.

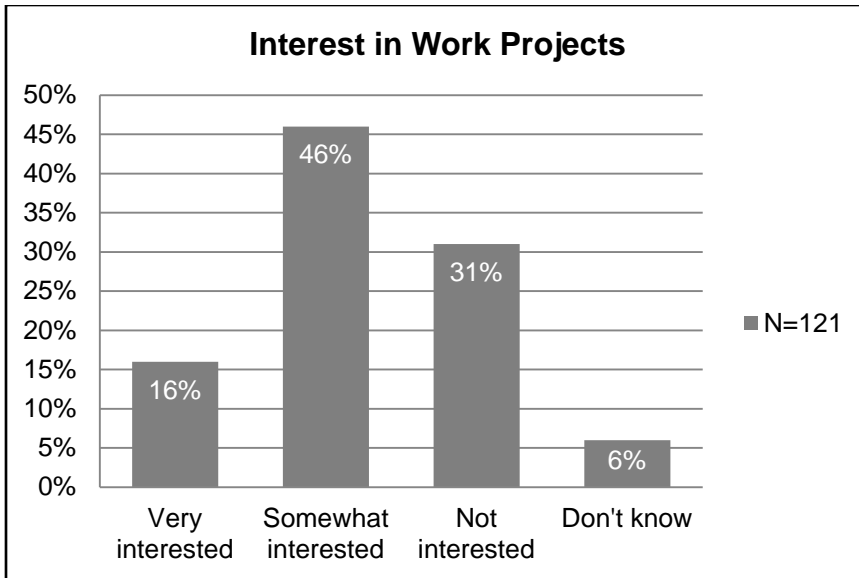


Figure 2: Respondents' interest in volunteering for work projects

**Question 3: How interested are you in participating in a volunteer program to help provide educational programs at Schmeckle Reserve?**

A total of 46 percent of respondents were either very interested or somewhat interested in volunteering to present programs to the public or school groups about the natural and cultural history of central Wisconsin. Forty-five percent of respondents were not interested (Figure 3).

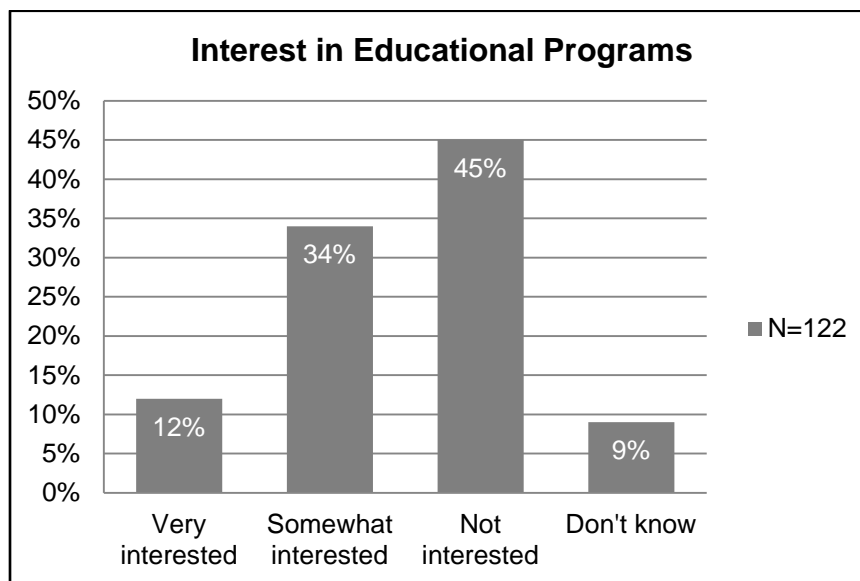


Figure 3: Respondents' interest in volunteering for educational programs

**Question 4: How interested are you in participating in a program to raise money to benefit Schmeckle Reserve?**

Volunteering to fundraise was the least popular option among respondents, with 71 percent saying they are not interested (Figure 4). About 19 percent of respondents would be either very or somewhat interested in helping with donation, endowment, memorial-gift, or estate-giving programs, or enhancing current revenue sources.

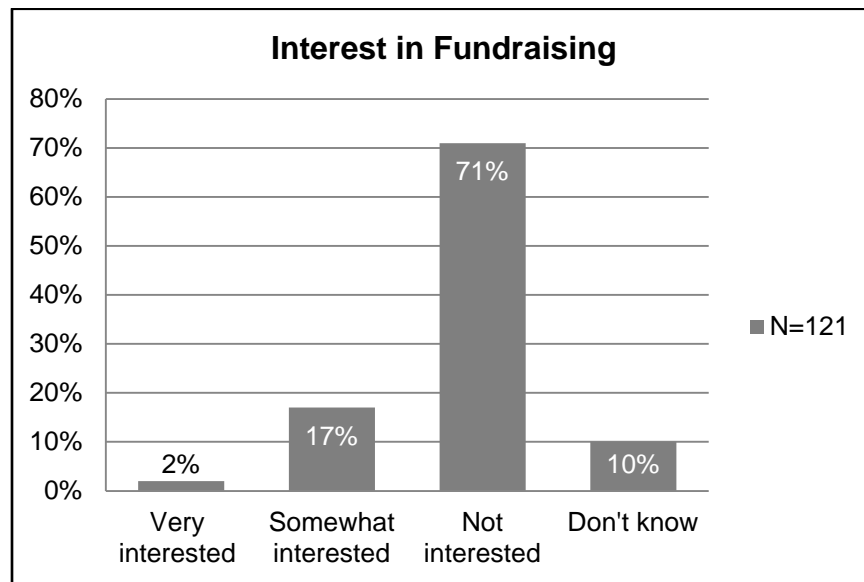


Figure 4: Respondents' interest in fundraising

**Question 5: Are there other ways you would like to become involved at Schmeckle Reserve? Please explain.**

Forty-nine respondents wrote comments in regards to this question (Appendix H). Similar responses to this question were grouped into categories. Seventeen respondents said they are not interested in volunteering, primarily because of lack of time or because they live outside the area. Respondents said their lack of time is due to work and other volunteer commitments. Several people said they support the initiative and are interested in Schmeckle Reserve but are unavailable to contribute. One respondent wrote:

I think that establishing a friends of Schmeeckle volunteer group is a marvelous idea. Unfortunately, I am in a place in my life that I don't have extra time to designate to the cause, but once I reach retirement, my answers would all change to 'very interested' in volunteering.

Three respondents expressed general interest in volunteering without specifying in what capacity. A representative of a homeschoolers group said the organization is grateful for time spent on the hiking trails and use of the reserve's meeting room. "Our group would be very interested in projects to improve Schmeeckle — whatever might be a good fit for us. It's a win-win for everyone," the respondent wrote.

Two respondents, including a tourism representative, mentioned an interest in promoting Schmeeckle Reserve. The representative wrote:

We'll continue to market and promote your visitor center to the thousands of visitors that travel to and through Portage County. Currently we promote Schmeeckle Reserve, the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame and the Green Circle Trail in our annual publications and on our website free of charge.

Eight respondents expressed interest in educational offerings, either participating in them or leading them. One person mentioned an interest in teaching leather projects to youth. An aquatic plants specialist expressed interest in giving public talks and creating interpretive signs that could be displayed in the reserve. One respondent suggested a program in which donors sponsor individual educational programs.

Five respondents wrote that they are willing to help the reserve raise money, either through personal donations or grant writing. One respondent said he/she would be willing to donate items to the reserve's Browse Shop.

Four respondents said they are interested in work projects such as invasive species control, habitat management, trail maintenance, and research projects.

Four respondents wrote about potential alliances with other groups, including the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame, the Green Circle Trail, and the UW-Stevens Point Natural History Museum. One regular meeting-room user said he/she would be willing to engage other agency staff from around the state in helping meet the reserve's needs.

Question 7 asked respondents to provide their contact information to receive future updates about this new community involvement program. Of the 124 respondents, 67 people, or 54 percent, provided their contact information to receive future updates.

### **Focus Groups**

Nineteen people attended three focus groups at Schmeeckle Reserve to discuss what would motivate or prevent them from participating in a program to support the reserve. Two people who were unable to attend answered the focus-group questions via e-mail.

Focus groups participants were asked:

1. What has prompted your interest in becoming more involved at the reserve?
2. What factors would motivate you to become involved at the reserve or stay involved?
3. What factors would prevent you from becoming involved here?
4. How do you think Schmeeckle Reserve should involve the community in its work?

### **Participants' Interest**

When asked what prompted their interest in becoming more involved at Schmeeckle Reserve, focus group participants shared their personal connections to the site. Many recalled witnessing the reserve's establishment in the 1970s. Others said they visited the area before the reserve existed, while one participant said he knew Fred Schmeeckle.

Participants also had personal connections to the reserve's staff. Several people mentioned being acquainted with the director, Ron Zimmerman, or the assistant director, Jim Buchholz. Participants spoke about the directors with admiration, commending what has been accomplished with a small staff and limited budget. Some highlighted that the directors have extended their service beyond campus to support community projects. Others commented on the directors' thriftiness and efficient use of resources, saying an efficient operation would be attractive to potential donors.

Focus group participants have spent a considerable amount of time in the reserve. They visit to walk, bike, study the flora and fauna, and to engage in hobbies such as photography. Several people live nearby and walk to the reserve to recreate. One participant bought her home adjacent to the reserve because of its proximity to the natural area. Participants mentioned sharing their love of the reserve with others by bringing co-workers, family, and friends with them on visits. One participant worked at the reserve when he was a college student. Another mentioned that when his children were younger he brought them to the reserve's nature programs.

Overall, focus group participants' experiences in the reserve have led to a shared appreciation. Calling the reserve a treasure, a gem, a quiet sanctuary, and the best place in town, participants' love for the reserve was obvious. "It's kind of like the central park of Stevens Point," one participant said to the agreement of others. Another said he visits the reserve every day. "I fell in love with this place. It's probably my favorite place on earth," he said.

As might be expected among a group of people who agreed to spend an hour or more discussing a community involvement program, participants said they believe this potential program would be successful. Participants said they believe the community has a positive perception of Schmeckle Reserve and it makes sense to capitalize on that. Many participants said they believe there is great potential for volunteer interest. "I think many people would come forward and be extremely interested in a friends group. I don't think it would be a real hard sell," one member said. Others said that if local residents only knew there was a need, they would be willing to help by volunteering. Participants recommended soliciting volunteers among the reserve's regular users:

I do know there are some regular users who really love the reserve and I know they would help out if there were projects identified that were in their skill set, or even some physical labor. I would think that would be the best and fastest way to find people who would want to take some ownership.

People who attend the Candlelight Hike Festival also could be asked to sign up to volunteer, it was suggested. Retirees are another potential volunteer population, one participant said.

In addition to letting the community know there is a need, participants said they want to know what needs a volunteer program would address. “I think a volunteer group would need to know what the needs are and what the gap is so that they can feel like they’re solving a problem,” one participant said. Some asked about the reserve’s funding sources, including one person who requested that if focus-group participants meet again that they hear a presentation on the reserve’s budget. A few others expressed concern about whether any of the reserve’s staff members have time to help set up a nonprofit support group or conduct outreach for the reserve.

### **Motivations for Involvement**

In discussing what factors would motivate them to volunteer, several people mentioned they want to give back in return for the enjoyment they have received in the reserve. They said their love for Schmeeckle Reserve leads them to want to become involved. “I’d really like to get involved in giving something back because I really enjoy being here and one of my favorite things in some ways is to spend time in Schmeeckle,” one woman said.

Other motivations were expressed in varied terms. Several participants said they want to see Schmeeckle Reserve continue and improve, with a few adding that they want to see the reserve’s successes continue after the director’s retirement. Others said helping at Schmeeckle Reserve falls in line with what they value:

Schmeeckle is a really attractive facility. It’s also a feel-good kind of thing. Most of the people in the community were ecstatic when it was created, me included. Personally, I mean, I actively support this kind of thing in central Wisconsin.

Others said their motivation is feeling passionate about nature, enjoying the outdoors, or being environmentally concerned. Others said they are motivated to get involved because they want to be active in the community and give back. Others attended the focus group because of related interests to Schmeeckle Reserve, such as the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame, the Green Circle Trail, or local tourism.

The social aspect of volunteering motivates some participants. One woman who recently retired said she feels disconnected. She said she was thrilled to receive the questionnaire about a

community involvement program at Schmeeckle Reserve because it would allow her to meet others who share her love of nature.

Others said they are interested in getting more involved because they want to be more informed about what is happening in the reserve. They want to know more about property management decisions, invasive species control, and natural phenomenon. “For me the driving thing is to understand more of where policies are coming from and to perhaps help shape some policies,” one participant said. One man said he was pleased with the community outreach about this volunteer program and the chance to offer his opinion. Some members said a newsletter could effectively share information and current events. Another participant said a newsletter likely would encourage him to participate in the program.

Focus group members suggested other benefits to involvement, in addition to a newsletter. “Developing ways of recognizing and rewarding the value that (volunteers are) bringing to you is very important,” one participant said. Some said tangible benefits, even something as simple as a window sticker, would be effective. Another participant mentioned a Christmas party for volunteers. A reduced membership fee for students also was suggested.

### **Barriers to Involvement: Time-Related Factors**

Focus group participants most often mentioned lack of time as a barrier to volunteering their time at Schmeeckle Reserve. They said the lack of time is due to work or family obligations and other volunteer commitments. One woman who said her work schedule is erratic and she would prefer volunteer projects that she can do independently. Another who has a young child said volunteer projects that include children would allow her to volunteer for something she believes in and not miss out on family time. A retiree who volunteers for several community organizations said she is beginning to prioritize what causes are most important to her, and Schmeeckle Reserve would fall in that category. While many said their time is limited, a couple of retirees said they have time to volunteer.

Perhaps reflecting participants' lack of time, several people said they would prefer short-term commitments. Researchers say episodic volunteering is on the rise, as volunteers shift away from regular, long-term commitments to short-term or one-time projects (Meijs & Brudney, 2007). One member said:

I think people are much more willing to sign on for a project than for something that's a bit more indefinite. So even if they're extremely supportive, it's easier to let go of your time if you know it's for a fixed period.

Several participants also said they would need to feel that their time is valued to stay engaged at Schmeckle Reserve. For example, one participant said he would like to learn about work projects via e-mail, but he would need enough notice about them.

If somebody were to send me an e-mail and they need me the next day, I might be able to. But if that was consistently done that way, I would probably just tell them, "I can't do this, I'm sorry." So just knowing enough in advance when I'm needed to do whatever it is, it would be helpful.

The sense that their time is valued also could come through meaningful work instead of busywork, participants said. "You have to feel that your time was valuable, that you were doing something that was actually going to matter to the reserve," one participant said.

Participants also said a disorganized program would deter them from volunteering at Schmeckle Reserve. Volunteers seek programs that will use their time efficiently, also known as project organization (Bruyere & Rappe, 2007). Participants said they would like the community involvement program to have clear goals. "Good pre-planning, I think, is important. People have to have this goal and they have to agree to it, know what it is, and then get your volunteers out there," one participant said. Others said they like to show up and be put to work on an assigned task and complete it. One participant agreed with that idea:

What motivates me to get and stay involved in any group or effort is having a meaningful role. I've been a part of many 'think tanks' or volunteer efforts where the organizers did not make good use of those who showed up to contribute.

One member recommended using a database to keep track of volunteers' interests. Several participants criticized organizations that hold meetings for the sake of meetings. Meetings should

have a clear goal and committee busywork should be limited, they said. Several others said this program should begin small, with a few specific projects done well, and then grow from there.

### **Other Barriers to Involvement**

Fundraising, physical ability, and feeling unqualified for certain tasks were other barriers that participants mentioned. Several people said fundraising is not their specialty or they prefer not to engage in it. “To be frank, I just don’t ring with fundraising. So if I can do things other than that, that would keep me interested,” one woman said. Additionally, volunteers viewed as only a funding or labor source would be unappealing, one member said. While some people prefer hands-on projects, a couple of participants said because of their age they are not interested in manual labor.

### **Community Involvement Program Recommendations**

When asked how Schmeckle Reserve should involve the community in its work, participants offered several suggestions, including a membership program with dues, an advisory group, a docent program, and citizen science projects.

Participants in one of the focus groups discussed the merits of an advisory group. They said an advisory group could offer feedback from the community, help with project planning, and improve decision-making. An advisory group could include various representatives, including someone from the local school district and someone from Sentry Insurance, which has its headquarters near Schmeckle Reserve.

In an introduction to the focus group session, the researcher mentioned a docent program focused on volunteers leading educational programs as one possible community involvement program. A couple of focus group participants said they liked that idea, but it was not discussed at length. One member said a docent program appealed to her because of the opportunity to learn and share her knowledge with others.

Citizen science programs, in which scientists partner with community members to collect data and conduct research, also were discussed briefly. One participant said she had always

thought of research done at the reserve as being student-centered, but opening up those projects to the community would foster a sense of ownership. Another participant echoed that idea:

You can take people on a nature hike and tell them stuff but if you take them on a hike and give them a project to do (like counting birds) they will be more likely to feel ownership and continue their involvement in future efforts.

Focus group participants recommended borrowing ideas from other volunteer groups and friends groups. Several members volunteer with Stevens Point's Operation Bootstrap, which provides food, clothing, and medical assistance to the needy. They like that the charity is organized and makes efficient use of volunteers' time. The volunteer program at Stevens Point's hospital also was mentioned. "That's another example of people doing something because they're committed to it, either because somebody in their life used St. Michael's to good advantage and they want to give something back," a participant said. One participant recommended calling other friends groups to get ideas.

Focus group participants also suggested several potential partnerships between a volunteer program at Schmeckle Reserve and community groups. The reserve's program could partner with Scouts, youth groups, or other groups to complete work projects, they said. Other potential partners could include the Green Circle Trail, the UW-Stevens Point Museum of Natural History, and the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.

### **Educational Program Recommendations**

Participants said the reserve's educational program has been successful. They said they appreciate students' nature programs and they are impressed by the educational community's involvement in the reserve. They offered suggestions for ways to expand educational offerings, including enhancing the composting display near the visitor center, educating about native plants, establishing an informal educational group, or hosting natural history workshops. They also suggested ways to educate youth, including promoting the reserve as an outdoor classroom for school groups, and promoting public nature programs to teachers or inviting their classes to age-specific programs.

## **Fundraising Suggestions**

Several focus group participants said they believe Schmeeckle Reserve should consider ways to fundraise. They expressed concern about its financial tie to the university and criticized the usefulness of the university's fundraising foundation. One participant said:

I would want to make sure that if there are things that we can do to maintain some sort of a trust fund or something so that Schmeeckle is not so dependent of the ebb and flow of political reign in the state.

Participants said there is untapped fundraising potential for Schmeeckle Reserve. Several people said they have never been asked to donate to the reserve and would do so if asked. "Of all the things I get asked to donate money to, I've never been asked to donate any money to Schmeeckle Reserve, and if I had, it would've been at the top of my list," one man said. They suggested other ways to build funds, including setting up an endowment, increasing the reserve's funds in the University Foundation, fundraising among regular users, creating a membership program with dues, and seeking funding from the Community Foundation of Central Wisconsin. Donations could be solicited through a newsletter. Donors would want to know their money is going directly to Schmeeckle Reserve. "One thing that people would want to be assured of would be that whatever funds they would donate would go directly to this place and not, say, to the University Foundation," one participant said. Tangible donations could be solicited through friends group members or by publishing a wish list in program brochures or on the reserve's website.

## **Community Outreach**

Participants said the reserve could increase its outreach to make the public aware of the reserve as an asset to the university and to the community. They said the public should be made aware of why the reserve exists and that it is community-owned. The public should hear why management decisions are made, about its mission, and about reserve events. "Just the idea of keeping the place going and improving and informing the community what's going on and what the reason is for this place. It's not just a park; it's more than that," one participant said. They

suggested several methods to increase outreach, including the reserve's website, newspaper articles, and separate outreach to the university community of faculty, staff, and students.

### **University Connection**

Focus group members commented on the reserve's connection to the university. They said local residents do not always feel welcome on campus because of difficulty parking or because they do not feel entitled to university resources. However, the reserve breaks that campus-community divide, they said. The reserve is viewed as having some independence from the university. Less university oversight has benefited the reserve, they said, and that independence would be attractive to volunteers. One participant said:

I think Schmeckle has done better than it would if it had had heavier oversight from the university. It's allowed Ron (Zimmerman) to do a lot of things that wouldn't have been possible otherwise. In some ways, that might play well with the community, because of this old historic kind of tug between the town and the university. And again, it ties into ownership and interest in Schmeckle.

Focus group members discussed several ways that a community involvement program at the reserve could enhance the relationship between the university and the community. They said students could get involved as volunteers, or environmental education majors could work as volunteer managers to gain career experience.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter will summarize the research results, interpret the findings, review the methods, discuss the value of the findings, offer recommendations for further research, and make recommendations for Schmeeckle Reserve as it decides how to proceed in developing a community involvement program.

The purpose of this research was to explore how a community involvement program could benefit both Schmeeckle Reserve and potential participants. The study was divided into the following subproblems:

**Subproblem 1:** *Explore the successes and challenges that university-owned natural areas and other natural areas experienced in developing community involvement programs.*

Interviews with other community involvement programs revealed common attributes that led to the program's creation, including passionate supporters who saw unmet needs and felt compelled to help their site. Some of the challenges in managing these groups are recruiting and engaging members and fundraising, while some of the successes are committed board members, strong relationships with the host site, and long lists of programmatic and fundraising accomplishments.

**Subproblem 2:** *Determine the goals for a community involvement program at Schmeeckle Reserve.*

The SWOT analysis with Schmeeckle Reserve's directors resulted in goals for a community involvement program, including:

- Increased funding through donations, fundraising
- Improved staff coverage and project completion
- Heightened community support
- Expanded programming and events
- Improved facilities and property management
- Personal benefits to volunteers through participation

The SWOT analysis also revealed internal strengths that can be built on in developing a community involvement program. These strengths also could be attractive to potential volunteers. Some examples include the reserve's public visibility, its property management and educational programming successes, and its entrepreneurial approach to generating income. Internal weaknesses that were identified — including an overcommitted full-time staff, budgetary challenges, and infrastructure at capacity — are factors that may prove challenging in developing a community involvement program. The external threats that were identified that may negatively affect a community involvement program include uncertain funding sources, undependable volunteers, and that the reserve is subject to university policies.

**Subproblem 3:** *Discover potential participants' motivations and barriers related to participation in a community involvement program at Schmeckle Reserve.*

A questionnaire sent to Schmeckle Reserve stakeholders showed that joining a friends group or volunteering with work projects were more popular options than volunteering for educational programs or helping with fundraising. Questionnaire respondents who signed up for focus groups discussed their appreciation for Schmeckle Reserve and said they support the development of a community involvement program. Their motivations for involvement are that they want to see the reserve continue and improve, want to be informed about what is going on in the reserve, and want to give back. Common barriers to involvement would be lack of time, their time not being valued, and an unorganized program.

## **INTERPRETING THE RESULTS**

### **Subproblems 2 and 3**

The purpose of this study was to explore how a community involvement program could meet Schmeckle Reserve's needs and address potential participants' motivations. Of the community involvement program goals identified as external opportunities in the SWOT analysis, there was considerable corresponding interest and support expressed in the questionnaire and focus groups. Categories of overlap included project completion, improved facilities and property

management, expanded programs, and heightened community support. Fundraising and educational programs were two areas with mixed interest from potential volunteers. The comparisons follow:

**Staffing and project completion:** The directors identified improved staffing and project completion as a goal for a community involvement program. Volunteers could provide staffing continuity, assist with the reserve's revenue streams, and help with property-management projects. Volunteering for work projects received a favorable response in the questionnaire, with 46 percent of respondents somewhat interested in helping out, 16 percent very interested, and 31 percent not interested. Work projects also were discussed favorably in the focus groups. Many participants said they prefer work projects over meetings. Focus group members discussed their interest in helping with trail maintenance, invasive species control, and working in the Browse Shop. A few focus group participants said they prefer not to do manual labor because of their age and physical ability. Overall, potential volunteers' interest in work projects bodes well for the reserve's goal to improve project completion.

**Improved facilities and property management:** Bringing more volunteers into Schmeekle Reserve could improve facility and property management, another goal identified in the SWOT analysis. Having volunteers on the property could expand monitoring for safety and upkeep. Volunteers' community connections or the financial benefits of a friends group could increase the potential for land acquisitions. Fundraising revenue could be used to improve current structures or to build new ones. Elements of sustainability could be incorporated into facilities.

Other than asking about interest in work projects, the questionnaire did not address this issue, but the topic came up in the focus groups. Many participants were familiar with the reserve's plan to build a new visitor center. Some even mentioned the possibility of a community involvement program playing a role in raising money to build it, which would foster community ownership in the reserve, they said. One focus group participant said a new visitor center should

model sustainable design to educate the public. Focus group participants did not address land acquisition as an area of interest, though it may have simply not come up in discussion.

**Heightened community support:** One of the main reasons Schmeeckle Reserve began to consider a community involvement program was to strengthen its ties to the community. The reserve serves as an interface between the university and the community. The reserve's directors hope that a strengthened relationship with local residents will generate a positive image and create advocates for times of political and financial need. Heightened community support was one of the opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis. The questionnaire did not ask about this topic, but it came up in the focus groups. Participants said they believe the reserve should increase its public outreach, educating the community about its mission. Heightened community support would not necessarily be a direct task of a community involvement program, but it is assumed it would be a byproduct of such a program. Focus group participants overwhelmingly discussed Schmeeckle Reserve in a positive way. A formal community program may allow those people and other reserve supporters to spread a positive message about the reserve. Furthermore, a formalized program would give visibility to the reserve and efforts to support it, hopefully raising community support.

**Fundraising:** Schmeeckle Reserve has considered developing a nonprofit friends group to bring in revenue through memberships and fundraising. Increased funding was one of the opportunities identified in the SWOT analysis, as it would give the reserve more financial independence. However, 71 percent of questionnaire respondents indicated that they are not interested in helping the reserve fundraise. About 2 percent were very interested, and 17 percent were somewhat interested. In the questionnaire's open-ended question, five people mentioned an interest in helping the reserve fundraise through grant writing or by making personal donations. In the focus groups, fundraising was discussed in mixed terms. When asked about barriers to involvement in a community involvement program, several people said they prefer not to fundraise. One participant said that if volunteers were viewed solely as a source of funding, he

would discontinue his involvement. Though some participants may not want to help fundraise, several said they recognize that the reserve needs to cultivate financial stability in light of state funding uncertainties and upcoming staff retirements. Several focus group participants said they are willing to donate to Schmeckle Reserve. Many said they have never been asked to donate to the reserve, but if they had been asked they would have given money. They said they believe there is untapped potential for soliciting donations. It was unclear whether some of those participants would be interested in fundraising on behalf of the reserve. It is not overly surprising that a majority of potential volunteers are not interested in fundraising, as it is a niche activity that not everyone enjoys or feels capable of doing. For Schmeckle Reserve, however, it is promising that some of its biggest supporters both recognize the need for fundraising and would be willing to donate.

**Educational programs and events:** Part of Schmeckle Reserve's mission is to serve as an outdoor classroom for teaching and research, and it has a history of successful, well-attended public educational programs. The directors identified expanded programs and events as another goal of a community involvement program. The questionnaire asked about respondents' interest in volunteering to present programs to the public or school groups. Response was mixed, with about 46 percent of respondents either very or somewhat interested, and 45 percent not interested. In the focus groups, participants said they appreciate the reserve's programs and events, and they offered several ideas for how to expand them. Participants discussed the merits of citizen-science programs, informal educational groups, and expanded youth programming. Some people mentioned an interest in helping with programs and events, though work projects were mentioned more often.

**Similar view of strengths:** The strengths that Schmeckle Reserve's directors identified in the SWOT analysis are nearly identical to focus group participants' view of the reserve. This similarity shows that the reserve's directors have an accurate idea of how the reserve is perceived

by its supporters. It also shows that focus group participants are in tune with the reserve's function and role in the community. The comparisons follow:

- Focus group participants expressed reverence for the reserve, while the directors noted that the reserve is a green space that the community values.
- Focus group participants called the reserve the Central Park of Stevens Point, while the directors said the reserve has public visibility and accessibility.
- Focus group participants are familiar with the directors and their longevity at the reserve, a strength the directors also identified.
- Several focus group participants are connected with other community organizations and urged continued partnership with the reserve. The directors also identified the reserve's connections with other organizations as a strength.
- Both the directors and focus group participants deemed the reserve's successful programming a strength.
- The directors and the focus groups noted the benefits that result from the reserve's connection with the university.
- The directors highlighted the reserve's diversified sources of funding in light of low state support, and some focus group participants also were familiar with how the reserve's directors raise money. Focus group participants also commended the reserve's efficient use of resources.
- The directors counted property management successes as a strength. While this idea was not explicitly stated in focus groups, it likely was implied in participants' appreciation for the site.

**Supporters unfamiliar with challenges:** The reserve's internal weaknesses that the directors identified in the SWOT analysis seem largely unknown by some of the reserve's biggest supporters. The weaknesses include: an overcommitted full-time staff; transient student staff;

need to generate outside funding to fill budget gaps; infrastructure and equipment at capacity; and marketing that falls short. Several times during the focus groups, participants asked, “What is the goal of this program?” Focus group participants likely are more familiar with the reserve’s operation than most community members, but they seemed unfamiliar with the reserve’s major challenges. Several people expressed a desire to know more about how Schmeckle Reserve meets its annual operating budget. In a community involvement program, participants said they would want to know what needs they are addressing and that the program has clear goals.

**Potential for threats:** Some of the external threats that the directors identified in the SWOT analysis could become real. The directors discussed the possibility that a community involvement program may cause problems rather than support the reserve. It is a distinct possibility that a support group could introduce further challenges at Schmeckle Reserve. Community involvement program representatives interviewed for subproblem 1 mentioned the personality conflicts and power struggles that can occur with volunteer programs and friends groups. In the focus groups, some participants said Schmeckle Reserve would need to take care to ensure that a community program remains helpful and not overly challenging. They said fostering a sense of ownership among volunteers is a good idea as long as volunteers do not take too much ownership. Another threat identified in the SWOT was that volunteers can be unavailable or undependable. Because many people in the questionnaire and focus groups mentioned lack of time as a barrier to involvement, this scenario could prove true.

### **Addressing Barriers to Involvement**

**Time-related factors:** Lack of time was one of the major barriers to involvement mentioned in both the questionnaire and focus groups, especially among people who are not retired. If people do not have the spare time to volunteer, it would be difficult for Schmeckle Reserve to counter that barrier. However, short-term volunteer assignments may be more attractive to busy participants. A community involvement program should include episodic volunteering assignments in addition to ongoing commitments. For example, volunteers could

participate in an annual work day or help with special events, versus regular weekly or monthly commitments.

Focus group participants addressed other time-related factors, such as needing to feel that the program makes efficient use of their time and that their time is valued. A community involvement program with clear goals that maximizes volunteers' time with meaningful assignments would help address this potential barrier.

**Fundraising:** Helping the reserve fundraise received low interest in the questionnaire, and several focus group participants said they are not interested in fundraising. Despite the reserve's desire for a community program that brings in revenue, it will not happen if volunteers are not interested. To keep volunteers engaged, the reserve should track volunteers' interests in a database and tailor assignments to their preferences. It is also possible more people would be interested in helping the reserve fundraise if they understood the reserve's financial picture and the advantages possible with diversified funding sources. A friends group, as it grows and matures, also may become interested in helping the reserve fundraise.

**Other barriers:** Physical ability was another barrier to involvement mentioned. Some focus group participants said they do not feel able to participate in work projects. On the other hand, some participants said they have no interest in attending meetings or serving on committees and would prefer tangible projects. Again, taking into consideration volunteers' preferences will help address this issue.

### **Addressing Motivations to Involvement**

**Giving back:** Focus group participants were very familiar with the reserve and have spent a considerable amount of time there. They have derived much personal enjoyment from their visits. Desire to give back and see the reserve continue and improve was among the major motivations to becoming involved in a community program. Designing a program that allows these people to feel invested and like they can make a difference would tap into this motivation. Focus group participants also frequently mentioned bringing friends and family along for their

visits to the reserve. Volunteer projects that allow them to share their passion with others, perhaps through events and programs, may be meaningful.

**Want to be informed:** Focus group participants said they want to be informed about what is happening in the reserve. They mentioned a newsletter as one way to communicate with supporters. Even if a community program is not developed, the reserve should consider publishing a regular newsletter to send to its mailing list. A newsletter also could be a membership benefit in a friends group. Focus group participants mentioned that other perks would be motivating factors. Member events and gift shop discounts are likely choices for the reserve to consider.

### **Subproblem 1**

The goal of subproblem 1 was to explore the successes and challenges that university-owned natural areas and other natural areas experienced in developing and managing community involvement programs. For the purpose of this study, subproblem 1 results can be useful in guiding development and management of the community involvement program at Schmeckle Reserve. Results to this subproblem also can be compared and contrasted with the findings of the other two subproblems.

**Program formation:** In terms of program development, respondents said there was a catalyst that spurred a group of supporters to form a friends group. The researcher interpreted this catalyst as an unmet need that supporters felt compelled to fulfill. In the case of the docent program, the host site saw a need for education volunteers and formed a program, so the program was developed from within the organization. Because Schmeckle Reserve's community involvement program would originate from within the organization, it would be important for the reserve's directors to convey the necessity of the initiative. Focus group participants asked, "What is the need?" They also said community members have to know there is a need for them to want to give their time and resources. The reserve will need to show why such a program will be beneficial in order to mobilize potential participants.

If the reserve chooses to form a friends group, the directors should involve people with relevant skills, similar to the process used by the friends groups that were interviewed. A lawyer in particular would be necessary to review bylaws and articles of incorporation and to assist with the federal tax-exempt application. Other participants with special expertise, such as in fundraising, would contribute to the group's success.

**Board of directors:** The friends group coordinators who were interviewed expressed the importance of their boards of directors. The boards were instrumental in promoting the organization, soliciting members, and fundraising. If the reserve forms a friends group, it likely would begin with an appointed board. Care should be taken to choose committed board members who believe in the cause. Many focus group participants said they prefer tangible projects over sitting in meetings, but a friends group would need a board that meets regularly. Because focus group participants discussed their dislike of meetings for the sake of meetings, Schmeackle Reserve friends group meetings should have meaningful, organized agendas.

**Relationship with host site:** Building a healthy relationship between the friends group and host site was another factor that respondents said has been important to their success. The friends groups said they build those relationships through communication, attending each other's meetings, and supporting the site's mission. National Park Service friends group best practices also list building trust, clear communication, and having the same mission and goals as important to partnership success (Cherng & Heaney, 2005). In setting up a friends group, Schmeackle Reserve should consider how best to set the tone for the relationship between the group and the reserve. The friends group's paramount goal should be to support the reserve and advance its mission. Likewise, the friends group also should feel supported by the reserve. Open communication will help build trust over time. A formal agreement between the reserve and the friends group is recommended.

**Volunteer coordinator:** Part of the challenge the reserve would face in working with a friends group is a lack of available staff time. Several of the friends groups interviewed have paid

staff. The coordinators pointed out the benefits, including institutional memory, having a point person for public inquiries, and having someone to handle organizational duties. In one of the focus groups, a few people familiar with the reserve's staffing asked who would handle additional outreach for a volunteer program. The reserve's friends group initially would be significantly smaller than the organizations interviewed, but because the reserve has only two full-time staff, hiring a coordinator for this new program would be helpful. Alternatively, the reserve could explore whether an especially committed volunteer could be brought on board to coordinate volunteer efforts.

**Fundraising:** The coordinators interviewed also discussed their ongoing challenges in raising money. Schmeckle Reserve should expect to face similar challenges. From the questionnaire and focus groups, it was unclear whether Schmeckle Reserve's supporters would volunteer to fundraise. Focus group participants said they believe the reserve should fundraise, but few people specifically said they personally want to fundraise. If a friends group at the reserve got involved in fundraising, it likely would take time for the effort to gain momentum. The reserve and its friends group also would need to effectively convey that the reserve has justification to fundraise because of minimal state financial support.

**University connection:** Three of the friends groups interviewed were chosen because they support natural areas affiliated with a university, similar to Schmeckle Reserve. In developing a community involvement program, the reserve's directors believe there are special circumstances to be taken into account because the reserve is part of a university. For example, volunteers at the reserve could work alongside college students, and there is concern that generational differences could pose a challenge for some participants. When asked how their friends groups integrate with university students, the groups interviewed said interaction is low. At two of the sites, the university is some distance from the natural area and few if any university students work at the natural area. Students occasionally have been incorporated into short-term projects, but there is no ongoing interaction. Thus, the interviewees had little advice to offer

Schmeeckle Reserve. Going forward in developing a program, the reserve will need to develop its own practices for integrating community volunteers with university students. Some literature on generational differences between volunteers may prove useful, as would learning through trial and error.

## **REVIEW OF METHODS**

In subproblem 1, phone interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data to explore the successes and challenges experienced by other community involvement programs. The population sampled was purposive, with respondents chosen either because their organization is tied to a university natural area or because their community involvement program is known for its successes. Results cannot be generalized to apply to all community involvement programs.

There were a few limitations in subproblem 1. First, the researcher wanted to explore the formation of these organizations and how decisions were made, but several of the groups were 25 to 50 years old and the respondents were not part of the group's development. Second, there were limitations in the questions asked of respondents. The researcher's questions were diverse and yielded a variety of data about the characteristics and activities of the community involvement programs. Some of the data were not directly pertinent to the successes and challenges of developing and managing community involvement programs. Nevertheless, the data give a broader view of the role these organizations play in supporting their host sites. In hindsight, however, the questions and conversations could have been more targeted toward the concepts of success or challenge. The researcher also would have added a question related to the overall research problem of exploring how a community involvement program can meet the site's needs while also fulfilling participants' interests.

In subproblem 2, the researcher facilitated a SWOT analysis to determine the goals for a community involvement program at Schmeeckle Reserve. The exercise proved useful in providing an overall picture of the reserve's strengths and areas in need of improvement. Unlike other strategic planning exercises that could have been used for this subproblem, the SWOT

analysis positioned the goals for a community involvement program within the context of the whole organization, providing a useful summary of strengths to build on, weaknesses to address, opportunities for improvement, and external threats to keep in mind. The next step for the reserve's directors would be to take the broad goals identified in the SWOT and narrow them down to objectives and action steps for a community involvement program. At one point, the researcher considered including two active community members with knowledge of the reserve in the SWOT analysis. The researcher considered interviewing those people separately from the directors' SWOT exercise. Ultimately, this plan was not pursued, mostly due to the researcher's perception that those outside participants may not understand or appreciate being involved. Their involvement likely would have affected the diversity of the SWOT results, though the researcher perceived that the same function was accomplished through the focus groups.

The two-pronged approach of the questionnaire and focus groups seemed to adequately address the objective of subproblem 3, to discover potential participants' motivations and barriers to involvement at Schmeckle Reserve. While the questionnaire did not address motivations and barriers as in depth as the focus groups, it was necessary to explore initial interest in such a program. When this study began, the reserve's directors had little sense of whether the community would be interested in a volunteer program at the reserve. The questionnaire asked about four types of volunteer involvement the reserve is considering and gave respondents an open-ended question to discuss other ways they would want to be involved. The questionnaire also asked for focus group participants, an instrumental step in creating that population.

One shortcoming of the questionnaire was that the response rate was only 16 percent. It is unclear whether those who did not respond are not interested or whether they simply did not get around to filling out the questionnaire. One possible reason for the low response rate is that the reserve's mailing list was started in the early 1990s and many addresses are outdated. It also would have been interesting to see whether results differed with a more attractive incentive, such as a cash reward, instead of the gift-shop coupon.

The focus groups provided lively conversations about potential participants' motivations and barriers to involvement at Schmeckle Reserve. The researcher was most surprised by the strong personal connection participants have with the reserve. Participants were quite familiar with the reserve, its history, and its directors. There were some limitations with the focus group method. The researcher perceived that discussing the concepts of motivations and barriers may have been too heady of a topic for some participants. Perhaps a discussion about the importance of meeting volunteers' needs in order to retain them would have provided helpful context. The researcher also did not mention Schmeckle Reserve's goals identified in the SWOT analysis. Adding that component may have helped focus the conversation. Several participants asked about the reserve's needs, signaling their desire to have that information. The researcher also faced some difficulty keeping the conversation on topic. Overall, however, the focus groups provided rich qualitative data that the reserve's directors did not have previously. Participants' ideas can be used to develop and manage a program that is attractive to community members.

#### **IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Subproblem 1:** Though the interviews with friends groups were limited in quantity, the results support other friends group research. The Center for Park Management's best practices for national park partnerships (Cherng & Heaney, 2005) match several of the results in subproblem 1. For example, the best practices recommend clear and constant communication. Interview respondents discussed how their friends groups keep open lines of communication with their host organizations by attending each other's meetings or by having on-site offices. The best-practices report also says both groups should have the same mission and goals. The friends groups interviewed said their long-term vision is to continue to support their host organization. Respect and trust are also key, according to the center's report, and those same ideas came up in interviews with friends groups.

This subproblem could have been a study unto itself. Little research exists on success in friends groups, with the studies by Baker et al. (2010) and Jones (2002) two exceptions. As

natural areas increasingly turn toward partnerships with support groups for funding and labor, it will be an area in need of study. Further, the natural areas connected to a university that were interviewed yielded few valuable findings for Schmeckle Reserve's situation. One potential study could be trying to determine natural areas throughout the country that are tied to a university and to examine that relationship and how outside supporters are incorporated.

**Subproblem 2:** The SWOT analysis conducted to determine the goals for a community involvement program helped fulfill the literature's recommendation to know why a volunteer program is desired. Instead of jumping ahead to recruit volunteers with a vague idea of why they are needed, the reserve has taken the first step to define the broad outlines of a community involvement program. As it proceeds, the reserve may want to consider following the model proposed by Rehnberg et al. (2009). Subsequent steps recommended by Rehnberg would include integrating the volunteer program or friends group into the reserve's strategic plan, developing goals and objectives for the program, and deciding on an evaluation plan.

This study's use of a SWOT analysis for the developmental stage of a community involvement program should be considered by other organizations in a similar position. The researcher perceived that the SWOT placed the program's goals within the broader context of the organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Rather than immediately focusing on a volunteer program's specific goals, the SWOT was a useful way to begin the conversation about a community involvement program.

The planning stage of developing a community involvement program would be a useful area of research. The researcher faced difficulty in locating research specifically focused on the development stage. For example, one area of potential research could be a comparison of an organization's goals for a community involvement program pre-development and whether or how those goals change post-development and what caused those changes. Another potential area of research could be a study of what factors have led to community involvement programs to fail or disband.

**Subproblem 3:** The results gathered from the questionnaire and focus groups in subproblem 3 were useful in helping the reserve gauge interest in this new community program. It was information the reserve did not have previously. For other organizations seeking to explore whether the community is interested in a volunteer program, a questionnaire similar to the one used in this case could prove useful. Many nature centers have mailing lists, providing a population from which to measure interest. Most natural area directors are familiar with their most passionate visitors from whom they could convene focus groups to discuss motivations for involvement.

In this study's findings related to potential participants' motivations and barriers, there were several areas of overlap with existing research. It should be noted, however, that focus group participants are not currently volunteers. Participants were asked to think through what would motivate or prevent them from volunteering. Their actual experience may differ.

In comparing focus group results with the Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1998), the overlap in motivations included learning experiences, social opportunities, and to express values. Some focus group participants said they are interested in learning and social opportunities. Many mentioned their desire to give back to Schmeckle Reserve so it continues and improves (expressing values). Other categories in the Volunteer Functions Inventory that were not mentioned in the focus groups were career experience, coping with inner feelings of guilt, and psychological development. Most participants were middle-aged, which may explain why career experience is not important to them.

Research on volunteers in the environmental field has shown that their motivations are helping the environment, learning about nature, socialization, and spending time outside (Ryan et al., 2001; Bruyere & Rappe, 2007; Guiney & Oberhauser, 2009). Potential volunteers' motivations at Schmeckle Reserve were expressed in different terms.

In Bruyere and Rappe's survey of volunteers, "helping the environment" was the strongest motivator (2007). Focus group participants in this study did not use that phrase.

However, participants were not directly asked if helping the environment is a motivator for them. Many likely would have agreed, but in conversation they discussed more often their personal connection to Schmeeckle Reserve and a desire to see it improve and continue.

Learning about nature is another motivator for environmental volunteers (Ryan et al., 2001). Focus group participants did not specifically express learning about nature as a personal motivation, but they advocated for expanded educational offerings, citizen science projects, and informal educational groups. Socialization also emerged in the research as a motivator for environmental volunteers (Ryan et al., 2001), and it also was expressed by some focus group participants. Getting outside is another motivator (Guiney & Oberhauser, 2009) but focus group participants did not specifically express this idea. They did, however, express interest in tangible work projects, which would involve working outside.

Schmeeckle Reserve's findings were pre-program development, so it would be useful to repeat a similar study in a few years to compare volunteers' expected motivations with those of people actually volunteering. It also would be telling to research whether pre-program interest actually translates into participation in a volunteer program.

One final recommendation for future research is perhaps the most pertinent to this study. This research was based on the framework of comparing an organization's goals for volunteers with potential volunteers' motivations. Future studies could examine this dynamic at other organizations. Research questions should be based on how an organization can set itself up for a successful community involvement program based on taking into account these two dimensions.

#### **SUBPROBLEM 4: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHMEECKLE RESERVE**

**Subproblem 4:** *Provide recommendations on how a community involvement program can address Schmeeckle Reserve's goals and participants' motivations.*

When the researcher began a graduate assistantship at Schmeeckle Reserve, the director, Ron Zimmerman, introduced this study as a topic he had been considering since he became the director more than 30 years ago. He said he always felt like there was more opportunity for the

reserve to interact with the Stevens Point community. Over the decades, an overgrown farm has been transformed into the university and community asset it is today. Not many mid-size cities can lay claim to a similar natural area with a diversity of habitats right within the city limits.

Schmeeckle Reserve has benefited from access to university resources such as work-study students, student-paid fees, state support of the director's salary, and other assets. It also has benefited from strong leadership in directors who have a passion for the reserve and its mission. They have been entrepreneurial and successful in their cultivation of outside funding sources.

However, change is an inevitable part of any organization, and to be successful going forward, the reserve must look to the future and consider other avenues for labor, funding, and community support. With the results of this study in mind, the researcher recommends that Schmeeckle Reserve hire a volunteer coordinator and pursue development of a volunteer program and a friends group. Based on this study's results, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

### **1. Hire a volunteer coordinator**

One of the main reasons a community involvement program has not been developed is because of lack of staff time. The reserve's directors spend a large amount of their time on interpretive consulting and media projects that generate the revenue to fund the reserve. The large student staff fills labor needs but also demands extensive training time. The directors also have teaching obligations in the College of Natural Resources. Though a community involvement program could bring many benefits, staff time is already at a premium. The literature recommends having a volunteer coordinator so someone on staff is responsible for the program and so volunteers have a point of contact for assignments and concerns (Brudney, 2012).

### **2. Develop a nonprofit friends group**

A membership-based friends group would be an effective means to address many of Schmeeckle Reserve's goals for community involvement. Friends groups are known for their fundraising activities, but they also play a role in property management, visitor services,

education, and advocacy. Developing a Friends of Schmeeckle Reserve would give public visibility to the reserve's effort to involve the community in its work. Public events and a membership drive would promote the organization and the reserve.

Funding is one of the reserve's major goals for a community involvement program. A friends group that incorporates as a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization would provide a fundraising advantage for the reserve. The university's foundation prohibits individual university departments from fundraising because of the competition it would create in the community. Thus, all donations to the university, regardless of their destination, are funneled through the foundation. But a friends group at Schmeeckle Reserve would be a separate entity with its own financial accounts. The friends group would be free to choose when and how much money it wants to donate to the reserve. Some people may prefer to give to a nonprofit organization instead of the university. One of the issues discussed in the focus groups was that donors would want to know their money was going to benefit Schmeeckle Reserve. Donating to Schmeeckle Reserve via the University Foundation may not give donors that same satisfaction.

Fundraising was not a popular task among questionnaire respondents or focus group participants, yet several people said they believe the reserve should pursue fundraising options and that there is untapped potential to receive donations. The reserve cannot know for sure whether friends group members would fundraise or whether fundraising would be successful. However, the reserve has justification to fundraise in light of low state financial support, and the reserve should take care to educate the community about that fact. Because Schmeeckle Reserve is state-run and is not a nonprofit nature center, some community members may assume it is well-funded. Focus group participants said they want to better understand the reserve's financial picture. If they are unclear on how the reserve is funded, the community at large definitely could benefit from greater understanding.

Because the reserve has no entrance or programming fees, creativity would be needed to develop friends group membership benefits. A gift shop discount and newsletter are obvious

options. The reserve could develop an attractive friends group by using university resources as member benefits. Some examples include faculty guest lectures, special workshop or training opportunities, or field trips led by experts.

### **3. Develop a volunteer program**

When students or community members inquire about volunteering at Schmeeckle Reserve, they often are not given an assignment — mainly because the reserve has done well at meeting its needs with its student staff. The full-time staff also is at capacity and does not have available time to work with volunteers to discern their interests and to find meaningful assignments for them. The volunteer “program” is haphazardly run, responding to individual requests but not proactive in soliciting, mobilizing, and effectively using volunteers. Volunteers who are put to work are usually assigned to the maintenance crew and are supervised by the student maintenance supervisors.

Though the reserve may not currently have overwhelming labor needs, it will continue to get requests from potential volunteers. Even if it develops a friends group, membership may not interest all community members who want to become involved. The reserve needs a better system to make use of these people and to tap into their motivations and interests. People who ask to volunteer but are not appropriately responded to will remember that negative experience, thus harming the reserve’s future efforts to recruit volunteers and supporters.

To remedy this situation, the reserve should develop a volunteer form and database to collect and store volunteers’ names, contact information, availability, and interests. Volunteer assignments should be developed based on the reserve’s needs and participants’ interests. Volunteer work days held a few times a year would generate interest, provide a social element to the experience, and would allow the reserve to accomplish large tasks such as boardwalk renovation or invasive species control. To retain volunteers, a recognition program should be developed, with means to thank volunteers or offer incentives for their service.

## **CONCLUSION**

When Schmeckle Reserve proposed this study, its goals for a community involvement program were not articulated and it was unknown whether the community would even be interested in such an endeavor. Nearly two years later, the reserve has more information to use in developing a community program. It has established goals and is much more informed about how its visitors feel about becoming involved. Fortunately for the reserve, there is overlap between its needs and what its supporters are interested in doing. Their personal motivations can be taken into account in designing a program with a higher probability of success. Ideally, this process used by Schmeckle Reserve has applicability for other organizations that are developing community involvement programs.

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**Appendix A: IRB Approval Form**

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

11-12-09/1  
~~Expedited~~

**Protocol for Original Submissions**

A complete protocol must be submitted to the IRB for approval prior to the initiation of any investigations involving human subjects or human materials, including studies in the behavioral and social sciences.

For all research protocols, please submit the following:

- **1 printed copy with Faculty Mentor and Department Chair signatures** of (1) the completed protocol; (2) project abstract; and (3) samples of informed consent forms. PROTOCOLS LACKING ANY ONE OF THESE THREE ELEMENTS WILL NOT BE APPROVED.
- **A second copy of this page, with signatures.**  
Printed materials should be submitted to: **IRB/Grants Office, 204 Old Main.**
- **Electronic copies of all submission materials (multiple files are acceptable)** emailed as attachments to Jason R. Davis, IRB chair: [jdavis@uwsp.edu](mailto:jdavis@uwsp.edu) AND Sharon Courtney, Grants Office: [scourtne@uwsp.edu](mailto:scourtne@uwsp.edu)

**PLEASE TYPE**

Project Title: Assessing the Potential for a Community Involvement Program to Benefit Schmeckle Reserve and Participants

Principal Investigator: Megan Espe

Department: College of Natural Resources, environmental education and interpretation Rank: Grad student

Campus Mailing Address: Schmeckle Reserve, 1419 North Point Drive

Telephone: 715-346-4992 715-830-9434 (cell) E-mail address: [mespe634@uwsp.edu](mailto:mespe634@uwsp.edu)

Faculty Sponsor (if required): Dr. Brenda Lackey  
(Faculty sponsor required if investigator is below rank of instructor.)

Expected Starting Date: 05/15/12 Expected Completion Date: 05/30/13

Are you applying for funding of this research? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No  \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, what agency? \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate the categories of subjects to be included in this project. Please check all that apply.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Normal adult volunteers | <input type="checkbox"/> Minors (under 18 years of age) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Incarcerated individuals           | <input type="checkbox"/> Mentally Disabled              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnant women                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ (specify)          |

(Faculty Member) I have completed the "Human Subjects Protection Training" (available at <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/irb/start.htm>) and agree to accept responsibility for conducting or directing this research in accordance with the guidelines.

Brenda Lackey  
(Signature of Faculty Member responsible for research)

(Department Chair or equivalent) I have reviewed this research proposal and, to the best of my knowledge, believe that it meets the ethical standards of the discipline.

David J. Sevel  
(Signature of Department Chair or equivalent)

\*\*\*\*\* Do not write below this line - for IRB use only \*\*\*\*\*

IRB approval [Signature] **EXEMPT** Date 5-11-12  
(Signature of IRB Chair)

Approval for this research expires one year from the above date.

If research is not completed by this date, a request for continuation must be filed and approved before continuing.

Revised form: September 2010

RECEIVED  
**APR 25 2012**  
Grant Support Services

## **Appendix A: IRB Approval Form**

### **Proposal Abstract**

Write a brief description of the purpose of the proposed research project. (100-200 words)

With ever-tightening budgets, natural areas must rely on partnerships to meet their missions. Natural areas that involve community members potentially can increase their opportunities for funding, labor and advocacy. However, for a partnership to succeed, it also must fulfill the motivations of community volunteers. This research aims to assess the potential for developing a community involvement program that meets both Schmeckle Reserve's needs and the interests of potential participants. Schmeckle Reserve, a 280-acre natural area at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, has never had a community involvement program such as a volunteer or friends group. The problem lies in how to best develop and manage such a program. Research methods will include interviews with successful community involvement program coordinators to discover what worked best for them; an analysis of Schmeckle Reserve's needs; brief screening questions to identify residents' interest in participating in a program; and finally focus groups with those interested community members to determine how and why they would like to become involved. The results will include recommendations for Schmeckle Reserve's directors, and ideally will describe a model that natural areas interested in forming community involvement programs can follow.

## Appendix A: IRB Approval Form

### Please complete the following questions for all research.

1. Describe the characteristics of the subjects, including gender, age ranges, ethnic background, health/treatment status and approximate number.  
In subproblem one, community involvement program leaders will be male and female, of various adult ages and ethnic backgrounds. About 10-12 leaders will be contacted.  
In subproblem two, subjects will be adult, Caucasian males, limited to around 4 people total.  
In subproblem three, stakeholders will be male and female, adult, of unknown ethnic backgrounds and health status. Screening questions will be sent to approximately 650-plus people, primarily in the Stevens Point area. The screening questions will be followed by 6-10 focus groups with 6-8 per group.
2. Indicate how and where your subjects will be obtained. Describe the method you will use to contact subjects.  
Community involvement program leaders will be obtained using Internet searches and snowball sampling. Subjects will be contacted mostly by telephone, but also by e-mail.  
  
The analysis of Schmeeckle Reserve's needs will include Schmeeckle Reserve's director and assistant director and a couple of key community stakeholders, who will be contacted by phone.  
  
Stakeholders will be identified using Schmeeckle Reserve's mailing list of people who have signed up to receive information about public programs. Stakeholders also will include people identified by the Reserve's directors as having a strong interest in the reserve, and College of Natural Resources faculty. Stakeholders initially will be contacted using brief screening questions. These will be sent by e-mail if an e-mail address is available, or else by mail. Stakeholders will be asked whether they would be interested in participating in a focus group at Schmeeckle Reserve. If yes, they will be contacted by e-mail or phone to participate in a scheduled focus group.
3. What are you going to ask your subjects to do (be explicit) and where will your interaction with the subjects take place?  
In phase one, I am going to ask community involvement program leaders whether they agree to participate in an interview lasting about one hour. Interactions will take place on the phone, or in rare cases in person. Interviews will be recorded electronically.  
  
In phase two, I will ask Schmeeckle Reserve's directors to participate in a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. This analysis also will include input from a couple of key community stakeholders. The SWOT analysis with the directors will occur at Schmeeckle Reserve. I will obtain stakeholder input by visiting those people at their offices or by inviting them to Schmeeckle Reserve. All interactions will be recorded electronically.  
  
In phase three, I will ask stakeholders to answer a few brief screening questions to identify their interest in various potential community involvement programs that could be created at Schmeeckle Reserve. The screening questions will be sent via mail or e-mail. People who express interest in participating in focus groups can attend focus groups at Schmeeckle Reserve. The focus groups will be recorded with a video camera.
4. Will deception be used in gathering data? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X  
If yes, describe and justify.
5. Are there any risks to subjects? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X  
If yes, describe the risks (consider physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal risks) and include this description on the informed consent form.

## Appendix A: IRB Approval Form

6. What safeguards will be provided for subjects in case of harm or distress? (Examples of safeguards include having a counselor/therapist on call, an emergency plan in place for seeking medical assistance, assuring editorial rights to data prior to publication or release where appropriate.) No safeguards are necessary.

7. What are the benefits of participation/involvement in this research to subjects? (Examples include obtaining knowledge of discipline, experiencing research in a discipline, obtaining course credit, getting paid, or contributing to general welfare/knowledge.) Be sure to include this description on the informed consent form.

In phase one, community involvement program leaders will have the opportunity to reflect on the growth and current status of their organizations or programs. They also will contribute to general knowledge on a topic that has not been extensively researched.

In phase two, Schmeckle Reserve's directors, through the SWOT analysis, will have the opportunity to consider the Reserve's precise need for community involvement and how best to involve community members in the operation.

In phase three, stakeholders will have the opportunity to voice how they best would like to be involved in a community involvement program at Schmeckle Reserve. The screening questions will carry an incentive, such as a cash award. Participants also will contribute to general knowledge on this topic. Focus group participants also will have the opportunity to voice how they best would like to be involved in a community involvement program at Schmeckle Reserve, and to contribute to general knowledge on this topic.

8. Will this research involve conducting surveys or interviews? Yes  No   
If yes, please attach copies of all instruments or include a list of interview questions.

9. If electronic equipment is used with subjects, it is the investigator's responsibility to determine that it is safe, either by virtue of his or her own experience or through consultation with qualified technical personnel. The investigator is further responsible for carrying out continuing safety checks, as appropriate, during the course of the research. If electronic equipment is used, have appropriate measures been taken to ensure safety? Yes No  
No electronic equipment will be used in this study.

10. During this research, what precautions will be taken to protect the identity of subjects and the confidentiality of the data?

The researcher will use study codes on interview and focus group transcripts (both electronic and print copies) and on completed screening questions and will keep a separate document that links the code to subjects' identifying information locked in a separate location.

11. Where will the data be kept throughout the course of the study? What provisions will be taken to keep it confidential or safe?

Electronic versions of interview or focus group transcripts and digital voice and video recordings will be stored on private storage space such as a flash drive and not on network space that can be accessed by others. Further, electronic files will be password-protected. Printed copies of transcripts and digital media of audio and video recordings will be stored in a locked drawer.

12. Describe the intended use of the data by yourself and others.

## Appendix A: IRB Approval Form

Data will be used in writing research results for a master's thesis or for possible publication in a journal or magazine. Data also potentially will be presented at a national conference.

13. Will the results of the study be published or presented in a public or professional setting?

Yes  No

Results will be published in a master's thesis, and will be submitted for journal or magazine publication. Also, a proposal has been submitted to present research results at the National Association for Interpretation National Workshop in November 2012.

If yes, what precautions will be taken to protect the identity of your participants? **State whether or not subjects will be identifiable directly or through identifying information linked to the subjects.**

Subjects, other than Schmeekle Reserve's directors, will not be identifiable in the research. Names and associated organizations will be removed from subject information.

14. State how and where you will store the data upon completion of your study as well as who will have access to it? What will be done with audio/video data upon completion of the study?

Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers, including audio and video tapes, will be destroyed.

**A completed protocol must include a copy of the Informed Consent Form or a statement as why individual consent forms will not be used.**  
form: January 2001 **Revised**

## **Appendix B: Community Involvement Programs Informed Consent Form**

### **Informed Consent to Participate in Human Subject Research**

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Megan Espe, a graduate student in the College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The purpose of this study is to assess the potential for a community involvement program such as a friends group or volunteer program at Schmeeckle Reserve, a natural area on the UW-Stevens Point campus. This study will contribute to the student's completion of her master's thesis.

Should you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all of your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This phase of the study consists of a telephone interview that will be administered to individual participants at their convenience. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to the successes and challenges faced by your community involvement program. The interview will be recorded electronically.

Participation in this study will require approximately one hour of your time.

The researcher perceives minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

Potential benefits from participation in this study include the opportunity to reflect on your community involvement program and to contribute to knowledge on a topic that has not been extensively researched.

The results of this research will be included in the researcher's master's thesis and potentially will be published in a scholarly journal or magazine article and will be presented at a national conference. The results of this study will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers (including audio/video tapes) will be destroyed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without any consequences. You also may refuse to answer any individual question without consequences.

Once the study is completed, you may receive the results of the study. If you would like these results, or if you have any questions in the meantime, please contact:

Megan Espe  
Schmeeckle Reserve  
1419 North Point Drive  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
(715) 346-4992

If you have any complaints about your treatment as a participant in this study or believe that you have been harmed in some way by your participation, please call or write:

Dr. Jason R. Davis, Chair  
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects  
School of Business and Economics  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

**Appendix B: Community Involvement Programs Informed Consent Form**

Stevens Point, WI 54481  
(715) 346-4598

Although Dr. Davis will ask your name, all complaints are kept in confidence.

I have received a complete explanation of the study and I agree to participate.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Signature of subject)

**This research project has been approved by the UWSP Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.**

## **Appendix B: Community Involvement Programs Informed Consent Form**

### **Questions for population in subproblem 1:**

1. What year was the [friends or volunteer group or involvement program] formed?
2. Why was a group or program formed to support the organization?
3. How have the group's goals changed since it was formed?
4. What is the group or program's structure? How is it administered or coordinated?
5. Were other structures considered? Why were they not chosen?
6. How many participants are in the group or program?
7. Tell me about some of the group's regular activities or its accomplishments.
8. What were the successes in forming a group?
9. What were the challenges in forming a group?
10. What is the group's greatest strength? Weakness?
11. How does the group or program make itself attractive to participants?
12. Where does the group get its funding?
13. What is the long-term vision for the group?

## **Appendix C: SWOT Analysis Agenda**

### **SWOT analysis agenda**

June 26, 2012

9 to 11 a.m.

Schmeeckle Reserve meeting room

*Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis  
specific to a planned community involvement program at Schmeeckle Reserve*

#### **Participants:**

- Ron Zimmerman, director of Schmeeckle Reserve
- Jim Buchholz, assistant director of Schmeeckle Reserve

**Facilitator:** Megan Espe, graduate assistant at Schmeeckle Reserve

#### **Agenda:**

1. Define “community involvement program” for the purposes of the SWOT analysis.
2. Identify the internal strengths and weaknesses and the external opportunities and threats in relation to a planned community involvement program at Schmeeckle Reserve.
3. Rank factors by greatest priority.
4. Determine recommended actions for highest-ranked factors.

#### **After meeting:**

1. Results compiled and distributed to participants via e-mail for additional comments.

## **Appendix D: SWOT Analysis Informed Consent Form**

### **Informed Consent to Participate in Human Subject Research**

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Megan Espe, a graduate student in the College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The purpose of this study is to assess the potential for a community involvement program such as a friends group or volunteer program at Schmeeckle Reserve, a natural area on the UW-Stevens Point campus. This study will contribute to the student's completion of her master's thesis.

Should you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all of your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This phase of the study consists of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis (SWOT) pertinent to developing a community involvement program at Schmeeckle Reserve. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to how Schmeeckle Reserve can best incorporate voluntary community participants into its organization. Your answers will be recorded electronically.

Participation in this study will require approximately one to two hours of your time.

The researcher perceives minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

Potential benefits from participating in this study include the opportunity to shape the form of any future community involvement programs at Schmeeckle Reserve and to contribute to knowledge on a topic that has not been extensively researched.

The research results will be included in the researcher's master's thesis and potentially will be published in a scholarly journal or magazine article and potentially will be presented at a national conference. Study results will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches individual respondents with their answers (including audio/video tapes) will be destroyed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without any consequences. You also may refuse to answer any individual question without consequences.

Once the study is completed, you may receive the results of the study. If you would like these results, or if you have any questions in the meantime, please contact:

Megan Espe  
Schmeeckle Reserve  
1419 North Point Drive  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
(715) 346-4992

If you have any complaints about your treatment as a participant in this study or believe that you have been harmed in some way by your participation, please call or write:

Dr. Jason R. Davis, Chair  
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects  
School of Business and Economics

**Appendix D: SWOT Analysis Informed Consent Form**

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
(715) 346-4598

Although Dr. Davis will ask your name, all complaints are kept in confidence.

I have received a complete explanation of the study and I agree to participate.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of subject)

**This research project has been approved by the UWSP Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.**

## Appendix E: SWOT Results

### Strengths

- Student involvement
- Reserve and visitor center open to the public
- Schmeckle Reserve has a connection to the university's academic program
- The reserve has a relationship with community organizations, including:
  - The Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame
  - The Aldo Leopold Audubon Society
  - Wild Ones
  - Master Gardeners
  - Stevens Point Community Foundation
  - Green Circle Trail
- The reserve has a goal to acquire green space, to protect and preserve land
- The environmental education and interpretation practicum students' program and Candlelight Hike Festival
- Visibility in the city: The reserve is right in the city, on maps, brochures are distributed.
- Its primary goal is habitat restoration/management: invasive species control, prescribed burns.
- The community has a love of the outdoors.
- The reserve has justification for local financial support, i.e. low state funding.
- Broad support base from UWSP and the community: Student Government Association, faculty, community organizations and community members. There are shared values.
- The reserve's directors are entrepreneurial in terms of securing funding.
  - That gives the reserve flexibility and allows innovation.
- The reserve has independence with minimal state oversight
  - It's outside the "normal" realm of university operations
- The reserve supports research on state property
- The public meeting room increases visibility of the reserve among conservation groups
- Recreation opportunities are abundant and foster emotional connections with the reserve
  - Recreation is silent sports; the reserve is a quiet sanctuary
  - Reserve is adjacent to academic campus; allows easy access for students wanting quiet recreation
- The reserve is associated with the College of Natural Resources
  - Offers institutional credibility
  - Implies that the reserve exists for nature
- Diverse habitats such as Lake Joanis and Moses Creek are attractive to visitors
- National reputation through consulting and handbooks
- Diversified sources of income

## **Appendix E: SWOT Results**

- Staff (directors) longevity and their community connections
- Large, dedicated student staff
  - Staff transitions, which takes care of any problem employees

### **Weaknesses**

- Student staff turnover
  - Lack of continuity; constant need for training
- Low, insufficient annual operating budget
- Lack of full-time supervisory staff
  - No one has time to coordinate volunteers
- Lack of vehicles and large equipment
  - What would volunteers use?
- Permanent staff's time committed to generating revenue
  - No time to coordinate volunteers
- Lack of overnight facilities and food service for revenue
- No education/programming staff
- Programming limited to fall and spring (practicum programs)
- Facilities outdated and limited in size in terms of accommodating volunteers
- Trail structures (boardwalks/benches) outdated
- Exotic, invasive species control a constant battle
- Dependency on work study
- Many work niches filled by students
  - Would volunteers feel unneeded?
- Younger employees
  - Generational differences between employees and volunteers?
- Lack of marketing
  - Not telling Schmeckle Reserve story well enough
- Lack of identity with university
  - People in the reserve don't know they're on campus
- Lack of wayfinding signs directing people to reserve and visitor center
- People aren't aware there is a visitor center
- Dependence on Student Government Association funds

### **Opportunities**

- Increased funding from donations
- Continuity in staffing, possibly from long-term volunteers
- Reduced dependence on work study
- Optimize efficiency of work-study students

## Appendix E: SWOT Results

- Potential connection to major donors
- Broader community support
  - Word-of-mouth public relations among participants
- Political counterbalance to UW System
  - Creation of community advocates
- More independent control of funding
- Could undertake more projects with volunteer labor
  - Invasive species and land management
- Support larger education program
- Advocacy in city and county government
- Enhance identity of Schmeeckle Reserve in the community
- A self-sustaining group may require few resources from the reserve
- Could team college students with experienced community members
- Tapping into expertise of community professionals
- Academic program could serve as a training resource for volunteers
- Increased potential for land acquisitions
  - Participants' community connections may play a role
- Assistance with various revenue areas: Browse Shop, signs, handbooks
- Enhance or develop facilities to support volunteers
- More community events
- Another support base for partnering organizations: Hall of Fame and Green Circle Trail
- Annual volunteer events: natural history trips or banquets
- Membership program: Steady income and membership benefits
- Development of a friends group
  - Could support education mission of reserve
- Development of an endowment
- Development of docent training
- Development of "board of directors" for community fundraising
- Development of estate planning program
- Development of memorial program: Gifts to the reserve in honor of others
- Development of volunteer program for labor and operations
- Social opportunities for volunteers for their enjoyment and retention
  - Bird-watching groups, like-minded outdoors people, etc.
- Outdoor opportunities and exercise for volunteers
- Increased monitoring of property and visitors in terms of safety and upkeep
- More research opportunities, building off campus expertise
  - Citizen science programs
- Master Naturalist program

## Appendix E: SWOT Results

- Schmeeckle Reserve could serve as training site and recipient of volunteers' required hours
- Master Gardener and Master Composter programs
- Extend outreach with off-site educational programs
- Specific school programs that don't compete with the Central Wisconsin Environmental School
- Sustainability, with Schmeeckle Reserve serving as a model site
- Volunteers could obtain career experience in natural resources

### Threats

- Bureaucracy limits what can be done
  - Lack of flexibility
  - Travel contracts, overload limits, etc.
- Incompetence of university administration (personnel, financial aid, protective services)
- Not allowed to compete for corporate sponsorship (university policy)
- State support decreasing and uncertain
- Annual operating budget and state support of director could decrease or disappear
- Low population in central Wisconsin could limit number of volunteers
- Competition with similar or other organizations for volunteers
  - UWSP Natural History Museum
  - Mead Wildlife Area
  - Aldo Leopold Audubon Society
  - Children's Museum
- Competition with other field stations and the College of Natural Resources for funding
- Competition with other community organizations for funding
- Hall of Fame inactivity
- Lack of knowledge about Schmeeckle Reserve or about its funding status
- Exotic invasive species
- Economic recession negatively affects donations
- Lack of time: People are busy
- Potential competition with Natural History Museum for training benefits to offer volunteers
- CNR demands for Schmeeckle positions
  - Future director to carry half-time teaching load?
- Extra layers of administration that weren't there before: associate dean, finance manager
- Increased competition for Student Government Association funds
  - Not guaranteed
- Instability of SGA policy

## **Appendix E: SWOT Results**

- All funding could be cut, with director positions cut and visitor center closed
- University Foundation could feel threatened by a Schmeckle friends group
- Decision-making power struggle between reserve and friends group
- Friends group would demand director time and energy that could be spent elsewhere
- Friends can set priorities for raised funds
- Potential negative publicity via volunteers
- Reserve subject to state policy changes
  - Gun laws, hunting regulations, etc.
- Conservation zoning limits facility development
- Potential changes in university procedures
- Volunteers undependable? No continuity
- Reserve not well represented on dean's council
  - Lumped in with field stations and centers

## **Appendix F: Community Involvement Press Release**

### **Schmeeckle Reserve looks to make new friends**

STEVENS POINT – Schmeeckle Reserve is seeking public input to better involve the community.

Schmeeckle Reserve, a 280-acre public natural area at UW-Stevens Point, is considering developing a nonprofit friends group or volunteer program. The reserve is seeking community input to help guide this new program. Interested participants can complete a short questionnaire or join a roundtable discussion group to be held in September at the reserve. To receive or questionnaire or participate in a discussion group, contact Megan Espe at [mespe@uwsp.edu](mailto:mespe@uwsp.edu) or 715-346-4992.

“We hope to build even stronger bonds with the central Wisconsin community in the coming years,” said Ron Zimmerman, director of Schmeeckle Reserve.

Schmeeckle Reserve, created in 1976, makes up more than two-thirds of the campus. Five miles of walking and biking trails weave through wetlands and forests. The visitor center, which has a gift shop and museum, is open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Schmeeckle Reserve is also the headquarters for the Green Circle Trail and the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.

## Appendix G: Screening Questionnaire Cover Letter



### Schmeeckle Reserve

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
Stevens Point, WI 54481

715-346-4992  
schmeeckle@uwsp.edu



Aug. 6, 2012

Do you enjoy visiting Schmeeckle Reserve? Are you interested in becoming involved at the Reserve?

Schmeeckle Reserve, a 280-acre natural area on the UW-Stevens Point campus, is developing a new community involvement program that will include volunteer and fundraising opportunities.

We greatly appreciate your past support of Schmeeckle Reserve and value your input about this new program. Please answer this brief questionnaire to share your interest in becoming involved at Schmeeckle Reserve. It should take only a few minutes, and we've included a postage-paid envelope for you to return the questionnaire.

To show our appreciation for your time, you can receive a coupon for 20 percent off any item in Schmeeckle Reserve's Browse Shop, which features natural and cultural books and gifts.

In addition to this questionnaire, half-hour roundtable discussion groups will be held in September at Schmeeckle Reserve. Joining a discussion group will allow you to personally discuss your motivations or barriers to participating in this new program at the Reserve.

Your participation in the questionnaire and the roundtable discussion is voluntary. Your responses will remain anonymous and your contact information will remain confidential. You must be 18 or older to participate.

We appreciate your response by Aug. 17 to help us schedule discussion groups, but your response is welcome at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact Megan Espe or Ron Zimmerman at 715-346-4992.

Thank you,

Handwritten signature of Megan Espe in black ink.

Megan Espe  
Graduate Assistant  
megan.espe@uwsp.edu

Handwritten signature of Ron Zimmerman in black ink.

Ron Zimmerman  
Director  
ron.zimmerman@uwsp.edu

## Appendix H: Screening Questionnaire



# Schmeeckle Reserve Community Involvement Program Questionnaire

Please share your interest in becoming involved at Schmeeckle Reserve, a natural area on the UW-Stevens Point campus. Your opinion will help guide the development of a new community involvement program.

**Questionnaire code:** 0001

If you prefer to complete this questionnaire online, enter your four-digit code at <http://tinyurl.com/bwepwcj>

**For the first four questions, rate your interest in participating in these potential programs at Schmeeckle Reserve. Circle one answer for each question.**

**How interested are you in ....?**

**1.** Becoming a member of a Friends group to support Schmeeckle Reserve.

*Friends groups are nonprofit organizations that support a specific site. Members volunteer to help the site meet its mission. Membership benefits generally include newsletters, special educational and program opportunities, and discounts.*

1: Very interested      2: Somewhat interested      3: Not interested      4: I don't know

**2.** Participating in a volunteer program to help with work projects and operations at Schmeeckle Reserve.

*Work projects and operations can include habitat management, invasive species control, staffing the visitor center, helping with events, boardwalk and trail construction, wildlife research, and building maintenance.*

1: Very interested      2: Somewhat interested      3: Not interested      4: I don't know

**3.** Participating in a volunteer program to help provide educational programs at Schmeeckle Reserve.

*Volunteering to present programs to the public or school groups about the natural and cultural history of central Wisconsin.*

1: Very interested      2: Somewhat interested      3: Not interested      4: I don't know

**4.** Participating in a program to raise money to benefit Schmeeckle Reserve.

*Volunteering to help with donation, endowment, memorial-gift, or estate-giving programs, or to enhance current revenue sources.*

1: Very interested      2: Somewhat interested      3: Not interested      4: I don't know

**5.** Are there other ways you would like to become involved at Schmeeckle Reserve? Please explain.

**6.** If you want to discuss your thoughts in a 30-minute roundtable discussion in September, please provide your contact information. It will remain confidential. We will contact you to arrange a convenient meeting time.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**7.** To receive updates about this new community program or to receive your 20 percent off coupon for the Browse Shop, please provide your e-mail address. It will remain confidential and will not be shared.

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Future updates**

**Browse Shop coupon**

**Thank you for your time!**

## Appendix I: Screening Questionnaire E-mail Cover Letter



### Schmeeckle Reserve

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
Stevens Point, WI 54481

715-346-4992  
schmeeckle@uwsp.edu



Aug. 7, 2012

Hello [REDACTED],

Do you enjoy visiting Schmeeckle Reserve? Are you interested in becoming involved at the Reserve?

Schmeeckle Reserve, a 280-acre natural area on the UW-Stevens Point campus, is developing a new community involvement program that will include volunteer and fundraising opportunities.

We greatly appreciate your past support of Schmeeckle Reserve and value your input about this new program. Please answer this brief questionnaire to share your interest in becoming involved at Schmeeckle Reserve. It should take only a few minutes.

The questionnaire can be found online at:  
<http://survey.uwsp.edu/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=76K06lmL>

For the first question, please enter your unique four-digit survey code: **0937**

To show our appreciation for your time, you can sign up to receive a coupon for 20 percent off any item in Schmeeckle Reserve's Browse Shop, which features natural and cultural books and gifts.

In addition to this questionnaire, half-hour roundtable discussion groups will be held in September at Schmeeckle Reserve. Joining a discussion group will allow you to personally discuss your motivations or barriers to participating in this new program at the Reserve.

Your participation in the questionnaire and the roundtable discussion is voluntary. Your responses will remain anonymous and your contact information will remain confidential. You must be 18 or older to participate.

We appreciate your response by Aug. 17 to help us schedule discussion groups, but your response is welcome at any time.

If you have any questions, please contact Megan Espe or Ron Zimmerman at 715-346-4992.

Thank you,



Megan Espe  
Graduate Assistant  
megan.espe@uwsp.edu



Ron Zimmerman  
Director  
ron.zimmerman@uwsp.edu

**Appendix J: Questionnaire Reminder Postcard**



Schmeckle Reserve #908308  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
2419 North Point Drive  
Stevens Point, WI 54481-1209

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

<<FIRSTNAME>> <<LASTNAME>>  
<<ADDRESS>>  
<<CITY>>, <<STATE>> <<ZIPCODE>>



Greetings!

A couple of weeks ago, Schmeckle Reserve sent you a brief questionnaire about a new community involvement program at the Reserve. We would like to hear from you!

Schmeckle Reserve, a 280-acre natural area on the UW-Stevens Point campus, is developing a new community involvement program that will include volunteer and fundraising opportunities.

If you have misplaced your copy of the questionnaire, please visit <http://tinyurl.com/bwepwcj> and enter your code: <<code>>.

For more information, please call Schmeckle Reserve at 715-346-4992.

Thank you,

Megan Espe  
Graduate Assistant  
megan.espe@uwsp.edu

Ron Zimmerman  
Director  
ron.zimmerman@uwsp.edu

## **Appendix K: Questionnaire Open Ended Responses**

### **Community Involvement Program Questionnaire**

*Question 5: Are there other ways you would like to become involved at Schmeeckle Reserve? Please explain.*

#### **Responses:**

A sign-making class would be neat. I might sign up for something like that if it wasn't too expensive.

Any program to promote Schmeeckle within UWSP, especially awareness programs among all students; any building design needs for the Visitor Center

As a non-profit organization we can't contribute money to your initiatives. As we have done in the past we'll continue to market and promote your visitor center to the thousands of visitors that travel to and through Portage County. Currently we promote Schmeeckle Reserve, the WI Conservation Hall of Fame and the Green Circle in our annual publications and on our website free of charge.

As I live out of town I could participate on a very limited level.

Collaboration between Schmeeckle and the Natural History Museum could have potential benefits for both.

Continued interest in projects that involve the Green Circle through the Reserve. Yes, if we are in town. [REDACTED] My wife, [REDACTED], uses the Reserve often and might be interested in being a member of a friends group

Donate nature-themed items to be sold in the Browse Shop.

Don't know at this point

Especially interested in WCHOF

For anything we may help with, I would love to involve my kids. They would especially be interested in species control, habitat management, wildlife research.

For physical reasons I don't want to get involved in heavy lifting, but I'm willing to be a financial contributor.

Good luck w/your endeavors -- I am not able to be involved other than attending a program now and then ...

Helping to organize a student effort to protect and enhance Lake Joanis

## **Appendix K: Questionnaire Open Ended Responses**

I am a leader with the Central WI Holistic Homeschoolers Co-op. We are grateful to have hiked on the trails, used the meeting room and visited the sculpture park. Our group would be very interested in projects to improve Schmeeckle - whatever might be a good fit for us. It's a win-win for everyone. We typically meet at Friday mornings. Also, my family has really enjoyed the educational programs and the candlelit hikes. Thank you!

I am currently working 2 jobs and am overbooked as a volunteer. I love Schmeeckle but I'm at my limit.

I am very active in the Boy Scouts, it would be nice to know when there are work projects so that they could participate as a troop or as an eagle project.

I can teach leather projects to young people.

I conduct research at the reserve that is producing posters and field guides. I do inventory work with bryophytes, lichens and useful plants. I could give a talk about any of those topics. Beware I am a professor, I am too busy during the semester. Best time for me would be during summer.

I don't know

I don't know how I could help. I am a wheelchair user and live three hours from St. Point (in Crivitz).

I live in Mosinee and work changing shifts and every other weekend so it's hard to volunteer. When I'm in Point I visit Schmeeckle and have bought gifts in the shop. I look forward to receiving schedule and try to attend 1 or 2 events. In future I hope to be more active. Thanks!

I love the Reserve and trails and am thankful for your organization that made/makes it possible.

I mentor undergraduates doing some research within the Reserve. I'd be happy to continue and expand this work.

I reserve the right to renege on #4 (public performance gives me the willies; but I can be pretty good at it).

I support Schmeeckle Reserve in my UWSP development staff role, and can assist you as needed:

## **Appendix K: Questionnaire Open Ended Responses**

I think a Friends group is a great idea for the Schmeeckle Reserve. I only posted that I am not interested because of time commitment to CWES and the fact that I do not live near Schmeeckle.

I think that establishing a friends of Schmeeckle volunteer group is a marvelous idea. Unfortunately, I am in a place in my life that I don't have extra time to designate to the cause, but once I reach retirement, my answers would all change to "very interested" in volunteering.

I will continue to donate financially.

I would like to use my experience and knowledge related to aquatic plants and bryophytes to make educational, photographic posters that could be displayed on the Schmeeckle property. I think an area to display educational posters about the birds/mammals/plants/lichens/etc. of Schmeeckle Reserve would be a great resource for students and others walking through the reserve to learn about the natural communities on the property.

I'm keenly interested in Schmeeckle, but am over-committed at this time.

I'm sure it is a good cause, but I do not have the time or resources to help, at this point. Sorry.

In an advisory capacity - educational programming

Maintenance, invasive species control, research

Never been to Schmeeckle. I work in Madison as a UWSP project position.

No time with my current schedule and working two jobs. Sorry.

NO, I live in Green Bay

No, not because I don't think it is a worthwhile program, just because I am already very involved in environmental education in my current position and, if I were to increase my activity in this area, I feel my efforts would go either to the non-profit where I work or to organizations with which we are already closely allied.

No, thank you. We live out of town and don't get to Stevens Point very often.

Not interested... AT THIS TIME. Sorry, I simply don't have the time or energy right now!

Open to suggestions.

## **Appendix K: Questionnaire Open Ended Responses**

Perhaps you could have a "program" whereby individuals could sign up to sponsor one educator program per year -- I & others might be willing to do that.

Plan to attend more classes and events.

Possibly assist with grant-writing efforts

Since we live two plus hours from Stevens Point, we have not participated in any of the programs offered at the Schmeckle Reserve, and don't feel we are able to be in the volunteer program.

Storm clean-up, assist in trail maintenance, assist in training trail rangers.

The difficulty with becoming involved is one of time availability. After I've been in town working at my current job for a bit longer, I will be better able to gauge how much of a commitment I can make to Schmeckle.

time permitting, I am interested in volunteering

We typically utilize Schmeckle for meetings with other agency staff from around the state and would be willing to engage them in the needs of the reserve.

While I am generally interested, I also know that I have absolutely no time at the moment to actually do any of these things.

You should let people with dogs in there

## Appendix L: Focus Group Invite

**Espe, Megan K**

---

**From:** Espe, Megan K  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 19, 2012 1:23 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Roundtable discussions at Schmeeckle Reserve

Hi [REDACTED],

Over the summer you received a questionnaire about your interest in becoming more involved at Schmeeckle Reserve. You indicated you would be willing to join a roundtable discussion at the reserve.

Those meetings have been scheduled for the following dates and times:

- 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 25
- 5 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 26
- 4 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 7

The meetings will last about 45 minutes to an hour. Please let me know which meeting time works best for you.

At the meeting, groups of 6 to 10 people will be discussing why they are interested in becoming more involved at the reserve, what would motivate them to become involved, and also would prevent them from becoming involved. I'll also have some refreshments on hand.

Thank you for your time, and I look forward to seeing you.

Megan Espe  
Graduate Assistant  
Schmeeckle Reserve  
2419 North Point Drive  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

715-346-2290  
[www.uwsp.edu/schmeeckle](http://www.uwsp.edu/schmeeckle)

## Appendix M: Focus Group Reminder

**Espe, Megan K**

---

**From:** Espe, Megan K  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 17, 2012 10:31 AM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Reminder: Meeting Thursday evening at Schmeeckle Reserve



**Schmeeckle Reserve**

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
Stevens Point, WI 54481

715-346-4992  
schmeeckle@uwsp.edu



Oct. 17, 2012

Hi [REDACTED],

Thank you for accepting my invitation to join a roundtable discussion group at Schmeeckle Reserve. I appreciate your willingness to provide your thoughts about a potential community involvement program at the Reserve.

The group will be held:

5:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 18

Schmeeckle Reserve Visitor Center meeting room (to the left inside the front door)  
2419 North Point Drive, Stevens Point

At the meeting, your group will be discussing:

- Why you are interested in becoming involved at the Reserve
- What would motivate you to become/remain involved
- What would prevent you from becoming involved
- What you think the Reserve should do to involve community members in its work

I'll have some light refreshments on hand. If you aren't able to join us, please e-mail me or call my direct line at 715-346-2290.

See you tomorrow,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Megan Espe".

Megan Espe  
Graduate Assistant  
Schmeeckle Reserve  
[megan.espe@uwsp.edu](mailto:megan.espe@uwsp.edu)

## **Appendix N: Focus Groups Informed Consent Form**

### **Informed Consent to Participate in Human Subject Research**

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Megan Espe, a graduate student in the College of Natural Resources at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The purpose of this study is to assess the potential for a community involvement program such as a friends group or volunteer program at Schmeeckle Reserve, a natural area on the UW-Stevens Point campus. This study will contribute to the student's completion of her master's thesis.

This phase of the study consists of screening questions to gauge stakeholders' interest in a community involvement program at Schmeeckle Reserve. By completing these questions, you are providing consent to participate in the study. The screening questions also will ask stakeholders whether they are willing to participate in focus groups at Schmeeckle Reserve, to understand what would motivate or prevent participation in a community involvement program. Focus group respondents' answers will be recorded electronically.

Participating in the screening questions will take about 10 minutes of your time. Participating in the focus groups will take about one hour of your time.

The researcher perceives minimal risks from your involvement in this study.

Potential benefits from participating in this study include the opportunity to shape the form of any future community involvement programs at Schmeeckle Reserve and to contribute to knowledge on a topic that has not been extensively researched.

The research results will be included in the researcher's master's thesis and potentially will be published in a scholarly journal or magazine article and potentially will be presented at a national conference. Study results will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches individual respondents with their answers (including audio/video tapes) will be destroyed.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without any consequences. You also may refuse to answer any individual question without consequences.

Once the study is completed, you may receive the results of the study. If you would like these results, or if you have any questions in the meantime, please contact:

Megan Espe  
Schmeeckle Reserve  
1419 North Point Drive  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
(715) 346-4992

If you have any complaints about your treatment as a participant in this study or believe that you have been harmed in some way by your participation, please call or write:

Dr. Jason R. Davis, Chair  
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

## Appendix N: Focus Groups Informed Consent Form

School of Business and Economics  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
Stevens Point, WI 54481  
(715) 346-4598

Although Dr. Davis will ask your name, all complaints are kept in confidence.

I have received a complete explanation of the study and I agree to participate.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

(Signature of subject)

**This research project has been approved by the UWSP Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.**

### Screening questions:

Schmeckle Reserve is interested in developing a community involvement program to better interact with the Stevens Point community. The program could include a Friends organization, volunteer program, donor program or advocacy program.

**Please rate your level of interest in the following potential programs at Schmeckle Reserve:**

*5: Very interested    4: Interested    3: Neutral    2: Not Interested    1: Definitely not interested*

1. A friends group or similar membership organization.
2. A volunteer program to perform labor.
3. A volunteer program to provide educational programming.
4. A donor program.
5. An advocacy program.

If you are interested in participating in any of these programs, would you be willing to discuss your thoughts in a focus group at Schmeckle Reserve? Yes/no.

- Respondents who agree to participation in a focus group and other stakeholders will be gathered for focus group sessions. Incentives will be used to encourage participation. Funding from incentives will come from student research fund.

(August 2012).

## **Appendix N: Focus Groups Informed Consent Form**

- Questions for focus groups will address potential participants' motivations and barriers, and will be based on data gathered for subproblem 1 and 2. Other questions to come from literature review, including:
  - Why are you interested in joining a community involvement program at Schmeckle Reserve?
  - How important is it to you that your participation be a learning experience?
  - Are you interested in helping restore the native ecological communities found in Schmeckle Reserve?
  - Is it important to you that your time here be spent outside?
  - Do you want your participation here to be a social experience?
  - Do you want to gain career skills through your participation here?
  - How important is it to you that you advocate for Schmeckle Reserve in the community?