

Living snow fences: Affordable wind barriers

Barriers also offer excellent wildlife habitat

DNR FORESTRY STAFF

It's been a long, cold winter and while we've recently experienced signs of spring, we haven't forgotten the sight of unending snowdrifts in the driveway, roadways and other areas around the house or farmstead.

Planting a living snow fence is an excellent way to manage blowing and drifting snow. A living snow fence is a variation of a windbreak or shelterbelt, which are plantings of single or multiple rows of trees, shrubs and/or native grasses that protect or shelter areas prone to troublesome winds. These natural fences slow the wind and cause the snow to deposit downwind of the planting.

Living snow fences have multiple benefits. They can protect driveways and roadways, reduce wind erosion and manage soil moisture, provide a windbreak for animals and growing plants, provide an urban sound

or visual barrier, and create wildlife and pollinator habitat. They are also cost-effective, have a long life and once established, require little maintenance.

The type of living snow fence you plant will depend on your needs. Before you buy your shrubs and trees, you will want to consider the height, density, length, location and design of your planting. The combination of height and density of your living snow fence will determine how much snow is captured and how far away from the problem area you will need to plant. The taller the barrier, the more snow it will capture. The denser the planting (spacing between the plants and rows), the closer the drifts will form at the rows, thus farther away from the problem area. The length of your rows will need to reach far beyond the area you wish to protect.

The location of your living snow fence is determined by factors such as prevailing wind direction, regional snowfall amounts and topography. The design of your living snow fence includes the species and spacing of the shrubs and trees between and within

the rows. Consider its purpose and what it will look like in 20 years. Do you want gaps between the trees, a thick row of shrubs or trees or food for wildlife? The species you choose should be adapted to the soil, climate and moisture conditions in the area. Increasing diversity in the type of trees and shrubs planted will aid in the survival of the snow fence in cases of insect and disease outbreaks.

Once you've decided on the location and design of your living snow fence, you will want to prepare the site by removing any herbaceous vegetation that will compete with the new plants. Using a commercial weed barrier or mulch for weed control and water conservation will also increase survival and growth. A drip line or trickle irrigation, though initially more costly, are efficient methods of supplying supplemental water for the first few years after planting, especially on well-drained, sandy soils and during dry, hot periods.

Once established, a living snow fence will provide permanent, affordable and low maintenance protection against wind and snow and

can provide high-quality wildlife habitat. There are many resources available to those interested in planting a living snow fence, windbreak or shelterbelt.

Some opportunities exist for cost share programs and financial incentives to landowners. For technical assistance, contact the local offices of the Soil and Water Conservation Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Farm Services Agency, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources or the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

Private nurseries, the DNR Minnesota State Forest Nursery (mndnr.gov/forestry/nurseries) and the local Soil and Water Conservation District offices are excellent sources for tree and shrub seedlings.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation has a standing corn row program that pays farmers along windprone stretches of state highways to leave a minimum of six rows of corn in the field in the winter (www.dot.state.mn.us/environment/livingsnowfence/).

For more information on living snow fences, visit www.extension.umn.edu.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, Jim Stavseth and his two brothers Dave and Bruce, pose with their father Gus, on a Rainy Lake fishing trip. Gus died in 2004 of lung cancer, and now, Jim raises money for Relay for Life to help fund research so others don't lose loved ones to cancer.

RELAY

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Relay for Life, an annual event that raises money for the American Cancer Society, attracts more than 4 million people in more than 20 countries to raise much-needed funds and awareness to save lives from cancer.

While Stavseth's father couldn't be saved, others can, and Stavseth knows that.

"Everyone knows someone who has had or has cancer," he said. "We need to help get money to the doctors so they can help their patients."

The Koochiching County Relay for Life event is set to run from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, May 3 at Rainy River Community College.

Denae Alamano, a Relay for Life specialist with the American Cancer Society, said a goal of \$25,000 is set for the county to raise toward the fight against cancer.

"We are making a difference," Alamano said. "The American Cancer Society has played a role in nearly every cancer breakthrough. One hundred years ago when ACS began, one out of 10 people were surviving cancer. Now two out of three are surviving. We don't want it to take another 100 years to make it three out of three. When you come support your local relay, you're helping find a cure and helping local cancer patients financially and emotionally while they are going through treatment."

The May 3 relay will return favorite events of previous years including the opening ceremony, 5-kilometer run/walk, celebrity pie contest, games, survivor speech, and the luminary ceremony.

"The luminary ceremony is pretty powerful," Stavseth said.

Luminaries in honor of or in memory of cancer survivors will be on display at RRCC throughout the event. Some, Stavseth said, are re-

Relay for Life
schedule of events:

May 2:
■ Spaghetti feed, 5-7 p.m.,
Union Hall

May 3:
(All events are at Rainy River
Community College)
■ Team Bachmeier
breakfast, 8 a.m.
■ 5-kilometer run/walk
registration, 8 a.m.
■ Opening ceremony, 9 a.m.
■ 5-K run/walk, 9:30 a.m.
■ Celebrity pie contest,
11 a.m.
■ Fire/EMT lunch and
games, noon
■ Survivor Lisa Bahr speech,
1 p.m.
■ Luminary ceremony,
1:30 p.m.

ally moving.

"If you take the time to walk around and read the bags, that alone will make people emotional," he said. "You realize how many people you know have been touched by cancer."

New this year will be luminaries honoring caregivers.

"So many survivors are so appreciative to their caregivers," Alamano said. "Oftentimes, the caregivers' lives are completely changed along with the survivors. Many caregivers who attend relay have lost their relative/friend/spouse to cancer and we want them to know how much we value their dedication to fighting back against cancer, too."

Stavseth said when his mother died of liver cancer in 1994, he played a small role as a caregiver, but acknowledged there were people who were more involved.

"We don't realize how much a caregiver goes through," he said. "Thank God there's people who are there to do that."

Relay for Life is a community-wide event, regardless if attendees are on an official relay team. Alamano said last year \$21,000 was raised and she is hopeful to bring in more funds this year.

AIRPORT

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about \$500,000 each from the city and county, of the proposed project and ongoing operations. A goal of the financing examination, the resolution said, is "to promote an equitable and fair distribution of costs between the parties to the airport agreement," with the commission to consider tax base, anticipated terminal building users and revenue sources including lease income, passenger facility charges, bonds, cash reserves and/or other sources.

Falls Mayor Bob Anderson, who serves as chairman of the airport commission, said he plans to take the resolution to the commission at its regular meeting 8:30 a.m. Tuesday in the courthouse boardroom. He said the commission would discuss how to make a presentation to the council about the proposed terminal project and how to put together the information sought in the city council resolution.

The presentation was requested by Councilor Cynthia Jaksa, who posed several questions about the need for the expansion and improvement of the terminal project.

Jaksa has advocated in the past couple years for establishment of a taxing district that could levy money from property owners within the district to fund airport improvements and ongoing costs. She has argued since the airport agreement was initiated 40 years ago, the value of property in the city compared to outside the city has dropped.

She said Monday the city is being asked to pledge more than \$500,000 toward a project without full disclosure of the need. She wondered, among other questions, how many jobs would be created through the projects and how many international flights each year pass through the airport.

Local officials have sought \$3 million from the state's sale of bonds for the project, which would involve renovating the administration building at the airport to accommodate larger groups in a secure area, add bathrooms to the area and expand it for official inspections.

The area is known as the terminal's sterile area. A letter supporting the bonding request sent to Gov. Mark Dayton by Anderson said the sterile area for passengers who cleared screening is very small and "most of the year, the number of passengers overwhelms the sterile area and crams the passengers into that small room." The letter also said the sterile area has no bathrooms and after being cleared in the area, if a passenger has a need for the bathroom, they must leave the sterile and be re-screened before being allowed to board the aircraft. Anderson has said there are times passengers wait up to an hour before going through screening.

In addition, the terminal is in need of a larger area for U.S. Customs and Border Protection to accommodate international flights. Anderson told The Journal in December the number of people that can come in on an international-bound flight is limited to 16 or

less passengers, which has forced flights by the Detroit Red Wings hockey team and the Rolling Stones to seek airport services elsewhere because the planes were carrying more than 16 passengers.

Thor Einarson, airport manager, told Jaksa Monday an average of 200 aircraft clear customs at the airport each year; of those aircraft, about 60 are charter flights.

"We don't know how many are turned away," Anderson said. "CBP tells them to go to another location (when there are too many passengers for inspection at the Falls)."

The renovation could allow the airport to handle more international passengers and flights, Councilor Peter Kalar said.

Einarson said the international and charter flights provide a huge boost to the local economy by purchasing fuel, catering services, crew accommodations, and more.

He said he's been asked by other airport officials from elsewhere why the airport is the focus of council debate. At a conference of 155 publicly funded airports held recently at Bemidji, Einarson said just nine had airline service and of the nine, just four offer CBP inspections.

"We are lucky, blessed and fortunate to have an airline (service)," he said.

The debate isn't about the value of the airport, but about how it is funded, said Jaksa.

Councilor Gail Rognerud said many other airports have a taxing authority "so everyone pays the same... so the burden is shared equally by all that benefit."

Jaksa earlier provided

the council with a statement saying "The combined city levy that city taxpayers pay is twice as much as school district residents' combined levy. Raising taxes for the airport will only increase this disparity and lead to further migration out of the city.... At the very least we need some analysis presented to the council to why our constituents should continue to pay twice as much as school district residents for the airport."

Jaksa also questioned how the budget is determined for the airport, noting it has no allocation in reserves for capitol outlay expenditures.


She questioned whether a request from the airport for the purchase of a new truck with plow and aviation radio should have been included in the budget. She asked what would happen if the county, which under the airport agreement is to split funding for the airport equally with the city, did not fully fund the request.

Rognerud explained both city and county officials have indicated they want to keep the money within their own government until a need by the airport is voiced.

She said if something not budgeted is needed, airport officials must seek funding from both the city and county for the purchase.

"There is no fluff in the budget," she told Jaksa. "It is mean and lean."

The council approved the truck request Monday. The county board Tuesday approved the purchase of a new truck at a cost of \$25,243, with a local match split between the city and county of \$12,622.



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