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Date: January 14, 2010
To: Board of Directors
From: Jane Krites, Executive Vice President
Subject: Camp Myeerah Invasive Growth Eradication Project

At the January board meeting we will ask the board for approval to enter into an agreement with several groups, consisting of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Pheasants Forever, Logan County Conservation Services, Ecologists from Ohio State University and Tri-Moraine Audubon Society for work at Camp Myeerah that would eradicate much of the non-native, invasive growth that is threatening the native habitat on that 500 acre site. This is being brought to the board to comply with board policy 2.5, Financial Condition and Activities, which states that “the CEO shall not acquire, encumber or dispose of real property.” As you will see in paragraph three of this memo, approval of this project would require Girl Scouts of Western Ohio to sign an agreement that the property continue to be maintained as a natural area for a period of ten years or the cost of the project must be paid back at a pro-rated amount.

This project would consist of manual removal, selected burning and safe chemical spraying of almost 100 acres of this site that is now be severely encroached with autumn olive, honeysuckle, evening primrose and grapevine. This has been an on-going challenge that requires much more work and expertise than the one full-time caretaker who is responsible for this camp can provide. Currently, it is estimated that it would cost approximately \$200 per acre to accomplish this task. Within three years that cost could increase to \$2,500 because of the size of machinery that would be needed for removal.

The project would be planned by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services with support from Pheasants Forever. The other parties involved would serve as consultants and also provide staff hours, in kind and monetary project support. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services would provide much of the financing for this project. However, they require that the landowner sign an agreement that for 10 years after the project is completed it would be maintained in a natural area. The landowner is expected to transfer this agreement to the new owner if the land is sold during this period. If this requirement is not met, the entity signing the agreement is expected to pay back a pro-rated amount.

Following a brief presentation on this project, the board will be asked to approve the project with its restrictions concerning the ten-year encumbrance. If you would like more information, attached is a report which describes the project in detail

Our Mission

*Girl Scouting builds girls of courage, confidence, and character,
who make the world a better place.*



Invasive Growth Eradication Project - Camp Myeerah

Several groups, consisting of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, Pheasants Forever, Logan County Conservation Services, Ecologists from Ohio State University and Tri-Moraine Audubon Society, are interested in performing work at Camp Myeerah that would eradicate much of the non-native, invasive growth that is threatening the native habitat on that 500 acre site.

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The project would be planned by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services with support from Pheasants Forever. The other parties involved would serve as consultants and also provide man hours, in-kind and monetary project support.

Major Stipulation: U.S Fish and Wildlife Services would provide much of the financing for this project. However, they require that the landowner sign an agreement that for 10 years after the project is completed it would be maintained in a natural area. The landowner is expected to transfer this agreement to the new owner if the land is sold during this period. If this requirement is not met, the entity signing the agreement is expected to pay back a pro-rated amount.

Project/Site Information: The proposed project is designed to strongly preserve a large block of high quality natural features at Camp Myeerah. This property is located in the unique hills near Bellefontaine in Logan County. The whole region is astride a geological feature known as the Bellefontaine outlier in which the highest elevation in Ohio is located. The terrain is rugged, with deeply dissecting ravines separating the high ridges. Camp Myeerah is largely forested and contains a notable high quality stand of mature forest (known as “Big Woods,” as well as second growth, old fields, slate beds, geo-sink and a small prairie remnant. It is one of the few sites within Ohio that has excellent examples of Ohio’s original plant and animal communities.

The species diversity is very high on this site due to the diverse and unusual terrain for western Ohio, the variety of plant communities, and the region’s location in the “crossroads” between the plants and animals of the deep south, the north woods, the western prairies, and the eastern deciduous forests. There are well over 400 plants and animals on the property including 146 birds (25 of those are on various lists as uncommon, rare, and endangered). The plants and animals on the property have not yet been fully inventoried. Several other uncommon or species of concern are found on the property, some actually reproducing there. Through the efforts of Tri Moraine Audubon Society, Camp Myeerah has been designated an Important Bird Area which is a list of national significance for resident and migrating birds. The non-native, invasive growth that has been invading over 100 acres of Camp Myeerah is an eminent threat to the rare and unique balance of both plant and animal presence on this site. Over the past 6 years, Tri Moraine Audubon Society has noted loss of both during their week-end “observation and count” program.

US Fish and Wildlife Services and NRCS have proposed a plan which would create 81 acres of grassland habitat and 7 acres which would revert to an oak savanna at Camp Myeerah. This habitat would include a mix of warm season grasses such as Indian grass, big bluestem, little bluestem and switch grass. It would include prairie forbes such as purple coneflower, partridge pea, black-eyed susan and wild bergamot. Establishment of an oak savannah is also part of the plan.

Additional Site Information: Seven years ago, the Girl Scouts of Appleseed Ridge placed 105 acres of Camp Myeerah into a permanent environmental easement with the Tri-Moraine Audubon Society. At the same time, we redeveloped a wetlands area on the camp property. This was done after careful study and involves a section of the camp that is very steep and not conducive to camping or building additional structures. The primary reasons for doing this were for the protection of the camps habitat and also to preserve the water quality on the site.

Careful consideration and study was given to this land prior to putting it into an Environmental Easement. The board made this decision based on the following beliefs:

1. The section of Camp Myeerah being put into an easement was of high environmental value and unique to this section of the country.
2. Girl Scouts have a responsibility to protect the land and be good environmental stewards.
3. This section of land had little commercial value for logging, camp, residential or commercial development.
4. The Environmental Easement could actually increase the value of the entire property, if the Girl Scouts would ever find themselves in a position of having to divest themselves of it, for the following reasons:
 - a. It would be very attractive to a Natural Conservancy Group of investors.
 - b. It would also be attractive to investors looking for a private retreat or public hunting area.
 - c. Developers would see this section of land as a natural buffer that would provide wonderful settings for private homes and also prevent encroachment from surrounding development.

Reasons to Consider this Project:

1. It is a necessary thing to do to maintain the ecological balance and the uniqueness of this site.
2. It is a critical maintenance need for the property. If not done within the next year, it will either cost 10 times as much to complete the project or the land will be left to succession of the strongest invasive growth.
3. It is not a capital need but maintenance need and should be viewed as such. This maintenance investment will actually contribute to the appeal ability of the land—not only as a Girl Scout Camp but also to its land value.
4. There is money available now to pay for the majority of this project. If there is required match of funds this could be accomplished through work hours donated by Pheasants Forever, Soil and Water Conservation and possibly the local vocational school's agriculture classes. The school is located within 2 miles of the camp and they have historically done construction projects on this site including the main troop house, shelters and all of the latrines.
5. There is investigative work being done right now by Tri-Moraine and Ohio State reps about the possibility of the proposed tall grasses being cut annually and sold for organic, high protein hay. According to them, this is a lucrative market that could be a small income stream for the Girl Scouts.
6. The reputation of the Girl Scouts has been one of strength and support in the area of environmental stewardship and appreciation of the value of Camp Myeerah. There are a number of influential people involved in Tri-Moraine and three couples have named the Girl Scouts in their wills as a result of the own experiences at this site and their positive view of our organization.
7. Tri-Moraine Audubon has committed both time and money to this project. Pheasants Forever have committed volunteer time to the project. These commitments will suffice the match required by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife for the proposed \$20,000 grant they can provide for the project.

Additional Thoughts: There is a high level of excitement within the groups that are proposing and supporting this project. We do have a history of working with many of these individuals and the projects have gone well and with relatively few problems. However, you never know what the future will bring and you have to always proceed with caution and protect the interests of the Girl Scouts.

It will take a staff person to make sure things are happening and everything is coordinated on the site. As the "Cooperator" of this grant we will be responsible for:

- a. Maintenance activities related to this project once completed
- b. Fund one of the herbicide applications
- c. Provide labor to plant the fields. The Logan County Pheasants Forever chapter has volunteered to do this and will be covered through their organization's insurance.
- d. Work with Tri-Moraine Audubon to provide labor for some of the tree clearing and the prescribed moving in some small areas surrounding the project areas. Tri-Moraine Audubon will also show proof of insurance coverage prior to performing any volunteer work.

In order for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife to get the details worked out for "the burn," which is a big part of this project, they need to move on this fairly soon. Late March to early April is the best time to do this since it is prior to the beginning of new growth.

This is a grant where the Girl Scouts will be reimbursed after we make payment for work that is being done. These payments will be made when each specific portion of the work is completed, not after the entire project is completed. Therefore, we should have fairly quick reimbursement for the expenses related to the project.