

## **Management Policies For: Ginn Woods**

A Property of the  
Ball State University Field Station and Environmental Education Center

### **Property Description**

Ginn Woods is a 161 acre complex of three contiguous parcels of land that differ with regard to land-use history, degree of disturbance, and site conditions related to soil drainage. The property lies in the Gaston quadrangle of Union Township in the north-central Delaware County, and is bounded on the north by the Wheeling-Eaton Pike, and on the south by County Road W 1000 N. The predominant soil type is Blount silt loam, with 0 to 2 percent slope. This soil type is generally poorly drained, with high water holding capacity and slow permeability. Pewamo silty clay loam occupies areas adjacent to water drainage channels within the woods and a 10 acre partially wooded wetland area on the southwest side of the property. This soil type is very poorly drained, with high water availability and low permeability, and is often associated with wetland vegetation.

The largest of the three parcels of land in the complex had been known locally as Ginn Woods for a long time. This original part of the Ginn Woods complex is unique in Delaware County. Since the original settlement of the area by people of European descent, this parcel of land had been owned by only one family. These owners claim they never grazed livestock or burned the understory in this area, nor was any significant logging done during the half century before acquisition by Ball State University. This part of Ginn Woods is believed to be the only wooded tract in this part of Indiana that has had minimal human disturbance, and it is the only old-growth beech-maple woods of comparable size left in East Central Indiana. The importance of the area was indicated by its inclusion in the 1969 Indiana Academy of Science book, Natural Areas of Indiana and their Preservation, edited by Alton Lindsey, who gave the

area a high priority as an educational area because of its proximity and usefulness to Ball State University and the scarcity of forested areas in this part of Indiana.

Nixon Woods is 40 acre area, contiguous with the south boundary of the original Ginn Woods, and comprised of mature mixed-mesophytic woods. This area was more disturbed by post-settlement human activities than Ginn Woods, but was a fully-stocked, mature forest at the time of acquisition by Ball State University in 1977. ***Do we have any additional information re: land-use history vegetation, and ecology of this area??***

The Wesley Addition is a 10 acre wetland contiguous with the southwest corner of the original Ginn Woods area. This poorly-drained, low-lying area is only partially wooded, with a large open area occupied by a shrub and herbaceous wetland plant community. ***Any additional land-use, vegetation or ecology info for this area?*** This property was purchased by Ball State University and added to the Ginn Woods complex in 1971.

The acquisition of lands now comprising the 161 acre Ginn Woods complex was accomplished only with the efforts of many individuals within and outside of Ball State University. See the appendix at the end of this document for a historical account of the contributions by many people that have left us the valuable legacy we now call Ginn Woods.

### **Appropriate Uses of the Property**

Ginn Woods is a unique natural area within the east-central Indiana region, due primarily to the lack of significant historical human disturbance. This history of limited human disturbance has left the legacy of an intact old-growth forest community. The primary management principle for use of this property is that no activity shall be allowed that would damage or diminish this last remaining remnant of a natural community that once covered most of this region. Unregulated access to this area by the public should not be encouraged. If signs and/or a parking area are placed on-site in the future, these

should have only modest visibility to the general public. Descriptive documents for the Field Station properties should indicate that Ginn Woods is an area of special concern, and that visits to this property should be restricted to specified activities. Under no circumstances should Ginn Woods be used for social gatherings.

The location of Ginn Woods, at some distance from Muncie and the main Ball State University campus, is a hindrance to its use as a site for field trips that occur during regular class hours. At present, Ginn Woods has no formal trail system, nor is there a marked parking area. This also limits the use of this site for field trips by local grade school classes or citizen groups. Hence, the best use of this area at present is as a site for student and faculty research projects, and for field trips by small groups during times that are not constrained by class schedules. Currently, this area is being used for student lab projects in the Ecology course, and as a field trip site for the Dendrology course and a wetlands delineation workshop.

### **Management Guidelines**

1. No significant damage to the vegetative community in Ginn Woods is to be allowed.
2. Introduction of non-native species to Ginn Woods is forbidden.
3. Destructive sampling and collecting of living organisms from Ginn Woods may be allowed only after a proposal describing the purpose of the sampling has been formally reviewed and approved by the Management committee and Director of the Field Station.
4. Hunting and live plant harvesting (including flower picking) in Ginn Woods by the public is forbidden.
5. Standing dead and fallen trees may not be cut or removed except where trails are blocked or where trees constitute a hazard near parking areas.
6. To the greatest extent feasible within constraints of personnel and resources, invasive exotic species should be eradicated from Ginn Woods.
7. Access to the Ginn Woods by individuals or groups exclusive of Ball State University

faculty, students, or staff should be by permission only. A permit process should be developed and implemented by the Field Station director.

8. Use of Ginn Woods by local schools and citizens groups shall be allowed, but only when accompanied by a representative designated by the Field Station director.
9. Use of Ginn Woods for scientific research is strongly encouraged. A proposal should be submitted to the Field Station director prior to initiation of any research project. Such proposals shall be review to insure that the research is consistent with the "Do No Harm" management principle for this property, and will not conflict with existing research projects or educational activities.
10. A copy of any publication, thesis, or final report derived from research conducted in Ginn Woods should be filed with the Field Station director.

### **Long-Term Management Goals**

1. If this area is to be opened for visits by large groups, it will be necessary to establish signage, parking, and a formal trail system to concentrate foot traffic and minimize damage to the rich herbaceous plant community. This trail should be as unobtrusive as possible, using cypress mulch as a foot bed as much as possible, and minimizing the use of gravel. The parking area should be only as large as necessary to handle a small number of cars or a school bus. Signage should be limited and unobtrusive, and should clearly communicate the unique nature of the site and the restrictions on harvesting living plants and animals.
2. Monitor the abundance of exotic plant species and eradicate them as they appear.

### **Appendix: Account of Land Acquisition for the Ginn Woods Complex**

Ginn Woods is a complex of three continuous parcels of land acquired by Ball State University, beginning in 1971. The property lies in the Gaston quadrangle of Union Township in the northern part of Delaware County and is bounded on the north by the Wheeling-Eaton Pike, and on the west and south by County Road ?????.

The first parcel of land acquired in the complex has been known as Ginn Woods for

a long time. It was purchased in October of 1971 by the Ball State University Foundation and was transferred to Ball State University ownership by action of the University Board of Trustees on December 17, 1971. Several individuals were involved in the acquisition of this property. Mrs. Mary Baldwin McKinzie, an Alumna of Ball State University, was the last private owner of the original Ginn Woods property, and wish to transfer ownership of the property to Ball State University. In May, 1971, she informed Dr. Robert Cooper that the property would be put on the market, giving the University an opportunity to arrange for purchase. Dr. Jerry Nisbet, then Chairman of the Department of Biology, asked a group of concerned faculty members to investigate the possibility of Ball State University acquiring the area. This Committee consisted of Dr. James List, who served as chairman, Dr. Cooper, Dr. William Crankshaw, and Dr. Charles Wise. In June 1971, the Committee submitted a written proposal for the purchase of Ginn Woods to the administration of Ball State University. Dr. List served as the editor for the proposal. The proposal was denied. Dr. Wise asked the President, Dr. John Pruis, for a meeting on the matter and Drs. Wise, List, and Crankshaw appealed the decision to deny the proposal. After reconsidering the proposal, the administration agreed to ask the Ball State University Foundation to purchase the Woods. The purchase was accomplished in October of 1971.

When it became apparent that Ginn Woods would come under the control of Ball State University, an ad hoc Ginn Woods Committee was formed in the Department of Biology to maintain communication with the Ball State University Foundation relative to the Woods. The Committee was established on August 3, 1971, and finally included Drs. Cooper, List, Wise, Crankshaw and Dr. Forrest Stevenson.

After acquisition of Ginn Woods, by Ball State University, direct management of the Woods became vested in the Department of Biology and Mr. Allen Winters, Manager of Biology Field Areas, increased his responsibilities to include this new acquisition. Meanwhile, Mr. Wade Cox, who lives near Ginn Woods, was employed as caretaker of

the Woods. Mr. Cox reports verbally periodically to Mr. Winters, as well as, to Dr. Wise, who was appointed faculty coordinator of the Woods on October 5, 1971.

In the spring of 1974, Dr. Wise was made aware of the impending cutting of Nixon Woods, a forty-acre, mixed-mesophytic woods, immediately south and adjacent to Ginn Woods and in the ownership of Mrs. J. Robert Baur of Muncie and her sister, Dr. Wise appealed to the owners for an opportunity try to work out the acquisition of Nixon Woods by Ball State University or others for possible annexation to Ginn Woods, which appeal was honored by the owners.

Drs. List and Wise agreed to serve as an ad hoc committee to explore possibilities for the acquisition of Nixon Woods and prepared a proposal to the Administration of Ball State University to consider the purchase of the Woods. In addition to Drs. Wise and List, Dr. Nisbet and Dr. Leland Hardman signed the proposal as forwarded to the administration.

Before Nixon Woods could be obtained, a more immediate problem arose relative to the wet area in the western part of Ginn Woods adjacent to the farm then held by Mr. Harold Wesley. Mr. Wesley's desire to drain these ecologically very valuable wet areas precipitated successful talks which culminated in the purchase of ten acres of the Wesley Farm by Ball State University. Drs. Wise and List served as an ad hoc committee to acquire these ten acres and wrote the necessary proposal. Dr. Crankshaw, Dr. Ralph Kirkpatrick, and Dr. Thomas McComish made valuable suggestions for the proposal which was signed by Dr. Wise, Dr. List and Dr. Norman Norton, Department of Biology. Following conferences by Dr. Wise with Dr. Robert Bell, Vice President of Business Affairs, Dr. Richard Burkhardt, Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Dr. Pruis, President, the acreage was purchased by Ball State University.

In April, 1975, Dr. Wise held informal discussions with Mr. C. Roberts Dailey, Muncie Realtor, relative to Nixon Woods, and in June of the same year, initiated discussions with the Indiana Nature Conservancy pertaining to Nixon Woods. Later, on November

12, 1976, Dr. Wise submitted a proposal to the administration of Ball State University to mount a fund drive campaign with the help of the Nature Conservancy for the purchase of Nixon Woods. Then on December 13, 1976, after more than a year of effort to find the necessary funding for purchase of the Woods, representatives of the Nature Conservancy met with members of the ad hoc committee on Nixon Woods and Dr. Pruis, President, and Dr. Burkhardt, Vice President of Academic Affairs, to explore possibilities for the purchase of Nixon Woods. Although immediate action was not realized from this meeting, the importance of Nixon Woods was generally better appreciated by the administration of Ball State University.

In February, 1977, at the suggestion of the Hon. C. Roberts Dailey, State Representative from Muncie, the Budget Subcommittee of Indiana House Ways and Means Committee entered a line item in the Indiana State Budget then being considered by the House of Representatives, to purchase Nixon Woods for Ball State University. This item became a permanent part of the state budget approved by the Indiana Legislature, and Nixon Woods was duly purchased and transferred to Ball State University, bringing to slightly over 161 acres the area of the Ginn Woods complex consisting of the three parcels of land herein described.

## Rationale

The Woods is the most nearly natural area in East Central Indiana, and as such, it is especially important for teaching and research in ecology and conservation-oriented classes. It is the only accessible area Delaware County where certain field procedures can be taught and where certain animals and plants may be found. It is bounded on two sides by paved county roads and is less than 25 minutes by auto or bus from the main campus of Ball State University.

It is fundamentally a different type area from our other field areas and its importance has been emphasized by its inclusion in the Indiana Academy of Science book, Natural Areas in Indiana and their Preservation, in which it is given a high priority as an educational area.

In addition to formal field trips, students and faculty use the Ginn Woods complex for research. For example, numerous masters' theses and research papers have been written on the ecology or anatomy of the amphibians found there. Ongoing research includes Dr. Crankshaw's studies of natural succession. Also, the area is a source of materials for class and laboratory use.

In sum, the woods is an irreplaceable, nearly maintenance-free, outdoor laboratory-classroom for present and future generations of students and teachers, and in the words of Alton Linsay, "Its preservation and resulting improvement by further maturation, is therefore desirable."

## Present Management

Ginn Woods is maintained at present under the Field Areas and Facilities Committee of the Department of Biology at Ball State University, with Dr. Wise serving as faculty coordinator, Mr. Winters serving as manager, and Donald Withers serving as caretaker.

It is being kept as a “natural area” with minimal disturbance. This policy was established by the faculty even before formal acquisition of the property.

### Management Problems

Among management problems which have developed in the past are illegal hunting, trash dumping, trespassing by horsemen and cyclists, and mushroom collecting. Recently there have been requests to “clean up” the woods for firewood. Lack of adequate parking space might be viewed as another problem of management.

Deliberate obstruction of possible easy access routes into the Woods and watchfulness of the caretaker have discouraged trespassing by horsemen and cyclists. Trash dumping continues as an ever-present problem, in addition to occasional illegal hunting of wildlife.

### Proposed Management

Eventually, we can anticipate the need for fencing and/or a resident caretaker on the property, especially when the services of Mr. Don Withers are no longer available to us. It is recommended that plans be developed by the Field Areas and Facilities Committee for the eventual fencing, at least, of the north boundary of the Woods along the Wheeling-Eaton Pike, and for caretakers’ quarters and an adequate parking lot.

The Woods shall be continued as a natural area with minimal disturbance. No paths shall be maintained, no cutting shall be permitted, and no removal of dead trees or other vegetation shall be allowed. Supervised collections of plant and animal specimens for research or class may be made by approval of the coordinator or the Field Areas Committee. Live trapping and mist netting for banding may be permitted under supervision of qualified biology faculty. Use of the area is restricted to supervised

educational classes or adult groups authorized by the Department of biology through the faculty coordinator.

The ten acres annexed from the Wesley farm shall be allowed to undergo succession and is not to be cut nor mowed except for spot mowing to control noxious weeds.