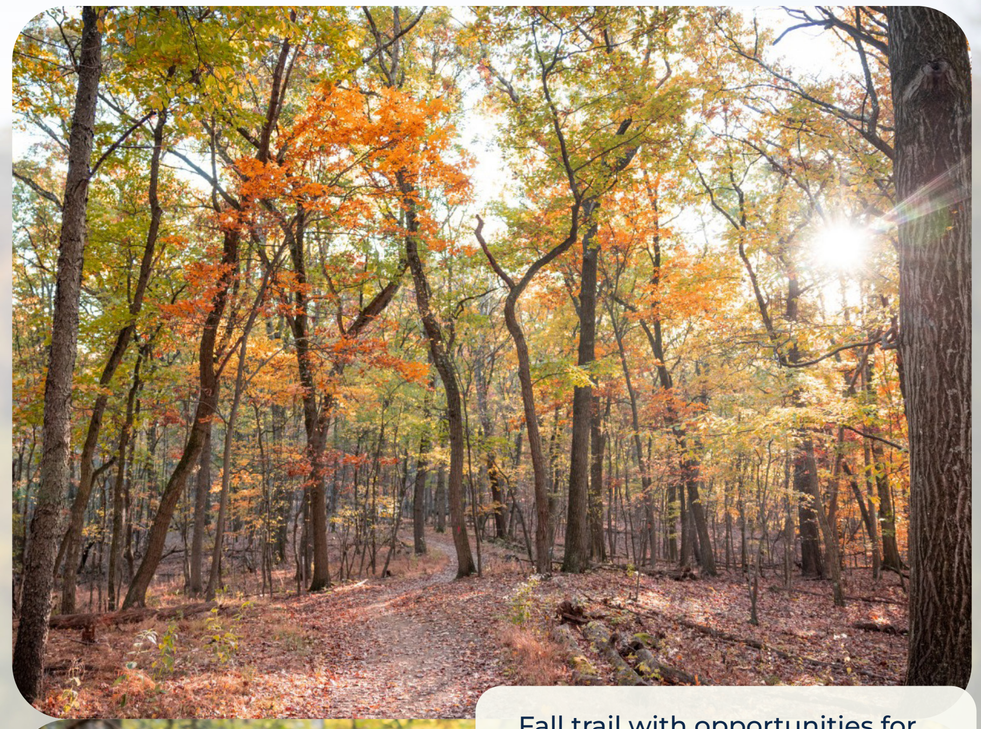
BUILDING BRIDGES TO BIODIVERSITY IN PUBLIC PARKS

Allegheny County Department of Parks *Pittsburgh, PA*
Joel Perkovich, PLA, ASLA

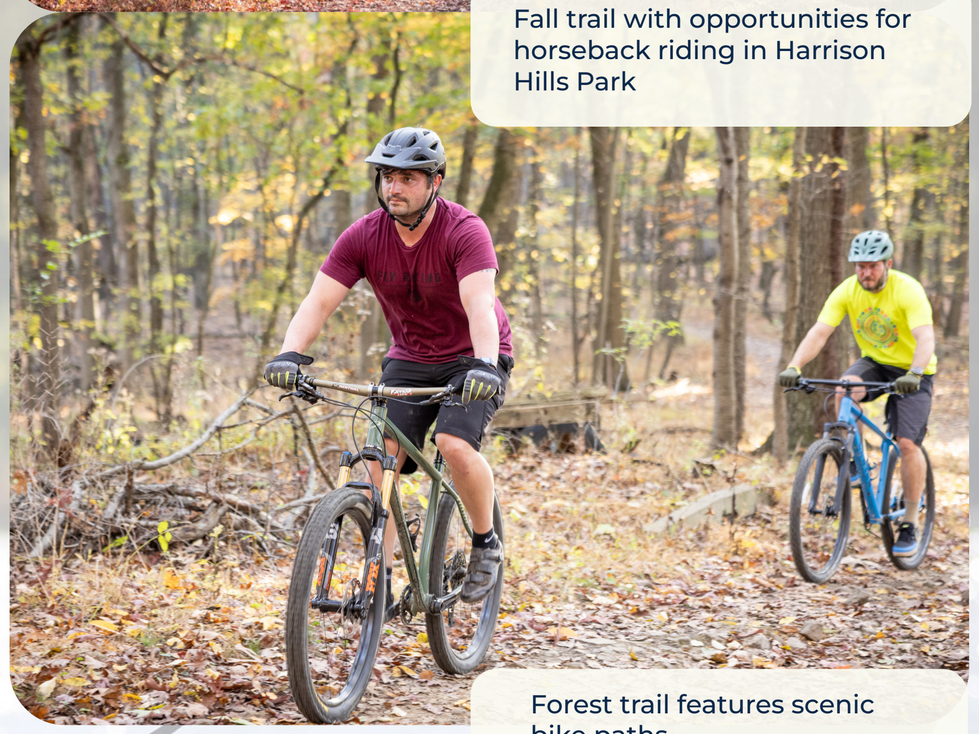
Joan Nassauer has had an indelible influence on my design aesthetic as a practicing Landscape Architect and her classic “Cues to Care” mantra has guided much of my work in the public realm. For the past eleven years I have served as lead landscape architect for the Allegheny County Department of Parks (ACDP) in Pittsburgh, PA, the nine-park, 12,000-acre park system serving the greater metro area. ACDP has a rich history of naturalistic design, dating back to its origins in the late 1920’s when prominent Landscape Architect Paul Riis designed the first two parks. Notably, Riis was a colleague of Jens Jensen, and the prairie-style aesthetic served as the park’s guiding design philosophy (shout out Bob Grese!). The acquired parcels of agricultural, mined, and clear-cut land were converted into what would become one of the country’s largest legacy regional park systems.

Thirteen meadows, on over 60-acres of former lawn, were designed and planted intentionally, so the public feels invited into those spaces. Initially, there was not an appetite for these types of landscapes. “It’s a bunch of weeds,” was a common critique. However, through good design, the use of appropriate seed mixes and install methods, the integration of wide, windy mowed paths in and around the meadows, and opportunities for seating, the meadows have now become a very popular feature.

Now the use of orderly frame instructs all our nature-based design work in the parks. Within pockets of large recreational complexes and public facilities, to sprawling hillsides of turf grass, we find ways to integrate native landscapes into everyday park spaces. With millions of visits each year, it has without question created a deeper connection to nature for park-goers, who delight in the diversity of what they now consider a worthy and acceptable feature of the “parkscape.” Thank You Joan!



Fall trail with opportunities for horseback riding in Harrison Hills Park



Forest trail features scenic bike paths



Dogs can roam free in off-leash park



Multiple art installations in sculpture garden at Hartwood Acres Park



Pump Track at Boyce Park

Design With Care: Joan Nassauer and the Importance of Ecological Design, Aesthetics and Management

The 2026 Whittemore Lecture in Landscape Architecture