

**Department of Parks
Director's Report
Thursday, January 24, 2008**

Events

- JANUARY 26 & 27 -- The Department of Parks will participate in the Camps and Summer Programs Expo at White Flint Mall.
- JANUARY 28 – Woodstock Equestrian Park community meeting, Owen's Local Park community center and park activity building, 7 p.m. The community will be asked to share their views on planning and design for equestrian park facilities.
- FEBRUARY 22— The 4th annual Green Matters Symposium: “Sustainable Sites—a new initiative to measure and recognize sustainability in landscape design, construction and maintenance” is at Brookside Gardens, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm. Sponsors include: Friends of Brookside Gardens, Winding Orchard Citizens Association, Brookside Gardens Chapter of the Azalea Society of America, Neighbors of Northwest Branch and the Montgomery County Group of the Sierra Club. Sponsors have donated \$2,550 to support the symposium. Co-hosts include: American Society of Landscape Architects, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and United States Botanic Garden. *Sold out* – but see www.BrooksideGardens.org for information. (Green Matters Symposium kicks off a year of programs dedicated to green issues in the workplace and at home, like sustainable landscaping, rain gardens, rain barrels, green cleaning products and healthy diet choices.)
- FEBRUARY 23 & 24—Brookside Nature Center's popular Maple Sugar Festival.
- MARCH 29 & APRIL 5—Open auditions for the ParkStar Search competition to find a teen host of *The Parks Show* this summer. The auditions will be held at Brookside Gardens and the Agricultural History Farm Park from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. See www.ParkStarSearch.com for more.

Capital Improvements

- The grout curtain installation is completed at Lake Needwood and the downstream filter blanket is approximately 40 percent complete -- pending weather, it is expected to be completed by March. The riser tower repairs are ongoing and are to be completed in February. The contractor is installing the remote monitoring system, which will also be installed at Lake Frank, and we expect the system to be operational by the end of January.

Management/Administration

- Parks staff has completed roof work over the fuel pumps Martin Luther King and the roof work over the diesel pump at Shady Grove has started.

Partnerships

- Information and forms related to partnering with the Department of Parks on projects, uses, and services have been added as new updates to the Public/Private Partnerships webpage from www.MontgomeryParks.org

3rd Party Support

- Parks staff is working with event planners of the Avon Walk for Breast Cancer, tentatively scheduled for May 3 and 4 at Norwood Local Park.
- Parks staff is working with event planners of the Walk for Hope, tentatively scheduled for October at Cabin John Regional Park.

Baseball and Softball

- Parks staff has cut, re-graded and replaced with sod all the infield “lips” at the ballfields at Cabin John Regional Park.
- First practice of the season with Georgetown on Povich Field, Friday, February 1.
- Ballfields 1 and 6 at Wheaton Regional Park are scheduled for renovation.

Field Sports

- Parks staff is gearing up for the spring season by ordering grass seed, paint, chalk and turf for the fields.

Property Management

- Parks staff has removed leaves, trimmed shrubs, removed shrubs and cleaned up the area around the newly acquired house at Hillmead Neighborhood Park.
- Parks contractors recently painted the Warner house and barn. It looks great!
- Parks property management staff expeditiously replaced a well pump at the Second Chance Wildlife Center this week within a few hours of receiving the service call with the help of vendor Tri-County Well and Pump.

Tennis

- Construction on the Wheaton Indoor Tennis facilities continues. Parks contractors hope to have both liners up by the end of January.
- Parks staff has re-located the court heaters, re-piped the gas lines and the electric at the Cabin John Indoor Tennis facility.
- Tennis champs at Cabin John Indoor Tennis:
 - Ben Woods, one of our tennis instructors at Cabin John, recently covered the Australian Open as a magazine photographer.
 - One of our women's doubles pairs that play regularly at Cabin John won the Banana Open in Olney, which qualified them for the national Banana Open in Hilton Head. The pair also won the Hilton Head tourney.
 - First-ranked 16-year-old in the mid-Atlantic Region, Linda Le, plays Saturday nights at Cabin John with a Chinese youth group.
- The Cabin John Indoor Tennis facility will be a polling place for the February 12 primary elections and will be given priority in the event of inclement weather.

Boating

- We have installed a new solar light in the parking lot next to the boat ramp at Black Hill Regional Park for night fishing and security.

Camping

- Parks staff is splitting firewood for the campsites.

Equestrian Centers

- The Potomac Horse Center received Board of Public Works approval for an Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share grant of \$100,000 to support the construction of the recently approved Waste Storage Structure.
- The Montgomery County Board of Appeals and Department of Permitting Services (DPS) are processing a refund to the Potomac Horse Center for a “special exemption” fee charged to them erroneously by DPS for many years.

Ice Skating

- The Cabin John Ice Rink had nearly 300 patrons during the free group lessons January 12 to celebrate National Skating Month.
- Currently, Cabin John Ice Rink has 1,462 students enrolled in its 6-week lesson session, which ends February 14.
- The Wheaton Ice Arena had 90 in its free group lesson for National Skating Month and 860 skating during the course of the day. Wheaton Ice also enjoyed record breaking sales in both the snack bar and pro shop for the day.
- Wheaton has 530 students enrolled its 6-week lesson series.

Trains, Carousels

- Air Land and Water Engineering, Inc. completed lead and asbestos testing at the Cabin John Train Station. Parks staff will review results and take appropriate action.
- ParkPASS will be installed at the Cabin John Train Station prior to the opening date.
- A new Wheaton train is scheduled for delivery in July. Spot repair of tracks and rail are in process.

Maintained Open Space

- Parks staff has re-painted trash cans and drilled drainage holes for placement in parks.
- Parks staff has replaced bench boards at Fox Hills and Tilden Woods parks.
- Parks staff has completed leaf collection in the regional parks.

Playgrounds

- Two new Playground Safety Inspectors have been hired in the southern region, one will be working out of the Cabin John Maintenance Facility and the other stationed at the Martin Luther King Maintenance Facility.
- The new playground at Black Hill Regional Park is almost complete.
- Coating of CCA treated wood at South Germantown’s Adventure Playground is 65 percent complete. Parks staff has completed sealing smaller play lots at Gunners Lake, Glen Hills, Heritage Farms, Merrimac and Willard Avenue.

Park Activity Buildings

- Parks staff has painted the interiors of park activity buildings at Meadowbrook Local Park and Glenmont.

Trails – Paved Surfaces

- Parks staff completed emergency repairs on the Acorn Park pathway.

Arboriculture

- Parks staff dug 372 trees, planted 30 trees and installed native grass plot at South Germantown Recreational Park.
- Parks staff has: installed a dedication bench along the Capital Crescent Trail, planted three trees at the Cabin John group picnic area, planted two trees at the Cabin John Ice Rink, planted one tree at the entrance of the Cabin John Maintenance Facility, planted five trees at Glen Mar Park, planted twenty trees at a reforestation site in Rock Creek Stream Valley and removed shrubs at the new property at Hillmead Park.
- Parks landscape crews are planting trees in various areas on Beach Drive and Sligo Creek Parkway.
- Parks staff has planted 100 trees thus far this season in the Rock Creek Area.
- Parks staff has planted approximately 60 trees so far, including 36 at a reforestation sites in the Black Hill area.

Natural Resources Management

- On Sunday, January 13, 21 public volunteers and 9 certified Weed Warriors and parks staff gathered at the Capital Crescent Trail to remove wintercreeper and English ivy vines, both non-native invasive plants, from trees along the trail. The volunteers worked south from Massachusetts Ave covering almost a mile along the trail.
- Parks staff is continuing to remove non-native invasives.

Archaeological and Historic Site Management

- Parks staff met with its consultant on the stabilization of the Darby Store.
- Parks staff met with its consultant on life safety upgrades to Meadowbrook Stables.
- Parks staff met with its consultant on accessibility improvements to Poole's House and Store.
- Parks staff reviewed bids for the stabilization of Seneca Stone Barn in Woodstock Equestrian Park.
- Parks staff is drafting an RFP, forming an internal team and clarifying the agreement on Woodlawn Barn.
- Parks staff sent a contract to the National Park Service for Historic American Engineering Recordation at WSSC Buildings.
- Parks staff added to and refined the ArcGIS layer for cultural resources stewardship needs.
- Parks staff held a volunteer reception last Saturday at Waters House for over 50 archaeology and history volunteers and guests. These volunteers contributed over 10,000 hours of dedicated service to the department over the past year. Service year awards were given to: Kathy Bumpass and Hugh Clayton (both 5 years); Mary Turner (10 years); Bob Hines (25 years). Service awards and Network to Freedom pins were given to Underground Railroad volunteers who had completed five hikes. Musicians Douglas Jimerson and the Civil War Comrades provided the entertainment.

Streams

- In July 2007, M-NCPPC contracted to replace the stream monitoring system for the Little Bennett Golf Course at Little Bennett Regional Park. The new system will enable the Montgomery Revenue Authority to monitor the water removal from Little

Bennett Creek for irrigation at the golf course and produce reports to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Water Resources Administration for permit compliance. The contractor is currently installing the control panels and the antennas for the monitoring system. The panel circuitry is scheduled to be installed beginning the week of January 28. The project is scheduled to be completed and the system on line by mid-February. Currently the project is approximately 60 percent complete.

Nature Centers

- Brookside Nature Center received the highest rankings among park facilities in the How Are We Doing Survey for calendar year 2007. The nature center received the highest marks in courtesy, helpfulness and program quality. This calendar year, Brookside Nature Center:
 - conducted 836 school and public programs;
 - enjoyed 24,715 attending programs;
 - generated \$76,695 in revenue.
- Brookside Nature Center is the only parks nature facility open Sundays, during which:
 - 3,500 visited and 42 programs were offered;
 - 134 outreach programs with 6,000 in attendance;
 - generated \$6,400 in revenue (many of the programs for Title 1 schools served at no charge); and
 - registered 103 volunteers, contributing 1800 volunteer hours.
- Park naturalists working cooperatively and across the department on the nature center strategic plan. The updated (from October 2004) nature center strategic plan is expected to be presented to the Planning Board in February.
- Parks staff is working on creating new Brookside Nature Center exhibits.
- Parks naturalists are updating trail directional signage for Wheaton Regional Park.
- Parks staff is installing new raised garden beds at Brookside Nature Center to promote native planting. This spring, Brookside Nature Center will have filled the new gardens with hummingbird/butterfly plants.
- The Black Hill Greenhouse is open for business! A group of 14 volunteers under the guidance of Park Naturalist Denise Gibbs have begun to propagate butterfly host and nectar plants from seed in our newly constructed greenhouse located in Black Hill Regional Park. These plants will be donated to Sally K. Ride Elementary School in Germantown to enhance a wetland on the school property. Second graders, who study butterflies as part of their science curriculum, will help with installation of these plants in May. We hope that students will use the improved area for their studies and enjoyment for many years to come. The intent is to donate plants, provide educational programs, and enhance habitat at a different MCPS elementary program each year.

Public Gardens

- The Garden of Lights show at Brookside Gardens closed on Sunday, January 6 after an 8-week run. The cold and rainy weather influenced attendance, and while figures didn't reach last year's exceptional heights, both attendance and revenue were strong. Light show staff are now dismantling exhibits and storing them for next year.
- The Spring Display opened in the Conservatory on Saturday, January 19, featuring the vivid colors and fragrances of orchids, camellias, jasmine and a variety of bulbs and other flower plants.

- Parks staff completed the stone wall in front of the Brookside Gardens Conservatory.

Archaeology and Historic Site Interpretation

- Parks staff met with the consultant team to discuss potential interpretive themes for “Uncle Tom’s Cabin (Riley Farm).”
- Parks staff drafted historic interpretive ideas for the Germantown Master Plan.
- Parks staff developed an interpretive action plan for Ziegler Log House.
- Parks staff worked with the Montgomery County Historical Society on potential bond bill for Waters House Barn Heritage Visitors Center.
- Parks staff submitted Maryland Heritage Area Grant ideas to the Heritage Tourism Alliance.

Park Police

- Park Police command and supervisory staff attended a one day leadership retreat at Park Police Headquarters. The training was highlighted by an interactive program that focused on diversity.
- Six new officers successfully completed the Montgomery County Police Academy on January 10. Officers Hodo, Meara, Long, Harrington, Murphy and Paulsen will begin their field training on January 20.
- Officers responded to 6,212 service calls in the month of December—despite the cold weather the parks system remains busy.

Mary R. Bradford

Director

Montgomery County Department of Parks