

**Department of Parks
Director's Report
Thursday, October 2, 2008**

Office of the Parks Director

- Park Development Division staff attended a symposium on Capital Project Cost Estimation hosted by Montgomery County Government at the AFI Silver Theater on September 15.
- Parks Deputy Director Mike Riley attended the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo), Parks and Recreation Affiliate meeting on September 19. The primary topic of discussion was the state's anticipated budget shortfalls and strategies to protect further erosion of Program Open Space funding to local governments.
- Park leadership staff held two recent meetings with our counterparts at the Montgomery County Department of Recreation regarding updating our 2004 interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on support, coordination, and planning for all our facilities; and to deal specifically with crosscutting issues for the upcoming mandatory referral for the new White Oak Community Center.
- Keith Miller of the Montgomery County Revenue Authority briefed us on the results of the recent stakeholders' sessions and the public comments and recommendations on their Sligo Creek Golf Course renovation proposal.
- We are working to develop a security needs assessment to ensure a secure work environment for our employees, now scattered in many buildings with a variety of alarms, entrance control, and other systems.
- Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan, under the direction of Lyn Coleman and Park Manager Wendy Hanley, was presented to the County Council on September 15, and was well-received with kudos to Lyn and her team for their work.
- We celebrated the illustrious and dedicated careers of our recent retirees, including chief planner Lyn Coleman, budget officer Varghese Cherian, landscape supervisor Bill Haller, 42-year park veteran Joe Hurt, and Captain Lisa Vasco of the Park Police.

Events

- OCTOBER 3—Fall Lecture Series at Brookside Gardens, "Eco-Design for Home Landscapes," by Lauren Wheeler, Principal, Natural Resources Design, Inc.
- OCTOBER 4 – Germantown Oktoberfest, Ridge Road Recreational Park, 10 a.m. to dark.
- OCTOBER 4 – Annual MOOseum Benefit, Waters House, 4 p.m.
- OCTOBER 4 & 5—Harvest Festival, 11:00 am – 4:00 pm, both days at the Agricultural History Farm Park. For more information visit www.AgHistoryFarm.org.
- OCTOBER 5—Mushroom Fair, Brookside Gardens Visitors Center, by the Mycological Association of Washington. Poetry in the Garden in the Japanese Tea House.
- OCTOBER 14-18 – National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Annual Congress in Baltimore. Includes M-NCPPC educational presentations and off-site tours of our facilities.
- NOVEMBER 1—Maryland Emancipation Day at Oakley Cabin, the Underground Railroad Experience Trail and Josiah Henson Site/"Uncle Tom's Cabin." More at www.ParksCulturalResources.org.

Partnerships

- National Public Lands Day on September 27 was a big success, in spite of the rain. Several volunteer cleanups, including the annual Sweep the Creek sponsored by the Friends of Sligo Creek, resulted in tons of trash and invasive plants being removed from our parks. Other projects, with volunteers led by Lynette Scaffidi, included cleanups along the Capital Crescent Trail (with help from the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail); Cabin John Stream Valley; Little Falls Parkway; and Rachel Carson Conservation Park. Scaffidi, Mary Chlan, and Lynn Vismara worked with volunteers from Identity, a group of Hispanic youth that give back to the community, and staff from Chevy Chase Bank on a great project at Wheaton Regional Park, ably assisted by Ed Docal and Nino Fama. Another group of volunteers, led by Ben Sugar, reconstructed Froggy Hollow natural surface trail in Little Bennett Regional Park. Hundreds participated in these events.
- Project proposals for Laytonia Recreational Park and South Germantown Recreational Park are currently under committee review. Parks staff anticipates making recommendations to the Planning Board on the most qualified bidders by the end of the year.
- Parks staff has come to an agreement on options and conditions for the proposed Korean Pavilion partnership at Cabin John Regional Park, involving replacement of an existing picnic pavilion.

3rd Party Support

- Park staff provided support for Burtonsville Days September 27 at Columbia Local Park.
- Parks managers, naturalists and parks archaeologists participated in the Damascus Community Fair, September 5 – 7, providing information, giveaways and nature crafts. The fair was well attended and provided a great opportunity to reach out to the community.
- September 14, the Washington DC Volksmarch Club held a walk at Little Bennett Regional Park. Seventy walkers participated in the 5K or 10K event.
- The Parks Half Marathon September 14 with the Montgomery County Road Runners was a big success, helped by a very generous donation of \$9500 from the sponsoring organization to help defray our expenses.

Baseball and Softball

- The Maryland Senior Olympics held events at Olney Manor Recreational Park, September 20 and 21 and September 25 – 28.

Tennis

- Fabric almost entirely on the Wheaton Indoor Tennis facility. Duct work for the AC and heat is following. The last step will be to resurface tennis floors. Classes are set to begin in the newly renovated center in December and we are gearing up by getting tennis staff and instructor crews in place.
- At the Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center, fall classes are underway. Seasonal times began September 11. New instructors are being hired. Note: this center will be a voting site for Election Day, November 4.
- Fall classes are underway on outdoor parks tennis courts. The second round of fall classes on the outdoor courts will begin in October. After the October sessions outdoor tennis classes will conclude for the season until spring.

Trains, Carousels

- More activities have been added to the Halloween train at Cabin John this season, including pumpkin ring toss games, crafts, face painting and more.

Maintained Open Space

- Parks staff is fielding complaints about newly established no-mow areas, delineated in limited areas in response to FY 09 budget cuts, at Ayrilawn Local Park, Merrimac Neighborhood Park and Brookmont Neighborhood Park. We are in daily dialogue with elected officials and upset neighbors, and are exploring choices within our existing resources.

Playgrounds

- A Job Corps volunteer group of nine students and one supervisor installed wood carpet at Fleming Local Park, Brookmont Neighborhood Park and Stratton Local Park playgrounds on September 19. The group has offered to help anytime, FREE of charge with just a few days notice.

Trails - Paved Surface

- The Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan public hearing, September 11, produced a good deal of testimony overwhelmingly in favor of trails and the mountain bike course. *The Gazette* and the *Montgomery County Sentinel* ran articles about the public hearing and trail corridor plan.
- Ireland Drive Trail access from the Forest Glen/Seminary neighborhood to Rock Creek Hiker/Biker Trail was reopened September 10, following the U.S. Army's repair of a crumbling bridge/culvert and a spillway below their Walter Reed facility at our request, and with the assistance of U.S. Rep. Chris Van Hollen. It was followed by a meeting this week among park staff, Army real estate personnel, Corps of Engineers, and Fort Detrick staff (taking over the Walter Reed facility October 1), regarding ownership, potential easements, and boundary issues to ensure its open use and trail connectivity. A field visit and walkthrough will be scheduled shortly.

Arboriculture

- Parks arborists provided 6 hours of training on September 10 for over 175 park employees on the importance of roots in relation to tree health.
- Parks arboriculture crews have finally caught up on service requests related to summer storms and are now concentrating on service request backlogs.

Horticulture

- Ongoing work: aftercare watering new trees and 2nd year trees, plus de-staking, pruning and watering; inspecting 90 ponds under contract for trash removal; cleaning trash rack at Olney Family Pond; filling tree holes, pruning and grading at Pope Farm nursery; hydroseeding backfilled pathway at Calverton Galway Park; and aerating athletic fields at Damascus Recreational Park and Blueberry Local Park.
- Countywide horticulturist updates:
 - Participated in White Oak Recreation Center Mandatory Referral review
 - Attended in-house training on tree work aerial rescue and hazard tree evaluation.

- Inspected contractor installed trees at Arora Hills Local Park to make additions to the punchlist for approval.
- Inspected Matthew Henson Trail with the project manager to determine specific locations and species for installation of about 600 plants along the trail this fall.
- Inspected the bioretention cells at Sligo-Dennis Avenue Local Park with a DEP representative to determine needed maintenance.
- Participated in a meeting regarding the renovation of Elm Street Local Park with the Bethesda Urban Partnership and other parks staff to determine a maintenance plan.
- Held tree planting team meeting at Black Hill Regional Park with all supervisors of planting crews countywide to determine planting plans for the upcoming season.

Natural Resources Management

- Our new Certified Weed Warrior Volunteer Supervisor position is up and running. Certified Weed Warriors who have one year experience or equivalent education or experience can now sign up to lead invasive plant removal projects for the public and organized groups, choosing which park to focus their energy in and meeting with parks natural resources staff to determine the logistics of a project. This expands our natural resources managers' abilities to operate additional non-native invasive management projects in more parks.
- The fall and winter deer management operations have been scheduled. More information, including dates when specific parks will be closed may be viewed at www.ParksDeerManagement.org.

Cultural Resources

- Cultural resources managers visited multiple houses in the parks property management office's portfolio slated for demolition and wrote four "Finding of Eligibility" forms for demolition properties.
- Friends of Oakley Cabin and the Underground Railroad held a successful History Day at Oakley Cabin on September 27.
- Bussard Farmhouse updates:
 - Organized a tour of the Bussard farmhouse at the Agricultural History Farm Park with Bussard family members to gather information for interpretation plan.
 - Conducted research for the docent manual for the Bussard Farm/Agricultural History Museum.
 - Opened the Bussard farmhouse for public tours on September 13 during the Bluegrass Festival with three docents.
 - Acquired new objects from private donors for the Bussard farmhouse collection.
- Drafted RFP for feasibility study on the Norwood Park Activity Building.
- Surveyed parks in Gaithersburg for Cultural Resources for the master plan. Developed ideas for the Germantown Master Plan amenity list.
- Researched and wrote implementation plan for Zeigler Log House museum.
- Darby House updates: conducted exterior lead abatement; painted the exterior; repaired the roof using original shingles; and received environmental testing report on the Darby Store.
- Coordinating efforts to develop new exhibits on Girl Scout history for Rockwood Manor.
- Coordinating Montgomery County Conservation Corps work on the Kingsley School restoration.

- Coordination and planning for Maryland Emancipation Day in November is underway. The October edition of *The Parks Show*, to begin airing October 5, previews the Celebration and features the Josiah Henson Historic Site/”Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” the Underground Railroad Experience Trail, and Oakley Cabin.
- Archaeology updates:
 - Thursdays, the Magruder High School and Richard Montgomery High School archaeology clubs volunteer by processing artifacts from the parks collections.
 - June 5 and September 4, the Archaeology program held its monthly labnight where volunteers worked on processing artifact collections from Oakley Cabin.
 - June 10, July 9, August 19, and September 2, Parks archaeology volunteer Don Housley gave history and archaeology presentations on Blockhouse Point Civil War Encampment to the Wheaton-Kensington Rotary Club, the Maplewood Park Place Senior Facility in Bethesda, the Chevy Chase Classic Residents Retirement home and the Sons of Confederate Veterans.
 - Saturday, September 13, Archaeology Society of Maryland and Richard Montgomery Archaeology Club members excavated the Acorn Hollow Site in Little Bennett Regional Park.
 - September 19, the parks archaeology program and Archaeology Society co-sponsored a lecture at Needwood Mansion given by local Professor Eugenia Robinson of Montgomery College describing her research on rockart in Guatemala.
 - Parks archaeology program staff is working with others on a potential easement for Selden Island, a significant prehistoric archaeological site in Montgomery County owned by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

Nature Centers

- Scilla Taylor is the new facility and program manager at Locust Grove Nature Center. The area in front of the center, designated as the future Nature Exploration Area, is in the second stage of review for possible funding. The first design draft is available and the center is encouraging visitor comment.
- Locust Grove will hold a mid-morning cider and doughnuts event in November to recognize the artistic work of Mark Tremper (parks’ champion tree climber occasionally seen around town as Woody the Tree), who carved animals out of downed trees in front of the center.
- Brookside and Locust Grove park naturalists are revamping some of the existing school programs this month and adding an off-site component to four specific programs for grades K-4.

Public Gardens

- The Friends of Brookside Gardens (FOBG) Annual Plant Sale was a great success. New this year was the addition of beautiful painted flower pots donated by the National Capital Society of Decorative Painters. All proceeds from the sale will support programs at Brookside Gardens.
- The first program of the Fall Lecture Series at Brookside Gardens was presented on September 19 by Doug Tallamy, Professor and Chair, Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology, University of Delaware, attended by approximately 95 visitors.
- Children’s Day at Brookside Gardens on September 20 welcomed several thousand children and their parents and grandparents. Titled “Growing up Green,” kids were able to participate

in a variety of hands-on crafts and activities. A free event, Children's Day was funded in part by the Friends of Brookside Gardens.

Park Police

- August 5, Park Police command staff and officers participated in National Night Out at several locations throughout the county.
- August 11, Park Police Captain Bise attended a meeting on demolition of two M-NCPPC houses on Spencerville Road.
- August 17-22, Acting Park Police Chief Manley and Lieutenant D. McClintock attended Police Legal Advisor training with a representative from the General Counsel's Office.
- August 29, Park Police Lieutenant Louketis attended Firearms Instructor Development training at the firearms range in Prince George's County.
- September 2, the Montgomery County Park Police Division began a month-long, countywide enforcement effort to address aggressive driving and pedestrian safety. The overtime program is funded by a grant from the Maryland Highway Safety Administration. Officers will target enforcement efforts on park roadways and trail/roadway intersections.
- September 6, Park Police worked with County and State Emergency Management officials to develop and implement plans for Tropical Storm Hannah. A coordinated response between Park Police and other park staff resulted in an efficient and effective response to the storm.

Mary R. Bradford

Director

Montgomery County Department of Parks