

**Department of Parks
Director's Report
Thursday, November 1, 2007**

Office of the Parks Director

- Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett, County Council Member George L. Leventhal and State's Attorney John McCarthy joined our park managers and volunteer services team at Wheaton Regional Park Saturday for a Community Service Day project with Identity, Inc., a non-profit organization, which serves the county's rapidly growing Latino community. Parks staff Lynette Scaffidi and Ed Docal led two groups at Wheaton for the day. *The Washington Post* ran an article about the volunteers in Sunday's Metro section of the paper (attached).
- I and nearly all of the department's units and divisions have been busily preparing the Department of Parks' fiscal year 2009 budget.
- The interview I taped in July with WETA-TV (PBS) for its WETA Guide show on unusual attractions in the region is expected to air Thursday, November 29 at 8:00 pm. The show will feature the department's Riley Farm/"Uncle Tom's Cabin." This half-hour program will rerun at least once again on Friday, November 30 at 10:30 pm and will also be available online at www.weta.org.
- The Commission will receive an award from the Maryland African American Heritage Preservation for the purchase of the Riley Farm/"Uncle Tom's Cabin" on Sunday, November 4.
- With Parks and Recreation directors from around the State, Mary Ellen Venzke and I attended a Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) meeting with Shaun Fenlon, Deputy DNR Secretary, regarding the goals and prospects for Program Open Space (POS) money in the upcoming Governor's budget. Today, November 1, is the Statewide POS Summit with Secretary John Griffin at the Prince Georges' Equestrian Center.
- Park Police activities include:
 - A presentation by Detective Bill Kellogg and Officer Sarah Mikalauskas to Jones Lane Elementary School students in Gaithersburg on crime scene processing. The students learned how to use fingerprint powder, blood and fluid detection agents, how surveillance cameras aid in catching criminals and how K-9 dogs are used to search crime scenes. Park Police received a packet of thank-you letters for the presentation.
 - Detective Cindy Weisman was honored by the Target Corporation at the Group 499 Law Enforcement Appreciation Luncheon last week for her efforts in the Russell and Williams cases at Beach Drive—a case which involved the theft of credit cards from vehicles on park property. Detective Weisman and numerous Park Police detectives, officers, civilians and special operations decoy teams worked in partnership with Silver Spring and Wheaton Assets Protection Teams to catch the two suspects and close the credit card fraud case, in which total losses amounted to over \$175,000.
 - This year's efforts to track gang activity in the parks have yielded 197 graffiti reports with 94 of those reports being gang-related tagging. Detective Jeff Price has made 11 arrests to date in these cases with 8 of those arrests identified as known gang members. Detectives from the Investigative Services Section are working with Montgomery County State Attorney's office to receive restitution

for damages to park equipment. Detective Price is sharing information with the local county task force and with the Governor's task force on gang-related issues.

Events

- NOVEMBER 3—Maryland Emancipation Day events at Woodlawn Manor, Sandy Spring Slave Museum and African Art Gallery and Oakley Cabin from 10:00 am – 4:00 pm. Program of celebration begins at Oakley Cabin at 2:00 pm and features special guest John W. Franklin, who will talk about future plans for the new African American History and Culture Museum on the National Mall.
- NOVEMBER 4—Trash pickup and invasive plant removal from 11:00 am – 1:00 pm at Long Branch Stream Valley Park. More “Save our Forests” volunteer opportunities at www.ParkPlanningandStewardship.org.
- NOVEMBER 16—Opening night reception for the 2007 Brookside Gardens Holiday Light show from 6:00 pm – 8:30 pm.

Management/Administration

- Parks staff is in the first phase of implementation for the year's snow plan, which includes preparing equipment for snow and ice removal and developing schedules.
- Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MSRA) Staph alerts were distributed to all M-NCPPC tenants, Enterprise facilities, and other areas throughout Parks and appropriate cleaning procedures have been put in place or supplemented.
- A segment of November's *The Parks Show*, “From the Director's Desk,” features a recap of the benefits to Montgomery County as a result of the 80 years of M-NCPPC.
- The December episode of *The Parks Show* will focus on “Winterizing the Parks” and feature information about the department's snow removal services.

Partnerships

- The Maryland Soccer Foundation at Soccerplex scheduled the first game on the new synthetic field (#20) on Monday, October 22. Fields 19 and 18 are scheduled for completion by November 8.
- Red Wiggler Farm has begun construction of a foundation for the permanent location for the solar house to be used as a residence for the manager of its program at Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park.

Property Management

- Exterior painting of the Warner Property in Kensington began October 29, using “first period” colors from 1894 to bring the structure back to that era. Parks exhibit staff will visually document the transition of the property through before, during and after project photos. Plans for the Warner Property include a feasibility study and a possible partnership if proposals yield viable candidates. A request for proposals (RFP) is slated to go out this fall.
- The Parks' property management office is developing major fiscal year 2009 budget initiatives and work program changes, including an infrastructure stewardship overhaul plan.
- A Legacy Open Space funding initiative is moving forward, proposing an increase to the current Legacy Open Space appropriation from \$50,000 annually to \$250,000 per year, to allow for making improvements to historic properties purchased with Legacy Open Space funds. We are encouraged by preliminary Montgomery County support.

- We collected an \$800 reimbursement from the county for solid waste fees assessed to vacant properties. This is a routine oversight measure staff has put in place because the state and county periodically apply assessments for services or taxes, which the Commission should not pay.
- Under our management of the Department’s agricultural leases (cropping, grazing, hay permits), three new agricultural leases were recently ratified—two cropping leases (one near Dry Seneca Creek Stream Valley and another in South Germantown) and one (horse) grazing lease adjacent to Muncaster Manor Local Park.

3rd Party Support (including pools)

- 2,000 attended the Walk for Hope at Cabin John Regional Park, Sunday, October 7.

Planning for Services

- Park development staff attended the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) kick-off meeting for the design of the White Oak Community Center to be located at April Stewart Lane Local Park and adjoining parkland on April Lane, east of Route 29.

Natural Resources Management

- Group volunteer non-native invasive plant removal continues, with projects held at Fleming Local Park, Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park, Blockhouse Point, Long Branch Stream Valley Park and Wheaton Regional Park. A trained Weed Warrior group volunteer project was also held at Northwest Branch Stream Valley Park #4 and parks staff held an evening presentation on “Non-Native Invasives and Citizen Volunteer Opportunities” for neighbors of the Northwest Branch.
- On October 15, parks aquatic ecologists with the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and freshwater fisheries staff from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources removed over 950 bass, sunfish and crappie from Pine Lake and relocated them to nearby ponds. Within the next few months, Pine Lake will be drained so that it can be dredged and re-engineered to provide better control of stormwater runoff; this is a joint Department of Parks and DEP project.
- Parks staff is recycling leaves (mowing/mulching) in all parks in the Martin Luther King Jr. service area, as well as saving trees from beavers at Martin Luther King, Jr., Recreational Park, using an environmentally friendly paint and sand mixture.

Trails

- More than 40 people attended a public meeting Tuesday, October 23 on the Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan. Located in the northeastern portion of the county, this proposed trail corridor extends northward from Rock Creek Regional Park to Rachel Carson Conservation Park and continues to the Patuxent River. Parks staff will present draft plan concepts to the Planning Board in January.
- The Montgomery Parks Heart Smart Trails are the Winning Website for the 2007 American Trails Website Contest for promotion of trails for health and physical activity. American Trails launched the first-ever contest to seek out the best websites in the cyberworld of trails and greenways. They looked for sites that really make trails come alive, and provide effective information delivery, support volunteers, and engage the public. See www.MontgomeryTrails.org.

- An area Eagle Scout installed log ladder steps from Cabin John Trail #1 to Cabin John Local Park. *The Gazette* featured the scout and Parks Trail Volunteer Coordinator Ben Sugar in an October 24 article.
- Parks staff installed two trash cans along the Capital Crescent Trail at River Road and Bethesda Avenue in response to citizen requests.

Nature Centers

- At Brookside Nature Center, staff supervised 40 students from Newport Mill Middle School in a project that included invasive plant species removal, collection of seeds in support of the Potomac Conservancy's Growing Native Project and a nature hike; staff is planning their 2008 summer camp schedule; met to brainstorm about reaching out to neighboring schools to use the nature center as a resource for wildlife and plant projects; and to encourage middle and high schools to come to the nature center as part of their school curriculum.
- Park Naturalist Brady Hartley has begun implementing of one of the pilot projects for the "Nature Everywhere" initiative, which encompasses all four of the parks nature facilities. She is going to two community centers and one Boys and Girls Club to offer afterschool nature programs, and visiting each center weekly; more than 100 children participated in the program in October. There is currently no charge for the program as it is a pilot project.
- Brookside Nature Center Volunteer Coordinator Jenny Aley is expanding the volunteer program at the nature center. All registered volunteers go through training, fingerprinting, receive a uniform and help with various duties around the nature center, including gardening, program aide, animal care, greeting the public, trail monitoring and bluebird nest box monitoring. There are currently 98 registered Brookside Nature Center volunteers.
- Black Hill nature programs offered a three-day kayak trip to Wye Island on the Eastern shore to enjoy the fall colors and gentle waters. Kayakers stayed overnight at the Department of Natural Resources lodge located within the state management area.

Public Gardens

- October 7, the Mushroom Fair was sponsored by the Mycological Association of Washington at Brookside Gardens.
- October 20-21, the Mum Show was sponsored by the Potomac Chrysanthemum Society at Brookside Gardens.
- Brookside Gardens Volunteer Coordinator Ellen Hartranft presented two sessions at the American Public Gardens Association's Volunteer Interaction Symposium, a national professional development workshop in Houston, Texas.
- On October 22, Voice of America's Indonesian Television used Brookside Gardens as a venue for filming eight stand-up spots for a program on earth conservation and the green movement. While filming in eight different locations, they talked about each of the garden areas and highlighted some of Brookside's green initiatives.
- WJZ-TV (Baltimore Channel 13) filmed a promotional spot at Brookside's Reflection Terrace for an upcoming interview with the ex-wife of John Muhammed.
- Boston's Arnold Arboretum Director of Living Collections Peter Del Tredici will present an in-depth look at one of the most ancient trees on the planet—the Ginkgo biloba—on Friday, November 2 as the fifth of six lectures at Brookside Gardens this fall celebrating the Year of the Tree.

Archaeology and Historic Site Interpretation

- Montgomery College's anthropology classes participated in the archaeological survey of Little Bennett Regional Park. Students learned the basics of a Phase I archaeological survey as they excavated Shovel Test Pits (STPS) along a grid, took soil and Munsell readings and collected cultural artifacts.
- Park Police Detective/Gang Officer Jeff Price gave a presentation about gang awareness to parks archaeology volunteers and members of the Mid-Potomac Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Maryland.
- Parks Archaeologist Jim Sorensen and volunteer associate Don Housley conducted a program about the milling history along the Paint Branch for 15 attendees through Montgomery College's lifelong learning class.
- Jim Sorensen led an excavation at a prehistoric site in Rock Creek Regional Park with participants from the Mid-Potomac Chapter of the Archaeological Society of Maryland.
- Seventh graders from The Bullis School donated student service hours to the parks archaeology program. Parks archaeology volunteer associate Don Housley introduced them to the archaeological process with a presentation about the work at Blockhouse Point Conservation Park. The students washed artifacts from collections previously excavated at Oakley Cabin and Newmantown (Agricultural History Farm Park).
- Parks staff attended a meeting about the Purple Line right of way and its potential impact on cultural resources (archaeological and historical) within parkland.
- The Magruder and Richard Montgomery Archaeology Clubs worked on the curation and washing of the backlogged archaeological collections.
- FEMA Archeologist Dana Linck volunteered with the parks archaeology program and discovered an archaeological site on the Needwood Mansion property. The site will be further investigated by the archaeology summer workshop programs.
- Parks volunteer associates Vivian Eicke and Don Housley gave a presentation about Blockhouse Point to students of Montgomery College's lifelong learning class.

Baseball and Softball

- A Bethesda Chevy Chase (BCC) baseball camp has been proposed for Westmoreland Hills Local Park.
- A supplemental appropriation request was introduced by the County Council to continue funding the maintenance of school fields through the Department of Parks.

Field Sports

- Parks staff has renovated the soccer field at Nolte Local Park.
- The Jessup Blair soccer field will be closed for renovations.
- Parks staff met internally last week to discuss portable soccer goal use, field use and permit operations in area parks.

Multi-use Courts

- With Park Police, parks staff re-opened handball courts at Wall Local Park October 23, after cleaning up the courts from homeless squatting, repairing locks, lights and painting the interior.

Tennis

- Parks staff installed newly formatted “Tennis Rules and Regulations” signs at Colesville and Pinecrest local parks.
- Lighting improvements are planned for the outdoor tennis courts at Cabin John Regional Park.
- Due to participant requests, outdoor tennis classes were extended for another series (10/ 22 –11/8). There are four classes at Cabin John Regional Park and seven at Olney Manor Recreational Park. We have received some great evaluations regarding the instructor’s knowledge and helpfulness as well as the content of the classes.

Equestrian Centers

- Great and Small Executive Director Sarah Phelps, of the therapeutic riding program operated at Rickman Farm Horse Park, has been chosen among six Washington area women to receive the 13th Annual WJLA-TV Tribute to Working Women award.

Ice Skating

- The Wheaton Ice Skating academy members, coaches and their gold, silver and bronze medal winners were featured in a WUSA-TV (Channel 9) news story.
- The “Spooky Skate” on Friday, October 26 was a hit at both the Wheaton Ice Arena and Cabin John Ice Rink with increased attendance for this time of year, and increased sales at the snack bars.
- Wheaton In-Line/Ice Rink staff laid down the sheet of ice last week and the facility is now in winter operation mode. The rink is home to about 15 high school hockey teams and 2 leagues. Friday night is high school game night.

Trains, Carousels

- The “Eye Spy” Halloween Train at Cabin John Regional Park was cancelled October 19 due to rain, however the holiday train has grossed, to date, \$6,516 and more than 400 cans of food for Manna Food of Rockville. Some of the eye spy props were vandalized on Sunday, October 21; a report was filed with Park Police. *The Gazette* and *Washington Post* covered the Halloween trains at Cabin John and Wheaton.

Playgrounds

- On October 22, in response to patron concern about staph infection, the play equipment at Falls Road Local Park’s Hadley’s playground was disinfected with a bleach solution. The park was closed from approximately 11:30 am until 6:00 pm.
- Parks staff interviewed prospective Playground Safety Specialists October 23 at Cabin John headquarters in order to fill two vacant positions.

Event Centers

- Parks central maintenance staff completed roofing work on all of the outbuildings at Rockwood Manor and will soon begin work on the Manor house.

Mary R. Bradford

Director

11/1/2007