

**Department of Parks  
Director's Report  
Thursday, April 10, 2008**

**Office of the Parks Director**

- Department staff participated in the preparation of the Semi-Annual Report to the County Council, which was presented this week by the Director.
- Our request for a supplemental appropriation for the FY 08 operating budget was approved by the County Council for an amount slightly in excess of \$200,000, but less than the \$403,000 we requested. We had been moving rapidly to fill vacant positions, an effort that has slowed down considerably recently as we anticipate future budget tightening in FY 09.
- The Maryland legislative session produced a number of new bond bills and other measures that affect Montgomery Parks. We will be analyzing the session results and will share the outcome in our next report.
- I attended a “visioning” session for the Wheaton redevelopment project, representing the need for open space and parks, and discussing improvements and suggested changes to existing parks in the Wheaton vicinity.
- I joined park staff in a site visit to examine the historic Winderbourne House, Boyds, adjacent to Black Hill Regional Park. The property is on the market for sale, but would need extensive and costly work.
- I met with Mary Kay Harper regarding the Waters House Barn proposal for adaptive reuse of that historic space, and we agreed upon a cooperative approach to take the project forward.
- I attended evening public hearings and meetings on the recently-acquired addition to Hillmead Neighborhood Park in Bethesda, and a public outreach planning session for renovations to Battery Lane Urban Park. We are awaiting a final report from DHCA regarding their proposed group home use of the existing house on the Hillmead property.
- We held two successful open auditions for our first-ever ParkStar Search competition to find a teen host of *The Parks Show* this summer with 39 very talented local teens. The competition will be narrowed down to around 5 finalists and we will open up public voting online May 1, at [www.ParkStarSearch.com](http://www.ParkStarSearch.com). Some of the audition footage is on this month's episode of *The Parks Show*, airing now on County Cable Montgomery, which is green-themed and highlights the department's conservation efforts and the Weed Warrior program.
- This past Saturday, April 5, fourteen of our parks were cleaned up by groups such as the Friends of Rock Creek's Environment (FoRCE), the Olney Mill Community Association, employees of Winchester Homes, the Mid-Atlantic Climbers Access Fund and Crossroads Youth Opportunities Center as part of the Potomac River Watershed Cleanup Day, sponsored by the Alice Ferguson Foundation. Our Volunteer Services office is managing several more volunteer park cleanups every weekend in April. See [www.ParksVolunteers.org](http://www.ParksVolunteers.org) for more information.
- We have 818 registered in our total of 192 summer camps being offered this year. Twenty of our camps are already full and revenue to date for our camps is \$111,415.00.
- Within the last two weeks, five families have benefitted from our fee reduction program and were issued 19 fee reduction coupon books to our facilities.

## Events

- APRIL 26—Maiden Lane Urban Park Community Celebration for our 400<sup>th</sup> park, with the neighborhood, from 11:30 am – 1:00 pm, 7522 Oldchester Road in Bethesda.
- APRIL 27—Montgomery Parks Arbor Day Celebration, 11:00 am – 4:00 pm, rain or shine, Agricultural History Farm Park, 18400 Muncaster Road in Derwood.
- MAY 1—Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center at Cabin John Regional Park Dedication, 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm, 7801 Democracy Boulevard in Bethesda. See [www.CabinJohnTennis.com](http://www.CabinJohnTennis.com)
- MAY 10—Archaeology Day, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm, Needwood Mansion, 6700 Needwood Road in Derwood. See [www.ParksArchaeology.org](http://www.ParksArchaeology.org)

## Capital Improvements

- We are requesting proposals, through our Park Development Division, to develop a multi-year, multi-disciplinary contract for architectural, landscape architectural and engineering services to streamline the process for hiring outside consultants to provide assistance with developing facility plans, detailed designs, land surveys and a variety of other tasks.

## Property Management

- Parks property management staff and park managers cleaned up parkland off Clopper Road, in Boyds, across from the Little Seneca Lodge. The debris removed included old engine parts and lots of trash.
- We successfully demolished two park houses in Clarksburg identified as inhabitable.
- Parks property management staff is transitioning the remote, vacant Armstrong House in Wheaton Regional Park to parks regional staff for oversight and additional office space. The Armstrong House features an historic barn and parks staff is exploring preservation options and caretaker responsibilities.
- Two vacant park houses were broken into resulting in minor damages and follow up with Park Police.

## 3rd Party Support

- Black Hill Regional Park managers and Park Police supported event managers of the Sizdah Bedar Festival at the park Sunday, April 6. The park filled up quickly with thousands of celebrants and had to be closed in the afternoon, with some confrontations as a result, all managed well by Park Police and park staff with assistance from coordinators of the event.

## Baseball and Softball

- Parks staff has sprayed football fields with Round Up to control winter weeds while Bermuda grass is still dormant.
- Park managers in the Martin Luther King maintenance area have started their spring aeration program on the athletic fields.
- Renovation of the backstop and players bench areas at Hillandale and Calverton Galway local parks has been completed.
- All Cabin John Regional Park fields look great and are ready for play.
- Parks staff has sprayed fields for grass growth to prepare for spring play.
- Park managers held a pre-construction meeting April 2 at Povich Field to discuss the second wall of donation bricks.

- The Adopt-a-Field Little League Field, a product of our Public-Private Partnerships program, is ready at North Chevy Chase Local Park after excellent preparatory work by park staff, and first day of play is scheduled to be this Saturday.

### **Field Sports**

- Parks staff is fielding complaints regarding field use at Burning Tree, a CUPF permitted field and have spoken with the principal of the school and have made calls to the athletic director who is permitting the field for lacrosse practice.
- Parks staff prepared all fields for opening games in the Meadowbrook area.
- Rock Creek Regional Park staff recently constructed a regulation size sand volleyball court.

### **Tennis**

- Parks staff has completed the Cabin John Indoor Tennis lottery for weekly court time for the 2008-2009 Season.

### **Ice Skating**

- Annual spring skating show, “Spring Bling,” at the Cabin John Ice Rink will be Sunday, May 4 at 4:00 pm. Admission is free.
- Cabin John Ice Rink in conjunction with the Washington Figure Skating Club is putting in a bid to host the South Atlantic Regional Figure Skating Competition, October 2009. This is a big event and will bring a lot of people and publicity to our facility.
- Wheaton Ice Arena staff is working on a partnership for the In-Line Facility with Pride Hockey, a high school level girls elite program.
- Group lesson registrations at both ice rinks begin April 15.

### **Mini Golf, Splash Playground**

- Parks staff at South Germantown Recreational Park completed maintenance on the miniature golf course in preparation for the season opening on Saturday, April 5.

### **Trains, Carousels**

- Parks staff met with Maryland State Inspector to approve the train tracks. Cabin John Train was open the week of Spring Break and will be open weekends and days MCPS schools are off, weather permitting, until it opens full time after Memorial Day.

### **Maintained Open Space**

- Parks staff is grading and adding top soil and seed at several locations: Cabin John Local Park, Beverly Farms and Heritage Farm.
- Parks staff also pruned trees along the soccer field for safe play at Buck Branch.

### **Picnic Shelters**

- Parks staff repaired the shelter at Long Branch and Wayne due to tree damage.
- A new picnic area was completed at Norbeck Meadows Park.
- A small picnic shelter was constructed for the Lake Needwood Boat Dock area.

## **Playgrounds**

- Parks staff replaced the retaining wall at West Fairland.
- Parks staff has finished sealing the treated lumber at the Adventure Playground and tot lot.

## **Park Activity Buildings**

- The exterior of the Hawk's Reach activity building at Little Bennett Regional Park has been painted.
- The Garrett Park Nursery School, a permitted occupant of the activity building in Garrett Park, is being relocated temporarily to another of our facilities while work continues on testing for lead paint.

## **Event Centers**

- Parks staff has put a new roof on the Manor house at Rockwood and new windows will be installed in Brooke Hall in the few weeks.
- The floor has been refinished at the Lodge at Little Seneca Creek.
- Woodlawn Manor has had a busy spring with many school field trips put on by our partner. The exterior of Woodlawn is scheduled for painting in May.

## **Scenic Parkway Experiences**

- A 5k Run/Walk for Darfur is scheduled from University to Forest Glen 9:00 am - 1:00 pm on Saturday, April 26.

## **Trails - Paved Surface**

- Parks staff is installing several new benches along the Heart Smart trail at Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park.
- The new paved surface trail crew is on board, receiving training and beginning several projects.

## **Arboriculture**

- Jeanne Kavinski has been hired as the Parks Urban Forester to plan and implement the annual tree inspection program and inspect for hazards in parks in all active use areas.
- The Gypsy Moth suppression program is in the final stages of preparation.
- The Historic, Significant and Champion Tree program is up and running. An inventory of trees is being prepared. Mulch rings are being installed around the base of the historic trees, to improve the health of the trees by providing a healthy environment for roots to thrive.
- Parks arborist is continuing work with the University of Maryland to help improve their four-year Urban Forestry Program. This includes reviewing course requirements, suggesting curriculum, providing classroom instruction as a guest lecturer and reviewing student projects.
- Parks arborist is working with Montgomery College Landscape Maintenance program to help develop a tree climbing course.
- The wind storms on March 16 caused damage in 17 parks, with 30 trees being blown down and numerous trees damaged. Parks arboriculture crews responded to three after hour emergency calls for service and completed clean-up from the storm damage by March 25.
- Parks staff has planted over 240 trees in South Germantown Recreational Park.

## Horticulture

- Parks countywide horticulturist:
  - Provided inspection of contractor installed plant material for reforestation/restoration projects at Reddy Branch and Northwest Branch Stream Valley;
  - Provided consultation to parks regional staff for tree planting projects at Ken-Gar Park, Rock Creek Stream Valley, Ovid Hazen Wells and Fairview Park;
  - Field located large Pope Farm trees for contractor tree moving project at Watkins Farm, Water's House, Ovid Hazen Wells and Water's Landing parks;
  - Participated and provided comment on tree preservation, landscape installation and facility plans by participating on internal teams for White Oak Recreation Center Mandatory Referral, Longbranch Walkway Bridge Plan, Northwest Branch Recreational Park and Llewelyn Fields park;
  - Reviewed and provided comment on landscape plans for Elm Street Park renovation and Clarksburg Village Local Park;
  - Provided consultation for donor tree projects at Argyle Park, Greenwich Local Park and Brookside Nature Center and tagged nursery trees to ensure quality material was provided for projects;
  - Field located Elms for installation at the Warner Property; and
  - Conducted pesticide review session for 50 staff at Cabin John Regional Park.
- The department's Pope Farm:
  - Completed the planting of 30,000 annual starter plugs; greenhouses are now in full production of annuals that will be used in the county parks for summer;
  - Potted up 380 new bareroot shrubs for container production so far;
  - Planted 1300 liners in the field;
  - Provided 950 trees to be planted in parks countywide this spring;
  - Provided 73 containerized shrubs for parks and public gardens during the month of March; and
  - Recruited two new volunteers for Pope Farm.
- Pope farm also provided plants for the following special events during the month of March:
  - Tropical plants were provided for the Montgomery's Best Award ceremony (in coordination with the Montgomery county government);
  - Tropical plants and centerpieces were provided for the Commission's Safety Award ceremony;
  - Tropical plants were provided for the Green Matters Symposium at Brookside Gardens on February 22;
  - Plants were grown and given as a thank you gift for the volunteers in horticulture at the Volunteer Horticulture Consortium on March 27;
  - Indoor plants were provided for Cabin John Ice Rink for beautification of lobby area;
  - Plants were provided to Brookside Gardens for sale in the gift shop; and
  - 500 pansies and violas were grown and given to Brookside Gardens for use in the gardens for early spring color.
- Horticulture Service crews hydroseeded the slope next to Wheaton Tennis Bubble construction site to stop soil erosion.
- Horticulture Services crews have planted 221 trees along the Matthew Henson Trail this spring.

## **Natural Resources Management**

- On Thursday, April 3, parks natural resources stewardship staff hosted the fifth annual thank-you party for Weed Warrior volunteers. The celebration marks the ninth anniversary of a hugely successful volunteer effort that has trained more than 500 citizens and generated more than 25,000 hours devoted to the removal of tree-killing invasive vines and other non-native plants. Director of Parks Mary Bradford thanked the more than 60 Weed Warriors in attendance, program creator Carole Bergmann gave a report on program status, Jayne Hench said a few words about the importance of volunteer efforts and main speaker Rob Gibbs spoke about “The Wildlife/Habitat Connection,” emphasizing how critical native plant populations are to the survival of park system animals.
- Parks wildlife ecology unit staff completed its fiscal year 2008 deer management efforts in March, removing 858 deer from 15,000 acres of parkland.
- The pond at Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park has been stocked with trout for the upcoming fishing season.
- Cabin John Local Park staff removed Bamboo from the Capital Crescent Trail and Cabin John Local Park.
- An Eagle Scout project to remove non-native invasive plants took place on Sunday, April 6 at Needwood Mansion. A similar project was completed by students at Poolesville High School last weekend.
- Park managers at Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park worked with volunteers from the YMCA to wrap wire mesh around trees near the pond to protect them from the beavers.
- The Maryland Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) awarded the 2008 Showcase Award for Best Website to the department’s Wild Montgomery website at [www.WildMontgomery.org](http://www.WildMontgomery.org) The site was a collaboration between parks natural resource staff, park information staff and the research and technology team.

## **Archaeological and Historic Site Management**

- Parks staff conducted a site visit and preliminary assessment of Winderborne.
- Parks staff prepared for annual curatorial meeting on Boyd-Maughlin House.
- Parks staff worked with staff across the department on plans for the Armstrong House and Stubbs Barn.
- Parks staff determined curatorial boundaries for Joseph White House Request for Proposals.

## **Trails - Natural Surface**

- Parks staff removed a fallen tree on the Cabin John Trail, removed down tree at Buck Branch and added water bars, picked up debris and trash between Democracy and Bradley boulevards along Blue Trail.

## **Nature Centers**

- Brookside Nature Center staff is working internally to revamp some of the nature center trails that are highly eroded or have safety concerns.
- Two Eagle Scout projects have been completed for Brookside Nature Center—flying squirrel nest boxes and feeders have been replaced and installed to replace old, rotting boxes and new bluebird nesting boxes have been installed in various locations in the region.

- Currently Eagle Scouts are working to beautify the grassy knoll area in the Brookside Nature Center parking lot with walkways, benches and a trellis to make a focal point for visitors. Raised beds will be filled mid May with butterfly/hummingbird plants.
- Naturalists are working with parks Grants Manager Tin-Mala on a proposal for two nature exploration areas, one for Locust Grove Nature Center and another for Brookside Nature Center. If funding is received, the two areas will highlight unstructured play in a natural setting within the confines of a fenced in area.
- Parks naturalists appreciated their volunteers during an event last month at the Lodge at Little Seneca. The astronomy-themed event saw 120 attending for dinner, an awards ceremony and guest speaker.
- Brookside Nature Center will have nine new interpretive plaques installed on the wooden walkway leading up to the nature center by late May.

### **Public Gardens**

- Volunteer training began on April 1 for volunteers working the Wings of Fancy Live Butterfly Exhibit at Brookside Gardens. Last fiscal year, 208 volunteers donated 4,042 hours to keep the show up and running, including maintaining USDA containment regulations, interpreting the butterfly lifecycle to visitors and providing tours for school groups.
- Gardens staff worked the Horticultural Consortium of the Greater Washington Metropolitan Area to present the 14th annual volunteer appreciation day. Hosted at Meadowlark Gardens in Vienna, Virginia, the day featured workshops, tours and a garden writer's panel. There were 275 volunteers registered.
- The Brookside Gardens spring Lecture Series began on Friday, March 21. The series of five free programs features local and nationally-known speakers addressing a variety of gardening topics. It focuses on green issues, from sustainable landscaping to green cleaning products.
- Brookside Gardens was featured as the cover photo and feature article of a new publication, *Trips and Getaways: Mid-Atlantic Travel Destinations*.
- The Maryland Recreation and Parks Association (MRPA) awarded two Showcase Awards to Brookside Gardens. The first, Best Logo, was awarded for "Tree-iage" logo a one day special event that focused on tree care and maintenance for homeowners. The second, for Best Facility Brochure, was awarded for Brookside Gardens' Xperience: Guide to Programs and Events, a publication printed twice a year to promote educational classes, special events, plant shows and sales, and Conservatory displays.
- Brookside Gardens staff participated in a booth at the Maryland Home and Garden Show in Timonium organized by the Maryland Public Gardens Consortium. The Consortium, a volunteer led organization, promotes the value of public gardens to the community, provides advocacy support and networking opportunities for horticultural professionals in the state.
- Parks staff has completed the flagstone work in rear conservatory at the Gardens.

### **Archaeological and Historic Site Interpretation**

- Six of our heritage sites are participating in the 11th annual Heritage Days event on June 28-29, from 12pm-4pm. These sites are:
  - The Riley Farm/Uncle Tom's Cabin
  - Blockhouse Point
  - Woodlawn Manor
  - Underground Railroad Experience Trail

- Oakley Cabin
- Bussard Farm/Agricultural History Farm Park
- Parks staff provided an orientation meeting to Oakley Cabin and Underground Railroad volunteers.
- Parks staff met with master craftsman to restore log room at Ziegler Log House for interpretation.
- Parks staff held startup meeting on Burnt Mills/WSSC for documentation with National Park Service.
- Parks staff completed determination of eligibility of National-Register status for Seneca Stone Barn.
- A well-attended public presentation was made to interested parties on the Historic Structure Report for Riley Farm/Uncle Tom's Cabin.

### **Park Police**

- Park Police attended the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Public Safety Awards ceremony. Officers participated in the honor guard and served on the organization committee.
- Park Police hosted its own annual awards ceremony in which officers and parks staff were recognized. Approximately sixty awards and letters of recognition were given to staff and community members for outstanding commitment and community service. The ceremony included a breakfast buffet and was well attended by community members, commission employees and local dignitaries.
- Park Police Division Chief Nathaniel Barber retired from the Commission after 28 extraordinary years of service. He was honored in a ceremony before the Montgomery County Planning Board in March, and at a retirement party on March 26. Captain Darien Manley has been selected as Acting Division Chief pending recruitment and selection of a permanent replacement. We welcome Acting Commander Manley back to the Montgomery side of the Commission from his most recent position in Prince Georges.
- Park Police canine officers and their partners completed narcotics detection training hosted by the Baltimore County Police Department. The fully trained teams have now been assigned to patrol squads and are actively patrolling the park system.
- Park Police received their fourth accreditation award from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA) on March 15, during their spring conference in Atlanta Georgia. CALEA requires accredited agencies to undergo a comprehensive review every three years to determine if the agency has continued to maintain compliance with all CALEA mandatory standards and receive re-accredited status for another three years.
- Park Police, during a three-week period from January to March, provided support to parks natural resources staff for the deer management program. Park Police officers participated as sharpshooters to cull deer in designated parks to meet goals set by natural resources staff. The program was conducted safely and this year as in past years was deemed to have successfully met established goals.

*Mary R. Bradford*

*Director*

*Montgomery County Department of Parks*