

**Department of Parks
Director's Report
Thursday, May 22, 2008**

Office of the Parks Director

- We finalized work with the County Council on the FY 09 Parks Operating Budget, and we are working to figure out how we take the cuts – not only did we lose our new initiatives and base budget improvements, we did not even get our same-service level funding, meaning cuts in programs, maintenance, and the appearance of our parks, which will be hit hard.
- Our office has been coordinating with the Wheaton Regional area Park Manager and Tree Crew in communicating with North Four Corners Community Association regarding removal of three trees at North Four Corners LP, near the Activity Building and Playground area.
- The tree crews are busy throughout the park system dealing with downed trees due to recent weather conditions, and our office is fielding many citizen calls for assistance.
- To spread the word about parks, we wrapped one of our courier vehicles with our web address www.montgomeryparks.org and photos of children headed out to enjoy a day in the parks. The wrap lasts for 3 years and was put on our courier van, which travels countywide. The newly wrapped vehicle hit the streets on May 15 – watch for it! (*Attachment 1*)
- We have been in discussion internally and with the new mayor of Garrett Park, Chris Keller, on annual operating costs and long-term life cycle of the Garrett Park Recreation Building (Activity Center) and a possibility of transferring the facility to town of Garrett Park. We will follow up with a discussion with town officials.
- Acting Deputy Director Giddens continues to work with Division Chiefs and key staff to develop new Performance Measurements for Program Elements for FY10 budget.
- We are delighted that the Executive Director provided a waiver to our Administrative Procedure No. 04-03 to allow the purchase of safety shoes for seasonal workers.
- We are in the process of assigning staff to the new MCGEO Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA).
- We are coordinating with Prince George's County Parks and Recreation Maintenance and Development Division and our Central Maintenance Division for assignment of Trade Staff for weekend emergency/standby coverage of all facilities.
- With the Revenue Authority, we are having bi-weekly Sligo Creek stakeholder meetings regarding Golf Course proposals, and hosted one of those meetings this past Tuesday night at Parkside headquarters.
- Finally, we were pleased to conduct Health and Fitness Day on May 13 for both Planning and Park staff – thanks to all who participated.

Events

- NOW THROUGH SEPTEMBER 21—The 11th season of the Wings of Fancy Live Butterfly Exhibit is open at Brookside Gardens, featuring butterflies from Asia, Costa Rica and North America flying freely among tropical flowering nectar plants.
- MAY 22—7:30 p.m. at Needwood Mansion: The parks archaeology program will host a presentation by Forensic Anthropologist Christopher Dudar, PhD of the Smithsonian Institution who will discuss documenting human remains using X-ray fluorescence analysis. A pre-meeting dinner is 6:00 pm at Mannequin Pis in Olney. Contact Parks Archaeologist Heather Bouslog at heather.bouslog@MontgomeryParks.org (301-840-5848) to participate.
- JUNE 28—Special viewing of Uncle Tom's Cabin, 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm, with a panel discussion led by Dr. Cheryl LaRoche and Dr. Diane Swann-Wright at the Tilden Center/Francis Scott Key Middle School, 6300 Tilden Lane in Rockville from 12:00 noon – 1:15 pm followed by tours of the house and cabin from 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm. For more visit www.JosiahHensonSite.org.

- JUNE 28 & 29—The 11th annual Heritage Days weekend, from 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm. Six parks sites will be open for the celebration: Civil War Blockhouse and Outpost Camp, Bussard Farm at Agricultural History Farm Park, Underground Railroad Experience Trail, Woodlawn Manor House, Riley House/”Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” and Oakley Cabin. See www.HeritageMontgomery.org for more.

Capital Improvements

- In April we completed the reconstruction of parking Lot “P”, in Olney Manor Recreational Park.
- Access road reconstruction is currently underway in Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park. The reconstruction is expected to be complete by June 30.
- We recently began construction of the new Trolley Museum under an M-NCPPC Construction Permit. The preconstruction meeting was held on April 25.
- We are beginning to advertise bids for the design of the much-delayed Town Center park in Germantown, with planning in 2009 and construction slated for spring 2010. (*Attachment 2*)

Management/Administration

- Parks staff attended Lyme disease training recently.
- Park managers have been fielding a few complaints and compliments regarding the management of the Avon Walk at Norwood Local Park in May. The walk raised over \$8.1 million for breast cancer research.

Partnerships

- The Maryland Soccer Foundation has agreed to become the project manager for the softball field #4 relocation within South Germantown Recreational Park.
- Parks volunteers cleaned up between Connecticut Avenue and Beach Drive on May 11.
- A parks banner will be placed on fence this weekend in North Chevy Chase Local Park by Bethesda Little League.
- Parks managers held a meeting on the proposed Korean Pavilion on May 15.

Property Management

- Park managers began maintenance at the newly acquired Wohlfarth property in Chevy Chase.
- All park houses are currently rented.

Baseball and Softball

- Parks managers assisted Miller and Long with stump removal at Povich Field in Cabin John Regional Park.

Tennis

- Media coverage of the dedication of the Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center at Cabin John Regional Park on May 1 included the sports section of the *Washington Post*, the *Gazette*, WRC-TV, Comcast Sports Network and the *Potomac Almanac*, among others, and featured interviews with keynote speaker Billie Jean King. Parks staff assisted the event by repainting the facility, installing new graphics and displays, delivering barrels, planting flowers, power washing the entrance way, replacing signs, removing large piles of cardboard and carpet from the woods behind tennis center, and providing security.

Boating

- We have secured \$99,000 in grant funding from the Department of Natural Resources Waterways Improvement Program for floating docks at Black Hill Regional Park.
- *Washingtonian* Magazine mentioned the availability of boat rentals at Lake Needwood.

Camping

- Park managers met with the Girl Scouts about “Camp Tuckerman” on May 15. Camp Tuckerman begins June 29 at Cabin John Regional Park.

- A new “Cool-Off Coupon” offer for campers at Little Bennett Campground encourages camping patrons to visit multiple facilities during their stay by offering a 50 percent discount at Black Hill Boats or the South Germantown Splash Playground – part of our cross-marketing program.

Ice Skating

- Summer program registration is underway at the ice rinks.
- At Wheaton Ice Arena, the '08-'09 Season Saturday night rentals have been booked and '08-'09 Season hockey and other leased ice rental requests are coming in with increased volume. They have a new office manager and are welcoming college student employees back to work for the summer.
- The Humane Society hosted “Paws in the Park” Sunday, May 18 at the Wheaton In-line facility.
- Preparations are underway for hosting this summer’s “Week in the Park” summer day campers at the Wheaton In-Line facility.
- Cabin John Ice Rink spring group lesson program has 22 more students than spring 2007 for a total of 947 students. Rink staff is continuing to follow up on safety recommendations made by Park Police and looking into restricting access to the front office by non-employees.

Mini Golf, Splash Playground

- Mini golf at South Germantown Recreational Park opened on April 5 for weekend play; and the splash park will open May 24.

Trains, Carousels

- Parks staff sprayed train tracks with weed eradicator. Weeds eat the park’s train tracks.
- The new birthday party room at Wheaton Train is a huge hit with many weekends scheduled back-to-back with parties.
- Cabin John park managers met internally with staff across the department to discuss commonalities between both train operations, including pricing, scheduling and staffing.

Event Centers

- On May 15 the reservation window opened for slots at this year’s Women’s Retreat at Rockwood Manor, September 5 through September 7. Registration is available online at www.ParkPASS.org or by calling (301) 299-5026. It has been a very successful new program.

Maintained Open Space

- On May 4, at the Ridge Road Recreational Park, approximately 4,000 people attended Kid Fest. Little Bennett area park managers participated in this event.
- On May 20, Community Bridges will hold a volunteer clean up at Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Park.
- On May 18, the Make A Wish Kids Triathlon was held at Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Park.

Playgrounds

- We secured \$44,000 in grant funding from the Department of Natural Resources Community Parks & Playgrounds Program for a green project at the Adventure Playground at South Germantown Recreational Park.
- Parks staff is prioritizing rotten wood issues on park playgrounds. Staff is awaiting parts to repair structures at Wells and North Chevy Chase parks.
- Olney Square Neighborhood Park playground was completed on May 9.
- A preconstruction meeting was held on May 12 to begin construction of a new playground in Flower Valley Neighborhood Park, which will be completed by mid-June.
- Our new “high-fitness playsystem” at Black Hill Regional Park, the first in the State, got positive press coverage and is part of our overhaul of facilities and programs aimed at helping children get more and better outdoor experiences. (*Attachment 3*)

Scenic Parkway Experiences

- The Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) is patching and resurfacing two sections of Sligo Creek Parkway, one from New Hampshire Avenue to Maple Avenue in Takoma Park and the other section from Dennis Avenue to University Boulevard. Construction on both is currently underway, expect delays.

Trails - Paved Surface

- Construction has begun on Park Loop Road at Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park.
- Safety improvement work will begin on June 2 on the Capital Crescent Trail, including trail marking and signage. We are receiving communication from those who oppose our lower speed limit changes, as well as expressions of support. A bicyclist and a jogger collided last weekend, with the jogger more seriously injured and transported to the hospital with a severe head injury.

Trails – Natural Surface

- Parks staff has built a rip rap swale to allow drainage and prevent ponding on the path between Viers Mill and Dewey.
- Parks staff is in the process of replacing the paths in Forest Glen.

Arboriculture

- A total of 787 trees were dug from Pope Farm for the season.
- 280 trees were planted at Matthew Henson Trail, 8 donor trees were planted and parks staff planted 13 trees at Ovid Hazen Wells.
- Parks staff conducted an Earth/Arbor Day program for 120 fourth graders from Little Bennett Elementary School on April 30. The students hiked, learned about the importance of trees, made a “reduce, recycle, reuse” craft and planted trees. Students, teachers and parks staff had a great and enjoyable day.

Horticulture

The department’s countywide horticulturist:

- Field located native, containerized plants from Pope Farm Nursery for Little Bennett Regional Park Arbor Day Celebration for Clarksburg students;
- Met with community members at Brookdale park to discuss playground landscaping following a recently completed renovation;
- Conducted 1-year warranty inspection of plant material that was installed by a contractor as part of a restoration project at Sligo Creek Golf Course on a tributary of Sligo Creek;
- Met with Master Gardeners at Pope Farm Nursery to provide them with containerized plants for a landscape renovation project;
- Met internally at Ovid Hazen Wells park to discuss landscaping a renovated bioretention pond with woody and herbaceous plants;
- Participated on an internal planning team for the Llewelyn Fields facility plan to discuss proposed tree preservation and landscaping;
- Met with South Germantown parks staff to discuss fall landscaping of 3 new artificial turf fields for shade and screening trees;
- Conducted a tour of several parks facilities with a focus on horticultural amenities;
- Met with parks staff at Pope Farm to look at large trees for a screening project on parkland;
- Participated on an internal planning for the White Oak Recreation Center;
- Participated in a discussion of amending ordering procedures for Pope Farm herbaceous plant material;
- Reviewed a landscape plan and made recommendations for appropriate plants for the Trolley Museum Verizon Tower;

- Planned for the relocation of multiple large trees from the Pope Farm Nursery to South Germantown Recreational Park to screen the illumination of the new synthetic turf fields.

Natural Resources Management

- On April 27, in cooperation with the department and the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection and in memory of Maryland State Representative Jane Lawton, Chesapeake Bay Foundation volunteers planted 80 native trees around the new stormwater ponds at Matthew Henson Park and cleaned up trash in the park.
- On April 30, 50 students from Fox Chapel Elementary School planted 25 native trees at Camp Seneca Special Park with parks staff and on May 2, 24 students from Matsunaga Elementary Reservoir Club planted 25 native trees near Little Seneca Lake in Black Hill Regional Park. In both cases students learned about watersheds, trees and the role of forest buffers in the effort to clean up the Chesapeake Bay.
- The Boy Scouts of America, Order of the Arrow, did a great job cleaning up an old farm dump on April 5. They collected over 4,260 pounds of trash and 1,000 pounds of recyclable materials in Little Bennett Regional Park.
- On April 26, 53 volunteers pulled 718 pounds of garlic mustard in Little Bennett Regional Park.

Nature Centers

- On May 2 - 4, 12 kayakers enjoyed a three day/two night trip to Janes Island State Park near Crisfield, Maryland. Black Hill park naturalists led several paddling excursions through the Chesapeake Bay marshes and night hikes. Another overnight kayak trip to Wye Island Natural Resources Management Area will be offered this October.
- May 16, park naturalists participated in Career Day at St. Catherine Labourne School.
- Parks staff is installing a Plexi-glass wall in the mammal room at Brookside Nature Center to protect taxidermy mounts, and working with a contractor to install new laminate flooring in the auditorium. This should be completed by the first week of June.
- Brookside Nature Center staff is also working on a brand new animal cam exhibit in the auditorium. Many of the outdated audio/visual exhibitory will be updated this month, and new butterfly/hummingbird plants are being planted in the new raised garden beds.
- Locust Grove Nature Center has a new roof.

Archaeological and Historic Site, Management and Interpretation

- May 8, parks archaeologists and volunteers celebrated Bob Hines, a parks archaeology program volunteer for 25 years. Mr. Hines was presented with a beautifully framed Civil War photograph to honor his years of service and dedication.
- May 10, 20 parks archaeology program staff and volunteers hosted guests at the Annual Archaeology Day at Needwood Mansion. Despite the rainy weather, 34 people participated to excavate, screen, wash, and tour Needwood Mansion. Guests were invited to play 19th century games and make marbles to take home. *The Washington Post* ran photos in the Montgomery Extra section of the paper.
- May 14, ten 7th grade students from the Bullis School came to Needwood to learn archaeological techniques. Parks archaeologists are investigating the area to find the slave houses that once stood on the property.
- *The Baltimore Sun* ran an article on archaeological opportunities for the public in the Baltimore-Washington area, in which parks archaeology camps were featured.
- Dendrochronology has been completed for 5 log structures in our parks.
- Oakley Cabin and the Underground Railroad Experience Trail hikes are open for the season every Saturday. Parks staff hosted a Rachel Carson Day hike along the Underground Railroad Experience Trail.
- Parks staff is developing interpretive themes for Woodlawn Barn and the Josiah Henson site.
- Parks staff completed a walking tour brochure for Blockhouse and is collecting oral histories about the Bussard Farm.

Park Police

- Park Police Officer Lauryn McNeill was promoted to sergeant on May 1.
- Park Police officers participated in several Law Enforcement Officer Memorial week activities in Washington DC, including the Annual Candlelight Vigil Service and the Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Day Services at the US Capitol. The events honor those fallen police officers from around the country who have given the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their communities. Officer Kristin M. Pataki, the first Park Police Officer to die in the line of duty, is remembered on the Law Enforcement Officers Memorial wall.
- May 1, Park Police officers on patrol in the area of Great Seneca Stream Valley Unit #1 conducted a traffic stop on a speeding vehicle. The driver was arrested and charged with Possession of Marijuana with Intent to Distribute. A follow up investigation lead to the execution of a Search and Seizure Warrant on the arrestee's residence and yielded the seizure of a loaded handgun with the serial number removed and numerous drug paraphernalia items consistent with drug manufacturing and distribution. Also seized was \$22,672.00 in US currency.
- May 9, Park Police Special Operations Section officers represented the division by attending funeral services in Pennsylvania, for a Philadelphia Police officer killed in the line of duty.
- May 2, Park Police officers Johnny Beason, Jeff Coe, and Marc Fanelli successfully completed a two-week intensive Police Motorcycle Operators training course. An informal graduation ceremony was held on May 2 and certification certificates were awarded.
- May 11, Park Police Officer Justine Andrews and his K-9 partner Shadow placed 6th out of 95 Police K-9 teams in the Police K-9 "Iron Dog" competition held in Virginia.

Mary R. Bradford

Director

Montgomery County Department of Parks