

**Department of Parks
Director's Report
Thursday, July 17, 2008**

Office of the Parks Director

- I was guest speaker at a well-attended meeting Monday night of the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, accompanied by Southern Region Chief Brian Woodward, Operations Manager Steve Chandlee, Acting Park Police Chief Darien Manley, and Attorney Rufus Meyers of the General Counsel's Office. We listened to comments and participated in a spirited discussion of our recent safety improvements to the trail, including the 15 mph speed limit. We are considering and evaluating all comments, and remain open to additional ideas for this multi-use trail. The bicycle commuters and racers are demanding more and better dedicated bicycle trails and roadway bike lanes in this region.
- The emergency response to the June 16 WSSC water main break in Rock Creek Regional Park and our Department's involvement was the subject of a recent meeting with Tom Street and Darlene Flynn in the County Executive's Office and a subsequent County Council public hearing this week on improving emergency communications. We are preparing our cost estimates for the event, as requested by Council President Knapp.
- Deputy Director Giddens is working with Prince George's County on joint presentations to full Commission in December regarding Fleet Management and Enterprise.
- Our Van Pool rules are changing, and we are working with Executive Director Rodriguez on a letter explaining the new policy, which will be sent to Van Pool Riders by end of July.
- Based on a recent citizen request forwarded to us by Councilmember Leventhal, we are preparing a Special Use Card for Bicycle Commuters using Hiker/Biker trails after normal park closure hours. It will include appropriate rules and regulations and will involve a small fee for processing.
- A new Safety and Wellness Committee is being organized to include representatives from each Division, the Planning Department, and Risk Management for Calendar Years 08 & 09. Employees assigned to Wellness will take a more proactive involvement in providing wellness activities under the Commission's sponsored Wellness Program.
- We want to call the Board's attention to the new Champions Field House, located in Rockville, be completed this fall. It is a 46,000 square-foot, state of the art complex that will focus on the training and development of popular niche sports including field hockey, lacrosse, volleyball, baseball, volleyball, basketball, as well as other activities for recreational leagues and competitive middle school, high school, and adult leagues.
- The Maryland 2008 Program Guide for the Senior Olympics is now prepared and is being circulated. The events are being sponsored and hosted by Montgomery County jointly with us and others. Additional information can be obtained from the website at www.mdseniorolympics.org
- The July 4th celebration and fireworks at South Germantown Recreational Park was a success. In spite of budget limitations, we were able to provide some park staff and Park Police support to the event by trimming costs and overtime (see "3rd party support" below.)
- As of July 4, we have four facilities - Cabin John Ice Rink, Rockwood Manor, Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center and the Wheaton Ice Arena - with wireless internet access for our patrons' use. They have been asking for this service for a long time, and the response has been positive thus far.

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.
- NOW THROUGH JULY 28 -- Exhibit of winning entries to the Maryland Junior Duck Stamp competition on display inside the Black Hill Regional Park Visitor Center.
- JULY 26—Art Farm at the Red Wiggler Farm at Ovid Hazen Wells Recreational Park during the Montgomery County Farm Tour.
- AUGUST 2 & 3—Cactus Show by the National Capital Cactus and Succulent Society at Brookside Gardens Visitors Center.

Capital Improvements

- Construction projects are scheduled to begin shortly at Broadacres Local Park, on the irrigation system at Brookside Gardens and at the Wheaton Indoor Tennis facility.
- A facility plan consultant is scheduled to be selected for Woodstock Equestrian Park.
- A public meeting for Sligo Cabin Neighborhood Park is scheduled.

Management/Administration

- The Meadowbrook area has a new leader for the Rock Creek mowing crew.
- Park Manager Paul Stevens will transfer from the Cabin John maintenance area and begin working at Meadowbrook.
- The two month manager shift by Wheaton, Cabin John and Olney area managers has been successful. Park managers Jeff Devlin and Troy Mason will return to their home sites Aug. 4.

Partnerships

- A Tai Chi Court and Korean Pavilion have been requested at Cabin John Regional Park.
- An Eagle Scout candidate installed a split rail fence at Winding Creek Local Park.
- Wheaton park managers are waiting for a proposal from a group interested in forming a friends group for the dog park.

Property Management

- The Armstrong property in Wheaton Regional Park is set to be occupied in September. It will have three offices and a conference room, available for M-NCPPC groups.

3rd Party Support (including pools)

- Summer day camps are up and running at Stoneybrook, Sligo-Dennis, Pinecrest and Pilgrim Hills park activity buildings within the Wheaton area.
- Germantown Glory, the 4th of July event sponsored by the Recreation Department, was held at South Germantown Recreational Park. The rain held off and everyone seemed to have an enjoyable evening. The total time for clearing the park was 50 minutes. Park Police and Montgomery County Police worked very well together to move the crowd of 8,500. Overall, the event was quite successful.

Baseball and Softball

- The septic work at Wheaton Regional Park, at the field house bathroom, is complete.

- The Big Train summer camp at Cabin John Regional Park is being held June 16 through August 1, 2008. The Big Train season at Povich Field in Cabin John Regional Park runs from May 31 through August 2, 2008.
- BCC Baseball camp is being held at Westmoreland Hills Local Park, June through August.
- Local fields in the Wheaton area have been sprayed for weeds and the lips of infield edges cut back.

Field Sports

- The Blair football field has been sprayed for goose grass and will be seeded in the coming week.
- Beginning September 1, Stoneybrook and Saddlebrook local park fields will be closed for a year to renovate the fields.
- We are developing a proposed Hourly Athletic Field Fee to be disseminated to users for comment and presented to the Board this fall, and working closely with CUPF on coordinating some similarity.

Tennis

- The nets and poles at Wheaton Woods Local Park have been replaced and work has been contracted out to repair and replace fencing and gates around the outdoor tennis courts.
- Wheaton area parks staff are working to resolve trash issues in and around the tennis courts at Wheaton Regional Park due to increased bottled water use.
- The Montgomery County Tennis Association held a tournament at Olney Manor Recreational Park on July 5 and 6.
- Negotiations are complete and the contract has been signed for work on the Wheaton Indoor Tennis facility. The preconstruction meeting was held this week July 15 to begin the installation of the fabric skin. The planned reopening is the end of November.
- The Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center is closed for renovations. This week, insulation is being installed along the walls. Next week, the court surface will be removed and a new surface will be laid. Then the courts will be color coated in US Open colors in time for the opening of the winter season on September 11. The summer tennis camps usually held inside the Center are being held on the outdoor tennis courts at Cabin John Regional Park. Parks staff is reviewing the draft market analysis for expanding the number of courts at the Center.

Boating

- A new Customer Service kiosk has been constructed near the Black Hill Boat Rental facility to assist patrons with questions about the rental operation, reduce waiting times in the rental line and increase overall satisfaction.

Equestrian Centers

- Wheaton Equestrian day camps are running smoothly now that the road work along Glenallan is near completion. The road work closed access to the stables and nature center during opening and closing times for campers for one day creating some confusion.

Ice Skating

- The Washington Figure Skating Club and Cabin John Ice Rink have been awarded the 2010 South Atlantic Regional Figure Skating Championships. The qualifying competition will be held October 9-13, 2009, and the non-qualifying competition will be held the week before.

This is a great honor, bringing recognition to the club, our programs, participants, and the facility.

- Both the Wheaton and Cabin John ice rinks are busy with summer camps and lesson programs.

Trains, Carousels

- The new train engine for the Wheaton Train is to be delivered this week. Repairs to the culvert behind the train station and general track repairs required after earlier rains will be done before the engine's maiden run. The Wheaton Train and the carousel have been very busy this summer accommodating large crowds especially on the weekends with attendance around 1,500 patrons per day.

Maintained Open Space

- The retaining wall at Forest Glen Neighborhood Park has been rebuilt.
- The flagstone walk at Germantown Square Urban Park has been rebuilt.

Picnic Shelters

- Park patrons enjoyed Fourth of July parties at picnic shelters in Hillmead Neighborhood Park, Woodacres Local Parks, Norwood Local Park and the Kenwood Community (Little Falls Stream Valley Unit 2).

Playgrounds

- Construction on the playground at Quebec Terrace Neighborhood Park has started.
- New playgrounds at Parklawn Group Picnic Area and Cabin John Group Picnic Area are open.
- In various parks in the Meadowbrook maintenance area, playground inspectors and staff have been making repairs and equipment replacements.

Trails - Paved Surface

- Parks staff repaved the trail and parking lot at Forest Glen Neighborhood Park.
- The Rock Creek Stream Valley Unit 2 hiker biker path renovation is complete.
- Parks trail crews are cutting back invasive and low hanging branches along the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Parks staff has completed work on the trail connectors on the Crystal Rock Trail in Black Hill Regional Park. These sections connect an adjacent homeowners' association path to the park's existing boardwalk. This area is now accessible to individuals with disabilities.

Horticulture

- Parks landscape crews are planting shrubs on the Mathew Henson Trail, watering trees and removing annuals.

Natural Resources Management

- Work on Pine Lake continues. A 10-12 foot long boa constrictor has been observed several times by the crews working on the overflow rise. The snake has been sighted at the far end of the lake, now a grassy area. Parks natural resources staff has been notified.

Archaeological and Historic Site Management

- Parks staff received approval from the Historic Preservation Commission on the accessible ramps for Poole's Store and House.
- Parks cultural resources staff kicked off and internal meeting on the Woodlawn Barn Visitor's Center.
- Parks staff is conducting site visits of park houses to determine any historical significance.

Trails – Natural Surface

- Parks staff will begin working soon on a new bridge on Hoyle's Mill Road, part of Hoyle's Mill Trail. This project should be completed by the end of November.

Nature Centers

- Brookside Nature Center has offered the following off site programming in the past three weeks:
 - Red wagon programs at Shorefield playground in Wheaton Regional Park on a variety of nature topics June 24 and 27 with 112 participants total and July 1 and 8 with 129 participants.
 - Brookside Nature Center naturalist trained 150 teen and adult Montgomery County Recreation Department summer camp counselors in easy-to-do nature activities on site at recreation centers.
 - Parks naturalists conducted two fee programs at the Wheaton and Kensington Park libraries on insects, with 143 participating.
- Brookside Nature Center summer camps are in full swing, running through August 21, a total of 16 camps offered with only one camp cancelled due to low attendance. The Center is also reporting waiting lists for popular summer programs, including weekly evening campfires and night hikes.
- The Black Hill Visitor Center is hosting the Maryland Junior Duck Stamp award winners from July 14 through 28 for the second year in a row. The exhibit is very well received. All of Black Hill's fishing, geology and kayaking summer camps for ages 11- 17 years are filled to capacity.

Public Gardens

- The fiscal year closed at Brookside Gardens with the Wings of Fancy Live Butterfly Exhibit revenues reaching a record high. Despite closing for four afternoons due to excessive heat, attendance in the first two months of the exhibit topped 23,000 visitors.
- Daniela Beall, a freshman at Cornell University, volunteered at Brookside Gardens for three weeks as part of a Triad Internship sponsored by the Center for Public Horticulture at the University of Delaware. The internship, which is fully funded by the Center, provides undergraduate students with an early introduction to public horticulture careers and an exposure to the missions, resources and operations of varied public horticulture institutions.
- As part of an on-going initiative to green Brookside Gardens' operations, twenty-three gardens staff visited Pogo Tree Works, a private company with exemplary sustainable practices. The tour of the facility included a biodiesel refinery and composting operations including red wiggler worms, leaves, mulch and custom soil mixes. The “zero-waste” mentality at Pogo has led to many creative ways for recycling and repurposing organic materials into useful products.

Archaeological and Historic Site Management

- During Heritage Days weekend, June 23 & 24 our open parks sites had these approximate visitation totals:
 - Josiah Henson Site, 600
 - Oakley Cabin, 100
 - Underground Railroad Experience Trail, 68
 - Blockhouse Point, 70 (*The Washington Post* ran photos of the archeology event)
 - Hyattstown Mill, History of Mills exhibit, 40
 - Bussard Farm at the Agricultural History Farm Park, 50
 - Woodlawn Manor, 125
- Parks staff interviewed Mrs. Joan Kelly, descendant of the Newmans of Newmantown, to gather information about Newmantown for Agricultural History Farm Park interpretation.

Park Police

- Park Police officers attended the funeral of Prince George's Police Dept. Sergeant Findley.
- Park Police officers staffed Fourth of July events in Germantown and Kensington.
- Park Police Lt. McClintock attended a Montgomery County Highway Safety Committee meeting.
- Acting Park Police Division Chief Darien Manley attended a public meeting on the Capital Crescent Trail and testified at a County Council hearing on emergency response.

Mary R. Bradford

Director

Montgomery County Department of Parks