

**Department of Parks
Director's Report
Thursday, September 11, 2008**

Office of the Parks Director

- The County Council's Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) is currently analyzing park and recreation programs in the county. Park staff is reviewing our programs with them, and providing tours of our parks and facilities.
- In cooperation with the Montgomery County Recreation Department, the Department of Parks is partnering with the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) on potential locations for the Wounded Warriors program, located at the National Naval Medical Center.
- We have launched a new phase of our No Child Left Inside initiative, under the leadership of David Vismara, to engage county youth in outdoor environmental education activities, and attended a kickoff session with Governor O'Malley and other Maryland participants.
- A new hourly athletic field fee proposal has been shared with the Recreation Advisory Boards, ICB, and others prior to public presentation before the Board this Monday evening.
- Parks staff is assisting the Sligo Creek Stakeholder Advisory Group with a final report to be presented to the Montgomery County Revenue Authority (MCRA) Board of Directors on September 23 regarding proposals for the Sligo Creek Golf Course.
- I joined community supporters, the *Gazette* staff, and representative from Rep. Van Hollen's office at an evening ceremony this week on the Ireland Drive Trail at Forest Glen, a segment owned by the U.S. Army (Walter Reed) which recently completed major repairs. We support the reopening of this segment and support trail connectivity to the Rock Creek Trail.
- Parks staff is adding recent Board and management comments re the draft Task Force Report on the Status of the Enterprise Division, for final recommendation and action this Fall.
- Senior park management is developing many new management tools from SmartParks, our labor tracking and work assignment system, and we had a recent review of status and needs.

Events

- SEPTEMBER 13—Bluegrass on the Farm at the Agricultural History Farm Park, 18400 Muncaster Road in Derwood, from Noon - 6:00 pm (\$15 at the gate, \$12 in advance). It features Randy Waller and the Country Gentleman with Blue Daze, Patuxent Partners and The Farm Band. For more, visit www.bluegrassonthefarm.com.
- SEPTEMBER 14 – Parks Half-Marathon.
- SEPTEMBER 20—“Ama Tu Vida” health festival, from 12:00 noon – 5:00 pm at the F. Frank Rubini Athletic Complex at Wheaton Regional Park. Parks staff has been working with the Recreation Department and various county offices on this event.
- SEPTEMBER 20—Children's Day “Growing up Green” at Brookside Gardens, 11 am-4 pm.
- SEPTEMBER 20 – Maryland Senior Olympics Parade of Athletes, 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m., Sports & Learning Complex, Landover.
- NOW THROUGH SEPTEMBER 21—The 11th season of the Wings of Fancy Live Butterfly Exhibit at Brookside Gardens.
- SEPTEMBER 27—Re-scheduled from September 6, History Day at Oakley Cabin from 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm. A FREE celebration of local history, presented by the Friends of Oakley Cabin and the Underground Railroad.

- SEPTEMBER 27—National Public Lands Day. Several volunteer cleanups are being organized in county parks.
- OCTOBER 4 – Oktoberfest at Ridge Road Recreational Park.
- 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.
- NOVEMBER 1—Maryland Emancipation Day at Oakley Cabin, the Underground Railroad Experience Trail and Josiah Henson Site/“Uncle Tom’s Cabin.” More details to come at www.ParksCulturalResources.org.

Management/Administration

- Little Bennett Regional Park Manager Wendy Hanley led a presentation about programs and new and future park development at Little Bennett RP with the Damascus Lions Club.

Partnerships

- The Pubic/Private Partnership Committee (PPPC) met with an international advertising company to explore a corporate funding strategy, “Raising Revenues without Raising Taxes,” using major national, international and local corporations to support park operations with private/corporate funding, materials and/or services.
- PPPC is currently reviewing the following park development proposals:
 - The development of a new recreational park at the undeveloped, 52.29-acre Laytonia Recreational Park, the intersection of Muncaster Mill Road and Airpark Drive; and
 - The development of an athletic facility on a vacant, 11.5-acre site at South Germantown Recreational Park located immediately adjacent to the SoccerPlex and Swim Center.
- The Maryland Soccer Foundation has started preliminary actions for relocating softball field C at South Germantown Recreational Park. This field is in preliminary stages of design.

Property Management

- The demolition of 4 houses in Spencerville (formerly the Grauel property) is complete on more than 22 acres acquired in November 2007 in the Special Protection Area of the Upper Paint Branch Watershed. Now being graded and cleaned up, it will become a meadow area and contribute generously to the health and beauty of the Upper Paint Branch Watershed and surrounding communities.
- The exterior painting of the following three parks historic properties is being completed and the results are impressive at Woodlawn Manor, Sandy Spring; Poole’s General Store and House, Poolesville; and Darby General Store and House, Darnestown. Repairs are scheduled for the roof of the Darby house.
- Hillmead park house has been prepared for demolition, with the water and sewer cap off. Asbestos has also been removed from the Bradley Boulevard property.
- Work continues on the Armstrong House in Wheaton Regional Park, with upgrades to provide for office space, conference and event space.

3rd Party Support

- On August 5, National Night Out held at the Ridge Road Recreational Park attracted approximately 400 attendees. Park Police, U.S. Park Police, Montgomery County Police and the Germantown Fire Department were event sponsors.
- Our M-NCPPC booth at the Montgomery County Fair attracted hundreds of fairgoers interested in both Parks and Planning issues. We appreciate all the staff support from both Departments.

Baseball and Softball

- Fields 1 and 2 at Wheaton Regional Park are undergoing minor renovations as play continues.
- Work on the Blair High School fields 1, 2 and the practice field includes silt seeding and edging.
- Stoneybrook Local Park and Saddlebrook Local Park fields are closed for the winter and will re-open in the spring.

Field Sports

- Cabin John Local Park ballfield crews have completed set-up for fall play. Cabin John will not install any portable soccer goals. If goals cannot be permanently installed they will not be used.
- The football field at Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park (field #4) opened for play September 6 with the following renovations: 18-month managed Bermuda Turf grass, new goalposts, one set of reconditioned bleachers and a new storage shed.
- Soccer fields at Nolte Local Park and Jessup Blair reopened September 1 after renovations.
- Soccer field #1 at Leaman Local Park will be renovated this fall and is expected to re-open 9/09.
- All park fields will be aerated and over-seeded this fall.

Tennis

- The fabric installation at the Wheaton Indoor Tennis facility is nearing completion. The duct work for the heating and AC will follow. It is scheduled to reopen later this year, and we anticipate beginning our first winter group lesson series in the new facility.
- The tennis courts at the Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center at Cabin John Regional Park were resurfaced with 2" of asphalt in July and color coated with three coats of paint in August. The net posts and nets were also replaced. It is scheduled to re-open September 11 for seasonal time; first group lessons for the fall begin September 14; and the facility is now reserving spot time.
- The first fall classes begin this week at four park locations on the outdoor tennis courts.

Boating

- As a result of reviewing the security at the Lake Needwood Boats, a new security system is currently being designed with installation scheduled for this winter.
- During Labor Day weekend, boat rentals and snack bar sales at Lake Needwood successfully increased revenue. The Snack Bar at Lake Needwood is now closed for the season and boat rentals at both Lake Needwood and Black Hill will be open weekends only through September 28. Lake Needwood Boats staff recently purchased four additional kayaks.
- Black Hill Boats will get a new boat rental dock and a new pontoon dock, expected for installation March 2009. This project will be funded by three separate grants from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Waterway Improvement Fund, combined to make the large purchase (\$184,000). Additional costs of \$5,000 will be charged to the Enterprise fund for this project.
- A pre-construction meeting was held for the replacement of an existing retaining wall adjacent to the Lake Needwood Boat House. Construction is scheduled to begin on September 29.

Camping

- The second Outdoor Adventure Camp at Little Bennett Campground has proven to be a successful summer program. Activities included hiking in the Little Bennett Regional Park and offsite adventures such as, canoeing, rock wall climbing and navigating a ropes course.

- The Family Campout scheduled for November 2 and 3 at Little Bennett Campground has 10 families registered and 4 on the waitlist.

Equestrian Centers

- Public safety improvements to the Meadowbrook Stables are underway. Following inclusion of \$250,000 in the Capital Improvements Program budget, a project manager and team have begun the permitting, selecting contractors and scheduling major improvements to the stables, including structural reinforcement of the hay loft, installation of a fire suppression system and upgrading its electrical systems.
- With the selection of Blackburn Architects, parks staff and the consultant team are scheduling a kickoff meeting for the Woodstock Equestrian Park facility plan. The first phase of the plan, which calls for outdoor riding rings, renovation of historic structures on the east side and a cross-country course on the west side of Route 28, is expected to be completed in 3 to 4 months.
- A consultant has been hired complete a facility plan for phase two of the Woodstock Equestrian Park development, which will include outdoor riding rings, water, septic, renovation of several small buildings on the Rickman side for storage of maintenance equipment and a small office and a cross-country course on the Greenburg side.
- Work is being done on different sections of the Wheaton Stables including the fore-bays, manure containment system and sediment pond in order to help control and minimize the impact of runoff into the local streams.

Ice Skating

- Renovations to the Wheaton Ice Arena Pro Shop are complete. Parks staff will begin fully stocking up for the season this month. Renovations to the Wheaton Ice Arena Snack Bar have begun. New food items were added this past weekend and so far have been met with positive public response. The new menu board is expected to be at the facility by the end of the month.
- Wheaton Ice Arena is offering 48 classes for the current group lesson series.
- A water holding tank for the cooling towers is in production for the Wheaton Ice Arena and is expected to be installed in the coming weeks. Once this is complete, we expect to see a tremendous decrease in our water consumption and bill. We are in the final stages of the purchasing process for the HVAC controller for the Wheaton Ice Arena. Much like the water holding tank, once this is installed, we should see a reduction in our utilities costs at the facility.

Mini Golf, Splash Playground

- The Splash Park is at South Germantown Recreational Park is closed for the season. The Splash Park generated \$4,000 of revenue during the Labor Day weekend.
- Through the end of September, South Germantown Miniature Golf will be open on weekends.

Trains, Carousels

- Parks staff installed new support posts at the Cabin John Train.
- Cash was robbed from an unsecured safe at the Cabin John Train. Investigation continues and remedial management measures have been put in place.
- Parks staff is preparing for the Halloween trains. The Haunted Train at Wheaton opens October 11 and the Halloween Train at Cabin John opens October 23.
- The new Wheaton Train engine is running smoothly along the newly repaired tracks. Repairs to the tracks to ensure safety and the quality of the train were made July 2 – 15 by the Railroad Association Corporation. The repairs included new track, upgrade of land in and around the

railroad lines, and replacing railroad ties. With these improvements, the train has run much smoother and more consistently.

- The Wheaton Train and OH Wells carousel saw more than 1,000 patrons per day on holiday weekends this season (Memorial Day, Mother's and Father's days, July 4th and Labor Day). Total revenue in May, June, July and August averaged more than \$40,000, an increase in revenue compared to 2007.

Maintained Open Space

- Park managers are fielding complaints about newly established no-mow areas at Ayrlawn and Merrimac parks implemented as part of the budget shortfalls for maintaining open space.
- Parks staff is aerating and over-seeding select park areas and taking soil samples.
- Rock Creek Regional Park managers have been very busy this summer. All the lines in the parking lot at Rock Creek Regional Park have been painted and a concrete floor was poured and finished in the storage bin of the maintenance yard. In addition, wood carpet was installed at several playgrounds in the Rock Creek area.
- Parks staff repainted the parking lot at Parkside Headquarters, installed a new water fountain at Rock Creek Hills Local Park, and completed a new sidewalk at Blair High School.

Picnic Shelters

- Parks central maintenance crew stained all the picnic shelters and restroom buildings at Rock Creek Regional Park.

Playgrounds

- The new playground at Flower Valley Local Park is open. The September edition of *The Parks Show*, airing daily now on County Cable Montgomery (Comcast and RCN Channel 6 and Verizon Channel 30), features park playgrounds and this new playground, and explains the park development process for the show topic, "how a park becomes a park."
- A group of 25 Job Corps workers installed 100 cubic yards of wood fiber at the Cabin John Regional Park action play land.
- The playground at Veirs Mill Local Park is nearly complete and expected to open in a week.

Event Centers

- Parks staff replaced the garage roof at Rockwood Manor.
- The Women's Outdoor Retreat, September 5 – 7, was a success in spite of Tropical Storm Hanna, 66 women participating.
- The Princess Gala at Rockwood Manor on October 5 is full with 30 girls and 30 parents registered. Due to its popularity, we've added a second Princess event on October 19 that has 3 girls registered so far.
- The two holiday baking classes scheduled in December at Rockwood Manor have 12 of a maximum of 15 participants registered in each.

Scenic Parkway Experiences

- Sligo Creek Parkway is closed between New Hampshire Avenue and Maple Avenue for approximately the next 90 calendar days (Sept. 4 - Dec. 4) while WSSC replaces a water line. A signed detour is in place.

Trails - Paved Surface

- Parks staff has completed Park Loop Road at Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park.
- Park managers in the Wheaton area are developing a maintenance plan for the newly constructed Matthew Henson Trail to include the identification of low mow/no mow areas.
- Parks staff met with organizers from the Avon Walk for breast cancer to discuss a park location in the Meadowbrook area for this year's event.
- A half marathon is scheduled for September 14 in the Rock Creek park area.

Arboriculture

- Parks arboriculture staff responded to removed fallen trees from the following parks Friday night and Saturday as a result of Tropical Storm Hanna:
 - Nike Missile Site Entrance road blocked
 - Rock Creek SVU #3 Parkway blocked
 - Rock Creek SVU #4 Bike Trail blocked
 - Little Falls Parkway Road blocked
 - Parkwood Drive Tree inspection
 - Olney Family Park Bike Trail blocked
- Parks staff inspected trees for safety and health in 55 parks, part of the Annual Inspection Program.
- Parks staff provided Best Management Practices for Arboriculture for 3 WSSC water main breaks on park property.
- Parks staff provided Best Management Practices for Arboriculture for numerous development projects including White Oak Recreation Center, Cloverly Elementary School, Woodlawn Manor and several demolition projects.
- Parks staff provided two days of safety training to Arboriculture staff, including arboriculture crews in Prince George's Parks and Recreation, relating to aerial rescue, hazardous tree assessment and proper rigging techniques.
- Parks "Tree Team" met to set a goal of planting 3,000 trees throughout the parks system. Each area has made a commitment to planting various numbers of trees.

Horticulture

- Pope Farm updates:
 - The water/sewer upgrade and irrigation installation is progressing well.
 - Parks staff has finished the second pruning day at the farm. A third one is scheduled in approximately 2 weeks. To date, approximately 3,500 trees have been pruned.
 - With the drier weather of the past few months, parks staff put out approximately 6,200 gallons of water a day on the newly planted trees.
 - Parks staff is processing balled and burlaped tree orders for the coming planting season. Orders for container shrubs and trees are also coming into Pope Farm with 237 plants reserved and slated to go out in September.
 - The Pope Farm Open House Day, "Root, Root, Root for Roots" took place yesterday.
 - Perennial orders are being picked up.
- On-going work: aftercare of watering trees; inspecting Arora Hills sod bed; inspecting 90 ponds that are under contract for trash removal; topdressing athletic field at Ridge Road Recreational Park; hydroseeding backfilled pathway at Calverton Galway Park; and removing annual plants and preparing the beds for sod and/or large rocks at South Germantown Recreational Park.
- Woody the Tree made appearances at the Montgomery County Fair and Maryland No Child Left Inside Rally with Governor O'Malley.

Natural Resources Management

- The Pine Lake rehabilitation project continues with an expected October re-open date.
- Parks staff sprayed for non-native invasives on September 2 at Beach Drive at East West Highway.

Streams

- Parks staff is working with the Maryland Department of the Environment on the investigation of the stream contamination in Flower Valley Local Park on August 6. *The Gazette* covered the stream contamination.

Agricultural Support

- Central maintenance crews are currently installing new siding at the Agricultural History Farm Park office.
- A corn maze has been planted at the Agricultural History Farm Park for Harvest Festival. A temporary irrigation system to help with the new growth has also been installed.
- This summer, the Agricultural History Farm Park was host to an Archaeology Camp, August 4 - 8; Farm Camp, August 11-15; and the Magruder High School Cross Country event on August 29.

Nature Centers

- Priscilla Taylor is the new Locust Grove Nature Center director. The exterior of the center was painted.
- Brookside Nature Center's new wind energy program, July 20 and August 9, was a success. The nature center partnered with the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection on the program. *The Gazette* ran an article about the program as well.
- Brookside Nature Center completed summer camps with 15 very successful camps. New this year was Pick of the Parks, Eco Explorers, Survival Wheaton and Wildlife Ecology camps.
- Brookside Nature Center offered 4 red wagon programs this summer with a total of 280 participants. Park naturalists at Brookside and Locust Grove nature centers are developing K-4 based curriculum for off-site programming.

Public Gardens

- Brookside Gardens' "Green Team" toured an indoor-outdoor exhibit at the U.S. Botanic Garden called One Planet: Ours! Sustainability for the 22nd Century. The exhibit showcased many sustainable practices for landscapes, activities for children and ideas for home and work.
- Gardens staff attended training by the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations on using social media to promote organizational missions. Staff plans to initiate an online interactive component for the Gardens' 40th Anniversary in 2009 to allow virtual visitors to share their images and memories of the Gardens.
- Wings of Fancy live butterfly exhibit volunteers were recognized for their work on Wednesday, September 10 at a dessert reception. A record 279 individual volunteers staffed three shifts per day while the show was open.
- Brookside Gardens' Phil Normandy provided a "walk and talk" training for park inspectors to help them identify plants found in cultivated landscapes in our parks.
- Leslie McDermott assisted the Wheaton and Kensington Chamber of Commerce with running their booth at the Kensington Labor Day Parade and Festival on September 1.

Archaeological and Historic Site Management

- Parks staff is aggressively moving forward with the Darby Store stabilization project. Staff has contacted specialists to help with environmental and wood analysis, developed a mothballing plan and researched procurement of mothballing materials.
- Parks staff is transferring responsibilities to the new Oakley Cabin Volunteer Coordinator.
- Parks staff is working on determining the date of construction and architect responsible for the Meadowbrook Park Activity Building and Maydale Nature Center.
- Parks staff is researching future exhibits for the Woodlawn Manor Visitor Center and wayside exhibits for the Rachel Carson Greenway.
- Parks staff is determining the eligibility of several buildings in the parks system for local/state/national listings.
- Parks staff is setting up interviews with former Girl Scout participants at Rockwood Manor and conducting research on the facility for a future exhibit and/or plaque.
- Parks staff conducted an oral history interview of Michael Dwyer.
- Parks staff completed an historical narrative for Hoyles Mill Ford signage. *The Gazette* covered the work being done on the Hoyles Mill Trail Bridge.
- Parks staff received a final Historic Structure Report for the Josiah Henson Site.
- Parks staff has completed installing air conditioning, upgrading the electrical, security, and plumbing at the Ziegler Log House.
- Parks staff has completed a final draft RFP for the Woodlawn Manor Barn.
- Parks staff delivered paint and new floorboards to the Conservation Corps, currently working on rehabilitation project for the Kingsley Schoolhouse in Little Bennett Regional Park.

Archaeological and Historic Site Interpretation

- August 5, parks staff provided tours of the Josiah Henson Site to international representatives of the UNESCO – World Slavery Project.
- Parks cultural resources staff and Volunteer Services Office staff coordinated to recruit volunteer Underground Railroad Experience trail guides, and on August 9, staff provided orientation and training for new Underground Railroad Experience Trail volunteers.
- Parks staff is working with the Friends of Oakley Cabin and the Underground Railroad on special events this fall.
- Parks staff is continuing its research to update the docent manual and improve interpretation at the Bussard Farmhouse at the Agricultural History Farm Park.

Mary R. Bradford

Director

Montgomery County Department of Parks