

**Department of Parks  
Director's Report  
Thursday, December 20, 2007**

**Management**

- Great news: A recent Montgomery County Resident Survey shows that Montgomery County's parks are the most visited public amenities in the County. They are also one of the most highly valued. In this recent survey, not one single respondent considered parks to be "not at all important," an honor shared with only five other county services: fire services, drinking water, electric service, snow removal, and street repairs and maintenance. Moreover, 86% of the respondents to the Survey reported visiting a park at least once in the past 12 months. Extrapolated, that equates to more than 800,000 county residents visiting our parks on an annual basis, and most visit more than once. We are delighted with this confirmation of our value to the county's citizens.
- FY 2009 budget preparations are nearly complete, and our program budget for the Department is being refined and improved continuously.
- Department of Parks staff is completing a comprehensive "Cultural Competency" training, designed to raise understanding and communication among our diverse staff and customers.
- Management vacancies recently filled include: Brian Woodward, Southern Region Division Chief; David Vismara, Horticultural Services Division Chief; Dr. John Hench, Park Planning and Stewardship Division Chief; and Christine Brett, Enterprise Division Chief. Congratulations to all.

**Events**

- DECEMBER 22—Wheaton Ice Arena's Winter Ice Show from 7:00 – 9:00 pm. Skaters will perform their routines. Free admission. Bring the whole family.
- JANUARY 6—The Garden of Lights show at Brookside Gardens now through January 6, 2008. See [www.BrooksideGardens.org](http://www.BrooksideGardens.org) for more information.
- JANUARY 23—Department of Parks staff briefing to the Historic Preservation Commission on the department's cultural resources.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Party Support**

- Parks staff assisted with logistics for a Memorial Service held at Unity Park on December 2, following the recent murder/suicide tragedy.

**Baseball and Softball**

- Parks staff has aerated and seeded all local fields in the Wheaton region.
- Renovations at Pleasant View Local Park are complete.
- Renovations at Aspen Hill Local Park are complete.
- Field #6 at Wheaton Regional Park is scheduled for renovation and fence repair.

**Field Sports**

- The *Washington Examiner* ran two articles about North Four Corners Local Park.

**Tennis**

- Parks staff has fabricated new signs for installation to reflect changes in the tennis rules and regulations.

- The Cabin John Indoor Tennis facility reopened to the public for group lessons on Sunday, December 2 and for general play on Tuesday, December 4. The new reflective ceiling and bright fluorescent lights make the Cabin John facility one of the best lit indoor tennis courts in the country. Our patrons were very pleased with the renovations and to be back in the facility.
- The renovations at the Wheaton Indoor Tennis facility have been delayed yet again, suffering another blow from a windstorm on Sunday, December 16, that shredded the new skin being installed on the structure over the facility. This is the second such occurrence since the work began, and will further delay opening and negatively affect Enterprise revenue projections for tennis.

### **Equestrian Centers**

- Parks staff has begun making significant improvements at Wheaton Park Stables, including brush clearing, pasture renovations, replacement of fencing along Kemp Mill Road and improved signage. Additional improvements are planned for 2008.
- The Potomac Horse Center received a park permit to begin construction of the horse waste recycling and composting program recently approved by the Planning Board and County Council.

### **Ice Skating**

- Parks staff created gift cards for the ice rinks to sell to patrons for the holiday season. Patrons can purchase a gift card in any dollar amount. The cards can be used to buy merchandise in the Pro Shops or Snack Bars or for any public session admissions and skate rental. This is a pilot program that will be run for one month. Staff will then evaluate the program and see what worked well and what may need to be changed.
- Skaters from both ice rinks were stars at the US Junior Championships in Salt Lake City, Utah. Cabin John has an 11 year old skater who received the 2008 National Silver Medal. Wheaton's Ice Dancing Academy pairs received the Gold and Bronze medals in the Juvenile Dance Finals and a third set of pairs placed 4th. Wheaton's pairs range in age from 8 to 12, while in comparison, the skaters that placed 2nd are aged 15 and 16. We are very proud of our skaters!
- Cabin John had a very successful Holiday Show on December 7 with several hundred patrons in attendance. Over 150 young skaters graced the ice and displayed talent, courage and sheer joy while performing to a packed arena of proud family members and friends. Also, 3 large containers filled with canned goods were collected and will be donated to an area food bank.
- The Wheaton Ice Arena partnered with 20th Century Fox to promote the new Alvin and the Chipmunks movie. During teen skate Friday, December 7 hats, sweatshirts, t-shirts, music download cards, free movie passes, 7 Eleven coupons, posters and CD's were handed out as part of the promotion. It was a lot of fun for the staff and visitors.

### **Trains, Carousels**

- Parks staff has begun the process for procuring a new engine for the Wheaton Train procurement and is awaiting approval of a bid waiver.

### **Maintained Open Space**

- New concrete steps have been installed at Bedfordshire Neighborhood Park.
- Parks staff has just completed leaf collection in regional and local parks.

- Parks staff has installed 4 picnic tables, 4 benches and new soccer goals at English Manor Neighborhood Park. Tree planting at the park is scheduled this winter.
- Parks snow crews did a wonderful job removing snow from our parkways, walkways and parking lots.

### **Picnic Shelters**

- Parks staff is replacing structural columns at Olney Mill Neighborhood Park.

### **Playgrounds**

- Parks staff is preparing to seal wooden play structures on park playgrounds.
- WTTG-TV (Fox 5) aired a story Sunday about playground renovations at Leland Neighborhood Park in Chevy Chase.

### **Dog Parks**

- Parks staff has begun the design process for the dog park at Cabin John Regional Park and is drafting the scope of engineering services required for its design, with a target date for construction in early 2009.
- The Olney Manor Recreational Park dog park is being designed by the Maryland State Highway Administration and should be under construction by Spring 2008.

### **Park Activity Buildings**

- Parks staff will soon begin work on the activity building at Lynnbrook Local Park—roof, ceiling and window replacement.

### **Trails - Paved Surface**

- Parks staff repaired drainage and repaved paths at Forest Grove Neighborhood Park.
- *The Washington Post* ran a recent article about commuter trails versus recreational trails in both the Montgomery and Prince George's parks systems.

### **Trails - Natural Surface**

- A new trailhead for the Froggy Hollow Schoolhouse Trail in Little Bennett Regional Park has been created off of Clarksburg Road in order to eliminate an unsafe trail crossing of Clarksburg Road.

### **Arboriculture**

- Parks staff has reforestation planting (385 containerized trees) and watering 2500+ trees underway.
- At Elmhirst Parkway Neighborhood Park, contractors from Ruppert will transplant trees to clear the area for the installation of a new play structure.
- Parks landscape crews planted two trees at Fenton Gateway Park on Monday December 10 for the East Silver Spring Citizens Association, purchased with grant funds.
- The Pope Farm has begun the 2007-08 tree transplanting season.

### **Horticulture**

- Parks staff has wrapped up fall annual production and grew 350 Poinsettias.

## **Natural Resources Management**

- Parks natural resources staff has been working for over a year and a half with County Council legal staff on the county Bill 43-05, which makes changes to the county's weapons regulations related to deer hunting in order to assist the department, area farmers and landowners manage deer impacts countywide. The bill passed the County Council unanimously on Tuesday, December 4. Media coverage of the bill and the department's deer management operations has been widespread: *Washington Post* editorial, *Associated Press*, *The Gazette*, *Washington Examiner* and *Annapolis Capital*.
- Parks natural resources specialists worked with 16 certified Weed Warrior volunteers to relieve trees of their vine burdens and remove invasive shrubs during a "Weed Warrior Workday" November 10 in Rock Creek Stream Valley Park near Connecticut Avenue and I-495. This fairly urban area has some outstanding examples of native trees. The volunteers finished the day by helping the parks staff leader measure a red maple that could be a new county champion.
- On December 8, Weed Warrior volunteers did a cleanup/invasive removal along Sligo Stream Valley Park at the intersection of Dale Drive and Thayer.
- Contractors from Highway and Safety Services will be working along Beach Drive removing vines growing in the trees.

## **Archaeological and Historic Site Management**

- Parks staff has returned the sidewalk at Norwood, after completing drainage work.

## **Agricultural Support**

- Christmas on the Farm was held on December 8 and 9 at the Agricultural History Farm Park. *The Washington Post* ran a recent article about holiday events on farms, in which the Christmas on the Farm event was featured.

## **Nature Centers**

- Parks staff installed trench drains in front of the Black Hill Visitor Center.
- Parks nature facility managers and park naturalists are continuing to update the Nature Center Strategic Plan (created in October 2004) to revise strategies, update accomplishments and set action items for the future.
- Brookside Nature Center reached 100 registered volunteers as of November 30. All volunteers have been fingerprinted, oriented (including participation in an online volunteer training) and given assignments. Currently there are 12 different volunteer job opportunities at the nature center. (All volunteer policies, procedures, guidelines are uniform among all four nature facilities.)
- Brookside Nature Center staff is working with parks landscape crews to "jazz up" the entrance parking lot area at the nature center. Currently in place 4 raised garden beds and a new tree on the grassy knoll in parking lot. In spring 2008, the gardens will be planted with native butterfly/hummingbird plants to encourage public to not only plant for wildlife but that native plants are just as attractive as ornamental plants. They are also undergoing a major maintenance project for the redesign of all interpretive plaques currently on the boardwalk ramp leading to the nature center building, anticipating completion by spring 2008.
- Brookside park naturalists will begin a new pilot project as part of the Nature Everywhere initiative to increase communication with neighborhood schools and

teachers about how to use the nature center as a resource for both programs and projects for their schools. Park naturalists are currently working with Glenallan Avenue Elementary and hope to work with Arcola Elementary next.

- Park naturalists participated in Science Day at Rosemary Hills Elementary School, interacting with over 100 public school children.
- Parks nature facilities are partnering on the department's Wild Montgomery initiative. See [www.WildMontgomery.org](http://www.WildMontgomery.org).

### **Public Gardens**

- More than 2,000 attended the opening reception for the Garden of Lights show at Brookside Gardens on Friday, November 16. Staff is pleased to report that the food and cutlery waste from the reception was able to be composted on-site because the cups, plates and napkins were all made of biodegradable products.
- Brookside Gardens staff planted 30,000 bulbs this fall for spring displays. While some of the bulbs, like tulips, are a one-time show, many of the bulbs are permanent plantings that will be enjoyed for many years to come.
- WAMU- FM taped a radio interview for the Metro Connection show with Brookside Gardens staff Leslie McDermott. The segment featured the Garden of Lights, Winter Display in the Conservatory and partnership with the Washington Virginia Maryland Garden Railway Society resulting in the train display in the South Conservatory
- Brookside Gardens staff produced its second annual appeal. The direct mailing was sent to over 3,000 donors, volunteers and program participants and solicits donations for the first phase of the Brookside Gardens Master Plan.

### **Archaeology and Historic Site Interpretation**

- Painting of the Brainard Warner House (Circle Manor) in historic colors is nearly complete.
- Dendrochronology (tree ring analysis) of the Perry Browning House and Jeremiah Norwood Tobacco Barn is being performed in December.
- Parks staff held a stabilization pre-bid meeting for the Seneca Stone Barn.
- Historic American Engineering Recordation with the National Park Service is scheduled for WSSC/Burnt Mills Buildings this winter.
- Exhibit interpretive displays for Oakley Cabin are in production.
- Parks staff is reviewing emergency stabilization plans for the Darby Store. *The Gazette* recently ran an article about the Darby Store.
- The Montgomery County Historical Society, with parks as owner-reviewer, completed the final draft feasibility study of the Waters Barn.
- Staff sent a capital grant application notification to the Maryland Historical Trust.
- The application for master plan status for the Bureau of Animal Industry Building at Norwood Local Park is underway.
- Parks staff has completed preliminary research on the buildings at Hillmead and Wolfarth. Local historic designation is not recommended.
- The annual Tree Lighting at the Waters House was held on Sunday, December 2, with approximately 400 people attending.

**Park Police**

- Park Police developed and deployed a special illegal hunting detail to catch poaching on park property.
- Park Police officers in both divisions and Wheaton Safe team members attended police mountain bike training.
- Four new Park Police officers completed field training program and were deployed.

*Mary R. Bradford*

*Director*

*Montgomery County Department of Parks*