

**Department of Parks  
Director's Report  
Thursday, May 8, 2008**

**Office of the Parks Director**

- We dedicated and celebrated the new Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center at Cabin John Regional Park with a very successful event last Thursday, May 1. Approximately 300 tennis enthusiasts joined us, Chairman Hanson, County Executive Ike Leggett, and Council Vice President Phil Andrews at a fine ceremony with tennis superstars Billie Jean King and Pauline Betz Addie herself.
- The annual Montgomery Parks Arbor Day celebration was also a huge success Sunday, April 27, with nearly 800 attending despite the dreary weather.
- The communities in Bethesda served by our 400<sup>th</sup> park—Maiden Lane Urban Park—were delighted Saturday, April 26, as we dedicated and celebrated this small pocket park with them.
- Also, on Saturday, April 26 and Sunday, April 27, our first-ever countywide Garlic Mustard Challenge was another huge success, with over 600 volunteers pulling these invasive plants at 28 different locations in 13 different Montgomery County parks. Over the course of the challenge, the volunteers removed nearly 6 tons of annoying garlic mustard! Prizes donated by sponsors REI, Washington Freedom Soccer Club, DC United Major League Soccer team and the Bowie Baysox Baseball Club were given to Cub Scout Pack 461 at Cabin John Regional Park for the group pulling the greatest amount; St. Peter's Catholic Church at Meadowside Nature Center for the greatest amount pulled per person in a group; the Cowhig Family at Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park for the greatest amount pulled by a family; and first and second place finishers Jo A. at Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park and Regan H. at Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park who pulled the greatest amounts by individuals, with 639 pounds and 77 pounds respectively.
- With park staff, I met with Moshe Briel, the new President of the Wheaton Chamber of Commerce, and Gabe Albornoz, Director of the Recreation Department, to discuss issues of mutual interest and how we can work cooperatively together to promote, improve, and sustain Wheaton and its park resources.
- The staging area for the recent Avon Walk at Norwood Local Park came off with a minimum of complication last weekend, and we were pleased to be able to permit the use of the area for a worthy cause that raised (we are told) in excess of \$8 million for breast cancer cure. The organizers worked in extensive outreach with neighborhood associations and interest groups, and moved quickly to restore the affected portion of the park for full public use.
- The Bethesda Little League held its inaugural game at North Chevy Chase Local Park on a beautiful Saturday, and several of us were in attendance, including some of the extremely talented park staff who made it all come together so quickly. Many thanks to them all.
- We have completed our Departmental FY 09 budget presentations before the County Council and remain hopeful that the widely acknowledged value County residents place upon their parks will carry us through what appear to be tough budget times ahead. We have already begun streamlining operations (personnel, supplies, travel, etc.) for the close of FY 08 and are rigorously managing expenditures and hiring expectations for the coming year.

## Events

- NOW THROUGH SEPTEMBER 21—The 11<sup>th</sup> 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 10—Archaeology Day, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm, Needwood Mansion, 6700 Needwood Road in Derwood. See [www.ParksArchaeology.org](http://www.ParksArchaeology.org) for more.
- 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](http://www.JosiahHensonSite.org).
- JUNE 28 & 29—The 11<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.HeritageMontgomery.org) for more.

## Property Management

- The Armstrong House was vandalized recently. Parks staff is working on lighting and alarm systems and cleanup continues. The Historical Preservation Committee visited the grounds of the Armstrong House and the Bank Barn.
- Mowing and trash removal is beginning on the Wolfarth property (Chevy Chase Open Space acquisition.).
- Parks staff observed an adjacent homeowner’s landscaper discarding yard waste on the Hillmead Neighborhood Park property. Discarding waste on a park property is a too-frequent occurrence and parks staff is hoping to be able to step up enforcement actions for encroachments and dumping.
- Last summer, the Commission acquired a property containing a commercial building known as the Barnett Building—an addition to the existing Hillandale Local Park. The two existing carryover tenants, acquired with the acquisition of the property, have recently vacated. Parks staff will renovate the interior of the building and convert it to office space this summer.
- Parks property management staff and legal team met with Montgomery County attorneys in April to discuss a new direction for existing group home leases. No decisions were made, but the county suggested a master lease for the six group homes currently occupied.
- Our Department is hosting interns from Towson University. The interns are moving and tracking turtles that will be impacted by the ICC. They are staying at the Kengla House and will conduct daily excursions to various sites within the affected area.

## 3rd Party Support (including pools)

- Park Police conducted a debriefing session as a follow-up to the Iranian American Festival, April 6 at Black Hill Regional Park. The debriefing included Park Police, Montgomery County Police, Black Hill Regional Park staff and the festival organizers. The event was discussed in detail and recommendations are forthcoming for any future events.
- Parks staff met with organizers of the Half Marathon and the Montgomery County Road Runners Club to discuss operational plans for the marathon and the possible reimbursement of event costs.

### **Park Planning**

- The Little Bennett Regional Park Master Plan won the 2008 PARC Branch award, part of the Maryland Recreation and Parks Association awards, in the category of Planning and Design with Environmental Protection in Mind.

### **Baseball and Softball**

- All athletic fields in the local and regional parks have been aerated and are ready for the upcoming season.
- Blair High School fields are in play. Dick O'Connor from the Thunderbolts placed a formal request for a new scoreboard. The region has reviewed and initially okayed the proposal.

### **Tennis**

- The tennis lottery process at Cabin John is nearly complete. There are very few time slots left, times remaining mostly at 6 am or 11 pm.
- Classes started in April on the outdoor tennis courts.

### **Boating**

- Both boat rentals at Lake Needwood and Little Seneca Lake opened for the season May 3.

### **Equestrian Centers**

- An RFP has been issued for facility planning for Woodstock Equestrian Park, furthering implementation of the park master plan. Parks staff expects the next phase of the park to be under construction by spring 2009. The first phase of the facility plan will likely emphasize passive uses, including outdoor riding rings and related facilities on the east side of Route 28. Approximately \$1 million in private contributions and state funds will be available for the construction of this phase.

### **Ice Skating**

- Skating registration at both rinks is underway, classes began April 25.
- Cabin John Ice Rink is doing preliminary preparations for the June installation of new dasher boards and laying new ice on the Olympic rink.

### **Trains, Carousels**

- Parks staff completed culvert reconstruction and related track repairs at the Wheaton Train. The train and carousel started daily operations this month.
- Our office continues to field calls and inquiries related to the Ovid Hazen Wells Carousel at Wheaton Regional Park. Under the terms of its acquisition, the carousel must be transferred at some point soon to the new Ovid Hazen Wells Special Park, which will require the appropriate funding for removal, transport, site preparation at the new location, and development of the appropriate support facilities.

### **Maintained Open Space**

- Parks staff completed two new picnic pads at Wheaton Regional Park.
- Parks staff cleared downed trees, vines and debris at the upper area, undeveloped area along University Boulevard at North Four Corners Local Park. Parks staff is addressing removing

any downed trees and debris, depending on ground conditions related to moisture and access to the lower areas of the park. Staff is also planning non-native invasive plant removal at the park, working with the neighborhood and coordinated internally across several divisions. The completion date for these projects at North Four Corners is late spring/early-summer.

- Parks staff has renovated Trailway Drive, the entrance at Lake Frank. The drain is now functional and the asphalt has been replaced. A lake level sensor has also been installed at Lake Frank.
- A retaining wall and perimeter fence have been constructed at the Lake Needwood Dam monitoring shed.

### **Playgrounds**

- Parks staff installed new picnic tables near the playground at English Manor Local Park.
- Parks staff is in the process of installing wood fiber at Wheaton Regional Park.

### **Dog Parks**

- Various park users have recently created a new and independent group they are calling Friends of the Wheaton Dog Park, with a dedicated website, and are busily promoting their organization. We are reaching out to them in order to work collaboratively on issues of common interest.

### **Park Activity Buildings**

- Parks staff has developed a new custodial program, which has notably improved the condition of the park activity buildings. The floors are particularly in much better condition.

### **Event Centers**

- Rockwood Manor received a new roof.

### **Trails - Paved Surface**

- Parks horticultural crews installed trees long the Matthew Henson Trail.
- Parks staff is working on a washed-out path between Dewey and Viers Mill.

### **Arboriculture**

- The Annual Tree Inspection program is up and running, with the department's new Urban Forester Jeanne Kaminski. Royce Hanson and Woodside parks were the first two inspected.
- The Historic, Significant and Champion Tree program is up and running. Trees at Argyle, North Four Corners, Sligo Creek Parkway and Jesup Blair Park have been mulched to improve soil quality and strengthen tree root systems.
- Plans for several park projects are being reviewed for tree protection measures, including Olney Manor Power Distribution Project, Long Branch walkway and bridge, Jesup Blair Park–Montgomery College improvements, WSSC water tunnel project impacting Cabin John and Rock Creek Stream Valley.
- The Gypsy Moth Suppression program is being coordinated with the Maryland Department of Agriculture and Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection. Spraying schedules are dependent on hatch times and weather.
- The International Society of Arboriculture held its regional tree climbing championship competition at Johnson Local Park in Gaithersburg on Sunday, April 13. Thirty-four men and

two women competed in the all-day event. Parks Tree Crew Leader Donnie Osborn was the site logistics coordinator for the event and Parks Tree Climber Mark Tremper placed first in the Belayed Speed Climb. Both the Director and the Acting Deputy Director attended.

### **Natural Resources Management**

- Once again, a dedicated group of park volunteers are monitoring the nearly 500 bluebird boxes that are part of the department's Bluebird Nestbox program coordinated through the department's nature facilities. The program enjoyed its best year ever last year when over 900 baby bluebirds were fledged out of 474 boxes. Volunteers maintain the boxes and monitor them every two weeks from late March to September to remove non-native house sparrows and other problem species. Thanks to this important work, the beautiful native bluebird, once in dramatic decline, is making a comeback.
- The Maryland Department of Natural Resources stocked Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park pond with 500 trout on April 8 and 11. On April 12, Trout Unlimited held its annual kids fishing day at the park's pond.
- Work continues at Pine Lake, but the project is still behind schedule. The fish rescue is nearly complete. The target date for entire project's completion is July 17, 2008.
- Canada Geese were managed at Lake Needwood April 9.
- Parks staff monitored the lake levels at both Lake Needwood and Lake Frank this past weekend and will continue to monitor conditions until the level crests. Parks staff is using the Argus remote monitoring system recently installed.

### **Archaeological and Historic Site Management**

- Parks staff met with Boyd-Maughlin House curator to discuss compliance and historic preservation regulations.
- Parks staff finalized the scope of work to restore the log interior at Ziegler Log House.
- Saturday and Sunday, April 12 and 13, Montgomery College students excavated a cabin in Little Bennett Regional Park. Montgomery College Professor Cindy Pfanstiehl conducted background research (chain-of-title) to learn the site was the Hanson Miles family residence built around 1840. The farm is rich with artifacts related to a domestic farmstead archaeological site: cut nails, children's items, an iron, scissors, buttons, marbles, chicken, pig and cow bones and an assortment of ceramics.
- Tuesday, April 15, parks archaeologists were invited to investigate an archaeological find at the Hayes Manor property in Chevy Chase. During construction, the foundation of an outbuilding was discovered. The work crew stopped work to allow the historic preservation and parks archaeology staff to consider the findings. Considering the data from a historic report done by Robinson and Associates, the foundation appears to be the foundation of a worker's building, with artifacts including 19th and 20th century ceramics and bottles.
- The Park and Planning Headquarters lobby has a new display on loan from the Montgomery County Historical Society, a portion of the Mill Display depicts research done by historians Mike Dwyer and Irwin and Gloria Billick.
- Parks staff is working to permanently, historically protect the Stubbs Bank Barn.

### **Streams**

- Parks staff has a concept plan for stream restoration for the Waverly-Schuylkill area.

## Nature Centers

- Locust Grove Nature Center recruited new volunteers for trail maintenance and gardening; started work on the Dotson Memorial Garden redesign; continued vernal pool and bluebird monitoring; and hosted several groups and cleanups. The spring break program, Beastly Buddies, enjoyed high turnout. The roof is also being replaced.
- Brookside Nature Center conducted outreach programs on weather for all first graders at two Title I schools, Sargent Shriver and Georgian Forest elementary schools. Park naturalists reached 170 students. They also held programs on deer ecology for two environmental science classes at Springbrook High School, taking students outside to look for signs of deer and deer damage in nearby Northwest Branch Park.
- Park naturalists at Brookside are working on a project with a volunteer to get camera footage of flying squirrel activity inside the nest box for use on the website and in the various flying squirrel programs offered at the nature center.
- Nature center managers are working on nature center operational guidelines, which they expect to present to the Board when complete.
- Meadowside Nature Center had approximately 1,500 people participate in a series of four special events over MCPS spring break. These included the annual Egg Hunt, Spring Time on the Farm, Maple Sugaring Festival and Cool Chemistry Day.

## Public Gardens

- Six new maps were installed at Brookside Gardens to help visitors orient themselves during their visit. Designed by John Yanson at the Exhibit Shop, they incorporate color graphics, new welcoming language and lists of expected behaviors accompanied by international symbols for those visitors who do not speak English. The cost of producing the maps was funded by private donation.
- Brookside Gardens and the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection hosted two rain barrel workshops on Friday and Saturday, April 18 and 19. Eighty participants received a free rain barrel and training on how to use it in their landscape. Another 120 potential registrants were placed on a waiting list, proving once again the popularity of this workshop and strong community interest in this environmentally-friendly gardening technique.
- Free guided gardening walks at Brookside Gardens and McCrillis Gardens began on Saturday, April 12 and will be repeated many Saturdays and Sundays through mid-June. Well-trained volunteer guides provide this service for our visitors.
- Brookside Gardens installed a portable restroom adjacent to the Visitors Center parking lot to serve visitors who are at the Gardens during daylight hours when the buildings are not open, in response to public requests. Gardens staff is investigating the potential installation of a composting toilet as a sustainable, year-round alternative to the temporary portable restroom.

## Archaeological and Historic Site Interpretation

- Parks staff provided tours of the Riley Farm/Uncle Tom's Cabin to the Luxmanor Homeowners Association as part of their 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. Over 200 people attended the tours.
- Parks staff completed updates to the Samaritan (volunteer) database regarding Cultural Resources Stewardship volunteer data for Oakley Cabin, Underground Railroad, Bussard Farmhouse and collections.

- Parks staff is assessing current collections procedures and software (PastPerfect).
- Parks staff participated in training the Underground Railroad Experience Trail guides and Oakley Cabin volunteers.
- Parks staff conducted dendrochronology (tree ring analysis) at Perry Browning House, Norwood Tobacco Barn, and Ziegler Log House.
- Parks staff completed a kick-off meeting with Historic American Engineering Record for Robert Morse Treatment Plant.
- Parks staff scheduled oral history interviews with Bussard Farm family members.

### **Park Police**

- Park Police worked in cooperation with the Calvert County Sheriff's Office, Montgomery County Police Fraud Unit and Prince George's Park Police to execute a search and seizure warrant at the Calvert County home of a suspect involved in a number of park-related thefts. Evidence from these crimes was recovered from the residence and it will be used to prosecute the suspect.
- Park Police held interview boards for two Park Police Officers and two career Park Ranger positions; as a result, hiring recommendations are moving forward in an attempt to meet a June 1, 2008, deadline.

*Mary R. Bradford*

*Director*

*Montgomery County Department of Parks*