

**Department of Parks
Director's Report
Thursday, July 3, 2008**

Office of the Parks Director

- Park staff presented or supported several excellent programs for the County's "Heritage Days" weekend June 28-29. After a scholarly historic panel discussion for the "Meeting Josiah Henson" event, which I was delighted to introduce and enjoy, staff and volunteers shuttled visitors and led tours of our Josiah Henson Site/"Uncle Tom's Cabin." Other events took place at the Agricultural History Farm Park, Oakley Cabin, Blockhouse Point and other sites. Media coverage for our 8 park sites featured included the *Potomac Almanac*, *Montgomery County Sentinel*, *The Washington Post* and *The Gazette*.
- At the monthly meeting of the State Park and Recreation directors, Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) affiliate, we discussed the deep cuts in the Program Open Space (POS) money available to each of us this year for recreational development as the State attempts to channel this money toward bay protection programs and bailing out the underfunded State park system.
- Our office is taking an active role in the new contract negotiations with the MCGEO employees union, which are just beginning.
- The County Council Public Safety Committee held a hearing last week on two matters of interest to our Department:
 - A perceived failure and lack of coordination among agencies and the citizens during the emergency response to the recent major water main break (note: the large WSSC event that shut down country and private facilities occurred under Park property, but there have been many other recent breaks affecting parks); and
 - The Second Chance Wildlife Center facility needs at George Carson Special Park. A "sense of the Council" was sought regarding pursuit of State bond money for a feasibility study on future repairs or construction for the Center. Park staff provided information about planning and development timelines for the park as a whole.
- Regarding WSSC high pressure water mains, our management, construction and stewardship staffs have been working together to create GIS layers illustrating where future problems with the aging WSSC infrastructure may impact park facilities and watersheds in order to develop action plans and recommendations to meet this increasingly difficult problem. Throughout this report, you will see recent pipe failures cited in several of our parks.
- I attended a meeting of the Wheaton-Kensington Chamber of Commerce, discussing CIP and operating budgets for area parks.
- I visited two parks with park structures currently scheduled for removal and participated in staff briefings regarding status of rehabilitation and leasing for various historic properties.

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.
- JULY 4 -- Park staff is participating (although at a reduced and streamlined level) in support of Montgomery County's 4th of July fireworks show, "Germantown Glory" at South

Germantown Recreational Park. Our participation involves park management coordination; Park Police traffic and crowd control as well as resource protection; and moving the Department of Recreation portable stage to and from its storage location at our Shady Grove/Crabbs Branch Central Maintenance facility. The usual overtime/holiday costs were greatly reduced through scheduling and operating with a skeleton crew.

Capital Improvements

- Construction bids are out for local park tennis and basketball court resurfacing.
- A design services bid is out for the Rock Creek Maintenance Yard facility plan.
- Parks staff selected a contractor for the Lake Needwood retaining wall replacement.
- Parks staff also opened bids (15 bids) for the various bridge replacement projects. There are 10 trail bridge replacements in all, two sets of 5 each. Parks staff has opened bids for 5 additional trail bridges replacements at different locations in the county.

Management/Administration

- Wheaton Park Manager Troy Mason has been temporarily assigned to Olney and will return to Wheaton Regional Park August 1, 2008.

Partnerships

- An Eagle Scout group will be installing a split rail fence at Winding Creek Local Park.
- The Maryland Soccer Foundation hosted the first girls' lacrosse tournament June 20 - 22. Over 150 teams competed on 22 soccer and athletic fields at SoccerPlex in South Germantown Recreational Park.

Property Management

- Parks property management staff and the Park Planning and Stewardship Division are working on the following historic properties:
 - Poole's General Store and Residential House, Poolesville: Fiscal Year 2008 concluded with the successful preparation of architectural drawings for two accessible ramps for both the store and house. The Historic Preservation Commission approved the drawings on June 25. The next steps will be to secure resources to build and install the ramps. The accessible ramps were requested by the current tenant as a means to travel back and forth from the store to the residence. Also underway for this property is a major lead-based paint abatement and re-painting of the exterior of the store and house.
 - Darby House, Darnestown: Fiscal Year 2009 features a much overdue exterior lead-based paint abatement and re-painting of the house. This work will also include repairs to the rotted wood and porch. In FY 08, the Darby Store was the focus of a stabilization study. Currently, the site drawings are under architectural review. The next phase of the project is stabilizing the structure.
 - Woodlawn Manor, Sandy Spring: The mansion's exterior will undergo lead-based paint abatement and re-painting.
- Property management staff filed for the demolition permit for the Hillmead Neighborhood Park structure on June 11. The permit process and pre-demolition work are underway and it is estimated that demolition will occur in approximately 6 – 8 months from now.
- Parks property management staff is working with the tenants of several ancillary buildings to review the recent condition assessments by FEA (parks consultants) and responding to

community concerns over what will become of the buildings at the Maydale Nature Center, Westmoreland and Ednor Park.

3rd Party Support (including pools)

- Last week, Wheaton area park managers met with Latino Health Fair committee members to discuss changing the event venue to combine the event activities at the Orebaugh athletic area in Wheaton Regional Park with activities at the park's picnic area.
- Parks staff gave permission to the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center and its partners to use Wheaton Regional Park and Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park to conduct Gray catbird reproductive strategy studies between June 1 and September 15, 2008. The methodology required to complete the studies includes searching for nests, using mist-nets to capture and band adults and genetic paternity analyses of nestlings.
- A very successful developmental program for young women, "Girls on the Run," was held at the South Germantown Recreational Park, with over 700 runners.

Park Planning

- A public meeting was held on Tuesday June 24 to obtain input on three alternative concepts for the renovation of Battery Lane Urban Park. The alternative concepts presented include: a contemplative urban oasis; a sustainability park that incorporates eco-friendly design; and an enhanced park, which would keep but relocate many of the park's features and add open space. Attendees also were given a survey to obtain additional input, which will ultimately be posted online so that opinions from a broader population can also be considered. For more visit www.ParkPlanning.org and click on Battery Lane Urban Park.
- Wheaton area park managers held a facility planning meeting with parks architects to discuss renovating Kemp Mill Urban Park.

Baseball and Softball

- New septic tanks were installed at the ballfield restrooms at Wheaton Regional Park. The restrooms are scheduled to be open and operational by July 27.
- Parks staff has been applying herbicides to ballfields in the Wheaton area to control weeds on the infields, warning tracks and areas around the backstops and benches.
- The "Baseball Beginnings" event was held Sunday, June 22 at Wims Meadow at the Little Bennett Regional Park. Wims Meadow was the home field for the Blue Birds, the first Black Baseball Team in the Hyattstown/Clarksburg area in the 1930's. Former players Wilson Wims and Henry Chaney attended this event with approximately 85 family members, friends and residents from the Clarksburg community. The Clarksburg Baseball Team played on the field that Little Bennett parks staff prepared for the event. A local 4-H group and Helping Hands sold hot dogs, sodas and popcorn—a thoroughly fun day, sponsored by the Friends of Little Bennett Regional Park and the Department of Parks.

Field Sports

- British Soccer Camp at Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Park and Ray's Meadow Park the week of June 16 was a huge success.

Multi-Use Courts

- Parks staff re-striped the basketball court at Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Park.

Tennis

- Parks staff has been informed by WSSC that there is no need to remove the tennis court at Tilden Woods Local Park, as once thought, to repair a WSSC pipe (see WSSC item on first page.)
- The outdoor tennis program at Cabin John Regional Park, Fairland Regional Park, Olney Manor Recreational Park and South Germantown Recreational Park, June 23 – July 10, has 17 classes taking place for the for ages 8 and up. Several classes are full.
- We also offered the second round of Quick Start tennis classes at Cabin John Regional Park for 5-8 year olds. It is a big hit.
- We are very close to having a signed contract to resume work at the Wheaton Indoor Tennis facility. Meetings with CAS on the matter have been occurring this week. We anticipate re-opening the facility in November.
- The Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center at Cabin John Regional Park will be closed in July and August so the courts can be resurfaced and US Open color coated. This work is done every 10-20 years.

Camping

- The outdoor adventure summer camp at Little Bennett Campground this week includes canoeing at Black Hill Regional Park, camping, orienteering and nature hikes. Activities also included use of lines, giant swing, jousting, water wars and rock climbing.
- Little Bennett Campground reports that on Saturday, June 21, 81 of the 91 campsites filled for the weekend. The hayride season began with 4 rides filled to capacity and heavy use of other park amenities including the Hawks Reach Activity Center's Nature Room.

Equestrian Centers

- Parks Equine Resources Coordinator David Tobin and the department's Research and Technology team hosted a meeting of potential partner agencies and organizations to discuss a collaborative survey of Montgomery County horse owners and enthusiasts, including representatives from the University of Maryland Equine Studies department, Montgomery County Department of Economic Development, Montgomery County Soil Conservation District, Montgomery County Extension, and Equestrian Partners in Conservation. The survey will provide needed data to expand conservation programs, improve agricultural practices and enhance horse-related recreation in the county. It is a follow-up to a 2001 study which led to the passage of a Zoning Text Amendment establishing horse farms as an agricultural activity. That study noted a powerful connection and interdependency between horses and the survival of Montgomery County agriculture and farmland. More than 20,000 acres of farmland are devoted to horse farms; 233 horse farms and 192 farms produce hay out of a total of 577 farms in the county; there are more than 15,000 horses in the County (second largest county horse population in the state); and the horse community contributes almost \$200 million annually to Montgomery County and the surrounding area. Montgomery County's equestrian community has been instrumental in the protection of over 5,000 acres of open space, either through easements or contributions of land to the Department of Parks.

Ice Skating

- The department's summer day camp, Week in the Park, based at the Wheaton Outdoor Rink, is in its third year. During the week of June 23-27, campers participated in various activities including tennis, ice skating, nature hikes, train and carousel rides, arts and crafts, sports and a trip to South Germantown Splash Park and Mini-Golf.
- Dasher boards and glass on the NHL rink at Cabin John Ice Rink have been replaced. This required removing the ice on both the NHL and studio rinks and rebuilding and repainting both surfaces after the installation of the boards. Cabin John parks staff transported the old dasher boards and glass over to the Wheaton Outdoor Rink,
- Summer programs are in full swing at both the Cabin John and Wheaton ice rinks. This past week well over 100 kids participated in hockey camp at the Cabin John Ice Rink. The next round of group lessons start July 7.
- Both ice rinks are offering "Summer Night Chill Out" sessions on Friday nights from June – August. This reduced fee session is targeted to teenagers and features specialty lighting and fun music. The first sessions were held at both rinks on June 20.

Mini-Golf, Splash Playground

- Birthday party and group reservations have increased significantly at the South Germantown Splash Park and Mini-Golf, with the addition of a second party tent available for rent.
- Parks staff met recently to explore expanding the common area of the Splash Park so that more people can be accommodated.

Trains, Carousels

- The new Wheaton Regional Park Miniature Train engine is scheduled to be delivered July 15. Plans for the old engine have not been determined.
- New exhaust fans have been installed at the Cabin John Station, which should improve air flow inside the tunnel while passengers are waiting for train to leave the station.

Maintained Open Space

- A temporary earthen dam (cofferdam) was constructed at Pine Lake in order for work on the overflow drainage system to be worked on in dry conditions.
- WSSC repaired a broken sewer line in wooded area at Ken-Gar Palisades Local Park.

Playgrounds

- Parks staff has set aside \$200,000 for minor repairs and equipment replacements for local park playgrounds that are not scheduled for renovation.
- The following playgrounds have been renovated: Flower Valley Local Park, Veirs Mill Group Picnic; and equipment has been ordered for the playground renovation at Little Bennett Campground.
- Repairs to the playground at Wheaton Regional Park are now complete. The repairs were made to address safety and functionality issues. Groundbreaking for the new playground is scheduled for January 2009.
- Parks staff is in the process of removing the wooden play structure at Lynbrook Local Park.
- The new playground at the Cabin John Group Picnic Area is scheduled to be completed June 27, weather permitting.

- Parks staff is installing wood fiber to the following playgrounds: Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Park, Tanglewood Local Park, Colesville Manor Local Park and Colesville Local Park.

Park Activity Buildings

- Parks staff repaired a broken pipe at Candy Cane City in Meadowbrook Local Park.

Scenic Parkway Experiences

- Parts of Sligo Creek Parkway have been repaved by the Department of Public Works and Transportation.
- Council staff informs us that DPWT is considering no longer supporting the Adopt-a-Road programs along Montgomery County Parkways. Parks staff is attempting to work with DPWT (or its successor Department) to clarify the next steps, if any.

Trails - Paved Surface

- Parks trail crew continues to remove hanging limbs from the trail along Sligo and Beach Drive.
- Park planners presented the draft Upper Rock Creek Trail Corridor Plan to the Planning Board on June 19, which was approved for a public hearing in September.
- Parks staff has completed “Dangerous Intersection Ahead” and “15 MPH” painting/stencils on the Capital Crescent Trail.
- Parks staff has removed approximately one-third of Park Loop Road at Martin Luther King Jr. Recreational Park for re-pavement. The concrete curbing on the road is complete. They have installed a handicapped parking spot and relined the employee parking lot.

Arboriculture

- Parks arborists are continuing clean-up from the June 4 storm. A total of 105 parks (over one quarter of our park system) sustained tree damage, including over 200 fallen trees and numerous trees damaged. To date, approximately half of the 189 service requests have been completed. Crews will continue to focus on clean-up over the next 4 weeks.
- Contractual tree maintenance along Sligo Creek Parkway between New Hampshire Avenue and Colesville road will be completed July 1.
- Parks arborists will continue working with park managers to help with clean-up and repairs after the two large WSSC water main breaks on park property. Numerous site inspections have occurred at Rock Creek Regional Park and Sligo Creek Park in an effort to repair sites and minimize damage which may occur during the repairs (see related item on first page.)

Horticulture

- Parks staff is continuing aftercare on trees planted during the 07-08 planting season as well as second-year trees.
- Parks staff inspected the sod bed at Arora Hills that contractors prepared, cleaned trash rack at Olney Family Pond.
- Parks staff provided Brookside Gardens with a water truck during water main break.
- Countywide horticulturist met with the Rock Creek Regional Park managers and landscape contractor to layout and inspect plant installation techniques related to the Needwood Dam construction project.

- Staff reviewed and commented on landscape plans for Clarksburg Town Center and associated parks (Piedmont Hills, Greenway and King Pond Local Park), and inspected plant material and approved layout of contractor installed plants at Matthew Henson Trail.
- At Pope Farm, parks staff has begun row mulching of newly planted trees and construction of the new main water line for the nursery and facilities has started.

Natural Resources Management

- The interagency Deer Management Work Group (DMWG) for Montgomery County, chaired by Rob Gibbs of the Department of Parks, includes members from MD-DNR, County Police, Uof MD Cooperative Extension, NPS, WSSC, & USGS-Patuxent Wildlife Research Station, is preparing to release its latest Deer Report. Although Montgomery Parks is the lead agency for the Work Group, it has always been viewed as an independent body that makes recommendations regarding deer management to a number of agencies operating within the County. Implementation of the recommendations is left to the agencies, based on their budget, resources, and other factors. Recommendations this year that apply to our Department include deer population management at several parks.

Archaeological and Historic Site Management

- Eight parks sites were open this past weekend for the annual Heritage Days.
- Oakley Cabin and the Underground Railroad Experience Trail continue to attract regular weekend visitors.
- The National Park Service is presently documenting the buildings at Burnt Mills dam for the national historic registry.

Trails – Natural Surface

- Parks staff is monitoring a sinkhole along the trail off of Willard Avenue. WSSC is responsible for the repairs.

Park Police

- Park Police officers and command staff completed MPCTC mandated annual firearms in-service and qualifications.
- Park Police Acting Chief Manley attended a quarterly Maryland Chiefs of Police Association meeting.
- Park Police command staff and supervisors attended recruitment and selection services shared services training sessions.
- Park Police Lieutenant Louketis attended advanced incident command training.
- Park Police Acting Chief Manley represented the division at a “Technology for First Responders” Demonstration Day at the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington D.C.
- Park Police Lieutenant McClintock and Acting Chief Manley presented a training session on the 2007 Reciprocal Enforcement and Mutual Aid Agreement to prosecutors from the Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s office.

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