

**Department of Parks  
Director's Report  
Thursday, July 31, 2008**

**Office of the Parks Director**

- We sent a letter to the Liquor Control Licensing Division transferring alcohol licenses to the Revenue Authority for the four Montgomery County golf courses on parkland, as authorized by legislation passed and signed into effect July 1, 2008, by the Governor.
- The PHED committee discussed the ALARF and Enterprise Funds on July 22. The Committee remains interested in broadening the use of ALARF funding to include the purchase of BLT easements. They also want continued dialogue on the financial condition of Enterprise Fund and all options to improve performance in advance of the Fiscal Year 2010 budget discussions.
- The due date for proposals has closed for development at Laytonia Recreational Park and South Germantown Recreational Park. Proposals are under review. Proposals for a partnership at the Warner property (Circle Manor) are due before the end of the month.
- Parks staff will bring a discussion to the Board this fall regarding leased premises on park property, including a policy for rent-setting.
- The PHED committee approved the supplemental appropriation for the Rock Creek Trail Bridge on July 21. Full Council approval was received on July 29.
- For Fiscal Year 2008, ParkPASS—our online system for registering for parks classes and programs—accounts have grown by 36 percent. We now have over 36,000 accounts.
- Several Park staff participated in the Saturday park tour for our new Commissioners.

**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.
- AUGUST 2 & 3—Cactus Show by the National Capital Cactus and Succulent Society at Brookside Gardens Visitors Center.
- AUGUST 9—Parks cultural resources staff is training new volunteer Underground Railroad Experience Trail guides at Woodlawn Manor from 10:00 am – 1:00 pm. For more see [www.UndergroundRRExperience.org](http://www.UndergroundRRExperience.org).
- AUGUST 9—Mt. Zion Community Day at Oakley Cabin, 3610 Brookville Road in Olney, from 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm. FREE celebration of family and kinships with members of the Mt. Zion community. This event is presented by the Friends of Oakley Cabin and the Underground Railroad.
- 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 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). This year's annual Bluegrass on the Farm festival features Randy Waller and the Country Gentleman with Blue Daze, Patuxent Partners and The Farm Band. For more, visit [www.bluegrassonthefarm.com](http://www.bluegrassonthefarm.com).

### **Capital Improvements**

- For the month of July, Park Development has received 6 formal park permit requests and reviewed and issued 2 permits.

### **Management/Administration**

- The Wheaton Maintenance Facility has a new Senior Administrative Assistant, Mayrelisman (Mayra) Medina.

### **Partnerships**

- Cabin John Regional Park staff reviewed plans for a proposed new Tai Chi court at the park.

### **Property Management**

- There are several exciting projects now in process on which the parks property management park planning and stewardship staff are working at the start of this new fiscal year:
  - Woodlawn Manor, Sandy Spring—completed a full exterior painting.
  - Poole's General Store and Residential House, Poolesville—major major lead-based paint abatement and re-painting of the exterior of the store and house now underway.
  - Darby General Store and Residential House, Darnestown—roof repairs to the house and full exterior lead-based paint abatement and re-painting scheduled for later this summer.

### **Baseball and Softball**

- Ballfields 3 and 6 in Wheaton Regional Park will be enclosed with fencing (similar to fields 1 and 2) as part of parks staff's fall ballfield work starting in November.
- Cabin John area park managers visited the field superintendent at the Washington Nationals stadium, Monday, July 21.

### **Field Sports**

- Parks staff dismantled half of the football bleachers and players' benches at Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park for delivery for sandblasting and painting. The field at the park was also top-dressed with sand.
- Parks staff has slit seeded the Blair football field to prepare for the fall season and added sidewalks between the football and baseball fields.

### **Tennis**

- Work is underway on the Wheaton Indoor Tennis facility following approval of the new design-build contract with Curtis Structures. Curtis Structures will be installing the exterior fabric and insulating liner over the next six weeks and complete the remaining site work. Revis Engineering has the other design-build contract to design and install new lighting and HVAC equipment, but due to delays in the fabric installation, parks staff processed a change order for a time extension. Revis is presently coordinating the utility work and will be installing ductwork and the new lights once the exterior fabric is in place.
- Park patrons are requesting court surface replacement and lights at the outdoor tennis courts at Cabin John Regional Park.
- The installation of the new insulation and fabric covering for the walls and the ceiling at the Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center at Cabin John Regional Park was delayed in order to avoid

service disruption. This month the facility was closed for maintenance. The contractor returned to the project site and completed all the contract required work on July 18, 2008. Completion of this phase of the work will reduce future capital investment for heating and air conditioning equipment. Also, this will reduce operating costs due to reduced energy usage.

### **Equestrian Centers**

- Park neighbors of Wheaton Riding Stables are beginning to notice improvements. The stables operator received the following a telephone message from one park neighbor calling to say how nice the grounds of the stable look now after all the many hours of hard work. Additional improvements planned include removing the deteriorated fencing and re-grading the riding area near Glenallen Avenue, replacing the footing in the indoor arena with dust-free footing (a health concern for workers and park users), renovating an erosion-prone paddock, and constructing a waste containment facility.
- Parks staff has completed dredging of the sediment in the holding pond at Meadowbrook Stables.

### **Ice Skating**

- Wheaton Ice Arena staff has been busy redesigning the Pro Shop and Snack Bar to make them more user-friendly and the arena has a newly designed logo. They are also offering a new public session—Parents Date Night. We entertain the kids while the parents skate.

### **Mini Golf, Splash Playground**

- The South Germantown Splash Playground has new party tents available for rent. Park patrons can also now check on the availability of the party tents online at [www.ParkPASS.org](http://www.ParkPASS.org).
- As of July 20, the Cabin John Ice Rink and South Germantown Mini-Golf and Splash Playground have sold 433 Maryland Recreational and Parks Association (MRPA) discount amusement park tickets for a total value of \$14,377.
- *The Washington Post* (Weekend section), July 25, ran an article about area splash parks and playgrounds, in which the South Germantown Splash Playground was featured.

### **Trains, Carousels**

- The new miniature train engine at Wheaton has been installed and is undergoing a period of testing and inspections before opening to the public.
- Parks staff has installed new lights in the Cabin John train station tunnel.

### **Maintained Open Space**

- Parks staff has begun reducing current mowing areas by 5 to 10 percent throughout the system due to budget restrictions.
- Parks staff has completed a base coat of asphalt on Park Rd at Martin Luther King, Jr. Recreational Park.

### **Playgrounds**

- The Flower Valley Local Park playground is complete and will open to the public in August.
- Parks staff in the Wheaton area is adding wood carpet to playgrounds as needed or requested.

- A new playground at the Cabin John Group Picnic Area is complete.
- The playground at Nolte Local Park is out of service due to unsafe conditions. Play equipment has been removed and a replacement date for the equipment is to be determined.
- Motorcycle spring toys were replaced at Takoma and Kemp Mill urban parks playgrounds.
- Parks staff met to discuss the status of the Elmhirst Parkway playground. The anticipated completion day is February 2009.

### **Trails - Paved Surface**

- Parks staff attended the National Park Service (NPS) trail safety outreach program at Theodore Roosevelt Island on Saturday, July 19. Parks staff will join NPS on August 1 and 2 at Fletcher's landing for Capital Crescent Trail outreach and education to users.
- Parks staff executed a \$329,310 with Meadville Land Services, Inc., of Meadville, Pennsylvania, for stream restoration and pedestrian bridge installation across Little Seneca Creek at Hoyles Mill Road on the Hoyles Mill Trail. The construction started Monday, July 28 and is expected to be completed by about mid-November, weather permitting. The construction will eliminate the ford—one of few known fords in Montgomery County. Parks staff is making a record of the conditions of the ford as they exist today.

### **Arboriculture**

- Parks arboriculture staff completed the clean-up of downed trees from the June 6 storm. There were downed trees in a quarter of our park system, with 105 parks impacted. On July 8, another storm passed through the area causing trees to fall and block Sligo Creek Parkway, Beach Drive and Little Falls. Parks arboriculture staff were called in to respond and cleaned up the downed trees and re-opened the roads.
- Tree maintenance for hazard tree and limb removal along Sligo Creek Parkway between New Hampshire Avenue and Colesville Road is complete.
- For the Historic, Significant and Champion Tree maintenance program, parks staff continue to mulch trees to improve soil structure and overall health of our oldest trees and preparing a list of trees for lightning protection to be installed by contract tree crews.
- Through the annual tree inspection program, parks staff is focusing on inspecting trees around playgrounds.
- Parks arboriculture staff worked closely with park managers, engineers and inspectors to determine the extent of damage and best management practices for mitigation of the recent WSSC water main breaks in Rock Creek Regional Park and Sligo Creek Park.
- Parks arboriculture staff is consulting on best management practices for the following park development projects: White Oak Recreation Center, Hoyles Mill Trail bridge installation, Needwood Golf Course pond renovation, Seneca Stone Barn renovation, Woodlawn Barn renovation, Sligo Cabin playground installation, Chevy Chase Open Space, Hillmead House demolition and several ICC mitigation sites.

### **Horticulture**

- Parks Shady Grove staff has been busy spraying tree rings to reduce maintenance time and prevent mower damage to the trees. Work has started on cleaning up the containerized tree and reforestation trees. Trees have been installed in the new pot-in-pot production areas with drip irrigation. This will help with watering in the future.

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- 53 container shrubs have been installed at Mathew Henson Trail.
- Parks staff is continuing aftercare of watering new trees for the 2007-08 planting season, and continued aftercare on 2<sup>nd</sup> year trees 2006-07 season, de-staking, pruning and watering and gator bagging.
- Parks landscaping staff inspected 90 ponds that are under contract for mowing and trash removal, inspected the sod bed that contractors prepared at Arora Hills Park, seeded the athletic field at Ridge Road Recreational Park and cleaned trash rack at Olney Family Pond.
- Due to reduction in horticultural services funding starting July 2008, Pope Farm and the horticultural staff have made the following difficult choices:
  - Relocated all tropicals to park offices and public facilities.
  - All the greenhouses at Pope Farm are now empty.
  - As of July 1, 2008, the annual flower program has been discontinued.

### **Natural Resources Management**

- Park manager met the community at Randolph Hills Local Park, July 22, to address various concerns. Park Police are working on removing homeless encampments, natural resources staff is removing non-native invasive plants, and park managers are working on other park amenities.
- Mowing invasive species is underway at Washington Grove Conservation Park.

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

- Parks cultural resources managers received dendrochronology dates for the following historic/cultural sites: 1816 Perry Browning House, 1823 Ziegler Log House, 1884 Jeremiah Norwood Tobacco Barn.
- Parks staff has opened up the second log room at Ziegler and is planning the Zeigler log house kitchen restoration.
- Parks staff is restoring the Kingsley Schoolhouse with the Montgomery County Conservation Corps.
- Parks staff evaluated and advised against Spencer-Oursler dairy barn demolition.
- Parks staff advised on Seneca Stone Barn stable yard re-creation.
- Began permit process for Poole's Store and House accessibility ramps.
- Adding research to docent manual for the Agricultural History Farm Park.
- Parks staff is creating a poster on Hoyle's Mill Ford at Hoyles Mill Conservation Park.
- Parks cultural resources managers are advising park development staff on the Pennyfield Boat Ramp and Section 106 preservation process.
- Parks staff is finalizing a Rachel Carson Greenway interpretive trail grant application.
- Park cultural resources staff has worked with the Volunteer Services Office to develop a draft Memorandum of Understanding for friends groups affiliated with the parks cultural resources and historic sites.
- We have a new docent coordinator for Oakley Cabin and Bussard Farmhouse volunteers and provided orientation and training for new volunteers for Oakley Cabin.
- Met with NEH program consultants to discuss a potential future submission for an Interpreting America's Historic Places planning grant.
- Parks staff is contacting members for the new Josiah Henson Site Advisory Committee.

- Parks cultural resources staff is recruiting for new volunteer trail guides for Underground Railroad Experience Trail.

### **Streams**

- New Emergency Action Plans are being developed for Pine Lake dam and Burnt Mill dam.
- The new rise at Pine Lake is nearing completion.

### **Nature Centers**

- Parks staff executed a contract with Allen H. Mitchell Construction Co., of Mt. Airy, Maryland to provide five pedestrian bridges at Meadowside Nature Center. The construction will start on or after July 28 and is expected to be completed on or before November 24.

### **Public Gardens**

- The Wings of Fancy Live Butterfly Exhibit is fully staffed with volunteers. Children's Day is scheduled for the third Saturday in September.
- A new irrigation system, funded by the CIP budget, is due to be installed at Brookside Gardens beginning next month to water plants more efficiently, reduce water use and improve plant health.
- Brookside Gardens custodial staff has switched to purchasing all green cleaning products that are non-toxic, biodegradable and environmentally safer than conventional products. The change means a safer work environment, clean and healthy buildings and a lighter footprint.
- Discovery Communications spent Monday, July 21 at Brookside Gardens shooting images for their fall product catalog.
- Maryland Public Television was at Brookside Gardens on July 19 to shoot some footage for a documentary called "Imani: A Story of Faith." The film is about how the Wilson family has gone through the process of healing from the loss of their child, Imani. The producer found the Butterfly Exhibit and the Labyrinth inspiring backdrops for interviews.

### **Park Police**

- July 15, Acting Park Police Chief Manley took part in the County Council briefing regarding parks impacts from WSSC water main breaks.
- Park Police Captain McNickle chaired a Law Enforcement Officer's Bill of Rights hearing board for the Charles County Sheriff's Department. Park Police Officer Nancy Jones served on the board as an equal ranking officer.
- Acting Park Police Chief Manley attended the annual National Institute of Justice conference in Arlington, July 22.
- Acting Park Police Chief Manley attended the Montgomery County Criminal Justice Coordinating committee meeting, July 23.
- The Montgomery County Park Police Division hosted FOP Bargaining Contract training at Saddlebrook on July 23.

*Mary R. Bradford*

*Director*

*Montgomery County Department of Parks*