

**Department of Parks  
Director's Report  
Thursday, January 10, 2008**

**Office of the Parks Director**

- We continue to work to refine our FY 2009 budget request, seek ways to find savings in FY 2008, and organize our financial projections for the remainder of this year.
- In calendar year 2007, the department secured a total of \$766,171 in grants and donations. We have secured \$56,000 worth of grants from community groups.
- Mike Riley, currently Chief of the Park Development Division, has been promoted to the position of Deputy Director, Administration, effective 12/30/07. He will have primary responsibility for the Management Services, Park Development, Facilities Management, and Park Planning and Stewardship divisions.
- Park Manager movement includes: Troy Mason, to Park Manager I at Wheaton Regional Park and Dave McGrady, to Park Manager II at Martin Luther King Regional Park.
- Bruce Adams, Director of Montgomery County's Office of Community Partnerships, sent our Volunteer Services Office a rave review about the 21<sup>st</sup> annual Community Service Day volunteer project in Wheaton Regional Park with Identity, Inc. this past October. Bruce called it his "all time favorite" project among the county's 20 Community Service Day projects in which he had participated previously (letter attached).
- With Park Planning staff, I attended a meeting hosted by Rep. Chris Van Hollen's staff with U.S. Army representatives and community activists regarding public access to the Ireland Drive trail behind the Walter Reed annex in Forest Glen, a key part of trail connectivity in the county. It appears that a workable shared use arrangement is on the horizon.
- For the first time ever, the Department of Parks is offering the chance for one lucky teen, ages 14 through 17, to be a ParkStar on *The Parks Show*—the award winning 15-minute monthly television program we jointly produce with the Montgomery County Council. We will host two open auditions this spring for try-outs. See [www.ParkStarSearch.com](http://www.ParkStarSearch.com) for more.

**Events**

- JANUARY 10—Registration opens for the department's summer camps. A listing of this summer's offerings is available at [www.ParkPASS.org](http://www.ParkPASS.org).
- JANUARY 12—Both Department of Parks ice rinks—Cabin John Ice Rink and Wheaton Ice Arena—will celebrate National Skating Month with "cheapskate" times and FREE group lessons at Cabin John with its professional teaching group. See [www.CabinJohnIce.com](http://www.CabinJohnIce.com) and [www.WheatonIceArena.com](http://www.WheatonIceArena.com) for more.
- JANUARY 22—Meadowside Nature Center's Winter Wonderland Festival.
- JANUARY 23—Department of Parks staff briefing to the Historic Preservation Commission on the department's cultural resources.
- FEBRUARY 22— The fourth annual Green Matters Symposium: Sustainable Sites—a new initiative to measure and recognize sustainability in landscape design, construction and maintenance—at Brookside Gardens, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm. This was simply excellent last year. Sponsors include: Friends of Brookside Gardens, Winding

Orchard Citizens Association, Azalea Society of America (Brookside Gardens Chapter), Neighbors of Northwest Branch and the Sierra Club. Sponsors have donated \$2,550 to support the symposium. Symposium co-hosts include: American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center and the United States Botanic Garden. See [www.BrooksideGardens.org](http://www.BrooksideGardens.org) for more.

- FEBRUARY 23 & 24—Brookside Nature Center's Maple Sugar Festival, always fun.

### **Management/Administration**

- Parks staff has completed the roof over the gas pumps at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Maintenance Yard.
- Parks staff has also completed work on the concrete fuel pads at the Rock Creek Maintenance Yard.

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

- The Clarksburg Holiday Tree Lighting, sponsored by the Clarksburg Historical Society, was held in Little Bennett Regional Park on Friday, December 7, 2007.

### **Park Planning**

- Parks staff is working with farmers to provide agricultural opportunities as interim uses of parkland, while also protecting sensitive areas by delineating stream and wetland buffers, steep slopes and erodible soils. In 2007, we did an interdisciplinary review of potential parkland for agricultural use. Approximately 10 individual leases for over 320 acres of parkland were signed or renewed. Parks staff also met with farmers to explain the methods for delineating sensitive areas and discussed the function of buffers.

### **Property Management**

- Demolition of the park house in Maydale Local Park is complete and the area has been restored to parkland in its natural condition. This was the house that flooded.
- This winter, the parks property management staff is conducting full-day training for parks division chiefs in asbestos, lead, mold and radon issues, hazardous materials surveys, facility management plans and how and when to address these critical issues. This 1-day pilot training will be used to evaluate and adjust training needs and determine broader internal audiences who might benefit.
- Significant environmental cleanup projects addressed this winter for various park properties include: the removal of hazardous materials, such as paint cans, abandoned drums, above and underground fuel storage tanks and asbestos; and lead paint remediation.

### **Tennis**

- The department received a \$100,000 donation from the Montgomery County Tennis Association for new signage and a facility study for the Cabin John Indoor Tennis facility, now the Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center at Cabin John Regional Park. We will celebrate the renaming of the facility, and its recent renovation, with games, demonstrations, refreshments, giveaways and some important guests of honor on a date to be determined this spring. More details to come. Media coverage about the renaming was received in *The Metro Herald*, the sports section of *The Gazette*, *The Washington Post* (Montgomery Extra) and *The Potomac Almanac*.

### **Equestrian Centers**

- Parks staff has spearheaded the first ever equestrian facility operators meeting, January 7, to share information, discuss industry issues and begin collaboration towards improving park facilities and operations. This is the first time parks equestrian facility operators have been brought together for this type of meeting.
- To proactively address management concerns at the parks equestrian centers, Parks Equine Resources Coordinator David Tobin is seeking an abatement to the special exemption fee charged to the Potomac Horse Center by the Department of Permitting Services for the past several years. This could potentially result in the return of funds already paid and should improve the relationship between the department and the lessees of the parks equestrian centers.
- Parks staff has reviewed the equestrian trail at Wheaton Regional Park and are planning improvements for increased safety, including the replacement of the existing bridge and the eventual major re-routing of the trail to prevent erosion and to improve trail maintenance.
- Parks contractor KCI has provided preliminary architectural drawings for the renovation of Wheaton Stables horse stalls. KCI is also expected to provide recommendations on the installation of fire suppression/sprinkler systems and electrical and plumbing upgrades. The contractor was hired by the department to assess public safety issues at Meadowbrook and Wheaton Stables.

### **Ice Skating**

- Winter class registrations at Cabin John Ice Rink are at 1400 students with a total of 225 classes. Despite the unusually warm weather, public skate sessions have good attendance with several reaching maximum capacity.

### **Picnic Shelters**

- Parks staff is continuing post replacement work at Georgian Forest Local Park; similar work at Olney Manor is complete.
- Parks staff has completed concrete repair work at Calverton-Galway Local Park.

### **Playgrounds**

- Parks staff has begun sealing the CCA-treated wood surfaces at South Germantown Recreational Park's Adventure Playground. WTTG-TV (Fox 5) is expected to air a follow-up to their November story about CCA-treated wood on playgrounds, at schools and in other consumer products, such as decks. The report is expected to show the department's action taken to address this concern at South Germantown.

### **Park Activity Buildings**

- Parks staff has completed painting the interior of activity buildings at Glenmont and Sligo Avenue local parks.
- With the county's Recreation Department, the department secured an \$81,773 grant from the Department of Juvenile Services for security and program enhancements at the Wheaton Community Center.

## **Natural Resources Management**

- Parks natural resources management staff held a managed deer hunt at Little Bennett Regional Park December 5 through 7, with a harvest of 125 deer. The first day of the scheduled hunt, December 4, was cancelled due to weather. The Nathan Dickerson Barn is now ready for the managed deer hunt program.
- The department received a \$20,171 donation from the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail (CCCT) for non-native invasive plant control. *The Gazette* ran an article about the CCCT donation to fight non-native invasives and *The Washington Post* (Montgomery Extra) recently ran an article about non-native invasives in parks.

## **Archaeological and Historic Site Management**

- Bids have been received on the stabilization work for the Seneca Stone Barn.
- A consulting technical architect is being hired to review plans for the Darby Store stabilization.
- Parks staff is in the process of reviewing the drawings for ADA-compliant ramps at Poole's House and Store.
- Parks staff met with Theresa Cameron from the Council of Arts and Humanities to discuss an arts incubator concept.
- This January, parks staff is expected to begin using the recently vacated historic property—the Ziegler Log House—in Little Bennett Regional Park as office space.

## **Trails – Natural Surface**

- Calvert Asset Management Company, Inc. of Bethesda recently donated \$1,000 to the department in recognition of their recent group volunteer project this past July to improve the natural surface trails near Locust Grove Nature Center in Cabin John Regional Park. Calvert volunteers and family worked to reclaim an old section of rerouted trail as well as resurface a set of steps near the center of the trail with gravel. The funds will be used to support programs aimed at maintaining and improving natural surface trails in the parks across the county.

## **Agricultural Support**

- Work to repair the bridge and stone at the Agricultural History Farm Park is underway.

## **Public Gardens**

- On December 10, WRC-TV (NBC Channel 4) filmed its Wednesday's Child segment at the train display at Brookside Gardens.
- On December 11, four students from Poolesville High School who are building a bio-diesel generator for Brookside Gardens visited staff to talk and view the equipment slated for conversion to bio-diesel.
- The Montgomery County Public Schools Green Schools Focus Program held a Green Landscaping Workshop at Brookside Gardens for students, teachers and parents from seven schools on December 13. Participants learned landscaping considerations, the benefits of no-mow zones and concluded the day with a tour of the Gardens led by Plant Collections Manager Phil Normandy.
- Once again, Brookside Gardens was a collection site for the Angels for Children toy drive, in cooperation with the Wheaton Volunteer Rescue Squad and the Wheaton and Kensington Chamber of Commerce. Staff participated in wrapping the donated

presents at Evergreen School. The Gardens also donated Garden of Lights tickets to 300 low income families who benefit from the toy drive and are residents in three apartment complexes owned by the Montgomery Housing Partnership.

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

- December 28 marked the kick-off of the interpretive planning phase for Uncle Tom's Cabin. An advisory committee is being formed for a first meeting in February. There is also an open house planned for the Luxmanor Citizens Association this spring.
- A parks draft chapter for the Germantown Master Plan has been written and includes interpretive recommendations.
- The concept of adaptively reusing the Waters House Barn for a Heritage Visitors Center has been approved by the Maryland Historical Trust Easement Committee. Parks senior staff and the Planning Board can expect a briefing on this project in the next two months.
- Dendrochronology analysis of the Perry Browning House is underway, in England.
- A previously unidentified log cabin in Little Bennett Regional Park is currently being studied.

### **Park Police**

- Concerning the recent homicide at Muddy Branch Local Park, an arrest has been made. The incident was domestically related.
- December 12, two search and seizure warrants were issued for malicious destruction of property (graffiti), targeting suspects who caused over \$15,000 worth of damage spanning multiple jurisdictions, including several parks in the Silver Spring/Wheaton area. Two arrests were made.
- The department received a \$19,439.78 FEMA Homeland Security grant for a trailer to carry emergency management equipment for Park Police.

Happy New Year!

*Mary R. Bradford*

*Director*

*Montgomery County Department of Parks*