

August 7, 2023

## **Memorandum**

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Nina Carmichael, Leadership in Conservation Fellow

Re: August staff reports

### **Executive Management (Lorrie Pearson, Michael Daab)**

- Staff welcomes new Commissioner Greg Knott, who was generous with his time and participated in several orientation sessions, where he toured preserves, met staff, and learned about our facilities, projects, opportunities, and challenges.
- We also welcome HR Manager Kathryn Glynn, who is also making the rounds to meet the staff, and joins us just in time to help us formulate the compensation portion of the FY24 budget. Welcome, Kathryn!
- Michael is working to move I.T. projects forward, including migration to the cloud, phone system upgrades, security cameras at the Golf Course, KnowBe4 cybersecurity training for staff, accounting software, and internet connectivity.
- Lorrie spoke to approximately 35 people at the August 9 Champaign West Rotary meeting about the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, in response to the invitation from Foundation Board member Matt Hausman.
- Lorrie participated in a semi-regular meeting with Champaign and Urbana Park District Executive Directors, where they discuss common concerns, discover ways to further collaborate, and celebrate one another's successes.

### **CCFPD Fellow (Nina Carmichael)**

- Completed the Woodland Ecology course (online) through the Morton Arboretum on scholarship from the volunteer stewardship Network (VSN).
- Currently editing an application submission for the PDRMA Risk Management Grant application in partnership with NR in hopes of receiving an on-site washer and dryer to further minimize tick exposure, chainsaw, and fire PPE failure, and cross-contamination from allergenic organic compounds from certain plants and herbicides.
- Drafted an executive summary for the 2022 *Champaign County Forest Preserve District Diversity and Accessibility Initiative Report* written by Hannah Caraway to be included in the comprehensive plan.
- Enrolled in the Environmental Professionals of Color (EPOC) Environmental Educators gathering series which consists of monthly learning and coaching sessions from August 2023 through April 2024.

### **Planning and Construction (Bridgette Moen)**

- Construction ran cable and installed security cameras at the Golf Course Pro Shop.
- New AC units and furnaces were installed at the Golf Course Pro Shop just in time for the heat wave.



- Farnsworth provided drawings for the Discovery Garden Greenhouse. Staff have reviewed and provided comments.



- Construction repaired the roof and gutters at the Homer Lake Interpretive Center following the storm. With the widespread damage throughout the community, the availability of roofing contractors was tight. Internal expertise to make the repairs ensured their timely completion.
- An ADA path leading to an accessible fishing area was installed by the Construction Crew at Willow Pond in Middle Fork. This access area includes a hard surface user area with a pergola structure and bench seating.
- Sam and Bridgette participated in a webinar, *The Evolving Community Survey: Common Problems with Traditional Surveys and How They Can Be Avoided*, hosted by the International City/County Management Association.
- Sam is working on procurement for the last two vehicles to be ordered in 2023. The VW ID.4, F250, and E-Transit were delivered this month. Nina assisted in the pick-up of VW ID.4.



## **Business and Finance (John Baker)**

- Met with Kamryn Suttinger to provide an overview of the Business and Finance section to familiarize herself with the types of needed information from supervisors to meet financial requirements.
- Received and entered 2024 operating budget submissions. Drafted administration budget requests which include the: Risk Management, Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF), Audit, Social Security, and Bond funds as well as general Foundation and District operating costs.
- Received new contract from Municipal Systems Incorporated for upgrading General Ledger, Accounts Payable, and Budget Planning modules from MSI 7.5 to MSI 10.
- Solicited information about financial enterprise system solutions from BS&A (an online municipal data search and service system) and Tyler Technologies (a school and government software system) for consideration of replacing current MSI software. Met twice with OpenGov (a cloud-based software for local government), Mike Daab, and Carron Johnson to review OpenGov's financial software solution.
- Reported 2023 Conservation Reserve Program tracts managed by the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation.
- Resolved several vendor issues, including disputed charges, electronic payments, and service cancellations.
- Updated Open Meetings Act report regarding employee compensation to include newly hired positions
- Still awaiting the auditor's report on 2022 financials to finalize the audit report. Requested GFOA extend the deadline for the District to submit the 2022 Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting.

## **Human Resources (Mary Beck)**

- During the month of July, HR processed 1 hire and 0 separations.
- As of July 1st, our total headcount was 124 employees; including 48 FT, 16 PT, 59 seasonal, and one paid intern.
- The District documented 4 employee injury reports (3-no medical needed/1 medical needed).
- We have several job positions opening as many of our seasonal staff go off to university.
- Kathryn Glynn, the new HR Manager, started her position on August 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- Claims have been filed with PDRMA for the June 29<sup>th</sup> Derecho events, including roof repairs at Homer Lake, and lost revenue at the Golf Course.

## Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- The Forest Preserves will have an article highlighting the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in the Mahomet Music Festival Book. The book is distributed to attendees at the festival.
- The Forest Preserves are highlighted in several areas in this year's "experience guide" put out by Experience CU (previously known as Visit Champaign County). The following areas of the District are highlighted on these pages:
  - Sustainability, page 10;
  - Music with Ambiance, page 28;
  - Connecting to our Past, page 33;
  - Outdoors, page 34;
  - A Walk in the Woods, page 35;
  - On the Water, page 36;
  - Hop on a Bike, page 36;
  - Night Under the Stars, page 37; Trail Runs, page 38;
  - Splash Your Day Away, page 42;
  - Hit the Links, page 43;Here's the link to the whole guide:  
<https://www.nxtbook.com/champaigncounty/ExperienceGuide/experienceguide2023/index.php>
- Pedal the Preserves is a district-wide bicycling event that will take place on August 19. Participants are to register by August 16 at: [Pedal the Preserves Online Registration \(bikereg.com\)](https://www.bikereg.com). Several different distance options are available and participants get to pedal across the KRT, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, and Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, with an option to camp at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. All proceeds from the event go to the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation.
  - Pedal the Preserves Promotions:
    - <https://youtu.be/WxYobhO2HKA> - A video was produced by Kristin Rose and posted to social media to promote the event.
    - Flyers, a press release, and other graphics, and materials were developed and used to market the event:  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1c8idLv6ZC\\_AwE1dV-0qCv3FXhsofcz0h?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1c8idLv6ZC_AwE1dV-0qCv3FXhsofcz0h?usp=sharing)
- Producing video promotions for district events and posting them to social media have helped to boost attendance and outreach.
  - Paddle with a Naturalist- <https://youtu.be/U548GobA-yA>
  - Meet the Critters- <https://youtu.be/CmyZ0ZWH1c0>
  - 75 Mile Trail Challenge- <https://youtu.be/CBHMEsKq2kY>
- July Ads:



- Attended a fundraising meeting July 19<sup>th</sup> and shared marketing material with the fundraising committee related to the Homer Lake Boat Launch Improvements and the Dark Sky Trails fundraising projects.
- Met with Jennifer Wick, Ryan Anderson, David Leake, and Matt Kuntz throughout the month of July to discuss marketing and events related to fundraising and related marketing material for projects.
- **Media this month included:**
  - <https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/paddle-with-a-naturalist-at-homer-lake-this-summer/>
  - <https://khmoradio.com/ixp/462/p/there-is-only-one-place-to-officially-stargaze-in-all-of-illinois/>
  - <https://www.smilepolitely.com/culture/weekender-july-21-23/>
  - [https://www.wcia.com/news/volunteer-planted-prairie-in-mahomet-blooms-after-5-year-wait/?utm\\_source=facebook.com&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=socialflow&fbclid=IwAR3m0VsXIW-4N51bx7i2TK3OrAEwIhYF-zMkY1h1ImrTxjoF61KVVhgyHdA](https://www.wcia.com/news/volunteer-planted-prairie-in-mahomet-blooms-after-5-year-wait/?utm_source=facebook.com&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=socialflow&fbclid=IwAR3m0VsXIW-4N51bx7i2TK3OrAEwIhYF-zMkY1h1ImrTxjoF61KVVhgyHdA)
  - <https://mahometdaily.com/registration-for-ccfpds-pedal-the-preserves-now-open/>
  - <https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/paddle-with-a-naturalist-at-homer-lake-this-summer/>
  - <https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/ciliving-stories/ciliving/explore-natures-wonders-with-champaign-county-forest-preserve-district/>
- Social media followers update.

|       | FACEBOOK | +/-  | INSTAGRAM | +/- |
|-------|----------|------|-----------|-----|
| CCFPD | 8,349    | +132 | 3,554     | +17 |
| KRT   | 5,267    | +43  | 171       | +5  |
| MGP   | 5,409    | +3   | 1,337     | +11 |

|      |       |     |     |    |
|------|-------|-----|-----|----|
| HLIC | 3,605 | +46 |     |    |
| GC   | 2,181 | +63 | 360 | +5 |
| FPPF | 682   | +2  |     |    |

- July Facility Rental Report

| 2023      | 2022      | July     |                            | 2023               | 2022               |
|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| # Rentals | # Rentals | Preserve | Facility                   | \$                 | \$                 |
| 14        | 10        | HL       | Salt Fork Center           | \$5,025.00         | \$3,550.00         |
| 4         | 3         | HL       | Walnut Hill Shelter        | \$900.00           | \$380.00           |
| 3         | 2         | LOW      | Botanical Garden Weddings  | \$1,990.00         | \$1,990.00         |
| 6         | 8         | LOW      | Elks Lake Pavilion         | \$2,300.00         | \$2,125.00         |
| 9         | 6         | LOW      | Izaak Walton Cabin         | \$1,520.00         | \$1,080.00         |
| 11        | 11        | LOW      | Lake of the Woods Pavilion | \$4,200.00         | \$3,350.00         |
| 2         | 1         | LOW      | Lakeview Shelter           | \$150.00           | \$120.00           |
| 2         | 3         | LOW      | Riverview Retreat Center   | \$640.00           | \$420.00           |
| 2         | 4         | LOW      | Rotary Hill Shelter        | \$320.00           | \$757.50           |
| 2         | 2         | LOW      | Sycamore Hollow Shelter    | \$360.00           | \$200.00           |
| 5         | 5         | MF       | Activity Center            | \$1,400.00         | \$1,350.00         |
| 0         | 0         | RB       | River Bend Shelter         | \$0.00             | \$0.00             |
| <b>60</b> | <b>55</b> |          | <b>TOTAL</b>               | <b>\$18,805.00</b> | <b>\$15,322.50</b> |

## Grants and Fundraising (Ryan Anderson)

**African American Heritage Trail-** Earlier this year, the Foundation purchased a brick as part of the CCAAHT new campaign for Skelton Park. The Champaign Park District anticipates awarding a contract for the completion of the Skelton Park transformation very soon. Construction will likely be completed by mid-December with bricks installed around that time.

**Donor Appreciation Kayak Event** – This event has been scheduled for August 26<sup>th</sup>. Postcard invitations went in the mail to 220 donors. As of 8/2 we have 32 attendees signed up including foundation members, donors, and staff.

**Dark Sky Fundraising** – Foundation members are meeting with prospective donors and an appeal letter and brochure will go out this week to a select group of donors that may have an interest in supporting the project.

**Homer Lake Boat Launch** – Foundation members met with AMBUCS on 7/25 to request a donation to the Homer Lake Boat Launch.

**Fundraising Campaigns Progress as of 7/24/23:**

| Campaign               | Raised       | Left         | Goal          | %   |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|-----|
| Dark Sky Trail         | \$ 25,182.00 | \$ 74,818.00 | \$ 100,000.00 | 25% |
| Timberdoodle Trail     | \$ 3,423.00  | \$ 3,577.00  | \$ 7,000.00   | 49% |
| Homer Lake Boat Launch | \$ 530.00    | \$ 19,470.00 | \$ 20,000.00  | 3%  |

**Fundraising Trends (as of 7/24/2023)**

*Donations 4-Year Summary*

| 4-year totals:                         | 2020         | 2021         | 2022         | 2023(YTD)   |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| <b>Total \$</b>                        | \$164,219.10 | \$209,832.74 | \$207,053.66 | \$65,518.70 |
| <b>Total \$ (adjusted)</b>             | \$111,738.24 | \$174,725.10 | \$175,731.78 | \$39,206.80 |
| <b># of donors (adjusted)</b>          | 341          | 407          | 345          | 190         |
| <b># of 1<sup>st</sup> time donors</b> | 134          | 165          | 87           | 68          |

\* “Adjusted” numbers have grants and bequests removed. Updates to our donor tracking system (Bloomerang) have altered these figures.

*Adjusted Revenue by Month (Apr-Jul)*

|             | Apr          | May          | June        | July        |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>2020</b> | \$ 2,425.00  | \$ 18,600.59 | \$6,830.49  | \$ 4,361.14 |
| <b>2021</b> | \$ 31,291.41 | \$ 11,330.06 | \$15,513.44 | \$ 3,758.82 |
| <b>2022</b> | \$ 7,774.04  | \$ 24,112.80 | \$17,278.82 | \$ 2,515.53 |
| <b>2023</b> | \$ 4,767.94  | \$ 3,733.38  | \$11,613.14 | \$ 3,234.10 |

**Volunteer coordinator (Sue Gallo)**

- Four new volunteer applications in July.
- Pedal the Preserves organization and volunteer recruitment has begun.
- Volunteer Appreciation Event organizing started – please plan to attend on August 31! This event will be held at Elk’s Pavilion, a detailed invite will be sent out in the next two weeks.
- Clean up and storage of the Freedom Fest Volunteer materials is complete and ready for donation to another organization.

- Confirmation of third semester of Lincoln's Challenge cadets volunteering weekly at Homer Lake under NR supervision – Thanks Emily!!
- A confirmation for Lincoln's Challenge cadets to volunteer weekly along the KRT has been confirmed. Further coordination concerning bathroom access and co-supervision from the Friends of the KRT volunteers, is in process.
- Coordinating Eagle Scout project of an old flag collection box along the KRT in St Joe's that Scouts will monitor and properly retire the collected flags.

### **Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Chris Edmondson & Joie Torres)**

- The extreme windstorm late June knocked out power; power was restored to the facility 1 the afternoon of July 4<sup>th</sup>. Thus, we were closed for business July 1-3 (a long holiday weekend), and only open for walking on July 4<sup>th</sup>. Without power, we are unable to access our tee sheet, take payments, or charge the electric golf carts. Not far after we had a few days of extreme heat and a couple of other days with extremely poor air quality peaking at a air quality score of 230 due to the Canadian wildfire smoke. All said and done, we managed to have a successful month when it comes to revenue and play. For the month, we had 5,884 players, which is 500 above the 5-year play average. Our revenues were \$147,762, which is well above the 5-year average of \$119,124 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest since 2009.
- We had 2 more projects completed in July at the facility. We had our parking lot sealed/resurfaced/painted over the first 2 weeks of the month (pictures attached). We also had the entire HVAC systems (8 Heating and AC units) replaced for the Snack Bar, Locker Rooms, and Clubhouse. This will greatly improve the consistency of the conditions indoors for our staff, patrons, and Clubhouse rentals.



- We held our annual Junior Golf Camp July 10-13. This camp is limited to the first 25 paid participants and we had the camp registration filled by March 1<sup>st</sup>! This camp runs from 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. daily for 10-17-year-olds and focuses on all aspects of the golf game (play, etiquette, maintenance). The camp also gives us a chance to incorporate other departments, specifically Stacey Clementz, who brought a fox snake to show, discussed other reptiles found in the Preserves, and spoke of other educational opportunities for the kids in the District. Thank you Stacey!



- July also saw the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the Adult “Get Golf Ready” Clinics. These were held on Monday evenings from 5:30-6:30 pm. This clinic is limited to the first 10 paid participants and was once again filled.
- In general, July is a quieter month for large events, mainly due to the heat that can be expected. We did host a few events in July and those are listed in the chart below.

| Outing                    | # of Players | 23 Total Rev | 23 Actual Merch |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Mahomet Rotary            | 48           | \$2,443.00   | \$340.00        |
| Grasshoppers              | 38           | \$1,064.00   | \$0.00          |
| MSHS Golf Team Fundraiser | 96           | \$5,257.52   | \$480.00        |

- Finally, we hosted our annual Junior Open Tournament on Thursday, July 27<sup>th</sup>. We had 91 participants this year, which is well up from the 55 we had last year and the most participants since 2014. This tournament is designed for ages 5-17, with the 5-11-year age groups broken up into divisions (5-7; 8-9; 10-11) on the Par 3 Course and the 12-17 age groups (12-13; 14-15; 16-17) on the 18 hole course. It is great to see the level of youth talent locally on display and we had 3 participants set tournament scoring records this year!
- Equipment Manger repaired the water hydrant at the cart barn.
- Maintenance crew reseeded tees, bare areas on the rough, and around the clubhouse, Golf course assistant superintendent repaired and replaced malfunctioning sprinkler heads on the back nine course.
- Mike Salinwachik from commercial irrigation repaired the underground wiring for the sprinklers on the Par 3 course.
- Golf course assistant superintendent helped demo equipment for the junior golf kids on understanding the use of a: green, fairway, tee, and rough mower.

## Museum and Education Department (Kamryn Suttinger)

### Patrons Served

|                | In-Person Programming* | Online Programming* | Outreach** | MGP Visitation | HLIC Visitation |
|----------------|------------------------|---------------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Jan-23</b>  | 78                     | 302                 | 423        | Closed         | 40              |
| <b>Feb-23</b>  | 286                    | 92                  | 35         | Closed         | 48              |
| <b>Mar-23</b>  | 246                    | 150                 | 90         | 707            | 167             |
| <b>Apr-23</b>  | 1312                   | 0                   | 210        | 830            | 274             |
| <b>May-23</b>  | 1559                   | 0                   | 0          | 1286           | 352             |
| <b>June-23</b> | 892                    | 0                   | 0          | 1616           | 239             |
| <b>July-23</b> | 1197                   | 0                   | 0          | 1578           | 136             |
| <b>YTD</b>     | 4373                   | 544                 | 758        | 4439           | 1120            |

\* Includes all youth and public program opportunities \*\* Includes loan kits and tabling events

## **Collections and Exhibits:**

- Jen and Rob collected the two errant large artifacts from the North Waterfowl Area shed at Middle Fork. Thanks to Matt and Jake for their patience and help.
- Artifact deaccessioning has been difficult. So far, no homes have been found for these items. Of seven offers made, six were declined and one is still pending.
- The Defiance College transfer was featured on the Pilgrim Library blog.  
<https://pilgrimlibrary.wordpress.com/>
- James Carter, or NMAAH Smith Intern will be wrapping up his work on August 16<sup>th</sup>. We may have the option for a third year in the program to host another intern in 2024.
- Telephone and in-person interviews are complete for the Department's Custodial Specialist position, and we have offered the position to one of the candidates.
- We are down to the last 30 or so artifacts at Sangamon River awaiting relocation to Rankin. However, these are some of the largest artifacts requiring the most time and work.

## **Youth Programs**

- Summer camp is officially over. We offered many great opportunities for children ages 3 to 15 and saw a total of 234 camp kids! This is the first time in 20-ish years that CCFPD has had to cancel camps. We canceled three different days of camp; one for a power outage at P2 after storm damage, one for an air quality warning where we weren't able to move all the campers safely into the Interpretive Center, and one for an excessive heat warning. A more in-depth report on camps, including evaluations, will be in the August board report.
- Patrick received an email from an Eco-adventures/Wilderness Explorers camper's family:

*"Thanks for a summer full of fun, interesting, and learning nature adventures you provided for our granddaughter and other area children! It's a great way to get kids out in our local nature parks!"*

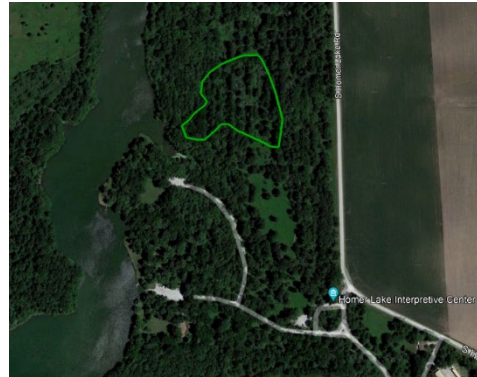
- Staff are continuing to review application materials and scheduling interviews for the Education Program Specialist II position.

## **Public Programs and Visitor Services**

- Looking at just the month of July alone, the museum saw visitors from at least 36 states and 5 countries!
- We wrapped up our Take Me Fishing events this month with a grand total of 187 attendees at all three events (60 at MF; 60 at HL; 67 at LOW). Jennifer Wick would like to thank all the staff (from multiple departments across the district) and volunteers that helped make these events run smoothly!
- Staff held in-person interviews with finalists for the Public Program Specialist position. Staff are hoping to have someone in the position by the end of the summer.
- Summer concerts continued with One Foot In playing at HL and Candy Foster & Shades of Blue playing in a new location at Lake of the Woods Peninsula. Nearly 500 visitors attended both concerts!
- Jennifer Wick and Selena Gonzalez visited 9 local libraries across Champaign, Vermilion, and Piatt Counties during June and July where they saw a total of 165 people.
- The new "Paddle with a Naturalist" programs at Homer Lake (with Lunatic Kayaks providing all boats) have been well received; this partnership allows us to offer more boat choices to participants and helps spread the word about Lunatic's rental services.

## Natural Resources (Peter Goodspeed)

- In early July, NR staff helped clean up damage at Homer Lake that was caused by a Derecho (a type of widespread wind storm associated with severe thunderstorms).
- The NR team remained busy with biennial weed control throughout the preserves, namely focusing on yellow and white sweet clover at Point Pleasant, Buffalo Trace, and the Northwest prairie complex at Homer Lake. Large patches of sweet clover were spot mowed with skid steers or tractors while smaller isolated populations were removed by hand-spading individual plants.
- The crew spent some time spraying invasive Japanese hops in several places throughout the floodplain at Homer Lake.
- NR has begun mulching invasive and undesirable shrubs and small trees in a 6-acre area north of the Interpretive Center along the Timberdoodle Trail. This is just the first step in a 25-acre woodland restoration project at Homer Lake that will promote oak tree regeneration and biodiversity. More shrub removal, tree thinning, small stem control, native seed planting, and prescribed fire will greatly enhance this area.
- Contracted tree thinning will be arranged using funds from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation Community Stewardship Challenge Grant.
- Jacob sampled aquatic macroinvertebrates in the stream below the spillway at Homer Lake to monitor the health of this aquatic ecosystem and plans to sample additional streams throughout more of the preserves during the summer season.
- Eric attended an Urban Tree Health Training in Decatur through the University of Illinois Extension Office.



- Anna continued to lead seed collection, milling, and storage for early species.
- Some notable administrative tasks in July included:
  - Budget development;
  - RFQ development for hazardous tree removal at Homer Lake FP;
  - Correspondence with the Wetlands Initiative on an update for the Buffalo Trace smart wetland design;
  - Correspondence with IDNR on dedicating high-quality habitat at Homer Lake FP as an IL Nature Preserve or IL Land and Water Reserve.

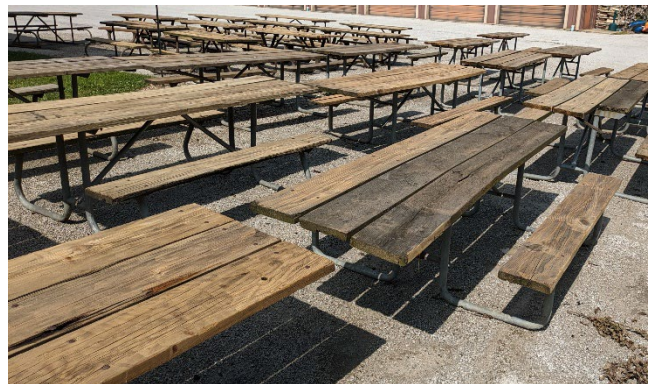
## Lake of the Woods (Rusty Maulding)

- Some much needed rain created a return to somewhat normal operations in early-mid July. Overall, things are very dry still and the reprieve was somewhat short lived. Staff have again increased time between mows and decreased time between watering. This continued departure from regular necessary demands has allowed several projects to be completed over the past month before seasonal help returns to school.

- The unofficially labeled It'll Do trail SW of Elks Lake had most understory invasive plants such as honeysuckle removed in July. Honeysuckle and other weed tree stumps were treated after removal to prevent regrowth and debris was chipped. It really opens up the lake views! We plan to return this winter to remove some material that is closer to the lake after it freezes over as well as thin select areas to allow the more desirable vegetation to thrive.



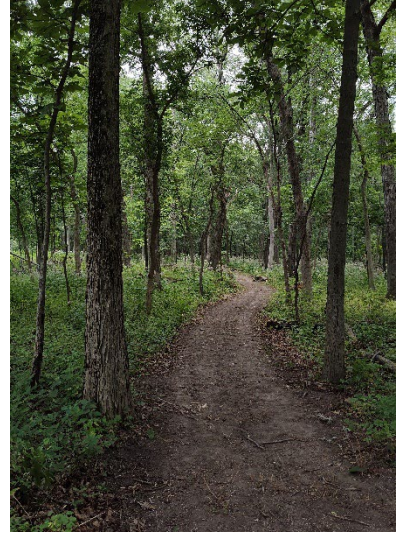
- Picnic tables are being rehabilitated. All wood picnic tables at Lake of the Woods and River Bend have been power washed and lumber needing replacement identified. We also broke down 10 very old picnic tables with failing support structures that were held as backups at West Maintenance. Metal was recycled and salvageable lumber went to replace failing wood in other reserve tables.



In total, there were 21 additional reserve tables that were cleaned and repaired. Five of those were dispersed to areas in need of additional tables. The remainder will be used as backups or swapped out for other picnic tables to be brought in for significant repair. There are now at least 72 wood picnic tables at Lake of the Woods

for public use and that does not include coated, expanded metal picnic tables in shelters. I anticipate the remaining repairs will be completed in August.

- Hawthorn and Rotary restroom exteriors were cleaned and painted. The Rotary shelter at the west end of Buffalo Trace (BT) was power washed and sealed.
- After consultation with Natural Resources (NR) and Education staff, Michael Dale's plan to directly link the Botanical Garden's Woodland Trail to the Rayburn Purnell Trail came to fruition this past month. This is a first step in better linking the various short trails on the west side of Lake of the Woods to give the public a better experience and enable staff to better take advantage of the various ecosystems for programming.
- Shrub and tree pruning occurred throughout July to control size, improve views and maintain an appropriate walking or driving height under branches throughout the preserves and trails.
- Planning is underway for fall planting projects at the Botanical Gardens and Elks Lake Pavilion.



## Homer Lake (Skylar Smith)

- Homer Lake Forest Preserve was temporarily closed to the public due to safety concerns from extreme storm damage in July. A goal was set to have all public areas of the Forest Preserve open within 7 days, which included the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Holiday Weekend. I'm happy to report that this goal was met through the support of staff across many departments.
- The Sylvester Woods sign, damaged by the storm, was repaired by Construction.
- HL Operations dug out all the old wood chips and roots from the Walnut Hill playground and replaced it with 12 inches of new safety guard wood chips. The leftover woodchips were spread around the logs at the natural playscape to make the area safer for children.



- Special attention was given to the KRT to keep tree and shrub limbs pruned back, vegetation removed from fences, and to fill in areas where the trail has settled and cracked.

### **Middle Fork (Matthew Kuntz)**

- Middle Fork staff have started more invasive removal work, focusing mostly on autumn olive and honeysuckle removal in and around trail areas.
- Willow Pond: IDNR has started their fish stocking procedure for this year. Largemouth bass have been initially stocked, with more of the sunfish species and catfish to be stocked periodically through the next few months.
- Campground reservations are keeping steady and strong through mid-summer, along with a very busy swim beach. We are expecting a very large crowd for the Perseids Meteor Shower coming up in mid-August. The campground has been fully booked for this event for several months, and we are hosting a meteor shower event at the Sugar Creek Shelter.
- Working with Marketing toward building a SMS messaging system for our guests at the campground. We hope to reach out to our guests using this system once it's more streamlined for more efficient communication and marketing.

### **Equity in Action**

- Selena Gonzalez and Kamryn Suttinger attended the Association of Midwest Museums/ Association of Indiana Museums joint conference in Indianapolis. Topics covered included DEI and developing inclusive programs and exhibits for overlooked age groups.