

March 7, 2023

## **Memorandum**

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Nina Carmichael, Leadership in Conservation Fellow

Re: March Staff Reports

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

- Almost all staff attended a joint, active-shooter training with Champaign and Urbana park districts on February 15<sup>th</sup>. The training was conducted by special agents from the FBI and included a classroom portion as well as interactive sessions. Staff got hands on experience learning how to use tourniquets and put an injured person into the recovery position, and also participated in active shooter simulations. Thanks go to Jarrod Scheunemann at the CPD for organizing the event and to Mark Beck for coordinating with Jarrod on behalf of CCFPD.
- Management staff and those who may have contact with the media participated in Crisis Communication and Media training (6hr) which focused on highlighting effective strategies for mitigating, managing, and responding to contextually relevant scenarios and support in developing a comprehensive communications plan that identifies key spokespeople to confidently engage with the media both during times of crisis and to best share our non-crisis stories. More in-depth, one-on-one on-camera training was also provided to Lisa, Michael Daab, and Lorrie.
- Michael Daab attended the IL Association of Conservation Districts and Prairie State Conservation Coalition conferences at Starved Rock Lodge and Conference Center in February and March. The events were full of thought-provoking and educational sessions, including those on climate change, Native American connections to the land, wetland construction, IL open space legislative agenda, updates from IL Department of Natural Resources and more.
- Commissioners Bill Goodman and Wendy Hundley, along with Deputy Executive Director Michael Daab, attended the IL Association of Park Districts' legislative breakfast program at Urbana Park District on February 27<sup>th</sup>. President Bill Goodman presented an update to Rep. Marron and Sen. Faraci on CCFPD's use of state grant and capital funding, and made the connection between the desires of CCFPD's constituency and how the state can help meet the demand for increased trails and habitat while maintaining our existing infrastructure and remaining financially secure. The tornado warning and sheltering during Commissioner Goodman's presentation surely made this meeting memorable for those in attendance.
- In February a team of two panels consisting of representatives from multiple departments interviewed 7 qualified candidates for the Museum and Education Director position. Two finalists were invited back for a second interview which staff are now deliberating.

## CCFPD Fellow (Nina Carmichael)

- Successfully completed 7-weeks of facilitation for leadership in the Museum and Education department (Stacey, Pat and Mark) on the book *Crucial Conversations*. The Superintendent crew (Matt, Rusty, Skylar, Chris, Mike, and Peter) and Finance and planning team (Ryan, John, Tim and Bridgette) only have 2 more sessions before completion. These discussion groups have been an exceptionally insightful way to connect and learn together. I've been pleased with the level of engagement each person has had with the reading materials and focus questions I've assigned.
- Currently half way through the Equity in Practice certification training put on by NRPA.
- Assisted in providing a tour to a Museum and Education Director candidate during their second interview
- Received a personal invitation from Robert Strand to speak at the World Water film festival at Columbia University March 19<sup>th</sup> during the Q&A for the screening of *Mussel Grubbing: A Citizen Science Treasure Hunt*. The film will be the first to kick off the film festival and features an interview of me discussing my experience participating in a series of mussel surveys on the Sangamon River at CCFPD preserves. The surveys were organized by the Upper Sangamon River Conservancy (USRC) this past summer and our very own Lorrie Pearson and Bruce Colravy make appearances in the film as well. I will be in New York March 15-22 for the film festival and United Nations World Water Conference.
  - <https://youtu.be/V-308QE6roQ> (the film)
  - [FILMS \(worldwaterff.org\)](https://www.worldwaterff.org) (WWFF screening info)
  - [Filmmakers Making A Social Impact: Why & How Robert Strand of World Water Film Festival Is Helping To Change Our World | by Yitzi Weiner | Authority Magazine | Medium](#) (Info on Robert Strand)

## Planning and Construction (Bridgette Moen)

- Improvements at the Sangamon River Residence are wrapping up. A contractor is scheduled to install carpet in the bedrooms, the HVAC will be tuned up, and then it will be ready for a staff resident.
- The construction crew is transitioning to projects at Middle Fork starting with improvements to the shower house and the kitchen at the Activity Center.
- The bathroom improvements at the Middle Fork Residence are complete.
- MUED staff notified Planning about a potential leak in the roof of the Annex, which has been confirmed with the rainy weather. Given the age of the roof and the type of leak, replacement is a more practical option than repairing a small section. Planning and Construction are soliciting estimates for replacing the roof. In the meantime, Construction has taken temporary measures to reduce the leak and the indoor air quality of the workspace has been tested.
- Construction of the ADA lift at HQ has been completed. One of the doors of the lift was damaged during shipping and the contractor had been waiting on the replacement. The Construction crew will finalize the hallway finishes.

- Planning met with the UIUC Design for America team, which is still interested in an ADA project. They have interviewed wheelchair users on campus about their experiences with visiting Forest Preserves (or similar locales). One of the largest hurdles for these users is not having precise information on what the condition of a site is before visiting. Users noted it can be frustrating to travel to a new location only to find it's not very accessible. They have narrowed their project scope to develop a pilot interactive map/webpage of accessible features in the District.
- Staff from Planning, Natural Resources, and Homer Lake Operations met to discuss updating the Kickapoo Rail Trail maintenance plan, with the addition of a Natural Resources site management plan. The current plan dates to 2017 and does not capture the latest construction or maintenance agreement with the Village of Ogden.

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

- Filed the District appropriation ordinance and certified our tax-exempt properties, an annual legal requirement before property taxes are calculated and extended each year by the county.
- Posted accrued 2022 and prepaid 2023 expenses in the District's fiscal ledger. Reviewed and reconciled the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation accounts, District payroll liabilities and initiated a detailed review of each District fund activity (ten remaining) for 2022 in preparation for Clifton Larson Allen's audit work in early April.
- Responded to the Census Bureau's Local Government Finances Survey and the US Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture surveys.
- Set up tracking of District risk management and safety activities for reimbursing these activities from the Risk Management and Liability fund.
- Moved the implementation date for the MSI 10 financial upgrade to May 1. Harris legal staff are reviewing the cyberthreat requirements that PDRMA expects Districts to meet.
- Revised and augmented month end financial procedures to accommodate changes in the past three years. New vendor reporting for golf reservations (foreUp) and health benefits (PNC) accounts are part of this update.
- Began updating long range projections (2024-2028) for operating funds. Projections will serve as a tool for estimated annual compensation increases, available capital funding and sufficiency of District reserves for future project commitments.

### **Human Resources (Dara Edgington, Mary Beck)**

- During the month of February, HR processed zero hires and two separations, resulting in a turnover rate of 2.75% for the month.
- As of February 28<sup>th</sup>, our total headcount was 72 employees including 49 FT, 16 PT, six seasonals, and one paid intern.
- The District documented four incidents with PDRMA over the month of February.

## Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

### Facebook/Social Media:

- Snowflake Search posts were made once every week throughout the month of February and were posted/shared across all CCFPD social media platforms.
- A post was made for World Wetlands Day celebrating wetland restoration. The wetland at Homer Lake and the Point Pleasant Wetland were featured.
- Posts to honor CCFPD's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and Black History Month were also made throughout the month of February with help from NR and Museum staff.
- The 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary images are now available through Fine Art America for people to purchase items such as posters, notecards, t-shirts, and more to celebrate with us!  
<https://fineartamerica.com/art/champaign+county+forest+preserve>
- The Spring Program Guide, which promotes programs for March through May is now available at the Museum of the Grand Prairie, Lake of the Woods Golf Course Pro Shop, Homer Lake Interpretive Center, and HQ.
- The District is the sponsor of Chambanamoms.com Ultimate Outdoor Adventure guide, <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2023/02/13/ultimate-outdoor-adventures-kids-around-champaign-urbana/>. The guide highlights where families with kids of all ages can get outside and have fun in the great outdoors all year long, from hiking to kayaking to sledding and more.
- Kristin met with the Dark Skies Committee Feb 20th to discuss the upcoming trail and amenities project and the Sustainability Committee to begin planning campaigns, deliverables, and social media content related to our sustainability efforts and Earth Day.
- Kristin recorded district employees for a new staff orientation video she's developing.
- Kristin documented all three phases of the Museum reorganization project.



- Media this month included:

<https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/ciliving-stories/ciliving/february-fun-with-champaign-county-forest-preserve-district/>

<https://www.chambanamoms.com/2023/02/22/fifty-things-to-do-spring-break-champaign-urbana/>

[https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/parks-recreation/inside-out-barb-bids-adieu-to-the-champaign-county-forest-preserve-district/article\\_86774f10-22da-5af3-8179-4ed755e6e235.html](https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/parks-recreation/inside-out-barb-bids-adieu-to-the-champaign-county-forest-preserve-district/article_86774f10-22da-5af3-8179-4ed755e6e235.html)

[https://www.newsbug.info/inside-out-the-importance-of-wetlands/article\\_1825214d-c37f-5466-8d63-f511c1529eab.html](https://www.newsbug.info/inside-out-the-importance-of-wetlands/article_1825214d-c37f-5466-8d63-f511c1529eab.html)

<https://hlwetland.blogspot.com/2022/09/wonders-of-wetland-thirty-two-photos-in.html?fbclid=IwAR3A9zKJliE9ZHPV5phwrFnIW63MPrXkZ8t6MmauH3paQQdUDyWCuzoHIYQ>

<https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/learn-how-tap-sugar-maple-trees-at-homer-lake-next-week/>

<https://www.chambanamoms.com/2023/02/13/ultimate-outdoor-adventures-kids-around-champaign-urbana/>

<https://www.wcia.com/news/60-million-state-grant-helping-to-make-champaign-county-park-improvements/>

<https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/this-champaign-county-forest-preserve-artwork-is-really-cool/>

[https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=876150687043156&id=100039446996476&mibextid=ncKXMA](https://m.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=876150687043156&id=100039446996476&mibextid=ncKXMA)

[Two high-priority recreation projects in Champaign County get state funding | Parks-recreation | news-gazette.com](#)

<https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/ciliving-stories/ciliving/champaign-county-forest-preserve-district-to-celebrate-75th-anniversary/>

- Social media followers update:

	FACEBOOK	+/-	INSTAGRAM	+/-	TWITTER	+/-
CCFPD	7,578	+65	3,330	+131	566	-4
KRT	5,012	+27	161	+0	137	-2
MGP	5,364	+10	1,306	+14	258	-7
HLIC	3,430	+11				
GC	2,078	+6	340	+4	117	+3
FPPF	630	+0				

- Facility Rentals:

•	2023	2022	February	2023	2022
# Rentals	# Rentals	Preserve	Facility	\$	\$
5	3	HL	Salt Fork Center	1,600.00	\$750.00
0	0	HL	Walnut Hill Shelter	0.00	\$0.00
0	0	LOW	Botanical Garden Weddings	0.00	\$0.00
5	5	LOW	Elks Lake Pavilion	2,350.00	\$1,750.00
3	4	LOW	Izaak Walton Cabin	720.00	\$540.00
7	2	LOW	Lake of the Woods Pavilion	2,950.00	\$650.00
0	0	LOW	Lakeview Shelter	0.00	\$0.00
0	0	LOW	Riverview Retreat Center	0.00	\$0.00
0	0	LOW	Rotary Hill Shelter	0.00	\$0.00
0	0	LOW	Sycamore Hollow Shelter	0.00	\$0.00
0	0	MF	Activity Center	0.00	\$0.00
0	0	RB	River Bend Shelter	0.00	\$0.00
<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7,620.00</b>	<b>\$3,690.00</b>

## Grants and Fundraising (Ryan Anderson)

**Three Rivers Foundation Contacts** – Foundation members have signed up to be primary contacts with the members of the Three Rivers Society throughout 2023, link here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1cgosstoOPpOYbgKKQ0KQiQFtPzDu2ldq9HBe693GOc/edit?usp=sharing>. Please reach out to your contacts by March 12, 2023. They should have received an invitation to the Launch Party by that time.

**Earth Day/Arbor Day** – For Earth Day (4/22) and Arbor Day (4/28), staff will run a social media (email if needed) campaign to raise about \$5,000 to plant 75 trees in the “Anniversary Grove” in the area of the Sugar Creek Shelter at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. Donors will be directed to QGiv.

**Dark Skies and International Dark Sky Week** – A Dark Sky Committee has been created from staff and Foundation members to strategize marketing, fundraising, and advocacy to raise the remaining of the Foundation’s \$100,000 commitment for 2023. So far, about \$25,000 has been raised. Staff will create a “case for support” with talking points and photographs. International Dark Sky Week is April 15-22. Staff will send out an appeal during that week. The CUAS included the project in their most recent newsletter.

### Fundraising Campaigns as of 2/22/23:

- Dark Sky Trail - \$24,803, goal of \$100,000

## Fundraising Trends (as of 2/22/23)

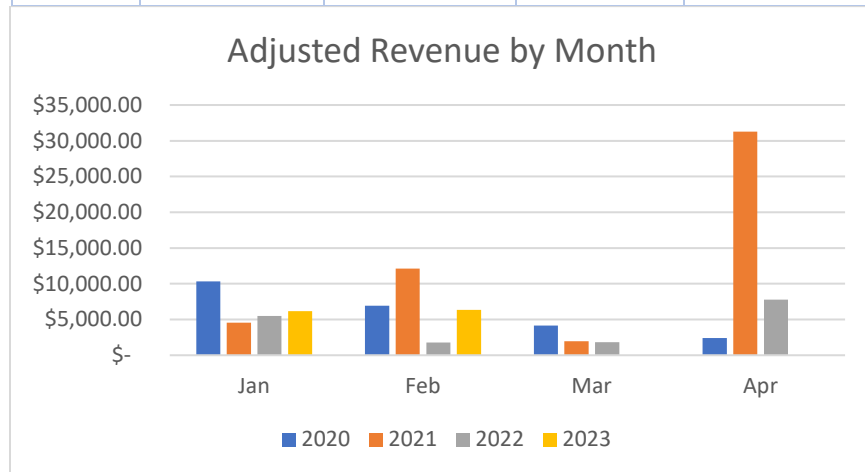
### *Donations 4 Year Summary*

4-year totals:	2020	2021	2022	2023(ytd)
<b>Total \$</b>	\$164,219.10	\$209,832.74	\$207,053.66	\$19,287.86
<b>Total \$ (adjusted)</b>	\$111,738.24	\$174,725.10	\$175,731.78	\$12,529.86
<b># of donors (adjusted)</b>	341	407	345	68
<b># of 1<sup>st</sup> time donors</b>	134	165	87	10

*\*Adjusted numbers have grants and bequests removed; Updates to Bloomerang (our donor tracking system) altered how these figures are calculated*

### *Adjusted Revenue by Month (Jan - Apr)*

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
<b>2020</b>	\$ 10,332.76	\$ 6,919.31	\$ 4,141.05	\$ 2,425.00
<b>2021</b>	\$ 4,575.11	\$ 12,096.66	\$ 1,972.00	\$ 31,291.41
<b>2022</b>	\$ 5,510.12	\$ 1,777.62	\$ 1,836.38	\$ 7,774.04
<b>2023</b>	\$ 6,164.72	\$ 6,365.14		



## Volunteer coordinator (Sue Gallo)

- By the end of February, we continue to see an uptick in volunteering; with 10 new people and 9 new groups submitting applications.
- The woody invasive species removal event hosted by Natural Resources at River Bend was a success with a turnout of over 128 volunteers. A total of half an acre of bush honeysuckle between Dogleg trail and the edge of Sunset Lake was cleared revealing a fabulous view of the lake. It is inspirational to see what has been accomplished and the volunteers had a great time!

- Our relationship with the UIUC restoration group Red Bison, is continuing to be mutually beneficial. The club has reached out to arrange an additional day to continue invasive removal along the shoreline River Bend.
- Eight students from the St Joe-Ogden Honors Society helped the Homer Lake Team remove unwanted plants along the West Lake Trail by the Salt Fork Center (photo follows).



- After reaching out to Ace Hardware (Champaign and Mahomet) and Do It Best (Champaign) to inquire about tool donations and we received a cumulative donation of nine bow saws, four power gear loppers and three herbicide sprayers! This will reduce the need for NR staff and site superintendents to deliver tools to different locations for volunteers.
- Updated digital “Youth Volunteering” brochures were sent to all the local schools to help recruit for the CIT program thanks to a collaborative effort with Cathy and Lisa.

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

- On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Golf Committee met for the first time since the fall of 2022. Discussed were goals for 2023 and beyond, fundraising opportunities, scheduled projects, and the Volunteer Clean Up Days, which will be held on March 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>. This will be an opportunity for individuals and volunteer groups to assist our Maintenance staff with the continual prepping of the course for the 2023 season (picking up sticks, limbs, debris, etc.).
- February continued the trend of one of the milder winters we have seen in Central Illinois in many years. This allowed the golf course to open outdoors for the season on February 14<sup>th</sup>. With database records going back to 1995, this is the earliest opening date we’ve seen. After a few days of only allowing walking, we began allowing carts on a day to day



basis, beginning on the 18<sup>th</sup>. We had 602 players for the month, which is extremely rare. We had one year higher with a player total (2017), but other than that had only been open in February five other times since 1995.

- Staff had a busy month between the early outdoor opening, continuing simulator play, receiving merchandise and staging the Pro Shop. The golf simulators continue to be busy, even with the course opening outdoors. The simulator weekly league continued and will wrap up the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of March. The early open also got us working on hiring somewhat sooner than anticipated for seasonal employees.
- Our revenue for the month was \$82,450. This is the highest February revenue on record by a wide margin. The 5-year average, which also includes seasons of Anniversary Pass Sales, is \$23,597. Speaking of the Anniversary Pass Sales, our 2023-2024 campaign concluded sales on February 28<sup>th</sup>. We sold 827 passes during this campaign, with the split being almost 50-50 between 5-Day and 7-Day options. We have also sold 86 Platinum (one year) Passes as of the end of the month and those will remain available for purchase throughout the season.
- Golf maintenance crew rolled the greens, set out ropes 30 yards from the greens for traffic purposes, and have been picking up sticks on the course.
- Assistant Superintendent Drinkwater sprayed pre-emergence on tees and fairways for crabgrass prevention.
- Joie attended the Golf Industry Show in Orlando where he gained some valuable information he intends to share more in depth at our next all-staff meeting. Sessions attended at the show: Understanding pesticide and labeling. (In Spanish), Golf course safety and risk management, Diversity in the work environment, Irrigation pump station set up and diagnostic and listen to a speaker about Turf Academy school in North Carolina for Assistants Superintendent.

## Museum and Education Department (Lorrie Pearson)

### 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>YTD</b>	364	394	458	0	88

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

- In response to the active shooter training received M&E staff toured HLIC to see all exits, potential hiding spaces and panic button locations. In the next month we will be performing the same process in the Museum and the various rental facilities we use most often for programming.
- The Museum Storage Reorganization Project is complete. For more details, please see the attached memo. All exhibits have been cleaned and put back together for the museum's reopening.

- The selection process for this summer’s Smith internship through the National Museum of African American History and Culture has begun. A selection will be made by the end of March.
- Due to a leak in the roof, a health concern over mold in the museum annex was raised. An outside contractor conducted air quality testing and determined airborne mold levels were normal with no indication of an exposure concern for occupants in the building.
- Counselor-in-training applications have started coming in; the deadline for applications is May 1. This year we have an online Google form for easier submission. All the applicants so far have been submitted through the online form.
- The Youth Programs Team has started using Microsoft Teams to increase the communication between staff since we are located on two sides of the county. HLIC staff are also using Teams to communicate general information or questions specific to the Interpretive Center.
- We have seen an increase in school program requests for this spring.
- Katie, Marina and Selena presented at the History-Social Sciences ISU Teacher Symposium. They shared information on field trips and educational loan materials for teachers to supplement their lesson plans with hands-on activities centered around artifacts.
- Programming highlights included the return of popular programs such as Owl Prowls, Maple Sugar Days & Lincoln’s Birthday Celebration, Naturalist in the Classroom visits to local schools, the conclusion of programming at Mahomet-Seymour’s BLAST afterschool program, special programs on fossils & maple tree tapping for scout groups, homeschool programs on a variety of topics, and a reptiles program at Champaign Park District’s Martens Center and much more.
- Staff began meeting with a local group including staff from the Urbana Park District and the Illinois Natural History Survey to plan programming centered on wetlands/water in April.
- Museum Collections & Front-End staff prepped the museum for reopening on March 1<sup>st</sup>. Under Spring Hours, the museum is open every day from 1-5 pm.

## Natural Resources (Peter Goodspeed)

- Prescribed burn season kicked off early this year and staff was able to conduct prescribed burns in the following management units:
  - Bicentennial Grove and the rain garden next to the Museum of the Grand Prairie at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve (10.2 acres)



- Previously mowed grass duff in the unrestored section, “Phase 10”, of Buffalo Trace at Lake of the Woods FP (6.5 acres)
- Dead grass duff sites for turf conversion prep near the entrance and activity center at MF (1.25 acres)



- The NR team continued to work on invasive woody plant removal and timber stand improvement (TSI) during the month of February. These projects included the following:
  - Forestry mowing bush honeysuckle, autumn olive, gray dogwood, and sweet gum in Timberdoodle Woods at Homer Lake FP
  - Clearing sweet gum and autumn olive from Flicker Woods at Homer Lake FP
  - Girdling honey locust, elm, cherry, and other undesirable trees at Quiller Woods and Prairie Dock Savanna at Middle Fork River FP
  - Supporting volunteer work along Dogleg trail at River Bend FP by clearing bush honeysuckle and igniting burn piles
  - TSI, cleaning up old wind throw, and burning piles in “Oak Island” in Point Pleasant at Middle Fork River FP

- Kenny, Anna, Eric, and Brennan attended the Illinois Association of Conservation Districts (IACD) conference at Starved Rock Lodge. Staff learned about the importance of frequent prescribed fire, how to install and maintain native wetlands, and other topics relevant to managing Illinois native ecosystems.



## Lake of the Woods (Rusty Maulding)

- It was an Eggcellent February for new artwork on the coming Egg Hunt eggs. Staff selected pieces that were faded or chipped and gave them a freshen up or new look and sealed them.
- With a lack of snow, Botanical Gardens and Operations staff continued invasive honeysuckle removal at Lake of the Woods. They also began timber stand improvements along high visibility corridors.
- Tyler Courson and Bruce Colravy have completed their 4 part online prescribed burn training and are registered to take part in a field burn in March.
- Michael Dale, Tyler Courson and Rusty Maulding attended 3 days of classes and a tradeshow at iLandscape in Schaumburg. The landscape industry as a whole is embracing native plants and many sessions included various approaches for incorporation of these great plants into home, commercial and municipal settings.
- Dennis Birge, Victor Yelaska and Cainan Birge attended a truck show in Peoria and brought back some great information about how to go about upgrading their driver's licenses to Class A CDL.
- Operations chipped 890 Christmas trees that were dropped off by the public to be recycled.
- Operations staff painted the Museum and Education Director's office and helped with clearing out some of the bulkier items that had outlived their usefulness.



## Homer Lake (Skylar Smith)

- Operations staff hosted 8 volunteers from the Saint Joseph High School National Honors Society. The crew continued removing invasive species along the West Lake Trail.
- We executed a prescribed burn over a small section of woodland across from the playscape.
- Native seeds were sown where invasive species had been removed near the Salt Fork Center and Walnut Hill.
- A trail bridge was repaired following storm damage with the help of Jennifer Wick from the HLIC staff.
- Roy and Colton attended a week-long maintenance training at Great Lakes Park Training Institute.

- Skylar Smith and Michael Daab met with Amber Lannert of Lunatic Kayaks to discuss the upcoming rental season. Amber was excited to hear about the planned ADA improvements to the north boat ramp area for next season, and looks forward to helping more people of all abilities enjoy the lake. The agreement with Lunatic has automatically renewed for March 1<sup>st</sup> through October 31<sup>st</sup> in accordance with agreement terms.
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### **Middle Fork (Matthew Kuntz)**

- Willow Pond has filled up significantly thanks to the recent storms we received in the last couple of weeks. Most of our fish structures are not visible anymore, and we have seen at least a three-foot difference in elevation.
- We have started interviews for campground hosts for the upcoming summer. We have received good candidates and are looking forward to filling the positions soon.
- Staff continue to retrofit new energy efficient LED lighting where needed in our facilities.
- The Construction crew has begun the kitchen renovation project at the Activity Center. We plan on increasing user space in the kitchen with updated appliances and fixtures.
- Middle Fork staff have been able to complete several prescribed burns throughout the preserve due to the right conditions.