

July 13, 2023

Memorandum

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Nina Carmichael, Leadership in Conservation Fellow

Re: July staff reports

Executive Management (Lorrie Pearson, Michael Daab)

- Skylar, Rusty, Peter, Lisa, Kamryn, Mike, and Lorrie attended the Special Park District Forum, where the Lake County Forest Preserve District presented their strategies for success in all departments and toured us around many of their preserves and facilities. SPDF was a fantastic opportunity to collaborate and share the experience with many other senior staff.
- Lorrie presented to the Savoy Rotary Club.
- Staff participated in interviews for the Human Resources Manager and Construction Worker II open positions. We are happy to announce the hire of Kathryn Glenn as Human Resources Manager (start date of August 2nd), and the transfer of Tammy Fry from Lake of the Woods Assistant Site Superintendent to the Construction Department as a Construction Worker II (effective July 10th). In other personnel news, Justin Fullenkamp has accepted a promotion from to Construction Worker III, with additional supervisory, training, and public interaction duties.
- Mike met with Jarrod Scheunemann with Champaign Park District to discuss Information Technology support, security, and more, in order to stay current with our local partners and our best management practices.
- The severe storms on June 29th necessitated much cleanup and coordination in regard to power, internet, and phone outages and messages to the public regarding open hours, camps, and events. We appreciate that staff communicated clearly through this time, worked long hours through scheduled vacations and holiday time off, and helped us quickly and safely provide safe outdoor space for the public.

CCFPD Fellow (Nina Carmichael)

- Completed the Diversifying Conservation with Indigenous Perspectives provided by the Morton Arboretum a member of the Volunteer Stewardship Network (VSN) of The Nature Conservancy and Effective Supervisory Skill Building training through the International City/County Management Association.
- Attended IDNR Illinois wild Mammals training which introduced how to use Illinois' wild mammals as a topic to support the teaching of several of the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for Science and Next Generation Science Standards by formal and non-formal educators such as interpreters.
- Attended IAPD's webinar entitled, Our Local Government Efficiency Committee which provided an overview of expectations, requirements, and suggestions along with helpful resources to utilize to streamline the process as I staff our own efficiency committee.

Planning and Construction (Bridgette Moen)

- Construction installed a pergola, small shelter, and café style furniture in the enabling garden of the Botanical Garden at Lake of the Woods.
- Construction completed the installation of the replacement Fishermans' Shelter at Lake of the Woods and the Pollinator Point Shelter at Homer Lake, which replaced the Observation Deck.



- Mike Fry repaired the Covered Bridge following damage from a motorist.
- Construction repaired a water line near the Rayburn-Purnell Restrooms at Lake of the Woods.
- The Illinois Department of Resources is accepting applications for the Open Space Land Acquisition and Develop (OSLAD) grant program. Staff are not planning to submit an application in order to prevent competing for match funding fundraising efforts for the nature center.
- Oil and chip work is complete at Lake of the Woods. The parking lot at Buffalo Trace has been sealed and striped. Sealing at the Golf Course parking lot is underway.



- The new small projects tracking system has helped with tracking non-capital staff requests. Of the 35 submitted, 10 are complete, 8 have been flagged as potential future capital projects, and 17 are active.
- Sam completed the first portion of the National Green Infrastructure Certification Program curriculum. Topics included an introduction to the practice of green infrastructure and materials used. The rest of the online curriculum covers more specific practices, plus the management, inspection, and maintenance of green infrastructure projects. Sam will attend live online classes in early August before taking a certification exam at the end of August.
- Work on the facility inventory is progressing, excerpt below.



Facility Roofs for 2024 CCFPD Budget

Thursday, June 29, 2023

5:05:09 PM

Preserve	Facility	Square Footage	Existing Material	Year Installed	Ideal Replacement
Homer Lake Forest Preserve	Oak Ridge Shelter West	200	Steel	1970	2010
	Salt Fork Center	2900	Asphalt Shingle	1997	2017
	North Boat Ramp Restroom	150	Asphalt Shingle	1997	2017
	Residence	3000	Asphalt Shingle	2000	2020
	Maple Grove Restroom	280	Asphalt Shingle	2000	2020
	Maintenance Facility	6800	Steel	2001	2041
	Oak Ridge Restroom	200	Asphalt Shingle	2009	2029
	Natural Playscape Treehouse	100	Cedar Shake	2011	2031
	Oak Ridge Shelter East	200	Steel	2019	2059
	Interpretive Center	2500	Asphalt Shingle	2019	2039
	Walnut Hill Shelter	1800	Steel	2021	2061
	Pollinator Point Shelter	640	Steel	2023	2063

Q2 Planning and Construction Update 2023.07.20 Capital Projects

Site	Projects	% Complete	Timing	Labor Type	Budget	Current Notes
HQ	Basement Offices and Computer Room	100	Q1	In House	\$87,680	ADA lift operational
GC	Irrigation Bid Back 9	15	Q1	Contractor	\$90,000	Approved in March; To be completed in fall
BG	Enabling Garden Shade Sails and Planters	90	Q1	In House	\$25,000	Pergola and shelter installed, shade to be installed
SR	Residence Upgrades	95	Q1	In House	\$40,000	Staff have moved in
KRT	Ogden Construction	98	Q1	Contractor	\$296,691	Waiting on final billing (testing is remaining)
BG	Replace Remaining Gravel Walks	100	Q1	Contractor	\$7,757	
MF	Shower House updates	100	Q1	In House	\$12,000	
GC	Cart Path Improvements/Expansion	25	Q1&Q4	In House	\$25,000	
RB	Sidewalk Repairs & Adjustments	0	Q2	Contractor	\$10,000	
LOW	Sealcoat	90	Q2	Contractor	\$275,000	Oil/Chip complete, asphalt seal underway
HL	Observation Deck Shelter Replacement	100	Q2	In House	\$15,000	
LOW	Replace Fisherman's Shelter	100	Q2	In House	\$5,000	
MF	Activity Center Kitchen	100	Q2	In House	\$16,000	
MF	Willow Pond Restoration	100	Q2	In House	\$7,000	
LOW	Replace West Maintenance Building Roof	50	Q2-Q3	In House	\$15,000	
KRT	St Joe - Ogden	5	Q2-Q4	Contractor	\$2,780,166	Drafts of Owners' rep rfq, press release, are complete
MF	Dark Skies Trail	5	Q2-Q4	Contractor/ IH	\$588,000	Finalizing revised drawings
BG	Replace Greenhouse and Restrooms	10	Q2-Q4	Contractor	\$750,000	Architect has provided concepts for review
GC	Automated Gate at Entrance	0	Q3	Contractor	\$30,500	
HL	Timberdoodle Trail	0	Q3	In House	\$34,000	
LOW	ADA parking	0	Q3	In House	\$5,000	P1
LOW	Repaint Bridges	0	Q3	In House	\$6,000	
HV	Canoe & Kayak Access	5	Q3	In House	\$55,000	ERA working on permits
LOW	Stream Barbs near Covered Bridge	5	Q3	Contractor	\$320,000	ERA working on documents
LOW	LOW Dam Spillway Repairs	5	Q3	In House	\$150,000	Anticipate State release of funding in August
MF	WP Fishing access	5	Q3	In House	\$10,000	Working on site plans, late summer installation
LOW	Hawthorne and Hickory Shelters	15	Q3	In House	\$30,000	Working on site plans, late summer installation

GC	HVAC	20	Q3	Contractor	\$30,000	Approved in June
LOW	Replace Gate Pillars	50	Q3	In House	\$5,000	Delivered
LOW	BT Wetland	0	Q3-Q4	Contractor/ IH	\$5,000	
HL	HLIC Architecture & Engineering Design	100	Q4	Contractor	\$50,000	
HL	North Boat Ramp	0	Q4	Contractor/ IH	\$126,100	Grant agreement received
LOW	P2 Kitchen/Bathroom	0	Q4	In House	\$25,000	
LOW	Pump House and Irrigation	0	Q4	Contractor/ IH	\$80,000	Dependent on Budget
MGP	Renovate Blacksmith Exhibit	0	Q4	In House	\$40,000	
RB	Canoe Access	0	Q4	In House	\$55,000	Dependent on Budget
HL	SFC Sound and Light Improvements	5	Q4	In House	\$11,500	Met with HL Ops 3/31 to discuss options
HL	Collins Pond Fishing Dock	5	Q4	In House	\$11,500	Met with HL Ops 3/31 to discuss options
LOW	Storm shelter	30	Q4	In House	\$10,000	Quotes approved, sent in 10% deposit, ordered

Equipment

Site	Equipment	% Complete	Cost	Savings	Budget	Current Notes
MF	Electric Truck	90	\$46,583	\$7,417	\$54,000	July approval
LOW	Ford F250 Truck 4x4	0	TBD	TBD	\$55,000	Availability issues
LOW	E-transit Electric Van	100	\$61,255	\$3,745	\$65,000	
GC	Greens Roller	90	\$14,777	\$5,223	\$20,000	Awaiting delivery
GC	Work Cart	90	\$32,228	\$2,772	\$35,000	Awaiting delivery
GC	Fleet Lease	100	\$30,163	\$0	\$30,163	
BG	Electric UTV	100	\$22,071	\$15,929	\$38,000	
CN	Mini Excavator	100	\$74,200	(\$4,200)	\$70,000	
GC	Pro Shop Vehicle	10	TBD	TBD	\$40,000	Anticipating cooperative purchase in fall

Plans

Site	Projects	% Complete	Timing	Labor Type	Budget	Current Notes
LOW	BIKE Application	100	Q2	In House	n/a	
District	Comp Plan	50	Q3	In House	n/a	Drafting of analysis sections & recommendations
LOW	RTP Application	100	Q1	In House	n/a	
HL	Nature Center Feasibility Study	100	Q1	In House	n/a	
District	Equipment Inventory	100	Q1	In House	n/a	
District	Facilities Inventory	50	Q4	In House	n/a	Migrating facilities inventory to Access
KRT	Masterplan	0	Future	In House	n/a	To start after Comprehensive Plan is complete
District	Lake maintenance/improvement study	0	Future	Contract	n/a	To start after Comprehensive Plan is complete
LOW	Riverview/Sangamon Rental Facility Study	0	Future	In House	n/a	To start after Comprehensive Plan is complete
LOW	BG Masterplan	0	Future	In House	n/a	To start after Comprehensive Plan is complete

Business and Finance (John Baker)

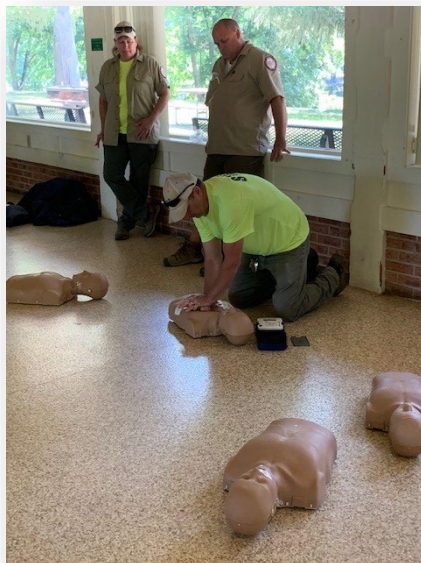
- Continued responding to auditor information requests. We have yet to receive the draft financial statements for review and for preparing the analysis and statistics sections of the audit report. Applied for and received an extension with the Government Finance Officers for the Certificate of Achievement in Financial Reporting. CliftonLarsonAllen applied for extensions with the State Comptroller and Attorney General for the District audit submission and Foundation Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax.
- Prepared the District's 2022 Public Funds Statement for publishing in the News-Gazette on June 30.
- Met with Mike Daab and Tim Sullivan about transferring information technology oversight responsibilities from Business and Finance to the Deputy Executive Director.
- Met several times with Carron Johnson on 2024 budget preparation, calendar, and compensation issues. Drafted 2024 administration budget.

Human Resources (Mary Beck)

- During the month of June, HR processed 6 hires 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 2 employee injury reports (no medical needed) and 2 property incidents during the month of July (wind storm damage/loss of revenue).
- The 2nd 2023 Quarterly Connection was held in June with over 50 staff members from across the District attending.



- During the month of June, 3 CPR/AED/First Aid sessions were held at Lake of the Woods with 34 District staff being certified. The District currently has 7 AEDs located at 3 preserves.



Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- Media this month included:
 - <https://mahometdaily.com/celebrating-75-years-of-ccpfd-heron-view-forest-preserve/>
 - <https://mahometdaily.com/celebrating-75-years-of-ccpfd-homer-lake/>
 - <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2023/06/15/free-air-conditioned-outings-champaign-urbana/>
 - <https://www.smilepolitely.com/culture/weekender-june-9-11/>
 - <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2023/06/07/champaign-urbana-summer-in-all-its-glory/>
 - https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/community-events/multilingual-lincoln-makes-appearance-in-mahomet/article_76302e00-ab03-5d38-8b32-f7f4e38df760.html
 - <https://www.chambanamoms.com/2023/06/05/boat-kayak-canoes-champaign-urbana/>
 - <https://www.wcia.com/news/one-freedom-fest-leaving-but-could-be-making-room-for-another/>
 - https://www.news-gazette.com/news/local/history/area-history-june-4-2023/article_9c98f939-f558-55e9-a4ed-e9e817ce1a5c.html
 - <https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/icymi-yesterday-was-world-otter-day/>
 - <https://www.smilepolitely.com/splog/the-story-of-the-lake-of-the-woods-slide/>
 - https://www.wandtv.com/news/champaign-county-forest-preserve-district-celebrates-75-years-with-special-exhibit/article_05b3f026-1b84-11ee-ba92-ff02c8c0d4ad.html
 - <https://www.wcia.com/ciliving-tv/ciliving-stories/ciliving/champaign-county-forest-preserve-takes-on-summer-projects-with-enthusiasm/>
 - <https://www.illinoistimes.com/springfield/growing-a-garden-for-children/Content?oid=17073442>
 - <https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/illinois/summer-wildflower-viewing-il/>
 - https://www.news-gazette.com/multimedia/photo-gallery-final-freedom-fest-mahomet/collection_e2c6d0f9-f614-5ce4-af6e-2ed51df784de.html
 - https://www.news-gazette.com/news/updates-lake-of-the-woods-golf-course-closed-clean-up-underway/article_312d267b-a92d-589c-bb12-07f5cb2e4f02.html
 - <https://illinoisnewsroom.org/heres-where-you-can-see-july-4th-fireworks/>
 -
- Social media followers update.

	FACEBOOK	+/-	INSTAGRAM	+/-
CCFPD	8,217	+369	3,537	+61
KRT	5,224	+27	166	+1
MGP	5,406	+11	1,326	+14
HLIC	3,559	+47		
GC	2,118	+0	355	+2
FPPF	680	+4		

- June Facility Rental Report

2023	2022	June		2023	2022
# Rentals	# Rentals	Preserve	Facility	\$	\$
14	12	HL	Salt Fork Center	\$4,800.00	\$4,100.00
9	10	HL	Walnut Hill Shelter	\$1,995.00	\$1,470.00
4	2	LOW	Botanical Garden Weddings	\$4,080.00	\$1,990.00
11	8	LOW	Elks Lake Pavilion	\$4,450.00	\$3,000.00
6	4	LOW	Izaak Walton Cabin	\$1,160.00	\$645.00
8	23*	LOW	Lake of the Woods Pavilion	\$2,550.00	\$850.00
6	5	LOW	Lakeview Shelter	\$750.00	\$360.00
5	7	LOW	Riverview Retreat Center	\$960.00	\$1,260.00
7	8	LOW	Rotary Hill Shelter	\$1,340.00	\$1,330.00
3	2	LOW	Sycamore Hollow Shelter	\$330.00	\$140.00
3	3	MF	Activity Center	\$550.00	\$900.00
1	0	RB	River Bend Shelter	\$120.00	\$0.00
77	61		TOTAL	\$23,085.00	\$16,045.00

*20 of these rentals were for an election

- Chambanamoms held a Christie Clinic Family Footgolf night at Lake of the Woods Golf Course on Thursday, June 22. They had a great turnout with over 100 people attending.
- The final Freedom Fest at Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve was held on Friday, June 30. We had 21 event sponsors, 8 food vendors and 2,386 attendees.
- Completed a Social Media Online Workshop on 6/15 conducted by SkillPath that focused on how to develop a successful social media marketing strategy (using social media to achieve specific, strategic goals).
- Attended a workshop: INSTAGRAM FOR BUSINESS 201 hosted by Clanin Marketing at the Champaign Library on 6/15, that focused on the latest strategies on how to create highly engaging content and reels on Instagram to elevate business promotion.
- Developed a brochure for fundraisers to present to donors for the Dark Sky Trail and Amenities Project and the Star Walk.
- Promoted the Leaflet via social media using the link: <https://bit.ly/44hQWuK>

- Created a graphic, a press release, flyers and a fb event page/posts for Pedal the Preserves, coming up **August 19-20: [Pedal the Preserves Online Registration \(bikereg.com\)](https://www.bikereg.com)**



- Generated promotional material for events and activities such as: the StoryWalk at Lake of the Wood Forest Preserve on the Museum Meander Trail, Take Me Fishing events hosted by Jennifer Wick, the StarWatch at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, the 75-Mile Trail Challenge, the 75th anniversary Exhibit, Freedom Fest and print and online ads to run on media outlets for the Summer Concert Series.

Grants and Fundraising (Ryan Anderson)

Donor Appreciation Kayak Event – This event has been rescheduled for August 26th.

Pedal the Preserve- The Champaign County Forest Preserve District will host Pedal the Preserves as a Foundation fundraiser on August 19-20. This will be the second year hosting the event. There are 3 routes of varying length. All three routes will begin at Meier Field in St. Joseph. Routes run through the KRT, Homer Lake Forest Preserve, Hidden Acres, and the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. More information at <https://www.facebook.com/events/3400311000236340>

Fundraising Campaigns Progress as of 7/1/23:

Campaign	Raised	Left	Goal	%
Dark Sky Trail	\$ 25,028.00	\$ 74,972.00	\$ 100,000.00	25%
Timberdoodle Trail	\$ 3,323.00	\$ 3,677.00	\$ 7,000.00	47%
Homer Lake Boat Launch	\$ 530.00	\$ 19,470.00	\$ 20,000.00	3%

Fundraising Trends (as of 7/1/2023)

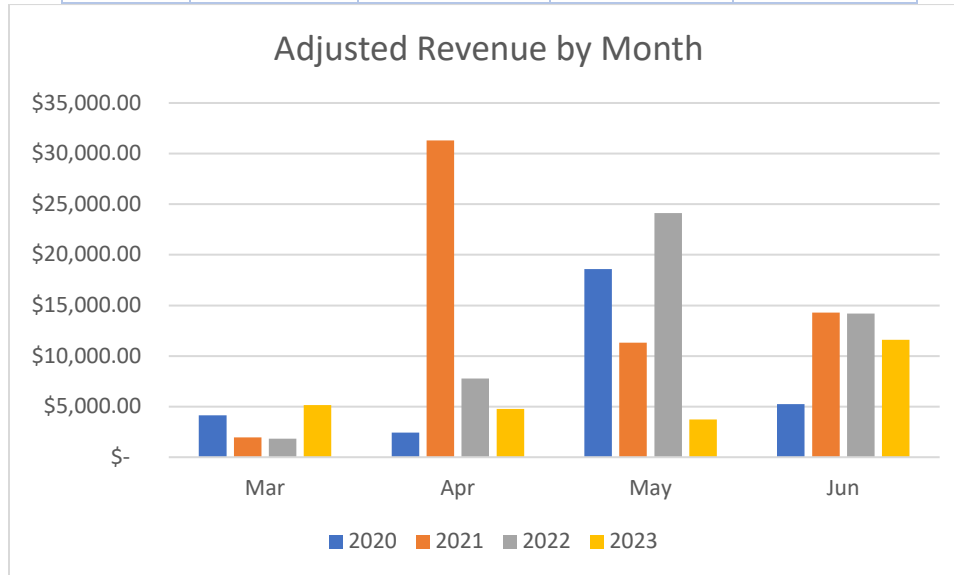
Donations 4 Year Summary

4-year totals:	2020	2021	2022	2023 (ytd)
Total \$	\$164,219.10	\$209,832.74	\$207,053.66	\$62,205.08
Total \$ (adjusted)	\$111,738.24	\$174,725.10	\$175,731.78	\$40,691.22
# of donors (adjusted)	341	407	345	160
# of 1st time donors	134	165	87	52

“Adjusted” numbers have grants and bequests removed. Updates to Bloomerang have altered these figures.

Adjusted Revenue by Month (Mar-Jun)

	Mar	Apr	May	June
2020	\$ 4,141.05	\$ 2,425.00	\$ 18,600.59	\$6,830.49
2021	\$ 1,972.00	\$ 31,291.41	\$ 11,330.06	\$15,513.44
2022	\$ 1,836.38	\$ 7,774.04	\$ 24,112.80	\$17,278.82
2023	\$ 5,137.02	\$ 4,767.94	\$ 3,733.38	\$11,613.14



Volunteer coordinator (Sue Gallo)

- There were 17 new volunteer applications in June. 7 of which specifically for Freedom Fest.
- Thanks to Chris Edmonson and team for supporting an Eagle Scout Project refinishing the Deck at the Clubhouse!
- Coordinated and supervised the basement storage clean up and document archival project at HQ. One group of Teens from the Catholic Heart Camp organized, scanned, and cataloged items into a spreadsheet while the other helped landscape around the newly painted deck at the golf course.
- Recruited for Freedom Fest volunteers. Communication and coordination for this event took quite a lot of time. The unpredictable weather amplified this. Thankfully, all volunteer openings were filled for the event which was a success! Volunteers were sparse to assist with clean up after the event, but fortunately there was not a lot of trash to collect the next morning.
- Special thanks to Skylar Smith for working with two last minute mandatory service volunteers. with assistance from Lisa and Rusty.



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

- Play and revenue numbers were strong once again in June. We had 6,070 players for the month, above the 5-year average of 4,998 and the highest total since 2007. Revenues were \$159,741, well above the 5-year average of \$112,398 and the highest we have on record.
- We held several outings and tournaments in June, as noted in the charts below:

Outing	# of Players	23 Total Rev
Bulldog Open	152	\$10,426.89
Hildreth Reunion	79	\$2,844.00
Tournament	# of Players	22 Total Rev
Naughtin Open	48	\$3,360.00
Hartwell Match Play	31	\$775.00
Parent-Child	45	\$2,025.00

- June is the month we hold our annual Junior Clinic sessions. These clinics are held every Tuesday afternoon for one hour, broken down by age groups (8-9; 10-12; 13-17). We had 64 participants in the Junior Clinics this year. That is up from 48 juniors in 2022.
- We had a couple of projects completed in June at the facility. The Clubhouse deck was power washed by our staff and then a Boy Scout group refinished the deck with an outdoor stain. The project was completed in one weekend. Another group of volunteers from Catholic Heart Charities came the following week and removed brush and debris from around the deck and then covered the area with mulch. All of this in combination has really improved the aesthetics of the west side of the building.



- DI Networks completed upgrading of the security and fire alarm system at the Pro Shop and Cart Barn.
- Lastly, we were hit very hard by the storm on June 29th. We lost power, phones, and the internet. There were several trees and large limbs down on the course. We were closed from 1:00 p.m. on the 29th through the 30th, with no power as of then being restored. We had no ability to check in golfers, accept payments, open the snack bar or locker rooms, or charge our electric golf carts for use. There were several power lines down, which made it a danger for people to use the facility.
- The maintenance crew continues to work hard after battling months of drought and the recent storm which took out 6 trees throughout the course. Special Thanks to Mike Daab for volunteering to come out to the course and help cut and haul out limbs.

- Superintendent got a hold of Randy from commercial irrigation to resolve some issues with the new Hunter irrigation sprinklers that were installed last year in the front 9 courses. Issues occur to be old wiring that has been installed in years past. The superintendent requested a second opinion and will have another technician solve the issue.
- Algae on the greens developed after the storm. The superintendent sprayed all the greens to control the algae.
- Special thanks to the maintenance crew for their hard work and for making Lake of the Woods Golf Course a place to be! Each crew member is a special asset to the Forest Preserves!

Museum and Education Department (Kamryn Suttinger)

Patrons Served

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

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

- Homer Lake Forest Preserve and the Interpretive Center were hit hard by the derecho that occurred at the end of June. The Interpretive Center roof sustained three holes from branches falling on it. Thank you to all staff, especially Skylar that came out to help out in this crazy time. And thank you to Mike and Tammy Fry that came in after a long weekend of Freedom Fest to put a temporary patch on our roof.
- The StoryWalk at Lake of the Woods is finished and open! We will have a grand opening/ribbon-cutting in September, incorporated into the “Prairie Stories” event. The story will be bilingual in conjunction with “Welcoming Week.” The walk starts right across from the museum parking lot on the Museum Meander Trail, and it looks great! Thanks to all the staff who were involved and the Mahomet Public Library for making this possible!
- Summer camps are going well. We had our first ever cancelation due to the air quality at the end of June. We were unable to house all of Eco-adventures inside the Interpretive Center so we needed to cancel camp and offer a refund for that day to their accounts. That same week we also canceled Friday’s Eco-adventures camp because of no power at Elks Lake Pavilion. The participants are also receiving a refund to their accounts.
- Staff held phone interviews with the three applicants for the Custodial Specialist position.
- Strong Cleaning Solutions was temporarily contracted to help clean bathrooms and public spaces in the museum during the Custodian Specialist search.

- Our Customer Service Retail Associates and Office Specialist attended the National Association for Interpretation's Certified Interpretive Host certification at the Brookfield Zoo. They came away with additional customer service skills, increased confidence in working with the public and were able to network with others in their field.
- Kamryn is beginning to gather background information in order to create a Program Plan that includes the expansion of programming locations along with robust assessment and evaluation tools.
- Mark Hanson transferred the Leslie James collection, consisting of items from his college days at the college, to the Pilgrim Library Archives at Defiance College in Defiance, Ohio.



Natural Resources (Peter Goodspeed)

- The NR department led a group of 14 volunteers with the Catholic Heart Work Camp through Buffalo Trace to remove invasive biennial herbs including wild parsnip, yellow sweet clover, and white sweet clover from several of the prairie restorations on the north side of the property.



- Biennial weed control continued with the spot mowing of larger infestations and spot application of herbicide on smaller, more isolated populations.
- Staff also mowed recently planted prairie restorations at Middle Fork River FP and Buffalo Trace. Mowing early prairie restorations is important for allowing light to reach small seedlings, in addition to controlling annual and biennial weeds that compete with the native perennial plants.
- For growing season weed and erosion control in restoration prep sites, NR staff planted 11 acres of Clearfield sunflowers in three areas at Middle Fork River FP, including a 6.3-acre area in the disturbed section of prairie north of the campground entrance. Material from this area was used for the renovation of Willow Pond. Sunflowers will provide temporary weed control between now and when the site is planted to tallgrass prairie in the late fall.

- Peter and Skylar met with Jason Bleich with the US Fish & Wildlife Service to explore opportunities for small pocket wetlands in the Homer Lake FP northwest prairie complex.
- Staff continued to collect native seed including Ohio spiderwort and nodding fescue.
- Eric became officially licensed as a Certified Arborist with the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA).

Lake of the Woods (Rusty Maulding)

- Freedom Fest – The event started off with a bang a day early with a severe storm that rolled through knocking out power to the east half of LOW and dropping trees and branches throughout. Here are some highlights of the dedication and sacrifice from staff in order to put on the show.
 - Operations, Botanical Gardens and Construction staff stayed into the evening on Thursday, June 29 to clear critical areas for Freedom Fest use the next day. We thank Eric Roth from Natural Resources for lending a hand that afternoon/evening as well! Most staff worked 12-13 hours that day.
 - On Friday, staff reported in several hours earlier than scheduled to sweep the area of any lingering hazards after the daily opener had checked and cleared many other spaces of all our Preserves. The mission was to make things safe and get it open. Final setup delayed by the storm was also completed that afternoon. With power still out, generators were mobilized to critical spaces where power was necessary.
 - Operations, Botanical Gardens, Construction, Golf and HQ staff along with many volunteers worked well into the evening, eventually departing after 11 pm to ensure the public enjoyed and had a safe Freedom Fest experience.
 - Ops, BG and CN staff returned at 6 am to finish cleanup with the help of 3 brave volunteers working in the rain to return the Lake of the Woods Preserve to its normal welcoming state for the enjoyment of the public.
 - We thank all who have helped make this event safe and enjoyable throughout the years.
- New growth has encroached on many trails and normal trail clearing has begun and will continue into July. By clearing and killing honeysuckle and other invasives along trail edges each of the past several winters, this work is being completed more efficiently now.
- Operations staff ceased most mowing activities and took the opportunity to catch up on some much-needed painting even with other Freedom Fest prep occurring as well. Watering newly installed plant material by both BG and OPS staff was also a top priority during the drought period.
- After more than 12 years wearing an Operations hat, with the last 8 of those years as an Assistant Site Superintendent, Tammy Fry is moving to Construction. We are grateful for all that she has given to the operations department and are confident she will bring her passion for our outdoor spaces to the other Preserves now as well.

Homer Lake (Skylar Smith)

- HL OPS assisted the Construction Department with the construction of the new shelter, which replaced the old observation deck.
- Staff worked to modify the way KRT signs are fixed to frames, as the recommended double-sided outdoor tape failed at some locations.
- The KRT received its bi-annual mowing, which keeps tall plants from leaning over the trail.
- Skylar gave a tour of Homer Lake and the Kickapoo Rail Trail to Kamryn Suttinger, our new M&E Director.
- Homer Lake was hit hard by the derecho on Thursday, June 29th. Staff worked hard to open the preserve before Independence Day, but there is still a lot left to do and cleanup is still underway. Thank you to all

staff from Homer Lake operations and other departments who came in to help out, especially those who were scheduled to be on leave.

Middle Fork (Matthew Kuntz)

- After a long wait from the Department of Public Health, we were finally able to open our swim beach in early June. We were able to retain proper water levels during the drought using our well pumps to try and keep Willow Pond full and since then we have had very large crowds using the swim facility almost every day.
- Through most of the month staff kept busy watering native landscape areas, newer planted trees throughout the preserve, and new turf seedings around Willow Pond. Mowing came to a halt at the beginning of the month and other than some patched areas we have not mowed for over 40 days.
- The camping season is continuing to be a blockbuster year for visitation. Last year's camping season was one of the best years we have ever had, and this year our revenue numbers are showing a 12-15% increase over last year.
- I would like to commend the Natural Resources Department for their shoreline restoration efforts around the newly built Willow Pond. Over 3,000 native species plugs were placed around the pond, and this was incredibly challenging during a horrible drought period.
- We are seeing great interest in our concerts being held at the playground on the weekends. Thanks to Pat Cain and his hard work scheduling these events. Each performance averages 70-100 people per performance and we are receiving many compliments from our camping guests for adding this entertainment during their stays.
- IDNR has started stocking fish in Willow Pond. Largemouth Bass have been placed in the pond in the first week of July, and other species such as bluegill, redear, catfish, and others will be placed later in the summer.

Equity in Action

- In June, Nina attended *Get Free: A Black Feminist Reunion* hosted by Black Feminist Futures and held in Baltimore Maryland. This reunion (conference) provided a framework for authentic and embodied inclusion, belonging, and equity. While there, I participated in the Environmental Justice against climate change caucus, Mapping Our Social Change Ecosystem Roles by Adaku, and got to bear witness to *Visions of Black Feminist Possibilities* a panel discussion between Mariame Kaba, Mikki Kendall, Savannah Shange, Imani Barbarin, Raquel Willis.
- Nina attended the live webinar, Decolonize Your Leadership Style: Transform Your Organization with Indigenous Wisdom delivered by Edgar Villanueva