

**SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT August 2025**  
**COMMUNICATIONS TO BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**  
**Park Superintendent's Monthly Report Summary**

Throughout July, Madison Parks celebrated National Park and Recreation month by partnering with Madison School and Community Resources to provide a large variety of free, fun recreation activities throughout the month. Residents and visitors demonstrated how important parks are to them as thousands of people attended special events, athletic games, family gatherings, and other celebrations throughout the system. Boat launches have been busy, and dog parks and disc golf are on par with permits issued from last year. Golf has continued to see rounds just ahead of last year's record number of rounds. Not to mention the thousands of visits Madison's parks get for daily use from neighbors to connect with nature. The wetter than normal July has meant that Park Operations team has had their work cut out for them in keeping the vegetation under control, but it has not stopped our parks from being full and busy at the height of the summer.

The Aquatics team has seen challenges with youth behavior at the pool this summer, which was discussed, and rule changes were authorized, at last month's Commission meeting. The Aquatics team quickly implemented the rule change, which dramatically reduced the number of behavior issues seen. They are now working intently on implementing the waiver program to make sure that youth can come back to the pool without an adult, as that is often the only way that youth can attend. An instrumental part of addressing this issue long term is the community outreach that the Aquatics team led by pulling together other City agencies, Madison Metropolitan School District, and other non-profit agencies. Discussions centered around long-term solutions for creating pro-social activities for our youth to engage in throughout the city, while supporting Aquatics staff in creating a welcoming, safe environment at the Goodman Pool.

The Parks team has been actively engaged with the City's Long Range Facility Planning team, discussing and planning strategically for the City's future public works facilities to best serve the Madison community over the long term. More immediately, Parks has been working with Engineering on designing the Far West Public Works facility, which is scheduled to be bid in June of 2026. This new facility is an opportunity for some of the Parks Operations team to move farther west and better serve new parks on the far west side as that part of town will see significant growth over the coming decades.

Future Commission Items

- Farm Leases – Parks Division staff have worked with farmers, staff from the Mayor's Office, Office of Real Estate Services, Public Health Madison & Dane County and representative from the Food Policy Council to create and modernize a template for interim farm leases. This is expected to come before the Board of Park Commissioners in September.
- The following items to the Commission over the next year:
  - Alcohol in Parks Policy
  - Parking Assets in Parks Analysis
  - Olin Houses
  - Marshall Houses
  - Fall Work Plan Update

## Personnel Updates

### Promotions/Hires:

- Paige Funkhouser was hired as a Program Assistant and will be coordinating private events and reservations at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. Paige started on July 5, 2025.
- Jared Way was hired as a permanent Park Ranger. Jared started on July 21, 2025.

## **Parks Operations**

### Central Parks

- Supported the La Fete de Marquette event at McPike Park.
- Field mowed wild parsnip, Canada thistle and burdock across the city.
- Treated low growing perennial weeds such as birds foot trefoil, crown vetch and Canada thistle (if small enough/after flowers are cut off) at several units/parks.

### Conservation

- Performed seasonal invasive species control including bird's-foot trefoil, Canada thistle, hedge parsley, and sweet clover.
- Completed establishment mowing of new 21-acre prairie planting at Cherokee Marsh North.
- Engaged volunteers in Canada Goose monitoring and hazing, and applied repellent on turf at waterfront parks such as James Madison, Tenney, Esther Beach and others.

### Construction

- Installed 5 concrete pads for Madison Parks Foundation memorial benches.
- Returned to the project at Yahara Golf assisting their Construction team. This work involves constructing new cart paths, new sand traps, new bunkers and closing/filling old sand traps and bunkers.
- Shredded 150 yards of topsoil for use in the parks and received a 3,000-yard donation of topsoil from a contractor.

### East Parks

- Interviews were held for the Athletic Lead worker position and shared position with Traffic and Engineering.
- Parks Alive! events occurred at Galaxy, Worthington, Sandburg, Warner, and Owl Creek Parks.
- Led 2 volunteer groups at Warner pulling weeds and cutting brush in the prairie.

### Facilities Maintenance

- Finished and placed two Madison Parks Foundation donor picnic tables and built an Aldo Leopold bench.
- Performed daily checks of Goodman pool and the spray parks for optimal operation.
- Onboarded a new carpenter who will help with woodworking projects, pier installations, door and lock maintenance and memorial bench construction to name a few things.

### Mall Concourse Maintenance

- Continued event cleanup including Art Fair on The Square and Maxwell St. Days.
- Instituted vinegar-based weed control as a pilot program with positive results.
- Power washing program continued on sidewalks, bus shelters and other amenities daily.

### West Parks

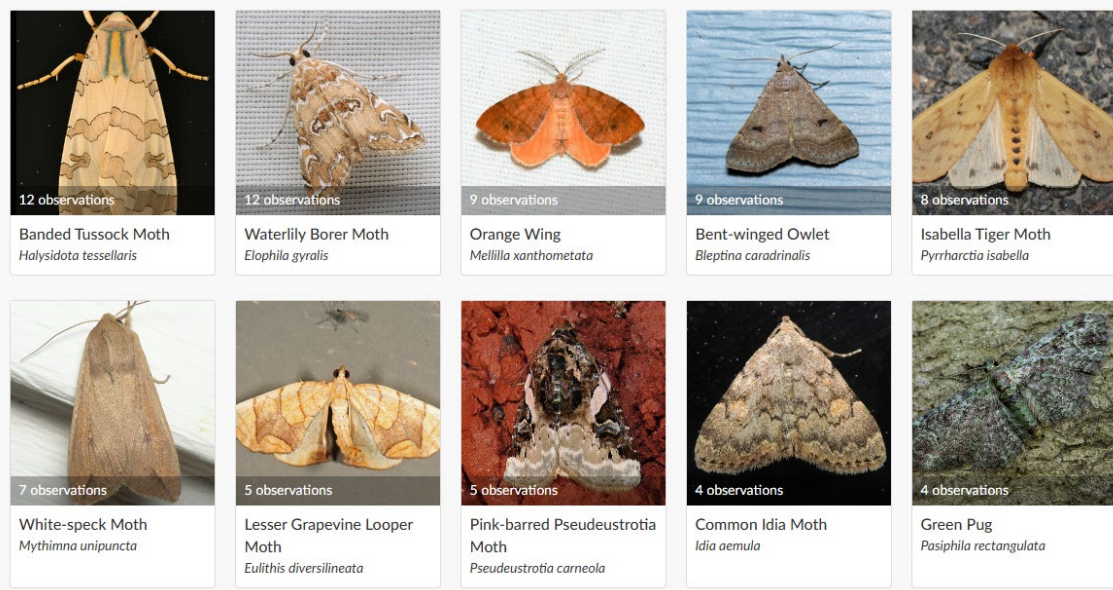
- Support events in parks including Parks Alive, 4<sup>th</sup> July, and Opera in the Park
- Worked with Eco-Team on projects at Hoyt Park and a volunteer planting event at Britta Park.
- Follow up on poison ivy complaints at various parks and the disc golf course.

## Olbrich Botanical Gardens



Corpse Flower Bloom – "Taylor Snift", the recent corpse flower in bloom, reached a height of 84 inches (or 7 feet) before starting to open up its spathe at 3:15 p.m. on July 30, 2025. Olbrich received this specimen as a seed donation from the titan named "Big Bucky" at UW-Madison's D.C. Smith Greenhouse in 2002. Named in honor of one of this generation's greatest musical entertainers, our titan was hand pollinated using pollen collected from Augsburg University's "Lady Gag-Uh" titan in Minneapolis. In addition, we will collect pollen from our own specimen on the second night of bloom.

Moth Night – Olbrich Gardens hosted its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Moth Bioblitz. In this year's event, over 281 observations were made of 97 different species of insects in less than 4 hours! Below is a photo of the top 10 most documented moths from that evening.



County Executive Melissa Agard Visit – On Friday, July 19<sup>th</sup>, County Executive Melissa Agard visited Olbrich Botanical Gardens along with her Deputy Chief of Staff Sam Olson and her intern. The purpose of this visit was to see the newly restored Royal Thai Pavilion, tour the gardens, hear about the upcoming Bolz Conservatory Project, and tour the new Frautschi Family Learning Center and greenhouses.

Bolz Conservatory Closures – The Bolz Conservatory will be closed to the public on August 11-15 for the installation of light art for GLEAM.

## Community Services Report August 2025 – Terrence Thompson

### Community Events (Kelly Post)

As August begins, the Community Event team is starting to process fall event permits for Madison's streets and parks. We are currently collecting and analyzing event data from the 2025 season to evaluate potential updates to our processes and fees for 2026.

This fall, we also plan to explore opportunities for increased community engagement and educational sessions regarding our permitting processes to help address unpermitted events in Madison parks.

### Parks Alive (Debra Alleyne)

#### **Sports and Games**

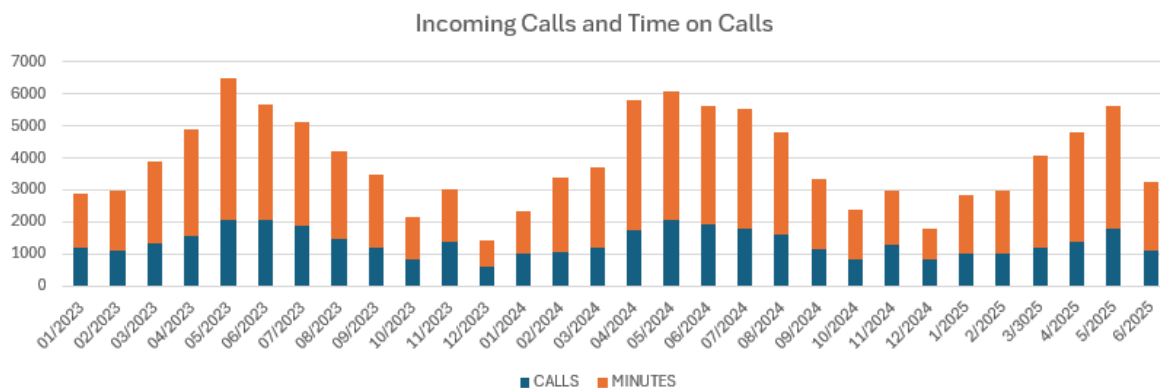
Parks Alive hosted a series of sports and games-themed events in July that were wildly successful and received a great deal of engagement. We created a passport that required participants to complete several games and activities to earn a Parks Alive stamp. After collecting five different stamps, they could draw a number for a chance to win prizes. We witnessed many kids jumping rope, playing frisbee, and engaging in physical activities, much to the surprise and delight of their parents.

#### **Arts Commission Collaboration**

On July 8, Parks Alive collaborated with the Madison Arts Commission to partake in the art installation festivities at Worthington Park. The artist Austen Brantley's sculpture, "Mother and Child," was installed at 3102 Darbo. Following the unveiling, the artist and guests attended Parks Alive, where they shared information about the installation and enjoyed time in the park. We also partnered with the Friends of Madison Arts Commission to host the Rare Element funk music band for the event.

### Customer Service (Joanne Austin)

From April to July, we experience our highest volume of incoming calls. The Customer Service Team is active beyond just answering these calls; we also make a significant number of outgoing calls and respond to many emails received in our general parks mailbox each day.



### Shelter and Athletic Reservations:

Shelter and athletic reservations play a significant role in attracting people to our parks. In June alone, there were 2,595 reservations, which included 957 for courts, 1,177 for fields, 110 for picnic shelters, and 351 for main shelters. The demand for reservations is particularly high in June due to gatherings related to the end of the school year, as well as events such as birthday parties, weddings, and graduation celebrations.

## Permits Sold: Ski Trails, Lake Access, Dog, and Disc Golf

### SUMMARY OF ANNUAL PERMITS BY YEAR

Sum of Annual Permits	Column Labels		
Row Labels	2023	2024	2025
Disc Golf	2,143	2,056	1,741
Dog	8,172	8,052	4,565
Lake Access	3,038	3,288	2,737
Ski Trail	1,634	1,407	658

### SUMMARY OF DAILY PERMITS BY YEAR

Sum of Daily Permits	Column Labels		
Row Labels	2023	2024	2025
Disc Golf	2,771	2,905	972
Dog	218	263	150
Lake Access	3,195	3,456	1,114
Ski Trail	473	189	329

Annual and Daily Permit totals for 2025, as of 6/30/25

## Recreation Services & Aquatics (Tracey Hartley)

### Events

So far this season, we have completed 20 movie screenings, with more scheduled to come. Additionally, we've hosted four engaging Learning Series events. While we unfortunately canceled a few sessions due to rain, the overall turnout and participation have been very positive.

Looking ahead, we are excited to invite you to Ride the Drive on Sunday, August 10—a community celebration you won't want to miss. We hope you'll join us for a day of fun, activity, and connection!

### Aquatics

On Tuesday, July 29, the new splash park at Rennebohm Park officially opened to the public. Named the Jeff Erlanger Sprayground, this vibrant new attraction provides a fun and inclusive space for families and children to enjoy water play throughout the summer.

On Thursday, July 17, we implemented a new entry policy for Goodman Pool. According to this policy, youth ages 11 to 15 must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or responsible adult aged 18 or older. This measure has already led to a noticeable decrease in behavioral issues at the pool. Starting in August, the next phase of the policy will take effect. Youth aged 11 to 15 will be allowed to enter the pool without adult supervision, provided they have an active profile and a signed waiver on file from a parent or guardian. These updates are designed to enhance safety, accessibility, and the overall experience for all Goodman Pool patrons.

## Rangers & Volunteers

### Rangers (Steve Dray)

#### Enforcement Contacts

Rangers have made 55 enforcement contacts this month, resulting in 27 warnings, 13 citations, and 15 bans. So far in July, 62 parking tickets have been issued.

#### Community Outreach

Rangers continue to prioritize community outreach at events such as Parks Alive. We have participated in as many outreach opportunities as our limited staffing allows this year.

#### July 4<sup>th</sup> Weekend

The July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend was very busy. Fortunately, thanks to our prior preparations—including an alcohol ban at Elver Park and additional staffing—this year's celebrations were much safer than in previous years. Rangers responded to calls throughout the city and were present at Elver, Garner, and at Warner Park for the Mallards' fireworks show.



## **Volunteers (John Weichelt)**

### **Volunteer Website (Get Connected) – Ongoing Growth**

- In July, we achieved a significant milestone by registering over 1,000 volunteers in the new volunteer management system. This accomplishment highlights the increasing visibility of our program and the strong interest in supporting Madison Parks.
- Continued backend development includes the creation of a structured user group for the Goat Volunteer program.

### **Ride the Drive**

Planning for Ride the Drive 2025 is progressing well, with volunteer recruitment now complete at 170 out of 174 slots filled. Additionally, we participated in TV interviews with WISC-TV and are organizing supplies and equipment for the event.

### **Conservation & Land Stewardship**

- Supported numerous invasive species removal workdays across various parks, including Vilas Park, Elver Park, and Owen Park.
- Organized over 90 shifts for the Goat Checker volunteer program, which is not only popular but also essential for our conservation efforts. Additionally, goat volunteer Mary Ann was featured in a morning news segment to promote both the volunteer program and the goat initiative.

## **Warner Park Community Recreation Center (Zach Watson)**

WPCRC Program Coordinator Marquis Sanders concluded support for the “Summer Nights at Wright” program on July 30, 2025. This initiative was a partnership with the Madison Public Library and provided recreational and leadership development opportunities for individuals aged 11 to 18 residing in the Park Cedar Apartments. The program took place at Wright Middle School after MMSD summer school.

WPCRC Expansion Project Update: From August 4 to August 22, WPCRC’s parking lot will undergo construction, which will limit parking to the back lot. However, we will maintain access to the front door, allowing WPCRC, New Bridge, and MSCR programming to continue as scheduled.

The WPCRC will be closed to the public from August 25 to September 2. The WPCRC Expansion is still on track to be completed by September 29, 2025.