

## **Park Operations Quarterly Report June - August 2020**

The Operations Team continued to respond to the changing work environment and work requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While there were challenges, a shining light was having the great opportunity to support the essential park services to help our community through these difficult times. The Operations Team focused on maintaining safe and inclusive parks and conservation land, while supporting the social separation requirements. Changes were made to resource support, reporting locations, work processes and the services supported.

Many of the amenities that had been closed, including athletic courts, shelters, and restrooms, were re-opened on a more limited basis. Currently, 16 of the 36 shelter restrooms in the system are open. These restrooms are considered high priority and are cleaned twice daily, which required adding a second work shift. Although delayed, work to install the piers and open the pool was completed. Throughout parks multiple different signs were posted and other efforts taken to help educate the public and to create a healthy recreational environment.

Due to City-wide budgetary constraints, fewer seasonal staff were hired this summer. However, this labor force reduction was mitigated by the thirteen employees that were redeployed to Parks from other City agencies. These employees supported critical operational needs and were welcomed support.

In addition to the COVID response, the Operations Team supported the preparation and clean-up efforts required in response to demonstrations held in the parks and the downtown riots. These activities required significant focus and work by all staff, but more so from the Mall staff due to the significant impact on State Street. The work demand for glass, trash and graffiti clean-up increased significantly.

While there was some reduction in workload due the changes in service support, this reduction was more than off-set by the increased work requirements in support of the pandemic, demonstrations, and riots.

During most of this quarter, the weather supported rapid turf and vegetation growth that required continued attention. The recent dry weather has allowed the team to reduce the time spent on mowing and focus more on pruning and other maintenance needs. While both the pandemic and the riot response required significant effort, the Operations Team continued to focus on providing service excellence, was proud to support the Community during these challenging times, and has settled into what is now considered the new normal.

### **CONSERVATION (Paul Quinlan)**

The Conservation team worked on various invasive species control projects including: at Owen, porcelain berry was cut to suppress seed production. Cut vines were flagged for future herbicide treatments, at Edna Taylor, staff cut and treated honeysuckle and buckthorn, particularly in a few areas that have been harder to access in the past and at Cherokee Marsh North Unit, staff cut and treated black locust and spot-mowed brush, bird's-foot trefoil, crown vetch, and wild parsnip.

Several trail improvement projects completed including placing crushed stone on 600 feet of trail at Knollwood and 1,200 feet of trail at Acewood. Wood chips were placed on a 600-foot section of trail at Turville. In addition, a 200-foot section of trail at Meadow Ridge was re-routed to avoid the burial mound.

Prescribed grazing was used for the first time this year in Madison Parks. Goat herds were contracted to control invasive woody species at Greenside Park, and at Acewood and Turville Point conservation parks. The timing of the grazing events allowed the goats to also consume a large amount of garlic mustard seeds at Acewood and to defoliate all brambles at Turville.

The Friends of Cherokee Marsh (FOCM) participated this year in the Prairie Partners internship program sponsored by Madison Audubon Society. FOCM acted as a host organization and worked with the interns in Cherokee Marsh in both the Madison Parks and the Dane County Parks holdings. They assisted our staff with several projects, including cottonwood and box elder control at the South Unit, garlic mustard and Japanese hedge parsley control at Meadow Ridge, and clearing cattails from around the “belly boards” at Lu’s Pond in the North Unit.



Turville Point before grazing



Turville Point after grazing

### **CONSTRUCTION (Rich Bergmann)**

The Construction team focused on both capital and non-capital projects. For capital projects, the team completed the basketball work at Bordner, Reservoir, Brittingham and Sandburg parks. The basketball court at Glenwood was removed and returned to turf. Ground work was completed in support of the new Nice Rinks that will be installed at Elver Park for the 2020/21 skating season. These rinks will significantly reduce water use and will provide better ice conditions in the face of weather fluctuations related to climate change. The team also prepared five concrete pads to support the new kiosk signs and benches at Cherokee Marsh and a donor memorial bench at Hoyt Park. The work began to replace the playground structure at Woodland Hills Park and the playground at Sheridan Triangle was altered for a nature play area with a swing set.

The team also supported the delivery of materials to Elver Park to support the disc golf course, Wexford Park to support the volleyball court, and new mulch to resurface Olive-Jones upper playground.



Reservoir Park



Elver Rink Preparation



Olive-Jones New Mulch

### **FACILITIES MAINTENANCE (Jon Landsverk)**

As with other groups, the pandemic and riots resulted in significant work for the Facilities Team. The team supported transforming Warner Park Community Recreation Center into a shelter for the homeless by completing plumbing, HVAC, and carpentry work as well as providing 24/7 on call support. The team also built and installed many Plexiglas barriers and sneeze guards for the golf courses, Forest Hill Cemetery, Goodman Pool, and office spaces. Touch-free hand sanitizer stands were made for Olbrich Gardens, Goodman Pool and the Visitor Center. The State Street Visitor Center sustained significant riot damage, which required temporarily boarding window openings. In preparation for opening the Goodman Pool, walls were built, lines were painted, gates were made and bottle fill drinking fountains were installed to support social separation. In addition, the team responded to 38 different work orders to remove graffiti during this quarter, which was a 52% increase over the average.

The Facilities team also focused on planned capital projects including: replacing the Tenney Park tennis court bounding boards, painting Rennebohm shelter, and building and installing new park signs at Elver Park, Patriot Park and Burr Jones Park. The team replaced doors at Lakeview Heights Shelter and Reindahl Barn, and replaced old lighting with new LED energy-saving lamps at James Madison and Demetral Park walking paths and Olbrich boat launch parking. The team installed electric vehicle charging stations at Goodman, Sycamore, and Summit Maintenance facilities and for the golf courses in support of the City's focus on alternative fuel vehicles and built the play features for the new "Nature Nook" at Brittingham Park.



Customized Plexiglas Barriers



Pier Installation

**CENTRAL PARKS (Paul Quinlan)**

In addition to the regular summer grounds work demands, the team re-installed tennis and basketball nets, re-opened shelters, installed social distancing signage, provide increased cleaning and disinfecting of bathrooms, and support re-opening of the Goodman Pool. Although beaches were not staffed with lifeguards to provide daily maintenance this summer, staff continued weekly debris and seaweed removal at the five beaches in Central Parks. With the more recent dry weather staff worked on pruning, and watering trees that were planted this spring.

Although regular shelter reservations were suspended in response to COVID, staff provided support and recovery for several large events that occurred at James Madison, Olin, Brittingham and Penn Park.

Staff supported volunteers by delivering mulch to Nakoma Gardens, and working with the Operation Fresh Start crew at Tenney Park to support neighborhood association projects.

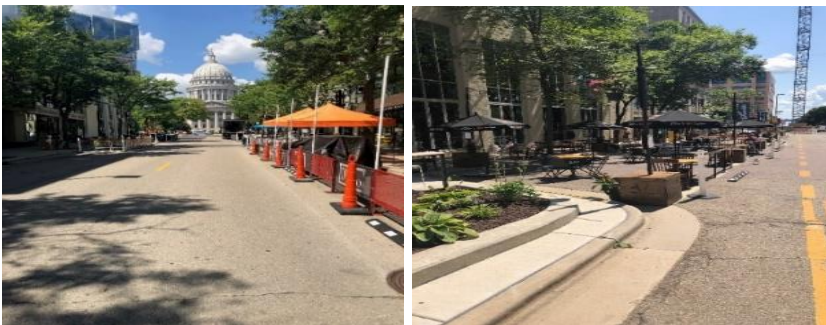


Esther Beach after cleaning

**MALL CONCOURSE (Mark Kiesow)**

The Mall Concourse crew efforts to keep the area maintained were challenged by the COVID-19 response and rioting. In the aftermath of rioting, considerable additional effort was required in support of graffiti cleanup, trash collection, and clearing broken glass from businesses’ windows and bus shelters. Peace Park presented some additional challenges as a COVID-19 relief center. However, the team did a very good job of working in sometimes difficult conditions to maintain the park.

While many downtown events were cancelled due to COVID-19, including the Farmer’s Market, staff supported the work required for the new “Streatery” program.



State Street recovery and “Streatery” program



## **EAST PARKS (Kristin Mathews)**

East had some new and innovative initiatives this quarter. The Parks Arborist crew assisted the Hawthorne Library with the creation of tree cookies for their outdoor programming and pocket garden spaces. They were recently featured in a story on the Madison Public Library Facebook page.

The new Land Stewardship Technician (Laurel Franklin) researched an approach to controlling the invasive leafy spurge in our meadow areas. Through these efforts and the collaboration with a natural resource specialist at Fort McCoy, about 5,000 flea beetles were harvested and released at Warner and Meadow Ridge prairies. While this is the first time this approach has been used at these parks, these *Aphthona* flea beetles were released by Parks at Prairie Ridge in 1998 where they were very effective in controlling the leafy spurge population. The Friends of Pheasant Branch have also released them at Pheasant Branch Conservancy. The beetles have been well studied, approved in the 1990s for use as biocontrol in the US, and are used widely from Wisconsin to Montana. This project aligned well with the Parks Land Management Plan and increases our capacity for invasive species control while reducing the need for herbicide use.

Through the efforts of Kristin Mathews, East Parks Supervisor, Parks received approval from the Ho Chunk Nation for new effigy mounds signage to be used throughout the Parks system. The purpose of the signs is to educate park users of the historical significance of the mounds and of the updated Madison Parks policy in regards to maintenance. The signs also ask, on behalf of Ho Chunk, that people treat the mounds with the respect that they deserve.



Flea beetles collection



Flea beetles release



Hawthorne tree cookie project

## **WEST PARKS (Chad Hughes)**

A number of staff reported to Elver and Owen Parks to maintain social separation. The remote reporting had some challenges, but overall, it worked well and contributed to operational efficiencies.

The absence of athletic reservations reduced the related maintenance, which allowed staff to beautify some of our signature sign beds, including Marshall, Elver, Meadowood and Marlborough parks.

Rob Kay, Parks Maintenance Worker, reviewed and updated all West Parks snow routes as part of his Leadership Development Training Course. All maps were converted into an electronic format for ease of updating and increased transparency.

The Forest Hill staff completed a review of the maintenance plans to support the multiple Burial Mounds located in the cemetery. The plans aligned with the newly adapted Parks Burial Mounds guidelines. Actions taken included eliminating a service path that encroached upon one mound, adding an access point for machinery to avoid the mound, and informational signage about the existence of the mounds.



Marshall Signature Garden Before



Marshall Signature Garden After