

Park Operations Quarterly Report May 2022

The Parks Operations team transitioned this quarter from winter activities to preparations for warm weather. The wet and cold start to spring provided the needed time to prepare the park amenities and delayed the mowing season, which, given the lower staffing levels, was welcomed relief. Park activities increased significantly as the weather warmed.

Staff completed maintenance and delivery of picnic tables, piers, and trashcans, and prepared shelters, park grounds, and amenities for the summer season. The refurbished James Madison pier that was damaged in the 2018 flood was finally reinstalled, and was a welcomed amenity for the park users. Athletic fields were mowed, graded, and striped as games and practices began for the season. As the weather warmed, most of the general parks staff transitioned their focus to mowing and other turf care.

Spring planting was also a major part of our effort with flower planting on the Mall Concourse and State Street, and over 200 trees planted in parks. Goodman Pool planting beds were maintained, annual flowers were planted, and mechanical preparations in support of the pool opening were completed.

The work to recruit and support new seasonal hires continued. Hiring seasonal staff continued to be a challenge with fewer new applicants and a reduction in returning workers. A detailed response plan based on staff availability and service priorities was created, should it be needed.

The work of defining and refining general parks natural area management plans continued. This work will provide additional structure and focus to our overall Parks ecological efforts.

Parks Operations hired our first ASSPIRE Intern. The intern will work with both the Conservation and General Parks staff with a focus on land stewardship. The intern's work plan will aid in building an understanding of the many job responsibilities; from creating land management plans to supporting the maintenance work requirements.

We are also pleased to have the new Conservation Trainee position posted. This position was approved in the 2022 operating budget. The position is a learning and development green job opportunity targeting women and or minorities.

CONSERVATION

Collectively, Parks' prescribed fire program burned 250 acres across 17 sites this spring. Generally cool, wet weather allowed the team to burn on just 12 days this year, but with multiple staff, volunteer, and contracted crews, a total of 23 separate prescribed burns were conducted: two by contractors, three by volunteers, and 18 by staff. The sites included eight conservation parks (Cherokee Marsh - North and South, Edna Taylor, Heritage Prairie, Kettle Pond, Owen, Prairie Ridge, and Stricker's Pond), managed meadows in seven general parks (Burrows, Demetral, Hudson, Mayfair, North Star, Raymond Ridge, and Reindahl), and plantings at Odana Hills golf course and an outlot of Brittingham Park.

In addition, staff oiled Canada Goose eggs, installed a bat house at Cherokee Marsh Mendota Unit, controlled spring invasive species such as garlic mustard, dame's rocket and burdock, and assisted the Landscape Maintenance Workers (LMW) with planting native trees and shrubs at Acewood, Edna Taylor, and Prairie Ridge. Contractors were hired with capital funds to help implement management plans at Cherokee Marsh, Edna Taylor, Knollwood, Moraine Woods,

Owen, Stricker's Pond, and Turville Point. The contractors performed seasonal invasive plant control at all of these parks, as well as special projects targeting reed canary grass at Cherokee and Stricker's.

Weekly volunteer workdays, special group events, and independent volunteer work hosted and coordinated by Friends groups at Cherokee Marsh, Owen, and Turville Point are building momentum and complementing staff and contractor work that has been conducted at these sites. These efforts are visibly improving the quality of these parks. Casual volunteerism is being supported again at Acewood, Kettle Pond, and Sandburg Woods with the continuation of designated garlic mustard compost sites. Parks staff hosted a garlic mustard pull at Heritage Sanctuary.



Prescribed burn



Garlic mustard compost site



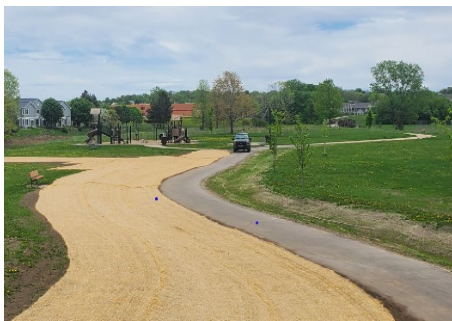
Volunteers at Heritage Sanctuary

CONSTRUCTION

The construction team worked on a number of capital projects. New bench and kiosk pads were poured at Edna Taylor, Elver, Olbrich, Paunack, and Warner parks. Work was completed at Aldo Leopold to connect the future off-road bike trail to the pump track, at Country Grove Park to improve water drainage, and at Eken Park to remove the old playground in preparation for installation of new playground equipment. The team began a significant land clean-up effort at the old "Wild Waters" site in support of furthering our relationship with the Ho Chunk Nation, whose casino is located adjacent to this parcel.

The team renovated two bunkers at Monona Golf Course and supported beach repairs and shoreline stabilization work at Olbrich, Tenney and the Yahara River to finalize the outstanding 2018 FEMA supported projects.

The Playground Technician and seasonal staff began inspecting, cleaning and repairing broken playground equipment at the 176 playgrounds in the system - a big effort.



Cottage Grove Park Path



Olbrich Beach Repair



Warner Break Water Bench

FACILITIES MAINTENANCE

Spring is a busy time for the Facilities team as they transition from winter and prepare many of the parks amenities for the summer season. Work included closing down ice rinks, installing the 13 lake access piers, re-opening the various shelters and water systems - such as the 160 drinking fountains in the system - and preparing the pool and splash pads for the summer.

The team also supported capital projects, special projects and annual maintenance work. One notable special project was the repair and re-installation of the James Madison pier, which has been out of the water since the 2018 flood, due to the FEMA work process. Staff stripped, sanded, and repaired the broken steel, galvanized and repainted the pier, and added new floats and treated lumber. Users expressed their pleasure with having the pier returned and with the new look. The crew also created a replica of the mile marker honoring Susy Hamilton at Wingra Park that was damaged, worked with Dane County employees to install and start-up the new beach treatment system at Warner Beach, and built and installed new signature signs at Cherokee Marsh and Elvehjem Park.



Installing new JMP pier



Installing Warner Park beach curtain

GENERAL PARKS

The parks spring cleanup is a big task and was a major focus this quarter. On Earth Day, hundreds of volunteers helped this effort at parks throughout the City. Many tasks were performed including trash removal, beach raking and landscape bed mulching. Volunteers planted a tree at Orton Park for Arbor Day after consulting with the Parks Landscape Maintenance Workers for placement and species selection.

The cool spring kept the grass in check through most of April, but a quick warm-up soon had most general parks staff mowing grass. Regular mowing maintains more than 1,200 acres of turf in parks, street medians, storm water greenways, and along bike paths. The target is to maintain a mowing cycle of 7-10 days, which has proven to be a challenge this year with the current staffing levels.

As part of our plan to evolve Parks' land management, the Land Stewardship Technicians (LST) worked with the Conservation staff to develop burn plans and complete prescribed burns on a number of prairie plantings in general parks this spring. See the Conservation section above for the parks included. Prescribed fire is one of the best tools to encourage robust native plant growth and help control invasive species in our managed meadows. To bring this effort forward, the LSTs also worked with the Conservation team to assess prairie diversity, prioritize natural areas, and develop work plans. Valuable support was provided by the Parks GIS specialist to map natural areas and develop a framework which will allow Parks to better track work

completed and resultant changes in vegetation, and support project planning based on the data collected.

In our effort to reduce our impact on climate change, we continued to expand our use of alternative electric equipment. To accommodate the increase in battery-powered equipment, the Parks maintenance mechanic, in coordination with City Engineering, constructed a battery charging station to provide enough electricity to simultaneously charge up to 22 batteries for handheld equipment. We will continue to research and pilot the use of additional battery equipment, including mowers, and purchase additional equipment as the technology evolves and the price premium is reduced.

Athletic reservations resumed with soccer, ultimate frisbee, softball, and baseball. An exciting addition this year will be the formation of a little league baseball team coordinated by the Black Men Coalition of Dane County. The program will provide youth from all genders, races and socio-economic backgrounds between the ages of 5 and 12 in underserved communities with free positive recreational activities and mentorship. Elver Park will be their home field. The Parks staff will make some minor modifications to the softball fields to accommodate baseball.

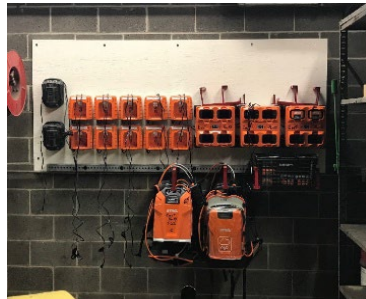
The Landscape Maintenance Workers (LMW), with the support of the Park Arborists and Park Conservation team, planted approximately 200 trees in over 20 parks, including 32 at Forest Hill Cemetery and 15 at Prairie Ridge Conservation Park. In our continuing mission to diversify park trees, 42 separate species are being planted. The LMW's also completed beautification projects, which included the annual flower plantings and planting bed rehabilitation at Goodman Pool.

Spring brought a dramatic increase in shelter reservations and events. Graduation and birthday parties, charity walks and company picnics are just a few examples of the reservations parks host each week. One of the larger events was the annual Picnic in the Park fundraiser held at Olin Park to benefit the Madison Parks Foundation. The General Parks' staff supported the work to prepare the parks for these events.

Staff also prepared the Forest Hill Cemetery for Memorial Day. Preparation was a team effort, with staff from other operations sections supporting the effort. The entire 140 acres was mowed and string trimmed. This was a significant undertaking over a short period of time to assure all of the grounds were prepared for the Memorial Day visitors.



Staff mowing



Battery charging station



Preparing athletic field



Arbor Day volunteers planting



Picnic in the Park set up

MALL CONCOURSE

The service area was transitioned to spring. The hundreds of tulip and daffodil bulbs planted last fall bloomed, including the new colorful displays at Peace Park. The staff planted pansies and kale in the planters, and finished the landscaping décor with flowers at the Top of State Street and the Forum of Origin. Staff also planted sunflowers in various landscape beds, in support of Ukraine.

The Forestry staff assisted with improving the landscaping décor, with more than 25 new street trees added to enliven the downtown service area.

The staff power washed bus shelters, bike racks and benches, and started the annual sidewalk power washing program, which will continue throughout the summer.

Staff supported set up and clean up for downtown events as they returned and visitor participation increased. The Farmer’s Market resumed for the season and the Madison Night Market had a successful start, with thousands of people attending the first session. The Crazylegs Classic run and other events returned from COVID hiatus.



Peace Park Tulip Bed



Planting Sunflower seeds



Power washing sidewalks



Planting and watering planters and flower beds

