

Park Operations Quarterly Report September - November 2021

While regular park maintenance continued to be a critical task, the team began to transition their focus toward fall work and winter preparation with the change of season this quarter. Winter preparations included removing trash barrels from some parks, collecting picnic tables in need of repair, winterizing shelters, closing down irrigation systems and drinking fountains, preparing warming shelters, removing piers and closing athletic fields. Work also began on preparing park areas for skating, skiing and other winter recreational activities. Land management efforts in parks and conservation lands included removing woody invasive species, mowing meadows, and planting trees.

The Operations team worked with CXC and MadNorSki ski clubs on this winter's cross country ski trails as well as future trail planning. Throughout 2021, the team regularly met to discuss how to provide a more reliable, safe, and sustainable snowmaking infrastructure. After many thoughtful hours of conversation, the team decided to focus the attention on the natural snow trails for the 2021-22 season, and continue working on a longer-term plan.

The team continued efforts toward a more formalized, planned approach to the general parks areas land management efforts. Staff shared a presentation of the efforts taken and current thinking on the plan forward with the Habitat Stewardship Committee in November.

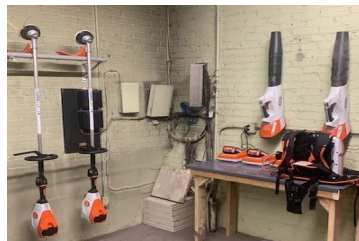
We engaged in conversations with Human Resources regarding the challenge experienced in securing hourly labor support in 2021, and ideas that might help avoid a similar challenge in 2022. This is a broad national challenge with no easy fix. Hourly labor support is a critical part of supporting Parks' seasonal work variations. We continue to look for opportunities to improve efficiency.

In addition to delivering on today's service needs, the team also continued to focus forward to prepare for the evolving environment. Some of these efforts included:

- Piloted the use of battery-powered tools and evaluated robotic mowing technology as a means to reduce the environmental impact of our small engine equipment.
- Continued to evolve the plan to expand and maintain general parks managed meadows.
- Began reviewing previous Parks climate change resilience work for consideration of inclusion in the Parks Land Management Plan, which will be updated next year.
- Continued to assess the operations organizational structure for effective and efficient delivery of services in the future.
- Continued to evaluate machine-made snow as an option to support cross-country skiing and options for supporting that effort.



Battery Mower Test



Battery Tools Pilot



Park Managed Meadow

CONSERVATION

Staff accomplished overdue brush mowing at Cherokee Marsh and Owen, provided support to the Operation Fresh Start crew on trail re-surfacing at Hiestand and burning brush piles at Stricker's Pond and Turville Point, completed prescribed burns at several sites, prepared ski trails for winter, and were able to allot sufficient effort to controlling the large porcelain-berry population at Owen.

Seasonal maintenance on cross-country ski trails included mowing brush and pruning branches encroaching on the trails, stabilizing erosion-prone areas, and making several minor improvements to allow better access for grooming equipment and an improved experience for skiers. Volunteers from the MadNorSki club supplemented this work at Elver with a volunteer event on November 6 and several hours of independent volunteer work, preparing the trails for this season.

The typically small and marginal fall prescribed burn window allowed staff to burn approximately 60 acres across five sites, including Cherokee Marsh, Owen, Prairie Ridge, Door Creek and Warner. The focus was on grass-dominated burn units that burn more readily than woodland units. Units at Cherokee, Owen and Prairie Ridge also had a heavy build-up of thatch, as it had been more than three growing seasons since any of these had burned. Continuing to expand Parks' prescribed burn program and enrich volunteers, burns this fall included a new burn unit on a managed meadow at Door Creek, and a specialized training opportunity for volunteers from the Friends of Owen Park.

Outreach by the Conservation Supervisor this quarter included conservation park tours at Moraine Woods and Owen, a presentation to the Wild Ones native landscaping club, discussion of pesticide reduction in landscaping with the North Star Neighborhood Association, and review of the Crestwood Elementary School prairie restoration.



Elver Park - Widened Ski Trails



Door Creek and Prairie Ridge Prescribed Burns

CONSTRUCTION

The team installed concrete for new bench pads at Warner and Tenney Parks, and completed the new path at Orlando Bell Park, the new drainage way and asphalt path at Odana School Dog Park, and the new volleyball court at Orchard Ridge Park. The team also started work on paths at Country Grove Park and Vilas Park, and improved the berm and access to the path at Forest Hill Cemetery.

The construction team played an instrumental role in providing shredded top soil for Parks and Streets, shredding 500 yards of topsoil this quarter. The team also supported

maintenance and repairs to ensure park playground safety, by adding new mulch to the playgrounds and completing the playground safety inspections.



Orchard Ridge Volleyball



Orlando Bell Path



Forest Hill Berm and Path

FACILITIES MAINTENANCE

The team focused on annual maintenance work, and capital projects including resurfacing Goodman Pool, replacing additional doors at the Brittingham Boathouse, rebuilding the James Madison Park pier, and repairing or replacing park signature signs.

The Goodman Pool capital resurfacing project began in September and is scheduled to be completed in May 2022. Badger Pools is the vendor supporting the project.

New or replacement signature signs were added to Eagle Trace, Washington Manor, Westport Meadows, Sherwood Forest, Galaxy, Demetral, Elvehjem and Kenneth Newville Parks.

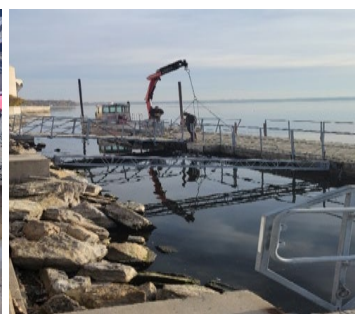
The team supported the extensive seasonal transition work on park facilities including winterization of 160 drinking fountains, 43 restrooms, 6 feature fountains, 5 community gardens and irrigation systems at various sites, as well as the removal of 13 piers from area waterways. The team also removed the mooring field at Marshall Park, conducted annual facility inspections, and supported work to prepare ice rinks.



Goodman Pool Resurface



Updated Signature Signs



Pier Removal

Pictured is the Monona Terrace Convention Center pier being prepared to barge across the lake for storage in the Olbrich boat launch parking lot for the winter.

GENERAL PARKS

Crews began fall maintenance and winter preparation this quarter, installing Nice Rink frames at Elver, Olbrich, and Heritage adopt-ice rinks, and hockey boards at Olbrich, Vilas and Elver Parks.



Hockey Boards and Nice Rink Preparation

The East Parks team worked to maintain Reindahl Park to the best of their ability, despite the added maintenance work required due to the encampment there. The team also cleaned up a large, unauthorized and abandoned encampment at O.B. Sherry Park. Clean-up efforts were coordinated with the Parks Rangers and Streets Division.

The Land Stewardship Technician (LST) worked with the Conservation Team to establish a prescribed burn rotation in the most established “Managed Meadow” prairies of East Parks. This fall the team coordinated prescribed burns on Firebird Island at Warner Park, and in a section of Door Creek Park. The LST completed the fourth of eight wildland firefighting courses required to become a burn boss.

The Landscape Maintenance Workers planted over 250 trees this fall with the support of the Parks Arborists. Of note, after several years of tree losses due to storm damage and disease, Forest Hill Cemetery received forty-eight new trees this fall. These included Redbuds, Magnolias, Catalpas, Oaks and Tulip Trees.

The Arborists also began work to safely prune or remove oak and elm trees, which are only cut between October and April to prevent the spread of Oak Wilt and Dutch Elm Disease. The team also worked on removing dead trees and scrubby overgrown brush from the Yahara Parkway riverbank. The river sections impacted by tree removal had new desirable trees replanted during this fall’s tree planting.



Forest Hill Tree Planting



Fall Oak Tree Removal

The athletics crew aerified and seeded athletic fields as reservations ended for the year. The crew also continued work on the organic turf restoration project that began this spring at Flagstone Park athletic field and Olbrich Park softball diamond. This project is partially funded by a grant from Stonyfield Organics, and will be a multi-year effort. Soil and turf health improvements will increase over the years as we continue to build the soil ecology and biota to naturally feed the turf.

The Junction Ridge Neighborhood Association, with the help of multiple grants, was able to install a community patio area at Junction Ridge Park. The association worked closely with Parks and other City agencies for approval and agreements before proceeding.

Other work this quarter included landscape projects such as mulching planting beds and playgrounds, planting bulbs, and tree pruning.



Junction Ridge Park – New Patio



Memorial Bed Clean-up



Playground Mulch Crew

MALL CONCOURSE

The team finalized the season's turf maintenance with a final aerating, fertilizing, and black gypsum application. Daffodil and tulip bulbs are expected to be in full bloom in early spring, as the crew planted over 2,000 additional bulbs in the service area.

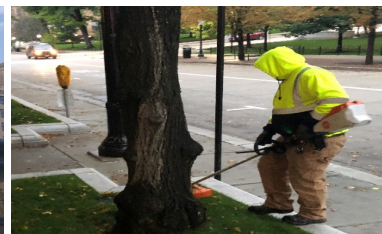
Events and non-events (such as Halloween) are coming to a close, but still require extensive and ongoing work. Benches, bike racks, trashcans, and planters were removed from the service area before Halloween to provide a safe downtown sidewalk area. UW home football games kept the weekend crew busy with cleanup since the stadium was at full capacity after a year of no fans in the stands. The Madison Night Market will continue its run through the year, with an added December Night Market to enliven the downtown. Staff began installing winter decorations in mid-November, including the traditional snowflake lights placed on light poles, and seasonal décor placed in planters and landscape beds.



Bulb Planting



Holiday Décor Preparation



Battery String Trimmer in Use