

Park Operations Quarterly Report March 2019

The 2018-19 winter season was one of extremes when it came to weather. The above average temperatures and dry conditions in December and early January kept skating rinks closed and reduced the more traditional demand for snow removal. There were a few minor snow events in December, but the clean-up was quick. The unseasonal warm weather provided an opportunity for significant pruning, trimming stump grubbing and clearing in the parks and conservation lands as well as outdoor facility maintenance and playground inspections.

The conditions quickly changed with the Polar Winter Vortex cold and continued snowfall. The frequency, depth and timing of the snowfall required schedule changes, extra time and a dedicated focus to assure priority routes, bike paths, bus stops, parking lots, sidewalks and ice rinks were cleared. The snow added challenge to providing safe ice rinks as it insulated the ice and creating a slushy surface and spots of thin ice. However, the teams' work and dedication eventually paid off providing the community excellent skating and cross country skiing conditions.

As February comes to a close, we continue to focus on the next winter storm, but we are also beginning to shift to spring preparation planning. Equipment will need to be changed to support summer maintenance and picnic tables, piers and trash cans will need to be inspected, repaired, repainted and prepared for delivery. The interviews for the summer seasonal workforce have begun with a total of 60 positions to be filled, of which 34 positions will be filled with returning workers.

In addition, all groups worked to identify potential Performance Excellence improvement projects. There was very good team support for this initial step with 22 improvement opportunities identified.

This has been an eventful and at times challenging winter season, but also a very successful one. There were plenty of opportunities to demonstrate teamwork and commitment to service excellences and this team delivered. The results of their efforts were recognized by a number of emails from a supportive community. We look forward to the transition to spring!

CONSERVATION (Paul Quinlan)

The lack of snow and a thaw event limited cross-country skiing opportunities early in the season. However, trails were open for 21 out of 32 days between January 20 and February 20. The conservation staff was able to groom at least one fee site on 18 of those days, and both of the fee sites maintained by conservation on 10 of those days. The MadNorSki ski club supplemented Parks staff efforts at Elver Park. Increased coordination with this group has helped support improved daily grooming. The addition of the Parks Worker position and some re-tooling of grooming equipment allowed staff to begin grooming both fee sites and at least two non-fee sites on the same day. This has allowed for an increase in community ski opportunities.

Prior to the snow accumulation, staff and contractors worked on woody invasive control projects, including burning brush piles, at Edna Taylor, South Cherokee Marsh and Knollwood. Some limited large woody debris removal occurred at Owen and Turville Point when conditions allowed.

The annual burn permits from Madison Fire Department were secured for burning brush piles and for prescribed burns. This year, Parks' prescribed burn permit covers not only staff-led burns on conservation parks, but also authorized volunteer-led burns in general parks and along bike paths. Key staff completed training courses this quarter that will allow us to burn under a wider range of conditions, as allowed by an option in the prescribed burn permit.

Staff from Parks and Engineering continue to work together to standardize the burning notification process and protocol for prescribed burns conducted on City property, whether by staff, contractors or volunteers. The Parks' operating procedure is being used as the basis for this review. In addition, the team is working with the City's Risk Manager to improve oversight of the volunteers.

The habitat management plan for Turville Point was reviewed by the Friends of Olin-Turville, and will be presented to the Habitat Stewardship Subcommittee in March.

In the coming month, the team plans to work on large woody debris removal at Turville Point and preparing for the spring prescribed burn season.

CONSTRUCTION (Rich Bergmann)

The construction teams' work, like other work groups, varied due to weather conditions. The early unseasonal warm weather allowed for the completion of mulching work and playground inspections. Restoration mulch resurfacing was completed at Carpenter-Ridgeway, Haen Family, and Valley Ridge, bringing this playground to required impact standards. In addition, preparation work to support 2019 construction top soil needs was accomplished with over 235 loads of topsoil removed from donor sites.

With the change to winter weather, the construction crew supported the Streets Division with snow plowing, plowing over 72 lane miles, and the Park's team removed snow from the Mall Concourse and State Street. As of Feb 25th, the assigned street areas were cleared five times, with one event including clearing over ten inches of snow.

The 2019 capital project resource planning started. The projects include work with Dane County Land and Conservation Division to remove a manure "pit" for use of fertilizer. The fertilizer will be spread on the leased farm land and the area will be reclaimed for future use as farm land. Other project work is captured in the capital plan.

FACILITIES MAINTENANCE (Tom Skaife)

Staff worked on capital projects, emergency work orders, routine daily maintenance and snow removal. Work included ADA renovation at the Elver shelter, boiler repair at Odana Club House, painting at the Obruch Gardens office, daily heat and rink inspections, pumps and hydrant checks, park signature sign painting and other heating, electric and water projects.

Work was also completed on improved work planning and scheduling. This work will support improved transparency and productivity. The work aligns with the performance excellence initiative and will support future project efforts.

Planning and early implementation work was completed for the McPike Park electric service upgrade, the capital square fountain repair and start-up work and the Focus on Energy lighting projects.

FORESTRY (Marla Eddy and Craig Klinke)

Forestry Section	Total Trees (Dec/Jan/Feb)	Total Hours (Dec/Jan/Feb)
Cycle Pruning	805	970
Pruned by Request	642	1,014
Small Tree Pruning Cycle	553	163
Tree Removal	433	1,002
Ash Preemptive Removals	179	796
Storm Work/Hangers		42.5
Snow Plow/Shovel		1,529

Assisted the Streets and General Parks areas with snow removal as a top priority the last two months. When the group was able to perform tree work, the focus was on Engineering Projects, District/Cycle Pruning and Small Tree Pruning. When the Engineering projects are completed, the focus will transition back to preemptive removal of ash trees as a top priority.

Arborists attended two training opportunities this winter. First training was a refresher course on electrical hazard awareness held by MG&E at their training facility. Secondly, a representative from Utility Sales & Service spoke to the group on routine maintenance and tower truck care.

Forestry specialists began preparing for spring 2019 planting with 1,722 new trees to be installed across the city. A large number of the trees, 1,045 trees, will be delivered from a grow contract with Johnson’s Nursery. This grow contract was established in 2015 whereby a down payment was provided for certain tree species and quantities to be delivered in 2018. The contract will provide trees for forestry through 2022.

Forestry specialists assisted and advised the Engineering Division working on street reconstruction projects to minimize construction impacts to street trees. In 2018 there were 20+ engineering projects that the forestry specialists assisted with. Some examples are Monroe Street, N. Hancock Street, Schenk Street, Davidson Street, W. Wilson, Emerson Street and Lowell Street. During the actual construction, forestry staff will monitor all the active projects to ensure that the City of Madison Construction Specifications for work near street trees are followed. If tree damage is found, the contractor is fined.

The forestry specialists also assisted with the Engineering's sidewalk replacement program. In 2018, Aldermanic District 3 and 16 had sidewalk repairs. Forestry specialists reviewed over 1,400 addresses that had sidewalk heaved by street trees. They evaluate and decide which addresses will not have tree roots cut before damaged sidewalk stones are removed. The sidewalk contractor is required to contact forestry specialists after stones are removed to determine what roots may be removed without harming the street tree.

Central Parks (Chad Hughes)

With the warm December a considerable amount of pruning was completed at Olin, Aldo Leopold and Paunack parks.

With the return of cold weather, the attention turned to snow removal and ice maintenance. Ice at both Vilas Lagoon and Goodman were a challenge with snow cover creating thin ice and slush. We were eventually able to open both. Vilas Lagoon was initially limited, but open ice expanded as conditions improved. Vilas general rink and hockey rink both had good ice once the cold weather set in.

We began spring planning by contacting local nurseries to finalize tree orders for the upcoming spring plantings. This year the plan is to plant over twice as many trees in Park property as compared to last year, with 400 trees scheduled to be planted this spring alone.

MALL CONCOURSE (Chad Hughes/Mark Kiesow)

As typical with heavy and continued snow fall, the Mall crews kept busy assuring the Mall, State Street and entire BID areas were safe and well maintained. The cold temperatures added challenges requiring additional steps to reduce ice formation on walkways. An ice storm complicated clean up forcing extra salt application for an entire day.

A few Mall and State Street snow hauling events were required to maintain safe passage for Metro and other traffic. Both the Construction and Forestry groups supported this work with resources and equipment. The Construction team hauled over 700 dump truck loads of snow from the Capital square/State Street areas to the City snow dump at Bowman Park. This work took place at night. Additional hauling work was also supported during the day given the light vehicle and pedestrian traffic during the Vortex.

Spring planning has begun with the ordering of spring plants including pansies and ornamental kale for the expansion area planters. Also, bike rack replacements were ordered to replace damaged and rusty racks, which are scheduled to arrive in late March. Damaged and rusty sidewalk benches will also be replaced, sprucing up the downtown hardscape.

East Parks (Kristin Mathews)

The winter weather extremes impacted the opening and maintaining of ice. The Tenney Lagoon ice was only open 4 days in January. This significantly improved in February with the cold weather with ice open 20 days as of February 27th.

Two new N'ice rinks were installed. This work included changing the larger rink at Heritage Heights Park to a smaller size rink and moving the full sized rink that was at Heritage to Olbrich, which replaced the Olbrich general rink. The N'ice rink maintenance work is still being perfected, but the benefits of these rinks were evident. The benefits included better ice quality after thaws, less melt during warmer periods and no gas bubbles! The end result proved to be better ice for longer periods of time at our neighborhood parks.

In addition, staff worked to clear existing routes as well as removed snow from 4000' of new sidewalks and 39 additional bus stops. The added maintenance requirements added some challenge, but the crews maintained the surfaces without significant delays.

West Parks (Laura Bauer)

The Madison Winter Festival was held at Elver Park with unseasonably warm weather. However, between the natural and artificial snow and the work provided by staff there were good snow conditions for sledding, skiing, and snowshoeing. Winter Fest had significant participation.

After a few years of interest, Sunset Park neighbors received a new N'ice rink. The neighborhood volunteer group installed the rink, filled it and maintained it. As we have experienced with other rinks of this design, it was one of the first to open once the weather was cold enough and the volunteers were able to keep up with the snow removal. The rink was a good addition to the neighborhood.



The skating rink at Elver Park was somewhat of a disappointment this year. The warm December weather and the January rains caused the water that the ice floats on to drain out through the unfrozen banks. As a result, the general rink area was treated as a "land rink". The area for general ice was slightly smaller, but we were able to maintain a good skating surface without worry of unsafe thin ice. Unfortunately, we were not able to establish the hockey ice this year due to the ice challenges. We will evaluate solutions for Elver ice.

The Parks Team and volunteer groups worked to maintain ice at other Westside locations, including Wexford Park, Rennebohm Park, Westmorland Park (hockey & general skating), Nakoma Park, and Hillington Park. The Parks and volunteer partnership approach resulted in a well-maintained ice given all of the weather challenges.

The Elver sled hill saw very good use this year. Natural snow was augmented early in the year with artificial snow, but since late January, natural snow has been plentiful. We also had sledding at Garner, which is a good option for those who find the Elver hill to be a little too much.

Forest Hill Cemetery (Laura Bauer)

This winter's weather required extra planning and scheduling with careful consideration to ground conditions and the weather forecast. The extreme cold weather, rain and snow required time to thaw frozen ground, remove snow and address grave site flooding due to the rainfall and frozen ground. Fortunately, our team of professionals did an excellent job addressing these challenges. The funeral homes understood these challenges well and we were able to work together to schedule services appropriately.

2018 year-end totals:

Total Cemetery Revenue Collected \$358,288.00

Interments	71 full-size, 106 cremains
Entombments	33 cremains entombments
Markers/Memorials	8 flush markers installed
	101 foundations staked out for marker Installation by Others
Cemetery Lots Sold	84.5
Mausoleum Spaces Sold	14