

Snag Protection Policy City of Madison Parks

The City of Madison recognizes the important value of snags for wildlife habitat within the Conservation Parks system. For management purposes, we define a snag as a standing dead tree ≥ 6 " diameter and $>6'$ tall.

Staff, contractors and volunteers will implement the following protocols and procedures when using heavy equipment (i.e. tractor, Toolcat, Bobcat, or larger) within Conservation Parks.

1. Inventory snags within the work area.

One of two methods will be used to determine the baseline inventory of snags within an area, depending on the density of woody stems in the work area.

- a. Comprehensive survey – Personnel will identify and map all existing snags within the work area. This will be a full census of snags and will be conducted in areas that have a very open canopy and understory. Examples include the “5th Addition Woods” and the “South Bathroom” management units at Cherokee Marsh North Unit. Data described below will be recorded for each snag mapped.
- b. Point-sample – Personnel will use a BAF prism to determine the snag density within larger and/or denser project areas. Examples include the “Caretaker Woods” and “Hibernaculum Woods” management units at Cherokee Marsh North Unit. Data described below will be recorded for each snag detected. Personnel will map plot centers, rather than each snag detected.

Each snag mapped (comprehensive survey) or detected (point sample) be assessed and data on size, species, decay class and cavities will be recorded. See [Conservation Parks Snag Management Data Collection Protocol](#) for more information. Snag inventory may be conducted by Parks staff or volunteers.

Data collected will be entered into electronic spreadsheets maintained on the Parks common data server. Maps will be digitized and stored in the City’s GIS data server, along with any GPS data collected. Field data sheets and hand-drawn maps will be kept on file for 5 years in the Conservation Parks physical file system.

2. Restrict Heavy Equipment Use

Heavy equipment use within a project area may only commence after the snag inventory has been completed and communicated to the equipment operator. Heavy equipment operators will leave a buffer zone of ten feet around existing snags in order to prevent accidental damage or removal of existing snags. Work closer than 10 feet to existing snags must be performed using hand tools and material moved outside of the buffer zone if it is to be removed with heavy equipment.

This policy is to serve as a guideline for heavy equipment work within the Conservation Park system. Each project area and the snags within will be assessed individually based on habitat value and hazard potential. Snags may be removed by hand or with heavy equipment if the hazard or threat of leaving the snag is determined to be greater than the habitat value.

Please refer to the individual Habitat Management Plans for each conservation park for site-specific snag management goals and prescriptions. Areas that are being managed to provide this resource should be re-inventoried every 5 years.

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