

Park Operations Quarterly Report May 2019

This quarter, the Parks Operations team focused on the seasonal transition from winter to warm weather activities. All winter activities closed in March, after record winter-season park and amenity use, which demanded considerable staff maintenance time. Because of the machine made snow, the Elver ski loop and sledding hill provided slightly extended winter activities. The ski loop remained open until March 18th this year - the longest duration in its history.

Staff completed the maintenance and delivery of picnic tables, piers, and trashcans, and prepared grounds, shelters, and amenities. With few exceptions, all Parks piers were installed by mid-April. The James Madison pier continues to be on hold due to the FEMA flood claim process and the Convention Center pier was delayed because of sediment that is blocking the mouth of Starkweather Creek. Thanks to staff's creative thinking, an alternative installation plan was devised and successfully implemented.

With the warmer temperatures, the general parks staff were busy mowing and string trimming parks and medians. Given the drier than normal spring, turf maintenance was manageable, but still required significant attention. Athletic fields were mowed, graded and striped, and some fences were mended.

Spring planting was also a major part of our efforts, with flower planting on the Mall Concourse and State Street, and 270 trees planted in parks.

As in previous years, hiring seasonal workers has been a challenge, with few applicants and a reduction in returning workers. Support from the Human Resources staff continues as efforts are made to fill the vacancies.

The replacement GPS system was installed in the Parks vehicles and equipment. Staff will be training on the new software in the coming months. The expectation is that the GPS data will aid in the management of park maintenance.

CONSERVATION (Paul Quinlan)

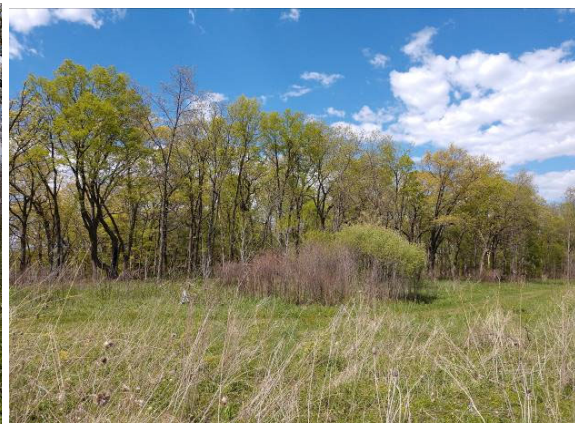
Staff conducted prescribed burns on 128 acres across eleven sites this spring, including seven conservation parks (Cherokee Marsh, Heritage Prairie, Meadow Ridge, Owen, Prairie Ridge, Stricker's Pond and Turville Point) and managed meadows in four general parks (Carpenter-Ridgeway, McClellan, Reston Heights and Whitetail Ridge).

Volunteers burned an additional 3 acres at Bear Mound Park and Kettle Pond Conservation Park, and The Friends of Hoyt Park funded a contract for Quercus Land Stewardship Services to conduct two small (0.5 acre each) burns at Hoyt Park as well.

While the total acres burned were fewer than average this spring, the fire effects were better than average, resulting in excellent control of woody species (invasive buckthorn and honeysuckle and other brush) and good consumption of leaf litter and other dead vegetation. We had been struggling to shift the equilibrium and advance the restoration trajectory in several of these burn units, and these burns have finally accomplished that.

Contractors helped implement management plans at Cherokee Marsh, Edna Taylor, Knollwood, Owen, and Turville Point. Contractors performed seasonal invasive plant control at all of these parks, and planted native shrubs at Owen to restore diversity – as well as visual screening between the trail and residences to the west.

Volunteers continued to support efforts at Cherokee Marsh, Heritage Sanctuary, Kettle Pond, Owen, and Prairie Ridge, by donating more than 300 hours pulling garlic mustard and clearing buckthorn. To cultivate more casual park users into volunteers, sites were designated and signs posted at Kettle Pond and Sandburg Woods to encourage visitors to pull garlic mustard and drop it at central locations in those parks.



Cherokee Marsh oak savanna one month post-burn. Herbaceous species are thriving after being released from accumulated leaf litter and shading from woody brush. Shrub thickets are kept in check by fire.



The canopy of fire-pruned oak and aspen is higher off the ground, allowing increased sunlight that supports a more diverse herbaceous plant community.

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CONSTRUCTION (Rich Bergmann)

Staff completed several capital improvement projects, including adding a gravel pad at Marshall Park to expand canoe storage capacity, pouring new concrete tee pads for disc golf at Hiestand, and converting the old Whitetail Ridge Park playground into a nature play area. The team also improved the shoulder of the road along a section of Owen Parkway at Hoyt Park to secure the asphalt curb that deflects water from neighboring properties.

Several non-capital projects were also completed, including playground inspections and repairs, addition of playground mulch at five parks (Bordner, Haen-Family, Wexford, Waldorf, and Indian Hills), construction of a sand bunker and tee box at Odana Golf Course, and construction of a compost bin at Olbrich Gardens. The team also added sand to volleyball courts and beaches, to prepare them for the summer. The court at Kennedy Park was particularly overgrown.



Ester Beach - After



Bernie's Beach - After



Kennedy volleyball (before)



Kennedy volleyball (after)



Marshall Park canoe rack pad

FACILITIES MAINTENANCE (Jon Landsverk)

The team's work focused on capital projects, special projects, and annual maintenance work. Capital projects included completing the Elvehjem shelter upgrades, the Hoover's Boathouse window replacement, Gates of Heaven stone restoration, and Marlborough Park roof and siding replacement. New kiosks and park signature signs were built and installed.

Annual maintenance work included installing the 13 piers, closing down ice rinks, starting up shelters, installing the mooring field at Marshall Park, preparing the pool and splash pads, and starting up drinking fountains and ornamental fountains.

The team supported special projects including removal of the damaged ATM at the State Street Visitor Center and subsequent brick wall repair, replacement of damaged plexi-glass in kiosks on State Street and Capitol Square, and replacement of screens at the Visitor Center. The team also removed the new winter covering from the Annie Stewart fountain at Vilas.



Hoover's Boathouse



Marlborough Park shelter



Gates of Heaven

CENTRAL PARKS (Chad Hughes)

The team kept busy with spring clean-up and summer preparation including painting and placing tables and trash cans, picking up refuse, and maintaining equipment.

The McPike skate park was opened for the season with assistance from the volunteer group. The athletic fields were prepared and a new windscreen was installed on the outfield fence at Bowman baseball field.

The Landscape Maintenance Workers planted 270 trees this spring. This has become a well-coordinated effort between Parks Operations and Parks Planning as we continue to replace the ash trees lost to EAB and diversify Madison's urban forest.

Due to the success of the 2020 Missouri Gravel Bed pilot program, the bed was used again this year to support the tree planting process. The bed allowed Parks to purchase bare root trees at a fraction of the cost of a burlap bag or potted tree. When planted correctly, these trees have a survival rate that meets and can exceed that of the more costly options.



Bowman Field windscreen



Missouri Gravel Bed



Tree Planting

MALL CONCOURSE (Mark Kiesow)

The crew mulched the landscape beds to provide a consistent medium for the emerging tulip and daffodil bulbs. The team had planted an additional 800 bulbs last fall to accompany the current inventory that emerge every spring. For the second year, the Mall staff completed the spring flower planting in the iconic flower planters on State Street and the Capitol Square, adding over 850 colorful pansies and 125 kale.

Turf islands were aerated and overseeded, repairing the usual winter damage from snow removal, and mowing operations started for the season. The team also started the annual sidewalk power-washing program, which will continue through mid-September. The bases of pedestrian light poles on State Street were painted. The poles themselves are also scheduled to be repainted this year.



State Street Planter



Capitol Square Planter



Sidewalk Power Washing

EAST PARKS (Spencer Werner)

Staff focused on spring maintenance. The work included the removal of the two NiceRinks, mowing, string trimming, painting picnic tables and trashcans, and preparing shelters.

The Land Stewardship Technician (LST) spot-mowed invasive species at eight parks, including Reindahl, Sherman Village, Glacier Hill, Portland, Kingston Onyx, Kennedy, Monona and Door Creek. Weeds were also treated at High Crossing, Washington Manor, Whitetail Ridge, Sherman Village, Warner, Mayfair, Hiestand, Kennedy, Monona, Olbrich and Lake Edge parks. A weed torch was increasingly used to reduce reliance on pesticides.

The Parks Arborists supported the Glenway Golf Park project by pruning and removing declined spruce and other non-native trees that do not support the goal of establishing native prairie and oak savanna plant communities interspersed with the fairways and roughs.



Glenway Tree Removal



Aerating athletic fields



Dragging athletic fields

WEST PARKS (Chad Hughes)

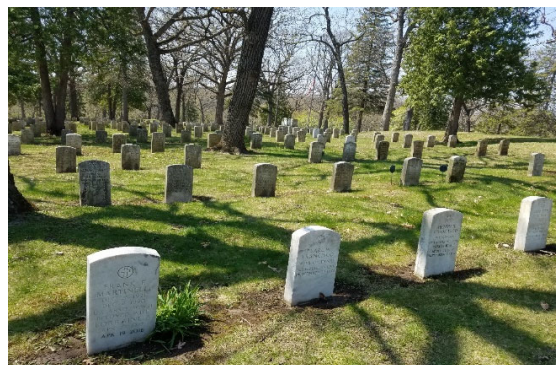
Staff kept busy with spring maintenance including mowing, preparing park shelters, and mulching planting beds. The fall bulb plantings were evident as flowers sprouted in the plant beds.

Earth Day brought hundreds of volunteers to help clean and beautify the parks, including volunteers who cleaned the veteran's gravestones at Forest Hill Cemetery.

Forest Hill Cemetery staff spent the second half of May performing the annual pre-Memorial Day preparation, an undertaking that includes mowing the entire 140 acres of turf and string trimming around all 39,000 grave markers.



Elver Park – Planting Bed



Forest Hill Cemetery Volunteer Cleaning Result