

Park Operations Quarterly Report September - November 2022

The team transitioned their focus from summer to fall work, and then to winter preparation. Trash barrels were removed from some parks, picnic tables in need of repair were collected, shelters winterized, irrigation systems and drinking fountains closed down, warming shelters prepared, piers removed, and athletic fields closed. Also, parks were prepared 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.

We continued to advance the plan to increase and evolve the general parks managed natural area focus, teamwork and processes. In support of that, we are happy to announce Megan McCrumb was selected to fill the open Ecology Leadworker position. Megan's education, experience and leadership will benefit our team and the managed natural area efforts.

Our expanding team approach to managed natural areas and planting beds was demonstrated by the new ecology team, general parks, and construction staff working together on several projects. These crews worked together, removing the invisible silos, to address several larger natural area and planting bed projects, including the restoration of a number of planted beds at Goodman Pool, and site preparation and installation of native vegetated matting at Merrill Spring, Hudson and Bear Mound Parks. These projects demonstrated the effectiveness and efficiency outcomes intended for the ecology team approach. In addition, draft habitat management plans for general parks tier one and tier two natural areas were completed, and a results tracking method was developed. The team also created and documented a new approach to direct and support volunteer-led invasive species removal projects. Information packets prepared by Parks staff include information on identification and control of targeted invasive species, maps of weed populations within parks, and photos of the work areas. This approach was used successfully at Warner Park and the use will be expanded to support other volunteer work efforts in natural areas.

The team continued to make significant progress in filling the many open Operations positions. In approximately a years' time, 30 operations positions have been filled, and six remaining open positions are moving through the posting and hiring processes. This tremendous turn-over required significant time from the Parks Team and HR. The new employees have been a welcomed addition to Parks Operations and they are contributing to the work and bringing new ideas.

In collaboration with MadNorSki ski club, the team prepared ski trails for the winter. MadNorSki held a club member volunteer event on October 29th to support trail preparation at Elver. Approximately 20 volunteers participated, and assisted with pruning brush and branches from the edges of the trails, and re-establishing an old section of trail to provide a more forgiving approach to a downhill turn. MadNorSki also worked closely with the Operations Team to lay out the expanded ski and walking trails at Door Creek Park. The collaboration between Parks and MadNorSki continues to provide community value through trail improvements and the many programs the Club supports.

Work was completed on the structure and process changes needed to transfer the boulevard median mow routes to Streets in support of the broader Publics Works approach approved in the 2023 budget. This change will allow Parks to focus more on

park sustainability and maintenance efforts. The current plan is for Parks staff to provide support for the median landscape bed care, and to transfer boulevard median turf maintenance responsibilities to Streets.

A short walk on State Street and the Capital Square clearly highlights the work the team has put into transforming the area for the winter season. Planters, holiday lights, banners and the traditional snowflakes were all part of the preparations for creating the holiday spirit and an inviting area for the community to enjoy.

CONSERVATION

Invasive plant management this quarter included control of Asian bittersweet and porcelain-berry at Owen, Norway maple at Sandburg Woods, buckthorn at Turville Point, and garden escapes such as Lamium (yellow archangel) at Prairie Ridge, Heritage Sanctuary, and other sites. Staff also mowed brush at Cherokee Marsh and volunteers cut buckthorn and sumac at Prairie Ridge. Staff improved about 1,000 feet of trail at Cherokee Marsh South Unit and Elvehjem Sanctuary by spreading gravel and installing water bars to correct and prevent erosion. The Operation Fresh Start crew cleared a total of three additional acres of buckthorn and honeysuckle at Edna Taylor, Elvehjem Sanctuary, Hiestand Woods, and Sandburg Woods this fall.

Staff from West, Central and Conservation joined forces to conduct a prescribed burn on the native planting around the Vilas lagoon in early November. This was the first burn ever attempted here, and the team is learning to balance operational and ecological goals in this space that has typically been mowed each fall to allow for ice maintenance in the winter. Small prescribed burns were also conducted in a sedge meadow at Acewood Conservation Park and the native garden at Washington Manor.

Staff and volunteers completed the pre-season ski and snowshoe trail preparations in November. Trails were mowed, encroaching branches were pruned back, and trail markers, maps, and signs were placed. Leaves were removed from ski trails to allow for a cleaner snow base that is more resistant to melt. At Door Creek, an additional 1.5 miles (2.4 km) of new ski trails were established, along with an equal length of separate trails for walking and snowshoeing. Thanks to the MadNorSki club for their volunteer event on October 29, and several additional hours of independent volunteer work.

The newly created Conservation Technician Trainee position was filled in September, and Jazmine Bevers has been learning about the conservation parks.



Refurbished trail at Elvehjem Sanctuary



Ski trail preparation at Elver Park

CONSTRUCTION

The team worked on a number of capital improvement projects. The work included creating a berm at Sunridge Park to deflect storm water run-off away from neighboring properties, adding a culvert at Door Creek Park to expand walking and snowshoe trails, and supporting the Goodman Pool landscape renovation project. The team also installed new donor bench pads and benches at Everglade, Bernie's and Olin parks, and installed a concrete pad for a donor memorial sign at Quann Park Dog Park. Further, the team installed a concrete pad for a new bike rack at Junction Ridge Park and prepared areas at the Dean House and at Olive-Jones Park for new asphalt for improved ADA compliance.

Playground staff added new surfacing mulch to nine playgrounds, including Tenney, Walnut Grove and Carpenter-Ridgeway parks.

The crew assisted the Golf team with the creation of a sand trap bunker at Odana Hills Golf Course and removed hazardous play equipment from the newly acquired Town of Madison playgrounds. Staff also worked to maintain inviting and safe playgrounds throughout the City by power washing equipment, removing graffiti, replenishing mulch, and making mechanical repairs.



Door Creek Walking Path Culvert Goodman Landscape Renovation Junction Ridge Bike Racks

FACILITIES MAINTENANCE

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. The team also removed 27 piers from area waterways, and supported work to prepare ice rinks.

A number of capital improvement projects were completed, including repainting the restrooms at Wingra Boats and Brittingham Boats, installing new high-efficiency water heaters at the Goodman Pool, and replacing the Reindahl Park tennis bounding boards.

In addition, the team completed a number of special projects including the installation of new memorial horseshoe pits at Yahara Place Park, a new park sign for the recently dedicated R. Richard Wagner Park, and electric car charging stations at Goodman and Olin facilities.



New Memorial Horseshoe pits



New Signature Sign



Updated Bounding Boards

GENERAL PARKS

Due to the higher than usual percentage of students in our seasonal labor pool this summer, most seasonal staff had left for the year by the beginning of September. The reduced staffing levels required some work process changes and narrower focus on strictly mowing, refuse cleanup, shelter cleaning and athletic field preparation. The warm and dry fall slowed turf work and provided an opportunity focus on other park projects.

Staff installed native vegetated matting at South Brearly Street End and Bear Mound, Hudson and Merrill Springs parks as a pilot project. The mat is similar to turf sod, but has a mix of native plants as opposed to turfgrasses. The product was installed on sloped areas where it is often difficult to establish vegetation from seed. Area volunteers assisted in watering the mats daily for the first few weeks. The cost, benefits, and success of the pilot will be assessed over the next few summers. Depending on the findings, the product may offer another option for difficult-to-plant restoration projects.

The Landscape Maintenance Workers, Land Stewardship Technicians and other operations staff renovated seven landscape beds at Goodman Pool. The project included removing existing vegetation and replacing it with either turf or native plantings. The end result is a more aesthetically pleasing and functional area that will require less maintenance.

The team supported the Cyclocross events at Aldo Leopold, Reindahl, Door Creek, Olin, Marshall and Sycamore parks by mowing the Cyclocross tracks into the managed meadow areas for each event. A wooden obstacle structure previously used at Aldo Leopold Park was repurposed for the event course at Sycamore Park.

The Wisconsin Veterans Museum hosted the 24th annual Talking Spirits Tour at Forest Hill Cemetery. These guided tours feature actors portraying historical figures from Madison and the surrounding area and discuss how the Emancipation Proclamation affected their lives.

The staff worked on fall maintenance and winter preparation, installing Nice Rink frames at Elver, Olbrich, and Heritage adopt-ice rinks, and hockey boards at Olbrich. Rinks will be finalized when the weather supports ice.



Goodman Pool Restoration



Installation of vegetated mat



Repurposed Bike Structure



Talking Spirits Tour



Nice Rink Preparation

MALL CONCOURSE

The team completed turf aeration, fertilizing, and leaf cleanup in preparation for winter. Additional bulbs were planted in the service area, including additional landscape beds on the Capitol Square for more spring displays. Hardscape maintenance continued, with painting light poles, and sweeping and power washing sidewalks. The team calibrated equipment for winter salt use. All new staff completed the Salt-Wise training and all crew members are now certified.

Downtown events subsided for the year, and the final outdoor Farmer's Market and Madison Night Market events for the season were held this quarter. Halloween brought limited activity to State Street again this year, reducing the need for additional cleanup. However, the UW home football games have kept the crew busy with cleanup.

The holiday seasonal décor was installed, including the usual snowflakes and winter seasonal banners on the light poles. Planters near the top of State Street are full of evergreen displays for the holiday season. Additional holiday lighting was added to the top of State Street and the bus shelters.



Maintenance – light pole painting and turf aeration



Holiday Snowflakes