

Parks Division Response to January 7, 2019 Presentation Questions

1. General parks and Conservation parks were covered by the land management plan updated in 2017, and the Emerald Ash Borer challenge has a dedicated management plan. What about other categories?

a. Olbrich Botanical Gardens No formal plan documented. The gardens are maintained according to best management practices within the industry. Our Horticulturists have extensive training and education, most with a minimum of B.S. in Horticulture. Staff consult regularly with peers within the industry to ensure work is done in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner.

b. Golf Enterprise No formal plan documented. Courses are maintained according to industry standards and adapted to resources available. Our Greenskeepers for each of our courses have Turf Management degrees from UW-Madison and have extensive experience in the industry. Management of no mows and wooded areas is consistent with the Parks 2017 Land Management Plan.

c. Others?

- No formal documented plan for Mall Concourse.
- Forestry's EAB mitigation plan was shared in January presentation. Urban Forestry Taskforce is currently meeting to review Forestry policies. Recommendations forthcoming in 2019. UFTF meetings are publicly noticed and can be accessed through the City's Legislative Center.
- Forest Hill Cemetery is managed as part of West Parks and according to Land Management Plan.

d. If so, can they be shared with the Task Force?

Refer to answers above.

e. If not, what other resources are available to the Task Force that govern the standards and practices in these park areas?

No formal documents to share at this time.

2. Regarding expectations of user groups, particularly those that "pay to play"

a. How are these expectations made known to the Parks Division?

Through regular meetings with major user groups and through Athletic Field User Survey that was recently implemented.

b. How are these expectations balanced with the more general values and concerns of the general public that also use these areas?

As discussed in January 7 presentation, different levels of service are provided to areas based on type of use. Youth fields are less intensively managed than adult. On athletic fields, we apply herbicides only to areas identified as playing surface.

c. Are safety factors other than lowering the risk of physical/athletic injury considered in how these areas are managed?

Staff and contractors are to follow label requirements, adhere to proper weather conditions, wear proper PPE and post the treatment area. For athletic fields, applications are timed when we anticipate less use by public.

3. Regarding weed tolerance:

a. Who decides what qualifies as a weed in a certain area? Is public input considered?

In January 7 presentation, we identified state and local rules related to weeds, which identify specific species that must be managed. Those weed species not specifically identified by state and local rules are determined by Parks supervisors and staff that maintain the parks as plants that impact the usability of the area or interfere with our ability to manage according to our land management plan. Public input is considered in all aspects of the Parks Division’s work, including balancing the diverse perspectives related to weed tolerance. Parks staff spends significant resources explaining standards and methods to individuals who have a broad range of opinions on this topic.

b. Are there guidelines for how different categories are addressed?

The Land Management Plan is our guiding document for how specific areas are managed. The training manual that staff developed identifies how and when to manage noxious/invasives species.

c. Is there a list of noxious weeds that Parks will always strive to eradicate because of safety concerns for users?

Due to the amount of land Parks manages, we strive for complete eradication only of species that are newly introduced species (ie. purple loosestrife, porcelain berry) or noxious species within areas we actively manage within conservation parks. As stated in the Land Management Plan, *“To protect this habitat as well as efficiently and effectively carry out the goals of this Land Management Plan and comply with the Noxious Weed Ordinance (MGO 23.29), the Parks Division will promptly remove noxious weeds that are within 10 feet of all property lines, trails, paths and sidewalks where members of the public may potentially come in contact with the weeds outlined in the ordinance. Complaints or infractions will be brought into compliance within thirty (30) days of initial report.”* The list below contains noxious weeds to be controlled:

Birdsfoot Trefoil
Burdock
Canada Thistle
Crown Vetch
Garlic Mustard
Japanese Knotweed
Japanese Hedge Parsley
Leafy Spurge
Purple Loosetrife
Poison Ivy
Ragweed (Common)
Ragweed (Giant)
Sweet Clover
Wild Parsnip

4. Regarding safety of park users:

a. Is public health, other than physical/athletic injury, considered?

Yes. Parks makes every attempt to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of all residents and visitors in our work. Staff and contractors are to follow label requirements, adhere to proper weather conditions, wear proper PPE and post the treatment area. For athletic fields, applications are timed when we anticipate less use by public.

b. Do guidelines include minimizing toxic exposures in areas not specifically used for children's play?

We make every attempt to balance the needs of both the system and the park users.

c. How are air and water quality concerns addressed?

Applicators are responsible for following label instructions when making pesticide applications. In periods of extreme drought/heat, we limit the use of mowing equipment. We are making efforts to reduce clippings left on paved surfaces that can migrate to storm sewers.

5. Regarding the "planning for plantings" approach to land management

a. Are there goals for this approach?

Landscaping beds are designed or approved by licensed professional Landscape Architects within the Parks Division who design planting beds so that shrubs, grasses and forbs are spaced at 75% of their growth rate. By spacing them closer together we hope to get more coverage in the bed and less opportunities for weed growth. Low maintenance, hardy, drought-tolerant species are preferred and native species are used when possible/appropriate.

b. Is public input invited?

Public input is not sought for individual planting plans, however, the plans are available for review through the Board of Public Works project website. The Parks Division seeks public input for many major projects throughout the year. Active and recently completed projects led by Parks staff can be found on the [Parks Project Website](#). In addition, there are numerous volunteer relationships across the system where the volunteer maintains a planting bed and has significant input as to what is planted and how it is maintained.

c. Could this be a public education opportunity for different categories of parks/areas, golf courses?

Parks is always supportive of improving the public's awareness of what is needed to manage the significant acreage in the park system. There are inherent tradeoffs in this work and raising awareness certainly makes it more likely that individuals have a broader understanding of all that is needed to properly care for our communal land. It is, however, important to note that public education campaigns and initiatives take resources and the Parks Division's current resource allocation is stretched in regard to community engagement and public information.

6. Regarding alternatives to commonly used pesticides:

a. What alternatives are there to broadleaf herbicides on playing fields?

There are many alternatives. Cost and effectiveness are the primary driving factors for the products currently used.

b. How are alternatives evaluated for cost, public health & ecosystem impacts?

When possible, staff research alternatives, utilize information available through OJ Noer facility, DNR, industry trends and resources available (labor and financial resources). We

have evaluated alternatives on a smaller scale for effectiveness and calculated costs to incorporate in the system. Our Athletic Field Leadworker does this often with products.

c. Would the Mall maintenance crew consider using Weed Slayer instead of Roundup for weed management in this highly public area?

Mall Concourse does not currently use Round-up or any other herbicide. Mall's last use of herbicide was in 2014 to eliminate invasive bindweed in a specific planting bed. This was effective in getting the weeds under control with few treatments, and has not been used since. We have no plans of using herbicides at the Mall anytime in the near future. January 7 presentation outlines the extreme measures Mall takes to manage the landscape and hardscape without pesticides. The Mall has significantly more staffing resources in comparison to the vast majority of the Parks Division (Olbrich is the lone exception) due to the service level expectations and funding sources.

d. In the Mausoleum, while the neonicotinoid being used to deal with flies may not escape into the environment where it could harm pollinators, what alternatives are available that would do the job and don't constitute hazards to human health?

As discussed on January 7, considerable capital investment of over \$500,000 to the building, installing door sweeps and cleaning scuppers helps reduce pest pressure. In 2018, we terminated our contract with vendor when they were unable to provide alternatives to Imidacloprid. We are currently evaluating options for control of these pests and seeking contractors who can meet these needs.

e. Does Parks set goal for reducing the amount of pesticides utilized?

Parks uses many techniques and strategies to manage pests. Our intent over time is to reduce herbicide usage as we gain a handle on regular and intentional maintenance of areas. It is important to note that the system itself is growing, so any metrics ought to consider the size of land being managed.

7. Regarding glyphosate, neonicotinoids and dicamba, given current concerns:

a. In what ways are these chemicals being utilized in parks?

i. Spot treatments

- Glyphosate is almost always made as a spot treatment application.
- Imidacloprid used at the Cemetery is used as a spray formulation around the perimeter of the mausoleum and cracks/crevices of the building.
- Dicamba used to tree cut stumps of woody trees and shrubs in general and conservation parks and Olbrich.

ii. Spray treatments

- When used in broadleaf products, Dicamba is typically used as a blanket spray application targeted to only playable athletic field or specific areas of golf course and targeted restoration areas within Conservation Parks.

iii. Used in granular form

At Yahara, Imidacloprid and Acelopryn are applied in a granular form, primarily on fareways.

8. The Emerald Ash Borer, widely recognized as a community issue, is addressed with a plan and annual reports are made to the Common Council.

Would the Parks Division be supportive of more general annual pesticide report to the public?

Public input on our work is welcome and Parks certainly supports evaluating the method of reporting our land management work. Parks would support this if it was the policy of the City though it is important to note here that depending on the level of detail and the process of engagement it may be taxing on limited resources of the Division and lead to negative outcomes in other areas of our operation. The 2017 Pesticide Report was reviewed by the Habitat Stewardship Subcommittee, which is a subcommittee of Board of Park Commissioners.

9. Regarding proactive measures:

a. Does Parks set measurable goals for reducing the amount of pesticides used?

Not currently, we strive to continue to manage our land in an effective and efficient manner within the resources we have available. Our goal is to continue to manage the land that we have been working on and look to expand maintenance initiatives where possible to avoid long term negative outcomes.

b. Does Parks set measurable goals for increasing soil health, planting resilience?

Not currently. We are interested in what the Taskforce has to share regarding how to quantify such matters. Our goal is to enhance the health and quality of the areas we manage through IPM strategies, primarily relying on a variety of cultural practices.

c. Does Parks have goals to address climate change?

The recently adopted Park and Open Space Plan was created using four main guiding lenses, which included Sustainability, Public Health, and Adaptability. One of the key strategies established from this plan is to "Improve the Park System's Capacity to Withstand Future Environmental Changes." The POSP will guide our work planning and goal setting for the next five years and the Division will certainly be setting more specific goals related to this work over that time. Also, Staff have recently attended training on Resiliency in Parks and will be working towards designing a system and implementing practices that can allow our parks to better withstand the changing environment. This is new, but important work. One of the pressures we face are those of invasive species overtaking our native habitats and disrupting nature's ability to balance itself through natural processes.

d. Is Parks willing to increase proactive practices to reduce the likelihood of needing to remedy infestations?

Parks is willing to explore all options available, keeping in mind finite resources available. A significant amount of the work currently being conducted as a part of our land management program is to remedy infestations and if done correctly should reset a number of high priority areas to a baseline that can be managed more proactively going forward.

For Golf Enterprise IPM Coordinator – sounds like it’s one of the greenskeepers.

1. Does the “golf enterprise” have a land management plan that provides standards and guidelines for City courses?

No formally documented plan.

a. If so, please provide documentation for the Task Force N/A

b. If not, what standards and guidelines are being consulted and applied?

Courses are maintained according to industry standards and adapted to the extremely limited resources available. Our Greenskeepers for each of our courses have Turf Management degrees from UW-Madison and have extensive experience in the industry. Management of no mows and wooded areas is consistent with the Parks 2017 Land Management Plan.

c. Is public input invited?

Golf Subcommittee, which reports to Board of Park Commissioners) meetings are open to the public, and allow for public comment. Staff also regularly field public input on a regular basis regarding course conditions.

2. Does the “golf enterprise” abide by the same City policies as other divisions of city agencies?

Yes in general. However, as an enterprise golf is governed by more stringent financial limitations than other City agencies/divisions. The Parks Superintendent has indicated that the current regulatory framework that Golf is required to adhere to while operating in a hyper competitive marketplace is one of many driving forces causing the poor financial position of the enterprise at this time.

3. Are “golf enterprise” employees considered City employees? All golf staff are City Parks Division employees.

a. If so, who supervises these employees?

Golf Clubhouse Supervisors report to Assistant Parks Superintendent

b. Who reports to the Superintendent of Parks? All Parks Division Employees (including Golf)

4. Are “golf enterprise” supervisors aware of the recent research on fungicides that may have even great impact pollinator species than neonicotinoids? See

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/dec/29/alarmed-link-between-fungicides-and-bee-declines-revealed>

Yes. Highly manicured and heavily maintained turf areas are not suitable habitat or food sources for pollinators. Areas within golf courses that do serve as pollinator habitat and food sources, such as high rough areas and natural area buffers, are not treated with fungicides.

5. Would the “golf enterprises” be willing to consider experimenting with different standards, guidelines and land management methods the would pro-actively build ecosystem and soil health in order to reduce the amount of pesticides used on a test course, e.g. Glenway?

The Parks Division is always considering ways to improve the courses, but given the current dire financial situation within golf there are no resources available to implement significant changes to the operation and maintenance of the courses. As an enterprise agency, Golf is meant to function without financial support from the City’s taxpayers and the fund does not have resources to invest in necessary improvements to make this happen. A simple

reduction in pesticides would adversely impact the playing conditions and subsequently the revenue generation capacity of the courses.

a. See article on organic approach of Madison Golf & Development

Parks staff is aware of Madison Golf & Development's courses and general operational principles. The first thing to note is that Madison Parks Golf is operating in a different portion of the Dane County golf market. Our golf courses are more economical and targeted towards players of all income levels. As an example, a season pass costs approximately 25% more at the Meadows and daily rates are also more expensive. Madison Golf & Development has a unique relationship with Purple Cow Organics which certainly provides them with access to materials at a rate that we cannot match. This group has approached the City before to. Of note, one of the two courses they operate (Windwood of Watertown) closed late last month due to it losing so much money.

b. See <https://www.auduboninternational.org/acspgolf>

Parks staff is aware of this certification program. The six key components (Planning, Wildlife/Habitat Mgt, Chemical Use Reduction and Safety, Water Conservation, Water Quality Mgt, and Outreach and Education) are all valuable things to consider in the management of golf courses (or land in general). The cost of participating in this program is a minor impediment (\$1,200/year for all four courses), but is something Parks will continue to consider as a possibility. It is important to note that the success stories on the website are limited in applicability to Madison Parks Golf Enterprise. As an example, one of the most highly touted success stories is The Bear Trace at Harrison Bay is a publicly operated 18 hole course in Tennessee. Though it is public, there are significant differences to Madison's courses. First, the renovations and capital costs for the course are borne by the State of Tennessee – through either direct subsidy or grant programs for equipment. It is difficult to find specific data on this individual course, but it is also true that the State is covering an annual operational loss of its golf program, something the City does not do for golf in Madison. Additionally, the climate in this part of the country is also substantially different than in South Central Wisconsin, which means there are issues we have to manage that they do not (e.g. snow mold). Another of the success stories is Stone Mountain, Georgia which is a 36 hole resort style course that has invested in promoting naturalized areas on the course. This is work that we have been doing for years and have over the past five years accelerated our efforts in this area. We have worked to promote a more naturalized environment through prairie and other native plantings across our system to enhance habitat, reduce mowing/chemical costs, and to reduce water consumption.

What opportunities do we have to reduce pesticide use in the Parks Department?

- There are likely many opportunities to do so, including expanded volunteer involvement
- Continued maintenance of the land as we have been doing will ideally reduce the use of pesticides over time.
- Pesticides are currently one of the many tools that we use to manage the land.

Would Parks be willing to use volunteers to help with non-pesticide methods of pest control?

Parks does currently have a significant number of volunteers. We are interested in expanding the volunteer program, and are evaluating a means for managing and fostering a more robust program. Expansion of the volunteer program will require additional resources.