

Park Operations Quarterly Report June 2019

The second quarter provided relief from the cold winter, however the early spring temperatures were below average. An April snowstorm required continued snow removal. The cold temperatures also allowed the ice rinks to remain open into the first week of March, a rare Madison occurrence, which required continued ice maintenance.

The winter work transitioned to spring preparation that included finalizing the maintenance and delivery of picnic tables, piers and trash cans, preparing shelters and picking up refuse. All of the piers were installed by May 13th, with the exception of James Madison, which was delayed due to the FEMA flood claim process. Hiring seasonal workers has become increasingly challenging given the low unemployment rate, and the hiring process continues to fill remaining vacancies.

The general parks staff were busy mowing and string trimming all parks and medians. Due to the warmer wet weather conditions the grass has been growing at a very rapid rate, requiring additional operational focus to keep up with mowing.

Planting was also a major part of the spring effort with trees and plants planted in the cemetery, Concourse Mall and State Street planters. Overall, 2,100 street and park trees were planted this spring.

The shelter and athletic field reservation season started in late March with the Freeze for Food run at Vilas Park. Athletic fields were mowed, striped and graded and some fences were mended. Also, the rainout call line process for supporting athletic field rain decisions was improved, which should reduce rain outs in questionable weather and improved communication with users.

Parks Operations also continued to focus on process improvement opportunities. The team identified 31 Performance Excellence projects ranging in project that can be quickly implemented to larger cross functional department projects. Three projects were completed. The initial projects completed were no cost/low cost projects that provide efficiency gains through improved work flow processes. Projects included improved access to tools and equipment and safety response kits.

Several training sessions were held to support work safety. Training for Narcan awareness, Blood Bourne Pathogen and proper lifting were held with operations staff.

The process for installing the new GPS system in the Parks vehicles and equipment was completed and software training is underway. The system has several safety advantages, the potential for fuel consumption reduction and will provide data for evaluation and operational insight to support improvement and awareness.

CONSERVATION (Paul Quinlan)

Conducted prescribed burns on 127 acres this spring. This included 87 of 97 acres deemed high priority, based on time since last fire or restoration project needs. Recent burn training received by staff allowed the team to take advantage of the 2018 ordinance change that allowed prescribed burn professionals to burn on days rated as "High" fire

danger under the DNR fire danger rating system. This allowed staff to burn on more days and conduct burns that are more ecologically effective. This spring, staff burned on 12 days between March 26 and April 26.

Following burn season, staff, contractors and volunteers began work on early-season invasive species control. Garlic mustard, dame's rocket and reed canary grass were targeted first, due to their phenology. Staff worked in unburned management units first, followed by completed burn units, in which emergence is generally delayed. Staff and volunteers completed work on approximately 120 acres, with an additional 88 acres supported by contractors.

Habitat Management Plans were completed for Edna Taylor and Prairie Ridge conservation parks and presented to the Habitat Stewardship Subcommittee in May.

The Operation Fresh Start conservation crew began working in April and burned brush piles at Prairie Ridge, completed trail improvements at Owen and Sandburg Woods and controlled garlic mustard at Knollwood.

The third annual Owen Pond Exploration Day was held on May 28. Staff and volunteers from Madison Parks and John Muir Elementary School led 200 students in a guided exploration of the three ponds at Owen Park. Activities included aquatic macroinvertebrate sampling, and observations on vegetation structure and vertebrate species found in and around the ponds. Students used sampling equipment to collect invertebrates and tadpoles, then examined and compared species found in each pond. Students from kindergarten through fourth grade participated. Highlights included mosquito, dragonfly, and damselfly larvae, American toad tadpoles, goldfish, woodpeckers, red-winged blackbirds, and a flock of turkeys.

CONSTRUCTION (Rich Bergmann)

Completed a large reclamation project at North-East Greenspace. The project transformed an old manure pit back into useable farmland.

Several other projects were completed or moved forward including the removal of an old metal building and the concrete foundation at the newly acquired Woods Rd conservation property. The work to replace the collapsed culvert under Vilas Rd and removal of the tennis court at Northland Manor was completed. A new tennis court will be added to the south of the old structure this year. Also, playground construction work was completed, including a new swing at Brittingham Park and a new spinner at Lake Edge Park.

The construction crew began shredding top soil for Parks and other City agencies. Over 300 yards of topsoil was shredded and delivered to agencies. The top soil will be used to fill holes from stump grubbing, planting, and landscaping. This work will continue throughout the construction season.

FACILITIES MAINTENANCE (Jon Landsverk)

The facilities team focused on spring/summer season preparation, closing out winter work and several capital projects. Work included turning on the water to the shelters, fountains and community gardens. In addition 12 lake piers were installed. All of the main use piers were available to the public by April 15th, with the others piers available by May 13th. The two Olbrich Park piers were completely rebuilt over the winter. Several park amenities were also improved, including ADA accessibility upgrade to Elver Park restroom, the installation of a new heating and cooling system at Gates of Heaven and Forest Hills and bounding board upgrades at Bordner and Elver. The team completed 44 of the 46 water meter project installations designed to better track and conserve water use. To further conserve energy, LED lighting was installed at the Bernard boathouse that is expected to use 80% less energy. To improve safety and user experience the McPike Park the electric system is in the process of being upgraded with new pedestals and user plug in outlets.

Further work was completed to improve the visual welcoming at several parks by replacing the tattered park sign at Indian springs, Huegel Jamestown, Bernie's Beach and Badger Park. In addition, work was completed on the Capital fountains to make them operational well before Memorial Day. The fountains granite was also cleaned.

The annual start-up procedures for the three splash pads and the Goodman pool began with the pool planned to be filled and available for life guard training by June 3rd.

To enhance relations and work coordination the team met with partners of Breese Stevens field, Warner Park, Mendota Rowing Club, Olbrich Biergarten, and Brittingham Wingra boats. These meetings were productive in extending teamwork with our new staff and to further our understanding of the partner's plans and needs.

FORESTRY (Marla Eddy and Craig Klinke)

Forestry Section	Total Trees (Mar/Apr/May)	Total Hours (Mar/Apr/May)
Cycle Pruning	159	325
Pruned by Request	754	1156
Small Tree Pruning Cycle	1640	771
Tree Removal	131	456
Ash Preemptive Removals	569	1135
Storm Work/Hangers		36
Planting		3028

Forestry Operations focused on completing the remaining oak and elm prunes before the April 1st deadline. They also completed the pruning required for Engineering's projects that needed to be finished before planting season began. Ash removals continued to take place as time allowed.

Planting season started on April 15th. Given the planting resource requirements, Forestry did not perform routine pruning or ash removal during planting. Emergency work was the only other tree work completed during planting time. Forestry will plant 1,700 trees this season.

Several Engineering reconstruction projects began in April that required the Forestry Specialists to inspect project sites to assure street trees are not damaged or that construction materials are not stored near the base of the trees.

Central Parks (Chad Hughes)

The second quarter began with continued ice maintenance and early spring preparation. As the weather warmed the focus changed from ice skating to skate parks with the opening of Goodman Skate Park in March. A newly installed seating area was added to the skate park and was well received.

Several reservation events were scheduled drawing the staffs focus to shelter preparation and opening. Freeze for Food run at Vilas started the reservation season. By the middle of April, all Central Parks shelters were open. The Eastside Farmers Market kicked off their new season at McPike Park on April 23rd and Madison Parks hosted their Earth Day Challenge on April 27th with nine Central parks participating. In addition, Bernie Sanders held a rally at James Madison Park on April 12th, which required park preparation.

Central parks staff planted 400 new trees in the Madison parks this spring. Also, staff rebuilt a collapsed retaining wall around the garden at Period Gardens in time for the volunteers to plant the spring flowers.

MALL CONCOURSE (Chad Hughes/Mark Kiesow)

The cold spring weather allowed the crews to complete mulching landscape beds, cold patching sidewalk damage, and bike rack replacements ahead of schedule.

Spring plants were added, including the plantings at the Top of State Street. Multi-colored daffodils and tulips decorate the area landscape. Pansies and ornamental kale were added to 120 planters. The two large landscape beds at the Top of State were planted with a blend of begonias, coleus and other colorful annuals.

The Visitor Center booth was installed at the top of State St and the crews worked to create an inviting and clean environment for the many spring events. These events included the St. Patrick's Day parade, the start of the Farmer's Markets and the Madison Night Market.

East Parks (Kristin Mathews)

Several volunteer work days were conducted along our shorelines and lakefronts. Volunteers picked up debris and garbage in Olbrich, Yahara Place Park and Warner. The East Parks crew assisted in restoring the Olbrich Biergarten area with raking and the addition of new crushed limestone to the area.

Invasive removal work was completed, primarily buckthorn, in Glacier Hill Park and Honeysuckle Parks. At Glacier Hill prairie grass seed was spread over .5 acres to promote more desirable growth.

West Parks (Laura Bauer)

To conserve water and improve ice conditions, a decision was made to further evaluate the work required and work toward converting the “floating” rinks at Elver to Nice Rinks. There are several factors influencing the timing of this project, but an effort is underway to find a solution for the 2019/20 winter season.

Work was performed by volunteers at Quarry Park, a little-known former limestone quarry just north of Hoyt, to reduce erosion and improve bike paths. Capital Off-Road Pathfinders (CORP) has constructed a series of trails, jumps, and a “pump track” in the park and held a volunteer workday to maintain and improve the trail system on May 11. Parks provided several yards of fill dirt and several hundred pounds of repurposed limestone to support this effort.

Forest Hill Cemetery (Laura Bauer)

The storm sewer and road paving projects are underway at Forest Hill. The work is scheduled to be completed by July 30. The main entrance road was reopened for Memorial Day.

To assure the cemetery grounds look their best for the Memorial Day holiday all general parks staff teamed together to prepare the cemetery. As a result of the teamwork, the grounds were well groomed for the busy holiday weekend.

Memorial Day services were held at Forest Hill this year, with programs in the Soldiers Rest, Union Rest, and Confederate Rest sections of the cemetery. Madison Veterans Council, the Sons of Union Veterans, the 61st Georgia Infantry, the Madison Veterans Firing Squad, and buglers [Jack Fitzgerald and Robert Evans] continued their involvement.