

June 11, 2018

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Lisa Sprinkle, Marketing Coordinator

Re: June Staff Report

**Executive Director (Mary Ellen Wuellner)**

- Our latest submission to the International Dark Sky Association for designation of Middle Fork as a Dark Sky Preserve requires a little more work, according to Dave Leake's contact at IDA. The revisions are minor in scope, but they have asked for more sky quality readings at Middle Fork. This pushes the decision on designation to August at the earliest.
- I have been following the advocacy efforts of Eco-Justice Collaborative and Prairie Rivers Network on behalf of the Middle Fork River in Vermilion County. Listed as one of the country's ten most threatened rivers and Illinois' only Wild and Scenic River, the Middle Fork's ecology and recreational value are at risk due to the presence of coal ash deposits left over from Dynegey's operations adjacent to the river. Along with several members of our CAC, I have attended two excellent public meetings about the issue to listen, learn, and provide support as possible.
- Our annual request to The Nature Conservancy for stewardship tools and equipment was submitted at the end of May. TNC, along with the Illinois Nature Preserves Commission, has long provided grants to furnish our trail and natural area stewards with items they need to maintain our lands, from work gloves and vests to drip torches and prairie parsnip predators. This year our tool request amounted to about \$600.
- As noted in earlier communications, Illinois' recently approved budget included funds for the OSLAD program as well as the Public Museum Capital Grant. Staff is currently reviewing the highest priorities from the capital projects list for their grant potential as well as our ability to secure the necessary match. Projects on the short list include Willow Pond and the Lake of the Woods spillway/Swiss Valley shelter replacement. No application cycle has yet been announced but we will proceed under the expectation that one may come up soon and have a short turnaround time.
- We are awaiting word from IDNR on the timeline for reimbursement of the FY 2012 Museum Capital Grant. We are also hopeful that the FY 2014 grant for the renovation or reconstruction of the large artifact storage wing of the museum will also be reinstated now that the funds are available.
- The nominating committee of the Friends Foundation met in early June to identify potential new members and agree on a recruitment and interview process. The Friends Foundation would like to expand by three or more members as we are down from a high of fifteen to the current ten member board. A list of candidates has been prepared and foundation members are now setting up meetings to confirm individuals' interest.

### **Business and Finance (John Baker)**

- Mary Ellen, Fran, and John finished the grant coordinator interviews and offered employment to Jarrod Scheunemann in this role. He accepted and began work June 4.
- Jon, Mary Ellen, and John met with Jarrod to initiate discussions on potential OSLAD grant submissions for the District and to review the five-year capital projects list to consider other grant funding to support District capital needs.
- Set June 25 for the 2019 budget kick off meeting for management discussions of next year's budget.
- Sikich provided a draft of the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation 2017 audit for management review. We returned comments on Sikich's report and recommendations, and provided the Management Discussion and Analysis to finalize the report for presentation.
- We prepared the submittal letter and statistical reports for the District's 2017 comprehensive annual financial report and continued providing information to Sikich as work on the audit draft nears conclusion.
- Applied and received liquor licenses from the State of Illinois and Champaign County for the golf course snack bar and beverage cart. The licenses are valid from June 1, 2017 to May 31, 2018.
- ActiveNet notified the District that processing and credit card fees will increase 3% beginning July 1. This increase affects public programs, facility rentals, and Museum Store sales.
- We are working on better securing District information technology: limiting access to the CCFPD computer room, requiring that employees regularly update their network and e-mail passwords, and strengthening security for employees who are provided remote access to the District network.
- Attended IMRF authorized agent refresher training with Mary and Fran.
- Provided longevity bonus scenarios, comparison information with other District's longevity policies, and drafted a longevity policy recommendation for finalization by the Compensation Committee.

### **Human Resources (Fran Bell)**

- Seasonal hiring continued through May and early June. HR has been instrumental in onboarding new and returning staff, including conducting several orientation sessions which are mandatory for all new staff.
- The PDRMA field representative assigned to the District visited Lake of the Woods Operations, the Museum of the Grand Prairie, and Administration at the end of May to begin the 2018 Loss Control Review. The field rep will make five more visits to various departments at the District over the next three months with the final report expected in November.
- HR staff attended the IMRF Authorized Agent workshop in early June and will attend the Society of Human Resource Management annual conference the third week in June.

## Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

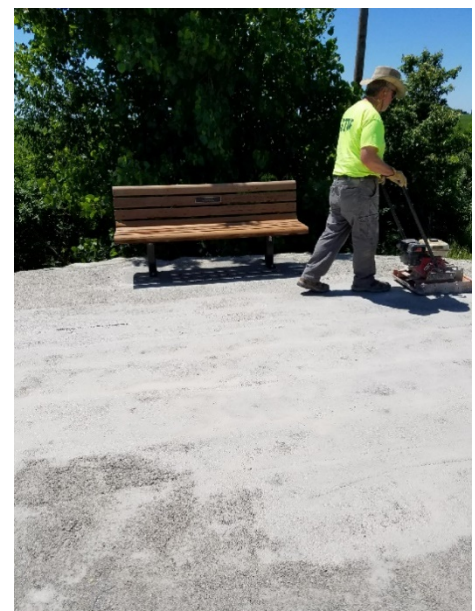
- Social Media Numbers

	FACEBOOK	+/-	INSTAGRAM	+/-	TWITTER	+/-
CCFPD	2,283	31	612	50	496	2
KRT	2,378	23			104	3
MGP	1,464	44	296	33		
GC	1,028	13	160	10	26	1
HLIC	368	72				

- Matt Kuntz and Lisa presented about our Dark Sky Park project to the Retired Teachers Association on June 7. The group of about fifty enjoyed the presentation and had numerous questions about the project.
- We worked with WCIA to shoot footage to update the Lake of the Woods Golf Course commercial on Friday, June 1.
- Lisa is working with SJ Broadcasting to showcase the preserves over a six week period starting at the end of May. Each Friday, Lisa is interviewed on the morning show to talk about upcoming programs and highlight a different preserve.
- CCFPD was prominently featured during the Our Town Mahomet week on WCIA. Stories featured the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden, the covered bridge, and Sunset Lake at River Bend. Being the first week of June, Lisa's monthly CiLiving appearance coincided with Our Town Mahomet, so a story about CCFPD aired four of the five days that week.

## Planning and Construction Department (Jon Hasselbring and Mike Fry)

- Jon presented on the topic of *Resident Engagement* along the KRT at the Mid-America Trails and Greenways (MATAG) Conference in Columbus, OH in late May.
- The Construction Department, with the help of Middle Fork staff put the finishing touches on the accessible sidewalk and road crossing to the campground shower house. Dark Sky lighting along the path has been well received by park patrons.
- Staff placed a memorial bench at Hole 15 on the golf course. Also, the first four memorial benches were placed on the KRT in early June.
- Construction did various repairs to the golf course irrigation pump house while the pumps were being rebuilt. Due to the dry weather in early May, and the irrigation system being worked on, we were called in to help water parts of the course. In four days, the Construction Department pumped, hauled, and hand sprayed 54 greens with 30,000 gallons of water.



- The first round of Clean Energy grant amenities, including trail head signs, boot brush stations, and benches, were installed at various locations. We would like to express our appreciation to the Operations staffs at Middle Fork and Homer Lake for their help in completing these projects.



### **Natural Resources (Mike Daab)**

- Middle Fork staff trained Natural Resources staff on the use of the John Deere 6140 and batwing mower. NR staff has been mowing at all preserves to limit weed seed development. Current targeted invasive species include reed canarygrass, red clover, wild parsnip, and sweet clover.
- We thank Jeremy Shafer and Dr. D.K. Lee from the University of Illinois for their donation of approximately 1,000 local ecotype butterfly milkweed seedlings. We have placed seedlings in prairie restorations at Middle Fork, Buffalo Trace, the Kickapoo Rail Trail, and Homer Lake. Some of the seedlings were planted at the Natural Playscape at Homer Lake as well.
- The Natural Resources crew completed the first round of the IL Environmental Protection Agency's Volunteer Lake Monitoring Program for the year. The monitoring, now led by Technician Emily Williams, takes place on Sunset Lake (River Bend), Lake of the Woods, and Homer Lake from May through October. Through the program we are capturing long term data regarding basic water quality.
- Natural Resources staff attended the IL Invasive Species Symposium at the Champaign U of I Extension Auditorium on May 24th. Topics of interest included: proper labeling of invasive plants in trade, the use of technology in invasive plant management, and non-native jumping worms.
- Michael Daab met with Ameren representatives regarding the need to replace poles for high-voltage power lines through an area of Lake of the Woods where the state-endangered Sangamon phlox is present. Good communication lines are now open, and everyone involved in the project is working to get the pole replacement done with minimal disturbance to the site. The work is scheduled for February and March of 2019, when plants will be dormant.
- The Natural Resources Department prepared a field at Buffalo Trace for use by the Illinois Fire Service Institute (IFSI) during the annual Fire College, June 8-9. The field, slated for a prairie restoration project over the next few years, was treated with glyphosate to kill the weedy vegetation present, and provide dry fuel for the firefighters who were there to learn more about wildland fire behavior. This is the third time we have worked with the IFSI for training, and we look forward to more partnership events in the future.

## **Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Chris Edmondson and Doug Sanders)**

- May was a very good month for the golf course. The weather cooperated for the most part, and we had 3,556 players. Compared to 2017, this is up about 700 players (2,828 in 2017). Our total revenue for May was \$106,656. Any month that we are over \$100,000, is a great month financially. In comparison, we made \$78,755 in May of 2017. This trend really boosted our 2018 numbers and got us back on track to keep increasing play and revenue moving forward.
- The maintenance staff did a great job working to get the course back into shape. With no irrigation and a couple of weeks without nature's irrigation, the course was not in great condition heading into May. Thankfully, the pump was fixed and restored in mid-May, and this, along with some much needed rain has really helped to revive the grass on the course and enhance the aesthetics. We have been receiving numerous compliments of late regarding the shape of the course and how impressed people are with the turnaround. Hats off to Joie Torres and his staff. We definitely know it has not been an easy task.
- Other tasks that were accomplished include a new south garage door being installed on the cart shed. The old barn doors had failed and were a potential hazard to employees. We (David Sebestik) also completed staining the Clubhouse deck, just in time for the start of Clubhouse rental season. We had 6 Clubhouse rentals in May and have several more scheduled for 2018.
- Our first session of the Ladies Golf and Yoga took place in May. We had a full class and have nearly filled the second session in July.
- We hosted 3 different "Fitting Days". Mizuno, Titleist, and Callaway all had their days on the range. These are days where golfers could schedule a time to demo golf clubs and get fitted by a certified club rep to a club that is right for their swing. Patrons could also come out during these times and test out all of the club products from these companies.
- Good publicity - Chris was interviewed by the Mahomet Citizen for an upcoming piece on things to do in the area. They will be running this article in early June, and highlighting upcoming events and happenings at Lake of the Woods Golf Course!
- Bad publicity - Chris was interviewed by WCIA in regard to the break-in, theft and vandalism that happened over the third weekend of May. We are working on solutions with Jon Hasselbring, Construction, and FE Moran to secure the building in a better manner. We have already placed padlocks on the overhead doors and signage around the building stating the building is under surveillance. We are looking into some security cameras with possible phone apps, along with a key pad alarm. Thankfully the damage to the course was minimal, but the loss of a golf cart is more serious. We hope that getting the word out via television and social media will assist in bringing the cart back. No luck so far, unfortunately.
- We are looking forward to June. It is traditionally our busiest month and we have several large golf outings on the calendar. Hopefully the weather cooperates and we have another large revenue month!
- Interviews and onboarding of seasonal staff are complete. With the end of the school semester all part-time staff have been integrated into the daily schedules (i.e. mowing, string trimming, bunker maintenance, general course cleanup).

- With the completion of the pump house project staff have spent a large amount of time healing the greens. This has consisted of aerating, seeding, top dressing, and fertilizing. Due to the hot weather and limited precipitation in May the greens incurred a significant amount of damage. But conditions now are much improved.
- Darin Weasel and Zach West Douglas have repaired several irrigation issues throughout the course. This includes replacement of control boards in satellite stations and line repairs (i.e. saddles, union joints, gate valves, sprinkler heads).
- Joie Torres completed his general pesticide testing in Springfield. He is scheduled for additional exams in the near future to finalize his applicator's license.

### **Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)**

- HLIC enjoyed hosting the travelling National Audubon Society Photography Awards show May 9-30. The photos featured birds from all over the world, and were the winners chosen from nearly 5,500 images submitted to the National Audubon Society in the Amateur, Professional, and Youth categories.
- Pam Leiter has scheduled regular Facebook posts through the end of the year about the *From Rail to Trail* exhibit, highlighting the Interurban and Champaign County train history. These have been very popular - one post in mid-May reached 5,700 people!
- Barb Garvey presented a pop-up program to accompany MGP's current World War I exhibit. The presentation, entitled *Art of the Trenches*, discussed how, when and by whom trench art was made. Pictured here is art brought back by Jesse Dowell (whose farm is now Buffalo Trace) to Mahomet. These pieces are also on the Smithsonian's History Pin website, Remembering World War I.
- Pat Cain presented our first "History of the Rail Trail" biking tour on Mother's Day. He had one scheduled in early April but cold weather caused its cancellation. He is planning another for the fall schedule.
- Katie Snyder worked with Shannon Perroco's 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade art students at Centennial High School and HLIC staff to study birds at the Interpretive Center. The students' trip was subsidized by a grant from the local Audubon Society.
- This year was our 10<sup>th</sup> Bird Migration Fest! As always, it was a great time with lots of great opportunity for interaction with and education about birds. Pictured here are two indigo buntings caught during the mist netting demo.
- Pat Cain and Katie Snyder appeared with DJ BJ Clark on the Afterwork Drive Show at WRFU in Urbana to discuss the MGP's 1968 exhibit.
- Staff was interviewed by Megan Flowers and a great article appeared in Smile Politely entitled,



“Turning Around, Fifty Years Later: A New Exhibit at Museum of Grand Prairie.” The exhibit was also covered by a lengthy article in the Mahomet Citizen.

- The MGP received a grant for \$2,713 from the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board for digital reproduction of magnetic tapes from the East Frisian Oral History Project undertaken by the museum in 1994. In that year, interviews were conducted with residents of the East Frisian cultural group in the north east corner of Champaign County. The project will preserve the results of this very important study for posterity.
- We placed a new letterbox outside the Interpretive Center, entitled Purple Coneflower.
- We interviewed and placed the Department’s Counselor in Training applicants; these volunteers make up most of our summer camp volunteer help.
- We welcome Arin Bishop this summer as a Nature Day Camp Educator. Arin graciously stepped in when another Educator resigned. She began May 30.
- The MGP has three new collections volunteers, two of whom will be doing intern work processing the Doris K. Wylie Hoskins Archive. Erika Weir is an information science graduate student at the ISchool. William Campbell is a student of history at Eastern Illinois University.
- Our Interpretive Naturalist, David Evans, will be leaving us at the beginning of August. He is moving to the St. Louis area. He will be missed tremendously and has been a great asset to the Interpretive Center and the Department. The Interpretive Naturalist position has been posted.
- Jennifer Wick participated in a webinar on *Interpretation for Toddlers* offered by the National Association for Interpretation.
- Barb Garvey completed the class, *Developing Others* at the Parkland Business and Community Training Division as part of the Leadership Series.
- Barb Garvey served as the Awards Chair for the Preservation and Conservation Association and was recently elected to their board and appointed the Vice President.
- Stacey Clementz assisted the Environmental Education Association of Illinois with hiring its first ever part-time Executive Director.
- Pam Leiter assisted Grand Prairie Friends in hiring its first full time Executive Director.

### **Lake of the Woods, River Bend, Sangamon River and Botanical Gardens (Doug Sanders)**

- Since 1983, WCIA 3 has recognized area high school seniors through the Best of the Class community project. This annual event is held each spring at the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden. Peter Carlson, creative services director at WCIA, stated this year the garden looked better than he has ever seen it. Thanks to Michael Dale and staff for all of their hard work in preparing for this year’s program.
- The rental boat program opened over the Memorial Day weekend and will continue through the Labor Day weekend. We have two seasonal staff, Hannah Ericson and Scott Metzger, managing the program this year. Special thanks go out to Marianne Lippi of the District’s Citizen’s Advisory Committee for volunteering to help Hannah and Scott during the opening weekend.
- Staff have been extremely busy over the past couple of weeks with normal seasonal tasks. Lake of the Woods has remained very active with fishing, school picnics, family gatherings, graduation parties, and garden weddings.

### **Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)**

- Staff attended the Health and Safety Fair that was put together by Fran and Mary. We learned about active shooters and how to deal with and reduce stress in our everyday lives.
- We had to replace one of the pumps that supply water to the Natural Playscape stream. We are fortunate to have two pumps so that the stream can remain flowing when one pump develops a problem.
- We have been working to control weeds along the KRT between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets in St Joe. This block long section will be under construction in the near future.
- This was a good month for fishing as we received reports of several nice sized largemouth bass being caught as well as a 5½ pound smallmouth bass.

### **Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)**

- Middle Fork staff along with the construction department has finished the accessible walkway for the shower house, including the installation of dark sky lighting with the walkway. Many compliments from our guests have been received. They appreciate having a safer walk to and from the shower house, especially at night.
- Middle Fork and construction staff have installed numerous items received under the Clean Energy Public Amenities grant into our user areas, such as benches, trail signs, etc.
- The new electric sites at the campground have been a big hit so far during the early camping season. This expansion has really helped retain campers by allowing us to fully book the campground on weekends and avoid having to turn away so many campers in need of a site while non-electric sites went unused.

### **Kickapoo Rail Trail (All)**

- The KRT received an award at MATAG for *Outstanding Project in the State of Illinois*.
- Michael Daab met with Cole Craft, forester with the Vermilion County Conservation District, to discuss natural areas management along the Kickapoo Rail Trail.
- The Champaign County Regional Planning Commission has now completed its Weaver Park/Kickapoo Rail Trail connectivity study. The public meeting held in May indicated support for RPC's recommended connection route, which would require the purchase of additional railroad right of way to the west of the District's current ownership. As a funder of the study, the District will be asked to review and adopt the final plan, likely at our July board meeting.

### **District Cultural Competency Initiatives**

- Pam Leiter and Katie Snyder attended the data-release of the New American Welcome Center's extensive study, *New Americans in Champaign County*.
- Mary Ellen met with staff from the University YWCA about its Women in Leadership program. The program matches teams of students with local non-profits and government agencies to solve an organizational challenge facing the agency. The two-semester program combines leadership development with hands-on internship experience for the young women participants. We are now working to identify an appropriate fit for our organization.