May 7, 2018

MEMORANDUM
To: Board of Commissioners
From: Lisa Sprinkle, Marketing Coordinator
Re: May Staff Report

Executive Director (Mary Ellen Wuellner)

• On April 26, I met with the current Champaign County sheriff, Dan Walsh, to discuss issues related to enforcement of trespassing and unauthorized uses on Forest Preserve District properties. Chief Deputy Allen Jones was also at the meeting. Although the Kickapoo Rail Trail was the main topic of conversation, their guidance applies to all of our sites. They recommended that anyone seeing illegal, unsafe, or unauthorized use of our properties should immediately call 911 or the non-emergency number 333-8911 and provide as much detail as possible about the offender. They will respond as soon as they possibly can. As a follow up to our meeting, Sheriff Walsh talked to State’s Attorney Rietz who indicated she would willingly prosecute anyone who does damage, is a repeat offender, or if they indicate by their response to a deputy’s warning that they will not cease their behavior.

• Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation awarded four public amenities grants to the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation in early May. ICECF will cover up to $5,000 per site for the following amenities. We can also offer programming at these sites with expenses covered up to $500.
  o Homer Lake Forest Preserve: small open-air shelter to replace aging shelter at Oak Ridge picnic area, plus new picnic tables
  o Kickapoo Rail Trail: bike racks, signage, power station for battery operated wheelchair, other desired amenities
  o Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden: completion of the accessible sidewalk
  o Middle Fork River Forest Preserve: two additional dark sky roadway lights

• I represented the District at Champaign County Design and Conservation (CCDC) Foundation’s annual meeting on April 15. I have now joined the organization and will continue to attend board meetings and look for partnership opportunities.

Business and Finance (John Baker)

• Hosted Sikich auditors for the 2017 audit field work. Providing financial documentation, reports and other information occupied much of our work for the past month.

• Met with Mary Ellen, Jon, and Fran to begin preparing the timeline and tasks for 2019 budget development. This included an internal evaluation of current District budget practices using the Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Award criteria as our benchmarks.

• Met with Mike Daab, Mary Ellen, and John Manuel regarding 1) using the 5-Star Program standards to implement more environmentally friendly farming practices, and 2) the potential for the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation to again qualify District lands for reimbursements for the Conservation Reserve Program. The District has participated in the CRP program for
more than 25 years but recent federal legislation disallowed local government agencies from receiving reimbursements. Manuel shared a model through which District lands might be leased to the Foundation for management of farmland restored to prairie, wetland, or woodland, qualifying the Foundation for the CRP payments. District natural resources expenses for restoring and managing these lands would then be billed to the Foundation.

- Conducted interviews for the Grants Coordinator part-time position, with Mary Ellen and Fran. We were pleased to have a strong candidate pool and hope to have an employee on board within the month.

- Attended the IMRF rate meeting on April 30 in Champaign, and met Brian Collins, the new IMRF executive director. IMRF’s investment return for 2017 was 15.96%, a $5.7 billion return, with all IMRF pension funds now aggregating $41 billion at year end. We also learned that:
  o CCFPD’s market-based pension funding of 102% falls between the 80th and 85th percentile of pension funding for IMRF-participating Districts.
  o IMRF’s actuaries erred in their 2014 mortality assumptions which cost employers a total of $730 million from 2015 to 2017. IMRF has corrected this assumption, and the impact will be felt beginning in 2019, with proposed 2019 rates decreasing sharply because of this correction as well as the strong performance of 2017 IMRF investments.
  o IMRF has considered (but did not adopt) lowering its assumption on the rate of return from 7.5% to 7.25%. Should IMRF take this step in the future, districts can expect an average 23% increase in employer contributions. Average market returns have decreased in the past ten years and many pension funds have lowered their rate of return assumptions. IMRF shared this information so districts may consider the best strategies to maintain adequate funding of employee pensions in the future.

- Secured approval for the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation financial policies.

Human Resources (Fran Bell)

- Human Resources organized another CCFPD Staff Give Back Event during the Illinois Marathon on April 27th. Staff volunteered on Friday evening to distribute food and drinks to the runners as they completed the 5k race. As a bonus, the staff’s volunteer hours were in support of the Kickapoo Rail Trail as an Illinois Marathon Charity Partner.

- Human Resources staff attended the Central Illinois Safety Group meeting in April. These meetings are held quarterly with PDRMA to promote collaboration for risk management and safety issues among various central Illinois parks and recreation agencies.
• The Compensation Committee met in April to discuss a variety of topics including vacation and sick leave policies, longevity bonus, mobile phone allowance, and on call.
• Human Resources facilitated an all-staff meeting and employee wellness fair in early May for all District employees. Staff received training on active shooter threats from the Champaign County Sheriff’s Office and instruction on workplace relaxation techniques from a local yoga instructor. In addition, staff were able to participate in chair massages, blood pressure screenings, glucose testing, and making stress relievers.

Volunteers (Kristin Tetzlaff)
• April was a month dedicated to volunteer recruitment! Staff from the Museum and Education Department met with me to discuss volunteerism needs. We were able to identify numerous areas where volunteers are needed as well as brainstorm potential recruitment pools. As a result, I registered to have a presence at UI quad day in August, confirmed dates for UI volunteer fair in September, and will be distributing materials to Champaign County Retired Teachers Association at their annual meeting in June. Targeted informational materials are currently being developed to hand out to these respective populations. Unique promotional items have also been ordered.
• I have also begun recruitment for Freedom Fest at Lake of the Woods on July 4, 2018. An initial appeal went out in April’s volunteer e-newsletter and personal contacts have been made to volunteers from previous years.

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)
• Social media update: Facebook followers: CCFPD has 2,252 (+78), Kickapoo Rail Trail has 2,355 (+16), Lake of the Woods Golf Course has 1015 (+37), Museum of the Grand Prairie has 1,420 (+53) and Homer Lake Interpretive Center has 319 likes (+14). Instagram followers: CCFPD has 562 (+49), Museum of the Grand Prairie has 263 (+14) and Lake of the Woods Golf
Course has 150 (+32). Twitter followers: CCFPD has 494 (+1), Kickapoo Rail Trail has 101 (+0), and Lake of the Woods Golf Course has 25 (+2).

- Matt Kuntz and Lisa presented about our Dark Sky Park project to the Urbana Exchange Club on May 10. The group of about twenty was intrigued by the project, which provided for a great discussion. A few members commented about how the ability to view the night sky has changed drastically in their lifetimes.
- Lisa attended training at the Small Business Development office on May 4, Destination Marketing - How Your Business Plays a Role in Tourism
- Jon H., Mary Ellen, and Lisa attended the Illinois Bike Summit at the University of Illinois-Chicago on May 7. One highlight of this conference was a session focused on the Federal Highway Administration’s latest publication, Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks, which offers design guidelines for integrated pedestrian, cycling, and automotive transportation.

Planning and Construction Department (Jon Hasselbring and Mike Fry)

- The Construction crew and Middle Fork staff completed the shower house sidewalk project, connecting the host cabin to the shower house via an accessible concrete route. This project was funded through a grant by the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois.
- The Construction department epoxy-coated two irrigation pumps at the golf course to reduce corrosion, and has begun work on the next phase of dark sky light fixture installation at Middle Fork.
- Construction and Middle Fork staff have completed the third and final phase of electrical infrastructure improvements!
- Jon H. attended a project meeting for the University of Illinois’ Sustainability, Energy, and Environment Fellows Program (SEE FP) on April 30. At this meeting, partner agencies and businesses presented projects to professors and students. Dialogue and questions followed, and student interest in each project was gauged. CCFPD presented a project where students would review energy use across the district and recommend renewable energy strategies for each preserve.
- Jon H., Mike Daab, Matt Kuntz, and Jacob Pruiett had a conference call with Engineering Resource Associates on April 30 to kick start the design process for the Point Pleasant Wetland project.
- The Planning department received one bid for Lake of the Woods Boulders on May 8. This RFP scope was for granite and sandstone boulders to be used in for the Botanical Garden Pond & Waterfall Rebuild.
- The Planning department received zero bids for the Lake of the Woods Botanical Garden Pond & Waterfall Rebuild on May 8. Illinois procurement statutes for local government agencies
allow CCFPD to work directly with a contractor if no bids are received as a result of public notice.

Natural Resources (Mike Daab)

- The Natural Resources Department welcomes Dalton Kerans aboard as our newest NR Technician. Dalton is a Mahomet native, has a degree in Environmental Studies with a Wildlife Management track, and has gained valuable experience working with the IL Department of Natural Resources and a private land management company.
- Spring weed removal has begun in full force. NR staff have been pulling loads of garlic mustard, and hosting volunteers to do the same at designated events. We have also begun more robust management of the Kickapoo Rail Trail natural areas where construction is complete between Urbana and St. Joseph, which so far has entailed spraying for garlic mustard and poison hemlock.
- The Red Bison Ecological Restoration student group completed their last work day for the semester on May 6. The University of Illinois student volunteers pulled garlic mustard at the start of the trail in Urbana.
- The Sangamon River Forest Preserve volunteers, led by Elizabeth Kirby and assisted by NR staff, planted 36 trees and shrubs of several varieties in areas of the preserve where invasive bush honeysuckle has been removed.
- Michael Daab and Champaign Soil and Water Conservation District staff and board members are interviewing, and will soon select, the first paid Program Coordinator for the Headwaters Invasive Plant Partnership (HIPP).
- May is Invasive Species Awareness Month in Illinois, and Michael Daab is leading an effort, along with assistance of staff from CCFPD's Natural Resources and Construction Departments, Champaign and Urbana Park Districts, and East Central Illinois Master Naturalists, to highlight the invasive plant issue through an installation of cut and painted invasive Callery Pear trees in downtown Champaign. We thank all the volunteers participating, as well as One Main Development for their cooperative use of the space. [https://www.ilipp.org/stop-the-spread.html](https://www.ilipp.org/stop-the-spread.html)
- The Natural Resources Department recently discovered that utility and construction contractors are bringing invasive knotweed into the Village of Mahomet. Knotweed is strong enough to crack and heavily damage infrastructure as it finds its way beneath concrete and asphalt. It can also have serious consequences for nearby natural areas such as the Sangamon River Greenway
and District sites, if not quickly contained and eradicated. Natural Resources staff has contacted the Village of Mahomet for help in identifying the source of this new infestation and in treating the affected areas.

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

- The trend of poor weather continued throughout most of April. We had only 14 “Playable Days” out of 30 (50 players or more in a day). The total players for the month was 1,806. In looking back at the past 5 years, our lowest previous play count in April was 2,107, with the average being 2,420 in that month. Our total revenue for April was $66,163, which is actually just shy of the $67,252 we brought in last April. We are hoping for a big May, with the weather trending in the right direction for us the past two weeks.
- We have our seasonal staff in place and are finishing the last of the orientations to get everyone up to speed and available for work for the golf season.
- On April 10-11, Chris Edmondson, Darin Weasel, and Zach West-Douglas, along with other staff from the Forest Preserve and surrounding districts, attended the PDRMA HELP training program for managers and supervisors, in Normal, IL. This 2-day seminar focused on situations management can and will encounter in day-to-day business operations.
- David and Nick are working with the BLAST after-school program at Lincoln Trail Elementary in Mahomet. This program has 13 kids enrolled and is held every Tuesday and Thursday for five weeks. The program brings in different activities from the community for the children to learn about and participate in after school. This is a great way to get the younger generation engaged and excited about playing golf!
- The Mahomet-Seymour PE Class held a golf unit here at the course. They came out during their class periods over a two-week stretch and used the range and Par 3 course (we collect $5 per student for facility usage).
- We held our annual Two-Person Season Opener golf tournament on Saturday and Sunday, April 28-29. Seventy-four teams participated this year, bringing in $7,400 of merchandise and green fee/cart revenue. This is the largest field we have ever had for this event.
- And finally, David, Mary Ellen, and Chris met with local Mahomet resident Gordon Salm about the possible development of a golf committee. Gordon is a season pass holder and lives adjacent to the 12th green. This is in the early stages of development, but would essentially be a volunteer committee to recommend course improvements and better play. We will be researching some particulars over the next month or so to get this committee off the ground (approvals, charter, members, etc.).
- Joie Torres joined the District as the new golf course superintendent on April 19. Joie comes to the District with more than ten years of experience in the golf course maintenance/management field. For the past three years he has been the superintendent at Brookhill Golf Course in Rantoul. He has been a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America for the past 13 years and currently holds a Class A membership. This status is achieved through a combination of formal education, experience as a superintendent, continuing education,
maintaining a valid pesticide license. His excitement about the course and vision for improvements can already be seen.

- Staff have finalized the first application of fertilizer and pre-emergent herbicides to the greens, tees, and fairways. This has been more of a challenge this year due to the repairs being made to the irrigation pump house and the ever-changing weather forecast.

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

- The Museum of the Grand Prairie kicked off its anniversary year with a donor/volunteer/supporter reception on Friday, May 4 and a public reception on Sunday, May 6 with live music, classic cars, crafts, and tours of the newest special exhibit, “1968: A Time for Every Purpose.” Both receptions were well attended.
- Staff completed work on the 1968 exhibit which features sections on Apollo 8, the Vietnam War, Culture and Counterculture, Civil Rights, the environmental movement, and the opening of the Early American Museum, now the Museum of the Grand Prairie.

- In preparation for the opening of the exhibit, the MGP hosted its first ever food history program, with guest speaker Meagan Glaser, who created 1968 recipes including vegetable trio Jell-O, tunnel of fudge cake, and chicken liver pate.
- Pat Cain with other staff and volunteers offered the first International Dark Sky week program at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve on April 21. Despite overcast skies more than 50 people attended.
- In a new set of school programs, two high school art classes from Urbana and Centennial High Schools came to the Museum and Botanical Garden to practice nature study and plein-air painting. Museum staff prepared an interactive introduction to plein-air painting as well.
- Stacey Clementz represented CCFPD at the Champaign Public Library’s Homeschool Fair. The turnout was great!
• David Evans and other staff members reviewed and interviewed day camp Counselor-in-Training applicants. We are also offering broader youth volunteer opportunities in the Museum and Education Department this year.

• We welcome Malaurie Murden and Christina Calcagno as Nature Day Camp Educators this summer. They will start May 30.

• There has been extensive interest in the Hidden Acres property after an article about bluebells appeared in the News-Gazette. Lots of visitors stopped by Homer Lake Interpretive Center with questions or called for directions.

• David Evans and Mark Hanson worked to integrate the HLIC’s animal care records into the MGP’s collections records database, PastPerfect, allowing the entire department to easily see the conditions and histories of the live animal collection.

• Stacey Gross, art teacher at Centennial High School, worked with museum staff to create images which will be part of a public mural at the Lodgistic co-working space, a project of the Champaign Moose Lodge. The images were created by exposing education collection items to light sensitive paper. The teacher also used this exercise with her students.

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

• Staff took in six loads of scrap metal to Mervis Recycling. This material had been collected over the past year from projects, decommissioned equipment, and other miscellaneous means. The total 11,880 pounds yielded $980.10 in revenue.

• Over the winter months, the Construction and Lake of the Woods operations staff constructed a giant Adirondack chair for photo opportunities in the Botanical Garden. The chair was placed in the garden the last week of April and since has been frequently visited by school program participants and park visitors.
• We are finally reaping the rewards of the Flower River in the Botanical Garden. Last fall, Michael Dale and staff designed and planted approximately 15,500 daffodils and hyacinth bulbs. All of the bulbs are perennials so the river will “flow” each spring. The river stretches over 200 feet in length and is up to 16 feet wide in certain areas.
• Staff have been busy de-winterizing and preparing all of the rental facilities for the summer season. They also have all of the water fountains, waterfall, Enabling Garden, and Mindy’s Garden back in full operation.
• Tammy Bruehl and Michael Dale finalized the two day PDRMA HELP-Essentials of Human Resources training in Bloomington, IL.

Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)
• This was the first time that Brian can remember starting the month plowing snow and then mowing at the end of the month.
• Brian participated with fellow staff members who volunteered to work the Illinois Marathon.
• When we started the pumps for the stream at the Natural Playscape we discovered that only one was working. We are fortunate that there are two pumps so that the stream could still flow with a reduced volume of water. A new pump was ordered.
• We are conducting interviews for seasonal employment.
• We have been addressing problems with signs on the KRT that have either heaved out of the ground or the fasteners holding the sign to the post have come loose. We also had a small area of erosion that was repaired just west of High Cross Road.

Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)
• The Phase III electrical infrastructure at Middle Fork is complete, and staff has completed the campground electrical expansion to the old primitive sites. All campground sites now offer electric service.
• The campground had a very slow start in April, but with the weather improving, the first weekend in May was quite busy.
• More native trees have been planted inside the campground area, replacing the ash trees that were removed this past winter.

Kickapoo Rail Trail (All)
• On April 29, we received a Heritage Award from the Preservation and Conservation Association (PACA) for the Kickapoo Rail Trail. The award cites the District’s effort in preserving the natural and built environment in our community.
• Jon H. attended a Kickapoo Rail Trail public meeting in Oakwood on April 23 hosted by our project partner, the Vermilion County Conservation District. Some Vermilion County residents have many of the same concerns that
Champaign County residents did prior to our end of trail construction.

- The Champaign County Regional Planning Commission has now completed a draft of the Weaver Park/East Urbana/Kickapoo Rail Trail Connectivity Study, jointly funded by the Forest Preserve District, the Urbana Park District, and the City of Urbana. An open house is scheduled for May 23, from 4:30 to 6:30pm, at the Champaign County Highway Department, to share the plan’s alignment and connection alternatives with the public and collect feedback. (See following flyer.) After the open house, the Urbana Park District will host a Bike Month Celebration at Weaver Park followed by a community moonlight ride on the KRT.

**District Cultural Competency Initiatives**

- Pam Leiter was one of five invited panelists at the New American Welcome Center’s (NAWC) advisory board meeting in April. The topic was Building Resilient Economies and Thriving Communities. Other panelists included Diane Marlin, Urbana Mayor; Lucia Maldonado, Urbana School District; Senait Gebregiorgis, FOX Illinois (moderator); Sabin Lubaga, Stone Creek Community Church.

- At the NAWC advisory board meeting, Pam Leiter and Katie Snyder also got a preview of the results of the New American Welcome Center’s extensive study, *New Americans in Champaign County*. They are presenting a full data-release at the I-Hotel on May 23, 4-6pm.

- The Parks & Diversity Working Group, facilitated by Pam Leiter, and which consists of CCFPD, UPD and CPD staff, had their bi-monthly meeting at the HLIC in April. Topics included an upcoming interagency training (in November), raising staff awareness of Latinos in the community, transgender considerations, and Active Aging Week.

- Katie Snyder gave a presentation to the Parent-Communiversity Group at Garden Hills School about free and low-priced enrichment programs available at the Forest Preserves over the summer.

- Information about free and low-priced CCFPD enrichment programs over the summer have been translated into Spanish and put online at the Urbana School District and into French by Sabin Lubaga for the Congolese community.

- The Boneyard Arts Festival at the MGP this year featured the works of students from Stratton School in celebration of the 20th anniversary of their school. After an initial session with Katie Snyder discovering artifacts from 1998, students from 5th grade created a variety of types of art for the show. Diamante poems, sculptures, paintings, chalk and cray-pas drawings were included. Activities that day included snacks, music and crafts from 1998.

- The MGP provided Barkstall School with images of prominent local African Americans from the Doris Hoskins Archive to be used in a study of portraiture being done with artist-in-residence Jason Patterson.

- The May meeting of the Champaign Community Coalition focused on an update from the NAACP and information from Julianna Sellett, Carle Vice President, who heads up the community health initiative *Healthy Beginnings* in partnership with several other local health and service providers.