

April 10, 2017

## MEMORANDUM

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

### **Executive Director (Dan Olson)**

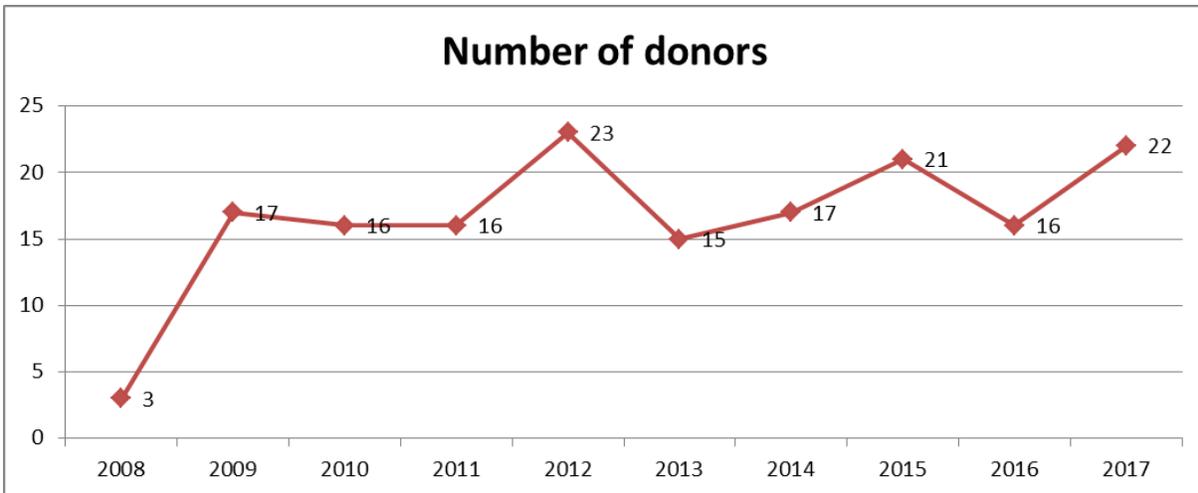
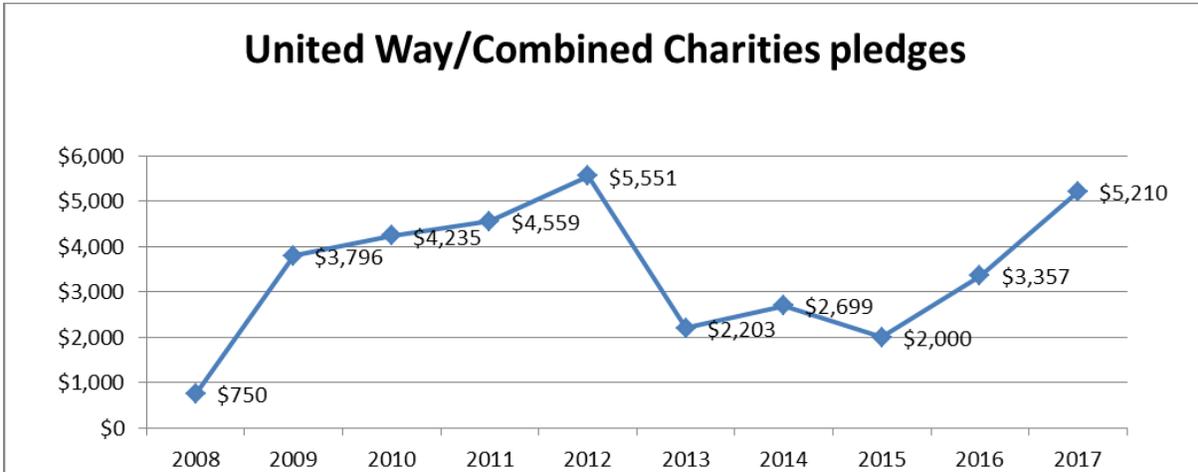
- It has been quite a treat to see so many people out at the preserves for a variety of reasons.
- We had another successful early voting session at Lake of the Woods Pavilion. The set up and clean up are done quickly.
- *Construction has picked up again on the KRT and is in full swing. Much of this year's activities will be placing the top coat (limestone chip and asphalt) and placing the many regulatory signs on the trail as well as on the roadways.*
- Organizational meetings for staff included one of our regularly scheduled all-staff meetings that featured formal presentations on District branding, emergency weather preparedness and cybersecurity as well as updates from the safety committee. The fun highlight of the day was each department outlining their biggest goal for 2017 in a Hangman, poem, or Pictionary format.
- The administrative staff has spent substantial time reviewing personnel policies. This is an effort that will be taking place over the next year culminating with a brand new Personnel Policy Manual for the District.
- *We have been discussing with Jarrod Scheunemann from U of I's ORPR office the inclusion of the KRT into an upcoming study of trails in Illinois.*
- The Freedom Fest Committee is undergoing some significant changes. A long-time committee volunteer Vickie Thompson has announced that this will be her last year on the committee (after the 4<sup>th</sup>). She has been an outstanding volunteer on the committee for 34 years. She has begun the transition of her duties to others. She will be greatly missed and we cannot thank her enough for her efforts. Another change is that the Committee has begun the long process of integrating by-laws. The entire process will take several months.

### **Deputy Director/Grants (Mary Ellen Wuellner)**

- At the end of March, I submitted a \$15,000 grant application to the Marajen Stevick Foundation on behalf of the Friends Foundation for lighting replacements at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. The grant would allow the District to continue replacing aging, inefficient light fixtures with new energy-efficient, fully shielded models that meet the requirements for eventual Dark Sky Park designation.
- On April 4, a grant application in the amount of \$10,000 was submitted to the Patagonia Foundation, in partnership with Champaign Surplus, to assist with Kickapoo Rail Trail phase two design work. A decision is expected at the end of August.
- On April 12, a grant application totaling \$4,500 was submitted to the National Environmental Education Foundation to conduct a baseline study of trail use once the Kickapoo Rail Trail is open to the public. Funds would be used to train volunteers to

survey trail users, conduct the survey, and analyze data, with the goal of developing good baseline information about who is using the trail, how often, where they are from, and how that might impact the local economy.

- We received the information from United Way this week about donations pledged to the Friends Foundation for 2017. Donations have rebounded nicely for 2017 after dropping off slightly over the last few years. Both total amount pledged and number of donors have returned to a level nearing the highest on record, which was in 2012.



#### Human Resources (Fran Bell)

- In mid-January, we began the transition from Applitrack to Paylocity Recruiting for our online applicant tracking system. Paylocity Recruiting provides a streamlined application process for applicants which will hopefully reduce applicant drop off rates for seasonal positions. Human Resources worked closely with Paylocity staff over several weeks to configure the new system and began posting seasonal positions to the new Recruiting module in late January. Along with the new applicant tracking system, we also began using the Onboarding module of Paylocity to process paperwork for new hires. Recruiting and Onboarding are integrated with the other Paylocity modules that we have been using for the past several years to process payroll. This integration has reduced the need for staff to manually enter data from Applitrack into Paylocity. Human

Resources developed training materials for both new systems and provided staff training on the new modules in mid-February.

- Hiring of seasonal staff began in mid-February and is still continuing. Job announcements were posted on the District's Employment page (<http://www.ccfpd.org/Get-Involved/Employment>) as well as on social media and flyers posted at various locations throughout the county. Marketing also developed banners that were posted at each preserve. To date, we have received 118 applications for various seasonal positions throughout the District.
- To coincide with the March Madness of the NCAA basketball tournament, Human Resources developed a fun wellness activity for our staff entitled the March Madness Wellness Challenge. The goal of the challenge was to encourage employees to make healthier lifestyle choices and to increase awareness of everyday activities that can contribute to overall wellness. Employees formed 3 person teams and completed various activities each day (such as drinking 8 glasses of water, doing 15 minutes of stretching, having lunch with a co-worker, etc.) to earn points over a five week period. Participation in the challenge was voluntary and was open to all District employees. A total of 24 employees signed up and participated in the Challenge.
- An All Staff Meeting of 2017 was held in late March at the Salt Fork Center at Homer Lake. Human Resources helped plan the agenda which included speakers on District branding efforts, weather preparedness, and cybersecurity. After lunch, each department met in small groups to discuss goals, challenges, and/or major projects for the year. These items were then shared with the entire District staff using a variety of creative methods such as Pictionary, Lego building and poetry. A voluntary hike was also planned, but weather cancelled this portion of the meeting.

#### **Administration (John Baker)**

- Received notification that the Consumer Price Index for calculating the 2017 pay 2018 tax levy is 2.1%. This CPI increase is the highest since RY 2012. Existing property tax rates for 2017 pay 2018 are capped at no more than a 2.1% increase more than 2016 property taxes paid in 2017, thereby capping the District's revenue increase for its current tax base to approximately \$70,000. A property tax freeze, however, would eliminate this increase.
- Received the 2017 tax levy extension from the County Clerk for a total of \$3,530,725 after applying the tax caps. The property tax extension is \$11,103 more than the total property tax budget for 2017. The County Clerk accepted District proposed adjustments to the extension to ensure that all funds will have sufficient revenues to cover expenditures and to maximize the extension for the IMRF and liability insurance funds. These two funds were exempted in proposed property tax freeze legislation.
- Verified the tax exemption status for all District properties including recently added parcels like the Kickapoo Rail Trail and Hidden Acres. This verification is an annual requirement to maintain tax exemptions.
- Prepared 2017 CD purchase plan for increasing investments and maintaining adequate cash flow through August. The plan will be revisited as the year progresses. Three CDs matured in the first quarter and, although the first quarter is always the leanest, District cash flow this year allowed purchase of three replacement CDs.

- Finalized review of employee purchasing card activity and updated purchasing limits for most employees, including the Board-approved increase in department head limits to \$1500.
- In preparation for the audit, staff completed several tasks:
  - Identifying and posting payroll and payables accruals to 2016 balance sheet,
  - Reviewing and reconciling payroll withholding liabilities,
  - Providing information to Lauterbach Amen for update of other post employment benefits report and reviewing and accepting report before submitting to auditors,
  - Updating internal control documentation for all District financial functions
  - Providing information on District information technology functions, practices and security
  - Documenting internal controls and all financial procedures for the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation. .
- Expanded monitoring of unexpected expenses and savings to ensure 2017 aggregate expenditures don't exceed incoming revenues. This includes initiating monthly tracking of part time/seasonal costs against budget targets.
- Prepared and mailed 2016 1099s for District vendors.
- Prepared the federal Form 990 – Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax and the state AG990-IL Illinois Charitable Organization Annual Report for the Forest Preserve Friends Foundation.
- Held four orientation sessions for 2017 seasonal employees so far this year.
- Conducted a safety and incident reporting session to the Museum/Education department
- Continued working with the Safety Committee to update the District's Emergency Response Quick Guide.
- Drafted financial procedures for the Freedom Fest Committee.
- Attended two half day training webinars on the Federal Uniform Guidance on grants and the Grant Accountability and Transparency Act. GATA eliminates inconsistent grant rules and requirements and provides a centralized and streamlined platform to eliminate qualification and reporting requirements for various state grants. The provision of financial information and qualification of CCFPD as a potential grant awardee have been greatly simplified and made sensible.
- Coordinated and developed District framework for program subsidization report, including reasonable attribution of all District administrative costs across program areas.
- Continued processing payroll and vendor payments, handling bank transfers, and providing support for Forest Preserve Friends Foundation meetings and reports.
- Enjoyed participating in the March MadWellness Challenge. 87.5% of Administration section employees participated!

### **Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)**

- Social media update: on Facebook CCFPD has 1,729 (+190) followers; Lake of the Woods Golf Course has 746 (+11); Kickapoo Rail Trail has 1,808 (+522); Museum of the Grand Prairie has 771 (+15). Homer Lake Interpretive Center 118 likes (+13). CCFPD has 315 (+35) Instagram followers. Kickapoo Rail Trail has 85 (+4) followers and CCFPD has 461 (+12) followers on Twitter.

- Spoke at the Mahomet Lions Club about the District in general, upcoming programs throughout the summer, and the opening of the Kickapoo Rail Trail on Monday, April 10.
- Sent Freedom Fest sponsorship letters out and have received \$1,650 in sponsorship donations.
- Presented session on District branding at the All-Staff meeting.

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

- Michael Daab and Brad Nelson attended the National Wildfire Coordinating Group S-219 Ignitions Operations class in Port Byron, IL, on April 8-9th. The class was safety focused and included instructors from the IL Fire Service Institute.
- Austin Haskett attended the Iowa Invasive Species Conference, presented by the Midwest Invasive Plant Network, in Moravia, IA on March 28-29th.
- Brad Nelson attended the Tri-State Forestry Conference in Sinsinawa, WI, on March 11th.
- Jacob Pruiett and Michael Daab attended the Indiana Society of American Foresters' Central Hardwood Oak Ecology and Wildlife Management Conference in Nashville, IN on March 8-9th.
- William Wright will be working with the Natural Resources crew through the summer as our seasonal. Will graduated from the University of Illinois with a degree in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences in May of 2014. He has since gained valuable experience in seasonal work with Grand Prairie Friends, Will County Forest Preserve District, Allerton Park, and Sugar Grove Nature Center, and he has immediately contributed to management at CCFPD.
- Austin Haskett and William Wright worked with volunteers from University of Illinois service fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega, to cut brush at Buffalo Trace on Saturday, April 1st.
- The Red Bison student ecological group worked at the west end of the Kickapoo Rail Trail in Urbana on two Sundays in February, cutting and treating stumps of invasive shrubs and trees.
- Michael Daab presented on stewardship responsibilities to CCFPD Trail Stewards at the Salt Fork Center on April 1st. He then led a hike to further elaborate on stewardship activities, and identifying emerging spring flora.
- Natural Resources staff wrapped up a successful spring prescribed fire season at the end of March. Prescribed burns are possible in most years into mid-April, but the early spring this year meant that conditions for successful burning declined prior to April. Most of our planned acres were burned, and we will pick up any remaining acres and the next rotation of sites in the fall. Thanks to all site operations staffs and volunteers that helped out during the season.
- Invasive plant management with herbicide has begun for the year. Early season plants treated so far include reed canarygrass, poison hemlock, and garlic mustard.
- Michael Daab presented best management practices for invasive species for operations staff at the April Risk Management meeting, which include methods for prevention, early detection, and rapid response. This presentation was a beginning for discussion on best management, and helped fulfill a portion of the 2013 Strategic Plan - Operational

Excellence Objective 1: Leaders in Conservation - Implement internal education about best operational practices for protecting natural resources.

- Twenty-four trees and shrubs were ordered through the Champaign County Soil and Water Conservation District's spring sale. These have been planted by volunteers, with NR staff assistance, in restoration areas at Sangamon River Forest Preserve.

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

- The planning and construction departments coordinated the purchase of a state bid truck for the construction crew.
- The planning department and Middle Fork staff coordinated bidding documents for a new tractor at Middle Fork.
- The planning and construction departments coordinated and installed traffic and trail counters districtwide.
- Jon and Matt K. met with excavation contractors to review the scope of work for shoreline vegetation removal at Middle Fork ponds, and issued a request for quotes.
- Jon met with masonry contractors to review the scope of work for museum chimney repairs, and issued a request for quotes.
- Jon met with a seamless gutter contractor to review the scope of work for gutter replacements at the Museum, and issued a request for quote. This work has been completed.
- Jon met with HVAC contractors and Illinois Energy Now representatives to review the scope of work for HVAC replacements at Lake of the Woods. An application and rebate request have been submitted to Illinois Energy Now.
- Jon and Mike F. met with Matt K. to review scope of work for shower house parking lot expansion at Middle Fork. The construction crew has completed the first parking lot.
- The construction crew refinished existing wood entrance doors at the museum, and re-installed them with new hardware meeting current building code standards.
- The construction crew refinished the museum entrance sign, and installed new directional signs on the west side of Lake of the Woods. They refinished several other directional signs throughout Lake of the Woods, and installed interpretive signs at Rayburn Purnell, LOW peninsula, and Middle Fork.
- Mike F. attended the Great Lakes Parks Training Institute and completed the Playground Maintenance Technician course offered by PDRMA and the Eppley Institute for Parks Management.

### **Lake of the Woods Golf Course (Dave Torrens and Dave Huber)**

- Dave Torrens attended the Golf Course Superintendent's Association of America annual educational conference in Orlando, FL. Seminars included: Sure-fire Way to Increase Plant Health, Developing and Implementing Best Management Practices for Golf Course Water Conservation, Low Maintenance Roughs and Natural Areas for Golf Courses, and Ecology and Technology for Reduced Herbicide Inputs.
- Staff attended the Train the Trainer mower safety class put on by PDRMA.
- Torrens attended the Prescribed Burn training held at Urbana Park District.
- Natural Resources removed many ash trees in the golf course parking lot and on the golf course.

- Thank you to Construction for the clubhouse bathroom repairs.
- Due to excellent February sales we are ahead of last year, even though the weather has been inconsistent so far this spring.
- We finished the winter golf simulator league season and took down both simulators, moved the 60" TV back to the snack bar, relocated the POS computer and cleaned the clubhouse in preparation for rentals and outing use.
- Chris Edmondson represented the Pro Shop at the all staff training day.
- In spite of the poor weather Dave Huber had a few club fitting appointments and has sold 3 iron sets already this spring. Club fitting service is included in our professional golf services at no charge to the customer if they purchase equipment from our shop. Huber conducts the fittings as part of his regular duties. This value added service gives us an advantage in our retail sales.
- Seasonal hiring is in process with a good number of last year's part time employees returning.
- We have started a few new promotions this spring: CI Saves coupons, Golf Now internet specials, and Bloomington/Normal advertising.
- The "Season Opener" April 27-28, our first event of 2017, is filling up quickly with 35 two-player teams already signed up. We will open the snack bar on the ground floor of the clubhouse for the season Friday the 26<sup>th</sup> just before our first event.

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

- The National Park Service has agreed to allow all participants in the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area to apply for a National Park Passport Program stamp. The Museum of the Grand Prairie (MGP) and the Homer Lake Interpretive Center (HLIC) applied and received approval, as Looking for Lincoln Communities in the ALNHA. As of April 7 2016, MGP and HLIC will now be issuing their National Park Service passport stamp in the official *Passport to Your National Parks* during open hours. In addition, the NPS passports will be available in the Museum Store.
- The Museum and Education (M and E) Department welcomes a new Garden Program Specialist, Marianne Whitacre, to the staff. Marianne has taught elementary school in CU for more than 30 years and has also served as social science coordinator for Unit 4.
- We also welcome several seasonal workers: Marina Montez-Ellis as Day Camp Educator at MGP. Christy Wallace returns for her 10<sup>th</sup> year as Campground Naturalist at Middle Fork. Jennifer Wicks returns as Seasonal Naturalist, Trisha Ferguson returns as Nature Day Camp Educator, and Alyson Munger joins staff housed at HLIC for the first time as a Nature Day Camp Educator.
- The Construction Department installed a board at the base of the south wall of the museum to prevent further decay of the board and batten and prevent air leaks.
- Opened March 1st with a grand opening event held on March 11th, the new temporary exhibit, "Horses are Quiet. Tractors are Loud," explores the revolutionary transition from draft horse power to tractor power. World War I was the tipping point. At war's end, mechanical power was here to stay, and the farm tractor rapidly replaced the draft horse and had lasting changes on the environment. Collaborating on this exhibit were the I&I Gas Engine and Tractor Club, Central Illinois Farm Heritage Tractor Club, Champaign County Historical Archive, Homer Historical Society, and the Rantoul Historical Society.

- In addition to a live Clydesdale draft horse from Merrybeth Farm, the exhibit opening also featured a restored 52 horsepower, 1948 LA Case tractor owned by Dave and Jane Berbaum of Champaign.
- The Interpretive Center's 2017 special exhibit, *A Bird's Eye View: 100 Years of a Changing Illinois Landscape*, opened April 1. It tells the story of how land use has changed and the resulting impacts on bird populations (positive or negative depending on the species). An animated map of migration in North & South America, and wing specimens, round out the exhibit.
- Summer camp registrations are going very well through the new ActiveNet registration system. We have a record number of people already signed up for Department summer camps. Last year at the end of March we had 129 participants registered for our summer camps; this year we are at 235 participants. The Kid's Garden Camp was filled by 8:10 am the first morning of registration!
- A new series of spring break programs at the Interpretive Center were very successful: Remarkable Reptiles, Spark & Tinder, and Survival Shelters. Record numbers attended the MGP spring break programs for a second year.
- Pam Leiter gave a special presentation to Master Naturalists, entitled Things that Bug You: Mosquitoes and Ticks. Many thanks to the UIUC Medical Entomology Lab, the Allan Lab (Dept of Entomology), and Dr. Phil Nixon for their help in providing specimens.
- All Department staff attended an excellent 3-part webinar series on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), entitled *Cultural Relevancy: Cultivating More Inclusive Outdoor Spaces*. Sessions included: *What is DEI and Why is it Important in Conservation and Outdoor Recreation?*, *Unconscious Bias and How it Impedes Successful DEI Efforts*, and *How to Eat an Elephant: Planning for DEI*.
- Several Department staff attended a diversity-awareness workshop offered by Spurlock Museum staff, entitled *Guiding Challenging Discussions with Objects*.
- David Evans officially completed certification as a Certified Interpretive Guide through the National Association for Interpretation. This 32-hour course combines both the theoretical foundations of the interpretive profession with practical skills for delivering quality interpretive programming.
- Stacey Clementz is an event mentor for the Lincoln Trail Science Olympiad Backyard Biologist, in which she will train six 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders on 18 different native Illinois bird species. This includes how to identify, their habitat, feeding habits, nesting and migration patterns. The state competition is held May 6 in Arlington Heights.

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

- Doug Sanders attended the Great Lakes Training Institute Playground Maintenance Training program and opening session on "Future of Parks and Recreation" (1.75 CEUs). The PMT program consisted of maintenance practices, inspections, record keeping, and closing/removal procedures.
- Michael Dale attended an evening seminar that was sponsored by the Uof I and Purdue extension offices. Topics covered included use of cover crops and pocket pollinator

gardens. Michael has been looking at developing a few pollinator gardens at the District, in particular at the golf course.

- Staff recycled nearly 650 Christmas trees this year. The majority of the mulch has been applied throughout LOW landscaping.
- The 4,000 spring flower bulbs staff planted this past fall at LOW have starting coming up. The bulbs consisted of a variety of Daffodils, Muscari, Hyacinth, and Alliums.
- Michael Dale, James Blythe and Tony Sparks attended the 2017 iLandscape show in February, where they were able to view new landscaping ideas and tools that are being presented to the industry. They were also able to meet several new landscape supply distributors and attended a variety of seminars ranging from the impact of changing climate to therapeutic gardening.

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

- Roy attended Great Lakes Park Training institute, and PDRMA's mower safety training.
- We hosted the district wide staff meeting at the Salt Fork Center.
- We have been conducting interviews for seasonal employment.
- Matt and I attended a seminar about drainage and drainage districts held at the Champaign County Farm Bureau.
- Park visitation has been incredibly high as a result of the unusually warm weather, and we have been getting reports of six and seven pound bass being caught already. Some fishermen have been surprised to catch saugeye for the first time. IDNR stocked them last year in an attempt to reduce the number of shad and crappie.

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

- Light replacement continues throughout the user areas in the preserve to comply with the Dark Sky initiative.
- Staff met with contractors to discuss the shoreline restoration project slated for this summer. This will involve removing shoreline cattails around the first two ponds to improve user access.
- The camping season began on the first weekend in April.
- The Construction Department has started building the new parking lot at the shower house location. This parking lot will help with overflow visitation in the campground area.
- Staff have been investigating the idea of opening an existing trail to mountain biking which would be located on the north side of the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve property.

### **Volunteers (Kristin Tetzlaff)**

- 2017 has been productive for the volunteer office thus far. Staff was introduced to the workings of the new, web-based volunteer tracking system of Volgistics at a training held March 1. Staff now knows how to log in to the system, see volunteers assigned to their projects, they know of planned volunteer recognition events, and how to make requests when volunteers are needed.
- In late March, the Museum and Education department hosted an appreciation luncheon for several of their dedicated volunteers. I attended that and made an introduction about

the plans to switch over the way we track hours from the more compartmentalized system that was in place to the District-wide, web-based system of Volgistics.

- Most recently, on April 1, a great collaboration was made when all site superintendents and Mike Daab attended the trail steward training. At this training, I instructed the volunteers about usage of Volgistics, distributed completely updated trail steward manuals that I compiled, and Mike Daab gave a wonderful presentation about managing invasive species and took the 20 volunteers in attendance on a short hike around a Homer Lake trail. For 2017, we have 35 individual volunteers who signed up for trails, monitoring just under seventy percent of the District's trails. We also have a list started of interested individuals to assist with KRT monitoring.
- To date, we have 68 volunteers in our online system. These are either entirely new applicants or select individuals who have attended the aforementioned trainings. There is still much work to be done in transitioning additional volunteers, but I believe we are making significant progress.