

January 6, 2014

**MEMORANDUM**

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Lisa Sprinkle

Re: January Staff Report

**Executive Director (Dan Olson)**

- On Monday, January 6 the CCFPD closed for a Weather Emergency Day. The operations staff at all the sites worked very hard in adverse conditions and had the preserves opened and ready on time.
- During the winter months, staff keeps very busy. Staff does considerable annual maintenance on equipment while trying to keep up with new equipment maintenance that comes about due to the harsh weather conditions. We have a pretty big recreational shift. We still see and hear from the dedicated runners and hikers. We add sled hill inspections to our daily list. Most people are surprised to hear that, but obstructions, ramps can occur within a matter of hours. This is also the time of year that we round up ice safety equipment and have it on hand for the public. The indoor golf simulators have added a new dimension of wintertime recreation. Weather typically pushes construction and maintenance projects indoors, but there is always plenty of painting, repair, and upkeep to be completed. Painting, repair, design, and building of signs consumes many of the days. Despite very good regular maintenance, we typically have a couple of HVAC surprises this time of year. This year is no exception. Year-end reports, documentation, and inventory come at a time when we prefer to be indoors. All of our usual meetings still occur and most regional meetings are planned during this time. Project planning meetings are longer because the new year brings a new project list that must be timed well through the year. Donations, tax letters, staff W-2's and a variety of budget finalization are a welcome task to tackle. Each donation envelope is like opening a present on Christmas Day. This is also the time of year when staff that has collected overtime or not had an opportunity to take vacation time, take much needed time off. Over the years, I have noticed that this is a hard-working staff that needs occasional reminders that it is O.K. to take vacation time. In addition, most of the seasonal employees have moved on leaving more day-to-day tasks to be picked up by staff. Prairie and wetland seed planting is best this time of year. Planting on the freeze and thaw with a little snow cover typically produces the best results.

**Construction Department (Bryan Stevens)**

- Completed the installation of new shelving and wall for the Museum director's office in the Annex of the Museum of the Grand Prairie.
- Met with Museum staff on the upcoming Grand Prairie Story exhibit and the role the Construction Department will have in this project. We will accomplish the demolishing

of existing exhibits and minor new exhibit construction. The majority of new construction will be accomplished under contract.

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

- The Museum of the Grand Prairie hosted a small Christmas exhibit in conjunction with the “To Grandmother’s House we Go” program. The museum also began to display a “Mystery Artifact” each week in conjunction with the museum’s new blog. Progress has continued on the new permanent exhibits, with bids going out for work on *The Grand Prairie Story* in January.
- The Museum and Education Department held its first department wide retreat at Homer Lake on December 17.
- Pam Leiter participated in an online training webinar entitled “Coping with Conflicts of Interest.”
- Much of December was spent in wrapping up 2013, cleaning and organizing, making preparations for 2014 programs, planning for volunteer recruitment, writing staff workplans, and continued new staff training.

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

- James Helbling staffed the Pro Shop during the holidays while Dave Huber staycated right here in beautiful Mahomet.
- Both simulators are in use in the clubhouse. League numbers are up over last year.
- After the end of year inventory. We reviewing 2014 orders in order to maximize our merchandise sales with the least amount of product necessary.
- We are preparing several end of year reports for the audit.
- Dave Torrens met with equipment dealers to prepare for the 2014 capital purchase.
- Helped Lake of the Woods operation staff with snow removal.
- Battery Specialist will test 20 more golf cars to determine the problem with battery failures. They don't have a definite answer to the problem at this time.

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

- Prairie and savanna planting projects have been completed at Buffalo Trace, Homer Lake, and Middle Fork. We continue to put native seed out in woodland areas. Woodland seeding continues.
- In 2012, Tomlinson Cemetery prairie was surveyed, and an additional half acre was identified outside of the current fence line. Local ecotype seed was collected in 2013 from Illinois Nature Preserves, along right-of-ways, and Tomlinson Cemetery itself. The half acre has now been planted, and we will move forward with new fencing in the spring.
- The NR crew has been busy clearing invasive shrubs and trees, including preparing for a new trail at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve, and several acres at Stidham Woods.
- Mike has been working with partners in the Invasive Plant Task Force to organize a volunteer herbicide and chainsaw use workshop at Lake of the Woods on Saturday, January 11.

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

- In preparation for the PDRMA review, staff updated the *Material Safety Data Sheets* (MSDS) folder/book. They also updated the *Boat Rental Manual* for the 2014 season.
- Six of the District's vehicles had their 3 year transmission service completed (i.e. change of filter, fluid, and gasket). In addition several pieces of equipment have been serviced (wood chipper, three BG mowers, OPS air compressor, and John Deere backhoe). We also received a new Buffalo turbine blower which is used to clear off trails, roadways, and parking lots.
- The greenhouse work is in full swing with propagating cuttings, planting seeds for annual and perennial plants, and repotting overwintering plant material. Staff is also designing and planning flower and vegetable beds within the BG. Staff is working with the Education department on plant selection in areas of the Discovery Garden for programming.
- Garden staff reports less deer damage in the garden this past fall/winter. Staff wrapped and/or fenced every tree with a trunk diameter less than 8 inches.

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

- We completed the utility maps so that Tom can develop a system that will assist District staff when locating underground utilities or easements.
- Staff has been constructing new picnic tables and grills that will be put out next spring.
- We have already plowed more snow this December than we have the past two years. The total so far is just over 18 inches. We really appreciate having good reliable equipment during this time of year.

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

- Work continues on the new trail site at the Odle Property. Natural Resources staff has done some initial invasive clearing in wooded areas of the property. Trail construction at the south end of the property has also started. The ADA section of the trail will begin as soon as weather allows for it.
- More trail directional posts are being constructed during the winter months.