

November 6, 2014

MEMORANDUM

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

Executive Director (Dan Olson)

- We have had several good planning and fundraising meetings for the Kickapoo Rail Trail this month, including meeting with Fehr Graham and IDNR to discuss engineering of the trail. Mary Ellen and I also met with Steve Buchtel (Trails for Illinois) and members of VCCD, UPD, CPD, and special interest groups to discuss possible volunteer opportunities with the youth corps program.
- As reported last month, we had a going away party for Megan McKenna (Administrative Assistant) and Tom Meachum (Registrar). Both have been instrumental in their positions while they were with us. They will be missed. Tom has agreed to stay on for a short time to help transition the new Registrar. Megan has offered to help with any future needs in design.
- We have been busy completing annual evaluations and setting goals for the new year, as well as finalizing the budgeting process amid the new studies and plans.

Deputy Director/Grants (Mary Ellen Wuellner)

- We received three responses to the construction engineering Request for Qualifications for the Kickapoo Rail Trail. Fehr Graham, Farnsworth Group, and Clark-Dietz all submitted excellent proposals. Dan and I will work with Vermilion County Conservation District staff to conduct interviews and reference checks, and then negotiate a rate with the leading firm. The final selection will come to the board for approval in December.
- Lisa and I have been working on plans for “Giving Tuesday”. Modeled after Black Friday and Cyber Monday, Giving Tuesday’s goal is to encourage individuals to set aside a day to think about the needs of their communities and make philanthropic gift-giving a part of the holiday season. December 2 is Giving Tuesday this year. In addition to mentioning it in the Nature’s Appeal, we hope to have a special website set up to make donating even easier for those who want to give online to the Foundation.
- Fundraising efforts over the past few weeks for the Rail Trail included proposals to ADM, Presence United Samaritans Medical Center Foundation in Danville, Carle Hospital Foundation, and a group of Vermilion County business leaders.

Administration (John Baker)

- In process of updating projections to include District total financial transactions through October 31 to provide baseline summary for all District funds and the impact of expected 2015 revenues and expenditures.
- Worked with compensation committee to finalize the total 2015 compensation package for employees.
- Received 2015 final rates for IMRF employer pension contributions (11.21%, nearly 1% less than 2014) and PDRMA insurance (\$88,822, a negligible reduction from 2014).
- The District has not yet received rate quotes for 2015 health insurance. For budgeting purposes we are estimating a ten percent increase for next year.

- Staff met to review the NGF recommendations in order to draft a three-year course of action to propose to the Board, including 2015 proposed fees based on the NGF recommendations.
- We are promoting the early sale of 2015 Golf season passes at 2014 rates through December 31, 2014. This promotion will hopefully offset the anticipated \$60,000 year end deficit in the Golf Fund.
- Have begun review and reconciliation of District financial transactions in preparation for our year end accounting and audit preparation.
- Attended audit training sponsored by the Government Finance Officers Association, sessions focused on internal control, capitalizing assets, and enterprise funds.
- The District sold 10,770 bushels of corn from the Middle Fork Farm for \$32,176. Staff believes this is a record corn harvest for the District.
- Received \$7,190 in payments for the District's acreage that participates in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Staff also renewed CRP contracts for an additional 186 District acres.
- Calculated and requested FPF reimbursement for the River to Rail Ride event expenses which were fronted by the District.

Human Resources (Jan Runion)

- Revised Performance Evaluation and Self-Assessment forms.
- Training on Performance Evaluation forms.
- Attended the Software Symposium in Wheaton, IL to research Payroll, H.R. and timekeeping systems.
- Met with representative from JobsInChampaign for additional resources for job postings and outreach for diversity candidates.
- Phone conference with EAP provider, Perspectives, and John Baker on opportunities and resources on training, coaching and organizational effectiveness to align with Strategic Plan.
- Participated in a conference call about WebEx with Harris Computer, John Baker, Mary Beck, and Arnold Blair on HR and Payroll system (Smart Fusion).
- Visited colleague for a demonstration of Paylocity software for HR and Payroll to use in conjunction with Affordable Care Act.
- Attended demonstration with Arnold Blair by BS&A software on HR and Payroll system at the Champaign Park District.
- Attended the IMRF Certification Class in Champaign.

Marketing (Lisa Sprinkle)

- Developed bus ad for the golf course that encouraged people to "Golf Year Round". Scheduled to run on three busses from Nov. 1 – Dec. 1.
- Megan McKenna resigned on Monday, Oct. 20. She will be missed.
- Nov/Dec Leaflet has been mailed and is now available at our facilities.
- Mary Ellen and Lisa met with Jodi Heckel at the News-Gazette about the Kickapoo Rail Trail. Her article appeared in the Nov. 4 Health section.



Construction (Mike Fry)

- Completed Middle Fork residence addition.
- Removed fiber optic cable from museum (temporary that was left from construction)
- Installed back up sump at headquarters
- Closed in golf course snack bar roof.

Museum and Education Department (Barb Garvey and Pam Leiter)

- Museum and Education staff have been very busy with school programs this month seeing 1,448 students in Environmental, Historical and Plant Science programs.
- Scout program requests for nature-related badges have been very strong this fall.
- We held our second annual Wilderness Living Skills workshop at Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. Participants learned about making fire, shelters and sleeping mats, as well as collecting water and edibles, and other survival skills.
- Harvest Fest was very popular with 190 participants including 37 from the Hidden Treasures and Flavors of Champaign County Tour from Visit Champaign County.
- Pam Leiter gave a presentation about the natural playscape to the Rotary Club of Champaign.
- Stacey Clementz attended the Illinois Association of School Administrators conference.
- The Museum and Education Department welcomes Megan McCoy as our new registrar at the Museum of the Grand Prairie. Megan comes to us from the Aurora, Colorado History Museum with a Master's Degree in Museum and Heritage Studies from the University of Denver.
- The Museum of the Grand Prairie bids a fond farewell to Tom Meachum, registrar for the past 13 years. Tom completed the museum's first inventory of artifacts, and computerized all of the records (with photographs) of over 25,000 pieces. He also presided over the movement, bar coding, and inventory of over 10,000 items in the last two years as we moved into compact mobile shelving.

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

- We had a staff meeting to review the NGF golf study recommendations and begin to compile an action plan.
- Foot Golf is doing well YTD with 397 green fees.
- We set up the simulator that has been in storage in the Clubhouse last weekend and the other one currently in the pro shop will be relocated by mid-November. Leagues start December 1.
- Chris Edmondson completed the BASSET bartender training online Friday, October 31. This same training site will allow us to complete our new "Safe Food Handling" requirement for 2015 for our Snack Bar staff.
- Outings and numbers for October: October 8th – Girls High School Class 2-A Regional – 70 players; October 18th & 19th 2 Man Better Ball Tournament – 74 players
- Golf maintenance staff aerified the teeing surfaces. The fairways and rough will be complete this month.
- Staff met to finalize the 2015 golf fees.
- Clint Schaffer attended the Game of Logging training held at the Forest Preserve.
- Staff continues with leaf removal.

Natural Resources (Mike Daab)

- Michael Daab attended the Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference in Duluth, MN. Time was well spent attending various sessions, moderating a session, and attending the Midwest Invasive Plant Network Board Meeting.
- Katie Smith has been participating in the Game of Logging training that has been hosted at Lake of the Woods. This is an intensive, four day chainsaw training that is very highly regarded by foresters and arborists.
- The Natural Resources crew has helped with cleanup of felled trees, and Mike has fielded questions regarding the class from local news agencies.
- Mike spoke to the graduating East Central Illinois Master Naturalists class about the natural areas of East Central Illinois.
- Mike attended the November 1st Trail Stewards meeting and spoke to the group about current and future Natural Resources projects, invasive species, and pruning.

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

- As of October 30, 2014, all seasonal facilities, drinking fountains, water pumps, irrigation systems, and the water fall have been shut down for the winter months.
- Final mowing of the grounds were completed. But we continue to mulch leaves and blow off roadways and trails at LOW. Cleanup also continues in the Botanical Gardens.
- Staff replaced the road barriers at the Buffalo Trace trail entrance and the LOW residence road with renovated barricades. In addition, new boards were installed on the Rotary Hill Shelter and bike trail benches.
- Sangamon Valley Public Water District have begun preliminary work on the well at Stidham Woods. To-date, they have installed a culvert, gravel entrance, and some minor brush clearing.
- Tammy Bruehl, Andrew Combes, and Brian Decker attended the four-day chainsaw training “Game of Logging.” This event is sponsored by the U of I Extension Office and was held at Lake of the Woods. A number of aging/problematic trees were removed during this training.
- In preparation for the Large Archives Storage renovation in 2015, staff is in the process of moving the collection to the SRFP storage shed. So far over 100 items have been transported for temporary storage. All Botanical Garden items within the lean-to greenhouse/shop and stockade fence have been cleared out.

Homer Lake (Brian Taylor)

- I attended a training session on “Developing Your Emotional Intelligence”. The emphasis was on how an employee’s emotional intelligence affects the work place and their success in the organization. We also learned how EI influences communication styles and how to use EI to understand and manage employees.
- We installed the parking area and improved the lane at the new Sylvester Woods Expansion property. (see pictures of Roy spreading rock)
- It’s unusual to still be mowing every week



in October, so we are behind schedule getting things ready for cold weather.

Middle Fork River (Matt Kuntz)

- Water lines have been blown out for the winter season throughout the user areas of the preserve.
- We had a very busy October with the campground as the weather cooperated through most of the month.
- Staff is prepping to construct the shower tower location at the swim beach area. If weather cooperates we should get a concrete pour accomplished and the tower will be ready for use in the spring.

Volunteers (Pat Simpson)

- The I Help student volunteer organization at the University of Illinois helped clean up around the museum and garden.
- Doug Sanders supervised a Mahomet Boy Scout troop in cleaning up the area around the Headquarters Building at Lake of the Woods.
- The Pre-Med Fraternity at the University of Illinois sent out a group of roughly 7 people to help with Harvest Fest.
- The Alpha Phi Omega Service Fraternity at the University of Illinois had such a good time volunteering at the River to Rail Ride that they called in October seeking other volunteer opportunities. We also discussed the idea of having this group return annually for the River to Rail Ride.
- I attended the MN graduation ceremony on Oct. 28th.
- Preparations were made for the second Trail Steward Training of 2014. Thirty-six trail stewards registered for this training, including ten new stewards. In addition to reviewing basic trail maintenance with the new stewards, the program included a presentation by Mike Daab on new types of invasive plants in our area and a talk by a Susan Kelly, a Yellowstone Park Ranger, currently working on a doctorate in geology at the U of I. Her topic focused on recent research studies conducted in Yellowstone and the practical implications of such research, including in the area of microbes. As it turns out, much of the follow up research to the Yellowstone studies is being done at the U of I.

Special Projects (Tom Pike)

- Continued updating facilities inventory.
- Continued researching and pricing items as well as some services for the 2015 budget.
- Contracted with Jake Wolf to do a professional inspection of the Homer Lake Dam. Mailed completed inspection to the IDNR.