

October 6, 2014

**MEMORANDUM**

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

**Executive Director (Dan Olson)**

- This month's appointment of Citizen Advisory Committee members is one to highlight. Two years ago, I asked Lisa Sprinkle to be a liaison to the CAC as they were doing great things for outreach. Lisa and I attended our first CAC meeting only to find out that every member was leaving the board within the following month. Through several conversations and rearranging of terms, the CAC members at that time really came through for the District, agreeing to stay on the Committee until we could replace the retiring members. The appointments this month will replace the last two individuals that were on the Committee at the time of the expanded terms. The District greatly thanks all of those individuals that helped us through the two year transition. During that time, the CAC remained an instrumental part of outreach and research. They have attended the Farmer's Market, are completing a site plan, have helped research aspects of the Rail Trail, and have recruited many great members to the CAC so it remains viable and sustainable. We see many of the members out at other events and volunteer days. It has been a pleasure working with them.
- We held our annual staff appreciation dinner. Thanks to Mary Beck for making the arrangements. We had a wonderful night with Katie Riopelle as master of ceremonies.
- Additional meetings, trainings and presentations this month include the Ogden Village Board, the Citizens Advisory Committee, and the Central Illinois Recreation Council for Leisure Experience.
- I attended the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Unity West Grade School West Woods planting along with the Natural Resources staff. In the early 2000s, a group of teachers from Tolono Unity were regular attendees at teachers' workshops hosted by the CCFPD. At that time, the Unity West Grade School was being built and consolidation was occurring. A small acreage in the new area was going to be somewhat abandoned. At our workshops the idea of an outdoor classroom was hatched and the teachers lobbied to have the small acreage turned over to them for some natural plantings. A wooded area was chosen as there are many woodland examples in that part of the county. Unity's core curriculum included science, English and math projects that included the tree plantings. Ten years ago, CCFPD Environmental Educators went into the school to teach about trees and wooded areas. Following that, a large community effort to plant the West Wood occurred. The two-day event featured the planting of 100 trees by the students, staff, and members of the community as well as staff from the CCFPD. Since that time, we have been asked to come back every year to lead the students in new planting projects. Every year, each new kindergarten class and each set of new teachers plant trees. The woods now consist of hundreds of trees and shrubs of many species, some of which are doing very well despite less than ideal growing conditions. The project has been one of the biggest outreach efforts that we have done in that part of the county.

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

- On Saturday, September 20, we held the first annual River to Rail Ride. A total of 182 people and one dog participated in the ride. Our sponsorship total of \$2,850 covered the majority of the expenses for the event, netting revenue of approximately \$6,300, which will be allocated to the Friends Foundation for the Kickapoo Rail Trail. A survey conducted of riders after the event indicated that most were very pleased with the route, food, and registration process. A few suggestions were submitted, which will be taken under advisement as we plan for the 2015 ride.
- The total amount received in donations for the Kickapoo Rail Trail to date, including those received during the three fundraising events held last month, is \$83,400. Adding multi-year pledges to that figure, we currently stand at \$139,000 toward our overall goal of \$850,000 in funds needed as the local match for IDOT grants.
- Funding raised toward the pond/waterfall project at the Botanical Garden stands at \$180,350, which includes multi-year pledges. The total fundraising goal for that project is \$500,000. Several foundation members met in late September with the UI Students Consulting for Non-profit Organizations (SNCO) group to bring them up to date on fundraising efforts so far. Our hope is that they might suggest some new methods which will help keep the donations coming in.
- Lisa, Megan, and I will be working with the Foundation's marketing group to design a 2015 Nature's Appeal mailing. Nature's Appeal is the Friends Foundation annual fundraising campaign, usually mailed out in late November or early December. Our goal this year is for it to arrive in mailboxes the weekend after Thanksgiving.



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

- The District received the initial Lake of the Woods Golf Study report. Dave Huber, Dave Torrens, Dan Olson and I reviewed the report for errors, needed clarifications and missing recommendations. The corrections and questions were forwarded to the National Golf Foundation. A revised draft of the study is expected by the October board meeting.
- The District received the Equalized Assessed Valuation estimate of \$3,560,973,769 for calculating the 2014 pay 2015 property tax levy. Staff estimates that District property tax receipts will increase by approximately \$91,000 for the 2015 budget.
- The purchasing card system is fully operational with back office systems tested and functioning well. Staff has successfully submitted their purchases electronically, including assigning expenditures appropriately to their budget lines. Commerce Bank is highly

complimentary of our efforts, noting the smoothness of transition into their system and the early processing of transactions by most employees.

- Jan, John, Arnold and Mary received an in depth demonstration of the Paylocity Time and Attendance, Human Resources, and Payroll application. We currently do not have an electronic time and attendance system and are considering options, including potentially replacing the HR and Payroll modules we currently have. Harris, the current provider, will also provide a demonstration of its upgraded product, Smart Fusion, later this month. Jan is also looking into other vendor products. One of the turnkey solutions we are seeking is timely and complete reports for the Affordable Care Act requirements. Utilizing a system like Paylocity for processing payroll will create efficiencies that must be weighed against system cost.
- John and Jan attended IPRA meetings related to the human resources and payroll systems, specifically focused on the Affordable Care Act reporting and vendor application demonstrations respectively.
- John attended Government Finance Officer training for Capital Assets, Internal Control, and Enterprise Funds during the first week in October.
- Bank reconciliations are now being prepared, reviewed and approved in the following month. Rather than periodic and sometimes subsequent to processing, John is systematically reviewing and signing off on financial journals and utility payments before processing. The purchasing card module has made it much easier to review these purchases and correct budget line assignments. Jan and Mary have revised the payroll notice form and developed a task checklist for when employees separate from service.

### **Human Resources (Jan Runion)**

- PDRMA held a local training on Performance Evaluations, which I attended along with the following staff: Dan Olson, Mary Ellen Wuellner, Brian Taylor, Doug Sanders, Mike Fry, Barb Garvey, Lisa Sprinkle, and Pam Leiter.
- After a thorough review of the documents by the District's compensation committee, the 2015 Compensation Policy and Salary Schedule have now been finalized.
- I am currently reviewing other District policies that require updating including the Anti-Discrimination/Harrassment and Bereavement policies. Any proposed substantive modifications will be reviewed with legal counsel.
- I completed orientation with the new Construction Manager and conducted phone interviews for the Planning Director position.
- I met with a representative from Paylocity to review payroll, HR and time and attendance system and also underwent training with MSI on its HR system module.
- Other meetings and contacts made during the last month include a meeting with John Katsinas and John Baker to discuss changes in our healthcare plan, a meeting with John Baker on ACA Healthcare to determine the District's next steps, and a discussion with Ellen Hearn from ERH Consulting to research staff training options for 2015.

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

- Developed Footgolf bus ad that was featured on buses from Sept 15 to Oct. 15
- Completed seven interpretive signs for River Bend. Topics include: Feathered Friends, Forests along the Sangamon, Glaciers Make Gravel, Prairie Past



of River Bend, Restoring Forests of River Bend, River of Plenty, and Sunset Lake.

- Completed three interpretive signs for Homer Lake. Topics include: Flicker Woods, Home on the Prairie, Making a Comeback: Bald Eagles and Osprey.
- Developed and sent a survey to the 96 email addresses we had for the River to Rail riders. We have received 40 completed surveys to date.

### **Construction (Mike Fry)**

- Working on trim installation and painting in museum gallery.
- Installed formed drain in front of Rotary Hill restrooms.
- Painted handrails and installed new stair treads on steps leading to the trail north of covered bridge.
- Remulched trail near covered bridge.
- Built new storage lofts in West Maintenance cold storage and moved wood rack from West Maintenance.
- Hung drywall and in the process of finishing it at Middle Fork room addition
- Painted Jan Runion's office.

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

- The Homer Lake interpretive sign panel replacements are complete; also seven interpretive panels are now installed at River Bend. These were funded by a grant from the Champaign County Audubon Society.
- Edison Middle School's 6<sup>th</sup> grade students came out to Homer Lake for a pond life program (238 students in two days). It was a huge success and we look forward to doing this with them again in the future.
- The Department is currently surveying homeschool families to get their input on homeschool programming and a possible homeschool event for 2015.
- After-school programming continues to be strong, with programs continuing for Project Success, BLAST and First School.
- Prairie Stories had great attendance, 250 people, this year. A Civil War archaeology and Lincoln lecture brought in 45 participants.
- Loan materials had very a strong month, with more than 240 served. Materials loaned include GPS units, Bird Adaptation kit, Dressed for Work and Play, First Illinoisans, Gone for a Soldier, and Illiniwek Connections.
- As a Gloria King Fellowship recipient, Valerie Hall traveled to Maryland to conduct archaeological research, looking at the impact of indigenous women on early colonial culture.
- In addition to the PDRMA workshop on Performance Evaluations which was attended by Barb and Pam, Pam participated in a PDRMA webinar entitled "Mutual Respect and Communication."
- Emily Henson attended the Illinois DNR's ENTICE workshop on Illinois Pollinators.
- Susan Voskuil, Katie Riopelle and Chelsey Walsh participated in a webinar, "Programming for Visitors on the Autism Spectrum."
- The Department welcomes Cara Grabowski as our fall seasonal naturalist; Cara has worked with the department as a volunteer and a day camp educator.
- Pam Leiter gave a tour of Homer Lake to the Visit Champaign County Board members.

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

- We have been working closely with John Baker and Dan Olson to review the National Golf Foundation study and compile a list of questions and comments.
- Foot Golf is doing well. Year to date, we have had 326 rounds played for a total of \$2414. To implement the program, we spent \$2660. So we are very close to breaking even. The bus ads should have an even greater impact on play.
- The Big Merchandise Scramble went very well with a full field of 130 players and 3 teams on the waiting list due to lack of space for any more teams. That translates to \$11,050 in entry fees alone for this event, making it one of our biggest of the year.
- Outings and numbers for September/October:
  - September 6 – Plumbers & Pipefitters Local #149 – 24 players
  - September 11 – Mahomet Chamber of Commerce – 70 players
  - September 13 – U of I Vet Med – 27 players
  - September 17 – Ashley Furniture – 20 players
  - September 28 – Big Merchandise Scramble – 130 players
  - October 1 – Champaign County Girls High School Tournament – 36 players
  - October 5 – Mahomet Christian Church – 31 players

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

- We welcome Brad Nelson to CCFPD in the role of full-time Natural Resources Technician. Brad earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Natural Resource Ecology and Management from Iowa State University. He has gained valuable work experience at the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Iowa and, most recently, as a Range Technician in the Arapahoe/Roosevelt National Forest in Colorado.
- The Natural Resources Department once again teamed up with staff and volunteers to plant trees at Unity West elementary school in Tolono. Six trees were added to the West Woods this year as we celebrated the 10th anniversary of first planting at the site.
- Kate Smith and Jacob Pruiett attended the Grassland Restoration Network Workshop at Nachusa Grasslands in September. They enjoyed visiting sites and discussing the latest in management of natural areas with peers in the field.
- Mike Daab worked with Chris Evans of IDNR and Kate Howe of the Midwest Invasive Plant Network, as well as the local Invasive Plant Task Force, to host a Cooperative Weed Management Area workshop on September 29, at Elks Lake Pavilion. The event was attended by approximately thirty individuals with various backgrounds and agency affiliations. Work will continue to determine the best methods to approach weed issues across boundaries.
- NR staff has been busy collecting seed for our savanna projects at Homer Lake as well as the US 150 project. We hosted a successful seed collection event on September 28 as part of National Public Lands Day. We thank the Master Naturalists and volunteers from the Nabor House agriculture fraternity at the University of Illinois that came out.
- Mike Daab and Jake Pruiett hosted Craig Meier, Coordinator for the Tallgrass Prairie and Oak Savanna Fire Science Consortium, and took him on a short field trip to CCFPD sites to observe and discuss the effects of using prescribed fire as a natural areas management tool.
- Fall tree planting has begun.

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

- Bi-annual truck and trailer inspections were completed by CRS Flying Services, Gibson City.
- Quarterly ADA inspections were completed for door closures and sink faucets.
- Paddleboats have been removed from the main lake, safety equipment and supplies stored, and the boathouse has been shut down and winterized.
- Fall cleanup has begun in the Botanical Gardens. This includes cleaning and setting up the greenhouse for potted plants, cuttings of plants for propagation, mulching flower beds, and adding deer wrap and fencing around adolescent trees and shrubs.
- Sangamon Valley Water Department replaced the fire hydrant near the Lake of the Woods' main entrance on September 15. During the replacement, several facilities and water fountains were shut down temporarily. There was a 48-hour boil order after the repair.
- Andrew Combes was able to isolate and repair an electrical problem that has persisted with the sidewalk and parking lot lights surrounding HQ for the past several months. An electrician quoted replacement of the underground line for approximately \$1,800. Combes was able to isolate the line brake and make the repairs with a \$24 splice kit.
- Lithonia Lighting issued a recall notice on incandescent light fixtures sold between March 2010 and March 2014. Sixteen of the emergency lights in the education wing of the museum were affected by this recall. Due to the fire hazard related to the circuit boards, the lights were removed on September 12 and replacement boards were ordered.

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

- I participated in the sign dedication at Old Homer Park. Members of the Homer Historical Society were very appreciative of the information display that was installed.
- The Natural Playscape has been extremely busy as a result of high school homecoming festivities. It is not uncommon to see bus and van loads of kids, parents, and grandparents gathering around the playscape features to get pictures. The amphitheater at the Salt Fork Center is still a very popular site for photos as well.



- We installed a new water pump system at the Natural Playscape with the help of Chris' Water Gardens. The new system allows us to easily retrieve the pumps from the vaults for service, and filtration is greatly improved reducing the potential for debris to get into the pumps. This

will save a great deal of time and is much safer than wading out into the lake to install and retrieve the pumps.

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

- Our campground hosts have departed for the season and we are now under the silent host system through the winter. We had a very successful camping season this year and look forward to a better one next year.
- Lincoln's Challenge cadets continue their work service this fall. They have helped us lay new gravel pack down on several campsites that are prone to flooding.
- The exterior work on the residence addition has been completed by the contractor. The construction crew is now completing the interior work.

### **Volunteers (Pat Simpson)**

- On September 4<sup>th</sup>, I attended the University of Illinois Volunteer Fair from 10 am to 2 pm. Outcomes included requests for service opportunities from four separate UIUC service organizations. One of the organizations helped out at the Sept. 28 National Public Lands seed collection event at Buffalo Trace. Another helped out with the breakfast and registration/information table at the River to Rail Ride. The two other groups will participate in events at Lake of the Woods: 1) one pre-med fraternity will help out at Harvest Fest and 2) the iHelp! Campus organization will attend a Lake of the Woods cleanup on Oct. 18.
- I was responsible for purchasing snacks and beverages and for setup for three Master Naturalist classes held on CCFPD sites in September.
- I met with Diane Wilhite, the new Program Coordinator for the East Central Illinois Master Naturalist Program, on Sept. 4<sup>th</sup> to develop a more refined reporting system for their Master Naturalists. This new approach will enable us to have a detailed, category-specific tracking of the contributions made by Master Naturalists to the CCFPD.
- Two Boy Scout troops have come forward seeking projects within CCFPD for purposes of fulfilling the requirements for badges in forestry and conservation. Arrangements are being made to for tree planting and clean-up projects within our preserves.
- In September, I recruited the following volunteers for special events:
  - 30 volunteers for the River to Rail Ride (Sept. 20)
  - 17 volunteers for seed collection on national Public Lands Day (Sept. 28)
  - 9 volunteers for Prairie Stories (Sept. 13)
  - 13-14 volunteers for Harvest Fest (Oct. 11)
  - 2 volunteers for School's Out – Insects (Oct. 12)
- Katie Smith and I have held one meeting and are scheduling another with Chelsey Walsh to reinstitute the Frog Survey, a highly successful citizen science project previously operating in the CCFPD. The new phase of this project will begin in March 2015.
- Additional meetings attended in September included the Advisory Board of the East Central Illinois Master Naturalist Program and the Freedom Fest Planning Committee.

### **Special Projects (Tom Pike)**

- Continue updating facilities inventory and pricing out items on 2015 Budget.
- Working on dam applications for PDRMA.
- Finishing the new wording and pictures of pre and post staff inspections forms for walk bridges, decks, ramps, and docks.