

February 6, 2017

MEMORANDUM

From: Dave Torrens, Director of Golf and Dave Huber, Golf Professional
To: Board of Commissioners
Subject: Golf Course Annual Report

Who We Are

The Golf Course maintenance staff has three full-time employees, Dave Torrens, Director of Golf and Assistant Golf Course Superintendents, Darin Weasel and one open Assistant Golf Course Superintendent. This department hires nine seasonal employees that work from March until December.

The Pro Shop staff consists of two full time regular employees: Head Golf Professional/Manager David Huber and the Assistant Manager/Outing Coordinator Chris Edmondson, one full time seasonal PGA Assistant Professional as well as a variable number of part time seasonal employees. Pro Shop part time seasonal positions include Cashiers, Starters, Rangers, Golf Cart /Range /Janitorial maintenance personnel. Snack Bar part time personnel include Cashiers, Beverage Cart attendant, outing and catering personnel.

Assistant Manager/Outing Coordinator Chris Edmondson completed his undergrad work at MacMurray College and graduated with a Masters in Public Parks and Recreation from the University of Minnesota. Chris has excellent organizational skills and his attention to detail has been an ongoing asset to the pro shop operation.

Nick Berger will be new to the PGA Golf Professional Training Program this spring after finishing his undergraduate work at McKendree University. Nick has worked for us while attending high school, Parkland College and McKendree. The PGA training teaches the specific skills associated with the golf industry such as teaching, merchandising, club repair, club fitting, golf cart fleet management, marketing, and basic turf grass science.

What We Do

Our Mission & Vision

Our mission is to promote the game of golf at the CCFPD Lake of the Woods Golf Course so that the pursuit of the game is an important part of the public's recreational enjoyment, by consistently delivering a recreational value that exceeds the golfer's expectations.

Our vision is to hold a valued and vital place in the lives of Champaign County residents, and be recognized for innovation, leadership and excellence.

Daily golf course maintenance comprises golf course set-up, includes moving tee locations, emptying trash and changing cup locations, mowing putting greens and raking sand bunkers. Three times per week fairways, tees and approaches are mowed. Cutting height for putting greens is five-thirty seconds of an inch, tees, approaches and fairways three-quarters of an inch. Staff reduced the fairway cutting height per the recommendation of the National Golf Foundation Study. Rough mowing takes place every day, mowing height two and one-half inches.

Twice per year the putting greens are aerified. In 2014, the golf course purchased a new aerifier. This unit is more productive and recovery time is decreased. We have the option with the new

aerifier to aerify in the middle of the season, using small ¼ inch holes, to help water infiltration. Aerification involves creating holes in the putting surfaces which decreases compaction, improves water infiltration and gas exchange. During aerification, sand is spread onto the putting surface. This helps with water infiltration, putting surface smoothness and helps break down organic matter build up. Monthly, during the growing season, the putting greens are topdressed with a fine layer of sand. This sand is worked into the turf canopy using a large brush dragged behind a golf maintenance cart. The sand helps fill low spots, creating a smooth putting surface. These applications of sand break down organic matter preventing the build-up of a thatch layer.

The last complete sand bunker renovation was in 1998 and 1999. During the following years dirt and debris have accumulated in the sand. This reduces the ability for water to drain properly. Each year golf maintenance staff renovates bunkers as time allows. This process involves removing the existing sand, repairing the drain tile where necessary, and refilling with new sand. The golf course has 58 sand bunkers. Thirty-two have been renovated in recent years.

Each year the Pro Shop collects green fees and related purchases for 20,000 to 25,000 rounds of golf including 1800 to 2000 rounds on the Par 3 course. Retail sales run year round even when outdoor course is closed for play. The official “Season” for season pass holders is March 1 through November 30. Additionally pro shop cashiers use the Illinois DNR equipment to sell hunting & fishing licenses and distribute information supplied by IDNR regarding Illinois Hunting & Fishing Rules & Regulations.

We have an AED device located in the Pro Shop with several staff trained in its use. It has been used on the course.

Equipment

Our equipment includes: two greens mowers, two tee/approach mowers, two fairway mowers, three rough mowers, two sand bunker rakes, two chemical sprayers, sand topdresser, bank/slope mower, leaf blowers, slit seeders, loader, maintenance golf carts, string trimmers, fertilizer spreaders and many hand tools.

During the winter months the staff performs maintenance on each piece of equipment. This involves cleaning, disassembling reels, replacing bearing and seals, and sharpening the reels. All oil and filters are changed.

Irrigation System

The irrigation system is an automatic computer controlled system. It was installed from 1988 to 1989. As the system ages, we have many irrigation problems. The pump station consists of three pumps, one twenty horsepower pump and two sixty horsepower pumps. This allows us to water at fourteen hundred gallons per minute. The irrigation system waters the putting greens, tees, approaches and fairways. Each irrigation head can be independently adjusted to increase or decrease the amount of water depending on the areas need. Irrigation cycles are used, only as needed, to avoid drought stress.

Irrigation repair is an ongoing process at the golf course. In 2014, staff labor totaled 112.5 hours, total wages \$2,562.50, and total repair parts \$6,018.15. In 2015, staff labor totaled 102 hours, total wages \$1,997.00 and total repair parts \$4,940.00. 2016 staff labor totaled 92 hours, total wages \$1815.00, and total repair parts \$2,361.48.

Golf Car Fleet Management

The golf course purchased new gasoline engine golf cars in 2016. We record outgoing cart numbers and check hour meters on carts to shift specific cart usage around to help even out total fleet hours.

Merchandise

For the Pro Shop merchandise operation the head professional and pro shop staff give input in the merchandise selection. Both full time staff as well as the assistant professional are involved with inventory purchasing, receiving, invoice management, inventory control, special orders, product display and rotation.

Other area pro shops have stopped taking trade-in merchandise because the slow turnover of used clubs ties up profit from new club sales. We offer golf club trade-in service to with three options: 1) Consignment 2) EBay their clubs 3) Wholesale value from third party website. No other shop in the area offers this level of customer service which helps to set our shop apart.

Clubhouse Rental

The Golf Course Clubhouse is available to rent for golf outings, showers, parties and many other events from April 1 to October 15. The facility has a capacity of 80 people seated. The Clubhouse is furnished with chairs and rectangular tables and has a kitchen with a refrigerator, sink, oven, coffee maker, and microwave and a unisex restroom. The Clubhouse is both heated and air conditioned. Facility rental hours are from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Pro Shop Golf Professional Services

We offered a variety of golf lessons and services at Lake of the Woods GC. Currently PGA professional Dave Huber retains 100% of lesson revenue from individual lessons he teaches, in addition we conduct group lessons, camps and junior golf clinics that CCFPD receives 100% of the lesson revenue. In 2016 this generated \$5110.00 for CCFPD vs. individual teaching revenue of \$1107.00 for Huber. We also offer club fitting to any golfer interested in buying new equipment. We use the Mizuno fitting system which allows us determine the proper club length, lie, shaft, shaft flex, and set make up to optimize a players game. We do not charge for this professional service if clubs are purchased through our pro shop. This “value added” extra service further enhances our merchandise operation. We perform all types of golf club repair from grip installation to re-shafting an entire set.

Associations

Men’s Association – Our men’s league runs from late April to early October and meets every Wednesday with tee times blocked from 3:30-5:30 on only 1-9 holes to ensure public access to the course. Some benefits to joining include a CDGA handicap, hole in one administration, entrance into the club championship and a fall dinner. The league consists of individual weekly games with some partner games mixed in occasionally. We have 50-60 members playing each week. Below is some additional information on our Men’s league:

Fee: \$30

Event (prize fund): \$5 each week plus green fees

Schedule: April 27th – October 5th (Wednesday afternoons)

Women's Association – Lake of the Woods GC has both an 18 and 9 hole women's association. Our 18 hole league runs from late April to the end of September and meets every Wednesday morning at 8:00 am. The 9 hole league also meets every Wednesday from 8:30-9:00 am. Both leagues consist of individual weekly games with some partner games mixed in from week to week. Both leagues combine for a "Fun Day" on the course with lunch following as a season finale.

18 Hole

Fee: \$35

Event Fee: Taken from \$35 plus green fees

Schedule: April 27st – September 26th

9 Hole

Fee: \$35

Event: Taken from \$35 plus green fees

Schedule: April 27th – September 26th

Practice Areas

We have a large grass tee driving range area as well as synthetic mats on a concrete pad at the back of the tee. Our range ball prices are \$12 for a large bucket \$8 for medium and \$6 for a small. We also have two practice putting greens and one pitching green with a practice bunker. The putting greens and pitching area are open to the public free of charge for any golfer who wants to improve their game.

Outings and Tournaments

Chris Edmondson coordinates all outside golf outings included in the list below. We also offer additional outing services as requested including: Rules administration, score boards, handicap application, flights, pairings, and tee times administration.

Foot Golf

In mid-July 2014 we opened a 9 hole Foot Golf Course located on our Par-3 golf course. Foot Golf is played with regular golf rules but with soccer balls and your feet instead of golf balls and golf clubs. Players kick off from a tee box and attempt to get their soccer ball into a 21-inch diameter cup using the fewest number of kicks. Foot Golf can be played by children and adults.



Foot Golf facilities in United States



Youth enjoying Foot Golf at LOW

Indoor Golf Simulator

Features include:

- 36 Modes of Scoring Formats – Stroke Play, Scramble, Skins, Stableford, etc.
- Handicap Score Adjustment • Closest to Pin and Longest Drive Competitions online
- Choice of Pin Position • Elevation Adjustments • Green Options – adjust hardness and speed
- Wind Conditions – both direction and velocity • Weather Conditions – from blue skies to rain
- Time-of-Day Customization – experience the beauty of the course at sunrise.



The photos above show the golf simulators in the Clubhouse. Golfers have 88 courses to choose from. The addition of online player profile capability brings a new level of service with handicap and play statistics available to golfers 24 / 7.

Play on simulators takes about one hour per 18 holes per person. One foursome will take 4 hours to complete an 18 holes on average. With one simulator we can play a maximum of three foursomes per day (12 green fees) in about 13 hours. With two simulators that doubled to 24 green fees per day maximum. As a comparison, we can have one tee time every nine minutes outside on the 18 hole course and inside on the simulators we have only two tee times every four hours.

The summary below shows simulator play including 18 hole rounds, practice and league play.

Simulator Summary

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
Rounds	32	717	978	899	825	3,451
Revenue	\$427	\$9,450	\$15,376	\$10,499	\$7,058	42,810

Marketing

Golf Now is our provider for golf course website, point of sale system and automated tee sheet. We manage and maintain the web site with current calendar of events, tournament and other relevant facility information.

Lake of the Woods was among the first golf facilities to use automated tee sheet for reservations. We accept tee-times one week in advance via telephone, internet, or in person. There is also a QR code on our scorecard which, when scanned by a smart phone, links directly to our mobile booking page. This is just another avenue for customers to book a tee time or view our website.

We compose and send out email promotions to advertise upcoming events, sales, and other important information we feel will attract customers. We send out a monthly newsletter via e-mail, as well as holiday, tournament or sales promotions in separate more detailed e-mails.

We write and record our own radio advertising which allows us to gain exposure throughout Champaign County and surrounding communities all paid for with a ½ price trade out promotion campaign offered through WDWS at no cost to CCFPD.

Recent improved collaboration with Lisa Sprinkle has helped the golf course project a more consistent look and message. We are following through with a number of the NGF recommended marketing ideas.

Snack Bar Operations

Completing another NGF study recommendation, Mike Fry and the construction crew did a very impressive top to bottom renovation to the snack bar facility last spring. The area looks clean and fresh and we have had many positive comments from the golfers.

The snack bar operation runs from April through early October on the main floor of the clubhouse and then we move the food and beverage service to the Pro Shop area for savings on personnel costs. Dave Huber has the required Food Service Sanitation Certificate issued through the Department of Public Health.

The snack bar serves hot dogs, sandwiches, chips, crackers, cookies, candy, fresh fruit and a variety of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. We also run snack bar specials on weekends when play is generally at its greatest. As suggested in the NGF study we have added pizza and some occasional healthier wraps to the menu selection as well.

We have a beverage cart which delivers our drink options and snacks as well as some merchandise to golfers on the course when weather and amount of play permit from April through October.

Local Play Overview

The NGF Golf Study pointed out that overall play in our immediate market is down. Nearly all area courses are below the national and regional rate of decline in play. We took the recommendation from NGF and increasing our marketing efforts outside of Champaign emphasized our destination qualities such as our Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary designation and Robert Bruce Harris designed course features in our approach to increase play.

Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary

In 2004, Lake of the Woods Golf Course became a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary by Audubon International. To achieve this certification we documented our environmental efforts in each of six categories: Environmental Planning, Wildlife and Habitat Management, Outreach and Education, Chemical Reduction and Safety, Water Conservation, and Water Quality Management. One of our main projects was the creation of the Bio-Swale along the entrance drive. Previously, the runoff from the golf parking lot drained directly into the Lake of the Woods Lake. During the parking lot renovation, the water was diverted into the bio-swale. Contaminants from the parking lot are filtered before they enter the lake, protecting the water's quality. An Eagle Scout project involved planting trees to help diversify the age and species inventory took place in 2015. The Scout planted 11 trees between holes #6 and #11.

Master Improvement Plan

A Master Improvement Plan was implemented in 1998 to improve the playability and aesthetics of Lake of the Woods Golf Course. Core areas of improvement were: Adding multiple tee system, lake placement and water quality, bunker placement and condition, cart path routing, tree planting, converting maintained areas to low or zero maintenance areas, and redesign pro shop grounds and parking area. Each of these core areas were addressed by 2010. The remaining items on the Master Improvement Plan will be reviewed with Jonathan Hasselbring and dovetailed into the overall CCFPD Master Plan.

February 2, 2017

MEMORANDUM

From: Brian Taylor, Homer Lake Site Superintendent

To: Board of Commissioners

Re: Summary of Homer Lake Operations

Facilities and Staff

Homer Lake Operations and Maintenance department is located on the north east side of the park just off South Homer Lake road. The facility is a 5,848 square foot metal shed that houses all the maintenance equipment, vehicles, work areas and offices for the staff. The residence of the site superintendent is located adjacent to the maintenance facility and is 600 feet east of the main entrance to the park. The maintenance drive separates the house property from the maintenance facility. The location of the house allows the site superintendent/resident guard to monitor traffic and provides easy access for park visitors should they need assistance.

The staff consists of a full-time site superintendent and a full-time assistant site superintendent and three seasonal employees. Brian Taylor has served as Site Superintendent for twenty-six years, and Assistant Site Superintendent Roy Woodmansee has twenty-five years of service. We also have three seasonals. Joe Hopper has been with us for ten seasons, and we hire at least two additional seasonals each year.

Duties and Responsibilities

The staff is responsible for the general maintenance, service and upkeep of the District's facilities, grounds and waters at Homer Lake, Collins Pond, Old Homer Park, Sylvester Woods, Hidden Acres, and Kickapoo Rail Trail. Normal recurring duties include:

- Opening and closing of the park and facilities
- Trash pick up and removal
- Mowing, trimming, weed control of common areas and trails
- Maintenance of landscape areas, shrub beds, flower beds, and prairie plots
- Tree planting, pruning and removal
- Trail maintenance and development
- Snow and ice removal on roads and sidewalks
- Janitorial duties at rental facilities, pit toilets, and maintenance building
- Rental facility, Special Use Permit and special program preparation and clean up
- Monthly playground and facility inspections
- Vehicle and equipment service and maintenance

Equipment

- Vehicles – Ford Escape hybrid, Ford F - 250, Ford F - 450 dump bed and snow plow
- Mowers – Kubota 6ft mower, John Deere 6ft mower, 3 point bush hog mower
- Tractors – Kubota 31hp general utility, John Deere Backhoe
- Implements – 5 ft tiller, box scraper, gill, turf aerator, grader blade, brush grapple
- Utility Vehicles – 2 Kubota RTV's with dump beds
- Skid Steer – Bobcat with forestry mulcher, brush mower, and loader bucket
- Trailers – 3 equipment trailers for mowers, tractors, and skid steer
- Patrol Boat – 14ft flat bottom with 25hp outboard motor

Scope of Responsibilities

Homer Lake Forest Preserve has been managed by the District since 1971 but was not under District ownership until 1992 when the IDNR transferred the title. The preserve consists of an 828-acre tract and an 80-acre lake with more than 5 miles of shoreline. The staff maintains, services, and inspects the following park features:

- Homer Lake Interpretive Center
- Salt Fork Center rental facility (115 capacity) – (1999 Award of Excellence from IDNR Best Facility Award) - Most rented facility in the District
- Salt Fork Center amphitheater – Used mainly for weddings and photography
- Walnut Hill Shelter rental facility (60 capacity) - Open air with indoor rest rooms
- Walnut Hill playground and sand volleyball court
- Park residence – 1,465 square feet constructed in late 70's
- Homer Lake – 80 acres of water, IDNR manages and stocks fish annually
- Oak Ridge picnic area has 2 small shelters open to the public
- Sail Boat Launch concrete walk way (300') This area serves as the overflow spillway.
- Natural Playscape & Stream (2013 IPRA Best Facility Award)
- Observation Tower overlooking a prairie restoration site
- Lincoln wayside exhibit
- 900 foot dam and spillway – constructed in 1968, annual inspections for PDRMA,
- 1.5 miles of Salt Fork River frontage
- 3 rest room facilities
- 5 fishing piers and 4 boat ramps
- 10 picnic areas with tables, grills and benches
- 10 plus miles of hiking / multi use trails with 1 interpretive trail system
- 4 trail bridges
- 1 sled hill
- 4 swinging benches

Collins Pond

This 28 acre parcel and three acre pond was purchased by the District in 1974. It has one of the oldest oak and hickory woodlands in the area with an excellent variety of native woodland plants. This park area is approximately 3 miles south of Homer Lake and it offers a more secluded outdoor experience.

- 0.62 mile trail
- 3 picnic tables
- 1 grill

Old Homer Park

This old historic park site was donated to the District in 1998. It is reported to be a 15 acre tract with Salt Fork River frontage located 2 miles south east of Homer Lake. State Route 49 runs thru the property. Old Homer Park operated from about 1905 to 1929 and it was one of the largest recreation areas in central Illinois. Most of the acreage is in the flood plain so very little has been done in terms of providing amenities for visitors. An Eagle Scout installed a bench near the last historic artifact which was a fountain that looked like a large bird bath. With financial assistance and historical research provided by the Homer Historical Society, a very nice interpretive sign was installed in 2014.

Sylvester Woods (2013)

This 6.7 acre parcel is located 2 miles west of Homer Lake. The property is a very high quality natural area that borders the Salt Fork River. We installed a beautiful maintenance free sign that recognizes the Sylvester family as the original owners since 1854.

Hidden Acres (2014)

This 28 acre property is located less than 1/4 mile north of Sylvester Woods and is adjacent to Sylvester along a portion of its perimeter. This area is predominately in the flood plain as it borders the Salt Fork River. The upland portion of the property has a small pond, a trail loop, and we installed a small parking area.

Kickapoo Rail Trail (2013)

The acquisition of the 24.5 mile CSX rail corridor from Urbana to Danville was finally completed after nearly two decades. The Forest Preserve District will manage 12.7 miles of this 175 acre linear parkway that begins just east of Urbana and ends at the Vermilion County line just east of Ogden. When developed the 10 foot wide crushed limestone path will provide a variety of recreational and educational opportunities. The first 6.7 miles of construction began in 2016.

Public Service Responsibilities / Activities

The Homer Lake staff provides excellent public service to our visitors and we respond to a variety of requests from the public, rental groups, and volunteers. The following list is representative of the additional public service activities:

- The Emergency Management Agency held their annual search and rescue training
- Trail Stewards - assisting them with trail issues
- Take Me Fishing - assisting the Interpretive staff
- Canoe Programs - assisting the Interpretive staff
- Audubon Programs & Bird Counts
- U of I Natural History Survey long term studies
- Bass Tournaments
- Catfish Tournaments
- U of I rowing crew team
- Special Use Permits – walk and run events, Search and Rescue events, several school related events, Cardboard Boat Race, car shows, and bike rides

2016 Accomplishments

The Sail Boat Boardwalk project is nearly completed after several years and many design proposals. District employees completed the project for less than \$34,000 of the \$135,000 that was budgeted. Over the years we received price quotes that approached \$400,000. The new concrete side walk was installed near the parking lot and the shoreline was naturalized. This should be a much more sustainable design and it will provide safe travel for families going to the Natural Playscape.

We are looking forward to the completion of the first phase of construction on the Kickapoo Rail Trail. The 6.7 mile section from Urbana to downtown St. Joseph is scheduled to open this summer.

Homer Lake rental facilities continue to be very popular attractions. The Salt Fork Center continues to be the most rented facility in the district with 60 rentals, and Walnut Hill is the most rented open air shelter with 32 rentals.

February 6, 2017

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Commissioners

From: Matthew Kuntz, Site Superintendent

Re: Middle Fork River Forest Preserve 2016 Annual Report

Background

The Middle Fork River Forest Preserve consists of 1,702 acres in northeast Champaign County, approximately five miles north of Penfield. The preserve contains a mix of hardwood forests, mixed lowland and upland prairies, and waterfowl management areas. Within the user areas of the preserve is a 65 site campground holding electric and non-electric camping, two group areas for larger camping groups, swim beach, four miles of the Middle Fork River, an enclosed rental building used for multiple applications, and three ponds for recreational use. Camping is available to the public April 1 through November 1, with its busiest time running May through October.

Staff and Responsibilities

Staffing at the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve consists of three full-time employees, Site Superintendent Matthew Kuntz, Assistant Site Superintendent Andy Little, and Ed Hutchinson, a Maintenance Worker II. We typically employ three seasonal positions helping with day to day operations and a campground host that runs office operations for the campground.

Responsibilities include grounds maintenance and general upkeep of all user areas and properties owned by the district. Along with the campground host, full-time staff maintains an online and walkup campground reservation system used by staff and public. Other duties include management of waterfowl areas, wetlands, river corridors, and trails.

2016 Year in Review

2016 once again was a successful year for the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. Keeping up with others in the industry, our campground was packed all year with full capacity bookings on most weekends. As stated in last year's report, we are continuing to turn away a large number of campers, mostly on the holiday weekends due to capacity issues. Christy Wallace returned in 2016 as our campground naturalist, hosting weekend workshop and environmental education programs at the campground with great success. Middle Fork was able to host the Third Annual River to Rail Ride, a fundraiser for the Kickapoo Rail Trail.

Capital improvements completed in 2016 started with the re-design and repair of the culvert located on the north property of the preserve. This culvert had washed out due to heavy flooding the year before, and cut off our access to that area due to the fact it is on a maintenance access/user trail. Middle Fork staff also built the parking lot for the new Pt. Pleasant Trail system on the southern edge of the preserve. This was the first phase of this project. In fall of 2016 we built an overlook area on this trail system giving incredible views of the prairie and wetland section of Pt. Pleasant. The outlook was built with large rocks for a retaining wall and sitting area, taking a minimalist approach to achieve the very least disturbance of that area. Interpretive signage was also placed throughout the trail system.

Other projects completed in 2016 include the first phase of the electrical infrastructure replacement for Middle Fork. This phase consisted of replacing the transformers at the operations shop, replacing all underground lines leading into the user area of the preserve, stopping at the Sugar Creek Shelter. This also resolved an issue with an exposed electrical main in Sugar Creek, with the new line placed over the creek set with telephone poles.

The shower house shower stalls were also renovated in the spring with a newer product called Polyurea. This product coated the concrete walls with a rubber type of coating, brightening the stalls up and making this section of the building much more efficient in terms of maintenance. We received many compliments from our guests with this renovation.

The Dark Skies Program was brought to our attention by the Champaign Urbana Astronomical Society, which currently uses our preserve for several astronomy programs set through the year. Light fixtures were evaluated throughout the preserve, mostly focusing on the globe style street lights and how they emit light into the sky, instead of a more efficient directional light. Replacing our lighting infrastructure will solve our current failing fixtures, and could get us ready to become Dark Sky Certified, possibly being the first forest preserve or park in the State of Illinois with this designation.

January 19, 2017

MEMORANDUM

From: Doug Sanders, Site Superintendent

To: Board of Commissioners

Re: L.O.W. Operations/Maintenance and Botanical Gardens Annual Report

Who We Are

The Operations/Maintenance (OPS) and Botanical Gardens (BG) department is housed at the west maintenance complex of the Lake of the Woods Preserve. Located directly south of the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden, the OPS/BG staff works out of a 9,307 square foot building, shared with the Construction (CN) department. The west maintenance complex also consists of a 6,095 square foot cold-storage shed which is used to store vehicles and large equipment. This building is utilized by the OPS and CN departments. In addition, there is a 3,298 square foot cold-storage shed located at the Sangamon River Forest Preserve residence that is utilized to store seasonal equipment, supplies, and other miscellaneous items.

The OPS/BG staff is comprised of a site superintendent, two assistant site superintendents, three full-time maintenance workers, and one part-time maintenance worker. In addition, throughout the year we hire a number of seasonal workers that assist full-time staff in their daily operations.

Departmental Overview

Duties and Responsibilities

The duties and responsibilities of the department include the general maintenance, service, and upkeep of the District's facilities, vehicles, equipment, and grounds at the Lake of the Woods, River Bend, and Sangamon River preserves. This also includes the facility and grounds at the Riverview Retreat Center. Normal recurring duties include:

- opening and closing procedures of grounds and facilities;
- trash pick-up and grill clean up;
- mowing, trimming, and spraying of common areas and trails;
- seasonal planning, development, and upkeep of the Botanical Garden;
- tree pruning and removal;
- trail maintenance and development;
- snow and ice removal on roads and sidewalks;
- janitorial duties at facilities, open shelters, restrooms, and office buildings;
- rental facility and *Special Use Permit* preparation and clean-up (seven facilities);
- supervision of garden weddings;
- administration of boat rental program;
- periodic playground, facility, bridge, deck, and ramp inspections; and
- vehicle service and maintenance (23 vehicles).

Jurisdiction

The jurisdiction of the department entails the facilities and grounds within the LOW, RB, and SR preserves. This excludes areas and programs maintained by the Golf Course, Museum of the Grand Prairie, and Natural Resources departments. The department does provide assistance in these areas when requested by department personnel.

Lake of the Woods

Opened to the public in 1948, Lake of the Woods Forest Preserve is the original preserve within the Champaign County Forest Preserve District. It consists of 871.86 acres that provide a number of natural resources, educational opportunities, and recreational activities. The OPS/BG department inspects, services, and upkeeps the following amenities:

- Lake of the Woods Pavilion (200 capacity enclosed rental facility)
- Elk's Lake Pavilion (200 capacity enclosed rental facility)
- Izaak Walton Cabin (32 capacity enclosed rental facility)
- *Riverview Retreat Center (35 capacity enclosed rental facility w/kitchen)
- Swiss Valley Shelter (90 capacity rental facility)
- Rotary Hill Shelter (116 capacity rental facility w/kitchen)
- Sycamore Hollow Shelter (60 capacity rental facility)
- HI-Tower Bell Carillon
- Paddle Boat Dock
- 6 restroom facilities, including the Rayburn-Purnell RR/Bridal Dressing Room and Buffalo Trace RR
- 5 smaller, open shelters (Peninsula, Old Hickory, Fisherman, Hawthorn, Rayburn-Purnell, and Mahomet Rotary)
- 5 playgrounds
- 4 volleyball sand pits
- 5 fishing piers
- 11.5 miles of bike paths and nature/multi-use trails

*Riverview Retreat Center is located at 428 Country Rd 2500 N, approximately 2 miles north of LOW.

Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden

Within Lake of the Woods is the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden, located along IL Rt. 47, adjacent to the Museum of the Grand Prairie. This 10-acre parcel was dedicated to the wife of H.I. Gelvin and in 2014 marked its 40th Anniversary. The Garden is made up of a number of floral beds and landscaped areas with a garden pond and 12-foot waterfall as its focal point. Other structures include the award winning Miriam Davies Memorial Enabling Garden with an extensive arbor and water feature, a 24-foot octagonal gazebo, a 25' x 60' greenhouse adjacent to a 3,200 sq. ft. Discovery Garden, and an historic one-room schoolhouse maintained by the Museum. A section of the 3.5-mile Lake of the Woods bike trail runs through and adjacent to the south end of the garden. Features of the Botanical Garden include:

- an All-America Selection garden;
- xeric garden;
- Prairie Sampler garden;
- perennial beds displaying native hybrids of selected prairie plants; and
- many diverse plantings of perennial beds, shrub, and annual floral displays.

In conjunction with the Garden Clubs of Illinois and the Mahomet Garden Club, the BG staff assists in maintaining the Illinois Blue Star Maker landscape site located at the Buffalo Trace east parking lot.

River Bend

Developed in 2001, the River Bend Forest Preserve is a 284.77-acre site, containing 130 acres of lake water, 2.5 miles of forest along the Sangamon River as well as a 1-mile nature trail and 1.2-mile multi-purpose trail. Amenities maintained by the department include:

- River Bend open shelter;
- 1 restroom facility;
- Possibility Pier; and
- 2.5 miles of nature/multi-use trails

Sangamon River

Purchased in 2007, Sangamon River Forest Preserve provides a 160-acre area for a variety of natural resource activities. In addition, it includes the historic residence that was built in 1919. The department cares for the following amenities:

- Sangamon River open shelter;
- 1 restroom facility;
- 2.3 miles of nature/multi-use trails;
- Canoe launch along Sangamon River and Wildcat Slough; and
- 450' accessible trail with shade structure

Affiliation with District Staff and General Public

In relation to the District's mission to provide conservation, education, and recreation experiences for the county, the OPS/BG staff supports the District's staff in their daily functions. This support comes in the form of providing general housekeeping of offices and common areas, facility maintenance, and addressing special requests.

Since the OPS/BG staff works throughout the grounds they are often the District's frontline responders to the general public's needs and questions.

2016 Accomplishments

LOW had a significant number of park visitors in 2016. Outside of golfing, educational programs, and normal foot/vehicle traffic it is estimated there were 39,450 visitors this past year. These numbers are conservative estimates generated through building rentals, weddings, and special use permits.

Estimated Park Visitors at LOW (2016)

- 16,650 Building Rentals
 - 800 Weddings
 - 22,000 Special Use Permits
- 39,450 Total Visitors**

Noteworthy Events

Primary/General Elections: Lake of the Woods Pavilion was utilized as an early voting location for both elections in 2016. During the primary election 488 voters visited LOW and the general election had 959 voters. The facility was reserved for a two week period for both election periods.

Polar Plunge and Donut Dash 5K: Each February, Special Olympics Illinois holds its annual polar plunge event at the Peninsula. This past year they added the Donut Dash 5K run/walk to their event. (450 visitors)

Best of the Class: WCIA recognized area high school seniors for their academic achievements with their annual Best of the Class event. It is a long standing tradition to hold this event in the Mabery Gelvin Botanical Garden where students have vignettes videotaped with the iconic bridge/waterfall in the background. (350 participants)

Freedom Fest: In celebration of our country's independence, LOW hosted the annual Freedom Fest event. This event consists of food vendors, children's games, and a spectacular fireworks display over the main lake, set to music. (4,200 visitors)

The Wall That Heals: In June, a special committee in Mahomet hosted The Wall That Heals at the Peninsula. This exhibit is a half-scaled replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. Patrick O'Neil, representative of the Wall, commented that LOW was one of the most picturesque locations they had ever visited. He also commented the cooperative effort made by event organizers and LOW staff raised the bar for future locations. (7,000 visitors)



Upgrades and Accessibility

Several capital projects were completed this year in support of visitor usage and accessibility. Among these upgrades at LOW were:

Route 47 Bike Path: Through a cooperative effort between IDOT, the Village of Mahomet, and CCFPD a bike trail was added along Route 47, connecting the downtown area with the Briar Cliff subdivision. This project was a continuation of the trail project that was installed in 2012. The newest portion provides access to the Botanical Garden, the Museum of the Grand Prairie, and the 3-mile bike trail that runs through LOW.

Peninsula Electric/Water Upgrades: The electrical panel on the outside of the Peninsula restroom was upgraded with multiple 110 volt outlets and a 220 volt outlet. In addition, a hot water heater was installed in the facility.

Elk's Lake Road Improvement: The section of the road between the LOW entrance and the Big Oak restroom facility was seal coated. Preparation work was completed by the CN and OPS staff that included filling of pot holes, cracks, and widening of the section between Elk's Lake Pavilion and the Big Oak restroom.

Botanical Garden Sidewalk: LOW received a \$4,000 grant from the Community Foundation of East Central Illinois that allowed phase II completion of the sidewalk system in the Botanical Garden. This "Access to Recreation" grant made it possible to connect the Garden's main entrance to the Miriam Davies Memorial Enabling Garden.