

montgomery county
department of parks





The Facts...

We are the custodians of 408 parks on more than 33,000 acres of parkland comprising over 10 percent of the County's land. Assets, facilities, and infrastructure that we manage directly, or manage through a variety of arrangements with others, include:

- over 500 lakes, ponds and stormwater management facilities and devices
- 457 miles of streams
- 305 tennis courts
- 296 athletic fields
- 289 playgrounds
- 208 basketball courts
- 189 miles of paved and natural surface trails
- 114 picnic areas
- 110 historic structures
- 120 campsites
- 31 park activity buildings
- 2 miniature trains
- 2 indoor tennis facilities
- 2 boat rental facilities
- 3 indoor and open-air ice rinks
- a variety of event centers
- 5 stables and equestrian centers
- 2 public gardens
- 2 scenic parkways
- 3 dog parks
- 4 golf courses
- 4 nature centers
- 2 miniature golf courses
- one SoccerPlex
- one splash park
- one agricultural history park
- hundreds of miles of paved and natural surface trails.

As one can tell from this list, we have far more recreational amenities than any other entity in Montgomery County with resultant high demand for our programs and services.

The Good...

With astonishing progress, a responsive and more professional approach to managing and operating parks and recreational facilities has been spreading throughout the agency, following a friendly split two years ago from the Planning Department. We are developing strong operational practices for what it takes to run a large and successful urban and suburban park system. This is making a big difference in accountability and results.

Our approach has shifted to systems and protocols for managing assets efficiently, empowering staff while holding them accountable, encouraging dialogue with users, respecting our partners, and responding quickly to the public. Over the last six months we have:

Better Systems

- Developed a steady stream of useful, clean data from our SmartParks system and use it to manage our work program and deploy our staff efficiently
- Improved our response time to the public with dedicated phone lines (answered in person) for reporting complaints, ideas, questions, repair needs, criminal activities, and the like
- Completed another “How Are We Doing?” survey of park users, primarily at our Enterprise facilities, and are using results to measure and guide performance
- Gotten a handle on the wide variety of leases, partnerships, special uses and similar arrangements for use of parks facilities and areas for both public and private purposes -- something we have long sought to accomplish
- Given historic properties long-overdue attention from the trained professional staff we were delighted to bring aboard last year.

Real Performance Measures

- Revised our measures to include more outcome and program evaluation to steer us in long- and short-term service evaluations
- Started to build measures for each of our budget program element categories
- Used the ongoing Infrastructure Assessment Project, funded by County Council, to take the enhanced information provided from industry standards of maintenance for facilities and components in parks to a new level – we are adding them to SmartParks as maintenance targets to more efficiently



schedule maintenance and analyze maintenance frequency. By monitoring performance against these standards we can adjust resources as appropriate.

Leveraging Resources

- Added our own new programming for event centers and other park sites, moving us from passively waiting for someone to rent our facilities to proactively creating opportunities to invite the public for use – and garnering more revenue eventually
- Upgraded our extremely popular volunteer program to provide automated registration and training, and it continues to prosper, up 5 percent over the last reporting period with over 62,000 hours – equal to \$1.2 million in manpower
- Generated dozens of staff and citizen ideas to save money, and we're putting many in place
- Attained some savings through our retirement incentive through attrition in the short term that can help us absorb a portion of the unfunded work years
- Figured out how to shave costs on our third-party support events (such as the 4th of July) by creative use of overtime-avoidance scheduling and billing protocols
- Introduced a new fee structure for athletic fields, after long and thoughtful negotiation
- Celebrated a banner year for grants and donations managed by Parks staff – \$2.3 million in FY08!

See appendices for additional details within several of our managed program elements. More still needs to be done, but we are encouraged so far and hope to keep momentum going forward where we can.

New park acquisitions continue with the other sources of funding we have available, many in sensitive and desirable areas, and we continue to show excellent progress on our Capital Improvement Program.

Overall, during the time since our last report, we have a significant number of successes to celebrate and surprising new challenges to face. Nearly 85 percent of County residents report regular use of parks – a big number. Our customer surveys indicate a great satisfaction with what we are doing and what we offer, but complaints about the effect of budget cuts on park conditions are likely to rise. Our goal is continuous evaluation, reevaluation, and improvement.



The Bad...

As with other County agencies, the impacts of the FY09 budget cuts have already started to slow – and in some cases curtail completely – various services, programs, and activities we offer to the public.

- We are required to keep nine percent of our vacant positions unfilled: almost 70 jobs, so we worry about eventual decline in service delivery.
- Our greenhouses had to be shut down on July 1 due to a 25 percent cut in horticultural services, reducing the number of flowers and other plantings we can supply to our parks.
- Response time to actually handle service requests for repairs after they are reported is getting longer as fewer staff with fewer resources are available, and costs rise for materials.
- Overtime reductions are resulting in fewer staff available during weekends and evenings, our system’s peak hours of use.
- Requirements to generate additional revenue are putting more strain on users and have nearly eliminated our ability to honor requests for fee reductions or waivers, even for worthy causes.

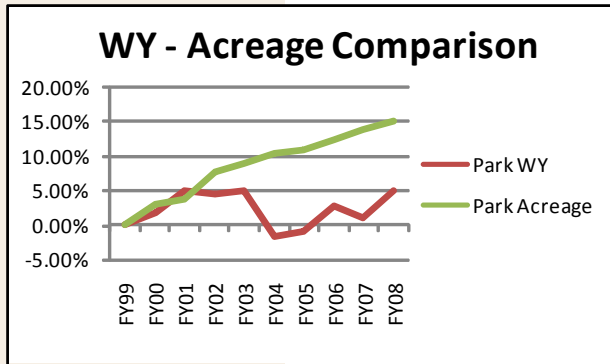
The citizens who use parks are really beginning to notice. (According to a major recent survey, that includes 85 percent of the County’s population, or more than 800,000 people.) Letters, emails, and phone calls are coming in from unhappy park users and neighbors noticing that park land isn’t being mowed as regularly or trash isn’t being picked up as quickly on weekends or after large games.

We fully expect an increase in these calls as we try to operate on a FY09 budget that is \$1.6 million below our estimate of a same-services budget. Things we did last year we cannot do this year at all. We know all operational agencies are struggling with similar constraints, but parks are often the first impacts they see immediately since we are located throughout the community and people take such a personal interest in their neighborhood’s “back yard.”

Table 3: Community Participation

In the last 12 months, about how many times, if ever, have you or other household members participated in the following activities in Montgomery County?	Never	Once or twice	3 to 12 times	13 to 26 times	More than 26 times	Total
Recycled used paper, cans or bottles from your home	6%	4%	6%	9%	75%	100%
Visited a park in the County	14%	25%	35%	12%	14%	100%
Used Montgomery County public libraries or their services	22%	20%	32%	14%	12%	100%
Visited the Montgomery County Web site (at www.montgomerycountymd.gov)	31%	23%	30%	9%	7%	100%
Used Montgomery County recreation centers	38%	23%	25%	7%	7%	100%
Ridden a Metrobus or Ride On bus within						

Moreover, and most ironically, the very success we are having in preserving and protecting land with other funds makes budget challenges greater. Parkland acreage continues to grow at a rate greater than work years or inflation-adjusted budgets. More than



60 parks have been added in the last 10 years, many with labor-intensive requirements, such as historic structures or dilapidated improvements that have major costs to remove.

We are lucky in having some beautiful new amenities in developer-built parks, such as Arora Hills and other worthy new additions, mostly up-County. Built at relatively no cost to the taxpayer, we leverage this public value by committing planning, maintenance, policing, and

other staff to their perpetual upkeep and paying for utilities and other costs.

No matter how acquired, all parks and trails have associated utility, repair, and other costs, and require ongoing maintenance and policing by our Department. And then there’s the deteriorating infrastructure and aging facilities we cannot ignore, especially with the data now streaming in from our inspections and assessments. Deferred maintenance just means big infrastructure problems in the future. Getting ahead of this is important – without a big push on this backlog, we’ll never catch up.

In a time of shrinking financial and budgetary resources, when use of our facilities continues to rise, how do we ensure our popular amenities are safe, functional and well-maintained?

The Ugly...

To work within our approved budget, we had to implement some very tough and unpopular choices. All these are choices with repercussions. We presented these choices in a tiered budget presentation to the County Council last spring, and the cuts are based directly on Council’s priority guidance. Here are more details about the real impacts of the primary service reductions in our approved FY09 budget, and how we are addressing them:

Maintained Open Space

This may be the hardest workload category to explain, but the one that has the biggest daily impact on our citizens. We consider the

care of these spaces to be one of our core missions. These are the park areas most widely used by the public – not those under a formal permit system for organized activities, but the great open spaces used for picnicking, throwing Frisbees, watching games, or simply for enjoying the outdoors and the natural surroundings. They include most neighborhood and urban parks. The problem: a large reduction here is already affecting the care and maintenance of these parks. We lost several workyears and \$450,000 in this, our largest expenditure program. The fix: initially, we have had to curtail the frequency of litter collection, weeding, and mowing. For example, no-mow areas have been delineated so a leaner staff can be deployed to the most crucial tasks. Our goal is to tinker with the correct formula of maintenance coverage in parks so that we get the most from our remaining workforce. Plus, we are examining the purchase of more efficient park vehicles, looking at routes and schedules, and cutting back on unnecessary expenditures. The problem: the Park Police Division will no longer be actively patrolling a number of parks which are reporting a low level of crime or police activity for the past twelve months. The fix: we will adjust if we receive a citizen complaint in any of the locations, and the need for proactive patrols will be continually reassessed.



Horticulture

The problem: this program took a whopping 25 percent cut this year, and may be the most sharply felt by the public. Three greenhouses at Pope Farm were shut down effective July 1st. We reduced the annual planting in the parks. Landscaping crews were downsized and the annual flower bed maintenance will be noticeably reduced and ultimately eliminated in some areas as plants deteriorate. The proposed composting program in parks has been deferred. The interior plant program was eliminated in most of our buildings. The fix: we are seeking ways to keep our parks as beautiful as we can under the circumstances, and will likely change the flower beds to use perennials, mulch, or turf in an effort to maintain the long-term appearance of the parks.

Park Buildings

Activity buildings, small recreation buildings, ancillary structures – whatever you call them, residents hate to see them deteriorate or



go away, even though there was a deliberate decision made years ago to phase them out of parks and concentrate on bringing all those uses into the new Recreation Department Community Centers or the County's Regional Centers. However, their presence in the landscape of the communities and the sense of place they create in parks is valued by many. The problem: as each building reaches the end of its road, we have had to make difficult decisions. We asked during last year's budget deliberations for money to fix them up where necessary, market those with possibilities, and develop a protocol for those beyond hope of repair. That money did not come, so we are stuck with a status quo situation as they continue to decline. The fix (maybe): a new idea we are exploring involves a different kind of replacement structure, to be funded through a special CIP initiative for park-like replacement structures that can serve as community focal points yet not compete with the County's other centers for public use. Meanwhile, we struggle to keep existing park buildings open and occasionally need to close them down when they become unsafe.



The Enterprise Solution

Enterprise facilities, programs, and activities continue to be extremely popular, tracking close to one million visitors in FY08. From ice-skating classes and tennis clinics to summer camps and miniature train rides, we have an assortment of affordable recreational activities and valuable programs for Montgomery County communities. But even with the success of new initiatives and programs, we continue to see expenditures outpace revenue growth. Though many facilities are able to cover operating expenses, as expected, we find reasonable public user fees cannot also cover debt service, increasing utility costs, and the capital reinvestment needed to sustain or upgrade these services. Our Enterprise Task Force has presented a draft report to the Montgomery County Planning Board and Park Commission, and based on comments received, we are refining those recommendations and developing new options for an upcoming presentation to the County Council.

Park Infrastructure and Facility Management

The care and oversight of our system's infrastructure is one of the most critical functions the Department manages. Though more attention has certainly been focused on this area of operations over the past few years, a great amount of work remains to be done to ensure our system's valuable assets remain safe, functional, and well-maintained.

Our situation is not unique. According to the latest Report Card for America's Infrastructure published by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), "Many of our nation's public parks, beaches and recreational harbors are falling into a state of disrepair...These facilities are anchors for tourism and economic development and often provide the public's only access to the country's cultural, historic and natural resources...there is great need for maintenance, replacement and construction of new infrastructure in our nation's state and municipal park systems."

In 2005, Montgomery Parks took the first step toward addressing this problem. A nationally respected facility management consultant was hired to conduct detailed facility condition assessments of our park infrastructure and assets, and to develop best practices to maintain, repair, and replace infrastructure to meet targeted service conditions.

Parks is heavily a land and facilities agency. As custodians of over 400 parks on more than 34,000 acres of parkland comprising 10 percent of the County's land area, the Department manages a wide array of assets, facilities, and infrastructure. Our popular amenities are supported by water and sewer lines, septic fields, roadways, bridges, parking lots, and the like, many of which Park staff manage. Although not always as "top of mind" as facilities or infrastructure, a significant portion of our resources are also dedicated to caring for the natural environment including trees and forests, streams, meadows, and natural areas. Many of the lessons learned from our focus on facility management are also applicable to what we call our "maintained open spaces."

The Past Six Months

To-date we have assessed the following facility groups: park activity buildings and selected leased buildings (ancillary buildings),



playgrounds, hard surface trails, and enterprise facilities. Similar to the findings of the ASCE on a national basis, the results in Montgomery County indicate significant backlogs in deferred maintenance and replacement for all the groups assessed thus far, a total of more than \$10,000,000.

Facility Group	Inventory	Current Replacement Value (millions)	Deferred Maintenance & Replacement Backlog (millions)
Park Activity & Leased Buildings	43 buildings; 140,000 square feet	\$11.5M	\$1.9M
Playgrounds	289 playgrounds; 1.4 million square feet	\$18.7M	\$1.7M
Hard Surface Trails	55.6 miles; 2.3 million square feet	\$26.8M	\$5.1M
Enterprise Facilities	33 buildings, 294,000 square feet	\$35.7M	\$1.4M
Total		\$92.7M	\$10.1M

Where possible and practical, funding to address these needs has already been programmed into our operating and CIP budgets.

In an effort to more efficiently manage our assets with the resources currently at our disposal, the Central Maintenance Division has reengineered its approach to work planning and execution. Its work program is now divided into three main components: routine preventative maintenance (RPM), service requests, and projects. RPM is the practice of visiting a facility at regularly scheduled intervals to perform service. Service requests are initiated by a customer, generally involve only one trade, and cost less than \$3,000. The third category represents projects that typically require more than one trade and cost more than \$3,000.

The primary objective is to develop and track a project schedule for each fiscal year that supports the priorities of departmental management. This approach will ensure more efficient use of resources by Central Maintenance management and maximizes the productive work time of maintenance staff. The secondary objective is to capture accurate project information so we can better predict future maintenance needs and reduce reactive maintenance. Work history data is paramount to effectively planning for the future needs of our customers.

In the past six months Central Maintenance staff has completed 1,200 RPM work orders and 1,900 service requests at a total cost of \$738,000. They have also completed 77 projects including nine unscheduled emergencies at a cost of \$1.1 million.

In addition to the hundreds of park facilities maintained by the Department, our property managements office oversees a variety of other facilities. These include the rental of 52 park houses and leases for 28 agricultural properties for crops, grazing, or hay; five equestrian centers; 11 communication facilities including cell towers, fiber optics, and radio towers; six Montgomery County group homes; 21 public/ private partnerships; five life-estates; five ancillary buildings; and various office space and other leases – and these numbers keep growing. In the past six months, efforts have continued to restructure our lease agreements to more effectively manage our leased assets.

Current areas of focus for leased facilities include:

Agricultural Leases: Agricultural lease agreements with local farmers are essential to our stewardship of land between the date rural land is acquired and the date park development or reforestation begins. Agricultural leases consisting of 1,060 acres are all located in the Northern Region of Montgomery County. Leases are negotiated at fair market rates. Farmers are required to respect stream buffers, observe limits on pesticide use, and meet other environmental standards. These leases generate approximately \$35,000 annually in revenues and save more than \$35,000 in annual maintenance costs that would be incurred if the land was the sole responsibility of the Department.

Equestrian Facilities: We continue to plan and implement improvements at Rickman Horse Park, Wheaton Stables, and Callithea Farm in pasture management and waste storage/recycling to ensure protection of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. With the help of the Maryland Department of Environment, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Montgomery County Soil Conservation District, and the University of Maryland Extension, Montgomery County Department of Parks equestrian facilities are setting new standards in environmental protection, land stewardship, facility management best practices and insuring safe and healthy facilities for the public. Significant improvements have been made to the grounds of the Wheaton Riding Stables.





Following inclusion in the CIP budget of \$250,000 for improvement to historic Meadowbrook Stables, a project manager and team have begun the process of permitting, selecting contractors, and scheduling major improvements to Meadowbrook Stables, including structural reinforcement of the hay loft, installation of a fire suppression system, and upgrading of electrical systems.

Park Rental Homes: In recent months, the staff has continued to achieve a level of care for maintenance of 52 park rental homes which meets or exceeds the regulations for the County's rental housing standards. All park rental houses are inspected and maintained with a focus on environmental stewardship and safety. All houses receive a comprehensive hazardous building materials survey, along with annual inspections and a long-range care plan is developed for each one.

Park rental homes are removed when they reach the end of their lifecycle. The Property Management fund is limited to what repairs can be supported by excess revenue. Any excess revenue is generally used to maintain a property in compliance with regulatory requirements such as lead-free certification for rental homes; this revenue is not adequate to perform larger projects such as roof replacements, foundation repairs, and major renovations. The park house inventory must be continually evaluated against the resources available to maintain the houses.

In FY08, six dilapidated residential properties were demolished. Two properties were removed from the Little Bennett Regional Park consistent with the recommendations of the approved master plan. The demolition of four buildings in Spencerville (formerly the Grauel Estate) is complete. The Commission acquired the 22+ acres, located in the Special Protection Area (SPA) of the Upper Paint Branch Watershed, in November 2007. The demolition site will become a meadow area and contribute to the health of the Upper Paint Branch SPA.

Historic Properties: Accessible ramps will be installed at Poole's General Store and House as a means to travel back and forth from the store to the residence. The Historic Preservation Commission approved the drawings on June 25, 2008. Also completed this summer was a lead-based paint abatement and re-painting of the exterior of the store and house. Drawings are underway to stabilize the Darby Store, located in Darnestown. The Darby House will be repainted and the roof will be repaired. In Silver Spring, Woodlawn Manor has undergone lead-based paint abatement and repainting.

Ancillary Buildings: Property Management is working closely with the tenants of several ancillary buildings to review the recent facility condition assessments and respond to community concerns. Currently in discussion are Maydale Nature Center, Westmoreland Hills, BCC Nursery, BCC Over-60's Counseling, and Ednor Park.

Wisconsin Place: A lease agreement is being negotiated with the developers of Wisconsin Place to lease the community center being constructed in that development. The Montgomery County Department of Recreation will operate the facility.



Challenges and Lessons Learned

Effective care of all of our assets requires applying industry standard practices, including a detailed inventory of assets, application of routine and preventative maintenance standards and practices, forecasted renovation and lifecycle replacement intervals, and budgeting and assignment of resources to do the work.

Our consultant's work to date indicates a backlog of more than \$10 million in deferred maintenance and replacement for just a relatively small portion of park assets. Many park facilities are nearing or over 50 years old and are beyond or reaching the end of their lifecycle. So the question becomes: in a time of shrinking resources, when use of our facilities continues to rise, how do we secure the funding necessary to ensure our popular amenities are safe, functional, and well-maintained for public use?

We must also be more thoughtful about how buildings and other infrastructure come into the system. Hundreds of acres of parkland are acquired annually, much of it with an existing structure that does not serve a mission-critical purpose.

In a time of shrinking resources, when use of our facilities continues to rise, how do we secure the funding necessary to ensure our popular amenities are safe, functional, and well-maintained for public use?

We need a more effective approach for managing our lease agreements. In the past, lease contracts were executed on a case-by-case basis, with most lease amounts falling well under market rates and lessee maintenance agreements falling well behind schedule. Leases need to be evaluated to determine the correct value and partners either need to be held accountable for their end of the agreement or released.

Looking Ahead

Additional planned improvements for Wheaton Riding Stables include removal of deteriorated fencing and regrading of the riding area near Glenallen Avenue, replacing footing in indoor arena with dust-free footing (a health concern for workers and park users), renovating an erosion-prone paddock, and constructing a waste containment facility. Improvements in structural integrity and fire prevention at Meadowbrook Stables are scheduled to be completed by fall 2009.

Property Management staff filed for the demolition permit for the house at Hillmead Neighborhood Park on June 11, 2008. The permit process and pre-demolition work are underway, and it is estimated that demolition will occur in approximately 1-2 months from now.

Future facility groups to be assessed include parking lots, athletic fields, stormwater facilities, office buildings, park rental houses, gazebos and picnic shelters, lakes and dams, restroom buildings, and historic buildings. As with the others, each assessment will identify the backlog of deferred maintenance and capital renewal, and provide recommended life cycle and ongoing maintenance programs.

We are forming a Facilities Management Division as an effort to further enhance our ability to manage our assets. This will consolidate the units of SmartParks, Property Management, and Athletic Field Maintenance. It will continue the evolution of SmartParks from a work order management system to a more valuable asset management tool to plan, budget, and track the care of our park facilities and infrastructure.

Partnerships, Volunteers and Grants

Public/private partnerships, volunteers and friends groups, and individual and organizational donors contribute significantly to the work of the Department of Parks. These partnerships enable the Department to expand the scope and reach of its programs, services and activities, and continue to be a fast-growing area of emphasis.

The Past Six Months

Partnerships: An official web presence was established in February 2008 to support the Public/Private Partnership process. This has streamlined the process by providing easier public access to the program's guidelines and application process.

The Public/Private Partnership Committee has approved a variety of partnerships including Dogtopia, Inc., a Bethesda-area pet store, to install five new mutt mitt waste bag dispensers in and around the following parks: Waverly-Schylkill Neighborhood Park, Viers Mill Local Park, Winding Creek Local Park, and an athletic field off Boiling Brook Parkway. The estimated value of this project is \$2,000. Dogtopia, Inc. will collect the waste three times weekly for a period of five years.

Development/management proposals have been received from potential partners at two park locations: South Germantown and Laytonia. These would be major facilities and are under review and evaluation.

Recently, the Public/Private Partnership Committee approved a partnership arrangement with The Bethesda Little League (BLL), the first little league in Montgomery County. In April 2008 the BLL had its first game at North Chevy Chase Local Park on Jones Bridge Road in Bethesda. An adopt-a-field agreement was executed for a one-year term, with two additional year options. BLL installed the following items: a six-foot chain link outfield fence; a solar powered, portable scoreboard; foul poles; a storage and/or concession shed; sponsor banners on the outfield fence; and a flagpole. The Department completed improvements to the field and bleachers, and provided signage to accommodate the partnership.

Grants and Donations: In FY08, the Department received grants and donations totaling \$2,360,217. The donations included \$508,099 from individuals, associations, corporations and



In FY08, a total of 62,363 volunteer hours were spent on park projects and staffing, up 5% over FY07. This equates to about \$1.2 million in added manpower for the department.

partners for commemorative gifts, greening projects, and other approved projects; \$20,170 for Non-Native Invasive Plant Removal from the Capital Crescent Coalition; and \$100,000 for the Pauline Betz Addie Center from the Montgomery County Tennis and Education Foundation. Grants brought in a total of \$1,852,118 including an additional grant award from the State Highway Administration for the Rock Creek Trail Hiker-Biker Bridge and a \$75,000 grant for floating docks at Black Hill Regional Park from the Waterway Improvement Program of the Department of Natural Resources.

In May 2008, the Department of Parks leveraged a \$100,000 donation from the Montgomery County Tennis and Education Foundation for the Cabin John Indoor Tennis facility. This donation paid for renaming the facility to the Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center at Cabin John Regional Park, including all related signage, a commemorative 22-foot timeline of Addie's accomplishments, and the renaming event. The event attracted over 500 people to celebrate this honor with Pauline Betz Addie, including special guest Billie Jean King. The donation will also be used to cover the costs of a market study, a feasibility study to develop six new indoor tennis courts, and a facility plan.

Volunteer Services: Volunteer Services has finished another great year of leveraging park staff resources with outside volunteers. The Department has recently completed its first year of a new department-wide volunteer management software system. This system allows volunteers to register and receive training more easily and enables us to better monitor volunteer use in the parks. In FY08, a total of 62,363 volunteer hours were spent on park projects and staffing, up five percent over FY07. This equates to about \$1.2 million in added manpower for the department.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Partnerships: Partnerships can be a valuable resource to leverage funding for park projects and services. But it is important to note that each partnership requires staff resources to collect, evaluate, develop, and implement. As we have learned, partnerships must always aim to balance the public benefit with the internal resources needed to sustain them. This lesson has taught us to be selective and more proactive about potential partnerships.

Grants and Donations: Grant and donation opportunities may become scarce as the federal, state, and local economies are constrained. The

declining housing market has severely affected funds available in Program Open Space funding, causing us to limit programming these funds and in some cases possibly deferring projects if this funding source is not restored. Sometimes, we find that partners or potential partners have received State grant funding on their own for projects that require a match from us, funding we do not have. This can create confusion, bad feeling, and misunderstanding. In some case we have been notified after the fact that a partner received such funding for an unapproved project on parkland, creating a dilemma for park management, the Commission, and elected officials.

Volunteer Services: The department is fortunate to have many friends groups and other organized groups that support our mission. Many are formally affiliated with our Department but there are some that are not. These groups perform a wide range of activities on behalf of the Department, but some of these functions are performed without the knowledge of the Department and are not sanctioned. We remain concerned about liability and well-meaning but erroneous incursions onto the public land. Staff is in the process of exploring ways to formalize these relationships to improve communication and control impact.



Looking Ahead

Partnerships: The public/private partnership program has been well received by the public and continues to receive an average of approximately two to three unsolicited partnership proposals each month. In the coming months, staff will explore the development of a corporate sponsorship program to support Park programs, services, and activities. Among the items that should be ready for Commission review in the next six months are another facility renaming proposal, a pavilion proposal, several curatorship projects, and other proposals.

Grants and Donations: The grants and donations program continues to grow and increase each year. The Department will increase its efforts and become more proactive in the pursuit of more and larger grant funds to support parks and park resources. We also intend to step up our contacts with State legislators to assure that any potential State grants are fully vetted before approval.

Volunteer Services: Volunteer Services will be working with staff to formalize existing partnerships with a variety of community-based organizations, like friends groups, to ensure their activities are approved, safe, and in support of Department objectives.



Urban Parks

Montgomery County is becoming more densely developed and new compact forms of growth are being encouraged. This changes the type of parks we are accustomed to producing and managing, and raises interesting questions about use and programming. To keep pace with this new vision, staff is developing the Countywide Urban Parks Plan (CUPP), which is projected for completion in FY09. Staff is scheduled to discuss the Plan Objectives, Outreach Strategy Recommendations, and Plan Schedule with the Planning Board this winter. This plan will reexamine and redefine the role of urban parks in community life.

The Past Six Months

Park staff has continued to work on framing a new vision for urban parks through studies of parks in community master plans and park concept plans. Ongoing studies include:

- White Flint Sector Plan
- Germantown Master Plan
- Wheaton Sector Plan
- Silver Spring Green Space Study, and
- Battery Lane Urban Park Concept Plan.

New studies underway include the Gaithersburg West Master Plan and the Takoma Crossroads Sector Plan.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Four key issues have emerged from the CUPP process:

1. ***When should an open space in an urban area be “elevated” to a public park?*** Through work on master plans for White Flint and Germantown, staff has been able to develop recommendations for Planning Board review that identify which open spaces rise to the level of public parks based on their role in community life.
2. ***How are urban parks different?*** Staff continues to find that urban parks are spaces that are active, not dormant, and that contribute significantly to the life and character of the surrounding urban area. Each community’s needs are different; to be successful, each urban park should respond

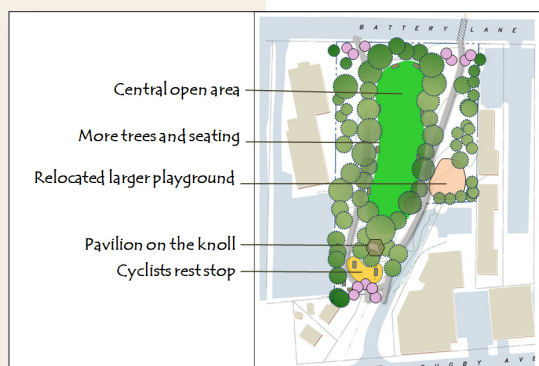


to the needs of its users. For example, at Battery Lane, the community wants to focus on getting children outside and active, retaining the active play courts and improving the playground; while at Wall Park in White Flint, a more intergenerational park has been requested.

3. ***What is the best approach for managing urban parks?*** As centers of community life, urban parks are really “24/7” amenities. Management and maintenance of urban parks are critical issues and likely to impact how parks are designed and programmed. Through the Battery Lane Urban Park concept planning process, staff has met with park managers and the Bethesda Urban District to explore partnering with urban districts. Additional meetings with development staff, park managers, and urban district staff are ongoing to explore this topic and develop a possible template for partnership for other urban parks.
4. ***How do we plan for urban parks?*** The additional issue that has emerged is that the Parks “needs assessment data” attained through the Park, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan doesn’t focus on smaller planning areas nor on the recreation and open space needs of urban populations. To address this concern, staff has begun to meet with staff of other urban jurisdictions to learn how urban park needs are assessed around the region and the country.

Looking Ahead

In the PROS Plan, urban parks are defined as edge parks that buffer high intensity uses from lower density neighborhoods. The CUPP will change this definition to promote urban parks as centers of community life.



Staff will continue working on urban park recommendations for specific master, sector, and concept plans, with an emphasis on community outreach and investigation into lessons learned in other jurisdictions responsible for planning urban parks.

Athletic Fields

Thousands of people enjoy our 296 park athletic fields, and hundreds of organizations use them to offer a wide variety of recreational programs for players of all ages.

Close to 10 percent of our operating budget – almost \$9M in FY09 – is allocated to maintain our heavily used athletic fields. This includes mowing, lining, dragging, seeding, aerating, fertilizing, renovations, equipment and machinery, administration and permitting, police patrols, and utility costs. The high cost of maintaining these fields is largely due to the amount of use they receive. In FY08 our athletic fields saw more than 130,000 hours of permitted use.

Our challenge is to find the right balance between use and renovation to satisfy customer demands for higher levels of field time and field quality.

The Past Six Months

In June 2008, a new Athletic Field Use Permit Policy was adopted to establish an orderly and fair procedure for the reserving and using park athletic fields. New guidelines for rest and renovation were introduced to better balance the high level of use with the maintenance, renovation, and rest necessary to protect long-term playability and ensure user safety. Almost constant maintenance is necessary to keep our fields in acceptable condition.

Our new Athletic Field Inspection and Evaluation (AFIE) program kicked off in August as promised. The AFIE program provides for regular, standardized inspection of all fields returning to play from the annual turf renovation program (typically 10-12 fields per year). After renovation these fields should be in the best condition possible and will therefore provide a solid baseline against which to measure the rest of our inventory. Each field will be evaluated at the time it is closed (prior to renovation) for comparison purposes, and then regular inspections begin the following year when the field is returned to play.

Evaluations are a combination of visual inspection, mechanical measurements, and photographic cataloging. The evaluation categories include turf coverage, wear patterns, field depressions, and soil compaction. Twenty-one fields were evaluated in August 2008: 12 were fields closing for renovation and the remaining nine were being



...cards ask field users to rate their satisfaction with the fields, the reservation process, and customer service. Results to-date show that 91 percent were satisfied with the location of the fields they received, 90 percent with the safety of those fields, 74 percent with the condition of the fields, and 67 percent with the quality of fields they received.

returned to play. The data collected from these evaluations will help staff determine the effects of current use levels and see if current or increased levels of field maintenance can really have an impact.

Park staff recently proposed a change to hourly fees for athletic fields to offset increasing maintenance and utilities costs, generate additional funds to improve field quality, discourage use violations by larger organizations, make field time available to new groups, and bring Park fees in line with other jurisdictions. The increase in user fees should also satisfy the Council's request for a \$100,000 offset in the FY09 Department of Parks budget. The Planning Board should render their decision in October 2008.

As part of the AFIE program, field users were sent a survey card with the traditional Permit Office mailing in August. The response rate to-date is four percent. These cards ask field users to rate their satisfaction with the fields, the reservation process, and customer service. Results to-date show that 91 percent were satisfied with the location of the fields they received, 90 percent with the safety of those fields, 74 percent with the condition of the fields, and 67 percent with the quality of fields they received.

The application process was ranked excellent by less than half of the respondents; clearly this is an area for improvement. Permit staff, however, were rated excellent in both courtesy and helpfulness by 92 percent and 89 percent of respondents respectively.

Two synthetic turf fields are planned at Fairland Regional Park and Montgomery Blair High School. Both projects are currently in the design phase. Staff is working closely with the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services to develop innovative, lower-impact stormwater management solutions that are environmentally sound and will save project costs. A Memorandum of Understanding that provides for additional community use of the Montgomery Blair field is being developed and will need to be agreed upon by the Planning Board and the Board of Education prior to construction of the field. Synthetic turf fields were recently installed at the SoccerPlex by our partner, Discovery, in the South Germantown Recreational Park and these fields were an instant success.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The cost of utilities, supplies, and materials is continuing to increase, requiring more resources from an operating budget already stretched

thin due to the FY09 budget cuts. Should the hourly field fees be approved by the Planning Board, we will generate additional revenue to help offset these increases. However, as money grows tighter, we may see a decline in permitted field activity as a result of the fee increase. Given that \$100,000 is required as a general offset for our FY09 budget, the additional revenue generated may be insignificant when weighed against the alarming 10 to 40 percent increases in the costs of supplies and materials for field maintenance.

It is important to note that overuse is a very real problem. With the kind of use our fields see, additional resources may not ultimately have any measurable impact on field quality. The AFIE program will help us answer that question. In the meantime, however, we should explore alternatives, such as introducing artificial turf fields, removing field overlays, or constructing new fields in the County.

According to a business case recently produced by Montgomery County Public Schools, "Artificial turf fields provide the functional equivalent of six natural grass fields. Over a ten-year time span, the cost of installing a high quality artificial grass infill surface is similar to the cost of installing and properly maintaining a natural grass surface. Considering that a single artificial grass infill surface provides the equivalent level of usage and opportunity a six natural grass fields, the savings are immediate and significant over the ten-year life of the field." As overuse continues to be an issue, we want to move forward now with our two selected park fields at Blair and Fairland.

Looking Ahead

The Permit Office is streamlining the application and reservation processes for athletic fields. By January 1, we hope to be able to reduce permit paperwork considerably by improving online functions and issuing electronic field permits. Should the Planning Board approve the new hourly field fees, these processes will be altered to accommodate the new fee structure in time for the 2009 spring/summer season. Athletic field surveys will continue to be sent with each seasonal mailing and the data will be reviewed, analyzed, and used to improve permitting processes and identify areas for field improvement. The AFIE program will continue as planned, with the



next round of inspections for our nine recently renovated fields occurring in November 2008.

Our goal for the installing the synthetic turf fields is to increase field availability at a lower cost and secure funding to install these fields as soon as possible.

We intend to begin more concentrated discussions on how to manage the increasing demand for athletic fields with all stakeholders, including staff, user groups, and policy-makers to identify a common, long-term vision. A field user forum will be scheduled in coordination with appropriate stakeholders to begin this dialogue.



Enterprise Facilities

Enterprise facilities, programs, and activities continue to be extremely popular, tracking close to one million visitors in FY08. From ice-skating classes and tennis clinics to summer camps and miniature train rides, these facilities provide an assortment of affordable recreational activities and valuable programs for communities in Montgomery County.

Even with the success of its new initiatives and programs, however, the Division continues to see expenditures outpace revenue growth. Though many facilities are able to cover operating expenses, it remains clear that user fees cannot also cover debt service, increasing utility costs, and the capital reinvestment needed to sustain or upgrade these services.

The Past Six Months

ParkPASS, the Department's online program and class registration system, managed by the Enterprise Division, now serves all 14 Enterprise facilities, our four nature centers, and Development Review's information counter. Individual special events and programs offered by other internal divisions and offices have also taken advantage of the quick and easy online registration system throughout the year. This system is also used to send online updates and notices to ParkPASS account holders and track facility finances. The overall number of ParkPASS accounts now tops 36,000, up 36 percent over last year.

We were able to successfully leverage a \$100,000 grant to rename the Cabin John Indoor Tennis Center and develop a plan to expand the number of courts. In partnership with the donors – the MCTA and the USTA – we hosted a very successful renaming ceremony on May 1, 2008, which was attended by Billie Jean King, as well as many local celebrities, politicians, and patrons. More than 500 people were present to celebrate the new Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center at Cabin John Regional Park and honor one of the sport's greatest female athletes. These courts were recently resurfaced with some help from Program Open Space funding (they had not been resurfaced since their installation in 1971). As a requirement of our grant, an independent market analysis study was recently completed



Every single seasonal park venue including the trains, carousel, campground, and boating operations, experienced an increase in revenue from four percent to 35 percent over last summer.

to determine the potential future demand for additional courts for the Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center. The findings will be reported to the Planning Board in the fall.

New dasher boards were installed in the Cabin John Ice Rink's NHL rink. The old dasher boards, installed in 1991, will replace the older dasher boards at the Wheaton Outdoor rink. This will improve the appearance at both rinks.

This summer, the Division offered a variety of summer programs including camps, tennis lessons, and ice skating lessons. Every single seasonal park venue including the trains, carousel, campground, and boating operations experienced an increase in revenue from four percent to 35 percent over last summer. To improve service to the almost 90,000 patrons it serves, a new train engine rolled into Wheaton Regional Park.

Attendance at the successful women's weekend retreat at Rockwood Manor was up seven percent over last year. In all, 214 women have attended these retreats. Revenues were also up, 28 percent over last year.

The Enterprise Fund Task Force Report was presented to the Planning Board in September for their review and comment. A memo and presentation outlining the Task Force Findings and the Department's recommendations are now being prepared for the County Council.

To help control utility costs, the Enterprise Division is working with an energy consultant to review its largest utility users, the ice rinks, and the indoor tennis facilities to identify cost-saving opportunities. Several of the consultant's recommendations have already been implemented and others are in process.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

In FY08, the Enterprise Fund had a deficit of \$600,000, due primarily to closing the Wheaton Indoor Tennis facility for the whole year and the Pauline Betz Addie Tennis Center for five months, along with skyrocketing utility costs. Enterprise reserves are below required levels and the Enterprise Fund is projecting a loss in FY09 as well.

The Task Force on the Enterprise Fund supports amending the Fund policy to fund all capital costs and debt service from tax receipts, but maintain the current accounting model. This one amendment would allow the Enterprise Fund to reach its reserve requirement and perform much needed deferred maintenance on our facilities.

The Enterprise Division has already begun to implement changes in our policies, personnel, and programs to improve the financial outcome of our operations. Changes to facility management and programming structure are being implemented to maximize revenue while continuing to provide outstanding, affordable activities and programs for our patrons. Our new programs have been well received, and additional programming is being created to maximize revenue and increase attendance at Enterprise facilities.

These changes are likely to increase operating efficiencies and profitability, but the reality remains: user fees alone cannot also cover debt service, increasing utility costs, and capital projects. We are fortunate that the Enterprise Fund policy of complete sustainability did in fact work for a while under a very unique set of circumstances; it is time to accept that this policy is no longer viable.

Looking Ahead

The Enterprise team will continue to identify and act on opportunities to increase use, awareness, and market share in the coming months and years. Greater attention will be paid to developing and adhering to a business model for facility operations, balanced with the continuing need to provide affordable recreational opportunities for our customers.

The new Wheaton Indoor Tennis facility will be completed in November after a closure of 17 months. The grand re-opening will take place shortly thereafter, and we will work with the Montgomery County Tennis Association, County government, and other involved stakeholders to program and market this newly renovated, air conditioned facility.

The splash playground is extremely popular and at times is filled to capacity, causing us to turn away patrons, while the two 18-hole mini golf courses next door are underutilized. We hope to better use the limited space we have at this facility by eliminating one of the mini-golf courses and expanding the more popular splash playground. We are also exploring the possibility of making the mini-golf course an easier, putt-putt type course rather than the fairly difficult championship level course it is now; this would make the golf course more attractive to the captive audience currently visiting the splash park and likely have a significant impact on attendance and revenue.



The event centers are wonderful venues for gatherings of up to 120 people, and Rockwood Manor is one of our more popular sites. We believe by expanding a section of Rockwood to include a larger room for receptions (perhaps with a dance floor), we would be able to attract even more social events to this site. But this would require a significant investment of funds, so no decision has yet been made to move forward.

Woodlawn Manor is a historic home and suitable for gatherings of 15-20 people. Almost all patrons rent a tent and have outdoor functions.

A permanent outdoor tent pad would ensure our patrons a stable, dry location to hold a tented function, thereby making Woodlawn more appealing as a rental location and generating additional revenue.



In the next six months, we will also be working with a new vendor, Biz Bash, to market our event centers to businesses in the Washington area for meetings and events. This effort includes a premium website listing as well as advertising in their magazine, which is sent to 1,200 event planners in the area. We hope to tap into this business niche market to increase our patronage and

exposure. Corporate sponsorship opportunities for all facilities are also being explored.

The Enterprise Division continues to provide a variety of popular, fun, and educational activities and programs for our citizens. The challenge remains to provide these unique revenue producing programs in an economically depressed climate. The upcoming discussion on administering the Enterprise Fund will have significant impact on the opportunities we will be able to provide to Montgomery County citizens in the future.

Trails

There are currently more than 200 miles of paved and natural surface trails in our park system. Our paved trails offer all patrons safe and convenient access to the natural environment where they can enjoy a wide variety of activities such as hiking, biking, walking, running, and bird watching. Paved trails also provide scenic, accessible connections to recreation facilities and urban areas, as well as a green commuting alternative to driving. Our extensive network of natural surface trails allows for improved stewardship and interpretation of our natural and cultural resources, and provides patrons with an opportunity to more closely connect with nature. Strollers, skaters, bicycles, wheelchairs, horses, walkers, leashed pets – all share the trails during daylight hours.



The Past Six Months

Between May and July 2008, more than 600 emails, pro and con, were received concerning the safety improvements made on the Montgomery Parks portion of the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT). These improvements were primarily marking lane separations, developing signage and printed materials for all users, and installing a 15 mph speed limit on our Maryland section to match the 15 mph limit on the D.C. portion of the trail. These safety improvements were highly publicized and made in collaboration with the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail. They garnered both strong criticism from elements of the bicycling community and a show of support from other user groups, and the Coalition hosted a well-attended public forum for discussion. A trail safety brochure was created to educate all users on proper use of the trail, and is being handed out by park staff and Park Police.

The Park Police received a Pedestrian Safety Grant from the Maryland Highway Safety Office that will provide for 80 hours of overtime enforcement at trail/roadway intersections. A portion of this grant will be used for enforcement throughout the Park system, but the majority of the funds will be used to address continuing safety concerns along the CCT.

The project to pave the trail connector between Little Falls Trail and the CCT was recently completed. A number of repairs identified in the Infrastructure Condition Assessment report for the Sligo Creek Trail

We have discovered that mixed-use trails are a good idea in areas of low use, but problematic when congested.

from New Hampshire Avenue to University Boulevard were completed, and efforts to address the remaining repairs on hard surface trails continue as funding allows.

There are a number of other trail projects currently in progress. The construction of the Matthew Henson Trail continues and sections will soon be made available to users and bicycle commuters. Park staff hopes to host an opening event for the full trail in May 2009. The natural surface trail projects in process include:

Constructing a new 70-foot bridge at Hoyles Mill Road with 100 feet of boardwalk for the Hoyles Mill Trail, scheduled for completion in November

2. Developing four gravel parking lots in Little Bennett Regional Park per master plan recommendations, scheduled to be completed in September
3. Continuing trail construction on the Muddy Branch Greenway in Blockhouse Point Conservation Park.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Our Trail Crew and Park Managers are taking additional steps to educate and improve the experience of the trail users. We hope to use the lessons learned from the CCT experience and apply these to our other heavily used trails. We have discovered that mixed-use trails are a good idea in areas of low use, but problematic when congested. We expect additional demand for trails dedicated solely to bicycle commuter use will increase.

How to deal with speed violations on trails is a challenge throughout the country. The Park Police are actively investigating the most cost-effective and efficient method for speed monitoring and control on the CCT and other trails throughout the County. Small pole-mounted speed displays are being considered for rider awareness and to combat the absence of a requirement to have speedometers on bicycles. Staff is reviewing trail safety and “Share the Trail” programs from around the region to identify other innovative ways to deal with multiple user groups and mitigate user conflicts.

The Infrastructure Condition Assessment project has quantified the backlog of trail maintenance and repairs. Hard surface trails were estimated to have more than \$5,000,000 in deferred maintenance and replacement needs, with a current replacement value of \$29,000,000.

We now have a better understanding of the gaps in funding and staffing to adequately maintain our trail system.

Looking Ahead

A comprehensive study of the safety and management of the Capital Crescent Trail has been ordered, and the final report should be completed soon. Once received, Park staff will review the report, share it with interested parties, and begin to implement recommendations as appropriate.

As a result of a constituent inquiry, we are developing permits for bicycle commuters whose travel on park trails may extend into periods before or after sunset, when park use is generally prohibited. This is particularly important as the daylight hours grow shorter in the autumn, and will provide notice to Park Police and park managers that the permit holder has a valid reason to be in those parks outside of operating hours. This new permit system will be ready shortly.

Future projects for natural surface trails will include the Muddy Branch Greenway Trail Bridge and a 70-foot Continental Steel Bridge in Blockhouse Conservation Park.

Future CIP and operating budgets must begin to bridge the gap in resources to improve the condition of the older trails and provide the ongoing maintenance necessary to increase the life and safety of our hard surface trails. They are among the most popular of park features.



Green Management

The Department of Parks remains dedicated to finding sustainable, green practices that improve operational efficiencies while reducing impact on the beautiful, natural spaces we are pledged to protect. In particular, we are focusing on recycling, energy consumption measures, and fleet and fuel efficiencies.

In 2003, a comprehensive energy management system was implemented and internal recycling practices were expanded. We

are closely monitoring energy use in all facilities and buildings, and are introducing environmentally friendly, cost-saving measures wherever possible. We continue to facilitate and encourage proper trash and recycling practices in all parks. We are also taking steps to improve fleet and fuel efficiencies and reduce the Department's carbon footprint.

Green management practices are becoming more and more a part of the way Montgomery Parks does business.



Recycling

The Past Six Months

The Department has continued to expand its recycling program. Close to 50 percent of all trash containers now have adjacent recycling containers, up from 20 percent six months ago. All athletic fields and vending areas at nine regional and recreational parks – Wheaton, Cabin John, Martin Luther King, Jr., South Germantown, Olney Manor, Fairland, Ridge Road, Damascus, and Ovid Hazen Wells – have now been equipped with recycling containers.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

According to some of our park managers, separate recycling containers are actually being used for the purposes intended in many areas, an improvement over a similar attempt to install such containers years ago. Comingling of trash remains an issue in some areas, but it appears trash separation is much more familiar to users today.

Looking Ahead

The Department hopes to expand the recycling program in FY10 and FY11. The establishment of improved employee awareness

and participation programs is also planned for next year. Special event permits are being revised to require user groups to obtain recycling containers for their activities, which park staff will help to administer. The next phase of the recycling program is to install recycling containers adjacent to trash cans at all local and recreational park locations. This expansion is, of course, dependent upon having the necessary resources, so the rollout may experience some delay. Regardless of the extent of the rollout, the public education campaign to promote usage will be an important factor in the success of this program.

Energy Consumption

The Past Six Months

Staff is implementing a number of cost and energy saving measures in lighting. Five recreational facilities and parking areas have been retrofitted with T-5 lighting. These bulbs are roughly three to four times more effective than a standard fluorescent bulb of similar wattage. Automatic time clocks have been installed at all athletic fields and motion sensors have been installed in all park facilities. LED bulbs have been installed at all maintenance yards that were scheduled for improvements this year. The Department will be installing solar lights at Black Hill. These improvements are expected to generate about a 50 percent reduction in lighting-related energy consumption. Replacement of low efficiency HVAC systems with high efficiency systems has been completed at Shady Grove, Sligo Creek/Dennis, Owens Park, and Olney Manor Park. Water conservation measures such as the installation of waterless toilets and low-flow water fixtures have been completed at several rental facilities.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The Department will begin calculating energy savings from all sources on a semi-annual basis, instead of on an annual basis, to allow for more up-to-date assessments of improvement efforts. Although a contractual arrangement for an energy consultant has been very successful, Parks should consider making this a full-time responsibility to achieve optimal energy savings.

Looking Ahead

Better water conservation is next. We are committed to expanding water conservation programs in regional parks and maintenance yards and implementing energy retrofitting programs Countywide. HVAC

These improvements are expected to generate about a 50 percent reduction in lighting-related energy consumption.

systems will be replaced at Black Hill, Agricultural History Farm Park, and Seneca Lodge. Continuous evaluation of green management practices is critical. We are undertaking a number of studies to assess the “heat island effect” of major buildings to determine appropriate actions (white roofs, solar panels, etc.), to identify steps to meet LEED Silver Certification for existing buildings, and to explore the possibilities of using rain water (run-off) for land irrigation and other uses.

Fleet and Fuel Efficiencies

The Past Six Months

In an effort to decrease its carbon footprint, the Department has increased bio-diesel usage from 34 percent to 62 percent over the past six months. Biodiesel fuel is a clean burning alternative fuel that comes from 100 percent renewable resources. Biodiesel is biodegradable and non-toxic, and is usually blended with petroleum and other fuels. The Department was able to resolve a number of issues affecting use, including change in viscosity in cold weather and ensuring that car manufacturer warranties would still be enforceable.

We are conducting quarterly assessments of vehicle use and mileage to determine opportunities for cost savings and greater efficiencies. In addition, Central Administrative Services initiated a pilot program using “zip cars” to replace Commission-owned vehicles. The Department will be reviewing the results of this program and will review other alternatives to reduce the fleet.

The Department purchased 10 hybrid vehicles and participated in Montgomery County’s Fleet Emissions Reduction Study (emissions reduction directly affects energy reduction). Fuel conservation tips have been distributed to division chiefs for dissemination to staff. A Fleet Green Technology Study was commissioned by the Department to ascertain our carbon footprint and make further recommendations to make the fleet more efficient and green.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The Department will need to increase funding for biodiesel to cover the higher cost fuel (the cost of biodiesel is more expensive than regular fuel by about \$.10-\$.15 per gallon). The use of biodiesel fuel also requires increased maintenance for diesel engines, fuel tanks, and fueling equipment.

We are currently reviewing the Fleet Green study to determine areas of applicability and how best to implement recommendations. The Department will need to be strategic in its decision-making, as there is currently limited funding to replace aging diesel powered vehicles and equipment that have the highest emissions.

Looking Ahead

The Department is projecting 100 percent biodiesel use for all diesel vehicles by the end of FY09 and is working with distributors to arrange delivery of small quantities of biodiesel as needed.

Using annual mileage statistics, we will make decisions on fleet reduction. Any future fleet purchases will be approved by senior management only with appropriate justification. A cost-benefit analysis will be done to determine if the “zip car” program should be adopted at some locations.

The Department is replacing vehicles with hybrids and other alternative fueled vehicles as they become more available. We will continue to study and implement Fleet Green Study recommendations, as appropriate.



Cultural Resources

The Department is responsible for the stewardship of 157 historical and archaeological resources within parks. We are beginning to make progress on priority sites, many of which had been at risk of “demolition by neglect.” The Adopted FY09-14 CIP approved an increase in the level-of-effort project “Restoration of Historic Structures,” which has helped jump start much needed restorations and improvements.

The Past Six Months

A museum manager was recently hired to guide interpretation and manage the large corps of volunteer trail guides and docents



who provide educational programs at Oakley Cabin, the Underground Railroad Experience Trail, the Josiah Henson Site, and the Bussard Farmstead.

The cultural resources team has also increased the Department’s knowledge base of its historic holdings, establishing construction dates of five buildings through dendrochronology, conducting research at archives using primary resources, building our oral history library, and developing complex historic themes for interpretation. Key accomplishments include the completion of the Historic Structures Report for the Josiah Henson Site

and the establishment of the Josiah Henson Site Advisory Committee. Staff wrote and presented several tours of the Henson site, welcoming 1,000 visitors to the site in this six-month period.

The archaeology program created a new, self-guided Blockhouse Point brochure in July 2008, targeting national Civil War heritage tourists. The number of archaeology program summer campers continues to increase (a 21 percent increase in summer campers overall with a 91 percent increase in those attending aftercare) while the number of high school archaeology club programs remains strong at 54 sessions per year.

Cultural resources efficiencies are very high, and we benefit greatly from 879 volunteer hours for our interpretive program and 8,200 volunteer hours for our archaeology program annually. The total gain of 9,079 hours of annual volunteer work equals 4.41 work years in annual savings. We are pursuing other efficiencies by employing high school students in the Montgomery County Conservation Corps to do the current restoration of the Kingsley School.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

One challenge in implementing our program is the lack of specialized in-house services for historic rehabilitation. The Department does not currently have a career preservation architect, a dedicated project manager for historic sites, or a historian. At present, the Commission routinely retains the services of large-scale architecture and engineering firms – generalists – but these firms lack the skills required of historic rehabilitation projects and we have had problems. The lesson learned is to find the specialist from the start, not insist that the generalist find the specialist. Though progress will certainly be made with use of contractors and the limited in-house resources we have, it will continue to be slow, and many sites will remain at risk of “demolition by neglect.”

Looking Ahead

As we move ahead, our primary goal is to reduce the number of vacant historic buildings by developing interpretive programs, including some that generate revenue. These programs will either be managed by Parks or through partnership with external groups who can provide rehabilitation funds and good ideas for adaptive reuse (Red Door Store, Darby House and Store, Joseph White, and Brainard Warner). More sites also will be interpreted through archaeology (Josiah Henson, the Paint Branch Valley) since they offer significant opportunities for interpretation in slavery, the Civil War, and milling history. The overall focus will be on implementing the plans and projects scheduled in the Restoration of Historic Structures PDF in the Capital Improvement Program budget.

We will also be expanding our interpretive programming at the Josiah Henson site and at Little Bennett Park (Ziegler Log house, Kingsley School, Wims Baseball Field). We will be preparing outreach kits for public, private, and home school students. Various revenue-generating programs will be implemented in stages beginning in FY10 and FY11 and could include reasonable entrance fees at some sites, Girl and Boy Scout badge programs, curriculum-based field trips, in-service teacher workshops, archaeological mystery digs, farmers’ markets, and movie nights.



Emergency Response

The Department of Parks continues to provide a timely and systematic approach to respond to a variety of emergency situations. The incidents we handle range from storm damage to incidents that can potentially disrupt safety in the communities. Coordination and communication among divisions and other County agencies have been key to the success of our efforts.

The Past Six Months



Both Tropical Storm Hanna and the WSSC water main break in Rock Creek Regional Park required emergency response from Park staff in the past six months. There were also several other water main breaks affecting various parks. Staff response to emergencies continues to be fine-tuned, improving our ability to prepare for potential emergencies, respond quickly in a more coordinated fashion, and mitigate possible impacts.

To ensure a clear line of communication with the Montgomery County Emergency Management Group (EMG), the Park Police Chief was selected as the primary point of contact for the Department of Parks for all future disasters and emergencies. This representation in the group has increased the flow of information back to the Department during critical incidents. Participation in

the EMG also provides real-time planning, coordination, and delivery of service for our patrons, staff, and County residents during an event.

We are pleased to report Parks has completed the final phase of the MDE-approved rehabilitation program for Lake Needwood. We also completed installation of the remote monitoring system, which allows conditions at the site to be monitored online. This project has drawn a great deal of media attention. In fact, our Department's response has become the model for effective emergency response on a national level, highlighted in a September 2006 presentation by MDE to the National Conference of the Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO); a June 2007 joint presentation by M-NCPPC, URS, and MDE to the ASDSO Northeast Regional Conference, an April 2008 joint paper at the United States Society of Dams (USSD) conference; and a June 2008 article in the ASDSO Journal of Dam Safety. This is a very high honor and a real credit to Park engineering, maintenance, police, and management staff.

Significant improvement has been achieved in the communication between Montgomery County Police and Park Police. The Park Police access to the Montgomery County Emergency Communications Computer Aided Dispatch (MCECC CAD) system has been expanded to allow the Park Police to view and acknowledge all active and pending emergency calls in the 911 system. It also allows for console to console communication between telecommunications technicians and supervisors in both agencies. In the past, Park Police did not have access to live active calls for service or any pending calls that could be related to M-NCPPC property. This step toward improving communication will allow the Park Police to actively monitor all calls for service in the MCECC CAD, both police and fire, for incidents involving the M-NCPPC. The Park Police Command staff are now included in the MCP Command Staff Notification system so police leaders from around the County are aware of emerging incidents that may need the resources of our various Public Safety agencies.

The Park Police continue to ensure we have a very safe park system, and have developed a strong record in catching and identifying those who cause damage or otherwise behave in a criminal fashion within our parks. They continue to implement the management recommendations in the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) report, adjusting schedules, moving officers to the street, and keeping a small part of the very effective park ranger program going in spite of a lack of funding this year.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

After the Lake Needwood dam incident highlighted the need for a more formal internal crisis response procedure, we made internal and external changes. For example, park staff are now better aware of the operation and maintenance of Lake Needwood as a flood control device and have developed a system for monitoring performance and coordinating between county departments when issues arise. We now use an incident command system with clear lines of communication for each event on parkland. Determining who is notified when and by whom in advance of potential disasters or emergencies has made a significant difference in the Department of Park's ability to respond quickly, appropriately and collaboratively to crises.

Looking Ahead

The Park Police leadership will continue to work with their peers at MCP to build on the recent successes and evaluate any difficulties

Determining who is notified when and by whom in advance of potential disasters or emergencies has made a significant difference in the Department of Park's ability to respond quickly, appropriately and collaboratively to crises.

encountered, so that Parks Department patrons, staff, and citizens continue to benefit from the collaboration between the County's two professional and unique law enforcement agencies.

The Department of Parks continues to refine all systems to address a variety of emergency responses and coordinate with other state and local agencies in an effort to keep the citizens of Montgomery County safe. While we are proud to be at the forefront of emergency response on a national level, staff will continue to seek ways to improve our preparation and response in anticipation of future emergencies.



Capital Improvements Program

On May 22nd, the Council approved the Parks FY09-14 CIP in the amount of \$196M for both the acquisition and development programs over the next six years. We are very appreciative of the Council's support. The Parks CIP was based on four priority goals:

- Maintenance of existing facilities and infrastructure
- Preservation of historic and cultural resources
- Acquisition and stewardship of land and natural resources
- Meeting demand for recreational facilities and open spaces

The Past Six Months

Acquisitions

Between April 1, 2008, and September 30, 2008, more than 100 acres were added to the park system. The acreage was added by direct purchases as well as dedication through the development review process. The parks enlarged or created by these acquisitions include Serpentine Barrens Conservation Park (South Unit), Fairland Recreational Park, Capitol View Park Open Space, Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Park, Great Seneca Stream Valley Park (Unit 9), Arora Hills Local Park, Magruder Branch Stream Valley Park (Unit 2), South Germantown Recreational Park, and Woodstock Equestrian Park. Pending contracts to purchase land include lands at Piedmont Crossing Local Park, Upper Paint Branch Stream Valley Park, Tilden Woods Stream Valley Park, and ALARF acquisition for road right-of-way near the intersection of Bel Pre and Homecrest Roads.

Developer-Built Parks and Partnerships

The Department accepted the developer-provided Arora Hills Local Park for maintenance and operation. We continue to work with the developer for the Dowden's Ordinary Historic Park in Clarksburg. Additionally, a number of smaller partnership projects are underway, such as Linda Weiner Memorial on the Capital Crescent Trail, Red Wiggler Farm, and a Tai Chi Court. Larger partnerships under review include proposals for the Laytonia Recreational Park Baseball facility and South Germantown Tennis facility. The Department continues to work closely with tenant/partners at Second Chance Wildlife Center at the Carson Farm Park and the Montgomery County Historical Society at the Waters House Barn to plan and coordinate potential capital projects to improve their facilities. Both tenants are seeking, but have not secured, capital funding for their projects.

Between April 1, 2008, and September 30, 2008, more than 100 acres were added to the park system.

Local Park CIP Projects

Staff continues to work on a number of local parks at various stages of detailed design or construction to renovate or expand existing facilities.

Construction began in July 2008 on the renovation for Broad Acres Local Park, adjacent to Broad Acres Elementary School, and is 25 percent complete, including sediment controls, tree clearing, construction of new concrete steps, grading of the new soccer field and installation of infiltration trenches. When complete, the park will include a multi-use court, a multi-purpose field that replaces one of the existing softball fields, trails, landscaping, and a new entrance. The park is expected to be officially dedicated in June 2009.

Trail CIP Projects

Construction is partially complete for the Matthew Henson Hiker-Biker Trail project, which includes approximately four miles of hard surface trail from Alderton Road to the Rock Creek Hiker-Biker Trail in Winding Creek Local Park. Approximately two miles of trail from Alderton Road to Georgia Avenue have been completed. The remaining trail construction is scheduled to be completed in December 2008, including the trail crossing at Veirs Mill Road that is being constructed by the Maryland State Highway Administration.



Non-Local CIP Projects

Three regional CIP projects of note are completed or nearing completion.

A facility plan for the entrance renovation at Brookside Gardens was approved by the Planning Board in July 2008. This project is Phase 1 of the master plan for the gardens, which was approved in March 2005. The approved plan includes narrowing the entrance paving to reduce unnecessary impervious surface and replacing it with decorative pervious paving, incorporating public art into the entrance and signage, providing a gatehouse with a green roof, planting displays, rain gardens, deer control, and improving the pedestrian access and entrance with a new gate, boardwalk, and a nearby garden gazebo.

The outer fabric installation for the Wheaton Regional Park Indoor Tennis Facility has been completed. The inner liner will be completed

in mid-September, with site work to follow. The HVAC units have been installed and the HVAC ductwork and lighting installation are scheduled to be completed by the end of October 2008, allowing the facility to be reopened for use in December.

The irrigation system and sewer line construction is well underway for the utilities upgrade at the Pope Farm Nursery and is anticipated to be completed in November 2008. The Pope Farm, approximately 50 acres of farmland, is used as nursery for the Parks Department. Upon completion, the facility will have an automatic irrigation system to provide better quality plant materials for the parks.



Special Projects

ICC Project: Staff continues to be involved in over-the-shoulder review of ICC roadway plans, as well as in all aspects of Environmental Stewardship, Community Stewardship, and Compensatory Mitigation (ES/CS/CM) projects. The Department of Parks and the Planning Department continue to work together, pooling resources to ensure that projects are effectively and efficiently reviewed by personnel with the appropriate technical expertise. The SHA contractor acting as the M-NCPPC Ecological Project Monitor was reassigned to a different project, leaving the Commission with a resource shortage. While searching for a replacement, existing staff have prioritized assignments and accepted additional responsibilities until the position is filled.

Staff involvement in the design-build process over the past six months include reviewing and commenting on Contracts A and C roadway design plans, attending various weekly and monthly task force meetings with the design teams, Special Protection Area meetings, inspections of construction sites adjacent to parkland, field visits with the Contract A design team and SHA design reviewers to discuss aesthetic and environmental aspects of the roadway, and providing the Planning Board with regular updates.

In addition to ICC roadway activities, staff is engaged in many other ICC-related activities including review and coordination of ES/CS/CM projects, leading the Non-Native Invasive Species Task Force that investigates options for controlling invasives along the ICC-forest edge, and identifying locations in parkland for constructing new vernal pools to replace vernal pools impacted by the ICC.



The Department of Parks provided review and input into the ICC Limited Functional Master Plan Amendment – Bikeways and Interchanges, as the various alignments under consideration passed through sensitive areas of parkland. Parks will study the park trail connection in Paint Branch as a high priority trail corridor study to determine feasibility, detailed alignment, and surface type.

Woodstock Equestrian Park: Design for Phase II of development is well underway. Phase II facilities consist of an outdoor riding ring with fencing, all-weather footing, lighting, expanded parking areas, a cross country or eventing course, new and enhanced circulation routes for both riders and vehicles, rehabilitation of the historic tenant house for use as an office, rehabilitation of the frame farm outbuildings for storage of materials and maintenance equipment, utilities, wayfinding and interpretive signage, and landscape planting. A working group of representatives from local equestrian user groups has been convened to help inform and define the development program. Review by the Historic Preservation Commission, Stormwater Management Concept approval by MCDPS, and an updated Forest Conservation Plan are required before the Facility Plan can be reviewed and approved by the Planning Board. The Facility Plan will be brought to the Planning Board in December of 2008.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Local and Urban Parks: Many of our local and urban parks are old, and it is necessary to review the entire park considering changing needs and demographics, resources available for maintenance, and community desires. Replacing a park's individual components is often not the solution. The recent communications received about the condition of Woodside Urban Park in Silver Spring are common, expressing dissatisfaction with deterioration of facilities in the park that have passed their lifecycle and unhappiness with the overall state of the park. The playground at Woodside Park is scheduled for renovation in FY 10, and a comprehensive look at the park is on the candidate list for the facility planning project in the six year CIP. Unfortunately, due to available resources, that schedule is well behind a desired timeframe from both the perspective of the Department and the community. Woodside is an example of one of our older parks that has reached the end of its lifecycle but is languishing in the outyears of the CIP. It is one of many that will need to be brought forward and reprioritized.

Park Projects Built by Outside Entities: Projects built by outside entities, including developers, private partners, and public agencies require more staff resources than one might expect to manage, review, and inspect. Recent examples include the ICC projects, the construction of three synthetic fields at the SoccerPlex, the developer-built parks and trails in Clarksburg, Wisconsin Place Community Recreation Center in Friendship Heights, White Oak Community Center, and the Long Branch Pedestrian Bridge. These projects usually have a strict timeframe and schedule and are typically managed by the same staff that manages park CIP projects. The challenge is to meet the partner's schedule while continuing to effectively manage other projects in the CIP. The number of these projects has increased significantly in recent years, and the staff resources necessary to manage these projects through design and construction will need to be evaluated. In addition, these projects result in new facilities that will require additional departmental resources for maintenance, operations, safety, and life cycle replacement in future years. Our current OBI calculations do not fully take all these costs into account, and will be revised based on our growing efficiencies in labor tracking.

ICC Project: Meeting the tight deadlines set by the designer-builders for the ICC in particular continues to be the biggest challenge faced by staff, compounded by the re-assignment of the Ecological Project Monitor. Staff is also working with SHA to evaluate options to offset increased reforestation costs associated with additional monitoring and maintenance in the SPAs and finalize details of the community stewardship facilities.

Looking Ahead

Developer Parks and Partner Projects: Besides meeting the commitment for capital projects funded through the CIP, staff will strive to improve the park system with new public facilities using both the development and partnership processes. In the next six months, we anticipate working on continuing park issues related to the White Oak Community Center, Battery Lane, Germantown, Wisconsin Place, and many others.

Construction documents for improvements to the King Dairy Barn Mooseum have been completed, and permit applications have been filed with DPS. Construction is scheduled to begin in December and be completed in March 2009.

The challenge is to meet the partner's schedule while continuing to effectively manage other projects in the CIP.

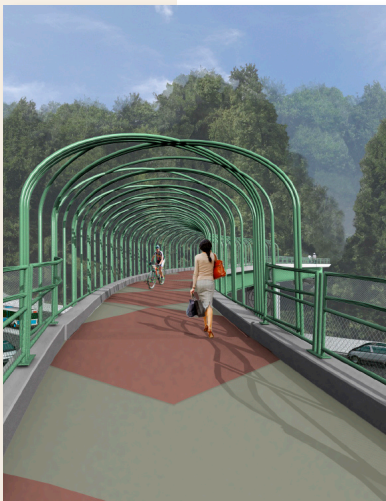
ICC and ICC Stewardship Projects: Staff will continue focus on ensuring successful implementation of the ES/CS/CM projects, and will continue to work on finalizing plans for implementing community facilities including Woodlawn Stone Barn, Llewellyn Fields, Lake Frank train, Olney Dog Park, other environmental projects such as reforestation on current or future parkland, and stream restoration projects.

Local Park CIP Projects: Construction will begin in the spring of 2009 on the reconstruction and expansion for East Norbeck Local Park, a 25-acre park located on the north side of Norbeck Road (MD 28) east of Georgia Avenue. The right-of-way for the Intercounty Connector is located along the north and eastern property line. The park includes a softball field, a baseball field, a soccer field overlay, two lighted tennis courts, a lighted basketball court, a playground, a picnic shelter with restrooms, and a small asphalt parking lot. Proposed facilities include a path network connecting the parking lot to the facilities; a natural surface trail; picnic pavilion; restrooms, lighted tennis courts, playground, soccer/lacrosse field, larger softball field, and realigned baseball and softball fields so that they no longer overlap.

Construction will begin in spring 2009 on the renovation for Takoma-Piney Branch Local Park, which provides for renovation of a 17.4-acre local park adjacent to Piney Branch Elementary School in Takoma Park. The renovated park will include a loop path, natural surface trails and pedestrian connections, improved entrance plaza and parking lot at Darwin Avenue, handicap parking at Grant Avenue and maintenance access, replaces existing basketball courts, replaces existing playground

and adds another, reduces two volleyball courts to one, provides stormwater management for the parking lot and a wetland area in Takoma Woods, constructs a new shelter, and replaces the existing restroom with portable toilets. The existing tennis courts will be converted to a skateboard facility if the City of Takoma Park agrees to manage its operation, otherwise, the tennis courts will become a multi-use court. The existing ballfields will remain unchanged.

Trail CIP Projects: Construction is expected to begin in November 2008 on the Rock Creek Trail Pedestrian Bridge, a new alignment for the Rock Creek Trail over Veirs Mill Road (MD 586) near Aspen Hill Road through Rock Creek Park to enhance the safety and continuity



of the Rock Creek Hiker-Biker Trail. Construction will be completed in two years and includes a new 605-foot steel bridge on concrete piers over Veirs Mill Road, approximately 1,100 feet of trail approaches, and sidewalk connections to the adjacent community. The design of the project also incorporated landscaping, lighting, public artwork elements in bridge fencing, deck, and trail pavement, and waterwheel sculpture. The project received Federal Highway Administration approval to advertise in February 2008. Staff obtained additional funding from the State for this project in May, and the County Council approved a Special Appropriation funding request in July. A groundbreaking ceremony is planned for this winter.

Playgrounds: Repairs and lifecycle replacement of our 289 playgrounds continues to be a priority and a challenge. Complete playground renovations in local parks are costing between \$60,000 and \$75,000; with lifecycle of equipment approximately 20 years. Communities desire more frequent replacement as play structures continue to evolve and improve. A simplified analysis of this data indicates we should be spending a million dollars a year on playground replacement alone, ignoring backlog. Playgrounds scheduled to be renovated over the next two fiscal years include Stewartown, Quebec Terrace, Randolph Hills, Heritage Farm, Capitol View-Homewood, Maplewood Alta Vista, Woodside, Gregerscroft, Lynnbrook, Willard Avenue, Nolte, Montgomery Hills, Leland, Cherrywood, Cedar Lane/Beach Drive, Forest Grove, Little Falls, Manor Oaks, Tilden Woods, Wheaton Forest, Beverly Farms, West Fairland, South Germantown Ellsworth, Edgewood, Johnson, Moyer Road, Southeast Olney, Water's Landing, and Hunter's Woods. Most of these are full lifecycle replacements, and some are replacement of selected equipment.



In the most recent report which covered the fourth quarter of FY08 (April-June), 97 percent of surveyed customers said they would recommend our facilities to a friend, and at least 90 percent rated us as “excellent” or “good” in all service areas.

Public Response and Feedback

Montgomery Parks continues its transition to more customer-friendly systems to provide faster response times to public inquiries, easier public access to more information, effective resolution of problems or complaints, and the best customer service policies for our patrons. Our centralized email inbox and general information line have served our customers well, and as more people receive quick and helpful responses, the volume of inquiries continues to increase.

The Past Six Months

In the past six months, more than 4,000 public inquiries were received and responded to by the Park Information and Customer Service (PICS) Office. These included requests for general parks information, assistance with permit requests, maintenance/service center requests, questions about Park classes or programs, and information about non-Park related activities or facilities, as well as a targeted email campaign about the Capital Crescent Trail speed limit. Every single communication, whether it’s a phone call or an email, receives a response from the PICS Office, usually within 24-48 hours (though some of the electronic campaigns require greater care, coordination and mass responses, which can delay the turnaround).

Feedback from our “How Are We Doing?” survey program continues to increase since its inception in January 2007. More than 400 surveys were received during the fourth quarter of FY08 (April – June), almost twice the number of surveys received during the entire calendar year of 2007. Customer satisfaction cards are regularly given to customers at our ice rinks, tennis centers, nature centers, and seasonal facilities. This information is reported on in quarterly reports distributed to senior leaders and managers to help them improve operations and programs. In the most recent report which covered 4Q FY08 (April-June 2008), 97 percent of surveyed customers said they would recommend our facilities to a friend, and at least 90 percent rated us as “excellent” or “good” in all service areas: courtesy, helpfulness, program quality, meeting activity needs, cleanliness, and safety.

New information magnets and business cards with the dedicated phone numbers for park questions (repairs, permits, criminal activity, etc.) were printed and are being widely distributed to officials, citizens, community groups, and others.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Every three to six months, a specific issue of significant interest to a large segment of the population surfaces and results in the receipt of hundreds of email form letters in support or protest of some action taken or proposed by the department. These seem to be the new “petitions”. Examples include hundreds of emails on the Capital Crescent Trail safety improvements, dozens on the recent “no-mow” policy, upwards of one hundred emails each for various specific park issues in Bethesda and Silver Spring, ditto for Blair fields, various park activity buildings, and assorted Legacy Open Space proposals. Electronic campaigns such as these usually escalate issues to the Planning Board, County Council, and State legislature levels because of their extensive “cc” chains. They often require a significant investment of time and resources from Park staff and leaders to resolve. It is frequently difficult to respond within the 24-48 hour window to these, as time is needed to prepare a coordinated answer or in some cases physically address other issues before responding.

Looking Ahead

Several Park Permit facilities will be added to the “How Are We Doing?” survey program in time for the upcoming spring season. Over the next six months, we will also be turning our attention to the issue of class and program evaluations. Paper evaluations are handed out and collected at the end of every class or program session. Though they are reviewed by instructors and managers, there has never been a method to review overall data for the Department or track trend lines for facilities over months or years. We have established a centralized web database to facilitate compilation and analysis of this data, now we need to work with facility managers to ensure this information is input regularly. Trend lines and customized reports will be developed in coordination with the affiliated divisions and managers.

The establishment of a Parks “call center” may be worth exploring. We have one customer service specialist and there are currently several individuals solely responsible for answering specific help lines. It would be helpful to cross-train individuals for backup coverage.

Finally, improvements will be made to the Park Permit office process to make booking and reserving facilities a quicker and less complicated process. Staff is currently reviewing the possibility of moving to electronic permits for athletic fields to reduce excessive paperwork and enable field availability to be viewed online.

Several Park Permit facilities will be added to the How Are We Doing? survey program in time for the upcoming spring season.