



NACPRO NEWS

The Newsletter of the National Association of Park and Recreation Officials

Affiliated with: National Association of Counties (NACo) and National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA)

NACPRO Board to meet in Minneapolis, professional parks tour scheduled

The fall Board of Directors meeting for NACPRO will be held on Monday, October, 25 at 6:00pm in room 102B at the Minneapolis Convention Center 1301 2nd Avenue South.

The business meeting will be dealing with general operational issues of the organization including budgeting, policy development and program planning. General members and even prospective NACPRO members are welcome to attend the meeting.

The NACPRO meeting and a County Parks Professional Tour are held in association with the National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) Congress also scheduled for Minneapolis.

An educational tour of

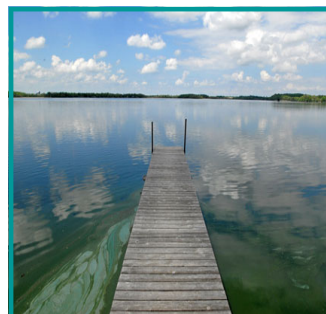


Minneapolis will host NACPRO Fall Events

County parks of the region for park professionals and elected officials has been arranged jointly by NACPRO and NRPA. It is scheduled for Monday, October 25 as well.

The NRPA Off Site Institute - titled "Best of Show" will highlight parks in Anoka, Hennepin and Ramsey Counties. Non-NRPA mem-

bers can register for an additional \$5.00 fee. Details are on the NRPA website.



NACPRO EXCELLENCE AWARDS TO 18

The National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials announced its 2010 NACPRO Awards at a special Awards Banquet in Reno, NV on July 18th. The awards program is designed not only to compliment out-

standing agency efforts but also to share these exemplary projects with other park professionals.

The highest honor for the NACPRO Board is to recognize its members throughout the United States for the many successful parks and recrea-

tion facilities, programs, and staff and volunteers. Winners were chosen in 18 award categories. Descriptions of awards and of park agencies that won them will be covered in full in the upcoming Winter issue of NACPRO News.

Volume 21, Issue 2

**October 2010
Web Edition**

Upcoming NACPRO Meetings:

- ♦ **Minneapolis**—Oct. 2010
- ♦ **Portland, OR**—July 2011
- ♦ **Atlanta, GA**—Nov. 2011
- ♦ **Pittsburgh, PA**—July 2012
- ♦ **Anaheim, CA**—Oct. 2012
- ♦ **Fort Worth, TX**—July 2013
- ♦ **New Orleans, LA**—July 2014

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NACPRO NEWS

NACPRO News is the official newsletter of the National Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials and is produced by its Executive Director, R. Dan Gooch.

NACPRO News is published quarterly—spring, summer, fall and winter. All issues are posted on NACPRO’s website. The winter issue is also mailed to NACPRO members, NACo and NRPA park affiliates and to our sponsors. Hard copy circulation is approximately 700 copies. Web circulation exceeds 1000 viewers.

Advertising Rates:

- Full Page.....\$500
- Half Page.....\$300
- 1/4 Page.....\$200
- Business Cards.....\$125
- Inserts, per single sheet\$250

NACPRO News will accept articles from professional members on current recreation, conservation and park related issues. Articles may include photos (preferably in JPG format) accompanied by a cover letter with the author’s name address and telephone number. They may be mailed to:

NACPRO News
16w284 97th St.
Burr Ridge, IL 60527
or faxed to 630-920-0333
or e-mailed to rdangooch@aol.com

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Letter from the NACPRO President

I hope that you are enjoying the conclusion of a prosperous and productive summer.

Unfortunately for many agencies in our field, these are exceptionally difficult times.

We have to remember and believe that adversity creates opportunity.

All across the country, county park and recreational services are being subjected to budget reductions and being challenged as non essential services. Over the years many studies have been conducted that document some of the economic impacts parks have on regions and communities. Many of us are aware of current or ongoing assessments and surveys designed to quantify some of these impacts. Unfortunately they are often not specific to county or regional systems.

Also, it is unclear if there is a source for a comprehensive assessment of our economic contributions including such measures as: ecological services, real estate values, neighborhood stability, economic development and stimulus, reductions in cost associated with health care, recruitment and retention to a region’s work force and general quality of life issues.

As many park systems find themselves under intense scrutiny by community leaders with tremendous pressure to reduce budgets, knowing the full ramifications of our contribution to a region’s economic well being is essential.

At our Reno, Nevada board meeting, we had a spontaneous discussion regarding the value of services that county/regional park systems provide and how/if the impacts of these services are adequately recognized and understood.

In the current economic setting we all agree that it is very important to quantify the services our agencies provide locally as well as across the nation, understand the economic value of these services, the public desire for these services and their role and impact on community stability, revitalization and urban renewal.

We all recognize that county and regional based park systems provide a tremendous myriad of services in urban and rural settings. During our discussion it became apparent that there are a number of research projects occurring across the country addressing portions or components of these issues. It is unclear if there are any studies that are completely comprehensive in nature. Examples were made with regard to how urban recreational services provided by county systems may not be recognized in urban based studies, or national trail surveys may not recognize the level of use county trail systems receive.

A suggestion was made to establish a NACPRO task force to explore this



Continued on top of next page

situation and determine if adequate research has been or is being done with applications specific to county level park and recreation services. Several board members offered to participate in a group to address this issue. As is the case with any problem, one of the great challenges will be to clarify our questions, inventory what research has been/is currently being done, determine what gaps exist in the research, and encourage any additional studies. Ultimately there will need to be some method of illustrating the conclusion of any and all relevant information.

One possibility may be to host a forum or retreat to explore this concept further. I have talked with several of board members and representatives from NRPA and private park and recreation strategists and numerous park directors and senior staff. I have also discussed this with several foundations, urban planners, financial institutions and business leaders where I live in northeastern Ohio. There is a great interest in moving this idea along.

At the October meeting, the NACPRO board will explore the development of a method to consolidate and

present or make available existing research that has been conducted on the various value impacts associated with the services county and regional park systems provide. Using the strength of our association as a networking organization we should be able to identify existing applicable research projects that quantify the work that we do.

If you are aware of or have participated in any projects to identify and measure our contribution to the issues outlined above, please feel free to contact me directly at smadewell@lakemetroparks.com.

If you are planning to attend the NRPA Congress in Minnesota, please plan to attend our NACPRO meeting... (See details on front page) and look for our informational display in the conference center.

Steve Madewell

NACPRO President for 2010-2010

Director Lake MetroParks, Ohio

NACo Presents Webinar relating County Parks with Carbon Credits

On Thursday, October 7, 2010 from 2:00 PM until 3:30 PM EDT NACo will present a webinar entitled :

Carbon Credits & Conservation Finance: What County Officials Need to Know

The thrust of the presentation as we understand it is that in addition to providing natural beauty and recreational space, county park lands effectively offset harmful greenhouse gas emissions and retain carbon. County parks and recreation officials are invited to join this webinar to learn about potential revenue streams from carbon credit markets and your parks, greenways, and open spaces.

Interested participants may register at:

<https://www2.gotomeeting.com/register/624016554>

Are County Parks on the Chopping Block? An opposing editorial view.

A recent article, titled as the first line above, appeared in the National Association of County (NACo) News reporting on a survey by the National Park and Recreation Association.

It said:

“Just when there is increased interest in using local parks as an inexpensive form of recreation, governments are cutting back park services as a way to address their recession-driven budget shortfalls.

A recent survey by the National Recreation and Park Association shows that more than 60 percent of county park systems have reduced their part-time and seasonal staff, while 43 percent have cut full-time positions. Staff reductions came on the heels of budget cuts reported by nearly 60 percent of counties responding to the survey. Reductions ranged from 3 percent to 18 percent.

The picture gets bleaker on the ground.”

The article continued on to describe various program cuts in county parks. The implication was that county park operations are being

closed down and that citizens are loosing out. That is not our observation. We would agree that those cuts in some cases reduce the public’s ability to use the parks. And the reductions in staff are hard on the employees. But, we would argue that county parks managers are by in large doing an excellent job in helping counties balance their budgets without raising taxes while for the most part continuing to provide most services as before.

The NACPRO Professional Parks Tour in July visited the Washoe County, NV parks. Their Director Doug Doolittle told us their new recession era motto is “Open, Clean and Safe.” They, like most other county park systems, have honed in on the basics of park and recreation operation.

Just spending money does not a great park system make. Using it wisely does!**To Page 12**

October professional park tour visits Anoka & Ramsey Counties and Three Rivers Park District

NACPRO typically arranges a visit for professional park managers and elected officials to county park systems near the location of the NRPA Congress each fall. This year NACPRO has teamed with NRPA to present an offsite institute visit to three excellent county parks systems in the Minneapolis area.—Anoka County Parks, Ramsey County Parks and the metro area's Three Rivers Park District.

The tour will highlight:

- Anoka County's 1,600-acre Bunker Hills Regional Park that offers a wide spectrum of recreation opportunities including swimming and water slides at the Bunker Beach Water Park, horseback riding at Bunker Park Stables, a playground, biking, hiking, golf, camping, archery, picnicking, and cross-country skiing. Bunker Hills is also home to the Anoka County Veteran's Memorial.
- Ramsey County's Tamarack Nature Center, a 320-acre park preserve located within Bald Eagle-Otter Lakes Regional Park providing wood chipped paths, paved trails and boardwalks. This ecologically diverse community is home to red fox, deer, woodcock,

and other wildlife, as well as ever-changing seasonal foliage. The floating dock serves as a scenic overlook onto Tamarack Lake. Observation deck overlooks Teal Pond. Environmental education programs are available on many topics.

- Three Rivers Park District's Silverwood Regional Park providing integrated nature-based experiences and artistic creation and its North Mississippi Regional Park offering river programming

Because the Three Rivers Park District will also be playing host to a number of other offsite institutes at the NRPA Congress this October, the editor as chosen to provide more in depth information about that park system in this edition of NACPRO News. The others will be highlighted at another time.

Three Rivers Park District

Three Rivers Park District is a park system in the west suburban Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area of Minnesota. It manages almost 27,000 acres of park reserves, regional parks, regional trails, and special-use facilities. The name "Three Rivers" comes from the parks' geography, situated within

History of Three Rivers Park District

1957–1977

Three Rivers Park District, established by the Minnesota State Legislature, began operating in 1957. Over the next two decades, the Park District purchased almost 21,000 acres of property.

1967–1970

Wetland, prairie, woodland, and wildlife restoration initiatives were introduced to help establish the parklands to their original, native state prior to settlement in the 1800s.

1971–1989

This era saw the design and construction of a number of park facilities as well as the addition of miles of paved biking, hiking and cross-country ski trails.

1990–Present

Three Rivers has become a leader in the delivery of outdoor recreation, education services, and facilities. It opened new facilities for mountain biking, snowboarding, and evening cross-country skiing along lighted trails.

Today, the Three Rivers' park reserves are among the largest wildlife habitat areas in the seven-county metro area. Seven million visitors annually access the 27,000 acres of park reserves, regional parks, and regional trail corridors.



Located on scenic Lake Independence, Baker Park Reserve (right) offers 2,700 acres of natural landscape and accommodations from golfing to camping to cross-country skiing. The Lake Independence Regional 10-foot-wide paved trail supports walking, jogging, hiking, dog-walking, inline skating and bicycling, as well as a turf for horses.

the watersheds that flow into three significant rivers to this region: the Mississippi, the Minnesota and the Crow.

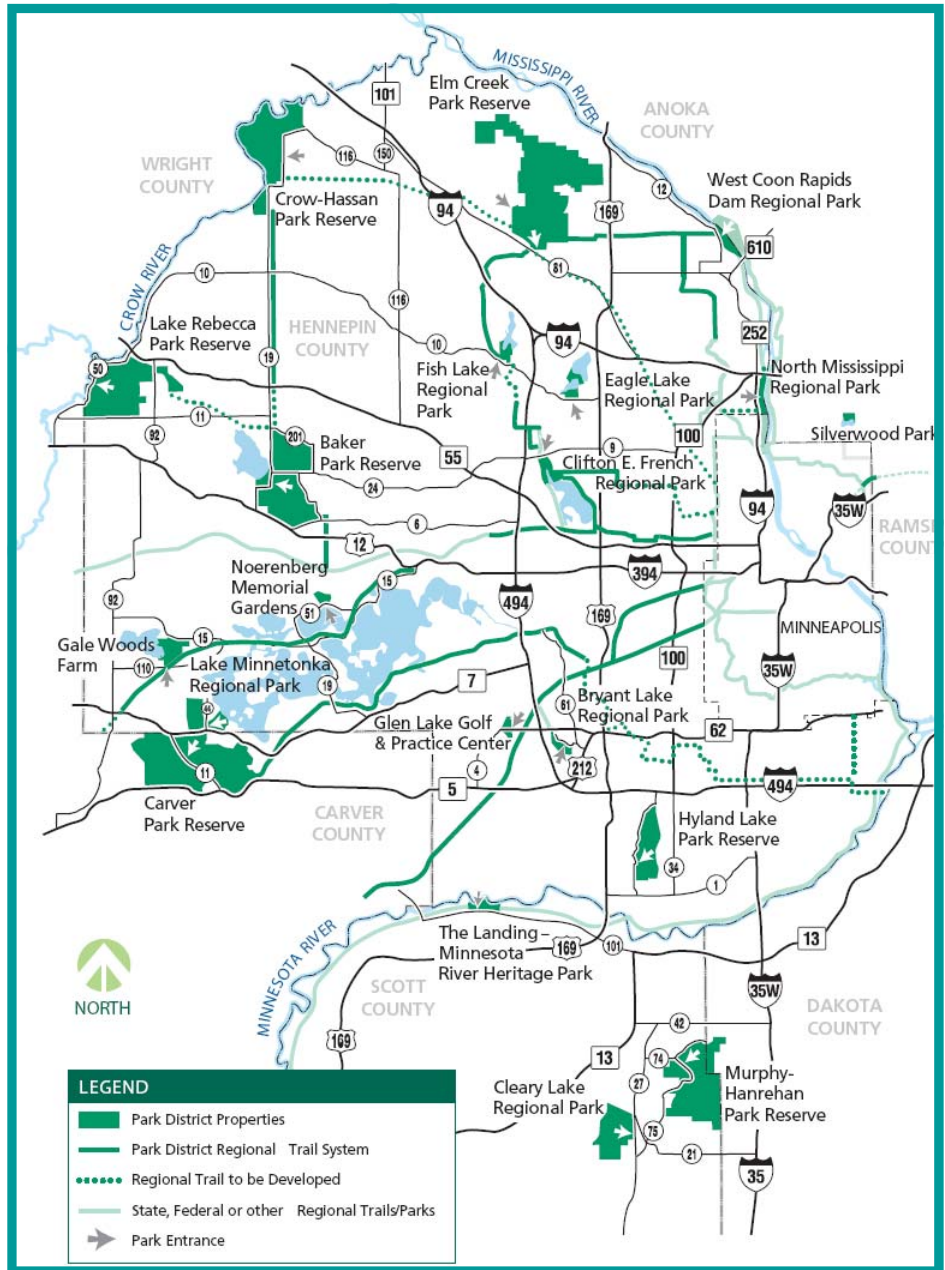
With facilities for every season, including picnicking, swimming, play areas, boating, fishing, downhill skiing, snowboarding, golfing, camping, and sledding, Three Rivers Parks is the place residents of Hennepin County and the region seek recreation, play and relaxation. Three Rivers Park District has developed an extensive trail system for hiking, biking, in-line skating, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. They also offer program sites for nature, recreation, historic, and farm education. The Park District serves 7 million park guests per year.



At 4,900 acres, Elm Creek Park Reserve is the largest of Three Rivers' parks.

Minnesota State Legislature established Three Rivers Park District as an independent, special park district in 1957. The District's charge is to acquire, develop and maintain large park reserves and regional parks and trails for the citizens of suburban Hennepin County, Scott County, the metro area, and the State.

Three Rivers works cooperatively with the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, Metropolitan Council and State Legislature as one of ten implementing agencies of the Metropolitan Regional Park System. This system of parks was established in 1974 by the Minnesota State Legislature to provide outdoor education, recreational facilities, services, and programs. Collectively,



The mission of Three Rivers Park District is to promote environmental stewardship through recreation and education in a natural resources-based park system.



the system serves more than 38 million park guests per year in the seven-county metro.

Three Rivers Park District is governed by an independent, seven-

member Board of Commissioners. Five members of the board are elected from districts in suburban Hennepin County, and two members are appointed by the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners. **More→**



Located on picturesque Whaletail Lake in Minnetrista, (above) Gale Woods Farm (below) features a unique educational opportunity where visitors of all ages will gain an understanding of agriculture, food production and land stewardship.



Three Rivers Funding Issues

The single most significant issue facing the Park District for 2010 is the economic slowdown that started in 2008 and continues into 2010. Housing issues and unemployment, while not directly affecting Park District revenues, do impact all facets of the Park District. Economic conditions impact how local constituents spend their money and leisure time, which in turn impacts property tax collections, park user fees and park and trail use.

Over the past several years the Park District has seen a decrease in the percentage of property tax collections, fluctuations - both positive and negative - in park user fees and a general increase in park users. The 2010 Operating Budgets anticipate these trends will continue. The Park District

will collect and spend over \$47 million to operate and maintain all park facilities, programs and operations this year.

Natural Resources

The Natural Resources Department is responsible for restoring and protecting natural resources (such as native plant communities, wildlife diversity and water quality) in Three Rivers Park District park reserves and regional parks. The Natural Resources department includes Forestry Management, Wildlife Management and Water Resources Management.

Three Rivers' policy for the planning and management of natural resources distinguishes it from other park and recreation agencies in Minnesota. Specifically, its policy allows no more than 20 percent of a park reserve to be developed for active use and requires that at least 80 percent of the park reserve be restored to and retained in a natural state. In keeping with this policy, they are actively involved in the preservation and restoration of wildlife and plant species.

Three Rivers relies on a team of volunteers to support its Natural Resources efforts.

Habitat management activities are essential for maintaining viable populations of wildlife and include the establishment and maintenance of na-



Park Service Officers are uniformed, non-sworn officers who patrol the parks and trails, provide limited Ordinance enforcement, and serve as a resource to guests.



The Wildlife Management Division of the Natural Resources Department is responsible for maintaining wildlife populations within the Park District through habitat management, reintroductions, management of species of special concern, population control, and general monitoring.

tive plant communities and their associated wildlife.

Three Rivers Park District has established programs to help with the reintroduction of native species to the Park District, including Trumpeter Swans and Ospreys.

The Park District conducts management programs to protect species of special concern like the Blanding's Turtle, a State-threatened species. Staff have been studying the populations for the past 15 years to ensure their survival.

Three Rivers Park District is committed to maintaining viable populations of white-tailed deer in its park reserves and some regional parks. However, without control, deer populations increase to the point where they start to damage vegetation and deer/car collisions increase. Archery and shotgun deer hunts and sharpshooters are used to keep populations in balance with available habitat. Park deer herds are counted annually through winter aerial deer surveys.

Canada geese have adapted very well to urban environments. The

Park District uses summer round-ups and special fall hunts to control numbers as needed. The Park District also uses a border collie to chase geese from picnic areas and golf courses.

Beaver ponds provide valuable wildlife habitat for a variety of animals. Occasionally, beavers plug culverts, flood fields and forests, cut trees in recreational areas or cause other damage. The Park District uses private trappers to control beavers as necessary on park property.

Three Rivers Parks conducts annual surveys of songbirds in the parks.

Public Safety

Three Rivers Park District Department of Public Safety is the law enforcement agency responsible for providing a safe environment for park guests and employees. Public Safety officers strive to provide an excellent park experience for visitors by protecting the facilities, trails, and natural resources of the Park

Three Rivers Park District focuses on healthful activities.

Its annual Autumn Woods Classic 1, 5 and 10 K run/walk winds through the picturesque 4,900-acre Elm Creek Park Reserve. The course for all races is set on asphalt and grass trails over the rolling hills of the Park. There is a 1K stretch of gravel on the 10K course.

District. The main goal of Public Safety is to educate park guests on the use of the parks and the Three Rivers Park District Ordinances and state statutes.

The Department of Public Safety is a full service Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POST) recognized law enforcement agency comprised of command staff, administrative staff, Park Police Officers, Park Service Officers, campground and large event security, and Equine Staff. The District employs use a variety of specialized patrol methods including bicycle, ATV, snowmobile, boat, and horse in addition to traditional squad patrol.

Public Safety Officers Three Rivers Park District Department of Public Safety offers a non-traditional environment for law enforcement professionals. It uses both sworn and non-sworn patrol officers who go through an extensive Field Training program to learn the nuances of park law enforcement. Its area of patrol includes 20 different parks spanning almost 27,000 acres. Its officers also patrol 150 miles of regional and in-park trails as well as over 200 miles of turf trails in various parks.

Park Police Officers are sworn, licensed police officers trained to respond to medical emergencies and accidents which may occur in or near our parks and trails. All Park Police Officers are certified First Responders or Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs).

Park Service Officers are uniformed, non-sworn officers who patrol the parks and trails, provide limited Ordinance enforcement, and serve as a resource to guests.

Public Safety also provides a security detail for those unique situations that call for overnight security, campground security, or large event gatherings. Deploying park security staff to these details allows the Park Police and Park Service Officers to remain focused on other public safety needs.

Public Safety staff is selected from a wide pool of applicants and must demonstrate excellence in both character and ability to be selected for employment.

Planning and Construction

The Planning and Development Department coordinates and provides planning, concept design, construction services, geographic information services, and infrastructure management for the Park District. The Department includes planners, landscape architects, architects, engineers, geographic information system (GIS) professionals, and technical support staff.

Planning and Development Department coordinates and collaborates with all Park District Divisions and Departments, the Metropolitan Council, Hennepin County, local municipalities, and other public agencies to provide thorough and consistent project delivery on:

- Developing and maintaining park and trail master plans
- Creating and managing park and trail facility design, implementation, and rehabilitation
- Creating, maintaining, and analyzing features on GIS maps for internal and public use
- Engaging public and private stakeholders and partners
- Supporting customer goals and facilitating informed decision making.



COUNTY PARK NEWS ROUNDUP

Editor's note: While researching county parks news for this issue the editor encountered far more than the usual amount of mayhem, violence, firearm use, criminality or loss for the reporting period. We do not know whether this is an artifact of research or an actual increase in incidents. In any case we should note that the reason these stories are presented is not so much to demonstrate trends in any crime or incident rate in county parks, but rather to provide park managers an opportunity to see the wide variety of incidents that can take place in county parks and to reflect on what might be done to avoid such incidents or to give thought to how a manager might react in face of a similar incident in his or her own park system.

Coyote Stalks Visitors

Erie County, OH—An Erie County park was closed for a day in early August following an incident the day prior in which a mother and her son were chased by a pair of coyotes. Not able to elude them, the mother called 911.

When deputies arrived, the coyotes ran towards the officers. One coyote was shot and killed. The other escaped and the park was closed the next day to search for it. The search was unsuccessful and the park reopened.

Mixed Stories in Dog Shooting

Travis County, TX—A Travis County Parks ranger reported being attacked by a dog before pulling his gun to shoot the dog in the face. The owner of the dog told a different story. Admitting that the dog and another were unleashed contrary to park rules, she said that when the ranger drove up to her campsite asking to whom the dogs belonged the dogs began barking. She said that the ranger began to retreat and then shot the dog.

Another witness said “He [the officer] was not being attacked. They [the dogs] didn't even make contact with him. I think to be attacked, you have teeth bared and dogs attacking you. They were barking. Barking and attacking are two different things.”

The dog is recovering from its injuries.

Fire Sparks Reward



Snohomish County, WA—the second instance of arson in a Snohomish County park in less than year has caused the department to offer a \$10,000 reward for information leading to the conviction of the person(s) responsible for lighting a playground structure at their Lake Goodwin Community Park. The structure of wood, metal and plastic as well as the bark beneath it burned. Damage was estimated to be worth about \$100,000.

Park Visitor Drowns

Charleston County, SC—In early August a park visitor was attempting to untangle his casting net from the James Island County Park fishing pier when, according to a witness, he apparently lost his footing and fell and disappeared into the water. The man's body was later recovered.

Squatters Tend Pot Farm

Sonoma County, CA—Nearly 50,000 marijuana plants were found in rugged terrain of two large Sonoma County parks in late July. Some plants had apparently already been partially harvested. Evidence suggested that the growers had been living nearby in the park to tend the crop.



Injured Woman Assisted at Park

Oconee County, SC—In mid August a woman was rescued from Chau Ram County Park. Rescue crews

related that the woman had been walking on a trail with a group when she fell and hurt her back. She was stabilized at the park by paramedics and taken to a nearby hospital.

We have watched the rise in popularity of dog parks over the last few years. Now a few conflicts are beginning to pop up.

Dog Shot at County Dog Park

Ann Arundel County, MD—This past summer a dog was shot and killed by an off duty police officer tending his own dog. The incident began when a man brought his sister's husky to the dog park and unleashed it. It began to play with a German shepherd on a leash. The owner of the shepherd, a policeman, felt his dog was in danger; pulled out the personal handgun he was authorized to carry off duty and shot the husky who later died at a veterinary hospital. The police department did not immediately initiate any investigation. But public outcry reportedly caused John R. Leopold, Anne Arundel County Executive to order further review. The police officer has now been officially charged with two offences, one for animal cruelty and the other for misuse of firearms. The animal cruelty charge, if convicted, is punishable to 90 days in jail and a \$1000 fine. The firearm charge for discharging a firearm within 100 feet of a residence, if convicted, is punishable to 6 months in jail and a \$1000 fine. The officer was placed on paid administrative leave from his job until this case is closed.

Cyclist Dies on Park Road

Santa Clara County, CA—A man riding a bicycle on a road in Santa Clara County's Almaden Quicksilver County Park in early in early September apparently lost control and fell to the pavement. Despite wearing a helmet he sustained a fatal blow to the head.

COUNTY PARK NEWS ROUNDUP.....Continued

Park Visitor Fatally Shot

Essex County, NJ—In late July an unarmed park visitor was shot and killed by an Essex County Sheriff's Officer. Because of citizen complaints, the county had been running an ongoing operation to stop sex acts in the park related to reported gay cruising and hookups in park vegetation. While on patrol the officer encountered a man masturbating. The man reportedly propositioned the officer who identified himself as a sheriff's officer; a scuffle and chase ensued; the subject seemed to panic, threatened the officer and reached for the officer's gun. Reportedly fearing for his life, the officer shot the subject killing him. Two weeks after the incident, authorities announced a temporary suspension of the undercover patrol. The shooting incident remains under investigation.

Aquatic Center Featured

Shawnee County, KS—Shawnee County Parks and Recreation is proud to report that its Shawnee North Family Aquatic Center was featured in Aquatics International magazine in the July/August issue. The Shawnee North Family Aquatic Center was selected as one of the premier 2010 Dream Designs from throughout the USA.

The facility was opened in 2006 and consists of 19,300 square feet of aquatic space including a lap diving pool, wading pool, lazy river, multiple water slides, themed toddler slides. The facility features a three-pool design with state-of-art features such as zero-dept entry, rock landscaping, and creative play



structures.

The Dream Designs showcase is an annual program that highlights extraordinary aquatics facility design projects.

Dade Expands Parking Fees

Dade County, FL—In order to offset potential budget cuts, the county will begin collecting \$5 per car on weekends and holidays at six regional parks beginning October 1.

The parks department has chosen those parks because they are large, popular and expensive to maintain. Several other county parks have charged for parking since the 1970s. (Nearby Broward County, FL charges \$1.50 per person for parking at 19 of its parks on weekends.)

Nearly \$35 million have been cut from the Parks and Recreation budget over the past three years. This year, the parks department expects an additional \$8 million reduction, largely due to lower property taxes collections because of sagging home values.

It will cost the County will about \$500,000 to install facilities necessary to collect parking fees. Parking fees are estimated to generate an estimated \$300,000 in revenue in the first year, and \$750,000 each year after.

System Seeks Levy Increase

Oakland County, MI—Oakland County Parks is asking for a renewal of its 10-year millage. The .2415-mill levy accounts for about 60 percent of the county parks budget and would raise \$12.4 million in 2011. It would cost the owner of a \$100,000 home about \$12 a year.

Virtual Tours Promote Park Use

Anoka County, MN—The Anoka County Parks and Recreation Department, in partnership with the Community Health and Environmental Services Department, is creating nine virtual park tours that will be available on the parks and recreation website. These tours will

highlight facilities, amenities, and park entrances, in an effort to familiarize the public with what the parks have to offer. The hope is that this will in turn bring more people out once they see what things the Department has offer. The funding for this project is from the Minnesota Department of Health, as part of the Statewide Health Improvement Program.



Anoka County's Chomonix Golf Course is one of the facilities featured in a virtual tour.

Washoe Partners in New Visitor Center

Washoe County, NV— The Galena Creek Visitor Center on Mt. Rose Highway opened to the public in August. The new Visitor Center is part of an ongoing partnership between the U.S. Forest Service and Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space to increase public understanding, appreciation and wise use of the many natural, cultural, historical and recreational resources of the area.

The Visitor Center and Recreation Area are operated by Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space under a special use permit from the U.S. Forest Service. Washoe County has partnered with the Great Basin Institute to operate the center. Great Basin Institute's staff and volunteers will provide information about local areas of interest, hikes, camping and other recreational activities. They also plan to offer a variety of seasonal nature programs for visitors of all ages and abilities.

COUNTY PARK NEWS ROUNDUP.....Continued

Relief for Toilets Found

Montgomery County, MD—For a while this past summer it appeared that budget cuts would force Montgomery County Parks to cut its program of providing portable toilets at key locations within its parks. But following a public outcry, the offer of commercial sponsorships and a search for funding from early retirement of 43 employees, the portable toilet program will stay at least until June of 2011.



Portable toilets in more than 80 park locations countywide were slated for removal June 30, 2010 as the Department of Parks prepared to meet a 16.5 percent reduction in its fiscal year 2011 budget—the portable restroom contract was one of many line item cuts to the adopted budget. Given expressed interest in community sponsorship, the Department of Parks asked the vendor to delay removing the portable toilets for the month of July. Before the end of July, Director of Parks Mary R. Bradford announced the completion of the department's various cost-savings efforts, it could cover the cost of keeping the portable toilets in the parks, with the help of its community sponsors.

Signs recognizing sponsors will be placed inside the doors of the sponsored portable toilets. Banners recognizing the most generous sponsor, A Step in Time Chimney Sweeps, will be placed at key locations within parks with sponsored toilets. A Step in Time has committed to keeping at least one portable toilet in all 80 park locations for a minimum of six months.

New Park Opened

Brunswick County, NV—The newest Brunswick County Park opened in mid August to join the 11 already in the system. The new Ocean Isle

Beach Park boasts tennis courts, restrooms, and two playgrounds, as well as a multipurpose field for football, soccer, and other activities. An amphitheater capable of seating 300 people will be used by the park department and will be available to rent.

PGMS Adds Sustainability to Award Criteria

The Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS) has announced they have incorporated sustainability into the scoring rubric for the annual Green Star Awards program. Sustainability has become one of the most important elements of a landscape management program. In keeping with this, PGMS has built specific scoring components into their Green Star Awards program scoring rubric in an effort to both acknowledge and evaluate a landscape programs sustainability practices.



Acquisition Boasts Natural Lands

Oakland County, MI—Oakland County Parks Executive Officer Dan Stencil announced in August the expansion of the County's Independence Oaks Park. The purchase expands the park by 186 acres to 1,274 acres. County officials are proud that the new acquisition contains a lake, rare natural communities, four miles of headwater streams, state-protected bog bluegrass, and two species of special concern in Michigan -- the tamarack tree cricket and purple tway-blade orchid.

The property's \$2.836 million purchase price will be paid for with \$1.74 million from the Oakland

County Parks, \$945,000 from a Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund grant, a contribution of \$16,000 from the North Oakland Headwaters Land Conservancy, rental income from three residences on the site for the next six months, and a potential pending grant application to the Carls Foundation through a partnership with Ducks Unlimited.

Parks Chief Steps Down

Westchester County, NY— In August Joseph Stout, Commissioner (chief) of the Westchester County Parks Department announced that he would be stepping down from his post to take advantage of the early retirement option being offered to shrink the size of the County workforce.



Joe Stout

Stout had started his career in parks by cutting grass and cleaning toilets for the Harrison Recreation Department. Nearly four decades later as commissioner of the Westchester Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation, he oversaw more than 50 parks, golf courses, pools, beaches, trails and an historic beachfront amusement park.

Deputy Commissioner Kathleen O'Connor is serving as interim Commissioner. She reportedly will be considered for the job on a permanent basis as part of a national search that has begun.



O'Connor has been deputy commissioner of the Parks and Recreation Commission

Kathleen O'Connor

COUNTY PARK NEWS ROUNDUP.....Continued

since 2006. She was first hired by the department in 1980 as a program specialist in camping, and later went on to other positions, including assistant manager of the County Center and director of recreation. O'Connor is also executive director of the not-for-profit group Friends of Westchester County Parks, an unpaid position. The group has \$2 million in assets and provides over \$300,000 in support to the park system annually.

Park Police Help with Short Budget

Clark County, NV—In a move to save the county \$115,000 the Clark County Park Police Association (union) which represents 15 members has voluntarily agreed for its officers to take a 4 percent pay cut and a week of unpaid furlough.

Dogs Have Their Day (In Water)



Charleston County, SC—After the end of the regular “people” season the Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission has, for the second year, opened its Whirlin' Waters at Wannamaker County Park to dogs and their owners. The event in early September attracted nearly 1000 dogs—well, owners of 1000 dogs—that paid nothing for themselves but \$8 to \$10 per dog to romp in the water. (No owners are allowed to bathe.) Reportedly all the dogs have a blast. Large dogs relish the wave pool, while smaller dogs take a dip in Otter Bay to cool off from the late summer heat. We

can't help wonder if some enjoy the water slide! Organizers report that for some reason the water environment makes dogs less aggressive and more playful. Despite small and large dogs of many types, no aggressive incidents of any type were reported. Indoor dogs with soft “carpet feet” sometimes bloodied their paws on the concrete so a first-aid station was set up near the pool.

Bequest to Enhance Park

Washington County, WI—A gift announced in August of \$233,000 from the estate of a former resident will finance construction of a recreation area at Washington County's Ridge Run County Park. Preliminary plans include tennis and basketball courts, new play equipment, exercise stations, tree plantings and landscaping. The project is anticipated to be complete early next year.

Employee Dies While Mowing

New Castle County, DE—In late August a New Castle County Parks employee, was preparing to cut grass on a hill when, the lawn tractor he was riding slid down the hill and overturned into a ditch. The worker was pinned under the tractor and was later pronounced dead at the scene. The exact cause of death is being investigated.

Right to Arms in Parks Violated?

Lee County, FL—In August a Fort Myers attorney filed a lawsuit against Lee County, alleging that an ordinance banning guns from parks (and other county locations) violates state law.

Fatal Attack Seen by Employees

Denton County, TX—In late August, two employees at Hidden Cove Park saw a woman attacking a man with a pair of scissors. When they yelled at the woman, she reportedly halted the attack and began to walk away. The employees followed, then restrained the woman until police ar-

rived. The victim was taken to a hospital where he died. The woman was held for investigation.

New DNR Head for King County

King County, WA—In July Christie True became the new King County Director of Natural Resources and Parks. Her key functions will be protecting human health, safeguarding the environment and enriching the quality of life in King County. It is a big job.



The department is responsible for wastewater, solid waste, water and land resources and parks and recreation. The Parks and Recreation Division looks after more than 25,000 acres of parks and natural lands, 175 miles of regional trails, plus pools and an aquatic center. By cultivating strong relationships with non-profit, corporate and community partners, King County Parks enhances park amenities while reducing costs.

Prior to True's appointment the Department was in the hands of an interim director Bob Burns. True had been head of the Wastewater Division of the Department she now leads.

Motor Vehicle Fees Raised

Hamilton County, OH—A recently changed Ohio State law has reduced taxes to local and regional parks in that state prompting Hamilton County Park District to raise its annual parking fees from \$5 to \$10 per car. This was the first parking fee increase since 2005. It also raised its daily permit from \$2 to \$3. Hamilton County Park District operates 21 parks. A valid Motor Vehicle Permit is required.



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The Newsletter of the National Association Of County Park and Recreation Officials

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The National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials is an independent non-profit organization with its own chartered constitution and is an affiliate of both the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). NACPRO represents counties and regional parks systems on federal legislative matters. Membership consists of county park professionals throughout the United States.

Its Goal is to advance official policies that promote county parks and recreation issues while providing members with opportunities to network, exchange resources and achieve professional development.

Are County Parks on the Chopping Block?...Cont.

The economic downturn has provided an unwelcome but perhaps necessary opportunity for county parks managers to look closely at facility and program offerings. We are confident that the most popular or most beneficial to the community have been or will be retained.

This newsletter has carried countless articles over the years about innovative programs—those that pay for themselves and those that are truly needed but cannot support themselves without taxpayer help (and clearly support).

We have noted recently that although most local level initiatives requiring voter referendum to maintain or increase park supporting taxes have failed, many county, regional and special district propos-

als continue to be approved—even in the down economy. We believe this is due to the knowledge and belief on part of the public that the right decisions are being made with regard to how public money is being used—with wisdom and efficiency.

The application of wisdom and efficiency can in fact lead to spending and taxing cuts.

Actually, virtually all the examples cited in the “Chopping Block” article resulted in good decisions or favorable outcomes. Butler County, OH will probably have its pending property tax levy approved if the proposed rate is reasonable. Kitsap County, WA has found a way to continue operation with intermittent closings. West-

chester County, NY, that operated the only county-owned amusement park in the nation and hasn't earned a profit in at least a generation concluded sensibly to shut it down.

If Pierce County, WA's only public skating rink is closed we are confident a reasonable alternative will somehow keep skating going just like Montgomery County, MD was able to keep its porta-pottys by seeking sponsorships.

If indeed County Parks are on the chopping block it is simply for a judicious trimming.

For additional information about the NRPA survey, go to www.nrpa.org and type in “Economic Update Survey Report Spring 2010” in the search box.