



## Operations Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director  
FROM: Jeremy Jensen, Director of Operations  
RE: December 2025 Department Monthly Report

### OPERATIONS

#### Winter Snow Operations

Winter snow operations jumped into high gear immediately this season, with the first snowfall on Thanksgiving weekend. The nine inches of snow delivered kept staff busy with blowing snow for the next week, followed by another significant snowfall the following weekend and lingering snow events throughout December.

To prepare for these days, staff transition all snow equipment from storage and start installing snowplows and salt spreaders on the trucks. As they move through this process, the equipment is inspected for safe and proper operation. If anything is in need of repair, the District's Fleet Division quickly steps in to complete repairs prior to the first snowflakes. Staff then review their cold weather gear to be sure they are ready for cold temperatures and icy conditions. Staff take advantage by including a snowplow training event lead by veteran employees to help new staff review equipment operation, as well as techniques and snow pile locations in the preserves. This helps ensure visibility at preserve entrances and minimizes melting snow from refreezing on parking lots, making driving conditions safer for preserve visitors. Training continues for the new drivers with one-on-one instruction in the trucks once snowfall occurs, until staff are fully prepared to operate in the preserves and keep roadways safe for driving and sidewalks free of ice.

Preserves also need to be prepared for the winter weather. All heating equipment is inspected in buildings to be sure its operational. At some locations, marker stakes are installed in critical locations to aid plow drivers and prevent landscape damage, while other locations are partially closed during winter months to limit driving access on roadways that will become dangerous with the addition of snow and ice. All preserves remain available during winter months for brisk hikes, snow-shoeing and cross-county skiing. A limited number of preserves also allow snowmobile operation with frozen ground and four inches of snow.

Those early season winter storms brought more snow to the area than the District has had to handle in recent years. Heavy snowfall brings on the need to maintain District sled hills, including the newest sled hill at



*Rangers Uidl & Callahan cleaning wood duck boxes.*



*Snow plowing operations at Camp Tomo Chi Chi.*



*Plowing snow at the Fox Valley Ice Arena with a skid steer and plow attachment.*

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Brunner Forest Preserve. Every morning, hill fences need repairs, jumps need to be removed from the surface, and debris needs to be removed from the hillside. Heat checks are performed daily to ensure buildings are kept from having issues with frozen pipes and fixtures. Once the snow and cold temperatures arrive maintaining the sled hills and doing heat checks on our buildings becomes a daily task throughout operations. Plowing is also a District-wide initiative in operations, including the snow removal of the parking area at Fox Valley Ice Arena, which is a duty shared by all Operations staff members.

Preparing for Bison at Burlington Prairie

The bison arrived at Burlington on December 5. Signage was produced and installed on the enclosure to help ensure protection of both the animals and guests. Operations completed the construction of the storage shed for supplies to be stored just prior to the arrival of their arrival. Improvements to the site continue with the planning phase of the electric installation, projected to be completed in early 2026. The cold spell created several gate issues to correct, many of them were battery related, and all were repaired to keep them functioning properly to allow access to authorized visitors and animal care takers.

Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance

December snowfall brought various snow plow and equipment failures through Fleet. Snowplow issues with hydraulic lines, repair of wiring/controllers, and replacing solenoids were a few of the common corrections. Equipment repairs included boom control linkage New Holland backhoe and recovery and repair on a CAT 299C skid steer which left the machine in-operable. The repair of the CAT lockout, completed was only possible with the Autel diagnostic scan tool purchased in 2023. This scan tool allows staff to scan fault codes, view live data, and communicate with various different vehicle and equipment manufacture's on-board ECUs and software modules making it a crucial tool in Fleets arsenal.

District mechanic, Tyler Rowe, also took on fabricating and welding new harrow mounts for Natural Resources' agricultural disc implement. This required measuring, fabricating plates, drilling precise bolt holes, and welding the new plates to the harrow arms. The results are a repair that looks and functions better than the factory mounts that came on the implement. This type of repair shows the skills and abilities of Tyler and his commitment to keeping District vehicles and equipment safe and operational.



*Photos of the disc attachment welding completed by Mechanic Tyler Rowe.*