



Operations Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director
FROM: Jeremy Jensen, Director of Operations
RE: November 2024 Department Monthly Report

OPERATIONS

Preparing for Snow & Winter Conditions

For Operations Staff, the month of November is all about transitioning from summer tasks to winter operations, primarily prepping for cold weather and snow removal. We were fortunate to have the cold temperatures hold off until the very end of the month, allowing staff to make the best of the ideal conditions to store landscaping equipment and replace it with the snow equipment. All snowplows and salt spreaders were installed on trucks, serviced and inspected for safe and proper operation. If repairs were needed, the District's Fleet Division quickly stepped in to order parts and complete repairs prior to the first snowflakes.

Staff also prepared for the forecasted temperatures, which included an inventory of their cold weather gear to ensure safe and efficient operations for cold temperatures and icy conditions. A snowplow training event takes advantage of experienced, 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 will continue for the new drivers with one-on-one instruction in the trucks once snowfall occurs, ensuring all staff are fully qualified to operate in the preserves; keeping roadways safe for driving and sidewalks free of ice.

Facilities are also prepared for winter conditions. With Daylight Savings Time ending in early November, all the entrance gates are reprogrammed to follow the late sunrise and early sunsets of winter. Additionally, all heating equipment is inspected in District buildings to verify it is fully operational. At some locations snowplow stakes are installed, identifying critical locations to aid plow drivers. Other locations need to be shut down during winter months to limit driving access on roadways that become dangerous with the addition of snow and ice. All preserves, however, 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 4" of snow.

Sled Hills & Safety

Operations began with the mowing of sled hills in late October, while November sled hill focus was the installation of protective measures. Fabyan Forest Preserve has been a popular sledding location for



Rangers Smith and Martin during chainsaw training.

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decades. Due to its proximity to the river and Fox River Bike trail, fencing is erected at the bottom of the hill to keep the sledders on the hill and it keeps other preserve users safe from collisions. Along with the snow fencing, straw bales are placed in front of the fence to help slow down the sledders. Fencing is also staged along the wood line parallel to the Johnson's Mound hill to provide a safe area for patrons to walk. New for this season, Operations will be adding the Brunner Family Forest Preserve to the list approved sledding locations.

Along with sled hills, protective rubber matting was put out on the bridges of the Great Western Trail to protect the surface from the tracks of snowmobiles. This covers all of the bridges from Burlington Rd west to the County Line Rd. The Great Western Trail is a popular snowmobiling location when there is adequate snow accumulation.

Garden Areas

The Horticulturist and crew completed our seasonal cut back using proper horticultural practices for plants at the Villa, Windmill, Creek Bend, Centennial and the Japanese gardens. Coneflower stalks, and other select vegetation, is left standing as a food source for the wildlife throughout the winter. Water features at Creek Bend and in the Japanese Garden were also winterized.

Equipment Repair

In addition to scheduled preventative maintenance of the District's vehicles and equipment, Fleet also handles non-mechanical repairs. Fabrication and welding repairs are needed at times to correct stressed metal, cracks, bends, and breaks. Having the equipment and staff available in-house keeps these repair costs and downtime of the equipment to a minimum. Trailer ramps, rough-cut mowers, and other implements throughout the District often experience these over the course of their life expectancy.