



Human Resources Department Memorandum

TO: Benjamin Haberthur, Executive Director

FROM: Jennifer Clough, Director of Human Resources

DATE: January 7, 2026

RE: December 2025 Report

Human Resources:

- In December, the District invited top candidates to participate in second-round interviews for the Horticulturalist position and extended an offer to the selected candidate, who will begin employment on January 5, 2026. Additionally, the District made a promotional offer for the vacant South Operations Crew Leader position and posted a Ranger position for internal and external recruitment. The District received a resignation letter from a part-time police officer and has initiated the recruitment process.
- Following a recent vacancy in the Deputy Executive Director position, and with President Lenert's approval, the District reallocated the associated funds to strengthen internal operations. This reallocation allowed the District to recognize existing talent through three internal promotions and to create two new positions to better support operational needs. As part of these changes, the Finance Director was promoted to Chief Financial and Administrative Officer (CFAO), the Finance Manager was promoted to Assistant Director of Finance, and the Accountant was promoted to Accounting Supervisor. These adjustments align staffing resources with current and anticipated needs and position the District for continued success.
- The Finance and HR teams officially launched a collaborative effort to develop, implement, and manage new programs and processes related to the ADP payroll and HR software migration, including multiple meetings focused on payroll preparation, scheduling for Police staff and coordination with Kane County IT for data exports into the ADP system. Staff expects portions of the ADP suite of technology to go live throughout 2026.
- HR continues to update the employee handbook and, in coordination with Administration and legal counsel, is revising the District's Organizational Ordinance to clarify language, align with current practices, and reflect laws effective in 2026.
- Plan modifications related specifically to GLP-1 prescriptions drugs for weight loss have resulted in a 1% reduction to the District's premiums effective January 1, 2026. Staff has worked to ensure its systems reflect the new employer and employee rates prior to the new year.
- The District continues its formal negotiations with the District's full-time police officers' collective bargaining unit with the Metropolitan Alliance of Police, having participated in a productive discussion in December. It's next bargaining session is planned for January 15th, with future dates calendared into February as needed.
- HR has contacted the District's insurance cooperative, IPBC, to obtain information regarding the new Illinois Health Coverage for Parents Law for 2026, including employer requirements, communication needs, and administrative responsibilities, with further information anticipated in the next months.
- The HR team has initiated the preparation of budget requests in support of the District's FY 26/27 budget process. These include recommendations to improve the competitiveness of the District's various benefit plans and programs available to District staff.
- The Director of Human Resources helped to support the finalized RFP for Grant Consultant services and will be participating in the selection panel for this important support service.
- In December, department staff attended the following training; Authorized Agent Webinar for IMRF, FMLA Time -Off Management, OSHA and Safety Program Administration via webinar through PDRMA, and completed its required annual training.



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Safety and Wellness:

There was one employee injury reported in the month of December. An employee was banding a hawk and sustained talon puncture wounds to hand and wrist. The employee was able to return to work after medical attention. In addition, there are no new property/general liability claims in December.

- The District completed the 2025 PDRMA Risk Management Review and earned a composite score of 87%. This compares to an average PDRMA member score of 76%. PDRMA recognized the District's risk management accomplishment with an annual incentive check of \$3,130.21. The annual review will be used to develop 2026 risk management goals in an effort to continuously improve safety.
- The Safety and Wellness Coordinator participated in a safety review of the Burlington Prairie Bison enclosure. Signage and the emergency response plan were reviewed by staff.
- Staff assisted with a light duty return to work plan for a District Police officer that was injured in October. Safety audits of the District police vehicles were conducted and items of concern or compliance are being addressed to ensure all vehicles have the necessary equipment for patrols.
- The Safety and Wellness Coordinator conducted trainings across multiple departments, including high-risk equipment instruction for the North Operations Team during their annual chainsaw training, an OSHA Arc Flash class through PDRMA for the Trades Supervisor and Tradesmen, and is tracking the completion status of all mandatory 2025 trainings.
- The Safety and Wellness Coordinator completed a comparable cost study for safety shoe/boot reimbursements to employee positions that require steel toed boots. Results show peer agencies/districts reimburse up to \$225 per year to eligible employees. This information will be used to inform the FY26/27 program budget.

Volunteer Resources:

In December, 767.5 volunteer hours at 42 events were given to the District!

December featured wild weather affecting many workdays and causing cancellations. Large snowfall at the start of the month and a bitter mid-month cold snap canceled several workdays but provided ground cover to safely burn accumulated brush piles from past years.

- The Volunteer Coordinator met with staff at Burlington Prairie to discuss the impending bison reintroduction and to consider opportunities for volunteers to be involved and of service during this exciting time.
- Staff supplied a group of scouts with tools for trail clearing at Camp Tomo, with collaboration from Operations management for added guidance.
- The District's EST Chair hosted the final EST meeting of 2025, with the HR Manager in attendance. The committee reviewed the 2025 EST collection totals, which included 134 pounds of batteries and 320 pounds of electronic waste, and discussed the District's IPRA Environmental Report Card score of 81%. The committee also discussed opportunities to improve this score, including communicating recommendations to District leadership. Additionally, carbon footprint reduction was introduced as a key focus and primary goal for 2026.
- The Seed Team program focuses on harvesting native seed from preserves with strong native plant populations. These seeds are then processed and distributed to other preserves and agricultural fields to support prairie restoration efforts. The Seed Team 2025 marked the busiest harvest season to date in terms of number of events, volunteers, and total volunteer hours. The regular Wednesday harvests included 17 events with 352 volunteers contributing 704 hours. Special event harvests added 15 events, 239 volunteers, and 383 hours. In total, the program conducted 32 harvests supported by 611 volunteers contributing 1,087 hours. Volunteer contributions through the Seed Team program directly support the District's Natural Resource Management goal of restoring 250 acres in 2025.
- Staff conducted its first comprehensive Volunteer satisfaction survey to gather feedback from volunteers across all programs and positions. The survey collected basic volunteer information, areas of service, and offered respondents



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the option to request staff follow-up regarding questions or concerns. The purpose of the survey is to identify strengths and opportunities within the Volunteer Office, improve customer service, and support volunteer retention across diverse programs. Given the wide range of volunteer roles and service areas, this feedback provides valuable insight to strengthen the overall volunteer program. Moving forward, staff plans to expand survey use following special events and trainings to continue collecting timely and meaningful feedback from volunteers serving in these capacities.

- Staff picked up and stored a batch of buckets from Fister Quarries in Batavia at Fabyan Garage for ongoing projects.
- A site walkthrough was conducted at Blackberry Maples with Natural Resources Management and new Co-Steward Sara to complete her official onboarding. This walkthrough is a standard District practice for all new Stewards and Co-Stewards to ensure clear expectations and consistent program standards. During the visit, staff and volunteers hiked the preserve to review work areas, priority projects, brush pile locations for burning, and other site-specific details. The walkthrough also included issuing necessary tools, supplies, first aid kits, sign-in sheets, and other materials required to successfully lead volunteer workdays. Because Steward-led workdays typically occur without staff present, these walkthroughs are critical to ensuring volunteers are fully prepared to lead activities safely, effectively, and in alignment with District goals.
- Staff collaborated with NRM to update the brush pile burn policy, ensuring current and accurate procedures are in place.
- Continued efforts regarding the new steward onboarding guide are taking place. Based on feedback and questions from current Stewards, there was a clear request for a document that provides an overall view of the Steward role. The onboarding guide outlines volunteer and staff responsibilities, required and recommended training sessions, and includes workday best practices and safety reminders. The goal of this document is to give prospective Stewards a clear snapshot of what the role entails, both responsibilities and limitations, while clearly outlining expectations and available opportunities. Given the significant responsibility associated with the Steward role, this guide is intended to support both new Stewards and experienced Stewards by serving as an educational resource and ongoing reference.



Left: CAMBR group at Raceway Woods enjoying a crackling fire of invasive species!

Right: District Staff at Burlington to meet with Ruhter Bison Ranchers on Dec 1st



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Over 40 volunteers and staff joined us at our Seed Harvest Potluck on Dec 10th at NRM.