



Operations Department Memorandum

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

OPERATIONS

Extreme Weather Conditions

The month of February often brings some uncomfortable weather conditions, which could include snow, ice, arctic cold or even soggy, sloppy work environments for staff that work outdoors. This year was no exception with three snow events, multiple icy days and a full week of extreme cold temperatures. During these extreme conditions, North, South, Trades, and Fleet staff all have identified priorities to ensure preserves are safe and District assets are protected. Staff continue to clear preserve roadways and shovel sidewalks each day to remove ice and snow hazards. Additionally, they clear blowing snow away from entrance gates to be sure they operate automatically. The lower temperatures drop, the more critical it becomes to maintain daily building checks to ensure all furnaces are working correctly and water lines do not freeze. Often infrastructure failures need to be repaired immediately to prevent additional damage, and chainsaw work continues as long as ground surfaces are solid enough to support trucks and equipment.

Winter weather conditions also support projects in the shops to prepare for the busy summer season. Staff engage in annual equipment maintenance on all mowers, tractors, carts and handheld equipment such as blowers, weedwhips and brushcutters. This list can include such things as full engine services, filter changes, belt replacements, blade sharpening and welding tasks. As winter progresses, almost every piece of equipment is cycled through the shop and is reviewed for needs and repairs. This is the best time of year to make repairs that



Rangers Callahan and Uidl conducting chainsaw work to remove hazard trees.



February's blustery conditions meant lots of snow plowing and ice prevention. Above is a photo of operations at Bowes Creek FP.



Stunning winter scenes around the county, above is from Binnie Woods.

ensure the equipment won't break down during summer, resulting in costly time delays. Other winter necessities include painting trash and recycle containers and constructing new picnic tables or replacing damaged boards on existing tables.

Winter Projects

February is a month where work is dictated by the weather, and this year was no different. Entering the month, we had bitterly cold temperatures which hardened the ground and allowed for a clearing project at the west entrance to the Fabyan Forest Preserve. The removed vegetation provided an improved aesthetic when entering the preserve, while also removing a large section of invasive material such as buckthorn and honeysuckle. Investing time into projects like these allows staff to focus on core job tasks in the spring and summer months like mowing and trail maintenance, while also providing a tidy and pleasing aesthetic to our preserve patrons.

Projects like these are tackled on a case-by-case basis. Our largest snowfalls of the 2024-2025 winter season followed this project, so with several inches of fresh snow on the ground suspended our cutting projects and these were replaced by plowing and sled hill repairs. Leading up into March fluctuating temperatures shift our focus on a day-to-day basis. March will make way for spring clean-up, burn season, and equipment preparation to get ready for annual mow season.

Cold Weather Gardening

The horticulturist completed site accurate maps of the landscape around the Villa, Windmill, and the northern part of the Japanese Garden. In the Japanese Garden the overall plan is to add more of an evergreen element that is a staple in all Japanese Gardens. All specimens selected adhere to their location, sun and design requirements.

For the Villa some plans include bringing back some historical elements such as the Gazebo



Storm damaged/hazard tree removed at Buffalo Park.



Although not glamorous, still incredibly important winter work: annual equipment maintenance.

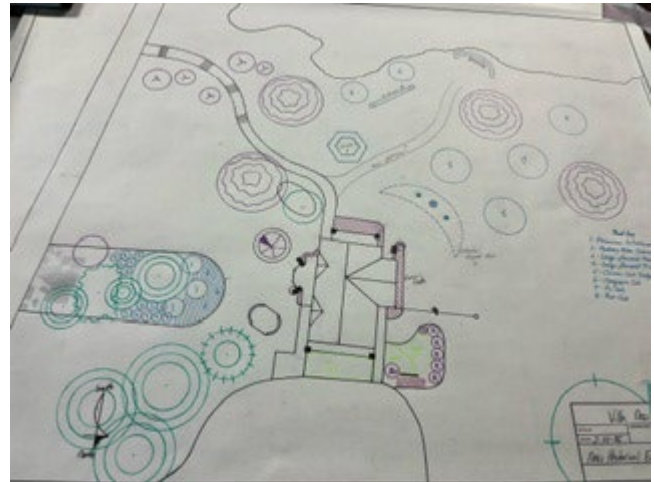
Operations Department Memorandum
February Report

overlooking the Japanese Garden, the spider web of rope possibly out in the lawn, and a slow transition to adding more celestial shaped beds around the Villa. All plans have historical significance and would reduce turf maintenance as well as adding more elements for our patrons to “walk through history”.

The Windmill is in much need of a renovation for the beds located between the service road and Crissey Ave. Plans are started using all native species, but was halted due to erosion issues in the Japanese Garden.

After snow rapidly melting it was observed that the pathway erosion issue in the Japanese Garden (which is a common issue) is most likely a result from water runoff from the steps outside the garden (west side) leading to the Villa. Permanent solutions are being discussed. Catch basins installed within the pathway leading to the Villa, planting wet soil tolerant plants (Buttonbush) as yet another buffer for this water.

Due to the already very permeable nature of the decomposed granite present in the Japanese Garden, the water moves underground and right along the pathway. In conclusion, hopefully fixing the problem where it originates will correct the issue within the Japanese Garden.



Horticulturalist Umstead's site plan maps around the Fabyan Villa and Japanese Garden.



Erosion issues were spotted at the Japanese Garden; permanent solutions are being discussed to address this ongoing concern.