



## Operations Department Memorandum

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

### OPERATIONS

#### Winter Projects

For the Operations Department, winter projects have always been focused on getting those bigger projects done where we need to bring in our equipment on the frozen turf. Working at this time of year allows us to remove trees and brush and then circle back in spring to repair any turf damage. One of our first big projects for the winter season was the removal of brush along the wall at Fabyan Forest Preserve stretching from the west gate entrance and then continuing north past the Fabyan Villa. Two things were accomplished during this clearing. One, it aesthetically improved the overall look of the area, which is one of our highest traffic areas in the entire county. We have daily users walking past this area or cycling and it brightens up the area greatly. The other issue that was addressed, and is more important, it removed vegetation near and along the antique limestone wall that is a focal point seen by motorists traveling on Route 31 into Geneva. This wall has been on the property for over 100 years and keeping back the vegetation is an integral part of keeping the remaining wall standing for years to come.

#### Chainsaw Training

Staff took advantage of the mild weather in December to complete some annual and introductory chainsaw training. Each year staff undergo a variety of cutting skills trainings to ensure they are safe while working but also improve their ability to remove trees along heavily used trails and roadways and make good decisions about protecting infrastructure on District property. All operations staff participated in a classroom refresher on PPE and



*Snow fencing installed at Fabyan FP east side, ready for winter activities once snow falls.*



*Staff clearing brush and debris along the Fabyan FP wall that stretches from the west gate entrance up north past the Villa.*



*Rangers Martin & Martin assessing a tree for chainsaw removal.*

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cutting techniques and then a discussion on tree diseases and recognizing tree health. Newly hired staff spent additional time with Crew Leader Perez for a detailed chainsaw operations class.

Putting all this information to work, staff scheduled multiple days at sites along the Fox River Trail and at Camp Tomo Chi Chi for practical application of everything they had learned. New staff members received one-on-one cutting training with seasoned Rangers and Crew Leaders to help them learn the safest way to fell trees, as well as monitor the surroundings and protect preserve visitors during the process. Techniques for removing leaning trees and the unpredictability of cutting deadfall were emphasized. This year chipper and skidsteer training were also incorporated into the process. This whole process benefits more than just the newest employees. There's always more to learn for the experienced cutter, and the trails are safer for hikers and bicyclists with the dead trees having been removed. By removing the trees that are likely to fall, emergency operations are reduced following icing and thunderstorms throughout the year.

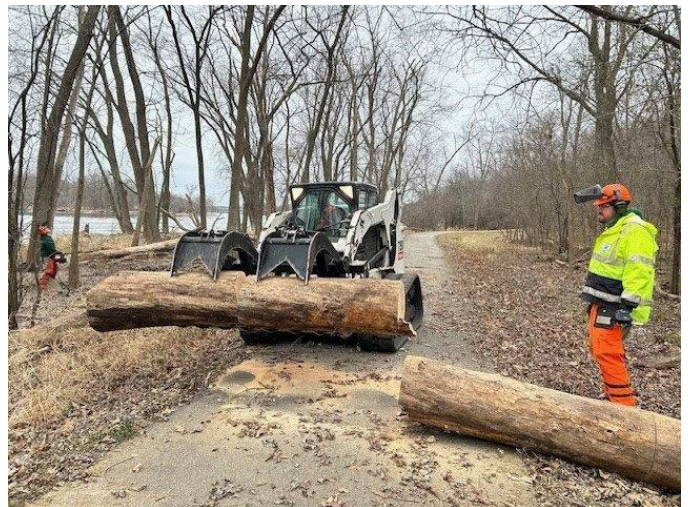
Candlelight & Draft Prep

The horticulturist prepared evergreen cuttings for the Durant House Candlelight Event. This has been done this for the past couple years and it has worked out wonderfully for both parties. Drafts were completed of the Centennial Garden's future planting and restoration. Plans include native selections and companion plantings to re-establish this once beautiful garden, also potential prospects for expansion when restoration is completed. A goal for these plans is to reduce the daily maintenance by replacing some areas that were annuals to native plants. Once established this will reduce daily maintenance by half.

Drafts of the Japanese Garden have been completed for future coniferous additions. While adhering to Traditional Japanese Gardening



*Rangers Kenney & Uidl reviewing cutting techniques.*



*Rangers Hernandez and Smith practice grapple bucket operation.*



*Evergreen cuttings prepared by the horticulturist for the Durant House Candlelight Event.*

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standards, staff likes to maintain creative ideas when it comes to plant placement with our volunteer groups. Staff has compiled lists of conifers that can be used in a wide array of areas within the garden, but staying focused on traditional techniques and designs.

Equipment Repair

In December, Fleet in addition to our regular services and minor repairs, worked on various major repairs. Staff overhauled one transmission and are in the process of replacing another in order to keep the vehicles in good working service for the years to come. Fleet is also working on welding repairs for some of Natural Resources stump jumpers for their large rotary mowers so they continue to operate safely for their staff. Natural Resources has also dropped off their ASV skid steer for a hydraulic hose repair that requires the lifting of the operator cab to access. Staff also replaced fuel and brake lines on one plow truck making sure it's ready for the next snowfall. Fleet also took the delivery of one new 2024 Ford F-250 4x4 truck for Natural Resources which was then decaled by Steve Pyszka in our Sign Shop.



*Photo from inside the fleet's bay.*