

## BELLE ISLE PARK

Underlined text notes new updates.

### Island Restoration/Work Efforts

- **BUILDINGS AND RESTROOMS**

- Twelve of the 17 public restrooms (freestanding and interior) have been renovated and reopened. These buildings have also received new plumbing and paint. Work began on the bear pit, golf course and band shell restrooms. Because extensive work is needed on these facilities, efforts will be ongoing. Currently installing a toilet in the bus stop restroom and the athletic building. New faucets were installed at Sunset Point restroom.
- Four (4) buildings, in addition to most public restrooms, have undergone or are currently undergoing restoration work: White House (administrative building), casino building, Welcome Center (former police station) and conservatory
  - **White House** first floor renovations are completed, including replacement of drywall and plaster, plumbing repairs, cleaning of debris from storage areas and conversion of some space to office areas. In late June, a new downspout was installed and the dilapidated screen around the porch taken down. Beginning in April and with efforts still ongoing, park staff is clearing debris from the old stable behind the White House, which serves as the **park work shop** where equipment and tools are stored and projects, such as cutting posts and repairing equipment, are completed. Staff is building tool and work benches. They have also replaced the roll-up door to the facility.
  - Many **casino building** restorations have occurred thanks to partners such as Penske Corporation. Work included upgrade of electrical, plumbing and fire suppression systems, revitalization of interior restrooms, conversion of interior and exterior lighting to LED using historically accurate lighting fixtures, repairing the elevator, removal of a half-ton of asbestos flooring and removal of basement debris. Currently working to replace boilers, broken glass and fire suppression system. Air conditioning system work continues.
  - **Welcome Center** light demo occurred during the May Michigan Cares for Tourism event. Efforts included ceiling tile and carpeting removal and power washing walls. On the grounds, 450 feet of dilapidated chain-link fence was removed and over 50 stumps

cleared to make way for a planned native plant garden.

- **Conservatory** renovations included repair of leaking pipes, assessment of structural brackets around the building and replacement of windows
- A new hot water heater was installed in the Kids' Row facility in June.
- Three (3) 30-yard dumpsters of refuse and debris were removed from the White House and stable area in May.
- Preparing systems for winter.

## **2. BEACH RESTORATION AND WATER SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS**

- Free swim classes are being held for the public on Belle Isle in July and August. To date, there are 114 registrants for the classes. Swim instructors from the metro Detroit area were hired to teach these classes. Each class, permitting 65 students, include a head swim instructor and four to five additional swim instructors. The Belle Isle Conservancy is providing \$10,000 from the GM Foundation to support August swim lessons.
- June and July improvements at the swimming beach included sand restoration and the installation of a kids' swim area with a buoy system close to shore. Lifeboat racks and signage were also added.
- Additional safety offerings currently available or in the works include life jackets, life boat, call box and informational kiosk on water safety.
- Beach restrooms were restored and opened on June 3.

## **3. GENERAL PARK MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS**

### ***September***

- Winterized Scott Fountain
- Purchased supplies to construct garbage corrals at shelters

### ***July-August***

- Replaced all the padlocks and rekeyed locks on all island buildings.

- Providing extensive general maintenance and cleaning of island facilities and conducting frequent trash removal.
- Conducted repairs on giant slide, which is now open on Saturdays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. It is run by DNR staff. The slide opened the first weekend of August.
- Conducting brush removal around inland lake shorelines, including the model yacht basin.
- Trimming low-hanging branches on trees – mainly Willow trees - for ease of mowing and maintenance.
- Over 50 refuse barrels have been removed from island canals thus far. Efforts began in the spring after ice thaw and continued into July.

### ***June***

- Signage, including shelter number, alcohol permit required, wayfinding, Recreation Passport, restroom and more, was placed around the island.
- Holes/tears in the old zoo fence were patched in June.
- A mobile informational booth – wrapped in iconic Belle Isle imagery – was placed in the circle drive just past the McArthur Bridge in June. The booth, with maps, brochures and information available, is staffed by a park ranger every day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Recreation Passports are also available for purchase here, as well as at the White House (administrative building).
- An archery range for the Stepping Stone outreach program (not open to public) was completed in June and was used for archery programs on the island. It is located by the Belle Isle Nature Zoo, near the intersection of Lakeside Drive and Oakway Road.
- Volunteers began installation of the first phase of the Rotary Native Garden at the Welcome Center on June 21, 2014. This effort is currently ongoing. Fundraising is under way for the remaining phases.
- Forty-two concrete bases for hot coal receptacles were poured and pilot ash receptacles assembled in June. This project is part of the department's ongoing campaign to prevent the damage caused by the common practice of dumping burning charcoal at the base of Belle Isle's trees.

- DNR Fisheries Division stocked the model boat basin in June with 1,000 hybrid 5-6 inch bluegill and sunfish for a fishing derby.

### **May**

- More than 55 picnic tables were refurbished in May.
- 230 refuse barrels were wrapped with “Keep Belle Isle Beautiful” covers by Michigan Cares for Tourism volunteers in May. During this effort, 200 barrel posts (to keep barrels anchored to the ground) were constructed and 130 barrel posts were installed with wrapped barrels.
- The service area for the Belle Isle Aquarium and Anna Scripts Whitcomb conservatory was cleared of debris in May.
- The Youth Connection volunteers and others conducted leaf and branch cleanup in the vicinity of the “Giant Slide” and the Kid’s Kingdom Playscape during the Michigan Cares for Tourism event in May. Several hundred leaf bags were sent to be composted.
- Golf Course Superintendent Association volunteers rehabilitated the athletic fields on May 20.

## **4. LANDMARK RESTORATIONS**

- The Scott Fountain is operating daily from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. through Labor Day. This requires several Belle Isle staff members working eight hours per day to keep the fountain clean and operational. The fountain does not operate during severe weather, including lightning.
- The Belle Isle Conservancy purchased and placed 64 chairs around the Scott Fountain in groups of four.
- In July, bird stripes were put on the fountain weir to prevent birds from roosting and getting inside the fountain.
- Prior to the DNR operating the Scott Fountain, two construction management students shadowed DTE’s Robert Carpenter to transfer his institutional knowledge into an operational manual. This was vital in the transition and current operations.
- Historical restoration projects are underway at the Carillon Tower, the aquarium and the Livingstone Lighthouse. All three involve the State of Michigan Historical Center.

## 5. SHELTERS

- Painted several shelters and picnic tables
- New ADA sidewalks and parking spaces were poured near shelters No. 10 and No. 11.
- Twenty ash bins were placed near various shelters around the island.
- New signs were ordered for the island's 19 shelters. Signs for all shelters – including number identification and alcohol consumption – were installed in June.
- A metro area Boy Scout troop removed the shingles on shelter No. 15 in June. The shelter was also repainted. New trim and tongue and groove were also made for shelter No. 15 in late June.
- New grills were put by many shelters in June. Two large group grills and 15 smaller grills have been added.
- The roof of shelter No. 9 was replaced by Penske Corporation in May. During the same month, Michigan Cares for Tourism volunteers scrapped and painted the shelter. Just outside the shelter, a concrete grill pad was poured and the fence along the river – located behind the shelter – was set back in place. Old grills were removed. Holes in the adjacent lawn were filled with top soil, leveled and seeded.
- Minor repairs were done to the Kids' Kingdom Playscape picnic and shade shelters in May, which were then scraped and painted.

## 6. TREE REMOVAL AND RELATED WORK

- Storm damage cleanup of downed trees
- Davey Tree Service began the tree inventory the first week of August and continued for one week. It looked at trees in the maintained area of the park, recording species, size, location, etc. There were 2,500 trees inventoried. Davey will be tracking conditions of trees in the maintained areas of the park. This is done through U.S. Forest Service grant funding.
- In July, parks staff conducted storm clean-ups of downed trees.
- Since Dec. 10, over 200 hazardous trees have been removed from around the island and stumps ground. A \$150,000 grant from the U.S. Forest Service will address remaining hazard trees and fund tree replanting around the island, which begins this fall.

## 7. OTHER

- The DNR Fisheries Division has completed mapping the bathymetry and bottom hardness along the southern shoreline of Belle Isle downstream of the South Pier as far as the model boat basin. This is where some near-shore habitat work is anticipated, including potential reconnection of Lake Okonoka to the Detroit River.
- Planning has begun for the first harvest fest weekend on the island, which will take place October 17-18. The event will include games, hay rides, face painting, costume contest, a haunted trail and candy distribution.
- The Praise Fest choir event, held 3-5 p.m. last Sunday, Aug. 24, went well. There were an estimated 300-400 people in attendance. It was sponsored by the Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee.
- The DNR Wildlife Division contracted the nuisance control company Goosebusters to take the lead on removal of geese from Belle Isle. Between 600 and 700 geese were removed from the Island in late June and relocated. Goosebusters also assisted with Canada Goose nest destruction on the Island in May to reduce the number of young hatched in the spring of 2014.
- Stepping Stones Outreach programs have been popular in several southeast Michigan state parks since 2010, and the program was expanded this year to include Belle Isle. Following the model established at other locations, local organized youth groups had the opportunity to participate in outdoor skills and nature education on the east end of the island, taught by DNR staff. A total of 228 youth and 29 chaperones participated in the programs on Belle Isle. Some of the groups included youth from Detroit recreation centers, libraries, The Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA and youth employment initiatives.

## CONTRACTS AND ASSOCIATED PROGRESS

- Contracts for 19 vendors – from food concessionaires to kayak and canoe rentals and carriage rides – have been approved and began offering services in mid-June. They will be available through at least Labor Day. Four designated vendor locations are identified. Concrete pads have been installed in several of these areas to support contracted food vendor trucks/carts. Designated vendor locations are:
  - the parking lot to the west of the Belle Isle Conservatory, near the intersection of Loiter Way and Conservatory Drive;

- near Scott Fountain, located just off the paddock area near the intersection of Fountain Drive and Sunset Drive;
  - near the swimming beach on Riverbank Road; and
  - near the athletic fields by Loiter Way.
- In July, DNR staff began purchasing equipment for Belle Isle including a skid steer, mower and utility vehicles.
- The Michigan Department of Transportation is finalizing a contract for paint marking and signage along the roadway system. Paint striping has been done on exterior roads. MDOT is beginning work on drainage structures in late August. In June and July, MDOT patched holes in some road surfaces.
- The DNR entered into agreement with Detroit Disc Golf, LLC for the official Belle Isle disc golf course. The contractor is responsible for maintaining grounds and operations. The grand opening was July 12, 2014. The facility is open seven days a week.
- The DNR developed agreements with multiple livery operations to provide canoeing/kayaking/paddle board opportunities during the weekends on the Detroit River and inland waterways of Belle Isle. Operations began on July 12.
- The DNR is working through a one-year agreement to maintain the practice golf facilities. It is looking to award a multiple-year contract beginning in 2015.
- A mowing contract is in place. Mowing by Brilar (headquartered in Detroit) began May 16. Park crew handled mowing responsibilities prior to contract start date.

## **YOUTH AND STUDENT INITIATIVE PROJECTS**

- MSU students doing assessments of old zoo, Flynn Pavilion and White House.
- The Youth Connection, through a summer youth employment program, painted shelters No. 10 and No. 11.
- ADA accessible sidewalks and parking spaces were added near shelters No. 10 and 11. The effort, in partnership with the Michigan Concrete Association - which trained, coordinated materials and oversaw the work by The Youth Connection – began in mid-July and is now completed.

- In June and July, Davey Tree Service, through partnership, trained nearly a dozen The Youth Connection young adults to perform horticultural work at the Conservatory outdoor formal gardens. The Youth Connection horticultural work is ongoing.
- Metro Youth Fitness Day was held July 9, 2014 with nearly 30,000 children participating.
- MDOT Youth Corp and Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) work crews, through a summer youth employment initiative, began assisting with refuse and grounds maintenance in June. They are assisting through August.
- Michigan State University's School of Planning Design and Construction is planning on focusing several design-based classes on conceptual aspects of future redevelopment projects on the island. The classes are to begin in the fall 2014 semester.

## **STAFFING**

- Approximately 14 short-term workers (STWs) are on board with additional hires in process. The diverse team is working hard to revitalize restrooms, perform general maintenance and park upkeep and provide good customer service.
- Darlisa Rickman joined the DNR as the Belle Isle outreach and event coordinator on July 7.
- In June, Karis Floyd, park manager of Island Lake Recreation Area, accepted a temporary assignment as manager of Belle Isle Park, Milliken State Park and Harbor and the Outdoor Adventure Center.
- In May, the DNR and the Belle Isle Conservancy jointly hired Erika Hill as the volunteer coordinator.

## **GRANT PROJECTS**

### *Grant Summary*

- \$956,650 in grants has been awarded to the DNR and its partners for Belle Isle. This includes:
  - \$132,650 AmeriCorps;
  - \$150,000 U.S. Forest Service;
  - \$470,000 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative; and
  - \$204,000 Great Lakes Fisheries Trust Fund.
- \$2.6 million in grants are pending to the DNR and its partners.

### *Additional Information on Grants Noted Above*

- \$132,650 AmeriCorps grant awarded to the DNR to provide members to support landscaping needs at the Conservatory on Belle Isle and the wetland complex at Milliken State Park.
- A \$150,000 U.S. Forest Service grant has enabled the removal of additional hazard trees. It will also enable a tree replanting and regeneration program on the island this fall.
- \$470,000 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant through the Environmental Protection Agency was awarded to The Friends of the Detroit River for a two-year project to control invasive plant species already present on Belle Isle.
- \$204,000 Great Lakes Fisheries Trust Fund Grant will target improvements addressing safety and fishing access.
- A \$319,692 grant was awarded for a Great Lakes Restoration Initiative grant through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association to The Friends of the Detroit River. The nonprofit group applied for the grant for an island-wide hydrological analysis.
- The DNR has applied for or is in the process of applying for \$2.6 million in additional grants for revitalization and rehabilitation of core public-facing infrastructure. Included are:
  - a pending \$500,000 Urban Park and Recreation grant for children's play areas;
  - a pending \$500,000 Land and Water Conservation Fund - Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program grant (with a required \$500,000 match) to renovate and revitalize the 50+ acre athletic complex on Belle Isle. The main goal and focus is to renovate and restore the existing fields, courts, shelter building and supporting amenities. Identified partners include Come Play Detroit, Healthy Detroit, city of Detroit Recreation Department, Youth Connections, Carter's Kids Foundation, Michigan State University's School of Planning, Design and Construction and Michigan Sports Turf Managers' Association.

**END**