

Estabrook and Lake Parks received the vast majority of the herbaceous plants in the fall. At Estabrook Park over 345 work hours were put into planting over 5,400 herbaceous plants. The Americorps crew, was of vital importance to getting this quantity of plants in the ground. At Lake Park the Crew continued where it left off last year by planting an additional 2,600 herbaceous plugs (approximately 400 more than the previous year).



PHOTO 4: AMERICORPS CREW PLANTING TREES.

Finally, the Crew spent the spring converting 27 acres of once leased agricultural fields to a flood plain forest. 20,000 barefoot trees were planted in this area, assisted by a crew of Americorps volunteers (photos 4 & 5). These fields were then placed into the Conservation Reserve Program. The County will receive yearly "rent" on this land from the Farm Service Agency in return for maintaining the

approved cover (trees) over the next ten years. In this way the Crew is fulfilling its mission of natural area preservation, while simultaneously maintaining the revenue generation of these parcels.



PHOTO 5: THE CREW PLANTING TREES.

3) Maintenance

Monitoring, in the form of photo points, permanent plots, and periodic inspections provides the necessary feedback to the Crew's management efforts. Currently Franklin Park is the only project where permanent monitoring plots have been established. This year six additional plots were installed on the northern unit of Franklin Park, and data were resampled on the initial 17 monitoring plots that were installed last year. Also, several photo points have been



◀ **PHOTO 6:**
ESTABROOK
BEFORE INVASIVE
WORK.



PHOTO 7: ▶
ESTABROOK
AFTER INVASIVE
REMOVALS.

established at Estabrook Park to document this slope stabilization project. These time series photos will capture the effect that this project will have on the slope (photos 6 & 7).

Aside from formalized data collection, the Crew spent a significant amount of time monitoring for safety the 100+ miles of formal trails throughout the park system. This includes replacing damaged or missing trail signs, trail improvements for the XTERRA Midwest Triathlon event, planning and establishing a new mountain bike trail at Hoyt Park (as well as maintaining the existing Alpha Mountain Bike Trail), and establishing new trail corridors at Kohl Park. Basically, the Crew stepped in wherever and whenever they were needed to keep Parks' trails safe and accessible.

4) Partnerships

It should be clear from previous examples that the Crew remains committed to working closely with interested parties to further its management objectives on County Park property.

Partnerships have played an ever-increasing role as budgets continue



PHOTO 8: AMERICORPS VOLUNTEERS HELP CONSTRUCT EAST BANK TRAIL ALONG MILWAUKEE RIVER

to tighten and staff are stretched to their limits. There are several partnership highlights from this year's work. The two AmeriCorps groups (one in the spring and one in the fall) and a very dedicated group of 40 high school students from the Milwaukee Conservation Leadership Corps (MCLC) were key to the Crews achievements throughout the year.



PHOTO 9: THE CREW & AMERICORPS VOLUNTEERS PLANTING @ ESTABROOK PARK

The two AmeriCorps crews spent a combined total of 14 weeks in Milwaukee County (9 weeks dedicated to Milwaukee County Parks' projects) compiling approximately 2,900 total work hours. A couple of the highlights from these partnerships include the construction of 3/4 of a mile of soft trail between Riverside and Caesar's Parks and the plantings at Estabrook Park (photos 8 & 9).

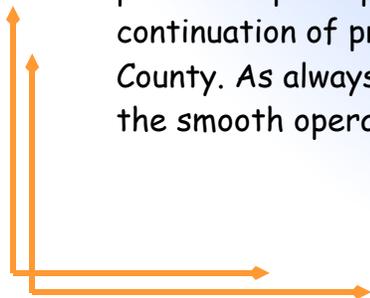
For their part, the MCLC students put in over 7,200 work hours on the following three distinct projects over their 6 week stints: Grant Park erosion control, Kohl Park trail building, and Estabrook Park invasive species removal (photo 10). Without this considerable help at least a couple of these projects would likely not have gotten off of the ground.



PHOTO 10: MCLC TRAIL WORK @ KOHL PARK

As always, the Crew maintained its associations with the various other citizen supported groups around the County, such as the Friends of Lake and Grant Parks. In all cases where these partnerships were formed the Crew was able to achieve significantly more than working alone.

2007 promises to be as productive as 2006 with a potential partnership and pilot project proposed for South Shore Park, as well as the continuation of projects currently underway in the various parks around the County. As always, the Crew will continue to fill in where needed and aid in the smooth operation of the County Parks.



Part II

A Park by Park Breakdown

Under the supervision of the Natural Lands Manager and the Trails Coordinator the Crew maintained its 2 full-time staff, but was augmented by 2 seasonal during the active summer months. The Trails and Natural Areas Crew worked in over 26 parks and parkways during the past year. Projects ranged from trail maintenance on segments of the Oak Leaf trail to a complete slope restoration at Estabrook Park. What follows is a brief description of the work done in each park and the potential direction of each project.

1) Brown Deer Park

In an effort to demonstrate that we all really are on the same team, the Crew assisted at Brown Deer in its spring golf course set up. This work included inspections, as well as GPS mapping of golf course features. Additionally, Brown Deer served as a site for one set of Emerald Ash borer survey/ detection -trees within the County. Working with DATCP and the City of Milwaukee, Parks has identified and marked 36 trees for emerald ash borer survey/ detection.

2) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The Crew performed a number of activities on the County's 300+ acres of CRP property; everything from tree planting to basic invasive species management (once again, Parks did not pay a single noxious weed notice violation on any CRP property). The major highlight was the planting of 20,000 trees in 27 acres along the southern border of the County. Also, new CRP contracts were finalized with the Farm Service Agency. All of the current CRP contracts expire in 2007. Each of these current contracts was either renewed or extended.

3) Dineen Park

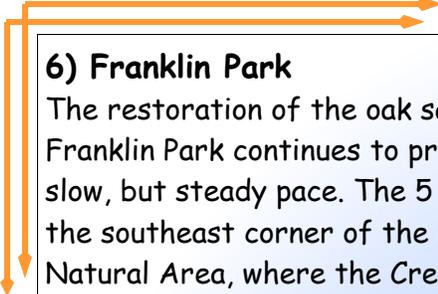
Late in the spring, grass cutting became a priority within the Parks Department. The Crew did their part by helping to keep grass length down at Dineen Park.

4) Doctors Park

The Crew spent several days at Doctors Park GPS mapping vegetation within the ravines here. These data were to be used for a grant application that did not, however, materialize. Work here included the removal and treatment of several invasive Norway maples. Doctors Park does warrant an erosion control project, however, funding for this type of project remains elusive.

5) Estabrook Park

Estabrook Park is the site of one of the Crew's major projects of the year (see Part III for more details). Much of the riparian corridor of the Milwaukee River at Estabrook is badly degraded by invasive, non-native shrubs, leading to erosion problems. The Crew spent significant time here, with the help of a group of dedicated high school students and an Americorps crew, shoring up the slope and installing native plants.



6) Franklin Park

The restoration of the oak savanna at Franklin Park continues to progress at a slow, but steady pace. The 5 acre parcel in the southeast corner of the park/ State Natural Area, where the Crew began their restoration efforts, hosted a controlled burned for the first time in years. The plan is to continue burning this site on a yearly basis, every spring. Additionally, the Crew began work in the northern-most unit along Ryan Creek. This area is more open, but does have significant woody plant invasion. Here, with the help of an Americorps crew, these shrubs were removed from underneath the canopies of the large bur oaks. A prescribed burn is planned for this site in the spring.

7) Froemming Park

Froemming is the site of several of the County's CRP parcels. The crew spent several days here fighting to keep the noxious weeds under control. As a result Parks did not receive a noxious weed violation fine from any municipality this year.

8) Grant

Following up last year's successful partnership with the Friends of Grant Park to control the spread of garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) in the park, the Crew continued to track down and eradicate this pernicious plant. Supported by funding from the Friends group, foliar herbicide spraying continued in the Seven Bridges ravine system. Early reports indicate that the herbicide treatments are being effective in that there were very few seed producing plants in the treated areas from last year.

Also, Grant Park was one of three project locations for the Student Conservation Association kids. Here they were involved in improving trail sustainability and decreasing non-point erosion. This project, in particular, would not have materialized without this support.

9) Greenhouse

The Crew was again allowed to utilize the greenhouse facility and resources to propagate some native plants. Working with seed purchased by individuals from the Friends of Jacobus Park, the Crew was able to propagate more than 6,000 native herbaceous plants from 32 species. These plants were used in a variety of parks to support the Crew's restoration efforts. It is anticipated that the Greenhouse will be used again, assuming it is still standing, for the same purpose in 2007.

10) Holler Park

Working with the neighborhood WeedOut coordinator for Holler Park, the Crew assisted in eradicating the remaining large buckthorn and honeysuckle specimens in the park. A sweep will be made through this park in 2007, in association with the WeedOut group, to ensure that the goal of total eradication has been met.

11) Honey Creek Parkway

The Crew spent a few days on Dewey Hill planting a hedge row along the border with the Aurora Hospice parcel. A number of wafer ash (a state protected species) were planted along this fenceline. After inspection late in the year they appear to be doing well and should begin to fully occupy the area this coming year.

12) Hoyt Park

Work in this park included the clearing of an established volunteer trail for use as a formal mountain bike trail. Supported by a grant from the REI corporation the Metro Mountain Bikers worked at stabilizing and realigning the trail, as well as installing permanent trail signage.

13) Jacobus Park

The Crew continued its work here on the particularly persistent invasive plant called Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*). Initial results from various control trials are promising and additional follow-up inspections will be made through this park in the coming year. Also, to replace the invasive plant material that was removed last year several days were spent planting natives to assist in reoccupying sites along the parkway and next to the lagoon. Finally, as was the case in a number of other parks, the Crew assisted the neighborhood WeedOut group in removing larger fruit bearing buckthorn trees. Work of this type will continue in 2007. Jacobus will likely play host to a lagoon improvement project (managed by the County's Environmental Services). Also, a major invasive species/ slope stabilization project is warranted in this park, however, funding for such a project is unlikely at this time.

14) Kohl Park

Kohl Park represents a major new trails project for the Crew. Work here included the stabilization and formalization of a series of volunteer walking trails that crisscross the park. Three crews of Student Conservation Association kids performed the majority of the work here,

woodchipping approximately 1/2 mile of trail and installing water bars on steep trail sections. Again, this support proved invaluable to this project.

15) Lagoons & Marinas

This year the treatment of the lagoons and marinas for aquatic nuisance plants was centralized. Under the supervision of the Natural Lands Manager a contractor was utilized to treat the lagoons and marinas on an as needed basis. No treatments were made to either McKinley or South Shore marinas in 2006. Of the 19 lagoons, only Brown Deer, Greenfield, Humboldt, Jacobus, Mitchell, Scout Lake, and Washington Parks received treatments. It is anticipated that permitting and treatments will be administered the same way in 2007.

16) Lake Park

The slope stabilization/ ravine restoration project in Lake Park continued this year, albeit at a slower rate. The grant funds for this project, which were secured in May of 2005, have yet to be fully utilized. As a result, the purchase of essential materials for this project has slowed. The Crew, however, was able to maintain its native planting levels, but future plantings are now in doubt. One bright spot here for the year has to be the planting of more than 100 shrubs around the Locust St. ravine by the Friends of Lake Park. This addition should serve to bolster the bird populations in the area, as well as dissuade park patrons from randomly accessing the ravine. Future work here will include maintenance of the existing plantings and a controlled burn of the naturalized turf area near the head of the Locust St. ravine.

17) Menomonee River Parkway

Two areas along the Menomonee River Parkway hosted differing WeedOut events. The spring event was held just north of Burleigh St. and included the removal of garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and the planting of over 100 native herbaceous plants in the same area. The fall event involved the Crew removing and treating the large berry-producing buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) for another WeedOut crew. Both events proved productive and, if continued, should prove useful for this area (which has been largely overlooked by WeedOut groups).

18) Milwaukee River Corridor

A second major trail initiative of 2006 was the construction of a "soft" trail along the east side of the Milwaukee River, between Riverside and Caesar's Parks. The Crew assisted in the laying out and clearing of the trail. Working with the River Revitalization Foundation and a group of hard-working Americorps volunteers, nearly 1 mile of trail was constructed. The trail is intended as a connector between these two highly used parks.

19) Mitchell Boulevard Park

In the fall of 2005 the Crew applied for a waiver to the City of Milwaukee's open burn ordinance to perform a controlled burn on the naturalized western section of the park. Sighting public safety concerns, the County refused to allow the burn. As a result, the Crew was forced to mow and rake the area, a process that is much less efficient than burning and not as beneficial to the native plants, but better than doing nothing at all. Additional invasive species removal work is anticipated here for 2007.

20) Oak Leaf Trail

A number of activities were performed on the trail throughout the year. Frequent sight line clearance was performed to enhance public safety, along with the installation and inspection of trail signage. Heavy trail usage led to occasion vandalism, however, this was typically minor and easily managed by the Crew.

21) Rainbow Airport

The prairie remnant at Rainbow Airport represents one of the last unfarmed prairie parcels in Milwaukee County. Early in the year the entire site was mowed using a forestry mower in order to reduce the woody vegetation encroachment. This was followed by a controlled burn in the fall (the first burn in many, many years). Partnering with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a revised plan for the site was developed, including additional woody vegetation removal and continued burning of the site on a yearly basis.

22) Root River Parkway

Some minor landscaping was performed near a new section of the Oak Leaf trail in Franklin. 30 large balled and burlapped trees and shrubs were planted as a visual barrier for area residents. The Americorps volunteers assisted with this project.

23) Scout Lake

The Crew spent several days at Scout Lake assisting forestry crews with removal and treatment of encroaching woody vegetation on the park paths. After an area was cleared by the forestry crew, stumps and remaining foliage were treated to eliminate resprouting.

24) Scout Projects

Eagle Scouts were very active with Parks related projects this past year . Two informational kiosks were constructed and installed. Also, 5 Aldo Leopold style benches were constructed and placed along the Oak Leaf Trail for use by park patrons. Finally, a nature trail at McGovern Park was developed. 2007 will undoubtedly bring similar projects that are of benefit, both to Parks, as well as park patrons.

25) South Shore Park

In conjunction with the opening of a new segment of the Oak Leaf trail at the southern end of South Shore Park, the Crew assisted with cleaning and maintenance of this trail. The Crew also assisted with several instances of bluff vista clearing by local residents. Working with the local friends group, a "pilot" bluff stabilization/ vista preservation project may begin in 2007.

26) Warnimont Park

Warnimont Park is the site of one of the County's three State designated Natural Areas (SNA). The calcareous fens along the Lake Michigan bluffs represent a remnant plant community believed to be the only plant community of its type in the state.

As part of its yearly maintenance on the site, the Crew spent a number of days here removing glossy buckthorn (*Rhamnus frangula*) saplings. The Crew was also fortunate to acquire additional purple loosestrife beetles from the WI DNR, which were released in the area of the fen to help control this persistent aquatic invasive plant. Additional sweeps for invasive plants are planned for 2007.

27) Whitnall Park

The Crew spent several days performing maintenance on the Alpha Mountain biking Trail in Whitnall Park. The maintenance included trail clearing and hazard tree removals. This is an annual activity and is always coordinated with the Metro Mountain bikers (who maintain and host races on the trail).