

**Parks and Recreation Division Report
April 2023**

PROGRAMMING

Summer Program Brochure

We are excited to launch our program brochure for summer 2023. Our recreation team has planned a summer full of activities for all ages located in parks, community centers, and trails throughout the city. These program offerings range from summer day camps for youth to 55+ programs, community events, mobile recreation, introductory outdoor experiences, and more! Summer programs take place June through August.

Find the brochure on our website here: <https://duluthmn.gov/media/14914/2023-duluth-parks-program-brochure-for-web.pdf>. Printed copies will be available in May.

Chester Concert Series Lineup 2023

The lineup for the 40th Annual Chester Creek Concert Series has been announced! This free, family-friendly concert series features a variety of music throughout the summer on Tuesday nights at Chester Park, 1801 East Skyline Parkway. Concerts begin at 7 p.m. in June and July, and at 6:30 p.m. in August.

June 13	Rich Mattson and the Northstars	Cosmic Rock & Roll
June 20	Listening Party	Folk Rock
June 27	Sorta Country	Country/Rock
July 4	<i>No Concert</i>	
July 11	Aly Aleigha	Transcendent Indie-Folk
July 18	North Shore Big Band	Swing/Dance/Big Band
July 25	Jojo Green	Pop Fusion
Aug. 1	Ross Thorn	Folk/Country
Aug. 8	The Most Wanted	Variety Covers
Aug. 15	Fish Heads	Bluegrass/Rock/Country
Aug. 22	<i>Rain Date</i>	

Volleyball League

The first season of our seven-week adult volleyball league at Washington Center Gym finished on March 12. Fifty people participated on six teams. The team “Stranger Swings” bumped, set, and spiked their way to the championship victory!



55+ Programs

The Lunch, Learn, and Share program series for ages 55+ continues to grow. Despite snowy conditions, we had a full house at Harrison Community Center for the most recent session on March 17 on the topic of Growing Older at Home. We expect to begin generating a waitlist for the upcoming sessions in April and May, with topics including Social Connections and Beware of Scams.



The Snowshoe Social program concluded at Hartley Park on March 7. At the end of the hike, we enjoyed hot cocoa and shared a moment of warm sunshine. This winter program series offered a chance to visit a variety of parks and have a social time outdoors.

In addition to these highlights, we continue our regularly scheduled fitness programs and social activity clubs. On March 15, we added a twist to our weekly BINGO program for St. Patrick's Day. Winners chose a surprise gift, all related to luck or St. Patrick's Day.

PERMITS

PERMIT TYPE	Jan	Feb	Mar
Park & Building Rentals	37	43	69
Commercial Operator Permits	3	1	3
Busker Permits	0	0	10
Alcohol Consumption Permits	2	8	3

Commercial Operator Permits

Well-coordinated and appropriately permitted commercial operators contribute positively to the overall experience of our parks and trails. And, permitted commercial operators gain communication lines with our staff to stay informed about current park and trail projects that help them understand when and where to avoid operating to ensure parks and trails are available for them to use with their customers.

Commercial Operator Permit Stats					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Permits Issued	10	13	31	31	TBD
Resident	Data unavailable	12	25	25	In Progress
Non-Resident	Data unavailable	1	6	6	In Progress
Solicitations	Data unavailable	Data unavailable	48	63	82 (26 are food vendors)

Permit Types and Fees

- Annual Permit Rates
 - \$500 per calendar year for Duluth residents; \$750 per calendar year for non-residents
- Six Month Permit Rates
 - \$300 for Duluth residents; \$450 for non-residents
- Monthly Permit Rates
 - \$150 per month for Duluth residents; \$200 per month for non-residents
- One Time Permit Rate
 - For one day event per calendar year; \$50 residents; \$75 non-residents

Communications

In 2023, Parks staff have thus far sent more than 80 solicitations to know Commercial Operators, including food trucks/vendors and traditional operators such as tour guides, fitness companies, etc. As displayed in the “Commercial Operator Permit Stats” table, this year’s outreach shows a steady increase in Parks’ efforts to inform and work with known commercial operators.

In 2023, Parks and Recreation will continue to utilize our social media and traditional media outlets to educate the community about commercial operations in parks. And, as has been done in past years, staff will continue to reach out to operators reported to us as non-compliant. At least 5 examples of these reports were followed up on in 2022, and are now on our known operators list for 2023 outreach.

An added layer of communication has been integrated with the City Clerk’s office, whereby the Clerk’s office strives to inform operators of their licensing requirements, including permitting for operations on park property, which falls within the Parks and Recreation Division’s jurisdiction for permit processing.

Compliance

Parks and Recreation has a well-developed set of permitting standards, procedures, fee schedules, etc. that align with City Ordinances and receive review by our Attorney’s Office, as well as other City departments as applicable. While we strive for education and provide opportunities for operators to willingly come into compliance, with this permit type now entering its sixth year, Parks and Recreation has further developed an Administrative Citation Program modeled off the City Clerk’s Office’s Administrative Citation Program, which outlines the process by which Parks and Recreation may proceed with issuing an administrative citation. In 2023, Parks and Recreation will begin implementing the Administrative Citation Program on known non-compliant commercial operators.

Before an Administrative Citation is issued, a Corrective Order is presented to the violator. The Corrective Order addresses the following:

- City Code being violated
- A method to correct the circumstances
- Location, time and method to pay fees
- Location to submit applications or other documentation
- List of documentation that may need to be submitted
- Specified time given to resolve the issue
- A point of contact for inquiry
- Notification of disciplinary actions to be taken if the circumstances are not corrected

Upon receipt of a Corrective Order, the identified operator may then either correct the violation or may choose not to correct the violation, which may lead to the issue of an Administrative Citation. Depending on which course of action the operator chooses, the process unfolds through a series of steps whereby the operator continues to have opportunity to

come into compliance, contest the case, or not respond. Each of these then has subsequent steps for both the City and operator.

Administrative Citations are Parks and Recreation's least desired outcome in regards to commercial operations in our parks.

PROJECT UPDATES

Park Point Boardwalks

In addition to the awarded \$100,000 grant from Minnesota's Lake Superior Coastal Program to support the replacement of a boardwalk at Lafayette Community Recreation Area, the City has been awarded additional funding from the MN Department of Natural Resources to conduct an archeological survey for the site. The survey and installation of the project include Tribal monitoring by the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The survey will begin this spring and if no significant historic or cultural resources are found, the boardwalk will be replaced this fall.

The planned boardwalk replacements at the Lafayette and Park Point Community Recreation Areas will utilize IPE wood boards that were salvaged from the Lakewalk reconstruction. IPE is a very high-quality wood with a useful life of 75+ years. This winter, project staff contracted the preparation of the wood for the boardwalk, which included removal of old hardware and organizing the boards by length to streamline their future installation.

Lincoln Park Improvements

The improvement project is making progress. Recent activities have included restoring the Historic Pavilion and removal of trees where needed for park amenities that will be installed later this summer. The Lincoln Park interpretive planning process is in progress. A need for an Interpretive Plan was identified in the Section 106 review process. Staff have been meeting with the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa regarding opportunities to include Ojibwe language in interpretive signage.

Kitchi Gammi Park and Harbor Plaza

Both the Kitchi Gammi Park (Brighton Beach) and Harbor Plaza projects will be put out for bid this month. Trees have been removed where needed for the future improvements. Timelines will become clearer after the contractor is selected, but construction is expected to begin for both projects sometime this summer. When construction does begin, park usage at Kitchi Gammi will be limited to the Lakewalk only, with intermittent closures. Signage will be posted at both ends of the Park informing Lakewalk users of the construction activity. The extent of the work at Harbor Plaza will require the Baywalk to be temporarily re-routed around the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center (DECC). The detour will be clearly marked.

Enger Park Golf Course Irrigation Project

On Tuesday, April 18 the City will open bids for the Enger Park Golf Course irrigation project. This is the second round of bidding on this project scope. Once bids are reviewed and accepted, timelines can be finalized for work to begin, and all parties will have a better understanding of how the project scope will impact operations at Enger Park Golf Course.

Golf Spring Meeting

The pre-season Spring Golf meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 26 at 5:30-6:30 p.m. at Enger Park Golf Course. Invitations have been sent to the Enger Golf Leagues and former Public Golf Committee members as well as an FYI to Parks and Recreation Commissioners. Agenda items will include 2023 Operations updates for both courses, as well as the status of renovations for Enger Park Golf Course. A formal agenda will be sent to the same distribution group closer to the meeting date.

NATURAL RESOURCES

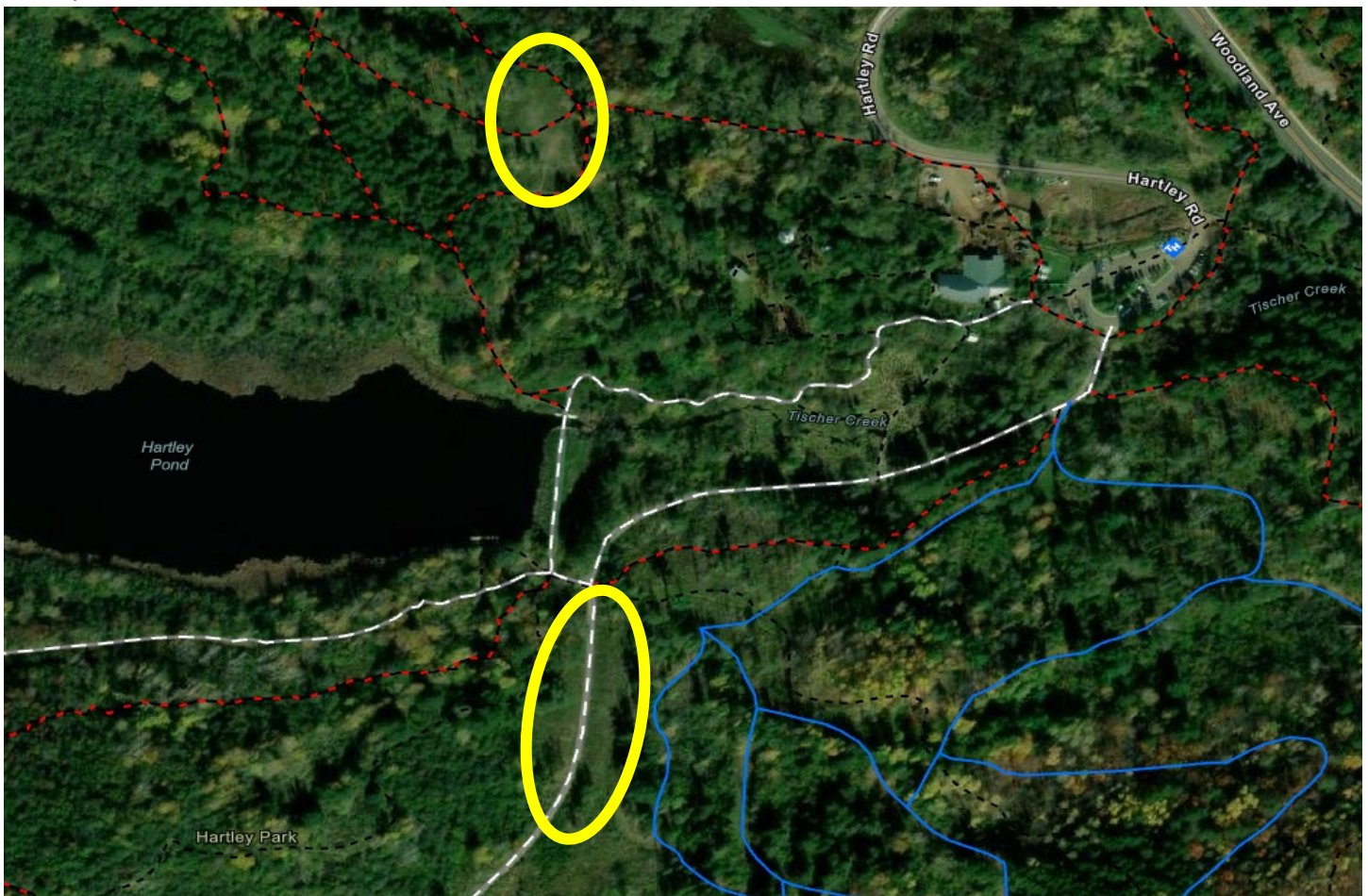
Prescribed Burn Pilot Project

The City will be contracting with Prairie Restorations to conduct a pilot project to perform controlled burns at three sites: two sites at Hartley Park and one site at the western end of Waabizheshikana: The Marten Trail near 94 Spring Street (see maps below – the yellow circles indicated the locations of the burns). Prescribed burning, also known as prescribed fire, is a land management strategy that uses the controlled application of fire to the landscape to restore health to ecosystems. The burns are conducted by fire experts under specific weather conditions with site preparation to ensure the fire stays within the designated area.

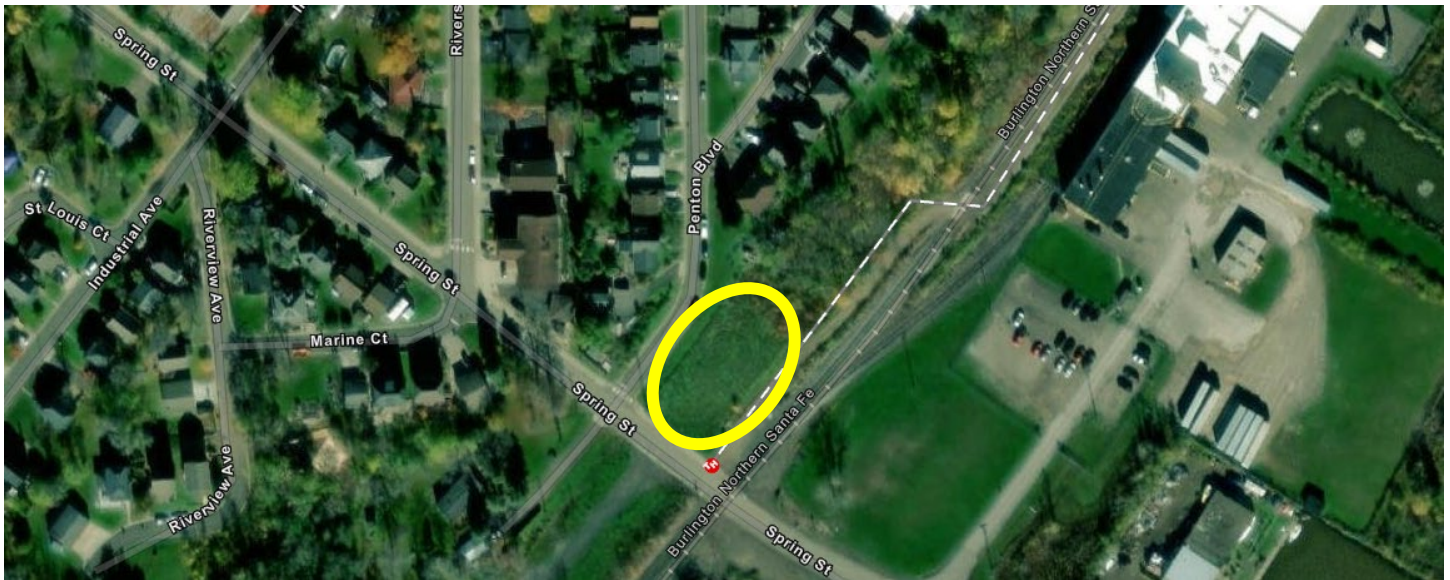
Prescribed burning at these three sites is intended to stimulate native plant growth while controlling invasive and non-native plants. The duration of the burn at each site is expected to last up to 30 minutes. Access to and around the sites will be limited to project personnel during site preparation, the burn, and clean up after the burn is completed. There will be staff on site to direct park and trail users to alternate routes.

The Fire Department is aware of the prescribed burns and the Fire Marshall has issued a burn permit for these three sites. The burns are entirely weather dependent, with wind speed and direction being a deciding factor if the burn can take place. The City anticipates that the burns will be conducted between April and May this spring, and a press release will be issued the morning of the burns.

Hartley Sites:



Waabizheshikana site:



Public Lands Transfer

The land conveyance continues to move forward in collaboration with St. Louis County. The process of conveyance is extensive and staff are on track to complete the transfer of approximately 2,398 acres of tax-forfeit open space from the County to the City of Duluth by June of 2023. A map of the lands proposed for preservation is available on the project webpage: <https://duluthmn.gov/planning-development/planning-development-news/public-lands-realignment/>

A resolution to initiate the transfer process is anticipated to go to City Council in May. After the parcels have been successfully conveyed to the City, there will be subsequent updates and opportunities for review to determine how, and which, parcels can be incorporated as an addition to an existing park and the naming process for groups of parcels that could become their own park spaces.

Invasive Species Management

Staff are planning for the continuation of invasive plant management in 2023, including treatment for buckthorn and roughly 40 sites with knotweed. Continued management of these sites is critical for progress towards restoring the native habitats. In addition to these sites, there will be treatments for invasive species at Hartley Park and in the Kingsbury Bay watershed, which is supported by grant funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation that was awarded in 2022.

Forestry

Pruning and removal of ash trees along the boulevards continues. The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is prevalent throughout Duluth and it should be presumed that all ash trees are infected. Despite some very cold days this winter, it is very unlikely that the EAB infestation was affected. The EAB larva overwinters beneath the bark of ash trees and are, unfortunately, well protected from the cold snaps. Ash tree removals and replacements will continue.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service declared the Northern Long-Eared Bat an endangered species this winter. The bats raise their young in trees, which makes them valuable habitat for the protection of the species. There is still much to learn about how this will affect forestry operations.

In March, eight Park Maintenance staff spent two days at the Shade Tree Short Course in the Twin Cities. The course included education about best practices regarding trees, fungus and pest prevention and treatment, tree propagation, climbing, and pruning.

PARK MAINTENANCE

Park Maintenance is currently working through the hiring process for summer seasonal and temporary staff, an Administrative Clerical position, and a third leadworker position. There are many seasonal and temporary staff returning from previous seasons for this summer and there is a compliment of new staff, too.

A new epoxy finish was applied to the flooring of the public restrooms near the Bayfront Family Center and at the Corner of the Lake Park. The new finish looks much nicer, will be significantly easier to clean, and provides better traction for users.

Park Maintenance is in the process of shifting from winter to summer equipment. The groomers and mowers are going in for seasonal servicing, while plows and blowers are headed into storage. Smaller projects continue, including garbage can painting and graffiti removal. Staff are also working to clear snow from the field at Wade Stadium to ready the field for the spring baseball and softball seasons.



This winter was a great year for skiing with an early and deep snow base. Grooming of ski trails began November 17, 2022 and the final grooming occurred on . The final grooming dates from previous seasons was March 31 in 2022, March 24 in 2021, and April 6 in 2020. The timing of grooming and the determination for when final grooming will occur depends on the air and surface temperatures, which dictate if staff are able to get the equipment onto the trails without damaging them. In the spring, this often means staff start bright and early, when air temperatures are the coldest and surface temperatures have had time to cool as well. In total, staff groomed 51 days this season, which is 53% of the business days during the season this year.

The final number of grooming for each ski trail system was:

- Lester Trails: 27
- Hartley Park: 25
- Magney-Snively Forest Preserve: 24
- Piedmont Trails: 22
- Chester Park: 20
- Lester Golf Course: 14