

**Parks and Recreation Division Report
March 2023**

PROGRAMMING

Cold Front

On Saturday, February 4, nearly 3,000 people came out to the 6th annual Cold Front to celebrate the best of winter fun. Folks enjoyed the regular offerings of a sledding luge, snow play area, obstacle course, and other activities provided by local partners. Some new activities this year included a fat bike demo course, Damage's Snowboard Pro Team showing their tricks and skills, an adult snowshoe kickball tournament, and Palm Swings closest to the pin golf contest. Community partners were fantastic in supporting the event by leading activities with Parks and Recreation staff. Park Maintenance did an incredible job of getting the space ready and making it inviting for the day while the Recreation Specialists provided a creative range of activities to serve all ages and abilities.



Snowshoe and Science Hike

Eight community members joined Parks and Recreation and Duluth Foot Trails Alliance for an evening snowshoe on the Duluth Traverse near Twin Ponds. Halfway through the snowshoe trek, attendees stopped and built a small snow cave to discuss the insulating properties of snow. During the hike, participants learned about and practiced tree and animal track identification.



Yeti Hunt

The third annual Yeti Hunt took place on Saturday, February 18. More than 50 community members participated by following clues posted to social media to find the Yeti hiding at Fairmont Park! This passive recreation activity is a great way for families to get outside on a weekend on their own schedule. Below are a few of the pictures sent in by participants. Those who submitted a picture with the Yeti were entered in a drawing to win a yeti-themed prize!



Youth Programming Partnership with Family Freedom Center

Parks and Recreation planned and hosted a field trip for Family Freedom Center over the school winter break in February. Youth visited Bayfront Family Center and participated in activities like ice skating, curling (pictured above), and made PLENTY of s'mores!

S'more Ski Grooming

This new event highlighted what it takes to groom Duluth's cross-country ski trails and gave people a chance to see the PistenBully up close. Park Maintenance brought the PistenBully to Lester-Amity chalet, while Parks and Recreation provided s'mores and Duluth Cross Country Ski Club (DXC) led a group ski. Around 40 people came out on this chilly evening to learn more about grooming!



Full Moon Hike in Hartley

Parks and Recreation hosted a full moon hike at Hartley Park. Ten community members came out for a great loop along Hartley pond, and then through The Pines up to the top of Rock Knob. From there, folks were able to take in the glory of the full moon and spot Mars, Jupiter, and Venus. Hiking down from Rock Knob on the Superior Hiking Trail was a great way to round out the evening.



Women Hike Duluth – Highlight in the Duluth News Tribune

February’s Women Hike Duluth was extra special with a Duluth News Tribune reporter joining the hike to do a feature piece on local women hiking groups. Around 30 women came together at Park Point beach for a calm night hike along the shore. You can read the article here: <https://www.duluthnewstribune.com/sports/northland-outdoors/womens-hiking-groups-in-duluth-cloquet-draw-large-numbers>

PROJECT UPDATES

Northern Long-Eared Bat Declared Endangered– Implications for Projects

In January, the Northern Long-Eared Bat was declared an endangered species by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Endangered species are in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its native range. The declaration provides additional protections for suitable habitat for the bats, such as forests and caves. Because the bats potentially roost in trees in the summer, there is likely to be a restriction on tree removal during summer months, particularly for projects with Federal funding. More information about how the declaration will affect Duluth’s projects is expected to be available at the end of the month. In the meantime, tree removals for projects that are scheduled to take place this summer will be completed this spring to avoid potential project delays. The projects that require tree removals include Kitchi Gammi Park (Brighton Beach), Harbor Plaza, and Lincoln Park.

More information about the declaration is available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/11/30/2022-25998/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-endangered-species-status-for-northern-long-eared-bat>.

Lakewalk Interpretive Plan

Two public meetings were held in February. Both meetings included a presentation about the interpretive approach, draft plans for eight defined experience districts, and proposed interpretive content. The draft Plan and interpretive panel content is in development, and staff anticipate presenting the draft Plan to Parks and Recreation this spring.

The project area includes the riverfront segments of the Baywalk along Bayfront Festival Park, the Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center and the south side of Canal Park, and then continues along the Lakewalk from the ship canal to 21st Avenue East. Altogether, the Plan spans nearly 3.5 miles of designated trail. The purpose of the Plan is to define specific elements and common themes for interpretation along the existing trail and soon to be reconstructed segments during the Lakewalk resiliency and Harbor Plaza improvements.

Kitchi Gammi Park – Brighton Beach

Our department remains on track to put the park improvement project out for bid in spring of 2023. Construction is anticipated to be substantially complete by the end of 2023.

Park Point Boardwalks

In 2021, the City applied for, and was later awarded, a \$100,000 grant from Minnesota’s Lake Superior Coastal Program to support the replacement of a boardwalk at Lafayette Community Recreation Area to improve access to the beach and preserve the sensitive dune habitat. The Program is implemented by the MN DNR and funded through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency (NOAA). During the project review process, the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) determined that an archeological survey of the site is required. The archeological survey, which will be conducted in collaboration with the Fond du Lac Band Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO), is expected to take place this spring. The results of the survey will determine when, and if, the boardwalk will be replaced.

The City applied for a second \$100,000 grant from Minnesota’s Lake Superior Coastal Program to support the replacement of a boardwalk at Park Point Recreation Area. In February, the City was notified that the MN DNR has selected the project for inclusion in their funding request to NOAA. In July, NOAA will provide notification of approval.

Enger Golf Course Renovation Update

Bids for this phase of Enger Golf Course Renovation have been reworked and posted to the City’s Bids and Request for Proposals page, which links to Bid Express, the City’s electronic bidding platform. Bids are scheduled to be opened on Tuesday, April 18. Anticipated Enger Golf Course Meeting with the golf community will occur after bids are opened, with a date anticipated for late April so that staff can share status updates in relation to the renovation work that is currently out for bid. Bids and Request for Proposals link: <https://duluthmn.gov/purchasing/bids-request-for-proposals/>

NATURAL RESOURCES



Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration – US Steel Superfund Site

The US EPA, MN Pollution Control Agency, and US Steel have been working to clean up hazardous contamination through the Area of Concern projects, which are expected to be completed this year. The cleanup is one component of the restoration that is required by the US EPA. Next, a Natural Resources Damage Assessment and Restoration (NRDAR) will be conducted to determine the amount and type of restoration needed to compensate the public for injuries to natural resources resulting from the release of hazardous substances into the environment. The draft Assessment Plan for how the NRDAR will identify injuries is available for public comment until March 23.

The draft Assessment Plan and information about the NRDAR process is available at <https://www.fws.gov/project/st-louis-river-us-steel-duluth-minnesota-natural-resource-damage-assessment-and-restoration>

Tischer Creek & Hartley Pond Feasibility Study

The first of three public information sessions regarding the Feasibility Study was held on February 23 at Hartley Nature Center. Additional information sessions are expected to be held this summer and the study will be completed this year.

The purpose of the Study is to improve the aesthetic value and recreation opportunities in Hartley Park, while also mitigating the temperature and sediment impairments that are negatively impacting downstream trout. The Study will evaluate the feasibility of the proposed options. The findings will then be used by the Parks and Recreation Commission, Natural Resources Commission, and City Council to determine future action. The City is working with the Minnesota DNR for the Study.

PARK MAINTENANCE

Park Maintenance staff continue to complete park sanitation routes for garbage and recycling collection of over 80 locations, snow removal for city-owned sidewalks and parks, preparation and planning for the coming months, and grooming for cross-country ski trails. The ski trail grooming for this season started November 17, 2022. Since then, staff have groomed 37 out of 106 days, including:

- Lester Park Trails: 21 times
- Lester Park Golf Course: 9 times
- Hartley Park: 17 times
- Chester Park: 15 times
- Piedmont Trails: 17 times
- Magney Snively Forest Preserve: 18 times