

Parks and Recreation Division Report

May 2025

PROGRAMMING

Lincoln Park Middle School Mountain Bike Club

April marked the start of our Afterschool Mountain Biking Club with Lincoln Park Middle School! The first day was spent with introductions, basic skills, and then a short ride along the Munger Trail, a paved trail ride due to wet conditions on natural surface trails.

The second week we headed indoors due to storms. The group met at Observation Park and worked on different skills in small groups: different riding positions, how to shift, and basic bike maintenance including how to put a chain back on, clean gears, and change a flat tire.



March Family Movie Night

Each Friday night in March, we transformed the Morgan Park Community Center into a night on the big screen with our free Family Movie Nights! We showcased four different films, including The Mario Movie, Wild Robot, Secret Life of Pets, and Migration. The movies were a hit, with nearly 70 people showing up for Wild Robot! We made sure not to forget the popcorn to make it feel just like going to the movies.



55+ Programs

St. Patrick's Day bingo at Evergreen Senior Center attracted a record number of participants. It was a bustling afternoon with folks visiting, catching up with friends, and winning prizes.



Thirty-six people rode a bus to see "Grease" at the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre on March 26. The attendees were from Duluth, Wisconsin, and even included a group of six sisters and cousins from Cloquet. It was a wonderful theatre performance with some well-known musical hits. Everyone appreciated riding the bus home instead of driving through rush hour traffic.



Claire Hoffman, Recreation Specialist from Duluth Parks & Recreation, attended the annual conference of the Minnesota Association of Senior Services, which is a branch of the Minnesota Recreation and Park Association. This year the conference was held in Duluth. Speakers presented on topics such as addiction in the elderly, the Human Library project, and community partnerships.

Youth Programs

March was a busy month in Washington Center Gym for Parks & Recreation youth programs – Homeschool Gym, Toddler Playtime, and Youth Archery Club all occurred weekly. Saturday, March 29 welcomed another Parks & Recreation Archery Tournament for youth and adults! A highlight for youth programming in April was an Archery League taking place over four Mondays.

Sunrise Equinox Hike

On Thursday, March 20 from 7-8 a.m., we welcomed the changing of the seasons with a sunrise equinox hike on the Lakewalk from the lighthouses to Leif Erikson Park. Attendees received seed packets for attending and were encouraged to bring a warm beverage to start their day.

Joke Trail

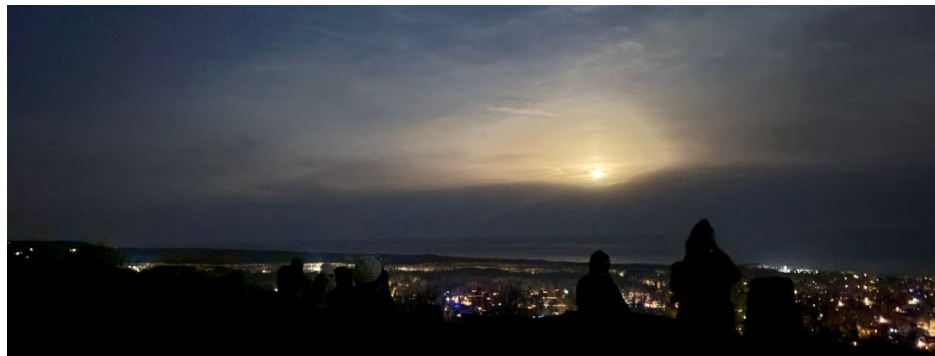
Our recreation team coordinated our annual “Joke Trail” at Quarry Park the week of April Fools Day. This encouraged folks to shake off the winter blues by taking a hike and reading signs placed along the quarry floor with jokes submitted by local kids, ages 12 and under.

Women Hike Duluth

We continue Women Hike Duluth monthly, year-round and are always excited to see a mix of regulars and new faces. We take to the gravel and paved trails in the spring months while natural surface trails dry out. Consistently, we hike with a group of 30-60 women on a different trail each month! March: Brighton Beach, April: Waabizheshikana-The Marten Trail, May: Lincoln Park.

Full Moon Hike

Parks & Recreation hosted two Full Moon Hikes this spring. On March 14, a group of seven hiked at Hawk Ridge, adding one more hiker to the group just from having a conversation with a passerby. Staff brought a pair of binoculars for a close-up view of the moon rising above the lake. On April 13, a group met at the 12th Street beach access for a Park Point beach hike. It was a cool, blustery evening, but folks showed up to walk along the lake. We see a number of repeat hikers that join each month and are able to build great relationships with our staff.



OPERATIONS

PERMIT TYPE	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr
Park & Building Rentals	58	67	93	73
Commercial Operator Permits	1	1	5	2
Alcohol Consumption Permits	8	5	0	8
Total	67	73	98	83

Indian Point Campground RFP

The City of Duluth issued a Request for Proposals for the Operation and Maintenance of Indian Point Campground on April 17. The operator awarded will enter into an agreement, anticipated to be 5 years, taking effect on January 1, 2026. The City is seeking candidates experienced in campground management and operations, knowledgeable of camping trends in the region, and able to provide the camping public an enjoyable experience at the site. A pre-proposal virtual conference was held on April 28, and a site visit was offered on April 30 for interested parties to submit questions. Proposals are due to the City's Purchasing division on Thursday, May 15, and interviews with qualified candidates will follow.

PROJECT UPDATES

Trail Detour Notice – Lakewalk London Road Tunnel

Resource Renew, the new brand of WLSSD, will be rehabilitating segments of a critical sanitary sewer pipe in Lakeside this summer. Their project stretches from approximately the northern terminus of Water Street and along London Road to 40th Avenue East. The project will require temporary closures of the Lakewalk for placement of an above-ground bypass pipe, and the bypass pipe will run along the Lakewalk through the London Road tunnel near 26th Avenue East for the duration of the project. The temporary closure is expected to take place between late May and mid-June. Once dates are finalized, Lakewalk closures will be communicated via press release, social media posts, and detour signage at the site.

Wade Stadium

Building improvements funded through the Athletic Venue Reinvestment Initiative at Wade Stadium have begun. These improvements are focused on supporting structural integrity, halting water infiltration, and improving safety. Masonry repairs, including brick tuckpointing and replacement, have started. Other work included in Phase 1 will include repairs to the roof and exterior door replacements.



Spring Golf Meeting at Enger Park Golf Course

The Spring Golf Meeting was held at Enger Park Golf Course on Wednesday, April 23. Parks & Recreation Manager Jessica Peterson and Construction Project Supervisor Rob Hurd were joined by Enger's General Manager Craig Smith and Superintendent Josh Krause to provide updates on operations, irrigation, stream restoration, branding, signage, etc. Approximately 15 people attended the meeting, which was also attended by Parks & Recreation Commission Liaison, Councilor Tara Swenson.

City staff provided updates on the irrigation project, namely all 27 holes were completed last year, and the system would be turned back on in early May, while the remaining extension of the system would be installed at the driving range. Work continues on the Buckingham Creek realignment and restoration work with several new bridges already in place. The Tower 9 (formerly known as the Back 9) is expected to open Memorial Day weekend, understanding additional work and grass growing time will be needed.

Indigo Golf, the management company for Enger Park Golf Course, rolled out new course branding and logos, and a sample of the new Tee Monument Signs was on display (also shown below). All 27 holes will feature new Tee Monument signs, a collaborative effort between the City's Parks & Recreation team, IT's Graphic Design staff, and Indigo Golf staff. Additionally, a number of improvements were made over the winter to the clubhouse – windows, plumbing, electrical, flooring, chairs, and more were improved to ensure the clubhouse remains fully functional until it can be replaced. Funding for clubhouse replacement is anticipated, though not yet confirmed, as part of the current Athletic Venues Reinvestment Initiative.

Through a collaborative programming effort between Parks & Recreation and Enger Park Golf Course, those interested in learning how to play golf can sign up for a new Intro to Golf program through Parks & Recreation. This low-cost, no-pressure introductory program is a 4-week series designed to help first-timers and novice golfers gain familiarity with the course, practice facilities, and the game of golf. Support from Indigo Golf staff and equipment makes this a low-barrier opportunity to learn to play golf.

Rebranding includes renaming of each of the 9's: Front 9 is now Skyline 9, Middle 9 is now Bridge 9, and Back 9 is now Tower 9.



Norton Park – Building Removal

The building removal at Norton Park will begin in late May or early June 2025. The independent consultants that assessed the building condition determined it is structurally compromised, and the primary systems are beyond their useful life. Demolition was recommended by these consultants. Building removal is the first step towards renovating this neighborhood park and community focal point.

Park Point Recreation Area Plan

In April, City staff and the selected consulting firm, LHB Inc., held a project kick-off meeting for the Park Point Recreation Area planning process. Initial project tasks include an assessment of existing and historical site conditions, development of a base map, and hosting a series of focus group meetings with key stakeholders and user groups, which are scheduled for May 13th. Later this summer, there will be pop-up events and other opportunities to share feedback and help guide future improvements at Park Point Recreation Area.

Lincoln Park – Honor Award of Excellence

On April 25, the MN Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects recognized the Lincoln Park Restoration and Reconnection Project in the General Design category with an Honor Award, the highest award of excellence. LHB inc., the design firm involved on the project, did a great job with the project and submitted the project for consideration. Awarded projects represent the best of landscape architecture, and we're thrilled that Lincoln Park was selected!

Duluth Traverse Trailhead Improvement Planning

The design development process has started to prepare for improvements to the trailheads serving Piedmont Trails at 2226 Hutchinson Road and Lester Park at 61 Lester River Road. A public open house will be held on Wednesday, May 28 from 6:00 – 7:30 pm in Conference Room 330 at Duluth City Hall. The open house will be “drop in” style, where everyone is welcome to join us to learn more about the project and share feedback on the two conceptual layouts prepared for each site. COGGS will also be there to share a conceptual plan for the bicycle playground proposed at Lester Park. Invites will be mailed to households near both locations, and there will be social media posts about the open house. A survey will also be provided as an alternative option for sharing feedback.

The feedback from these community engagement sessions will inform future improvements. Subsequently, preliminary designs will be completed to support a Greater MN Regional Parks & Trails Commission grant application and fundraising to support implementation.

NATURAL RESOURCES

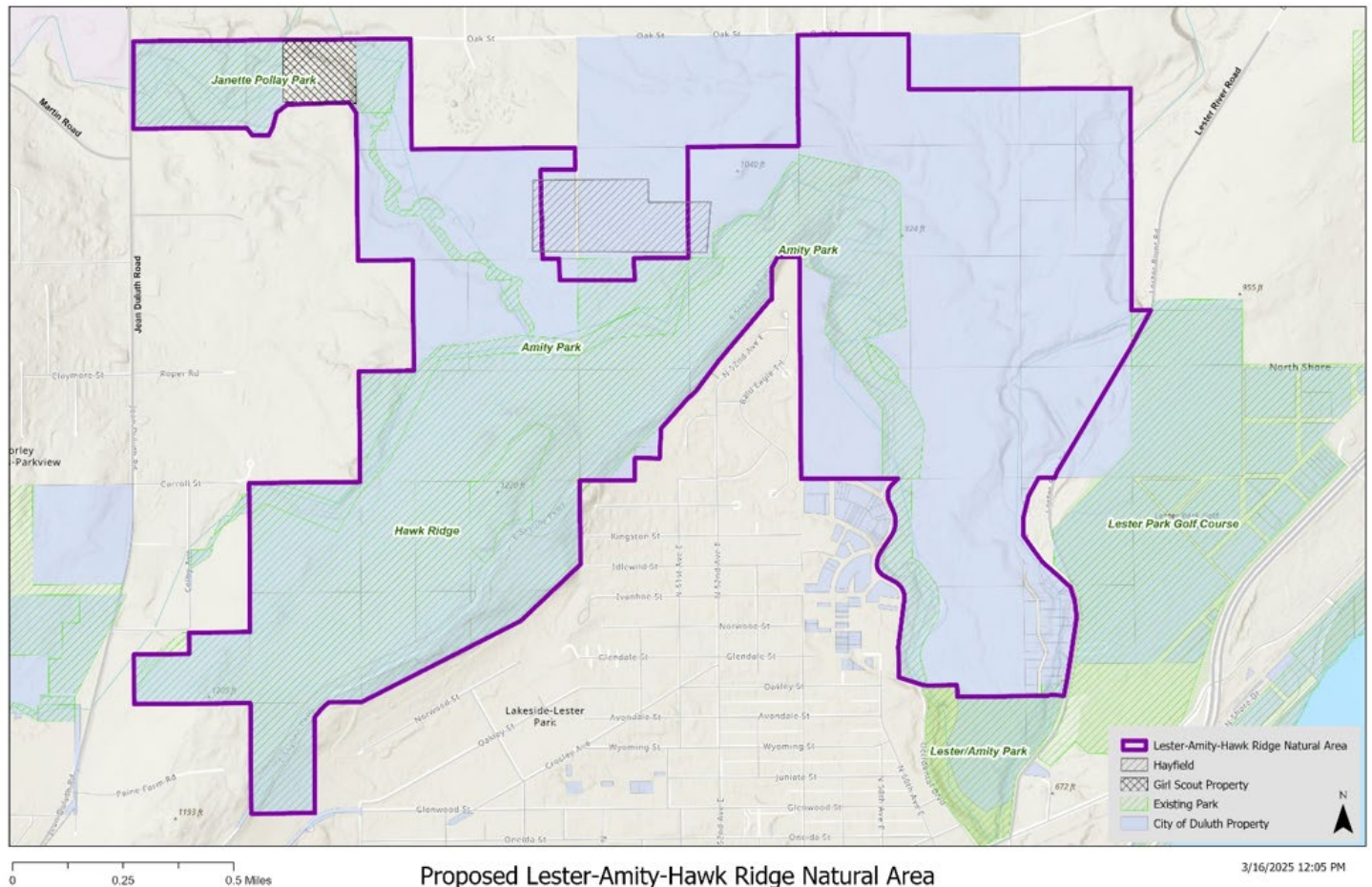
Plans are being made for summer natural resources work including tree planting with the Duluth Stream Corps and The Nature Conservancy, buckthorn and japanese knotweed removal and treatment, and Native Plant Community Surveys in Magney Snively Designated Natural Area and other areas throughout the city.

Hartley Pond & Tischer Creek Restoration

In the summer of 2024, the Hartley Pond & Tischer Creek Feasibility Study was completed. The recommended alternative was to install a flow restrictive culvert, with or without a potential 3-acre pond remaining. Since then, the MN Department of Natural Resources worked to secure funding for the design of the project, and funds have been successfully awarded through the Great Lakes Reinvestment Initiative. City staff and the MN DNR will develop a Project Agreement to describe the roles and responsibilities for moving the design project forward.

Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Natural Area Nomination

A nomination package has been assembled for the Lester-Amity-Hawk Ridge Designated Natural Area. While past Designated Natural Area Nominations have been brought forward by the City, this one is being brought forward by partner organizations: Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, South St. Louis Soil and Water Conservation District, Trout Unlimited, and the Minnesota Land Trust. By ordinance, the Planning Commission has the authority to approve or reject the nomination. If approved, the group will have one year to develop a management plan for the area. The proposed boundary contains over 1,100 acres of property:



Research in Duluth Parks

Each year, the City of Duluth receives a handful of requests to conduct research within Duluth's park system. So far this year, there are ten research projects authorized across our parks! This is a lesser-known, but exciting part of work that our Duluth park system gets to support. A couple of projects are highlighted below:

- [Lichen Transplants & Surveys](#) – Conducted by Natália Mossmann Koch and Daniel Stanton of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis-St. Paul. This project explores lichen as an indicator of air quality across MN. Since lichen pull their nutrients from the air, this makes them sensitive to air pollutants! Lichen specimens were transplanted (see example photo below left) in selected parks last fall and will be retrieved in fall of 2025 for laboratory evaluations. The research team is also conducting surveys of the existing lichen populations. For more information about this research: startribune.com/university-of-minnesota-researcher-digs-into-hidden-world-of-lichen-to-measure-the-air-we-breathe/600302715

- Flying Squirrels – Did you realize that Duluth is home to flying squirrels? No? Well, now you know! Anna Mangan and Katie Pfaff from the Natural Resources Research Institute conducted research last year that included live-trapping (see example photo below at right) and monitoring of flying squirrels in a few parks to evaluate species range and behaviors. This year, the research team is mounting nest boxes with game cameras to monitor nesting activity in Lester Park. For more information about this research: nrri.umn.edu/news/flying-squirrels-2024



Lichen Transplants (Photo credit: Alex Kormann)



Flying Squirrel Population Monitoring (Photo credit: Charly Kearns)

PARK MAINTENANCE DIVISION UPDATES

Volunteer Cleanup Highlights

Friends of the Lakewalk Spring Cleanup – On Tuesday, April 22, the Friends of the Lakewalk coordinated litter cleanup along a 2-mile stretch of the Lakewalk. Despite the damp and windy day, it was a successful partnership with Friends of the Lakewalk, Duluth East High School Key Club students, Essentia Health, and community neighbors. Over 35 volunteers cleaned up 40th Ave E to 26th Ave E. Kudos to the community, as this was the cleanest we've seen this section of the Lakewalk and only one full-sized garbage bag of litter was collected! Volunteers from Allette also cleaned the Lakewalk and tracks from 40th Ave E to Lester River on Saturday, April 19.



Photo credit: Friends of the Lakewalk

Keep Duluth Clean - Clean Yer Creek – On Saturday, May 3, around 500 volunteers signed up to collect litter along Keene, Merritt, Miller, Chester, and Amity/Lester Creeks! The 17th anniversary of the event again featured strong partnerships with businesses and organizations across Duluth. Over the years, this event has cumulatively collected nearly 30 tons of garbage and debris found along creeks! Park Maintenance staff supported the event by shuttling large materials collected during the event. Photos below show the crews gathered for Merritt (left) and Miller (right) Creeks!



Prescribed Burns

In April, Park Maintenance and the Duluth Fire Department partnered to conduct prescribed burns off the Lakewalk near Canal Park and the roadside near the Arlington Athletic Complex. Prescribed burns, also referred to as controlled burns, use the controlled use of fire to reduce undesirable and invasive plants while encouraging the re-growth and vitality of native perennials and grasses.