Assistant Superintendent’s Update

Friends Members…

This has been quite a year! We started out 2020 with a wonderful winter, plenty of snow and with that came plenty of visitors on skis, snowshoes, sleds and snowmobiles. We weathered many storms, one with over 8” of heavy wet snow that took down hundreds of cedar and pine trees and limbs all over the park. We worked extra hard on large scale projects throughout, cutting trees and plowing campground roads in preparation. Little did we know what was to come.

By the end of March, our offices, campgrounds, playgrounds and many other areas were closed and a new way of life in Peninsula began. Though this was a challenge and an adjustment for staff and visitors, we found ways to keep moving forward. As of June 10th, our campgrounds were open again, and within a couple of days, full! Though it was quite the journey to get to this point, having an extra couple of months to work in the park was very helpful. We kept busy cutting and chipping the downed trees and limbs from the storm, clearing Ash from the campgrounds and helping clear out dead Ash at the golf course. We were lucky to have help from our two Peninsula Wardens, Nic and Brent, as well as two additional warden recruits keeping busy while the academy was shut down.

Not only were we working through our new way of operations at the Park, but in the midst of it all, we lost a couple more employees. Peninsula normally has 9 full time employees. However, as of today we have 4. The most recent departure is Brian Markowski, Park Superintendent, who left Peninsula to take a Parks District Supervisor position in the Northwest District. Prior to that, Joe Simon, one of our Park Rangers, left Peninsula and the WI DNR to move to the upper peninsula in Michigan with his fiancé. If you haven’t heard, Kathleen Harris, our Naturalist and Educator made the decision to retire in November. She is keeping busy now with a recently released book about Camp Meenahga. On a good note, four of us are still here including myself, Jessica, Morgan and Chuck, and a great set of summer LTEs! We are also actively working to fill some of the vacant positions, starting with two Rangers very soon.
As for projects in the park, they are making their mark and moving along. As Friend’s members, you are all aware of two large ongoing projects, including the new Eagle Tower and canopy walk/accessible ramp, but there are plenty other large projects recently completed or near to. One project we were very excited about is a new roof on our main office building! We have 10 new vault toilets installed in our campgrounds and one by the Terrace contact station. Weborg and the 700s shower building in South Nicolet Campground are completely renovated, and the 800s shower building in South Nicolet Campground is brand new.

Toilets are being replaced in the Tennison Bay Campground buildings. Once complete, we will have 23 new electrical sites in South Nicolet Campground. A major overhaul and upgrades were added to our wastewater treatment facility and work is still in progress on the new dump station located near the east entrance to Tennison Bay Campground. Many other updates are ongoing in our campgrounds including graveling all sites, added new tables, grills and fire rings. Our other partners are working just as hard to improve the park for the visitors, including a new flush toilet building at the outdoor theater, upgrades to the golf course grounds and to the lighthouse.

There has been a lot of action at Peninsula in 2020, and we are only half done with the year! There will always be changes with staff and projects, that is inevitable, and I am expecting many more challenges yet to come as we move through the summer. One thing is certain - the love and pride each of you have for our park, and the commitment to its natural beauty and recreational opportunities. I am happy to see our park thriving with visitors once again and I hope to see all of you here in the park very soon!

Jennifer Birkholz, Assistant Superintendent

New Nature Center
Superintendent’s Message

Hi Everyone,

I hope everyone is healthy and doing well. As many of you know, I accepted the Northwest Parks and Recreation District Supervisor position and will be residing in the Spooner/Hayward area. I am very thankful for the opportunity to work with amazing Friends groups, partners, campground hosts, volunteers and staff. I cannot thank everyone enough for your dedication and passion for Peninsula State Park. I am looking forward to seeing all the future property enhancements and all the great things you do! It’s exciting to see the completion of the Nature Center Addition and the early stages of Eagle Tower. I will miss the many conversations and appreciate all the friendships I have made. I have been asked multiple times, “How are the Friends of Peninsula State Park able to accomplish so many projects?” The answer: They are incredible people!

Brian Markowski, Superintendent

President’s Message

Hi to all Peninsula Park Friends and volunteers.

We look forward to welcoming visitors and volunteers back to the park as we follow state guidelines. We are thrilled that the construction of the new Eagle Tower and ramp are proceeding. Our Nature Center Phase I is complete and we are looking forward to raising money for Phase II, which will include building an amphitheater and enlarging the parking area. Our Trails Committee is also in the planning phase of a Warming Shelter which will be located at Lot 5.

We would like to thank Kathleen Harris for her dedicated work as Park Naturalist. Please look for her recently published book on the history of Camp Meenahga.

We would also like to thank Brian Markowski for his work as Park Superintendent and wish him well in his new job as Northwest District Supervisor.

We would also like to honor the memory of Jim Cushing who served as a Friends Board member. We will miss him as a colleague and friend.

We hope you all stay safe and healthy and take time to enjoy the park this summer. As always, thank you for all your support.

Chris Holicek, President
Merchandise Committee

As most of our members and supporters know, the Friends of Peninsula State Park has a long tradition of funding projects that enhance and expand the park service. We have provided for extra staff members in the summer, trail maintenance operations, research projects (an orchid study for one), and, most visibly the reconstruction and expansion of the Eagle Tower and the White Cedar Nature Center. These funds come from two sources: direct donations and the sale of park related items that we purchase and resell, primarily right in the Headquarters building.

Profits for 2018 were $27,765.58. A record amount, due in part to the extra efforts made to raise funds for the Eagle Tower rebuild. Those items which supported the Tower project that year brought in $12,464 of the total. In 2019 the profits were $16,228. This year was looking very favorable until . . .

Due to Covid-19, the park has been at a very low level of functioning since mid-March. The Headquarters building has been closed and all park stickers have been provided to visitors via phone and online sales.

Below you can see a comparison of sales and profits from 2019 to 2020:

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<th>Profit</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Sales</th>
<th>Profit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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We hope you will consider helping on the other side of the equation: direct contributions. These are not as much fun as plush toys and nature books, but still offer a way for you to help provide those essential services that the Friends have been sponsoring. Thanks ahead of time for any assistance you can offer!

Dave Lea, Merchandise Guy
Business Manager’s Report

NATURE CENTER UPDATE

Work on the Nature Center addition and update at Peninsula State Park is almost complete. Thank you to the many donors who made the new addition possible!

We look forward to the day when it will be safe to reopen the building to the public and show all of the improvements that have been made. The new and improved facility will allow the naturalists, park staff, and volunteers to more effectively provide educational and interpretive programs to students, families, and other park visitors.

As Chris mentioned earlier, we are starting to plan for a second phase to address exterior needs, including an amphitheater for outdoor education and historical programs, and enhanced access, including parking. The estimated cost of this phase is $150,000-$200,000.

Here is a conceptual site plan as well as a photo of the amphitheater at Pike Lake that is similar to what we have in mind for the Nature Center:

WORK ON EAGLE TOWER FORGING AHEAD

Construction of the new Eagle Tower began in April. Michels Construction is the general contractor for the project. The first step is setting the footings for the new tower and the ramp through the tree canopy in the woods. The tower is currently scheduled to be completed in late fall 2020. Check the Friends website and Facebook page for regular updates on the project.
PLANNING FOR A NEW WARMING SHELTER

Jeff Pfeifer and Rachel Stollenwerk from the Trails Committee are heading up a group looking at ideas for a warming shelter to be located near Lot 5 off of Highland Road in the park. The initial concept includes indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, indoor restrooms and changing areas, a fireplace, and a garage for storing grooming equipment for the ski trails. John Sawyer, former owner of Carlson-Erickson Construction, is spearheading the effort to develop plans and cost estimates for the project. We hope to make an announcement about detailed plans and a campaign goal in the coming months. This photo of the shelter at Governor Thompson State Park gives an idea of what a new shelter might look like.

LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY

Think about your experiences at Peninsula State Park. Wouldn’t you like to preserve these great memories for years to come? Perhaps you would like to remember a loved one who shared special time with you here. You may be seeking an affordable way to acknowledge someone’s love for the Park or celebrate a special occasion. You might wish to capture your personal connection to the Park and leave a mark for future generations.

Now there is a way your memories can live on! Donate a commemorative brick to be placed at the Nature Center. Visit www.PeninsulaFriends.org/engraved-bricks for more information.

*Steve Strucely, Business Manager*

Meet our Board