
Manager's Report – Administrative Activities

Updated May 14, 2020

Recreation Area Activities

With nice weather and campgrounds at most other recreation areas closed we have seen a record number of park users this spring. The campgrounds at all our areas have been full the past three weekends. Most of the areas fill up by Thursday evening. People are calling the office on a continuous basis asking a variety of questions. Spring is a busy time of year and normally it is not difficult to squeeze checking parks into the mix. This year has been different. Due to the crowds, we try to have someone go through each park Monday, Thursday, and Friday. With the high demand for RV pads, we are working hard to make sure everyone is paying. From April 1 – May 14 we have collected \$12,035 in park permit fees and \$8,491 in camping fees. To date we have sold 1,474 annual permits which is 463 more than the same time last year.

All the concrete vault restrooms were opened on May 8. The older wooden ones are still closed. I was watching the status of camping at Game and Parks areas closely and was getting concerned about Memorial Day weekend if they kept their camping areas closed. They are opening RV campsites in state areas with several limitations such as no tent camping on May 20th, so hopefully that will help. Iowa opened their camping areas on May 8. Our playgrounds and picnic shelters are still closed, and we are monitoring crowds at the beaches. I would note that the water clarity in the lakes this spring is amazingly high.

Staff, including Steve, Aaron and Charlie have nearly completed the installation of the new playground at Iron Horse. It is certainly a nice-looking addition to the park. Staff also did a considerable amount of burning at Iron Horse this spring. Steve is planning to get the park roads at Kirkman's Cove graded.

Duck Creek Sediment Basin

We are still waiting for the water storage and dam safety permits from DNR. I am assuming those will be received soon. Staff will start putting together the final bid specifications and forms with a goal to act on bids in July.

Peru Recovery Group

We continue to meet every Wednesday via Zoom. Peru has been working with Nebraska City to hook-up to their water system and there seems to be great interest on both sides. They are still trying to determine how much FEMA and other grant funding will be available. The levee district still has some repair work to do on the levee that controls Buck Creek and once it is repaired it should help protect Peru's sewage lagoons from flooding. They continue to look at options for repairing the main levee. With the virus impacting state tax revenue, it does not seem likely they will be able to fund any type of engineering work as had been hoped. It sounds like they are making headway to allow a fix through the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). Congressman Smith is proposing an amendment to the WRDA bill to allow the Corps of Engineers to grant an exception to repair an inactive levee that protects community infrastructure.

Hazard Mitigation Plan Update

JEO held the second round of stakeholder meetings via the Zoom platform and they were very well attended. The first meeting alone had 40+ participants. JEO is doing everything they can to stay on schedule and complete the plan by fall.

CoVid-19

Our office status remains at Phase 1. I am not certain what the trigger will be to open the office fully to the public. So far, the public has been very cooperative, and it seems like the number of people visiting the office is less than what we typically see, but the phone calls have increased. Staff has tried to take precautions when visiting public in the field by maintaining the social distancing requirement.

Legislation

State Senator Slama has informed me that the Covid virus will have a major impact to the next year's revenue stream. It is expected that sales tax revenue will be drastically down and with all the employment layoffs, I assume that it will have an impact to income tax revenue too. She said it will be a major task to balance the budget, so expect numerous cuts that will impact many programs.

Senator Slama and Janet Palmtag will advance to the general election in November. Slama received over 60% of the vote with Palmtag and Schardt splitting the balance. Slama admitted that none of their projections had anywhere close to that big a margin. Primaries do not always accurately predict the outcome of a general election particularly in a presidential election year.

SWCP

We basically wrapped up the SWCP cost share program for the year. After contacting all the applicants that not been approved, we did end up with \$41,000 of the NRD funds that were not used. There were several late cancellations.

Tree Program

We received all the trees we ordered and almost have planting wrapped up.

Plant-A-Tree

Jane worked with several schools and came up with a plan to distribute the trees we had earmarked for Plant-A-Tree to the students. The pre-virus plan was to provide 736 trees to students at 15 schools. We ended up providing 470 trees to 13 schools. Norris and Syracuse were the two schools unable to participate.

WOW Camp

A decision was made to cancel the Watershed of Wonders Day Camp and reschedule it for 2021. Since we only hold this event every other year it seemed moving it to next summer was the best option.

District Cash Flow

I brought this up as a concern last month. The good news is we have caught up with our claims for the UBN 25C Project, so we should be in good shape the rest of the year.

Other Meetings:

May 4 - Admin Team Meeting