



ROCHESTER

As I write my portion of the newsletter, we are under a blizzard warning (this would be our first for the season.) The office is now quiet, the phone is not ringing off the hook and I have sent the staff home for the day. There are times that I cannot see the house because of the blowing snow. I am determined to get this assignment completed - I do have a supply of MRE (meals ready to eat) if this should become an all night event.

The solitude of a snow event has always intrigued me; like the critters, it is a good time to hide out in the "cave". Growing up on a farm my dad instilled in me the importance of being aware of the weather and how rapidly it can change. The weather is an important part of our lives and I credit this interest to my dad.

This year the weather had some extremely interesting events. Here are a few events recorded at the Park. It took until January 17th before the reservoir had completely frozen over, thus creating a short ice fishing season for those who like thick ice. On February 23rd, there was an awesome thunder-snow event that went on for several hours.

I didn't know snow flakes could get as big as they did during this storm. In March, there was a three-day stretch of upper 70's and thus by the 28th the ice layer was off the reservoir, which made it the shortest period recorded for having solid water. Just when we thought spring was here, on April 11th, there was a snow event that dropped 4 inches of that white stuff just to remind us that it can still happen. The summer months of 2007 could have gone down as one of the driest summers. That was until August 18th, when the rains began in the morning and did not let up for 24 hours. This did prove to be the biggest weather event for the region with a storm total of 11.07 inches being recorded at the Park. The Bear Creek Reservoir reached a pool level of 13 feet 4 inches above normal pool. This did surpass the previous height of 5 feet 10 inches set on April 12, 2001.

Even though it seems that we had an extremely dry and then wet year our precipitation was slightly higher than normal. There was 45.31 inches reported in 2007 and the average for Rochester Airport is 31.40 inches.

Prior to the August flooding, the staff had made some modest improvements to the Park. If you hadn't noticed, the new paddle boat dock was the only dock that withstood the high water. In June the southern 2/3 of the large open ball field which is surrounded by road and parking lots was planted to prairie. A butterfly garden was

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Black-Eyed Susan and Daisy Fleabane

Continued from page 1)

planted by the Eyota Girl Scout Troop, they are going to continue to improve the diversity of this planting for all to enjoy. In April, the First Grade Class from Harriet Bishop Elementary School planted 300 trees, extending our conifer shelter belt along the Highway 14 corridor.

One of the most noticeable changes late in the year, was staff. Park Superintendent Jim Foote retired, and Oxbow Park's Tom Ryan became the new Park Superintendent giving Kevin Crilly the opportunity to transfer to Oxbow Park. The transition has gone over well and they are all getting used to their new roles. Change is good, I welcome it - I think!

Tom Eckdahl



THE SUMMER OF 2007

Here's a toast to all the staff,
Who made it through the summer,
They did it with a smile and laugh,
Even when t'was a bummer.

The weather was as hot as it gits,
And things began to smell,
What's worse than all those toilet pits
Or places where garbage fell?

Mowing grass was a favorite chore,
Till there was little rain.
Then the job turned into a bore
With lots of sunburn pain.

Then there were winds that whipped the park,
And kept all staff quite busy.
Out came the saws to cut trees and bark,
And move all the brush till dizzy,

Enough! You cried! But it didn't stop,
The storms now brought a scare,
Nights in the bathhouse, not the shop,
You wished you really weren't there.

Then the rain began to pound,
Twenty-four hours and more,
Flood warnings soon began to sound,
And campers watched it pour.

The staff kept calm for the campers' sake.
While water flowed out of the ditches.
The beach disappeared down in the lake
And the campground cleared without hitches.

If this is a summer you won't hold dear,
Here's the best of the goods,
You can apply for your job next year,
And work at Chester Woods.

Pat Tabor

Here are some upcoming events in 2008 that anyone can participate in at Chester Woods!

- ☐ **April 2nd, 12:00 PM-** Prescribed Burn Training, RSVP March 24th
- ☐ **Month of April-** Assist Park Staff with Prairie Burning
- ☐ **April 17th, 8:00 PM-** Annual Woodcock Hike
- ☐ **April 26th, 10:00 AM-** FOCW Spring Park Clean Up Day
- ☐ **May 25th, 11:00 AM-** Annual Dam Hike and Wiener Roast
- ☐ **May 27th, 7:00 PM-** Eastern Bluebird Banding Session
- ☐ **June 14th, 9:00 AM-** Audubon Society Bird Hike
- ☐ **July 12th, 9:00 AM-** Audubon Society Bird Hike
- ☐ **July 22nd, 7:00 PM-** Chester Woods Prairie Hike
- ☐ **August 9th, 9:00 AM-** Audubon Society Bird Hike
- ☐ **September 20th, 10:00 AM-** Day In The Park

FOCW encourages anyone who wishes to participate in any of these activities to please do so. For more information on these events or the Friends of Chester Woods organization, please contact the Chester Woods Park office at (507) 287- 2624.



Have you noticed some changes around Chester Lake (Bear Creek Reservoir)? Probably the most noticeable would be the new floating docks that are being placed throughout the lake. Park staff have constructed three new wood floating docks. We have mimicked the large handicap fishing pier located in the boat ramp area. These newly constructed docks have been planned with our visitors in mind, having wider widths and lengths. These docks are designed to raise and lower with the lake water level. With a 4-inch rainfall, the lake level would typically raise 2 feet leaving our old docks under water, and unusable. This would also create issues for park staff, with the task of pulling out and pushing in the previous wheeled docks, as water levels fluctuate. Our goal is to replace all the wheeled docks. Our hope is that you are finding these new additions to the lake more user friendly and convenient.

Some other changes you may have seen are the constant battles with erosion along the banks of the lake. We are continuously thinking of new ways and ideas to stabilize our shorelines using gabion baskets, limestone rock, retaining walls, and vegetation. We are trying to reduce erosion along the canoe rental racks. At this location we have placed "tender foot" pieces (4x6 rubber coated mesh) in the areas with the problem. In addition, we placed dirt over the top trying to get the turf grass to grow. We will narrow up the canoe launching area by placing split rail fencing along the water's edge. We hope that this directs our canoe launching traffic to walk on top of the "tender foot," reducing any additional erosion.

This year Chester Lake (Bear Creek Reservoir) produced some awesome fishing. The lake was originally stocked with catfish, sunfish, crappie and largemouth bass. There were several nice

fish reported to park staff, one being an 8 lb. 4.5 oz. Largemouth Bass. It was released back into the lake. This fish was just shy of the current state record. The Minnesota state record for Largemouth Bass is 8 lb. 15



© 2003 Curtis Preuss

Two Northern Shovelers enjoying a swim.

oz. 23.5 / 18 length/girth inches caught at Auburn Lake in Carver County on 10/05/2005.

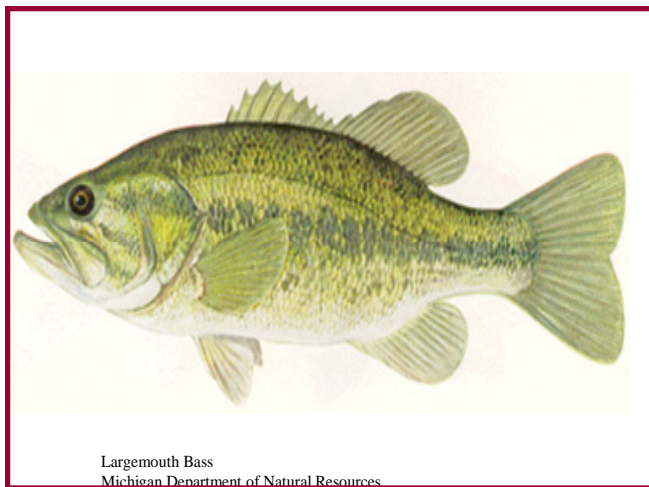
The great thing about Chester Woods Park is that there are so many different family events offered! The park offers a wide variety of activities such as canoeing and paddle boat rental for those who would like to experience viewing the lake from off shore. A new addition this year will be four kayaks available for rent. Life-jackets and a kayak paddle will be available with each watercraft. The rental rates for all watercrafts is \$6 per hour or \$25 per day. There is a \$10 key deposit with a driver's license required at the time of rental.

If you have never explored Chester Lake before take some time with a friend or family member and adventure out and search for the state record fish!

Josh Drilling

**Minnesota State
Record Largemouth Bass**
8 lbs, 15 ounces
23.5/18 length/girth

Auburn Lake
(Carver County),
October 5th, 2005



Largemouth Bass
Michigan Department of Natural Resources





Critter Spotlight: Red-Headed Woodpecker

Chester Woods Red-Headed Woodpecker Recovery Program

As readers may remember, Red-Headed Woodpeckers used to be quite common throughout SE Minnesota. They are now a rare sight. Current estimates are that populations have declined by as

much as 90% since the 1960's, and that the current population is declining by 5% per year. As reported on the Minnesota Red-Headed Woodpecker Recovery Web-site



Red-Headed Woodpecker

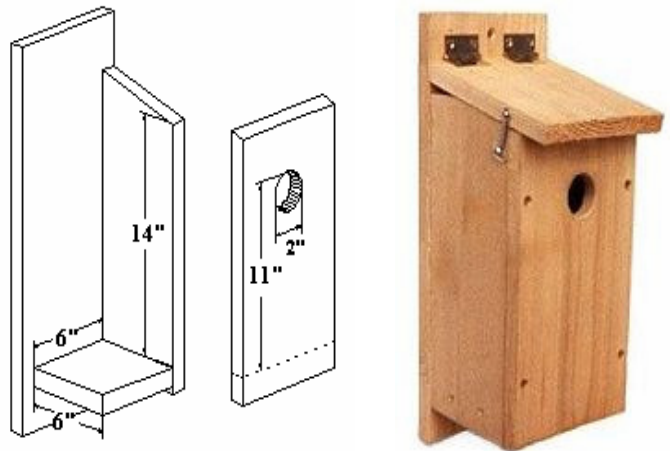
(www.redheadrecovery.org) *"The top reason for Red-Headed Woodpecker decline is the loss of woodlot habitat. Red-Heads favor woodlots with a significant number of dead snags and trees with dead branches (termed "wildlife trees"). Woodlot management in the last 50 years has encouraged the removal of such wildlife trees."*

Friends of Chester Woods have joined together with Zumbro Valley Audubon to begin a Red-Headed Woodpecker recovery program within Chester Woods Park. The purpose of this effort is to help re-establish a healthy Red-Headed Woodpecker population in the Park and hopefully, in the future extend this effort to other areas. We also wish to thank the leaders of the Minnesota Red-Headed Woodpecker Recovery Program (www.redheadrecovery.org) for inspiring and assisting this effort.

Following advice of Richard King of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<http://www.wnrmag.com/stories/2005/aug05/red.htm>), and with consent of Chester Woods Park staff we have selected eight sites within Chester Woods Park that appear to be suitable habitat for Red-Headed Woodpeckers. We have selected groups of 4 to 5 mature Poplar/Aspen trees (60 to 80 ft tall) and girdled them. Over a period of months the trees will die and provide an excellent opportunity for Red-Headed Woodpeckers and other cavity nesting birds to colonize these dead trees and branches.

Most of these habitat trees will not be obvious to park patrons, but if you look closely, you may see a few. Look for signage designating the tree near the beach house. If you do, keep a close eye out in the future for the bright-colored cheery birds that we hope will find welcoming new homes here.

The Nest box for Red-Headed Woodpeckers, Golden-fronted Woodpeckers and Hawk Owls is constructed with Red Cedar. Wood stock is rough-cut on both sides so birds can grip interior and exterior surfaces. It has a 6" by 6" floor, 14" inside ceiling, 2" diameter



entrance hole located 11" above the floor. Ventilation openings are in the floor and under the roof. Hinged roof provides easy access for monitoring and cleaning. Shutter hooks secure roof in closed position.

Assembled with corrosion resistant screws. Pilot holes in both primary and secondary work pieces makes for easy assembly with screwdriver in minutes.

Locate in a woodland edge or clearing. Mount at least ten feet high. Leave some wood chips on the floor.



Olmsted County Parks Department 2007 Flooding

Oxbow Park:

Looking back to the 2007 season, an all too familiar event in SE Minnesota was the August flooding that has affected most or all of us in some direct or indirect way. Oxbow Park was no exception, having seen disheartening results from the record rainfall that began August 18th, 2007.

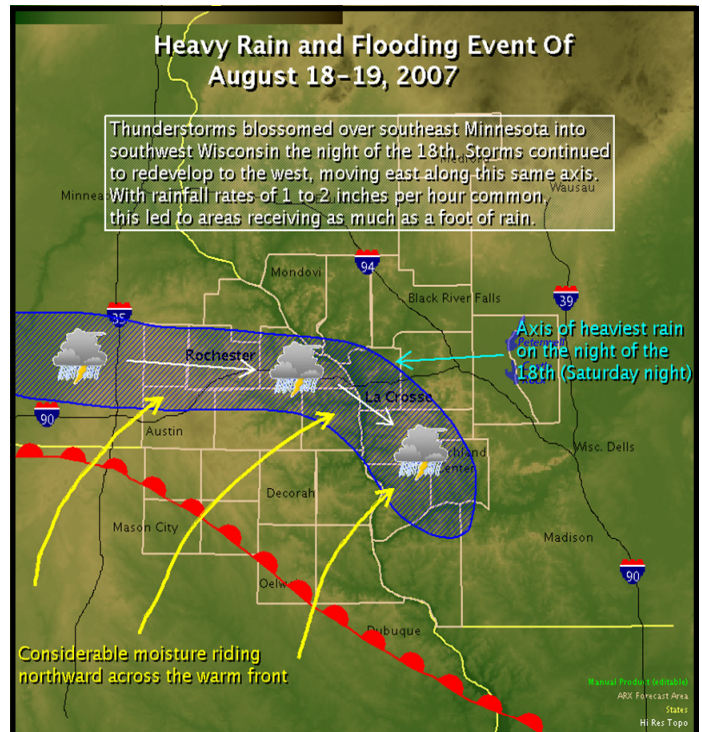
It was known that rain was coming, yet many questions loomed as to where, how much, and when it would all come together. The element of surprise was due to arrive, bringing an unknown here to Oxbow Park and all of SE Minnesota. The rain began to fall, alerting Oxbow Park personnel to get ready. We were in drill mode as before; alert campers and visitors, secure picnic tables, check the flood to-do list and monitor the situation at hand. The Zumbro River Valley in which Oxbow Park lies is no stranger to the flooding, so preparations were underway. Rainfall rates came at 1-2 inches per hour, and continued to fill the Zumbro.

The campground was evacuated and visitors were advised to head home. The river was on the rise Saturday, and with all of the visitors gone, the only task left to do was wait and watch. Sunday arrived, roads were flooded, the valley was filled, and total rainfall amounts were approaching the 9-inch mark for Oxbow Park. At this time the park was completely shut off to vehicles, and the waiting game was still being played. By Monday morning, the east entrance was open into the park, and that afternoon, road 105 from the south entrance was passable as the flood levels continued to subside.

Before this, the record holder for a flood event was July 22, 1951 with a flood stage of 30.8 feet recorded at Zumbro Falls. The 2007 contender fell short of the mark, delivering a punch of nearly 22 feet above flood stage. The 2007 flood didn't receive the title but earned a definite mark of respect.

Chester Woods Park:

The August flooding brought several unexpected events to all of southeast Minnesota. As for Chester Woods Park, we did receive damage; our damage was not as severe as other areas. The main road leading into



the Park was under water for 3 days, forcing us to keep this part of the Park closed to the public. The beach sustained some pretty large wash-outs. Unfortunately this caused Chester Woods Park to close the beach for the remaining three weeks of the swimming season. The trails did have minor damage, but were mostly saturated. The equestrian trails were kept closed. Almost all fishing piers and docks were displaced, which was expected.

The BR-1 reservoir did exactly what it was designed to do. In fact, all 7 flood control structures saved the community of Rochester from experiencing a flood similar to that of 1978. Within the twenty-four hour period, the pooled water went from a normal 118 acres to 204 acres. It was late November before the reservoir returned to normal pool level.

Graciously, the Olmsted County Highway Department has retrieved the washed-away sand and reshaped the beach to the original slope. They have also assisted with road and trail repairs. Without their cooperation and their heavy equipment the re-opening of the beach for the summer of 2008 would have been a difficult task.

Thanks to all organizations, groups and volunteers for assisting with our flood clean-up! Kevin Crilly and Josh Drilling



Volunteers! Volunteers! Volunteers! While the operation and maintenance of the park is very dependent upon the skills and dedication of the employed staff, volunteers are a critical element in the mix. In the year 2007, approximately 2000 volunteer hours were expended in the park. If a dollar value were attached to these hours it would necessitate a significant increase in the Park's budget. What kinds of things do volunteers do at the park? Everything from monitoring the campground as campground host to helping to clean up litter around the lake and almost everything else imaginable in between. For example (the examples represent number of persons and hours on various occasions):

- Monitoring of Blue Bird Boxes: 3 people, 54 hours
- Clearing of Buckthorn: 43 people, 180 hours
- Clearing historic house foundation: 6 people, 54 hours
- Friends of Chester Woods projects: (bird house building, park clean up, etc), 19 people, 101 hours
- Various groups doing park cleanup: 19 people, 111 hours
- Office Assistance: 14 people, 48 hours
- General Maintenance: 45 people, 304 hours
- Prairie burns: 10 people, 55 hours
- Nature Trail development and plant/tree identification: 14 people, 60 hours
- Tree Planting: 6 people, 36 hours
- Kiosk and Park bulletin boards: 23 people, 94 hours
- Dam and nature hikes: 6 people, 18 hours
- Educational events: 2 people, 13.5 hours
- Day In The Park: 54 people, 320 hours
- Preparation of firewood: 12 people, 60 hours

These figures do not reflect numerous hours given by such groups as IBMer's and others doing prairie seed collection, school groups planting trees for an Arbor Day project, Summer of Service students doing various projects of planting, clean up, seed collection, tree watering, etc; nor does it reflect the hours expended by the volunteer campground hosts. The citing of numbers may sound rather tedious but the importance of volunteers to Chester Woods Park and to the Olmsted County Park System in general, is quite significant. With the assistance of volunteers many projects are accomplished and the overall usability of the park is greatly enhanced.

An increasingly significant group connected with Chester Woods is the Friends of Chester Woods (FOCW). The purpose of the FOCW is to assist with preservation of the natural setting, program implementation, and promotion of the Park. The group is very con-



Volunteer's girdling a large tree at Chester Woods Park.

cerned that the natural state of the park be maintained and that it continue to be available as a living educational resource for citizens to enjoy well into the future. Besides the lake and the miles of hiking trails, a significant feature of the park which is rather unique to this region, is the acres of restored prairie, which will hopefully be expanded. To see the prairie grasses and wild flowers glistening in the sun and gently blowing in the breeze is a sight to behold. The prairie nurtures a variety of birds and wild life and is a natural eliminator of noxious plants such as wild parsnips and thistles. If you haven't experienced the prairie come and participate in one of the prairie walks and you will learn of the multiple types of plants comprising a healthy prairie. Or participate in one of the bird hikes offered throughout the summer and learn how the prairie enhances the bird population. An additional project in which FOCW is involved is the Red-Headed Woodpecker Restoration Project, which you can read about elsewhere in this newsletter. The natural setting of the park greatly enhances the existence of multiple species of birds and wildlife. It is the hope and purpose of the FOCW that this be maintained at Chester Woods. If you are interested in being a part of the Friends of Chester Woods or volunteering at the park, please contact us at: chesterw1@myclearwave.net Volunteers are important and are greatly appreciated by the park system.

Dennis Tooley





Welcoming New Staff to Chester Woods Park

Olmsted County Parks welcomed Russ Jensen on January 7, 2008 as a new Park and Natural Resource Specialist. Russ replaces Kevin Crilly who accepted the Director/Park Naturalist position at Oxbow Park. His wife Joni, is employed at the Mayo Clinic. Russ has two boys. Cole is 18 and working fulltime, and searching for the right college to attend. Lucas is 16 and a junior at Stewartville High School. Russ came to Chester Woods Park from the Olmsted County Adult Detention Center. He had worked as a Sentence to Serve Crew Leader for 13 months, while a co-worker was in Iraq. He has been with the county a total of eight years. Prior to that he had worked at Hathaway Tree as a Foreman for 12+ yrs. He has many hobbies from coaching youth sports to training and raising Coonhounds and German shorthair Pointers. Russ and his family enjoy competing in Lumber-Jack sports and spending family time doing outdoor activities.

Josh Drilling



Olmsted County Parks staff welcomed Russ Jensen to the crew in January.



The Bison Review

EMERALD ASH BORER

Effective in 2008: Due to the potential threat of the infestation of the Emerald Ash Borer-Olmsted County Parks will no longer allow firewood to be brought onto park property. All firewood must be purchased on the premises.

Movement of firewood has been closely associated with the spread of several very damaging forest pests, including the emerald ash borer (EAB), Sirex wood wasp, gypsy moth, Asian long-horned beetle, and a number of other wood-boring insects. Decay and wood-stain fungi are also spread as well as the pathogens that cause Dutch elm disease, oak wilt, and sudden oak death.

Firewood is a prime candidate for movement of forest pests into new areas since, unlike other forest products such as nursery stock and lumber, the movement of firewood is largely unregulated because it relies heavily on individuals and small operations that come and go.

Our state forests and neighborhood trees are at par-

ticular risk from EAB. Minnesota has the third largest volume of ash timber in the nation and ash trees were used extensively as street trees to replace elms lost to Dutch elm disease in the '70s and '80s.

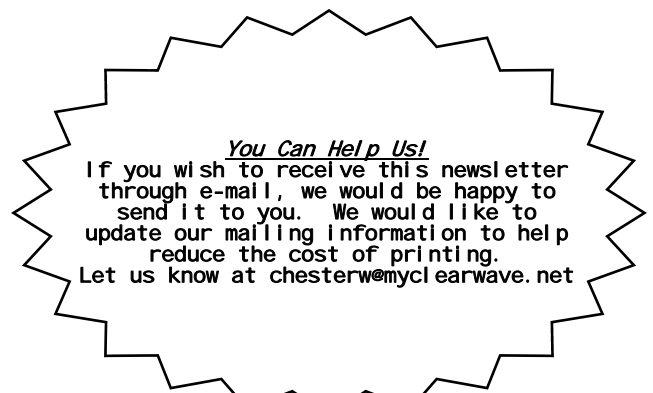
What Can I Do to Help "Slow the Spread"?

- EAB is a tiny bug that is devastating forests and neighborhood trees in Canada and several of Minnesota's neighboring states to the east. To date, EAB has killed more than 20 million ash trees and infested over 40,000 square miles in Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and parts of Canada.
- Approximately 50 percent of overnight visitors typically bring firewood to Minnesota state parks and state forest campgrounds annually, putting state lands at risk for pest infestations.
- Picture this: Insect pests spread at a rate of about 0.5 to 2 miles per year on their own. When they are carried on firewood, their spread

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Chester Woods Park
8378 Highway 14 East
Eyota, MN 55934
 Phone: 507-287-2624
 Email: chesterw@myclearwave.net



WE 'RE ON THE WEB!
 TO SEE THIS NEWSLETTER AND OTHER PARK
 INFORMATION, CHECK OUT
WWW.OLMSTEDPUBLICWORKS.COM

 **Bison Prairie Review Cont.**

(Continued from page 7)

rate jumps to 55 miles per hour.

- When camping or picnicking, purchase your firewood from the park or a local vendor. **Don't bring firewood from home.**
- Don't transport wood from your home area to your lake cabin or other recreation sites around the state. Buy your firewood locally from someone who harvests Minnesota-grown trees.

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Olmsted County Parks Firewood Sales Hours:



Chester Woods Park-

Gatehouse: bundled wood 8:00 am –8:00 pm - Wood Shed
Hours: 1:00 –1:30 pm, 5:00-5:30 pm, & 7:00-7:30 pm
Phone: 507-287-2624

Oxbow Park-

Nature Center hours 8:00 am-4:30 pm weekly
Notify Campground Host at campsite, or park staff at Nature Center.
 Phone: 507-775-2451

Oronoco Park-

Notify park staff at resident's house.

