

1980  
Annual Report  
Of the  
BERGEN COUNTY PARK COMMISSION  
Paramus, New Jersey

BERGEN COUNTY PARK COMMISSION, 1980

Paramus, New Jersey

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James A. McFaul, Executive Director

William L. Mann, Assistant Executive Director

Isabel Stark, Assistant County Counsel

George Malhiot, Assistant County Counsel

\*Commissioner Pehle died September 14

\*\*Appointed December 23 to fill Commissioner Pehle's unexpired term

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THE BUDGET PINCH  
WON'T HURT AS MUCH  
IF VISITORS ARE CAREFUL

As we entered the 1980's, we realized that budget limitations would continue for some time to be the dominant consideration for the Bergen County Park Commission as well as for most other government agencies.

The Park Commission has had to accept the reality that we cannot afford to maintain the service and standards of the days before the budget cap, and we have had to look for new approaches to park operation and maintenance. Also, we have had to enlist the public's understanding and cooperation.

One of our goals of the new decade is to get visitors to play a larger part in keeping our county parks neat and undamaged. Lovely now, our parks would be more lovely and a greater source of pride and joy without the littering and vandalism.

The Park Commission welcomes suggestions from the public and is most grateful for the valued volunteer service and contributions from organizations and individuals.

Despite the shortage of funds, cutbacks in personnel, and a severe drought, 1980 was by and large a good and busy and successful year for the Bergen County Park Commission and for park visitors.

The Park Commission--in cooperation with the Board of Chosen Freeholders--is pledged to do its best to get top value from available resources and to seek to provide maximum opportunity for enjoyment in the county parks.

JOHN BOMBACE  
Bergen County Park Commission President

#### DARLINGTON GOLF COURSE CONSTRUCTION IS COMPLETED

Construction of the upper nine holes at Darlington Bergen County Golf Course was completed in October and the public was invited to inspect the new nine, but play was postponed until the spring of 1981 because the prolonged drought adversely affected grass growth and it was felt the new seedlings were not ready to withstand play in the fall.

All of the nine new fairways are tree-lined and hilly and well trapped, making it important for golfers to place their shots on the fairway. The lower nine holes opened for play July 10, 1979. Comment on all 18 holes has been most favorable.

#### BALL FIELDS RECONSTRUCTED IN PALISADES PARK

Construction projects in 1980 included reconstruction of the football and baseball fields in the Palisades Park Area of Overpeck Park, 18 auxiliary tees at Rockleigh Golf Course, perimeter fencing of Darlington Park and paving of the park's pavilion area, paving of Darlington Golf Course's parking area and cart paths, paving of the visitors' center parking area at Campgaw Mountain Reservation, reinforcement of the railroad bridge in Van Saun Park, completion of the storage building at Overpeck Riding Center and erection of light poles around the paddock, and erection of a guard house at the Van Saun zoo.

#### A MEADOWLAND HABITAT FOR THE AVIARY

The Hackensack Meadowlands habitat was recreated in Van Saun Park's walk-through aviary. The zoo staff gathered marsh grasses, cattails, and birch trees from the meadowlands and planted them in the aviary to make the birds comfortable in their new setting. Birds commonly seen in the meadowlands were purchased for the exhibit, which was designed to be educational and memorable and to further the cause of meadowlands wildlife conservation.

Wildlife Center expansion and renovation was under way as the year ended.

#### STEPS ON BEHALF OF A LONGER TRAIL

A proposed 1 3/4-mile extension to Saddle River County Park's bicycle-pedestrian North Trail was brought in 1980 four steps closer to reality. The Park Commission met with Ridgewood residents from the proposed trail course area, proceeded with survey work, explored the possibility of a land exchange with the Village of Ridgewood, and hired an engineer to design a bridge spanning the Ho-Ho-Kus Brook near the confluence with the Saddle River. The extension would start with the bridge and end at the park's Wild Duck Pond Area in Ridgewood.

An architect was hired in 1980 to draw up plans and specifications for renovation of 32 comfort stations to make them more accessible to handicapped visitors.

An engineer was hired to draw up plans and specifications for new lighting at Breslin Field in Riverside Park North.

Plans and specifications were prepared for the paving of the play rink in Overpeck Park's Leonia North Area and for erection of a retaining wall and paving of a section of the path at Saddle River Park's Wild Duck Pond Area.

#### REVENUE OFFSETS 28.81 PER CENT OF THE BUDGET

Revenue taken in by the Park Commission and relayed to the County Treasurer totaled \$1,795,669, 28.81 per cent of the \$6,183,565 operating budget appropriated to the Park Commission by the Board of Chosen Freeholders.

Rockleigh Golf Course had the top revenue total: \$373,324. Other revenues were: Darlington Park (swimming season), \$345,952; Overpeck Golf Course, \$273,466; Overpeck Riding Center, \$147,263; Darlington Golf Course, \$137,482; Orchard Hills Golf Course, \$108,619; Park Commission registration and park-use permit fees, \$105,958; the ski center, \$92,708; the miniature railroad in Van Saun Park, \$68,078; miscellaneous revenues (including concession and vending machine returns), \$58,694; Saddle Ridge Horseback Riding Area, \$53,066; pony rides at Van Saun Park, \$15,720; tennis center at Van Saun Park, \$15,339.

#### THE PUBLIC FINDS A BALD EAGLE FASCINATING

At the Wildlife Center a bald eagle created great excitement. The United States Fish and Game Division selected the Wildlife Center to display a bald eagle which had been shot in Alaska and, permanently injured, could no longer survive in the wild. The eagle is on permanent loan to the Wildlife Center. There has been tremendous public interest.

The former mammal shelter was gutted and renovated for display of the eagle, and the mammals were moved into a new, larger shelter. A third outdoor shelter houses birds of prey.

In addition to 80 public programs at the Wildlife Center in 1980 and vacation film festivals, there were 864 specially scheduled programs for school classes and other groups. Naturalists also arranged guided hikes at Campgaw Mountain and Ramapo Valley Reservations and led many of the hikes themselves. They set up indoor natural science and live exhibits, took in injured creatures, answered questions, conducted nature workshops, and demonstrated maple syrup making.

#### THE ZOO BREEDING PROGRAM IS A GREAT SUCCESS

The aviary project was not the only 1980 innovation at the zoo in Van Saun Park. The zoo initiated a North American waterfowl exhibit in the zoo pond and renovated wild hoof stock exhibits for a more naturalistic effect. Adult hiking and birding courses were added to the nature education program.

The 1980 breeding program at the zoo resulted in the birth of ponies, calves, sheep, pigs, goats, deer, mouflon, and monkeys.

Three blue-necked ostrich chicks were acquired, and the public was able to watch them grow. This was the first species obtained as part of the zoo's new master plan.

Throughout 1980 the Van Saun Park zoo entered into agreements with other professional zoos for conservation and propagation of wildlife.

Van Saun Park zoo attendants counted 369,491 visitors in 1980.

Animal care was a major concern at the zoo, the Wildlife Center, and the Overpeck and Saddle Ridge horseback riding facilities.

#### A MAJOR JUMPING EVENT AT OVERPECK RIDING CENTER

Overpeck Riding Center made headlines with the Garden State Grand Prix May 18. This was the final major equestrian jumping event for consideration in selection of the 1980 United States Olympic Show Jumping Team. (Training and selection of Olympic teams continued despite the U.S. boycott of the Moscow Olympics.) The competition was the only Grand Prix event in New Jersey. This was the first time an equestrian event of this prestige and importance took place in Bergen County.

#### THE TRAIN AND PONIES ARE KEPT BUSY

At Van Saun Park there were 272,267 train rides in 1980 and 44,929 pony rides. Emergency work on the railroad track was required.

#### VANDALISM IS WIDESPREAD

Rampant vandalism throughout the park system necessitated extensive repair work, taking money and man hours that could have been utilized for park betterment. There was damage to comfort stations, picnic shelters, golf greens, fencing, alarm systems, sprinkler systems, motors, meters, fences, posts, rails, pumps, lights, lawns, doors, fountains, signs, waste containers, vehicles, roofs, ceilings, trees, flower beds, picnic tables, hydrants, plumbing, and glass. A room divider was torn down, and locks and chains and tools were stolen.

#### WOOD STOVES CONSERVE ENERGY

To conserve energy, wood-burning stoves were installed at Wood Dale Park and the Glen Rock and Dunkerhook Areas of Saddle River Park. Among other things installed in the parks in 1980 were playground equipment, drinking fountains, electric lines, heaters, hydrants, alarm systems, motors, sidewalks, fencing, curbs, signs, sliding doors, electric control boxes, shower heads, sewer grates, fans, and shingles.

Painting was a never-ending chore in the parks, as was equipment maintenance. Cabinets and shelves and similar items were constructed as needed throughout the park system.

#### PARKS NEED A LOT OF GROUNDWORK

Gardening and groundskeeping chores in 1980, as in other years, included planting, transplanting, digging, grading, raking, mowing, fertilizing, weeding, pruning, mulching, spraying, and snow removal. Dirt, manure, stone, gravel, and riprap were carted and spread. Trenches were dug. Deadwood was cleared away. Sand was spread on the Darlington Park beaches. Picking up visitors' litter was an all-the-time chore.

#### BERGEN HAS ITS OWN WALDEN POND

The 4-acre fishing and skating pond in Van Saun Park was named Walden Pond in honor of Alfred S. Walden, who was Park and Recreation Committee Chairman for the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders from 1961 through 1965, peak years of development for the Bergen County park system. He was a member of the Bergen County Park Commission in 1959 and 1960.

Excavation of the pond took place in 1962 during Walden's park and recreation chairmanship.

The pond is directly behind the property of the Central Unitarian Church, which asked the Park Commission to name the pond in Walden's honor. In granting the request, with the backing of the Board of Freeholders, the Park Commission stated that Freeholder Walden was exceptionally dedicated and devoted in his efforts on behalf of public parks for the people of Bergen County.