

NEW FACILITIES FURTHERED
WITH BOND-ISSUE FUNDS;
OPERATING-FUND PINCH
CAUSES PROBLEMS

Construction of the new walk-through aviary in the zoo at Van Saun Park was at the halfway mark as 1983 ended. Darlington Park renovation was a major 1983 project, and Overpeck Park sitework in Ridgefield Park was off to a good start.

Though capital-fund projects were furthered in 1983, severe budget limitations and resultant staff shortages made it difficult to operate and maintain the park system. Rising costs and rampant vandalism contributed to the budget pinch. The Park Commission was forced to make cutbacks in services, maintenance work, and repairs, but managed to keep all facilities open and available to the public. The public turned out in force. There were 10,000 more visits to the Park Commission fee facilities than in 1982, and other facilities were more crowded than ever.

OPEN-AIR AVIARY TAKING SHAPE

Construction of the new aviary began in September after razing of the old aviary, which had deteriorated to the point where it was considered unsafe. The new facility will have a boardwalk through the center of the exhibit. A footbridge on the walkway will cross the exhibit's free-form waterfowl pool. On one side of the aviary there will be a covered viewing area. Poles and cables will support the netting which will serve as the open-air roof. Vegetation and birds commonly found in the Hackensack Meadowlands habitat will be placed in the aviary when it is completed.

DIVING FACILITIES REPLACED

Darlington Park renovation, which started in 1982, was completed in 1983. The swimming season opened with a new diving platform and new diving boards and ladders, three new ramps with handrails to make the lower lake accessible to persons having handicaps, and new sand on the lower lake beaches. The three old handball courts were removed and replaced by new sheet asphalt courts with concrete backstops. A new retaining wall around the lower lake was completed. Barrier-free installations, begun in 1982, included rest-room facilities, two drinking fountains, and locker room showers.

SITE READIED IN RIDGEFIELD PARK

The Park Commission awarded a general development contract for the first stage of work on the site of the Ridgefield Park area of Overpeck Park. Also, a contract was awarded for design of the maintenance building. Work on the 21-acre site started in July. In the fall the site was graded, enriched with topsoil, and seeded, and base stone was placed for the park drive and parking area. The Bergen County Department of Public Works began basic work on construction of the entrance road to the south of the site, through Ridgefield Park.

Initial development of the park area will include restrooms, the maintenance building, and utility installations. Plans for the park also call for picnic groves, ball fields, and a children's playground. The park site borders on Overpeck Creek.

COUNTY GETS BACK A THIRD OF CURRENT OUTLAY

A third of the Park Commission's 1983 operating expenditure was offset by revenue from user fees and other sources. Revenue forwarded to the County Treasurer totaled \$2,280,648, which amounted to 33.54 per cent of the Park Commission's \$7,092,659 operating expenditure in 1983. Capital expenditures totaled \$2,581,580.

CONCESSION OPERATION AT RIDING AND TENNIS CENTERS

A deficit facility moved to the credit side of the County Treasury ledger when Overpeck Riding Center went to concession operation. The 5-year contract, effective July 1, 1983, calls for a \$63,120 annual rental payable in monthly installments.

Concession operation also went into effect at the tennis center in Van Saun Park. The rental received for the 1983 season was \$4,800, and there was an option for an additional season at that rental. The Park Commission had operated a full-service tennis center from the 1960 opening through the 1980 season, but services were not available in 1981 and 1982 because the Commission lacked sufficient funds for staffing. With concession operation, lessons and other services resumed.

The \$554,359 received from 27-hole Rockleigh Golf Course in 1983 was the Park Commission's highest revenue total in 1983. Darlington Golf Course turned in \$353,330, and Overpeck Golf Course \$345,518; each has 18 holes. Darlington County Park's swim season revenue totaled \$337,817.

Miscellaneous revenue, which included concession and vendor payments and unanticipated income, increased from \$63,641 in 1982 to \$171,397 in 1983--principally as a result of the change to concession operation at Overpeck Riding Center and the start of concession operation at the Van Saun Park tennis center. The sale of Overpeck Riding Center horses and stable equipment contributed to the increase.

Other revenue totals were: \$155,591, 9-hole Orchard Hills Golf Course; \$122,878, income from registrations, permit fees, and special use of park facilities; \$104,967, Campgaw Ski Center; \$68,858, the railroad at Van Saun Park; \$55,584, Overpeck Riding Center before concession operation; and \$10,349, pony rides at Van Saun Park.

BARRIER-FREE FACILITIES COMPLETED

Barrier-free installations throughout the park system were completed and inspected. All public comfort stations were made accessible to the handicapped. Three ramps with handrails were built from the beach into the lower swimming lake at Darlington Park to make the lake accessible to handicapped bathers.

There were also drinking fountain and shower installations in some parks for the handicapped.

ANIMAL-HOLDING COMPLEX NEARLY READY

The animal-holding complex at the zoo in Van Saun Park was nearing completion at the end of the year. There are two structures, one for winter housing of tender species and for the breeding program and the other for storage.

IMPROVEMENTS AT GOLF COURSES

New energy-efficient heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning systems and new windows were installed at Overpeck Golf Course. At Rockleigh Golf Course the furnace and chimney were replaced and a utility room was added to compensate for space lost to construction of barrier-free facilities. Asphalt paths were added at Darlington Golf Course.

Contracts were awarded for the design and construction of two bridges across the Sparkill at Rockleigh Golf Course, and repairs were made to the old deteriorating wooden bridges.

A new 25-foot bridge was built over the brook on Ramapo Valley Reservation's Waterfall Trail.

NORTH TRAIL EXTENSION PLANS GO TO STATE

In December the Park Commission sent to the New Jersey Department of Transportation, for review and approval, all data pertaining to the 1 3/4-mile extension of Saddle River Park's North Trail for bicyclists and pedestrians. Park Commission personnel surveyed the site, did the necessary field work and cross sections, designed the trail, and did the plottings for the bridge which will span Ho-Ho-Kus Brook. The architect's bridge design had already been submitted.

An easement was obtained from the owner of Ridgewood properties needed for development of the trail extension.

TENNIS COURTS RESURFACED AT FOUR PARKS

Tennis courts were resurfaced at Van Saun Park, Overpeck Park's Palisades Park Area, Riverside Park South, and Samuel Nelkin Park. The contract was awarded for court resurfacing at Saddle River Park's Glen Rock Area.

A soccer field at the south end of Overpeck Park's Leonia North Area was refurbished, and plans were initiated for refurbishing of the soccer field at the north end.

EXERCISE CIRCUIT TO PROMOTE FITNESS

Arrangements were completed for installation of a fitness circuit at Riverside Park's Joseph A. Carucci Jr. Area. There will be 18 exercise stations designed for a balanced fitness routine.

New Jersey Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans contributed \$2,500 toward the Parcourse project, and the Bergen County Park Commission matched the contribution. Park Commission employees will install the exercise equipment. Blueprints and signs for the circuit are provided by Blue Cross and Blue Shield.

COMFORT STATIONS, NEW AND REROOFED

Comfort stations were completed in '83 at the Van Saun Park zoo and Riverside Park South. Bids were sought for construction of a comfort station in Overpeck Park's Leonia South Area.

Roofs were replaced on comfort stations at both Riverside Park Areas, Saddle River Park's Wild Duck Pond and Rochelle Park Areas, Dahnert's Lake Park, and Samuel Nelkin Park.

Picnic shelter roofs were replaced at both Riverside Areas, Saddle River Park's Rochelle Park and Otto C. Pehle Areas, and Dahnert's Lake Park. Roofs were also replaced on the Orchard Hills Golf Course maintenance building and the manager's house at Darlington Park.

Maintenance garages at Van Saun Park and Riverside Park's South Area were under construction as the year ended.

SEWER, POND, AND LAKE PROJECTS

Construction of a gravity sanitary sewer was started in 1983 at the Wildlife Center. Darlington Park sewer installation plans and specifications were prepared. The Park Commission is awaiting the Mahwah Township decision on Darlington Avenue sewer disposition.

A contract was awarded for construction of an outlet structure at Campgaw Mountain Reservation's pond. The project will help retain the water in the pond, which is used as a water source for snow making during the ski season.

A contract for engineering and design work for a drainage facility for Darlington Park's lower lake was awarded in 1983. A new diving platform was designed for the upper swimming lake. Crushed stone was placed behind the lower lake gabion wall. Sand was moved from the lower lake bottom to the beach.

UPGRADING FOR A PRACTICE FAIRWAY

Fill dirt was trucked from a Paramus cemetery to Darlington Golf Course, to raise the grade for a projected practice fairway. Dirt was also trucked from Paramus to the site of the Riverside Park South maintenance garage.

Curbing was installed at Van Saun Park and at Riverside Park's South Area.

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS BUILD TO SUIT

Park Commission construction workers were kept busy with a wide variety of construction, installation, and repair jobs. Items built by Commission personnel in 1983 included zoo cages, a day camp security screen, new stairs to the Breslin Field press box, goose-dropping scoopers, a pole-light base, bulletin boards, a tool cabinet, a phone cabinet, lifeguard chairs, and a poolside shed for first aid and rescue gear.

Among facilities installed in 1983 by Park Commission crews were oil and gasoline tanks, doors, entrance gates, fans, time clocks, sign posts, compressor batteries, drains, electrical outlets and lines, light fixtures, water lines and mains, and plumbing equipment.

Repairs were made to picnic tables and benches, ruts and holes, roads, bicycle paths, drinking fountains and other equipment, bridge approaches, lifeguard rowboats, fences, doors, signs, fire extinguishers, thermostats, litter baskets, and assorted other facilities. The construction department did most of the major repairing, and minor repairs were usually taken care of at the park by foremen and attendants. Painting and staining work in the parks was never ending.

Vehicles of all types were serviced at the garage.

A number of playgrounds, ball fields, and games courts were econditioned. The archery range entrance way was graded.

Personnel shortages resulting from severe budget limitations affected park maintenance adversely. The parks were maintained as well as possible under the circumstances.

VANDALS TAKE A HEAVY TOLL

Facilities damaged by vandals included golf greens and other grass areas, emergency phones, comfort stations, roofs, gates, doors, windows, vehicles, gardens, lights, equipment of all kinds, fences, picnic tables and benches, posts and rails (ignited at one park), and picnic shelters. Attempts were made to derail the train at Van Saun Park. Litter and garbage were scattered. Spray paint defaced signs. Picnic tables, a golf car, trees, a swing, and a ski snow gun were among objects stolen.

WALDEN POND IS SPRUCED UP

The Park Commission and the County Mosquito Extermination Commission joined forces in dredging Walden Pond at Van Saun Park, to remove accumulated silt and debris and to level sand bars. Top-heavy willow trees at the edge of the lake were cut back to reduce the danger of toppling and to clear the way for dredging equipment.

GRANT PAYS FOR EVERGREEN PLANTING

Planting of evergreens at the Van Saun Park zoo area, Rockleigh Golf Course, and the Wildlife Center was financed by a \$12,800 grant from the United States Small Business Administration. The grant, part of a project to help the unemployed, was obtained through New Jersey's Green Acres Program.

A ROSE GARDEN FOR ZOO VISITORS

A new rose garden was planted in 1983 at the Van Saun Park Zoo. Tree work and garden and grass care were major Park Commission considerations. In addition to their work in the park system, Commission horticulture crews did landscaping work at County historic sites.

The herb garden beside the Wildlife Center exhibit hall was expanded in 1983.

600-GALLON AQUARIUMS COMPLETED

Two Wildlife Center 600-gallon aquariums' construction was completed. Freshwater fish were placed in one tank. Saltwater species were to be placed in the other tank in 1984, after several months' curing of the water to insure survival of the fish.

SYRUP MAKING AND SHEEP SHEARING ARE POPULAR

Demonstrations of maple syrup making at Ramapo Valley Reservation and sheep shearing at the zoo in Van Saun Park were very popular Park Commission events. Five public demonstrations of syrup making were conducted in March, and 183 weekday demonstrations were conducted for school classes and other groups despite bad-weather cancellations. The zoo's sheep shearing demonstrations, conducted for three days, were attended by many school classes.

The Wildlife Center, which is home base for Park Commission naturalists, had approximately 350,000 visitors in 1983. The zoo in Van Saun Park had approximately 500,000 visitors during the year.

COMMISSION PROGRAMS' ATTENDANCE TOTALS 53,185

Of the 1,372 programs scheduled in 1983 by Bergen County Park Commission naturalists, 155 were public events and the rest were specially arranged for groups, principally school classes. The Wildlife Center was host to 879 of the specially arranged programs, and the other 338 were at Campgaw Mountain Reservation or Ramapo Valley Reservation. There were 140 public programs at the Wildlife Center, 15 (mostly guided hikes) at the Reservations. Attendance for all these events totaled 35,899.

In 1983 the zoo at Van Saun Park presented 270 educational programs with live exhibits and had 300 guided tours of the zoo. Most of the programs were conducted in school classrooms. A new "Animal Kingdom" program was added for kindergarten and primary pupils. Program and tour attendance totaled 17,286 in 1983.

Total attendance for all Commission programs was 53,185.

A VARIETY OF SPECIAL EVENTS

Events scheduled by the Park Commission in 1983 included a torch-light skiing demonstration by ski school instructors and Ski Patrol members, a Ski Center costume contest, orienteering workshops, a bird banding demonstration, a demonstration of origami (Japanese paper folding), a wood-carving demonstration, school vacation fun festivals with film and animal programs, a tropical fish show, flower shows, a bicycle safety and maintenance workshop, and nature workshop classes. In 1983 there were ten guided hikes and walks; those having special emphasis featured birds, insects, mushrooms, nocturnal life, pond life, and foliage. A canoe-kayak workshop and a fishing demonstration were held.

CIVIL WAR ENCOUNTERS ARE STAGED

Simulated Civil War battles were fought in April at Campgaw Mountain Reservation and in September at Saddle River Park's Dunkerhook Area. The encounters and encampments were among events in observance of Bergen County's tricentennial year. Enactments were staged in cooperation with the Park Commission by the 22nd New Jersey Volunteers--with participation by many units of the United Armies of the North and South Inc.

VOLUNTEERS HELP WILDLIFE CENTER AND ZOO

Volunteers helped out at the Wildlife Center and the Van Saun Park Zoo in 1983. At the Wildlife Center, volunteers helped prepare the animals' food and clean the animals' quarters, helped maintain the nature walk, helped with other grounds maintenance, and assisted naturalists with workshop preparation and cleanup. At the Van Saun Park zoo, five volunteers helped with the feeding and grooming of the zoo's domestic animals. The zoo volunteers were members of the Van Saun Park Zoo 4-H Animal Science Club.