

1984

A NEW PARK AREA  
IS TAKING SHAPE;  
THE ZOO IS EXPANDED

Overpeck County Park's Ridgefield Park Area and Van Saun County Park Zoo aviary and animal care facilities were the major park projects under development in 1984.

LAYING THE GROUNDWORK IN RIDGEFIELD PARK

Construction of the entrance road and bridge leading to the Ridgefield Park recreation facility was begun in 1984 by the Bergen County Department of Public Works. Basic grading and landscaping of the recreation section and preliminary construction of the park drive and parking areas were 1984 Park Commission projects in the developing area. Commission Engineering Department personnel did field work for future development of the park area. The first phase of development will include what is to be called the great lawn (for relaxation and casual play), picnic tables, the comfort station and maintenance building, utility installations, and access facilities.

THE WALK-THROUGH AVIARY IS NEARLY COMPLETED

Construction of the Van Saun Park Zoo's new walk-through aviary was completed in 1984 except for the final touches. Birds will fly freely in the 4,000-square-foot exhibit area, which is rigged like a circus tent and has an open-air roof of netting. A covered viewing area will enable visitors to look into the enclosure from outside. The boardwalk through the center of the exhibit area has a footbridge over a free-form pool that gives the effect of a natural pond. A simulated meadowlands environment is planned.

ZOO ANIMAL FACILITIES ARE IMPROVED

The zoo's animal-holding complex was completed. There are two structures, one for winter housing of tender species and for the breeding program and the other for storage. The Park Commission's Engineering and Construction Departments, working jointly, began conversion of the barn into an animal care and treatment center. New outdoor holding cages were constructed, and the monkey shelter was renovated. New sheep and pig enclosures were provided. New to the zoo in 1984 were an iguana and toucan exhibit, a macaw exhibit, a rhea exhibit, and a white-nose coati exhibit. In cold weather, iguanas and toucans are moved indoors and their outdoor exhibit area is taken over by birds of prey.

OUR FIRST FITNESS COURSE OPENS

The park system's first fitness course was opened at the Joseph A. Carucci Jr. Area of Riverside County Park. The 18-station fitness circuit is designed for a balanced exercise routine. Blue Cross and Blue Shield contributed \$2,500 toward the installation and provided circuit blueprints and signs.

A purchase order for a walking fitness course for seniors was processed in 1984. This circuit will be installed in 1985 in Overpeck Park's Leonia North Area. Two grants were obtained for the project, each for \$2,500. One grant is from Wells Fargo and the other from the Hackensack Health and Hospital Foundation.

## SALTWATER FISH SWIM IN WYCKOFF

The saltwater fish aquarium at the Wildlife Center in Wyckoff went into operation in 1984. It is one of two 600-gallon aquariums flanking the entrance to the main exhibit room. The other aquarium contains freshwater fish. Fish species for the tanks are collected by Wildlife Center personnel. Other live exhibits added in 1984 included a new frog tank, a golden eagle, and two bobcats. Creatures in the rustic outdoor shelters have some disability which would impair their ability to survive in the wild.

## GETTING SET TO EXTEND THE NORTH TRAIL

As 1984 ended, final arrangements were being made for acquisition of two small land parcels needed to complete the site for the 9,000-linear-foot extension of Saddle River County Park's North Trail. Plans and specifications have been completed, and necessary approval has been received from the State Departments of Transportation and Environmental Protection and the United States Army Corps of Engineers. Bids for development will be received in 1985.

On completion of the trail extension, bicyclists will be able to follow the trail through the linear streamside park from Williams and Union Streets, Fair Lawn to the Wild Duck Pond Area in Ridgewood. The park's Dunkerhook and Glen Rock Areas also have access to the trail.

## 28 PER CENT OF OPERATING BUDGET OFFSET BY REVENUE

The Park Commission's 1984 operating budget, allocated by the Board of Freeholders, was \$7,483,051. The Commission forwarded to the County Treasurer revenue totaling \$2,102,570, thus offsetting 28.10 percent of the operating budget.

Revenue from Commission-operated fee facilities totaled \$1,814,333. The 27-hole Rockleigh Golf Course took in \$540,077, Overpeck Golf Course \$345,518, Darlington Golf Course \$347,862, Darlington County Park (swim season) \$219,481, Orchard Hills Golf Course \$155,591, Campgaw Mountain Ski Center \$129,514, and the Van Saun Park railroad \$69,123.

The \$167,046 in 1984 miscellaneous revenue includes concession rental payments (the largest of which was \$63,120 from Overpeck Riding Center), vendor payments, and unanticipated revenue. Fees paid for park-use permits and Park Commission registration totaled \$121,191.

## PROCESSING THE EXPENDITURES TAKES A LOT OF WORK

Park Commission expenditures chargeable to 1984 totaled \$12,388,488.39, including \$7,343,358.87 in current funds expenditures, \$1,115,381.20 in bond fund expenditures, \$3,733,918.57 in trust fund expenditures, \$187,224.37 chargeable to 1984 but payable in 1985, and \$14,613 in unemployment insurance.

All expenditures involved processing by Park Commission personnel--considerable processing in many cases. A large percentage of employees in the office and in the field are involved to some extent in expenditure transactions. The Finance, Payroll, Purchasing, Engineering, Registration, and Permit Departments handle great quantities of paperwork involved in expenditures.

In 1984 the Commission Purchasing Department processed 4,379 vouchers for payment. The purchasing process includes research on products and materials, preparation of specifications and bid and quotation sheets, compilation of price comparison sheets, bid openings, preparation and mailing of purchase orders, notifying unsuccessful bidders, and endless record keeping and filing.

Engineering Department procedures for contract construction and concession and vendor contracts are also very complex; specifications for one construction contract may be more than 100 pages long.

A 26-area park system requires widely varied goods and equipment. The Purchasing Department's shopping list includes, among many other items, tractors, mowers, trucks, front-end loaders, lumber, electrical materials, equipment parts, picnic tables, tools, landscaping and gardening materials, sign-making supplies, coffee shop equipment, animal feed, brush chippers, uniforms, flags, baseball field clay mix, chlorine for swimming lakes, beach sand, printed forms, office supplies, paper products such as toilet tissue and towels, paint, furnishings, office machines, heating oil, gasoline, and playground equipment.

#### BUDGET LIMITATIONS PERSIST

Economy was the byword again in 1984. All County agencies continued with austerity measures necessitated by the State budget cap.

Despite severe budget limitations and resultant staff shortages, all park areas were available for public enjoyment, albeit with some adjustments in schedules. The four golf courses closed 15 days earlier than in preceding years. Darlington Park's swim season, which traditionally has started Memorial Day weekend, opened June 16 in 1984; the park was open only on weekends in October and closed Oct. 28. Previously, Darlington Park had closed for the season Nov. 30 and was open daily in October. The railroad in Van Saun Park, which formerly closed only on Mondays and rainy days, was closed Mondays and Tuesdays in 1984.

#### PARK FACILITIES ARE UPGRADED

Renovation of the soccer field at Overpeck Park's Leonia North Area was completed in 1984. Other projects completed in 1984 included renovation of tennis courts at the Joseph A. Carucci Jr. Area of Riverside Park; construction of two bridges over the Sparkill at Rockleigh Golf Course; extension of Darlington Golf Course's asphalt cart paths, installation of fencing at the tees, and clearing of brush along the fairways; extension of asphalt paths at Overpeck Golf Course; installation of sanitary sewers at the Wildlife Center and Overpeck Park's Leonia South Area; construction of a shed at Ramapo Valley Reservation for the annual demonstrations of maple syrup making; construction of a storage building in Riverside Park South; dredging of Walden Pond in Van Saun Park and moving of the silt to various low areas; drainage work at Darlington Golf Course; and reconstruction of the cofferdam at Campgaw Mountain County Reservation and installation of new sluice gates there.

Plans and specifications for reconstruction of Darlington Park rest rooms were prepared in 1984, and work was under way on rest room construction in Overpeck Park's Leonia South Area.

Other projects in varying stages of development as 1984 ends include installation of culverts doubling as bridges at Darlington Golf Course; construction of a new maintenance building at Van Saun Park (nearly completed); air-conditioning of the Wildlife Center exhibit hall; construction of concession batting cages at Riverside Park's Joseph A. Carucci Jr. Area; and repairs to tennis courts in several parks.

#### PROGRAMS PRESENTED BY THE WILDLIFE CENTER AND ZOO

The Wildlife Center and Van Saun Park Zoo had busy schedules of public and specially arranged programs.

At the Wildlife Center there were 928 specially arranged programs for school classes and organizations and 159 public programs. Ramapo Valley and Campgaw Mountain County Reservations were utilized for 384 specially arranged programs and 19 public programs, chiefly guided hikes. The 1984 program total for the Wildlife Center and the reservations was 1,490. Special activities included school vacation festivals, workshop classes, and a variety of demonstrations. Most popular were demonstrations of maple syrup making at Ramapo Valley Reservation on 18 March weekdays for school classes and organizations and on a Saturday and a Sunday for the public.

The favorite zoo project was a sheep-shearing demonstration followed by a wool spinning and weaving demonstration. Permits for the 12 showings were all reserved way ahead, principally by school classes.

Van Saun Park Zoo presented 615 educational programs with live specimens in 1984 for school classes and organizations. Participants ranged in age from preschool to senior citizen. Most of the programs were conducted in school classrooms. There were 70 guided tours of the zoo, scheduled between May and September. Zoo tour and program attendance totaled 23,688.

#### THOUSANDS OF PERMITS AND REGISTRATIONS ARE PROCESSED

In addition to permits issued at the Wildlife Center and zoo, approximately 5,000 park-use permits were issued at Park Commission headquarters. Ninety per cent were issued for group picnics, the rest for other group activities and visits and for camping, model-boat launching, archery, and use of ball fields and track and field facilities.

Park Commission resident registrations totaled 26,408 in 1984. These entitled 57,379 residents (including listed eligible members of each registrant's family) to resident rates at Park Commission golf courses (if age 12 or older), at Campgaw Mountain Ski Center, and at Darlington County Park. (Darlington Park has an entrance fee during swimming season.) Each of these 57,379 residents received his own card.

#### STAFFING THE PARK SYSTEM

The Park Commission started 1984 with 268 permanent employees and ended the year with 257. February's 270 was the highest total. October and November each had a 253 total, the lowest for the year.

Personnel Department staffers were kept busy with payroll, employee records, job applications and interviews, vacation and sick time, health benefits and claims, injury claims, compensatory time off, retirements, union negotiations, staff meetings, and report sessions.

Seasonal jobs included life guard and ski lift work and train operation.

Seasonal preparations in the parks included getting the ski lifts and snow machines ready, filling the swimming lakes and adding sand to the beaches, preparing for ice skating on designated lakes and flooded rinks, and transfer of tender zoo species.

Golf courses and other park system facilities required considerable landscaping and horticultural work in the warmer seasons. Some of the chores were aerating, raking, fertilizing, seeding, planting, pruning, mowing, spraying, cultivating, mulching, weeding, and leaf and debris removal.

#### FIELD CREWS DID A WIDE VARIETY OF JOBS

Among the 1984 installation and construction projects in the parks were retaining walls, drainage systems, electric and water lines, fences, paving, an oil burner, duct work, pumps, exhaust fans, curbing, lighting, roofing, alarm systems, gates, barricades, doors, seats, cages, picnic tables, bulletin boards, shelves, signs, garbage containers, play and exercise equipment, and trail markers.

Crews were kept busy with repairs, repainting, and replacement. Flooding at Ramapo Valley Reservation washed away a bridge, necessitating replacement.

There was considerable damage, mostly caused by vandals, to comfort stations, fences, doors, windows, gates, plantings, picnic tables, signs, scoreboards, telephones, alarms, garbage containers, shelters, and play and exercise equipment. A shelter was burned. The train was derailed. A ski center chair lift, a back hoe, and a hiking trail footbridge were among large items damaged.

Stolen objects included a mower, picnic tables, signs, and bulletin boards.

#### UTILITY COSTS ARE IN SIX DIGITS

Park Commission utility bills for 1984 totaled \$282,482, \$4,785 more than in 1983. Suppliers' charges were as follows: Hackensack Water Company, \$17,845; New Jersey Bell, \$24,284; Public Service Gas and Electric, \$130,414; Rockland Electric, \$95,574; Suburban Propane, \$2,843; and municipal utilities, \$11,522.