

**WT&T
PROFILE**

Public Park Management



CITIZENS PAY \$16 EACH FOR USE OF PUBLIC PARKS

Approximately 35,000 parks serve 216.5 million U.S. citizens. They do it at a cost of \$3.5 billion per year (1975 U.S. Bureau of Census), or roughly \$16 per person per year. Parks have to be the best value in the realm of recreation at this cost.

Weeds Trees & Turf surveyed 1,000 park managers in August and received 210 responses. The names were selected at random from the approximately 3,500 park managers receiving the magazine.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) counts 291 Federal parks, 3,804 state parks, and 31,235 municipal, county, and city parks. One park director may supervise a number of parks, in fact each park may not have its own full-time maintenance person. In 1970, the

NRPA reported that less than 21,000 professionals worked full-time for the 31,235 municipal, county and city parks. Many local parks are maintained as a part of the whole county or municipal program.

Out of NRPA's 18,000 members, 5,000 are known to be managers of parks. If you assume that each state and Federal park has one manager, a figure of 4,095 managers is obtained. Making another assumption that cities with more than 10,000 residents and all counties have one person directly or indirectly in charge of parks, there are another 4,260 park managers. Consequently, a 'bottom line figure' of 8,355 park managers in the U.S. is obtained.

The 210 persons answering the survey had 78 different titles, from

park division chief to landscape foreman. It is as if governments try to defy anyone to label all or part of them with one title.

The respondents manage parks averaging 1,064 acres (median 336) with an average budget of \$268,000 (median \$260,000). Sixty-five percent of the respondents indicated their budgets are too low to do the job desired by them. An increase of 35 percent was the average needed to meet their level of satisfaction. One park manager said he needed twice as much money to do his job properly.

One way park managers combat low budgets is by doing much of the contract work themselves, such as drainage and irrigation installation, sod installation, pest control, and tree care.

Jobs performed by the greatest number of park managers and their crews are seeding, fertilization, mowing, planting and care of ornamentals, and tree trimming. The types of work hired out most are tree trimming, irrigation installation, and drainage installation, although less than half the managers contracted for these services.

Jobs not done either by outside contractors or park workers are tree feeding (20 percent), sod installation (28 percent), aquatic weed control (43 percent), sprinkler system installation (35 percent), and drainage system installation (26 percent).

Park managers fertilize roughly 40 percent of their turf area and irrigate an average of 30 percent (median 5 percent). The irrigation figures suggest that small numbers irrigate large portions of parks and large numbers irrigate small portions or none at all.

Eighty percent of the respondents said their park has baseball fields, 65 percent have soccer and football fields, and 57 percent have lakes or pools.

Managers reported an average of 12 persons on staff performing turf and tree care. This figure is high when compared to NRPA data for state and local parks which counts 133,000 personnel at 35,000 parks (about four persons per park).

The two largest expenditures for

Annual expenditures by park managers.

Type	Average	Percent Responding	Projected to 8,355
Equipment	\$15,291	92	\$117.5 million
Sod	\$ 3,830	63	\$ 20.2 million
Seed	\$ 1,150	87	\$ 8.4 million
Ornamentals	\$ 7,870	90	\$ 59.2 million
Chemicals	\$ 3,982	89	\$ 29.6 million
Total			\$234.9 million

Work performed by staff or contracted out.

Job	Done By Staff	Done By Outside Contractor	Not Done
Seeding	95%	5%	3%
Sod Installation	62%	13%	28%
Turf Fertilization	91%	4%	6%
Turf Pest Control	79%	4%	6%
Mowing of Turf	98%	2%	1%
Planting of Ornamentals	92%	16%	3%
Caring for Ornamentals	94%	3%	2%
Tree Feeding	76%	3%	20%
Tree Pest Control	79%	14%	13%
Tree Trimming	88%	21%	1%
Aquatic Weed Control	45%	6%	43%
Care of Athletic Fields	77%	14%	15%
Sprinkler System Installation	39%	37%	35%
Drainage System Installation	52%	26%	26%

*Respondents checked more than one column.

Public Parks

parks are equipment and ornamentals. Managers spend an average of \$15,000 for equipment and \$8,000 for ornamentals. They also spend an average per year of \$4,000 for chemicals, \$3,800 for sod, and \$1,150 for seed. Most purchasing is from local dealers (67-78 percent). Most purchasing for chemicals takes place in February through April, with very little chemical purchased in November or December. Equipment purchasing is done primarily in January, February, and July. Equipment purchases are not as heavily weighted to months as with chemicals. May, June

and December are the slow months for chemical purchasing.

Averages projected to 8,355 park managers give annual expenditures of \$235 million for equipment, chemicals and supplies. This is a 'bottom line' estimate of expenditures based upon a very conservative estimate of the number of park managers. It also doesn't take into consideration extremely large purchases by Federal and state parks, especially those with golf courses.

WTT

Equipment operated by park staff.

Equipment	Percentage Responding	Mean Response
Backhoes	46%	1.4
Chain Saws	91%	7.0
Flexible Line Trimmer	45%	3.3
Front End Loader	75%	1.8
Flail Mowers	55%	2.2
Rotary Mowers	89%	7.1
Reel Mower	53%	4.0
Sickle Bar	39%	1.9
Small Trim Mowers	67%	8.1
Compressed Air Sprayer	32%	2.4
Complete Sprayer with Pump and Tank	69%	2.0
Small Push-Type Spreader	67%	3.2
Large, Truck Mounted Spreader	42%	1.5
Sweepers	40%	2.0
Less than 60 H.P. Tractors	77%	4.7
More than 60 H.P. Tractors	38%	2.9
Utility Vehicles	70%	6.7

Months equipment is purchased.

	Chemicals*	Equipment*
January	5%	13%
February	12%	12%
March	16%	7%
April	16%	8%
May	9%	5%
June	8%	4%
July	6%	10%
August	8%	8%
September	9%	9%
October	6%	8%
November	3%	7%
December	2%	5%

* Percentages are percentages of all responses which occurred in the given month.

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BROOKLYN PARK: GOLD MEDAL WINNER

"It used to be that a park got what was left over from a city's budget. Today, that is not always true. People are demanding more and better athletic complexes all the time."

With that statement, Lloyd Olsen, park superintendent at Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, expresses the commitment that the city administration has made to supply residents with a quality park system.

Olsen is starting his twelfth year as superintendent for Brooklyn Park. When he first came to the city in 1967, it had 100 acres of park land, two buildings, and hardly any equipment. Now, the city has 881 acres of parks and enough equipment to complete a park once the rough grading is done.

Brooklyn Park is just northwest of Minneapolis. One thing the city does not do over the 27 square miles it occupies, is sprawl. Brooklyn Park is being copied around the United States for its planned community development. The park system is a prime example.

The city has 881 acres of parks for its 40,000 residents. This meets minimum standards set by the National Recreation and Parks Association. Brooklyn Park will reach a popu-

lation of 120,000 according to Director of Parks and Recreation, Dennis Palm. By that time, he plans to have 2,000 acres of park developed for the residents.

Brooklyn Park passed a \$600,000 bond issue in 1967. With part of that backing them, they applied for a federal grant, received nearly \$300,000, and bought a par three golf course and quite a few other pieces of park land around the city.

In 1972, residents passed another bond issue for \$200,000. Olsen states, "Through those two bond issues, we've been able to apply for various federal and state grants and we've managed to turn that money into more than two million dollars worth of acquisition and development. "We've made the bond issue work for us." The city also has a clause requiring a developer to turn 10% of the land he is developing, or an equal amount of money, over to the city parks department.

Brooklyn Park has twenty-eight developed parks. They range in size from one acre to more than a hundred. "We refer to anything over 25 acres as a community park," says Olsen. "Anything under that is a neighborhood park.

"Neighborhood parks will normally have a warming house, playground equipment, hockey rink, skating rink and one or two ball fields, depending upon its size. What we try to do is put a park within walking distance of every child in the developed areas."

Palm's and Olsen's efforts have not gone unnoticed. In 1967, the Parks and Recreation Department received the National Gold Medal Award from the National Sports Foundation, the highest such award given. They have put the finishing touches on their new acquisitions and are applying for the award again this year.

The parks are popular with the residents. This summer, they were the scene of over 4000 softball games. And, the park staff drags every field before every game!

Olsen has a full time staff of eight. This summer he built up to 33 people. He is planning to keep 12 through this winter. "We get a lot of college students," he says. "I've been fortunate in that I get some who come back throughout college. They know the ropes. That's one thing wrong with part-time people. You get somebody green and by the time you get him trained, he's ready to go back to school."

All park construction and maintenance, except heavy grading is performed by the maintenance staff. Equipment includes 7 tractors, 3 rotary mowers, 2 self-propelled mowers, 14 trucks and 4 pick-up trucks, plus all the other equipment it takes to maintain quality turf and trees.

River Park, for example, has twenty-six acres along the Mississippi River and its major use is as a picnic facility in the summer. It has two softball fields and a skating rink for winter. All of the parks have playground equipment. River Park is known to the kids as "Rocket Park" because of a very large slide that has the steps in the shape of a rocket.

Another park that Olsen says is maintained strictly for picnics has playground equipment spread throughout the area to distribute the wear. There are also some ponds



Department found an artesian well that supplies steady water.

Brooklyn Park

that they dredged for children to swim in.

The parks are well landscaped as evidenced by the many varieties of trees. The Parks Department has three tree nurseries located throughout the city totaling about 55 acres. Species in the nursery include ash, maple, hackberry, linden, and some oaks. Olsen estimated that, two years ago, he had \$150,000 worth of young trees in the nurseries. He doesn't transplant the trees until they reach about a 4-inch diameter. Other-

wise, kids damage them when they play around them.

The Parks Department has saved money in developing the parks by using the city engineering department. "When we talked to consulting engineers for planning the parks system and found out how much they wanted to do it, we decided to see if maybe we could just as well use our own engineering department," Olsen says. "It's worked out very well. We've managed to stretch our money a long way by doing our own planning end of it, having the engi-

neering staff draw the grade plans and so forth."

The Parks Department has qualified management. Director Palm graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1963 with a Master's Degree in Parks and Recreation Administration. He accepted the position in Brooklyn Park in 1965. His position involves development of policies, programs, and facilities to meet the city's needs.

Assistant Director Steve Roe graduated from the University of Minnesota also, in 1973, with a Bachelor's degree in Parks and Recreation Administration. His responsibilities include planning, evaluating, and overseeing all phases of the recreation programs.

Recreation programs include soccer. The season is just winding up. When hockey comes into season, the department will maintain 42 skating rinks.

Winter kill is a major problem when you get that far north. "I try to take my grass into the winter just as healthy as I can," stresses Olsen. He fertilizes the park turf in spring and fall. "We take soil samples and send them to the University of Minnesota for analysis. Then we apply what they recommend."

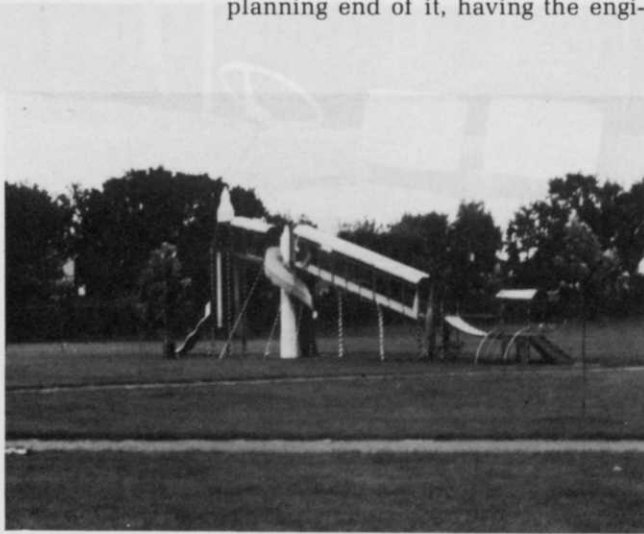
"I also work on the basis that if I keep my grass healthy and cut it right, I won't get a big disease problem." The Parks Department does not follow a preventative disease program, but it does spray if disease becomes a problem. Trees are watched closely for any symptoms. An outbreak of Dutch Elm disease is anticipated with a sanitation program.

The golf course is irrigated. The rest of the park area receives enough rainfall. This year rainfall has been especially abundant.

Olsen is treasurer of the Minnesota Park Supervisors Association. The association has been active in the state for the past one and one-half years. "It has been our hope through this organization, to professionalize our work," Olsen states. He feels that the association has filled a void, allowing park supervisors now to share their knowledge in solving common problems.

Utilizing available resources to the fullest in a program of planned development has worked for the Brooklyn Park Recreation and Parks Department.

Ron Morris



This piece of playground equipment has changed the name of River Park. The slide in "Rocket Park" is popular among the younger residents of Brooklyn Park.



The Parks Department has purchased this farm and will return it to its "turn-of-the-century" state.

MEMORIAL PARK: FARMLAND TO FUNLAND

Fran Leusner has the job of providing recreational and other services for the 20,000 residents of Cinnaminson, New Jersey, an eastern suburb of Philadelphia. As superintendent of public works, Leusner wan-



Above: Costs were cut nearly in half by having the work performed within the city's work force. Here Cinnaminson Public Works men take grade shots. **Right:** An asphalt bike path and jogging path follow side by side. **Below:** The baseball field, ready for its first game.



ted to establish a convenient and useful park for the community of single family homes. Forty-four acres of farmland in the 7½ sq. mi. township were purchased for conversion into a park facility.

"We had to excavate the entire area and put in roads, parking lots, baseball fields, football/soccer fields, an irrigation system, water fountains, a bike path, a jogging path, tennis and basketball courts, and all the turf and trees required to make the park attractive," says Leusner.

Today, Memorial Park in Cinnaminson has handsome gardens and the pond may soon provide fishing and canoeing to residents. Since much of the work was done by city work crews, the entire project cost only about \$500,000 against an estimated \$950,000 had the work been contracted out.

Maintenance of the park is also integrated into the city programs, but Leusner estimates that he has five or six men working at the park every day. He has a park foreman who supervises the maintenance efforts at Memorial.

When the park was first prepared for planting, Leusner applied a mixture of 50 percent municipal sludge with an equal amount of composted leaf mulch and spread it over the entire area. He had made arrangements with the local waste treatment facility to acquire all the wastes for use in this manner. The state has since halted his efforts but steps are being taken to work the matter out.

Leusner now acquires manure from the riding stables nearby and mixes it with the leaves for winter application throughout the park.

Then, in April, he applies a 10-6-4, 50 percent organic fertilizer to the park grounds. They are given a light shot in summer, and fertilized again in the fall. A preemergence crabgrass preventer is applied every spring. The combination soccer/football fields and baseball fields receive selective herbicides as needed. Leusner plans to institute a complete program of O.M. Scott & Sons products next year.

Most of the turf in the park is K-31 fescue. The baseball infield was sod-

Memorial Park



Extensive landscaping was done around a sandbox for small children.

ded with Merion Kentucky bluegrass. The infield is reseeded every year. The outfield is seeded on an as needed basis. Leusner reseeds the combination football/soccer fields every year, also.

Trees in the park are mulched twice a year and watered regularly. A quick coupler irrigation system provides a ready source of water.

Leusner recently switched to S&D Products Eezy Gro Pakets to fertilize the trees. The fertilizer is slow release, applied 8-10 inches around the young trees and a little deeper around the larger trees. The trees shouldn't need additional applications for three years.

Trees in the park include Bradford pear, crab, cherry, Norway and Australian spruce, and white pine. Leusner maintains a nursery and rents a tree spade for transplanting.

When the park was first constructed, most of the trees were brought in bare root, even though plans called for balled and burlapped. Less than one-fourth were. The actual cost was \$8000 against an original estimate of \$55,000.

The trees are sprayed with insecticide routinely. Japanese beetle and scale insects are the major concerns in Memorial Park:

The county sprays the pond for mosquitoes, but Leusner tests once a week for larvae to make sure it doesn't get out of hand. There are fish in the pond now and that does help mosquito control somewhat.

Equipment for maintaining the park is integrated with that of the city. Leusner does have two large diesel Ford tractors and a Farmall equipped with a mower. Mowing units include a Mott and a 72-inch rotary. He also has a gang unit but it is seldom used except as a backup.

Budget figures are hard to break out in a situation where park management is integrated into the city budget. Leusner estimates that he gets about \$5000 for fertilizer and seed.

He puts a bid out in March and then purchases as needed. He also purchases and applies lime according to soil tests, which are performed every year.

Community support for the park is tremendous, Leusner says. "It's a masterpiece as far as the people are concerned. They love it." **WTT**



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