

2017 Friends of Lapham Peak – Annual Property Manager’s Report

Dear Friends of Lapham Peak members,

Just like every other year at Lapham Peak, staff have been busy and this year has gone by faster than ever. As it has always been, we would not have been as successful if it were not for the efforts of the Friends of Lapham Peak and all our selfless volunteers.

Last winter’s ski season saw a large growth in volunteer labor to support snowmaking. Nearly a dozen volunteers assisted staff with covering shifts to make as much snow as possible when conditions allowed. Their efforts were considerable and truly appreciated; staff is looking forward to working with those who return and any new volunteers that are interested in helping this winter. Although the winter was above average for temperature and below average for snowfall, we were fortunate that there was no extreme weather and the man-made snow survived until the Birkie. It did make for an interesting Lapham Loppet with warm temperatures and mist in the air.

The year began with the Friends Group taking over as the organizer/host role of the annual Candlelight Ski/Hike in January. The event introduced the new voucher system which worked very well to control the numbers that showed up to attend, keeping the event safe for everyone and protecting the intimacy of the event for those that participated.

Spring Burn season went very well but the end was emotional for many of us since Property staff will no longer be able to conduct burns. There is hope for burning to continue which will certainly protect the efforts of Mike and his crew, however being able to do it ourselves was always the most rewarding part of working at Lapham Peak, especially after a busy winter. We also began a new chapter in restoration thanks to Dan and Melissa Jarecki who began the “Adopt-a-Prairie” program. You may have noticed the work that has begun in their prairie in front of the Hausmann Nature Center along the paved accessible trail. We hope other individuals will step up to do the same in other prairie areas at Lapham.

We just wrapped up another great year of Eagle Scout service projects as well. A Scout completed the first phase of a wooden boardwalk along the Ice Age Trail at the Evergreen trailhead. The structure looks fantastic and will get people onto the Ice Age Trail without having to get their feet wet or step around a very large wet area. Another Scout planted native trees and shrubs around the newly constructed “Mike Fort” shelter at Homestead Hollow and plant identification labels were installed to educate visitors and provide some privacy screening for those using the shelter.

We finally obtained approval to name the paved trail on the west side of Highway C “Paul Sandgren Recreational Trail”. The sign was ordered and production should be complete at the beginning of November. A sincere thank you for everyone’s support, a dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony is being planned; a notification will be set as soon as plans are finalized.

Volunteers assisted staff in spreading well over two dozen piles of woodchips on the trail this summer which led to one the best trail conditions for the 29th annual Colorama event. Those trail conditions should last through the winter ski season as well and hopefully most if not all of next year too.

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And finally, work should begin soon on the continuation of the paver block path inside the Butterfly Garden. This is the second phase of three and will get us that much closer to finishing the accessibility efforts of the Friends Group for those who wish to visit the Garden. Liz has done a tremendous job the past few years nurturing her plantings which have made the garden very popular.

You would never believe that after having been a part of all these wonderful things for the past seven years that anyone would want to leave. Unfortunately for me though, I have decided to transfer to Mirror Lake State Park. My last day at Lapham Peak will be November 12. Words cannot express how much this experience has meant to me. When I began in 2011, I never thought I would’ve been here this long. It has since turned into one of the most rewarding opportunities of my life, making my decision to leave that much more difficult. I wish nothing but the best for the Friends of Lapham Peak, all other volunteers, special interest groups, visitors, the surrounding communities, staff, the next property manager and of course, the Lapham Peak Unit property itself. We have accomplished many great things here over the years and I look forward to stay in touch with everyone so see it continue to be as good, if not better than what I was able to help you all accomplish during my time here.

Thank you for making my last year here so memorable!

Respectfully submitted,

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