



Title: Seasonal Closure of the Minnehaha Preserve Boardwalk - Update

Prepared by: Name: Janna Jonely
Phone: 952-641-4523
jjonely@minnehahacreek.org

Purpose:

To provide the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District (MCWD) Board of Managers an update on the alternate method deployed to indicate the Minnehaha Preserve Boardwalk system is closed for public use during the winter months.

Background:

On November 19, 2020 the Board of Managers authorized seasonal closure of the Minnehaha Preserve Boardwalk (Res #20-089) to ensure safety is upheld during the winter months when ice and snow create a more difficult environment for potential users to traverse and for MCWD to inspect and maintain.

The closure was recommended in accordance with MCWD's inspection and repair policy and addressed an enhanced public safety risk due to uneven surfaces resulting from ice and snow accumulations on top of boardwalk decking patched with plywood. This safety risk was determined a higher priority than limited public access during the winter months and was recommended as an interim solution while the District continues to determine the proper approach to the overall repair of the facility.

The system closure recommended consisted of snow fencing and signage affixed to each of the seven boardwalk trail entry points.

Summary:

Due to warm weather, a lack of snow and ice cover, and clear visibility of the plywood patches and fluorescent safety markings, the seasonal closure measures for the boardwalk were not deployed until December 21, 2020.

In the six weeks since installation, three staff inspections have been conducted, and at each inspection staff observed that the snow fencing had been cut down at all seven entry points. Staff previously affixed signage indicating that the trail is closed and uneven surfaces are present to the fencing. Staff has now permanently attached the signage to the boardwalk structure itself to maintain signage visibility independent of the status of the snow fencing. The signs separately applied to the boardwalk are reflective yellow.

Staff in consultation with legal counsel weighed alternative options to limit public safety risk and liability concerns while balancing staff resources (inspection and repair time). Staff determined, it is reasonable to deploy a physical barrier that is more permanent but with a constrained footprint. Therefore, staff has installed a chain-link chain across each of the seven entry points with the addition of a sign stating "keep out." The sign affixed to the chain is orange on black and by its presence indicates the presence of a cord or chain across the entry. Both the signs affixed to the boardwalk and the chain-link chain are quite visible in low light to those approaching on foot or bike. Staff has not observed any signs of bike use. Staff judges this to be a logical alternative method to convey the system is closed to public user-ship while reducing the time spent and cost of inspecting and repairing the snow fence barriers, and is more reliable than replacing snow fencing that may be removed by a third party soon after staff has put it in place. Staff will continue to inspect the system bi-weekly and make any necessary repairs during that time.