



CHRIS ABELE, MILWAUKEE COUNTY EXECUTIVE
JOHN DARGLE, JR., DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE

Date: September 8, 2016

To: Jason Haas, Chair, Parks, Energy and Environment Committee

From: John Dargle, Jr., CPRP, Director, Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture (DPRC)

Subject: **Pokémon Go Sites within Milwaukee County Parks (INFO)**

ISSUE

The Pokémon Go phenomenon is on full display in Milwaukee County parks, most notably at its beloved and historic Lake Park, which has quickly become known as one of the most active Pokémon sites in the Midwest.

BACKGROUND

What it is: Pokémon Go is a free, augmented reality, location-based, multi-player, online mobile game. Players look for Pokémon ("pocket monsters"), catch them, train them, and battle with them. The game uses the real world to inform the player experience – which has created an entirely new experience in the public realm.

How the game is played: Pokémon Go does not come with an instruction manual, so people learn by intuition and sharing tips. Pokémon appear virtually in real-world locations at random, but people do not compete with each other to find them. For example, water attracts water Pokémon and playing at night brings out nocturnal Pokémon. Pokémon tend to be clustered in certain spots and the more a player catches, the more points they earn as "trainer". Points are also earned by collecting free items at Pokéstops. Once a player has accumulated enough experience points, Pokémon can be trained at the nearest "gym", usually found near local landmarks which is why clusters of people may often be seen circling a statue with their phones.

Impacts: Pokémon Go has introduced thousands of individual to our park system resulting in many new positive recreation experiences and social connections. These outcomes are to be applauded and celebrated. However, there have been other unanticipated and negative consequences from Pokémon-related activities which have caused significant disruption within Lake Park and in adjacent neighborhoods. These include traffic congestion, parking issues, littering, damaged turf, risks to natural habitats, lack of restrooms, and noncompliance with park system operational hours.





What players see as they play Pokémon; players in Lake Park.

County actions: In effort to manage issues resulting from Pokémon play the DPRC, in cooperation with other County departments, has taken several actions:

- On August 16, in cooperation with Corporation Counsel, the DPRC issued a letter to John Hanke, the CEO of Niantic, Inc. (the parent company of Pokémon Go) requesting compliance with Milwaukee County parks policy related to virtual geocaches requiring written permission before placement of a virtual geocache and formalized by a free permit. To date, there has been no response from Niantic. This letter was issued with the intent of creating a means for responsible management of game play within Milwaukee County Parks in collaboration with Niantic.
- County staff from both Corporation Counsel and the DPRC have left repeated voice mails and sent multiple emails to Niantic, again with no response to date.
- DPRC's operational staff have increased daily maintenance and clean-up efforts at Lake Park. The House of Correction has provided additional trash pick-ups.
- DPRC's Ranger staff have increased their presence at Lake Park and worked in cooperation with the Milwaukee County Sheriff's Office and the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) to minimize unlawful behavior. The Sheriff's Office is responsible for violations in County parks and the MPD is responsible for the street violations. If a violation is within city jurisdiction, the Sheriff's Office contacts the MPD for assistance.
- On September 7, a public conversation on the impacts of Pokémon was held during the Historic Water Tower Neighborhood Association meeting attended by approximately 100 citizens with panel speakers including Parks Committee Chair Jason Haas, Supervisor Sheldon Wasserman, City Alderman Nic Kovac, DPRC Director John Dargle, DPRC Chief of Field Operations Guy Smith, Interim Corporation Counsel Colleen Foley, the County Executive's Constituent Services Coordinator Carly Smith, as well as members of the Sheriff's Office, DRPC Rangers, and MPD.

Pokémon has reframed the way that people use the public spaces across the globe, include parks. Since the introduction of Pokémon Go, the DPRC has maintained a

sharp focus on keeping all Milwaukee County Parks safe, clean, and accessible to all – and will continue to do so as the Pokémon experience and public conversation evolve.

RECOMMENDATION

No action requested. Informational item unless further action required.

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Approved by:



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