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CONTACT: Amie M. Downs
412-350-3711 office
412-327-3700 cell
Amie.Downs@AlleghenyCounty.us

Substantial Progress on Deer Lake Improvements and Projects

PITTSBURGH – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and Council Member Ed Kress toured Deer Lakes Park last week with the County Manager and Parks Department staff to see the completed improvements and projects underway there that have been made as a result of the revenue from the off-site extraction lease.

“I’m thrilled with everything that we’ve been able to do at Deer Lakes Park with money from the off-site extraction. To be able to accomplish so much without using tax dollars is fantastic,” said Fitzgerald. “The work that has been done by our employees is fantastic, and the contractors that we worked with have also done an exceptional job to make these improvements. I can’t wait for the spring opening to see all of the kids enjoying this.”

To date, \$2.2 million has been invested in Deer Lakes Park including \$2 million allocated from the signing bonus received from Range Resources and an additional \$200,000 in parks improvement funds received to date. Another \$133,000 will be proposed for use at the park in 2017 and 2018. Along with funding used for projects in the other eight parks, a total of \$5 million will have been dedicated for park improvements between 2014 and 2018. Projects currently underway or planned are expected to be complete by Spring 2017.

“As a Council Member, I have always strived to bring additional revenue into the county budget without going to taxpayers for additional revenue. It’s why I voted in favor of the contract with Range Resources. We have significantly upgraded Deer Lakes Park for the benefit of the people in the area without using a penny of taxpayer money,” said Kress. “For the residents of this area, the investment into Deer Lakes ensures that these amenities are here for generations to come. This infusion of funding into Deer Lakes Park has made it clear that each of the parks in our system is important. I am honored to represent the people of this area and will continue to keep working for their best interests.”

The improvements near the Minnow Shelter include a new shelter at the universal playground which enables an elevated view of the playground and features arched beams, tongue and groove roof deck, steel posts and a red standing seam metal roof. County-installed sidewalks connect the shelter to a new CXT restroom, the universal playground and the parking lot, making the entire area ADA-accessible.

“The parks system is really a crown jewel in our county. With over 12,000 acres of parkland throughout the nine parks, there’s something to do for everyone,” said Council Member Nick Futules, District 7, which includes a portion of Deer Lakes Park. “To see so many improvements in Deer Lakes in such a short amount of time is fulfilling and I have no doubt that the residents of this area will benefit greatly from these investments in our community.”

The lower and middle lakes, which had been plagued by excess vegetation growth, were treated to create a healthier lake ecosystem by balancing plant populations with access for fishermen and a wildlife habitat. Shoreline fishing pedestals have had overgrowth removed to allow for easier access to them, park benches have been installed along the lakes and low-growing, water-loving native species will be planted around the pedestals to assure long-term access to the fishing spots.



The largest, and most visible, project is the creation of a portal at the entrance to the park. The area previously held impervious service parking lots, a spray park and dilapidated playground equipment. The project underway is doubling the size of the area with the installation of new playgrounds, landscape, a shelter and picnic area, restrooms and permeable paver parking lot. The site will also feature lots of shade trees and seating.



Additional improvements were made last year that included parking pads, concrete and restrooms at the Wagman Observatory, including an inlaid compass done by county tradesmen.



The lease with Range Resources for the off-site extraction of gas under Deer Lakes Park was signed in October 2014. The authorizing legislation was passed by County Council in May 2014. The lease terms included a \$4.7 million bonus payment, an additional \$3 million Park Improvement Fund and 18% in

royalties to the county over the length of the lease. To date, the county has received over half a million dollars in royalties.

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OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

101 COURTHOUSE • 436 GRANT STREET • PITTSBURGH, PA 15219
PHONE (412) 350-6500 • FAX (412) 350-6512

