



Parks, Natural Lands, Urban Forestry, & Trails NEWSLETTER

JULY 2018 - ISSUE 7

Why Every Empty Lot Isn't Mowed Regularly

Come summertime, as the vegetation grows in our Open Space lands and dries out then the green fades from the leaves and stems of plants, the Trails & Natural Lands Program begins to receive a flood of requests to mow natural areas, trail corridors, foothill open spaces, and similar properties. The most common reasons for such requests include concerns about fire danger, and the perception that tall grasses and weedy plants "look bad" and reflect poorly on the surrounding neighborhood.

Mowing of natural areas is sometimes appropriate as part of a vegetation improvement strategy. However, regular mowing can also have unintended consequences for the landscape, which are important to consider. First, spring and summertime mowing removes plant stalks and stems taller than about 6" which greatly accelerates drying and hardening of the ground surface. As a result, some low-growing invasive plants thrive. For example, Cheat grass is known to be extremely fire-prone and puncture vine often causes harm to trail users and their pets. The growth of these plant species along numerous Salt Lake City trail corridors is often a symptom of repeated mowing.

Habitat diversity and quality of our natural areas is given thoughtful attention

by Natural Land employees. Mowing removes hiding places for small animals, perches for birds, and food for insects. Mowed natural areas quickly become "habitat deserts," which support only a small fraction of the biodiversity that normally exists in the city's nature parks and open spaces. Mowing can also disturb or destroy the nests or dens of ground-dwelling birds and animals, and spring and summertime mowing is generally discouraged by bird conservation organizations.

Reflection on the unique habitat these spaces provide adds to your outdoor experience each time you are in a Salt Lake City natural area. Remembering that these areas are intentionally managed for biodiversity, water conservation, and "wild" aesthetics that differ significantly from a traditional park space provides a new perspective. You can help the City avoid unnecessary mowing by volunteering with the Trails & Natural Lands Program to remove unsightly weeds by hand. If you have a natural area near your home, or a favorite open space that you visit often, get involved and encourage your friends or co-workers to join in. Remember that involvement and voluntary assistance from people just like you is crucial to properly steward our precious natural areas into the future.

If you would like to get involved, call (801) 972-7809 for more information.

INVENTORIED CITY TREES

86,500

DISTINCT TREE SPECIES

320

VACANT STREET PLANTING SITES

23,000

FINANCIAL BENEFIT OF SLC TREES

\$5M +

Seasonal Employees - An Essential Part of Park Maintenance

In 2017, Salt Lake City launched a new hiring platform. The new system allows applicants to easily submit applications online through social media platforms such as Facebook or LinkedIn or by uploading a resume. The new system is more sustainable and functions 100% electronically as applicants can complete all paperwork through an online portal. Most importantly, the new system has allowed the City to conduct the hiring process in a fraction of the time compared to previous years.

Seasonal hiring is beginning to slow for the year as fewer new applicants submit applications in late summer. However, Public Lands begins posting jobs and seeking seasonal and part-time employees in early March each year. Seasonal and part-time employees are crucial to regular summertime maintenance and daily operations. In 2018, more than 100 seasonal employees have been hired to maintain public lands, plant flower beds, and provide support for summertime events. More than half of the seasonal employees hired each year are returning employees – some returning for as many as 15 years.

By June each year, the majority of the returning employees have been trained and are ready to begin work. This year, and in many past years Parks has been unable to fully staff seasonal employees for park maintenance. This is due to a decline in applicants seeking temporary work and less interest in working labor intensive jobs. This has led to supervisors seeking assistance from temporary hiring agencies, participating in job fairs, and even recruiting people who seem interested in parks while out in the field.

Public services is the only department in the City that doubles the number of staff members each summer season. Other divisions in Public Services such as Youth & Family, Streets, and Golf also hire seasonal employees every year. The employees hired by Parks and Public Lands often go unrecognized for their essential role in the City. It is through their hard work and dedication that Salt Lake City's public park system is cared for each spring and summer.

Employees

Temporary

10

Part-Time

38

Seasonal

80

Full-Time

95

Noteworthy News

- In preparation for work in Pioneer Park that includes demolishing older restrooms, the Parks Division worked with the Public Services Safety Manager, who is a certified asbestos inspector, to determine if the building contained asbestos; no asbestos was found. The Safety Manager's role is to help Public Services divisions identify and mitigate risks to keep employees safe and costs down.
- Salt Lake City Trails & Natural Lands is partnering with the University of Utah's Biodiversity and Conservation Ecology Lab, Wild Utah Project, and the Natural History Museum of Utah on a wildlife research study. The project seeks to understand how human traffic, recreation, and urban development impact animal presence, distribution, and behavior in the Central Wasatch and Salt Lake Valley. Over 70 "citizen scientist" teams are in charge of wildlife camera stations throughout the valley, several of which are located in Salt Lake City's natural areas. Thus far, several incredible wildlife photos have been captured.
- On Sunday, July 8th, several City trees were damaged or destroyed by severe wind gusts. Crews from the Urban Forestry program worked through the day on Monday, July 9th to clear debris from cars, roadways and residential properties.

CEMETERY HISTORY SPOTLIGHT

MARTHA MARIA HUGHES PUAL CANNON

July 1, 1857 – July 10, 1932 Martha Maria Hughes Paul Cannon was one of the first female doctors in Utah, the first state senator in the nation and creator of the Utah State Board of Health. Martha was born to Peter Hughes and Elizabeth Evans near Llandudno, Clwyd, Wales on July 1, 1857. The Hughes family embarked from Liverpool, England to New York on May 1, 1860. The family stayed in New York to earn money to travel to the Utah territory. The family arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on September 13, 1861. Three days after they arrived in the Salt Lake Valley Martha's father Peter Hughes died and soon after her mother Elizabeth married James Patten Paul. After Elizabeth's marriage to Paul she went by the surnames Paul and Hughes at various times. Later in her life Paul encouraged her to follow her dream of becoming a medical doctor.

Sports, Robots, and Paint.

In July the Regional Athletic Complex purchased a robot! Known as the Intelligent One - yes that is the brand name - this robot is tasked with striping fields in preparation for games at the complex. Previously, all field painting was completed by employees and could take upwards of an hour and a half per field. Soccer fields need to be re-striped regularly and each soccer field striping uses approximately seven gallons of paint. With the Intelligent One, field striping takes only thirty minutes and has reduced the need for paint by four gallons per field. The intelligent one uses just three gallons per field adding to the sustainability of the Regional Athletic Complex and reducing future costs.

