



NEWS RELEASE

Media Contact:

Amanda Dorman | (317) 873-1585 | www.zionsville-in.gov | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

For Immediate Release:

Jan. 19, 2016

Fallen tree in Starkey Park closes trail

Trail SP-1 expected to re-open late spring

Early Thursday morning, Zionsville Park Department crews found a fallen oak tree in Starkey Park that permanently damaged parts of one of the trails. Park users will not be able to access Trail SP-1 from the Starkey Park parking lot to the trails intersection at Trail SP-2 until at least the end of spring.

The oak tree, which was six feet in diameter at its base and four feet in diameter at chest height, fell onto the pedestrian boardwalk on SP-1. The boardwalk, originally constructed by an Eagle Scout project, is permanently damaged. Up to 10 feet of the base of the stairs leading to the boardwalk is also destroyed.

Starting today, the Park Department, with the generous assistance of the Street & Stormwater Department, will begin the process of cutting up and removing the tree and salvaging as much material as possible from the boardwalk. A fence will be erected to prevent walkers and runners from using the trail segment until it can be reopened.

According to Matt Dickey, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, the fallen tree is a result of improper trail use by pedestrians and runners. When people walk off designated trails and to the sides, tree roots are compacted over time and can eventually die. Runners who run to the side of the stairs in Starkey Park rather than using the treads wear down the soil. This creates a water trough, which, in this instance, delivered water to the base of the oak tree and killed the tree's roots.

While the Park Department has tried adding more soil to the trough, they were unable to keep up with the trail damage. Eventually the roots of the oak tree became so wet and damaged that the tree toppled.

"Walking off the side of the designated trail surface or around the stair treads is improper use of the trail. We really need to get people to use the trails responsibly," Dickey said.

Initial estimates by the Park Department show the damage to the boardwalk and the stairs will cost tens of thousands of dollars in staff time and repair/replacement costs. As a long term remedy, the Department will look into replacing the damaged wood stairway with a more permanent industrial metal staircase.

###