

Columbus Park was considered by landscape designer Jens Jensen—a prominent landscape architect who worked in the early part of the 20th century in Chicago—to be his most successful park project. (Robert E. Grese, *Jens Jensen: Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens* by, Johns Hopkins Press, 1992.) Grese writes, "The center of the park was kept open to suggest the broad expanse of the prairie. Flatness was regarded as an asset. The small brook and ancient beach depression were shaped and deepened to form a linear lagoon suggestive of a natural 'prairie river.'

The restorations are concentrated around the lagoon **1**. The lagoon has a natural shoreline **2**, with aquatic and common prairie plants along the bank, including cattails and asters. Large elms and willows tower over the water's edge.

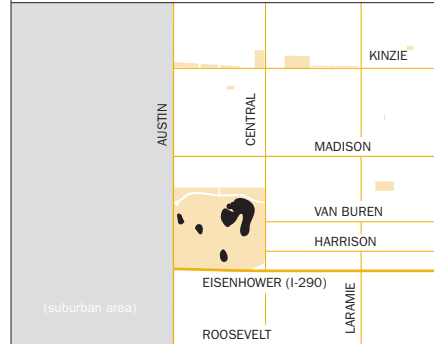
Jensen used stratified stonework to create some footpaths and two waterfalls. A stone path winds around the woodland area **4** on the peninsula, which features a turf grass clearing for picnics near the narrow west arm. The path makes a complete circle and leads back to the two stone waterfalls. A stone crossing leads

to the field house, golf course, and parking lot. The lagoon is stocked with blue gill and catfish; bullheads, crappie and bass are also present.

Directly behind the field house is a small reflecting pond. Herons and waterfowl visit the pond and lagoons in the summer months. In the spring, many migrating birds can be seen; Virginia rail, prothonotary warbler and mourning warbler have been seen here.

In his design of the golf course that occupies most of the western half of the park, J. Jensen created a "checker board" effect by breaking up fairways with scattered oak trees and native shrubs. The golf course also includes three prairie restoration areas **5 6 7**, which are managed through the use of controlled burning.

Along the south and west perimeters of the golf course (and north of I-290), is a woodland that is natural in character. In the fall, the oaks, maples and witch hazel surrounding the lagoon and scattered throughout the park provide dramatic color.



Columbus Park Lagoon



ADDRESS 500 S Central Ave  
 OWNER Chicago Park District  
 ACREAGE 11.63

HABITATS  
**1** Aquatic  
**2** Riparian / Water Edge  
**3 5 6 7** Prairie / Grassland  
**4** Forest / Woodland

DIRECTIONS Turn west off of Central onto Jensen; Jensen is the same as the street known as Jackson throughout the rest of the city.