

Outdoor Times



MARION COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION
IT STARTS IN PARKS

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Essential to Community Vitality

Parks & Recreation, May 2008

Parks and recreation play a vital role in creating active and healthy communities. However, some people may not be aware of the directed contribution that these essential services play in shaping community health, preserving open spaces and benefiting the economy.

Did you know:

- Recreation programs give youth an opportunity to discover healthy interests and strengthen leadership skills in safe environments. Recreation

and leisure also provide opportunities for youth to positively socialize with peers and relieve stress. Finally, it plants the seed



in children's minds to care for the environment and become the most environ-

mentally caring citizens, while mitigating "nature deficit" disorder.

- Forested open space and wetlands control erosion, help clean the air, mitigate global warming and shelter and cool homes.
- Nationwide, easy access to parks and open space has become a new measure of community wealth—an important way to attract businesses and residents by guaranteeing both quality of life and economic health.

KP Hole Waterfront Improvements Now Open to the Public

On Friday, May 16 the waterfront improvement facilities at KP Hole Park were unveiled. Sixty people were in attendance for refreshments, children's activities, complementary kayak rentals and scenic river tours provided by Capt. Bill and Capt. Dave.

The Park, located on the Rainbow

River, now offers a boat mooring facility, sundeck, canoe launch, boardwalks, boater staging area, ADA access, walkway ramp and

steps leading into the swimming area.

Two grants, including a \$125,000 Florida Recreation Development Assis-



tance Program (FRDAP) and a \$10,000 Coastal Impact Assistance Program (CIAP) grant were received to offset the cost of the project.

Other funding sources utilized to complete the project include Florida Boater Improvement Project (FBIP) funds, the Pennies for Parks fund and the Parks and Recreation Fee Fund.

Commissioner Jim Payton provided a history of the park, which was donated to Marion County by the Knights of Pythias (which is where the KP in KP Hole stems from) 55 years ago. He added that the park saw over 81,000 visitors last year alone, some of which came from as far away as Germany and Switzerland.

Outdoor Times is a monthly newsletter provided as a public service to park visitors and guests.

Any questions related to this publication may be directed to Gina Peebles, Administrative Manager, in writing at Marion County Parks & Recreation, 111 SE 25 Ave, Ocala, FL 34471, by telephone at 352-671-8560 or via e-mail at gina.peebles@marioncountyfl.org

Inside this issue:

PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY COUNCIL	2
NATIONAL TRAILS DAY	2
CO-ED SOFTBALL @ WRIGLEY FIELDS	3
JIM'S CORNER - CLEAN STREETS = CLEAN WATER	3
IDLE-SPEED / NO WAKE ZONES ESTABLISHED	3
CALENDAR OF EVENTS	4
COMMISSION & STATE OFFICIALS TOUR	4

Parks & Recreation Advisory Council A Model Advisory Board

“The different backgrounds of the members of the PRAC provide the Department staff with an excellent sounding board to ‘test’ community reaction to plans and programs being developed and / or recommended”

The Marion County Parks and Recreation Advisory Council (PRAC) consists of five members who are individually appointed by each respective Commissioner. Their term runs concurrently with that of their appointing Commissioner.

A *who’s who* of key community leaders, the Council currently boasts members including Chair Stan Hanson, retired Vice President for Proctor & Gamble; Vice-Chair Tracy Rains, Manager of a real estate investment company; Pat Gabriel, SR 200 Coalition leader; Shirley Little, well known environmentalist and Bill Ward, co-owner of Ward Construction & Roofing, Inc.

Their personal and professional experiences have helped to make the Council a model advisory board.

“The different backgrounds of the members of the PRAC provide the Department staff with an excellent sounding board to ‘test’ community reaction to plans and programs being developed and / or recommended,” stated PRAC Chairman, Stan Hanson.

And the Commission and the Department relies on PRAC for their input. When considering any number of park related matters, the issues are brought before the Council for deliberation and a recommendation. That recommendation is then presented to the Commission for implementation.

The PRAC’s role is to advise the Board and to be a working partner in supporting the Department. The Council recently reviewed the Department’s ten-year master plan, budget reduc-

tion recommendations, legislative priorities and upcoming recreation programs.

“Serving on the Council made me realize how hard each staff member works to ensure visitors enjoy the beautiful parks we have. Most people don’t realize the time and effort it takes to acquire land, build facilities and keep them maintained,” stated Vice-Chair Tracy Rains. “I enjoy visiting the County parks and seeing children’s birthday parties, family reunions, jogging, boating, swimming/tubing, ball-games, bird-watching and picnicking. Your Marion County Parks have something to be used and enjoyed by everyone!” added Rains.

Get Moving On National Trails Day

On June 7 the American Hiking Society and hikers across the country will celebrate the 16th annual National Trails Day (NTD), a long-standing celebration of America’s trail system and its supporters and volunteers.

Since 1993, National Trails Day has inspired thousands of people to enjoy trails on the same day nationwide,

taking part in hikes, bike and horse rides, trail maintenance, paddle trips and other activities. Event hosts include local hiking clubs, federal agencies, municipal parks, retailers, land trusts and many other businesses and organizations.

A nature bird walk has been scheduled to commemorate this event at the Silver Springs Shores Com-

munity Park on Tuesday, June 3 beginning at 8:30 a.m.

Participants are requested to pre-register by contacting the Parks and Recreation Department at 352-671-8560.



Co-Ed Softball Heats Up at Wrigley Fields



The Wrigley Fields Co-ed Softball Team scored their first win against the Morriston Baptist Church Team on

Sunday, May 18 with a final score of 23-12. Both teams exhibited their best both at the plate and on the field.

The Morriston team brought a large fan base in support of their first competitive game of the season. However, the Wrig-

ley team was not intimidated and played amazing offense.

Cathy Norris, Recreation Manager, stated "the Wrigley team appreciated the opportunity to competitively play the Morriston team as both have been practicing each week for several months."

Men and women, over the age of 18, interested in practicing and playing pick-up softball games are en-

couraged to come out and play. The Wrigley Fields Co-ed Softball Team practices on Tuesdays from 6 - 8 p.m. at Wrigley Fields.

Co-ed softball teams looking for scrimmage games, or interested players needing more information, can contact the Marion County Parks and Recreation Office at 111 SE 25 Ave in Ocala, by telephone at 352-671-8560, or by e-mail at cathy.norris@marioncountyfl.org.

Jim's Corner - Clean Streets = Clean Water

Mowing your lawn may seem like an arduous task (or an expensive one) but it is necessary to maintain a healthy, appealing landscape. Certain sod requires specific mowing heights, but generally speaking, the timing of when to mow should be dictated by the amount of leaf blade being removed. A good rule to follow is to never remove more than 1/3 of the leaf blade at each mowing.

One issue frequently overlooked is where grass clippings end up after mowing. For years the collection of grass clippings was the going fad and landfills became the final destination for huge amounts of this organic matter. Current trends are more environmentally friendly and can actually help keep your lawn looking good. These trends also help with nutrient loading in our groundwater supply.

Grass clippings contain ni-



trogen and other elements typically found in green plants (chlorophyll, phosphorus, etc.). By moving grass clipping on to the streets around your home or business, these elements will eventually find their way into a neighborhood water retention area (WRA). Debris can also clog storm water pipes causing a backup of water in the pipe system and may result in possible flood and drainage issues.

When debris finally makes its way into retainage basins, it will eventually settle and biodegrade. In the long-term this could result in

the formation of an organic/mucky layer which no longer allows for good

percolation in the designed ponds. Finally, clippings in the system can cause re-suspension of nutrients into stormwater runoff. As the nutrients, particularly nitrogen, become dissolved, they are unlikely to be removed. Through this process, the nutrient-laden stormwater percolates into the groundwater, reenters into the natural hydrologic cycle and eventually into the springs. (Marion County Clean Water Program, 8/2007)

Fortunately, there are good, environmentally friendly solutions. First, always police your yard for trash, pet

waste and other debris before mowing. Doing so will lessen the amount of litter in our streets and prevents debris from becoming a flying projectile. Leaf litter makes great mulch for your landscape beds and can be simply raked into your landscape beds prior to mowing. Second, use a mulching blade on your mower. This helps break the grass clippings into smaller pieces and thus enables the clippings to break down quicker. Lastly, after mowing blow the clippings back on to your lawn allowing for the nitrogen to be recycled and helps to feed your lawn.

Using these simple steps will help keep your lawn looking good and reduce the possibility of contaminating groundwater supplies. Remember to mow frequently, use a mulching blade and avoid blowing the clippings into the streets.



Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Location	Time
June 3	Nature Bird Walk	Silver Springs Shores Park	8:30 a.m.
June 14	Family Adventure Day	Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat	10 a.m.—3 p.m.
June 14	Flag Retirement	Veterans Memorial Park	10 a.m.
June 16	Summer Recreation Program	Various Elementary Schools	8 a.m.—2 p.m.
June 21	Youth Public Speaking Contest	Coehadjoe Park	10 a.m.—12 noon
June 27	Youth Outdoors Adventure Camp	Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat	8:30 a.m.—4 p.m.
July 4	God & Country Day—5k Run	Veterans Memorial Park	7:30 a.m.
July 5	Quarterly Memorial Service	Veterans Memorial Park	10 a.m.
July 11	Youth Trail Biking / Disc Golf	Baseline Road Trailhead	8 a.m.—3 p.m.
July 12	Quarterly Memorial Program	Veterans Memorial Park	10 a.m.
July 25	Youth Canoe / Kayak	Carney Island	9 a.m.—2 p.m.
July 28	Horseshoe Lake Summer Camp	Horseshoe Lake	8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.
October 4	Family Adventure Day	Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat	10 a.m.—3 p.m.
October 18	Owl-Ween	Carney Island	4 p.m.—7 p.m.
November 22	Family Adventure Day	Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat	10 a.m.—3 p.m.

Commission & State Elected Officials Participate in Tour



Pictured left to right: Charlie Stone, Rep. Larry Cretul, Stan McClain, David Holmes, Lee Niblock, Greg Wiley, Pat Howard, Barbara Fitos and Sen. Carey Baker.

The Marion County Board of County Commissioners, Senator Carey Baker and Representatives Larry Cretul and Kurt Kelly recently participated in a tour of Indian Lake State Forest

and the University of Florida Research Center.

The purpose of the tour was to familiarize our State elected officials of the County's interest in participating in the management of the Indian Lake State Forest and the importance of the University of Florida Research Center to agribusiness.

The County provided \$2.5 million to assist the State with the purchase of the Indian Lake State Forest (f.k.a. Avatar property), located on the NW corner of Hwy 326 and CR 35. The joint purchase of this roughly 4,400 acre property protected the sensitive two and ten year water recharge areas of Silver Springs, where 11,100 homes were slated to be built.

"The University of Florida Research Center is a treasure to our County and our State," noted Commission

Chairman Charlie Stone. The research performed at this facility helps our local growers use appropriate pesticides and herbicides; assists turf managers keep Florida's ecotourism up to par; identifies future alternate energy sources and contributes to Marion County's rank as the third leading agricultural producing county in the State.