

Outdoor Times



MARION COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION
IT STARTS IN PARKS

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The Big Playground

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If you've got children or grandchildren, you've got to take advantage of one of the best parks in Marion County: *Baseline Trailhead Park*.

The park, at the corner of Baseline and Maricamp roads, offers something for the whole family. The playground is the big draw for my family. The equipment features

plenty of slides, ladders, poles and steps to climb. It also has a couple of rock-climbing walls, swing sets - including a cool swing for handicapped guests - a big sand box with activity tables and diggers and a

whole lot more. And it has that bouncy material beneath your feet, which makes falling down easier



on the kids. It's called a "boundless playground" because it offers activities for all children, including those with disabilities. The playground is at the main entrance to the Base-

line to Marshall Swamp Trail, part of the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway. The five miles of paved trails are great for riding, jogging, Rollerblading or hiking. Covered picnic tables - some require reservations for a fee - and public restrooms help to make this spot very family-friendly. Birthday parties are held

there on any Saturday or **S u n d a y**. My children call this one "The Big Playground," and it lives up to its name.

-David Moore

Pennies for Parks—A Community Success



The Pennies for Parks fund, a popular voter approved bond referendum, is drawing to

an end.

"In 1988, the Marion County voters had the foresight to see their community prosper by approving \$20 million for the acquisition and improvement of recreation, conservation and water recharge areas," stated Com-

missioner Stan McClain. "The goals of the bond were to maintain a clean water supply; to provide adequate recreational parks and to assure green space to buffer growth areas," added McClain.

Parks benefiting from the Pennies for Parks referendum include: Carney Island, W.H. Willoughby Park, Wrigley Fields, Horseshoe Lake, Veterans Park, KP Hole and Liberty Community Park, to name a few. Now, 20 years later, the Department is recommending a

number of options to the Board of County Commissioners to provide park acquisition and infrastructure for our growing community. At a workshop on January 15, suggestions including a second bond referendum were considered.

The Pennies for Parks fund has helped to achieve the County's mission of *Meeting Needs by Exceeding Expectations* by helping to leverage a number of State grants, utilized for development and acquisition.

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

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Outdoor Times

Park Visitation Exceeds Two Million

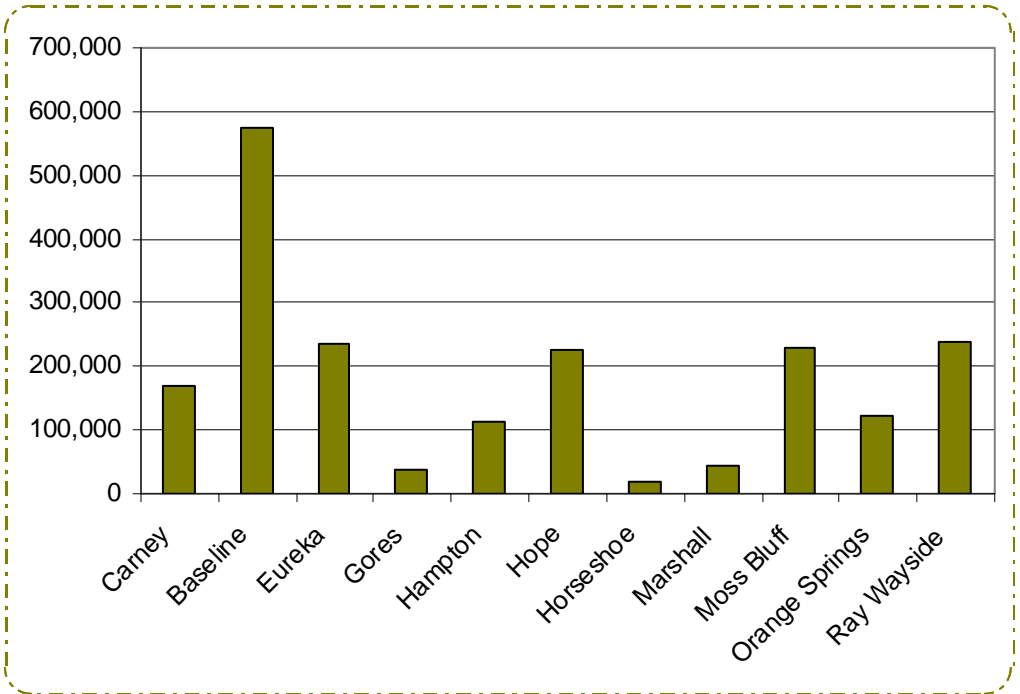
Over the past five years, the Marion County Parks & Recreation Department has served more than two million residents and guests at our most popular park locations.

Of the 48 parks in the current inventory, 17 have traffic counting devices which keep a tally of how many vehicles enter each of these parks daily. A total of 17 traffic counters are in the park system for two reasons: the parks with unimproved road access cannot accommodate these counters and some parks are remotely located so it does not make fiscal sense to install them. These counts are

turned into monthly tabulations and are reviewed by the Department's Park Operations Division and by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Council.

Tens of thousands of uncounted people visit the 31 remaining parks, some of which are undeveloped. Just at KP Hole alone, 3,000 visitors per

day can be found floating the Rainbow River on a summer holiday or weekend.



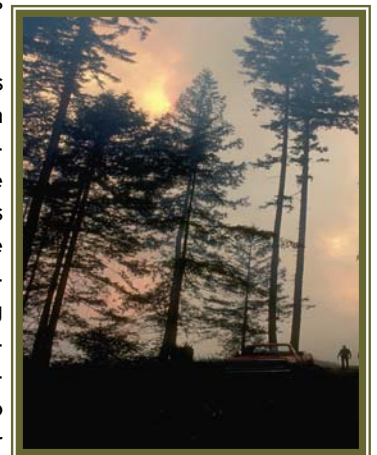
A Land Shaped by Fire

Before there were roads, canals, modern agriculture, or big cities, lightning-set fires frequently swept almost unimpeded across Florida's landscape. Over thousands of years, many native habitats evolved under the influence of fire, and now depend on it. In modern times, fire has been increasingly excluded from natural lands, causing a dramatic decline in the extent and condition of fire-dependent habitats. As a result, many unique plants and animals

needing these habitats are disappearing and flammable vegetation has accumulated to unnaturally high and hazardous levels in many areas. The Parks and Natural Resources Division is actively working to restore and maintain fire-dependent habitats, and to reduce the likelihood of destructive wildfires. Our primary tool is prescribed burning, with which we mimic lightning fires by carefully reintroducing fire according

to detailed control plans called "prescriptions."

The Department has formed partnerships with the Florida Division of Forestry, State Parks, Office of Greenways and Trails and Marion County Fire Services to conduct prescribed burns. By working together, and utilizing combined professional resources, we are able to provide a safer and higher level of service while realizing a cost benefit to the tax payers.



Where Did Those Trees Come From?

You may have noticed during the past year a significant number of trees being planted at your local parks. You can thank your County Commission for those trees and for the installation and maintenance of the trees. Your Parks and Recreation Department is fortunate to be the recipient of the money generated through the Tree Mitigation Fund.

The Tree Mitigation Fund is a fund that receives money from developers who are unable to plant the required replacement trees for their new commercial construction. The Land Development Code (LDC) provides the specific require-

ments for tree replacement.

Payment into the fund is authorized by the recommendation of the County Administrator and approved by the Board. The Department must spend the funds within three years, otherwise it is returned to the developer.

Trees have been installed on a number of County properties including the Rotary Sportsplex where 167 Live Oak and three Magnolia were planted in 2006. In 2007, Ralph Russell Field received 101 trees; 29 Magnolia, 36 Red Maple and 36 Live Oak. In January 2008 Liberty Park received 11 trees, all of

which were Live Oak. In the next month, Wrigley Fields will also receive trees as part of a Canopy Replacement Project.

H&J Landscaping, Inc. is currently contracted with Marion County to provide materials and labor for the installation of the trees while the Parks and Recreation Department assumes the maintenance responsibilities after the trees are planted.

“Through the tree replacement program, trees installed on County property will provide a shade canopy for park visitors well into the future,” noted Commission Chair Charlie Stone.



Final Phase of Shores Sidewalks Under Construction



The third and final phase of a paved pedestrian and bicycle sidewalk in Silver Springs Shores is under construction. The project completes the unfunded connectors originally engineered in FY 05/06. The five-foot wide trail is located along the major road network in the Shores.

“The sidewalk is located along existing right-of-way and serves both recreational and utilitarian trips. This trail provides residents of the Silver Springs Shores area with direct non-motorized vehicular access to the bicycle and pedestrian system of Marion County,” stated Commission Andy Kesselring.

This trail was funded through the Florida Department of Transportation through their Transportation Enhancement Program. The trail was eligible as it removes automobile trips from the surrounding road network and connects people to other urban trail systems in the County, bringing them into the heart of Ocala.

Youth Flag Football Program

The inaugural Youth Flag Football Program for 6—11 year olds is scheduled for Wrigley Fields. Games will be played on Saturdays starting in April.

Early Bird registration begins on March 1, which includes a discounted fee of

\$15 per player. Regular registration runs from March 10-28 for \$20 per player.

The program will focus on basic skill development and strategies of the sport in a fun, safe recreational atmosphere. Concepts such as teamwork, fair play, and

recreation as a form of fitness will be promoted.

For information on this program, registration, or special registration times scheduled, please contact the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department at (352) 671-8560.





Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Location	Time
March 1	Art Van-Go	Liberty Community Park	10 a.m.—11 a.m.
	Art Van-Go	Baseline Road Trailhead	12 noon—1 p.m.
	Art Van-Go	Wrigley Fields	2 p.m.—3 p.m.
March 4	Nature Bird Walk	Coehadjoe Park	8:30 a.m.
March 18	Brown Bag Bunny Brunch	Liberty Community Park	10:30—12:30
March 19	Brown Bag Bunny Brunch	Baseline Road Trailhead	10:30—12:30
March 20	Brown Bag Bunny Brunch	Wrigley Fields	10:30—12:30
March 25	Nature Bird Walk	Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat	8:30 a.m.
March 29	Family Adventure Day	Carney Island	10 a.m.—3 p.m.
April 5	Art Van-Go	Liberty Community Park	10 a.m.—11 a.m.
	Art Van-Go	Baseline Road Trailhead	12 noon—1 p.m.
	Art Van-Go	Wrigley Fields	2 p.m.—3 p.m.
	Youth Flag Football Begins	Wrigley Fields	
June 14	Family Adventure Day	Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat	10 a.m.—3 p.m.
June 16	Summer Recreation Program	Various Elementary Schools	8 a.m.—2 p.m.
September 13	Family Adventure Day	Horseshoe Lake Park & Retreat	10 a.m.—3 p.m.

Nature Bird Walk Planned

Are you interested in observing our feathered friends in your local parks? If the answer is yes, then you are invited for a morning walk with Carolyn Retey, of Marion County's Audubon group, on the first and fourth Tuesday of each month starting in March.

Carolyn will provide insightful information on native species during each walk. Participants should bring a hat, insect repellent, water and binoculars, if you have them. Field guides will be available for use during the walks.

Bird walks are scheduled for the month of March on Tuesday, March 4 at Coehadjoe Park, located at 4225 NE 35 Street in Ocala and on March 25 at Horseshoe Lake Park and Retreat, located at 10780 E. Highway 318 in Orange Springs.

Participants should meet at the park by 8:30 a.m.

For more information on the program and future walks please contact the Marion County Parks and Recreation Department at (352) 671-8560.

