

County awaits word on Glacial Heritage Area grants

By Amy Smith, Union staff writer | Posted: Tuesday, August 5, 2014 9:28 am

JEFFERSON — The Jefferson County Parks Committee still awaits word on whether the county will receive several Glacial Heritage Area (GHA) grants.

At its meeting Monday, the committee received an update on the county's overall standing among other grant applicants.

Parks Director Joe Nehmer reported that Cheryl Housley, of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, said at a GHA meeting July 30 that the Oconomowoc section of the proposed trail ranks high in the DNR's estimation for receiving grant money. Waterloo's section of the trail, she said, ranks a bit lower but still might be worthy of funding.

Housley said there were 19 applicants competing for \$633,366 in DNR stewardship funding within South Central Wisconsin, and that of those 19 applications the highest ranking applicant had a score of 26.5.

Nehmer noted that Oconomowoc ranked fourth, with a score of 24.5. The Watertown to Waterloo project, he said, ranked 13th, the addition of a Rock River project ranked 10th and a Dorothy Carnes Park project 14th.

With these standings, Jefferson County is lagging behind several other trail grant applicants, but Nehmer reminded committee members that those applicants would not be competing for the funding in 2015, giving Jefferson County a better chance in the coming year.

An announcement of grant recipients originally was slated for June, but Nehmer said the official date now has been marked as to be announced.

The GHA is a network of wildlife and recreational areas throughout the Jefferson County area. Officials previously have likened the network of wildlife areas as a "string of pearls."

Existing county parks — Dorothy Carnes Park in the Town of Jefferson, Korth Park in the Town of Lake Mills and the Garman Nature Preserve in Waterloo — and other sites of interest in the area make up the pearls, while the strings are the routes that link them, from the Glacial Drumlin Trail to rural roadways to bicycle routes.

With the help of these grants, planners hope to make the network so interlinked that visitors seldom would need to be on an actual road between parks.

Meanwhile, in other business, the committee received an update on the parking situation for the Crawfish River Park.

Currently, the park has no designated parking area, which resulted in park-users parking along Highway 18 to access the park. Earlier in July, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation had posted no parking signs along the shoulder, leaving park-users without adequate parking at the park.

Following discussion with the DOT, the no parking signs were removed temporarily until Jefferson County can

find a safer solution.

The land now considered Crawfish River Park originally was purchased by the DOT when the Highway 26 interchange was built in order to comply with a statewide standard that requires a specific shoulder width.

The property was purchased with the understanding that it would be a no-access property. Until a more long-term solution is made available, DOT is compromising with the county by allowing people to park along Highway 18 as long as a five-foot bike lane is designated along the road.

An eight-foot space then would be left for parking, but gravel must be applied to even out the slope that currently encompasses the landscape. The county eventually plans to turn the old highway shop parking lot on County Highway W into a permanent parking space for Crawfish River Park.

Also during Monday's meeting, committee members:

- Discussed creating a designated park area for individuals with special needs.
- Received an update of Watertown outboarders.
- Received an update on the Mason Log Home restoration.
- Received an update on the transferring of smaller county parks to other units of government.