

# Mountain bike park plan eyed

By Amy Smith Union lifestyles editor | Posted: Tuesday, June 9, 2015 9:52 am

JEFFERSON — An initial implementation plan for Holzhueter Farm State Park was presented to the Jefferson County Parks Committee Monday.

The plan, which still is in the early stages of the design process, proposes about five to six miles of beginner, intermediate and advanced mountain biking trails, as well as parking, a picnic area and a centrally-located park trailhead.

Earlier this year, park planner Margaret Burlingham, of LanDesign by Margaret Burlingham LLC in Palmyra, met with a representative of Trek Bicycle of Waterloo who said that Holzhueter Park could be one of the premiere mountain biking parks in the southern part of the state due to its diverse landscape.

“There is no park that has topography like this except the Southern Kettle Moraine,” Burlingham said. “Being located so close between Milwaukee and Madison, it could be very heavily used.”

The 2.95-acre park, between Waterloo and Watertown, was purchased by the state for \$89,900 in 2012. At the time, the park was designated as a conservation park as part of the Glacial Heritage Area master plan.

The primary purpose of a conservation park is to provide opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in a range of outdoor activities. The county has chosen to implement mountain biking trails, as the sport has gained in popularity throughout the state.

Currently, a landowner resides in the center of the park, which has created some design challenges. A parking lot, with potential for larger overflow parking, is proposed for the southern end of the park, with direct access to Island Road. A road would lead from the parking lot to a trailhead to the west of the neighboring landowner.

The homeowner and trailhead would be separated by a forest, keeping the noise minimal. Because the park’s topography is so steep, a centrally located trailhead at the top of a drumlin would allow those who do not plan on mountain biking to enjoy the park.

The trailhead potentially would include a parking lot, restrooms, a shelter and a scenic overlook. A picnic area also is planned on the east side of the property in what Burlingham described as a savannah-like area, with tall and beautiful trees. The proposed rest area is, however, closer in proximity to the adjacent homeowner.

Jefferson County Supervisor Mike Kelly voiced approval of the proposal, noting the homeowner had purchased the property after the park already was established.

“They knew what they were getting into,” he added.

A public presentation of the park implementation plan will be held in the near future in an effort to gain further support and hear concerns for the project. The county’s next step will be to gain approval of the plan by the state Department of Natural Resources.

If approved, implementation of the park plan will take several years, as the mountain bike trails will be created by a mostly volunteer crew. County parks operations supervisor Kevin Wiesmann said he hopes to build about 1.5 miles of trail per year unless the county were to hire outside contractors.

Wiesmann added that he hopes to gain experience and a strong volunteer base when the mountain biking trails are implemented behind the Jefferson County Human Services building in the next few years.

Discussions also have begun with the Jefferson County Bicycle Club in effort to create a mountain biking branch and gain more interest for the sport, specifically within the county.

“We’re starting the dialogue, and I think a lot of people were interested,” Wiesmann said.

Burlingham added that once mountain bikers get out to the park and see the potential, the volunteer base might snowball further.

Wiesmann, who visited a mountain biking race in Dane County this past weekend, said he was amazed at the amount of bikers and bystanders at the event.

“Wisconsin is a big supporter of the sport,” he added. “It brings a lot into the local economy and a lot of people travel to view the races. There’s definitely a big demand for that and a lot of interest in it, and I think with this piece of property we can have a really special park that would have a huge draw.”

Also Wednesday, the council:

- Discussed a proposal to implement a rotational grazing field at Dorothy Carnes County Park.
- Discussed the possibility of implementing a raincheck policy for camping at Dorothy Carnes County Park.
- Addressed concerns in regard to the proposed riverside camping at the Watertown Outboarders property.