

JEFFERSON COUNTY PARKS DEPARTMENT

ANNUAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER, 2020



Mission Statement:

To preserve natural resources for public use and conservation, to operate and maintain a parks system with resource oriented recreation, trails and specialty parks; and to expand the parks system for environmental and land use benefits and the health and enjoyment of Jefferson County residents.

PARKS

The Jefferson County Parks Department currently manages the year round operations for 22 County Parks. Those parks vary in size from small wayside rest areas like Cold Spring Creamery Historic Site to the 517 acre Dorothy Carnes County Park and Rose Lake State Natural Area. Recreational features in the parks range from interpretation of historic sites, to boat launches, shelters, playgrounds, extensive trails, and expansive natural areas. Some of our recreational offerings include an off leash dog exercise area, groomed cross country skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, hiking, running, biking, boating, fishing, hosting special events, shelter rentals and picnicking, nature appreciation, playgrounds, mountain biking, Frisbee golf, photography and more.

Project highlights in our park system from the past year include:

- The donation of 1.8 acres of land to Indian Mounds Park from the Gramley family which included 5 additional Native American Effigy Mounds to be preserved in perpetuity.
- Paving of the access trail to Rose Lake at Dorothy Carnes Park with the help of a grant from the Recreational Trail Program to make the trail more ADA accessible.
- Complete re-habilitation of the Rock Lake County park boat launch Piers paid for through boat launch revenues.
- Restoration and invasive plant control at Carlin-Weld County Parks with donations and grant funding.
- Restoration and invasive plant control at Garman Nature Preserve implemented with private donations.
- Garman Nature Preserve Draft Interpretation and Wayfinding Plan implemented with private donations.
- Planting 450 donated bare root oak trees through Living Lands and Waters.
- Planted 5 large trees donated through the John and Ann Molinaro Tree Fund.
- Updating the Jefferson County Parks and Recreation Plan for 2020.
- Removal of 75 dead and dying ash trees from park properties.
- Installation of a new fenced area at the Jefferson County Dog Park to increase the opportunities for additional programming and special events. Paid for through dog park entrance fee revenues and donations.

Shelter Rentals continue to be a staple of summer activities in our parks. Korth County Park in Lake Mills continues to be the most popular shelter in the park system due to the views and amenities. We anticipate a drop in these numbers for 2020 due to COVID-19 cancelations and early season closures. A chart of shelter rentals is included at the end of the report.

The Jefferson County Dog Park is our most heavily used facility with dog ownership in the State at an all-time high. Tag sales in 2020 will also see a reduction in revenue with reductions in point of contact compliance checks and the removal of pay for access kiosks. Parks staff has been working to get an online tag sales system and hopefully that will be live by the end of the year and will help streamline payment for all services.

TRAILS

We also manage a comprehensive network of trails including the 30 mile Glacial River Bike Trail, 2 mile Glacial River Mountain Bike Trails, 11 mile Interurban Bike Trail, Jefferson County Intercommunity Bike Routes, 199.2 miles of Jefferson County Snowmobile trails, 18 miles of hiking and cross country ski trails located in our parks, and our Glacial Heritage Area Water Trails. These trail systems have grown to become some of our most popular offerings with silent sports like paddling and biking continuing to drive the outdoor recreation industry while personal health continues to be an emphasis in our communities.

Project Highlights on our Trail Systems include:

- Installation of barrier fencing on the Interurban Trail Phase I.
- Installation of all regulatory signs on the Interurban Trail Phase I.
- Initial implementation of the Transportation Alternative Program Grant: Engineering on the Interurban Trail for Phase II with KL Engineering.
- Application for additional grants through WiDNR for the Interurban trail project in all three phases.
- Completion of a trail repair on the Glacial River Trail south of Fort Atkinson with a grant from the WiDNR Recreational Trails Program in partnership with the Jefferson County Highway Department.
- Expansion of the Jefferson County Snowmobile Trails by 14.2 miles including important community connections for trail continuity.
- A Joint project with WiDNR to install a walk-in canoe and kayak launch on the Bark River at County Highway E in the town of Palmyra with a floating launch structure and parking area. DNR covered 100% of the project costs. This launch creates a unique connection on the Bark River from Highway E to the Launch at Rome Pond.

COUNTY FACILITY: GROUND MAINTENANCE

We manage the grounds of all county owned properties. This includes general mowing and landscape maintenance at the Courthouse, MIS building, Highway Department, Fairgrounds, Human Services, Workforce Development/University of Wisconsin-Extension, Sheriff's Department annex and shooting range, and the Potters Field Cemetery. We also work with and support the facility managers in their annual parking lot snow and ice removal operations.

FLOOD MITIGATION AND TAX FORECLOSURES

The Parks Department also manages the counties 122 flood mitigation properties and assists the administrator's office in managing issues on tax foreclosures. The department provides services including compliance monitoring, reporting, enforcement of violations, response to complaints and non-compliant uses, invasive plant removals, building demolition, mowing, and mitigation of hazards. Current challenges to the properties is the increased demand for access to the rivers and lakes for fishing and recreation and the associated conflicts this has created

with local residents. A planning process is scheduled for 2021 to create a management plan for the properties, identify those properties best suited for recreation or public access, and possibly create a system to lease or rent properties to neighbors or other interested parties.

Current Departmental Successes

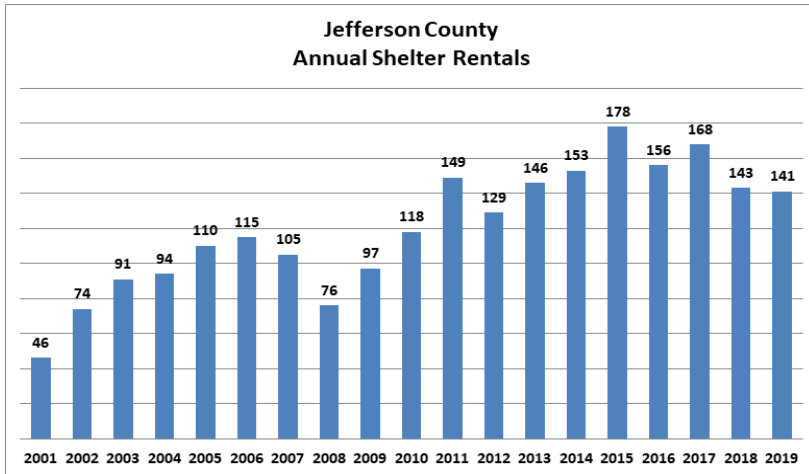
- Successful fundraising and special events hosted with our highly valued partners and friends groups.
- Alternative sources of income for capital projects through private donations and foundations continue to come in.
- High level of support from the community analyzed through multiple planning processes in the county.
- Successful grant writing efforts on larger projects (RTP, TAP, Stewardship, SFR, CC Aids).
- Continually improved relationships with our County Snowmobile program.
- Continued support from individual volunteers, volunteer groups, and friends groups.
- We continue to build on a comprehensive trail system throughout the county and provide ample opportunities for citizens to experience the out of doors.
- Creative funding and partnerships to keep Master Plans and large projects moving forward.

Current Departmental Opportunities

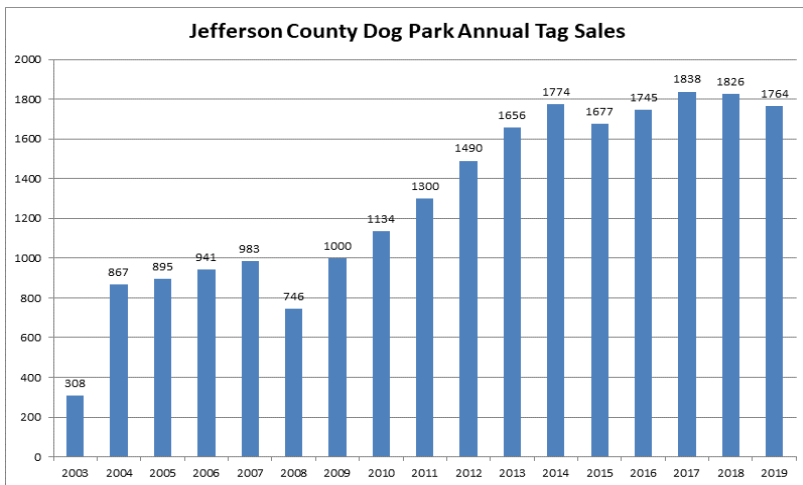
- Implementation of the updated Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan.
- Expansion of marketing efforts.
- Development of the Flood Mitigation Property Management Plan.
- Refinement of the Jefferson County Bike and Pedestrian Plan.
- Expansion of digital and web based platforms for recreational assets and trails.
- Build upon current partnerships with State and local municipalities and organizations to build our regional recreational assets and working capacity.
- Fostering new friends groups to help with long term maintenance and fundraising goals.
- Build upon our Natural Resources Foundation Fund and look into other funding options such as donor advised funds.
- Development opportunities at the Holzhueter State Park in partnership with WiDNR.

Current Departmental Challenges

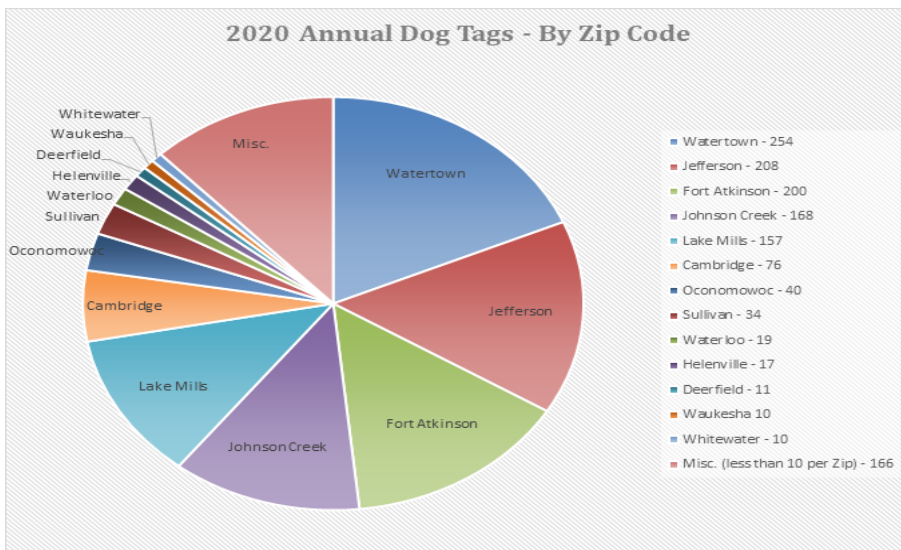
- Funding and fundraising for larger capital projects such as the interurban trail project.
- Staffing levels sufficient to meet the objectives of the plans and expectations of the public.
- Lack of snowfall and moderate temperatures in recent years reducing winter season sports such as snowmobiling, sledding, cross country skiing and ice fishing.
- Management of invasive and noxious weeds in parks and along trails.
- Management and recruitment of volunteers on projects.
- Enforcement of county ordinances in parks – Lack of Parks Ranger Services.
- Community outreach, advocacy, and fundraising.
- Continually expanding scope of responsibility for the department.



Our Dog Park continues to be our most popular park with a steadily expanding user base.



Below is the distribution of annual tags sold based on the dog owner's community of residence.



Jefferson County Parks	Total Park Acreage
Altpeter Park	4
Blackhawk Island Fishing Wharf	1
Burnt Village Landing	1.5
Cappie's Landing	6.2
Carlin Weld County Park	78.5
Crawfish River County Park	17.5
Cold Spring Creamery Historic Site	0.8
Holzhueter State Park	145
Jefferson County Dog Park	109
Dorothy Carnes County Park	517
Garman Nature Preserve	45
Glacial River Mountain Bike Trails	24
Highway 16 Wayside Park	4
Indian Mounds	7.1
Joy Park	0.8
Kanow	45
Korth Park	89
Pohlmann Park	9.2
Rock Lake Park (upper and lower)	23
Rock River Park	4.3
Rome Pond	12
Welcome Travelers	8
	1006.9