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Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

VOLUME 110, No. 46, November 12, 2009

THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443

USPS 627-300

75¢

State park improvement progressing despite cuts

by Cindy Glasson

In spite of a shaky economy and state funding cuts, several projects were completed in Hot Springs State Park this season, according to park superintendent Kevin Skates.

"We didn't get done as many as we would have liked," Skates said.

One project completed was a trail around the Spirit Hole in the buffalo pasture.

Previously, a dirt trail had circled the old geyser hole, created by years of visitors walking around it for a better look. Now, there is an Americans with Disabilities Act approved trail, and benches will be installed soon.

Visitor site at Legend Rock

A small visitor's center at the Legend Rock site is being handled by the state park employees.

"The center is built; we just need to finish the inside and get electricity run to it," Skates said.

In addition, he hopes to add a "camp host" who would be on hand several days each week.

Irrigation and seeding has been completed between the Plaza Hotel and the Big Horn River, five new park benches were installed with the help of the Leadership Hot Springs County class and all of the trees in the park were trimmed over the spring and summer.

A hiring freeze mandated by the state limited what they could get done.

"We kept up with the day to day things, but we really couldn't take on anything extra this year," he said. "We were two full-time positions short and only had half the seasonal workers we usually have."

Next year there are plans to replace the foundation around the Teepee Fountain north of the Plaza Best Western.

"It's grown a lot over the years and has outgrown its foundation," he said. Funding is already in place.

Buffalo corral improvements

Fencing and materials have already been purchased to build a new portion of buffalo corrals this winter.

"We've got a mixture of pole fence, barbed wire and other fencing out there," he said. "We're going to do a little change in the configuration of the corrals, and the new fencing is actually bison standard fencing."

There are also plans to replace the Lion's Shelter by the State Bath House.

Skates said the covered shelter and the picnic tables will be left in place, but the cooking portion of the shelter will be moved to a new shelter to be built to the north near the cooling ponds.

Part of the reason the shelter will be moved is parking.

"You have a hundred people with a family reunion there, add the folks coming over from the pool, and before you know it you've got a mess with parking," he said.

Funding has already been set aside for this project too.

Looking down the road, Skates said the park

does have a "wish list" of things he would like to see completed in the next two to three years.

More sidewalks planned

"We would like to add more sidewalks in some areas," he said. "There are places where folks who walk in the park have to step out into the street. We'd like to add sidewalks to tie it all together."

Skates said the question he's asked most often by visitors is whether there are camping facilities in the state park. He said camping facilities are being considered in the next few years.

Another item on the wish list is combining the two state shops into a single shop.

"We would have to build a greenhouse and an irrigation shop," he said. "We use the greenhouse to get all our plants going in the spring."

Official counts on the number of visitors through the state park are not available, but Skates said things seemed "very busy."

He said the park sends in visitor counts electronically each month; however, the state has been having software problems and no visitor counts are available for any of the parks or historic sites.

"In the state meetings I've been to lately, it seems like everyone's numbers are up this year," he said.

Several special events

The park had several special events over the summer.

"The car rally was the biggest ever and the vendors for the craft fair were pleasantly surprised with the turnout," he said.

"We haven't found what's going to get the people out with the music events yet," he said. "We're not sure if it's the day of the week we're holding the events, the time, the type of music; we're just not sure."

"I'm open to suggestions from folks. We really want to use the pavilion."

The bison herd in the state park is being thinned this year through sealed bids. Six heifers and five bull calves are up for sale.

Herd cut leaves 14 buffalo

Skates said this will leave between 12 to 14 animals in the pasture, two bulls and 10-12 cows.

Five bison have been moved to T-Hill, which Skates said keeps the ground cover down in the area.

"We're starting a new herd over there with a new bull," he said. "That way we can switch animals around as needed."

A big draw in the buffalo pasture has been missing for a few years. The burros that used to roam freely, attracting visitors and locals alike, have been moved to a pasture north of the buffalo pens.

"We had a really hard time keeping them healthy," he said. "We encouraged folks to feed them carrots and apples, but we were finding they were eating potato chips and bags of gummy worms."

"They were just getting too fat eating everything. We haven't moved them back, but we're not sure what we'll do with them."



Fred Yeaman and Hubert Shoemaker of Central Wyoming Tree Service place Christmas lights on the Veterans Tree in Bicentennial Park on Monday. Earlier red stars with the names of veterans were placed on the tree.

—Lara Love photo

Thermopolis one of ten teams playing football at UW stadium

All five classifications of the Wyoming High School Activities Association football championship games will be played Friday and Saturday in War Memorial Stadium at the University of Wyoming.

Action begins Friday at 11:30 a.m. with the 1A 11-man championship game between Lingle-Ft. Laramie and Southeast High School of Yoder.

Thermopolis plays Glenrock in the 2A championship game at 2 p.m.

The Saturday games begin at 10:30 a.m. with Douglas battling Cody for the 3A state championship. At 1 p.m. the 1A 6-man title game features Kaycee against Guernsey-Sunrise. The final game of the weekend is the 4A state championship at 3:30 p.m., between Cheyenne Central and Sheridan.

All-session tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for ages 3-18. Single-day tickets are \$10 for adults and \$7 for youths.

Parking for all championship games is free

and available in the parking lots east of the stadium. On Friday, fans are asked to move their vehicles by 5 p.m., allowing donors to park in their reserved spots for the UW Cowboy basketball game that night.

Free parking for the Cowboy basketball game that evening is available in the parking lot near the Cowboy baseball field and also in the Brown lot one block north of the stadium, near the American Heritage Center.

For the UW men's basketball game against South Dakota State at 7:30 in the Arena-Auditorium, tickets are offered for \$5.

The UW wrestling team will host Northwest College of Powell Friday at 5 p.m. in the UniWyo Sports Complex. Tickets are \$5 for adults and \$3 for ages 3-18.

On Sunday, the UW Cowgirl basketball team will play the University of Montana in the Arena-Auditorium at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$4 for all ages.

Hunter solves problem of lion dining on sheep outside town

by Lara Love

Two sheep belonging to Jack and Ellen Baird of Buffalo Creek Road were killed by a mountain lion, according to Wyoming Game and Fish Department warden Benge Brown.

Jack Baird reported the sheep dead on Thursday and thought at first that it was the work of dogs.

Government trapper Steve Richins investigated and determined it could have been dogs but felt the cause of death was not confirmed.

Later, a mountain lion was found feeding on the remainder of the sheep carcasses and that was determined to be the cause of their deaths.

Authorities from Wildlife Ser-

vices and Wyoming Game and Fish and Brown began searching for the lion. They were prepared to take the lion for causing depredation damage to the livestock.

However, Brown believes a licensed mountain lion hunter harvested the offending animal off an island in the Big Horn River.

Back the Bobcats pullout inside

A special Back the Bobcats pullout is included in this edition of the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Independent Record.

You're invited to remove the pages and display them as you want. Taking the reversible sign to

state championship games or placing them in windows has become a tradition dating back to the Bobcat state championship teams in 1990-92, one that we are proud to continue!

Go Bobcats!



Law enforcement vehicles and fire trucks lead the Bobcats out of Thermopolis on their way to the state football game in Kemmerer Thursday. Another procession is planned as the Bobcats depart from the high school at 10:30 a.m. Thursday.

—Gary Linton photo