



County faces stiff budget cuts

by April S. Kelley

The 2016 final assessed value for Hot Springs County is in, and some reductions to entities in the county will have to be made.

Hot Springs County Assessor Shelley Deromedi said that last year's total assessed value was \$230,839,867 and this year the value has plummeted to \$139,392,004. This means that last year one mill would generate approximately \$230,839 and this year one mill will generate approximately \$139,392. This is almost a 40 percent decrease in what one mill will generate.

Deromedi said for entities like the Fire

District, last year one mill would generate \$692,520 whereas this year one mill will generate \$418,176.

With Hot Springs County only having 12 mills total, Deromedi said the county will not have the money to give to some entities.

"Each board will have to decide what they will have to do different," she said.

Hot Springs County Commissioner Chairman John Lumley said when the assessed value drops that much, it will impact the entire community.

"It's going to cause us [commissioners] to cut several areas we were able to fund previ-

ously," he said. "A lot of stuff we funded before, we just won't be able to fund. We have to maintain our cash reserve."

Lumley noted several entities that will not receive any funding this year, including the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce, the Hope Agency Crisis Line, Economic Development and the Recreation Center. Though several cuts will have to be made, most funding for governmental entities will not be cut, such as the Sheriff's Office and the courts. However, Hot Springs County Counseling, which is a county building, will

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photo by Mark Dykes

Pack it up

Jason Christopherson of the Mountain Trash team speeds along during the Chuck Mead Memorial Pack Horse Race. Riders must keep their horses steady through a variety of obstacles, as lost pack items can mean time penalties or disqualification.

Legend Rock petroglyph site vandalism under investigation

by Mark Dykes

The Legend Rock petroglyph site northwest of town is one of living history, helping tell the story of the area. Among those who formed the rock art thou-

sands of years ago, Jordon Norris wasn't likely.

The name appears on one of the rocks at Legend Rock, however, and Parks Superintendent Kevin Skates said he was notified of the vandalism about two weeks ago; the Sheriff's Office is helping investigate it.

There is no Jordon Norris listed in the registration book, Skates noted, and while there are security cameras at the visitors center, and it is likely the vandal appears on footage, there are no cameras trained specifically to the site. Likewise, there are staff at the visitor's center, but they are not able to monitor the trail all the time.

On the positive side, Skates said the vandalism is not over any of the existing petroglyphs,

and there are staff trained to diminish the vandalism. It won't get rid of it completely, but it will make it less noticeable. Skates further explained reducing the visibility utilizes distilled wa-

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be the same some times, but a determining factor is how deep the vandalism goes. Skates encourages people to visit the site, but knows with more people it means having to deal with things like vandalism and trash left everywhere. He noted the trail formerly used to allow people right up to the petroglyphs, but it was moved about three or four years ago to where it is now, about 20-30 feet back.

Vandalism is something of a regular occurrence at Legend Rock, Skates said.

There wasn't any a couple years back, but there was some last year. In reference to the latter, he added the vandals might have thought they were helping by filling in old vandalism with markers, but it is still marking up the rock.

Legend Rock is open 8 a.m.-6 p.m. from May to September.



courtesy photo

Jordon Norris is twice scratched into a rock face at Legend Rock.

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If the vandalism happens to go over the petroglyphs, Skates said the visibility reduction can

Centennial Celebration July 4 in Hot Springs State Park

by April S. Kelley

The 2016 Fourth of July celebrations in Hot Springs County are certain to be bigger and better than ever this year. Not only will there be the usual Fourth of July Fireworks Celebration, but Hot Springs State Park will also be celebrating the Centennial Celebration for both the Swinging Bridge and the Bison.

At 6 p.m. on Monday, July 4 at the Kiwanis Shelter in Hot Springs State Park, the Centennial Celebration for the Swinging Bridge and the Bison will begin.

"We're going to have food, beverages and snow cones provided by 4-H, the Robotics Team and the Spanish Club from the high school," Hot Springs State Park Superintendent Kevin Skates said. "Shorty's will have their beverage wagon there and we're going to have live music. This way people can come and eat and listen to music while they're waiting for the celebration and the fireworks to start."

Skates said at 8 p.m., there will be some short presentations from the Pioneer Association and the Historic Society.

"They have put together a little program about the history of the Swinging Bridge," Skates said. "They've researched and put together a DVD that will play throughout the event. The history of the bison who are also 100 years old will be discussed."

After the presentations, at around 10 p.m., there will be the lighting of the bridge followed by a two-minute firework display on the Swinging Bridge.

"We encourage people to get down by the river," Skates said. "That will be the best place to view the events on the Swinging Bridge. We also encourage people to bring lawn chairs and blankets. There will be some picnic tables, but likely not enough to accommodate everyone."

Hot Springs State Park Assistant Superintendent John Fish said the towers of the bridge will be lit up with strobe lights and the fireworks dis-

play from the bridge will create a waterfall effect.

Local historian Dorothy Milek explained that the Swinging Bridge was built in 1916 in Hot Springs State Park. In 1984, one of the boards on the chains was broken or dysfunctional and the bridge was temporarily closed to traffic. It was determined the bridge needed to be replaced in 1991, so the process of tearing the bridge down began. The rebuilding of the bridge was finished in 1992. The North Dakota National Guard spent two summers building it, and were very appreciative of the community for all of their fundraising efforts to make it possible.

Milek said the Pioneer Association started a drive to earn money to rebuild the bridge, and the community held many fundraising efforts, including auctioning off pieces of the old bridge.

Pioneer Association President Ray Shaffer said the new bridge was built a lot better than the older bridge.

"It was a good community project," Shaffer said. "There was a lot of help from the community too—a lot of fundraising. It cost about \$200,000 to make the bridge right again. It was an incredible task."

A book on the historic Swinging Bridge is in the works with help from Milek, Shaffer, Bonnie Bauer, Charlyne White, Doris Ann Ready, Carol Barham and Terry TenBoer. The book will not be available until a few months after the ceremony. The Hot Springs County Museum and the Wyoming Historical Society have also been helpful in the celebration and with the book, Milek said.

"It's [the bridge] been quite an icon for the community and it will continue to be," Shaffer said. "I think the public will really enjoy it [the celebration]."

Skates said the Centennial Celebration was only possible through the help of the Fire Department, the Kiwanis Club, the Historic Society and

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