



Jester Park Master Plan

Overview

Executive Summary

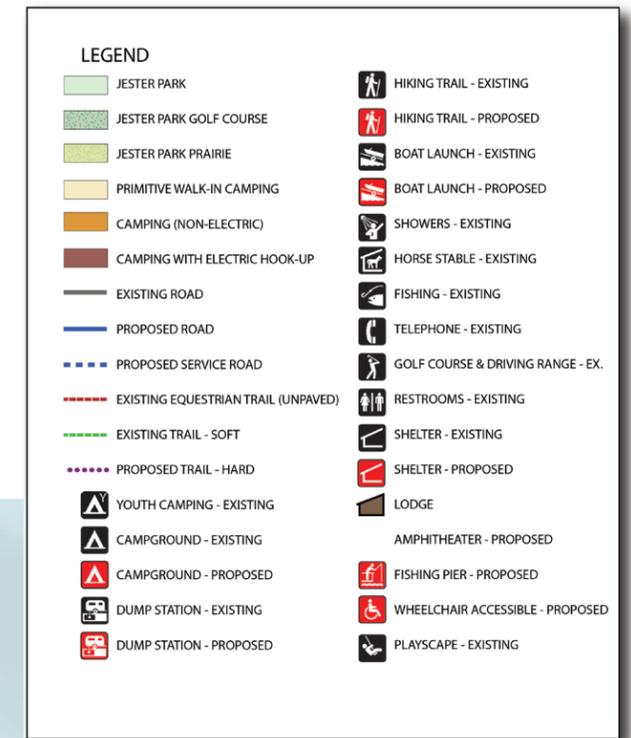
The master plan for Jester Park provides a clear development plan for the more than 1,834-acre park. The year-long planning process began in late December 2008 and has involved the local public, park users, US Army Corps of Engineers, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Polk County Conservation Advisory Board, RDG Planning & Design consultants and Polk County Conservation Board Staff through public workshops, working sessions and ongoing meetings.

Since 1958, when Jester Park became a park, recreation use has experienced steady growth. Originally, The Park was a river-based park along the Des Moines River providing camping, picnicking and fishing facilities. In 1975, the Saylorville Dam, on the Des Moines River, created the 6,000-acre Saylorville Reservoir. The creation of Saylorville Reservoir provided improved water-based recreation opportunities for Jester Park users. Additional campgrounds and picnic areas have been developed, as well as hiking and equestrian trails. The Jester Park Golf Course was added in 1971 and the Equestrian Center was added in 1979.

The Park is a combination of heavily wooded ridges and restored native grasslands. Spring flooding occurs most years and the occasional, more extensive, flooding restricts what facilities and activities that can be provided adjacent to Saylorville Reservoir.

Public input and park managers identified a variety of park needs in response to the changing amount and type of users. These needs include improved access to and within The Park, improved camping facilities, additional trail opportunities, expanded winter access, more fully accessible facilities, and increased amenities in support of interpretation and environmental education activities.

Several significant improvements are recommended in the master plan. The most significant is the relocation of the main entrance to the west side of The Park and the closing of the existing south and north entrances. This improved entrance location will reduce the travel distance to the various facilities within The Park and provide for improved park security. In conjunction with the relocated entrance, a conservation center is proposed at the new entrance and will serve as a park entry station, interpretive facility, environmental education center and Polk County Conservation office. Upgrading additional campsites to include electricity and developing an additional campground will respond to the growing demand for more highly developed campsites. Providing water and electricity to the heavily used picnic shelters will provide improved facilities for these users as well.



Master Plan Recommendations

The key outcome of a master plan is the actions that are proposed as a result of the planning process. Recommendations were arrived at after considering a range of alternatives. The recommendations respond directly to the needs identified through the planning process and shape the future for how The Park will be improved. The following recommendations include a brief explanation of the basis for the recommendation. The recommendations are grouped by category.

LAND USES

- Provide buffer zone surrounding the park through acquisition and/or easements.

NATURAL RESOURCES

- Manage woodland areas and steep slopes.
- Actively manage invasive species.
- Improve perennial and intermittent stream beds.
- Enhance aquatic resources.
- Enhance Shadow Pond by raising water level and expanding area.
- Develop a wetland sedimentation pond southwest of Two Dam Pond.

VEHICULAR CIRCULATION

- Relocate entrance to west side of The Park.
- Improve internal park system roads.
- Improve vehicular access to the lodge and equestrian center for visitors with special needs.
- Provide additional parking at park facilities.
- Develop cul-de-sac turnarounds at north and south ends of main park.
- Improve bridges within The Park to support commercial/bus traffic and allow for pedestrian traffic.

TRAIL CIRCULATION

- Develop additional hiking trails.
- Improve the existing equestrian trail system.
- Develop an accessible trail around Two Dam Pond and an accessible fishing dock.
- Develop a hard surface trail adjacent to the main internal park road.
- Expand existing trail system maintained for cross-country skiing.
- Support efforts to connect The Park to existing and proposed regional trail systems.

RECREATION FACILITIES

- Develop a campground registration station, including a camp store, to provide improved services to campground users and better facilitate registration process, including the reservation system.
- Install permanent vault toilets at Camp Area #3, Camp Area #5, and at The Playscape.
- Provide water adjacent to the existing toilet at picnic shelter #6 and water and electricity to picnic shelters #5 and #6.
- Develop three rental cabins to provide additional

overnight recreational opportunities within The Park.

- Provide electricity to campsites in the lower portion of camp area #4 and west side of camp area #2.
- Develop a new 20-30 site campground with electric campsites and a shower house.
- Develop up to 12 walk-in primitive campsites.
- Develop a smaller shelter within camp area #5 to support special events.
- Modify an existing shelter including adding three sides and a fireplace to support three-season uses.
- Develop a boat ramp at the north end of NW 128th Street.

INTERPRETATION/ADMINISTRATION FACILITIES

- Develop a conservation center near the new entrance.
- Consolidate all park maintenance facilities at existing office location.
- Develop a bird viewing blind and feeding station near shelter #5.
- Develop a viewing structure for the elk/bison enclosures.
- Develop a rustic amphitheater north of the mini shelter.
- Develop 2-3 wildlife observation areas.

LODGE FACILITIES

- Relocate the picnic shelter adjacent to the lodge and to the equestrian center area and construct a storage building to support lodge operations.
- Upgrade the lodge sound system.

EQUESTRIAN CENTER FACILITIES

- Improve camp area #6, including providing water, vault toilet, interior road, designated spurs and equestrian site amenities.
- Upgrade equestrian center outdoor arena.
- Improve outdoor paddocks to improve operations.
- Develop a storage building for equipment and hay
- Relocate a picnic shelter from the lodge.

GOLF COURSE FACILITIES

- Relocate and enhance clubhouse for improved association with driving range, expanded large group activities and improved operations.
- Continue fairway enhancements to improve course appearance and golfing experience for visitors.

Summary of Public Involvement

January 2009 January-April 2009 Nature News article inviting readers to January 22 public meeting and/or fill out the online survey.

Public input meeting on January 22. Polk County Conservation mailed invites to Jester Park neighbors, posted on website and flyers in the park, press releases to local media outlets, avid campers and shelter users.

Public input online survey posted.

May 2009 May-August 2009 Nature News article updating readers about Master Plan progress and announcing the May 19 meeting.

Public meeting on May 19. Polk County Conservation mailed to participants of first public meeting, posted online and in the park.

Short article included in the Saylorville Recreation Guide.

September 2009 September–December 2009 Nature News article updating readers about Master Plan progress and announcing the September 16 meeting

Public meeting on September 16. Polk County Conservation mailed to participants of previous public meetings, posted online and in the park.

October 2009 Final neighbor letter (Oct. 8) presenting final master plan concepts and an invitation to the Board meeting where approval would take place. This was sent to public meeting participants.

Plan discussed numerous times at PCC Board meetings in 2009.

PCC Advisory Committee Meeting (input solicited).

January 2010 January–April 2010 Nature News article announcing plan completion and a link to view the plan on our website.

Polk County Conservation used many forms of communication to reach the public during the master planning process, from January 2009 - January 2010. These included sending meeting invitation letters to Jester Park neighbors, posting notices on the website and flyers in the park, sending press releases to local media outlets, and using online survey to gather feedback.

