



JEFFERSON COUNTY PARKS DEPARTMENT

ANNUAL REPORT

September, 2024

To the members of the Jefferson County Board of Supervisors, I am proud to submit the 2024 Jefferson County Parks Department Annual Report. This report only captures a fraction of the hard work our dedicated staff has put into the maintenance and operations of our County Parks, Trails, and Facilities. The Parks staff are an incredibly talented and hardworking team that deserves credit for all the great work they do. Our success is also, in no small part, due to the dedication and ongoing support of our Parks Committee, County Board, and other County Departments that continue to support our departments projects, and our mission. We thank you.

The Mission of the Jefferson County Parks Department is 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.

JEFFERSON COUNTY PARKS

The Jefferson County Parks Department manages a system of 22 County Parks. Our parks vary in size from small wayside rest areas like Cold Spring Creamery Park, to the 517-acre Dorothy Carnes County Park and Rose Lake State Natural Area. Our parks feature a wide range of recreation from historic interpretation to boat launches, shelters, playgrounds, hiking trails, and expansive natural areas. Some of our highlighted recreational offerings include Wisconsin best off-leash dog exercise area, boating, fishing, hosting special events, shelter rentals and picnicking, education, nature appreciation, playgrounds, mountain biking, frisbee golf, cross country ski trails, snowshoeing, sledding, photography, and trails for hiking, running, biking, more.

Parks annual project highlights:

- Replace and update automatic gate operators at Upper Rock Lake County Park
- Updated fencing and access gates at the Jefferson County Dog Park
- Updated E-Bicycle and Park Hours ordinances
- Partnered with our GIS department to create new park and trail wayfinding maps and signage for six County Parks and Trails
- Completed Mountain Bike Trail Project at Upper Rock Lake Park in Partnership with Doosen Bobcat
- Added bike/ped counter on Glacial River Trail
- Installed three memorial benches and an interpretive memorial at Dorothy Carnes Park

- Managed over 400 hours of volunteer hours through partnerships with local businesses, Scout Groups, Jefferson County Human Services, and other volunteer recruitment programs.
- Ongoing collaboration with City of Jefferson Parks Department at Rock River Landing including construction of a new playground
- Rehabilitation of Lower Rock Lake Park playground
- Implemented digital Work Order System for tracking project costs and asset maintenance
- Brand new webpage with updated technology for scheduling and online payments

PARKS NATURAL RESOURCES AND FORESTRY

Jefferson County Parks manages the grounds for over 1200 acres of County Parkland, County Facilities, and Flood Mitigation Properties. We have an ISA Certified Arborist and Natural Resources Technician position that is dedicated to managing our broad ecosystems and natural resources in the parks. This position oversees multiple LTE positions and in 2024 added 2 student inter positions that work to accomplish the many tasks and goals outlined below.

Natural Resources and Forestry annual project highlights

- Completed 6 Prescribed burns for a total of 68 acres at Carnes, Carlin, and Korth
- Planted 83 oaks, 100 evergreens, and 3 memorial trees (2 white oak and 1 Sugar Maple)
- Installation of new 25-acre shortgrass prairie at Carnes North
- Mitigation of 40 acres woodland encroachment on native prairie habitats at Carnes Park
- Monitoring and control of invasive plants across the entire park system with an emphasis in 2023/24 on Wild Parsnip
- Hosted 8 volunteer workdays and 3 educational events in the parks with multiple organizations and friends groups
- Implemented first Memorial Prairie Planting in 2024 (\$2,000.00 Donation)
- Implementation of a structural pruning program in parks and facilities
- Inventory of forest resources including risk assessments along trails, parking areas, and structures
- Ongoing monitoring of the Spongy Moth outbreak and implementation of mitigation strategies
- Oversee contract restoration work at Garman Nature Preserve

JEFFERSON COUNTY TRAILS

Staff also manage a network of trails including the 30-mile Glacial River Bike Trail, 3-mile Glacial River Mountain Bike Trails, 11-mile Interurban Bike Trail, Jefferson County Intercommunity Bike Routes, 224 miles of Jefferson County Snowmobile trails, 18 miles of hiking and cross-country ski trails, and our Glacial Heritage Area Water Trails. These trail systems have grown to become some of our most popular offerings and silent sports like paddling, biking, birding, and hiking continuing to lead the outdoor recreation industry for popularity and days spent participating. The link between personal health and access to the outdoors continues to be an emphasis in our communities, highlighted by year over year increases in users and our ongoing status as a Gold Medal Community in the Wisconsin Healthy Communities Initiative.

Project Highlights on our Trail Systems include:

- Ongoing volunteer work on Mountain Bike Trails at Upper Rock Lake Mountain Bike Park
- Successful Stewardship Grant for Phase III Interurban Trail for \$249,999.00
- Successful Transportation Alternative Grant for Phase III Interurban Trail \$1,485,666.92

- Replaced one additional snowmobile bridge on funded trails
- Updated wayfinding signage and maps on the Glacial River Trail, Interurban Trail, Glacial River Mountain Bike Trails, and Upper Rock Mountain Bike Trails
- Interurban Trail Phase III bridge project was awarded and planned to begin construction in September of 2024
- Interurban Phase III trail design at 60% and slated to begin work in spring of 2025

COUNTY FACILITIES

The Parks Department works with the County Facility managers to provide year-round grounds maintenance services on all county owned properties. This includes general mowing, landscape maintenance, tree removals and planting, and snow removal at the County 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.

FLOOD MITIGATION AND TAX FORECLOSURES

The Parks Department also manages the County's 140+ flood mitigation properties and assists the Corporation Counsels office in grounds keeping and 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.

Noteworthy Grants and Donations:

- \$100,000.00 disbursement from the Community Foundation of the Fox Valley for Garman Nature Preserve
- \$16,161.50 in donations from three Brew with a View fundraising events at Korth Park with Tyrannena Brewery
- \$20,000 Quirk Foundation Grant for Interurban Trail Bridge Construction
- \$15,000.00 Recreation Boating Facility Grant for Burnt Village Launch Improvement



