

Plans continue for July 4th fireworks display

By ERICA BRADLEY

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Planning for the Fourth of July fireworks display at Prairie Dog State Park has been underway for a month and will continue until the holiday, Karla Reed, executive director of the Norton Area Chamber of Commerce said.

Ms. Reed said planning is an ongoing process — she is still looking for donors for the big event. The display is funded entirely through donors and by other projects..

"Everything goes for the fireworks display," Ms. Reed said.

The display will take place at Prairie Dog State Park. It will cost \$4.20 or \$2.85 for seniors to get in, which is the rate for a one-day park visit, she said.

Ms. Reed said the entrance fee goes to the park, not to the display.

She expects attendance to be high this year, — last year an estimated 5,000 people from Norton, Alma and Lenora attended.

"With the economy being the way

it is, I think this year's display will have more participation than last year's, she said."

The fireworks display is something that is cheap, fun and wholesome, she said. This year, Larry Nelson, Joyce Quinn, Dan Hazlett and Steve Mees became certified pyrotechnics.

"Russ Erbert and Larry Nelson have done a wonderful job designing and coordinating this year's event," Ms. Reed said.

The Norton County Sheriff's De-

Schedule

7:30 – Watermelon setup
8:00 – Welcome the crowd, watermelon served
8:30 – Presentation of the Flag
9:30 – Retiring of the flag, fireworks to follow

partment, Kansas Highway Patrol, Norton Rural Fire Department, Alma Fire Department, Lenora Fire Department and Norton County EMS will be on hand to enjoy the display and, most importantly, react if they are needed.

The event will start at 8 p.m., when free watermelon will be served. Jamboree Foods will provide the watermelon, Ms. Reed said.

The fireworks display will start after dark, or around 9:30.

Memorial weekend '09 crowd tops 2008

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Memorial Day is always a big holiday for travel, especially at Prairie Dog State Park, where park staff saw an increase of 2,400 visitors over last year — 15,000 vs. 12,600.

Park Manager Steve Mathes said an estimated \$9,000 was earned last year, and this year's total was \$13,000.

Mr. Mathes said the revenue numbers can be misleading because some

campers book and pay for their travel in advance.

He attributed the increase to the economy saying, "The economy keeps people closer to home. All Kansas wildlife and parks have had record attendance numbers this year."

Another factor in increased lake visits was the weather. Last year, the lake rose seven feet due to heavy rain around the holiday, Mr. Mathes said.

"The weather this year was perfect.

It was a good, busy holiday weekend."

While a higher shoreline is good for the fish, it limits fishermen.

"High water really limits shoreline access. Fishermen don't have the same access they do when the water is at lower levels."

This year, the water level is six feet above where it was in March of 2008. The elevation of 2294.2 feet, puts the reservoir in good shape.

Mr. Mathes said there has been a minimal rise this year due to the rain that has been occurring in recent months.

Another factor in increased visitation this year was some of the park improvements. Toby Kuhn, park ranger, said the park staff has been working on campsite renovation, modern cabins and Americans with Disabilities Act improvements, which give the handicapped access to more

of the park.

Upgrades are not yet complete.

The modern cabin will be full service and will operate year round. The cabin is currently being built at the Norton Correctional Facility, and it should be ready by late fall.

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