

Man fights for future of parks in Kansas

By TOM DREILING

The future of state parks in Kansas has at least one northwest Kansas man tossing and turning.

Doug Sebelius of Norton, a member of the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Commission, said that Kansas, in 2005, celebrated a half-century of building a system of state parks. These enhance the quality of life for every Kansan, he said, through outdoor recreation and wildlife conservation, but the future of the system is uncertain.

Mr. Sebelius said that protecting and improving 24 state parks requires a dependable, long-term source of money which is fair and beneficial to everyone.

"When Kansas dedicated its first state park 50 years ago, 70 percent of the cost for caring for the parks was borne by the state's general fund," he said. "More recently, it has been 15 percent and soon there will likely be no general tax support for the park system."

Mr. Sebelius said he feels another hike in access and user fees might result in less revenue by driving people away.

"Kansas is tied for last in the nation in general fund spending on state parks," he said. "Without adequate support, parks will open later and close earlier, services will be cut, and some will deteriorate and some may close altogether."

He said the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks offered a solution last year by proposing in the Legislature an outdoor recreational access fee of \$4 to be paid by Kansas residents each year when they register a vehicle. The plan removes the need for a Kansas resident to have a park permit and makes entry

to the parks free for anyone who drives a vehicle registered in Kansas. Sebelius said those who have purchased a park vehicle pass under the present law, this proposed bill will save \$41.50 a year.

The daily park permit is currently \$2.50 more than the proposed cost for a full year.

Sebelius said the once-successful Local Outdoor Recreation Grant Program can be revived with the plan.

"When the parks division... had sufficient tax support several years ago, local governments received matching funds for their own recreation and parks projects," he said.

Sebelius said that part of the proposed \$4 registration fee will be devoted to grants, which at one time assisted more than 100 Kansas communities.

Sebelius mentioned that Oklahoma, Montana and California are among several states that care for their parks through a motor vehicle registration fee.

"Kansas, sadly, is last among the states in per capita spending for recreation," he said.

He called the lack of legislative support "puzzling," noting that seven of the top 10 tourist attractions in Kansas are state parks.

"The only opposition to SB87 that I have heard during the past year has come from legislators," he said. "They need to be convinced that this step is vital to the protection of our natural and historical resources."

Sebelius called it a question of values.

"Kansans," he said, "should guarantee that our wonderful, diverse system of parks has a future beyond our lifetimes."



Kids hear story

IN THE GRADE SCHOOL LIBRARY on Monday afternoon, Librarian Linda Glaze (above) read to the fourth graders including Justin Gee, Konner Fortin and Nick Ashley (right).



Good Sam Center hosts show Sunday

Don't forget to check out the "ageless" art show from 2 to 5 p.m. on Sunday at the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center. Live music will be played throughout the show by Leanne Miller, violinist, of McCook.

The center received a grant to hold the show from the Kansas Association for Homes and Services for the Aging/Central National Bank Art of the Ages program.

The show is open to all ages, from children to seniors, and all categories including needlework, photography, oil painting, pastels, pen-

cil, watercolor, sculpture, wood-carving, textiles and ceramics. Winners may be eligible to participate in the 2006 state show.

There will also be a rug hooking demonstration.

Judges will be Anna Shaw and Terri Woolsey. Refreshments will be served.

Assisting with the event will be the Oberlin Arts and Humanities Commission.

The last day to enter a piece is Friday. For details, call Lisa Stacy or Anita Hirsch at 475-2245.

The public is welcome to attend.

Council to discuss energy mutual aid

The Oberlin City Council will meet at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the police department because all rooms at The Gateway will be full.

The council will discuss a resolution authorizing membership in the mutual aid program with the Kansas Municipal Energy Association. City Administrator Gary Shike said this is something the city does every three years.

The group will also need to appoint a representative to the convention and visitors bureau. Councilman Joe Stanley has been serving as the representative.

Mr. Shike said he will send the reports from Water's Edge Aquatics, the pool architects, about the designs and costs of a new pool, to council members. The pool is not on the agenda since the pool commission has asked for a work session with the council with the pool as the only item on the agenda.

The meeting will not be aired on the local access channel 7 on cable, but is open to the public.

Take a Trip Around the World

Supporting Our Schools has eight presenters signed up for the Trip Around the World night from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on Monday.

Abby Hissong, with the group, said there are people who are going to talk about Southeast Asia, Korea, Egypt, Germany, Africa and China. She said some who have been more than one place haven't yet decided

what they will talk about. The evening is open for all ages of kids and adults. Everyone should meet in the gym and they will then move around the building.

Mrs. Hissong said they will also kick off their basket giveaway that night. She said each class at the grade school has made a basket and will be selling tickets for a chance

to win one. Tickets will be sold that night, Tuesday at the basketball game, Friday, Feb. 10, at the wrestling match and be given away on Tuesday, Feb. 14, at the basketball game. Winners need not be present.

Tickets are \$1 a piece or 6 for \$5. The money will go to Supporting Our Schools to help with more activities.

Bureau to host bake-off

The Decatur County Farm Bureau will host a bake-off for food check-out day on Tuesday, Feb. 21, at the Business Enhancement Center.

Dianne Bremer, with the bureau, said food check-out day celebrates the affordability of food in America. The idea is to have people see how many agriculture related items they use every day and how cheap food is compared to everything else. Nationwide food check-out day is Thursday, but the Decatur County Farm Bureau decided to wait until the end of the month to try something new.

The bureau will host coffee hour from 9 to 11 a.m. that day, said Mrs. Bremer. She said they are asking anyone in the county to bake cakes, cookies or breads for the bake off and have them at the center by 9 a.m.

Each item baked should have the name of the item and then a list underneath of the ingredients used that are related to agriculture. At the bottom of the list should be the person's name. The name should be folded under since the items will be judged.

Those who come to the coffee hour can then see the baked items and what agriculture items are used to make the goodies. Anyone can enter, said Mrs. Bremer, including kids 12 years and under since they will have a junior division.

The judging will be held after the coffee hour. All of the goodies will be donated to Cedar Living Center and the Decatur County Good Samaritan Center.

Present your best card hand

Valentine's Day is almost here, which means it's time to try your luck at poker to win one of two \$50 bouquets.

That's right. Both Prairie Petals and Flowers by Lee will be giving away a \$50 bouquet just in time for Valentine's Day.

Each time you visit one of the sponsoring businesses collect one randomly drawn playing card. Each person needs to collect five cards for a poker hand.

The cards must be turned in to *The Oberlin Herald* by 5 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 10. The two highest hands win.

All participants must be 18 or older to win.

Sponsoring businesses include: R & M Service Center, The Dresser, Rocking R, Stanley Hardware, Flowers By Lee, Shear Creations West & Day Spa, Home Planning Center, Ward Drug Store, Prairie Petals, and Addleman Drug Store.




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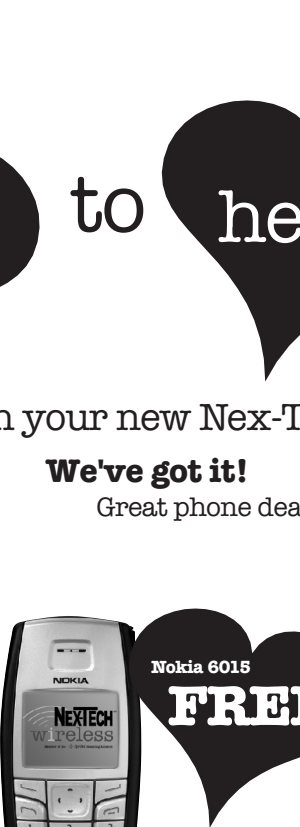


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