

THE CENTER

Nature Center Directors and Administrators Section Newsletter

Mission: To provide leadership and inspire excellence in nature center administration



Important dates

Submit newsletter articles and information by:

December 4, 2008

NAI National Workshop

November 11-15, 2008

Portland, Oregon

www.interpnet.com/workshop

“Parks for Life” by Will LaPage

Review by Jon Brown
Regional Supervisor
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I would like to give my personal comments on this book from Will LaPage on our park's legacy. I was very impressed with the message of thinking outside the box or changing the rules in park operations. As park managers we sometimes get caught up in policy and procedures which keeps creative thoughts in check with current administration guidelines. The book “Parks for Life” encourages one to think about park(s) lasting forever. Our Director is always talking about the parks being in the “Forever Business”; he is 100% on target. What does that mean to you? When I got out of college, I perceived it to mean working for one system until I retired. Then, later in life, while living in a park family environment, I realized I wanted these parks to last my whole life. Then as I got older, and 30 years has gone by in my career, I realized these parks aren't 100% guaranteed for my children's and their children's enjoyment. So what do I need to do to make them “Parks for Life”?

Parks for Life is a concept of the future, but must be practiced today. What this book tells me is we must think out of the box to keep these parks alive forever. So how do we do this? I believe by selling our parks to the next generation and having them fall in love with -the outdoor experience as we did. Hopefully they walk away with an emotional and intellectual connection between the visitor and the resources that they will never forget for their entire lifetime. As visitors share their life's experience through story telling and as they bring that emotional outdoor activity to the imagination, they will encourage others to visit that park. Simple you might say: Yes, no not really.

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One example in most park systems all over the country is that we have adopted a policy to not take on anymore park lands due to high deferred maintenance costs that you presently have with your present parks. But by not accepting anymore land acquisitions we are remaining status quo with our future outdoor experience. Down the road this limits and stresses our current land resources.

Will LaPage visits the ideas of certain essential practices (Best Management Practices) that all parks need to survive for life: Partnering; Friends Groups (Volunteers); Heritage Appreciation; Accountability; Asset Inventory/Monitoring; Good Neighbors; Advocacy and Activism; Planning and Experience.

I want to reinforce the elements of Friends Groups; Volunteers (Community) and

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NCDA

Parks for Life

Endowments. I feel, that over my career, these are essential components to the “Parks for Life” concept.

Friends Groups/Volunteers are the special people that understand the connection with the park or a facility/program. They are your voice to the community that supports the concepts in park managements. I want to share a little Brownism about communities: “without community support you and your park will not survive (Period)”, no matter how much funding you have to spend. Talking about funding, I embrace the concept of endowments due to no strings attached. These are guaranteed funds which you establish as a base and live off the interest for your operational needs. Your normal funding sources may go up & down as the economy dictates, but your base endowment fund is always intact (a great type of funding for life).

I talked about only a small part of a very interesting book. I suggest you check out other works by LaPage and see if you can also picture your park being around forever, because these “Parks are for Life”.

Board’s Arkansas Retreat

The NCDA Board of Officers met for a retreat in Arkansas on August 13 –15. We discussed needs for the newsletter and website. We have themes set out already for next years newsletter and set March, July, September and December as the standard months for the newsletter release. In addition, NCDA will be establishing monthly communication with its members.

Discussion also focused on ways to help participants in the Roadshow take home more materials or information that better addresses their questions and concerns. Centers on the tour will be asked for their important points which will all be compiled for participants. An evaluation will be created and goodies in totebags provided. The NCDA National Workshop Session was accepted and we discussed what each of us needs to be prepared to bring.

A NAI section Scorecard will be in place in January and the NCDA Board will review this. The board also will be working about 3 goals and will soon seek



on the Section’s Strategic Plan with member comments in some way.

Taming of a river led to creation of Lake Dardanelle State Park

By Jill M. Rohrbach, travel writer

comprehensive river basin development.

The objectives were: to make river traffic feasible again; limit flooding and stop erosion along the river’s banks; produce hydroelectric power; and provide recreational opportunities. The plan called for a series of locks and dams to create five reservoirs in Oklahoma and two in Arkansas, Ozark Lake and Lake Dardanelle. President Harry Truman signed the bill approving the project in 1946, but it took 10 years for money to be appropriated so construction could begin.

Lake Dardanelle

The groundbreaking ceremony for the Dardanelle Lock and Dam was held in 1959 even though funding was not secured until 1963. And when the flood gates at the Dardanelle Lock and Dam were closed in 1969, Lake Dardanelle was born.

Authorization for a state park at the lake came in 1966, and the lease with the Corps was signed in 1967. In the early days, the park was spread over three different locations – Ouita, Russellville and Dardanelle – and comprised 292 acres. Most of the initial construction in the park was done by the Corps of Engineers and included extremely primitive facilities. After the State Parks Division took possession of the park, the facilities were improved and expanded. (In 1995, the Ouita area was sold to the city of Russellville and is now a part of its city parks system.)

Today Lake Dardanelle is one of the most popular recreational parks in the system, and according to Superintendent Andy Thomas, campers, fishermen, and boaters use the park most. “Camping is a very popular activity at Lake Dardanelle. Most recently our popular sites along the water have been remodeled to include 50 amp service and provide more room for large recreational vehicles and campers with multiple vehicles or boat trailers,” said Thomas.

One of the most popular recreational parks in the system

“We cater to all fishermen – crappie, catfish, and bass. We also have an Americans with Disabilities Act-approved wooden fishing pier, along with a 682-foot-long ADA-sanctioned rock breakwater with a six-foot-wide concrete walkway that provides access to the excellent fishing the lake is known for,” Thomas added.

“Our Sport Fishing Weigh-In Pavilion is a facility we are particularly proud of here at the park. It was the first of its kind in the nation and has brought some of the largest bass fishing events in the country to Lake Dardanelle,” Thomas added. The pavilion provides a meeting and computer room, weigh-in scales, a public address system, LED weight readout, aerator tanks, and catch and release tanks. The park also provides a “catch-and-release” boat to take the tournament-caught fish back to their natural habitat. According to Thomas, Lake Dardanelle has had the privilege of hosting some of the biggest names in bass fishing in the country over the past several years because of this unique facility and the successful catch and release program the park has in place.

Facilities at the park have improved greatly since the early days. Today there are 74 campsites with water, electricity, flush toilets, hot showers, picnic tables and grills and 30 campsites with sewer, 16 of which also have 50 amp hookups in the Russellville area. In 2003, the park opened a new Visitor Center that houses classrooms, 8,000 gallons of aquariums representing the Arkansas River, local tributaries and Lake Dardanelle, and exhibits featuring an aquatic turtle touch table, honey bee exhibit and 5 interactive computer kiosks with information on aquatic resources and the history and culture of the Arkansas River Valley. This facility sits on the shore of Lake Dardanelle providing breathtaking views of the lake and something for every visitor to enjoy.

Thomas credits the park’s success to the 1/8th cent conservation tax passed in 1996 which has provided major funding for many improvements. Projects made possible by the conservation tax, include the Sport Fishing Weigh-In Pavilion, campground renovations, and the new 10,527-square-foot Visitor Information Center. “The park staff is committed to providing quality environmental education and recreational opportunities in the Arkansas River Valley, the 1/8th cent has made it possible to bring those opportunities to our visitors through quality exhibits, interpretive programs and state of the art facilities.”

Lake Dardanelle

Arkansas’s 24th state park, Lake Dardanelle, is located on a 34,000-acre reservoir and is popular for fishing tournaments and camping.

To reach the Russellville area of the park, take exit #81 (Scenic 7 Byway) off Interstate 40 at Russellville. Turn south then immediately turn west on Ark. 326 and proceed four miles. The Dardanelle area is located four miles west of Dardanelle on Ark. 22. For more information call (479) 967-5516 or visit www.ArkansasStateParks.com.

