



County Corner

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Flathead County Parks & Recreation

The purpose of the Parks & Recreation Department is to provide parks, recreational facilities, and recreation programs for the benefit of individuals and various supporting organizations in the Flathead Valley and its history can be traced back into the 1970s.

The current management has been in place since 1997 when the County Commission merged the former Parks & Recreation Department as a money saving measure with the Noxious Weed District. The success of this merger has shown through the quality and consistency of its programs. We continue to be partners with the City of Columbia Falls and Daybreak Rotary in providing much needed activities to the valley's youth. We also work with the Flathead National Forest in grooming the cross country ski trails at Blacktail Mountain.

The taxpayer is our foremost concern in all areas within this



department. Our staff is qualified and continuously strives for excellence. We offer several youth programs and operate adult basketball, flag football and softball leagues. Our youth programs begin in the fall with the preparatory flag football, then girl's basketball in Columbia Falls, followed by boy's basketball in Columbia Falls, Wendy's Lil' Hoopsters in Kalispell, Columbia Falls Girls' Volleyball and Daybreak Rotary Volleyball. Our youth programs' season ends with t-ball. Our leased facility at the Conrad Complex provides the home of the Flathead High School's Bravettes Softball Team and provides the facilities for our flag football and adult softball leagues. Our other recreational programs rely on the cooperation and availability of local school gyms. Much of our recreational programs also rely on the volunteer. We are grateful for the many parents and others who volunteer their time to help educate our local youth in the various athletic programs!

Aside from providing the county's taxpayers with recreation, we also provide much needed areas for leisure. Iven Herron Memorial Park is a 117-acre park that has hosted several equestrian events, but is available for any of the public to use (although our parks do not tolerate motorized vehicles). This park borders much state-owned land, as well as private landowners who are in the process of considering offering a trail that would start from Herron Park and go all the

way to Blacktail Mountain. Some of this is in the negotiation stage, but it is hoped that this access can be gained for future generations.

Many of our parks give the public access to waterways, such as Foy's Lake Beach and Boat Access, two developed sites at Bitterroot Lake, several less known parks on Whitefish Lake, four developed accesses to Flathead Lake, as well as one water only access to Swan River, in addition to others. In addition, many of our parks are available for the taxpayer to rent, please contact the office at 758-5800 for a list of parks.

County Parks has approximately 90 parks in our inventory, yet only 32 of these are well maintained due to funding and staffing constraints. Some of these parks, however, are just unusable and will be considered by staffing criteria, along with advisory committee's recommendations on whether they should be sold for surplus. If a decision is made to surplus a park, there will always be a public hearing conducted and the public invited to voice their own opinions and concerns.

One goal during the current administration is to acquire a gymnasium due to the increase of population and the desire for many taxpayers and children to have a facility that is easily accessible. Plans are in the first phase of research for funding mechanisms, grants, donations and possible sale of surplus parks to implement this goal. It is not the desire of the current administration to burden the taxpayer further by any levy or ballot issues.

Flathead County Parks & Recreation JED FISHER, Director



Jed Fisher is the current director of the Parks & Recreation Department, while Robert Tuman and Mike Dyon provide assistance in the recreational programming. Jed Fisher, along with the five-member Weed District Board took on the challenge of managing Parks & Recreation in 1997. He is also assisted by Gordon Jewett, Assistant Supervisor of Weeds & Parks and the office staff.

Jed Fisher has two children and enjoys spending his free time with his son Roman and daughter, Meaghan golfing, camping and fishing.

"The needs of the future take precedence over the demands of the present."

— County Commissioners: Dale Lauman, Gary Hall & Joe Brenneman