



JEFFERSON COUNTY PARKS DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT September, 2023



Mission Statement:

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.

PARKS

The Jefferson County Parks Department is fortunate to manage a comprehensive and celebrated system of 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. County parks feature a wide range of recreation opportunities from historic interpretation to boat launches, shelters, playgrounds, hiking trails, and expansive natural areas. Some of our highlighted recreational offerings include an off-leash dog exercise area, groomed cross country ski trails, snowshoeing, sledding, hiking, running, biking, boating, fishing, hosting special events, shelter rentals and picnicking, nature appreciation, playgrounds, mountain biking, Frisbee golf, photography, and more.

Project highlights in our park system from the past year include:

- On-going forest restoration at Garman Nature Preserve
- Replaced and updated automatic gate operators at Dorothy Carnes County Park (Radloff Lane)
- Replaced 5 restroom doors
- Installed electric and lighting at Cappies Landing
- Installed electric and lighting at the Jefferson County Dog Park
- Inoculated 72 ash trees in county parks and county facilities against Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)
- Removed 70 dead ash, maple, and oak trees from multiple parks
- Planted 75 native oak trees
- Planted 150 native shrubs including dogwood, hazelnut, and nannyberry
- Completed 4 prescribed burns on a total of 52 acres
- Treated 43 acres of prairie/savanna for woody invasive plants
- Treated 3 acres for spongy moth at Indian Mounds County Park
- Implementation of a structural pruning program on 150+ trees in parks and facilities
- Developed partnerships and volunteer opportunities with Prairie Enthusiasts
- Hosted 15 volunteer events to pull invasive plants and provide education to the public
- Hosted 8 volunteer Mountain Bike Trail build events
- Partnered with the City of Fort Atkinson Parks Department on a Bark River Paddling Event
- Ongoing collaboration with City of Jefferson Parks Department at Rock River Landing
- Implemented digital work order system for tracking project costs and asset maintenance
- Planted a total of 21 acres of new high diversity pollinator habitat in two locations
- Reconstructed Carnes East access drive (Jones Lane)
- New webpage - redesigned with updated technology for scheduling and online payments

Shelter Rentals continue to be a staple of summer activities in our parks. Korth County Park in Lake Mills continues to be the most popular shelter in the park system due to the views and amenities. The Jefferson County Dog Park is our most heavily used facility with dog ownership in the State at an all-time high.

TRAILS

Staff continue to manage a comprehensive network of trails including:

- 32-mile Glacial River Bike Trail
- 3-mile Glacial River Mountain Bike Trails
- 7-mile Interurban Bike Trail
- Jefferson County Inter-Community Bike Routes
- 229 miles of Jefferson County Snowmobile trails
- 18 miles of hiking and cross-country ski trails with-in our parks, and

- Glacial Heritage Area Water Trails

These trail systems have grown to become some of our most popular offerings with silent sports. Paddling and biking continue to lead the outdoor recreation industry for popularity and numbers of days spent participating. The link between personal health and access to the outdoors continues to be an emphasis in our communities. Trends highlight an increase in users.

The 2022/2023 winter season was well below average for snowmobiling, but the snow provided enough staying power for over 3-weeks of groomed cross-country skiing at Carnes and Korth Parks.

TRAIL SYSTEM HIGHLIGHTS

- Completed an additional 1 mile of single-track trail at the Glacial River Trail Mountain Bike Park in Jefferson. *A \$10,000.00 donation from the Jefferson Community Foundation was also received to help support new signage and supplemental staffing.*
- Ongoing volunteer work on Mountain Bike Trails at the 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
- Jefferson County Snowmobile trails were expanded by 5 miles
- Two bridges on the Jefferson County Snowmobile Trails were replaced
- Final repair of the Glacial River Bike Trail, south of Fort Atkinson

PARTNERSHIPS

We continue to work with area municipalities and groups on projects, programs, and community initiatives in the County Parks.

COUNTY FACILITY: GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

The Park Department manages (mowing and landscape maintenance) of the grounds for all county-owned properties

- Courthouse
- MIS building
- Highway Department
- Fairgrounds
- Human Services
- Workforce Development/University of Wisconsin-Extension
- Sheriff's Department annex and shooting range
- Potter's Field Cemetery.

The department also works with, and supports the facility managers in their annual parking lot snow and ice removal operations.

FLOOD MITIGATION AND TAX FORECLOSURES

The Parks Department manages the County's 140 Flood Mitigation Properties, and assists the Corporation Counsel office with managing grounds keeping issues/concerns on tax foreclosure properties. The department provides

services including compliance monitoring & reporting, enforcement of violations, response to citizen complaints and non-compliant uses, invasive plant removals, building demolition, mowing, and mitigation of hazards.

NOTEWORTHY DONATIONS:

- \$38,000.00 - Community Foundation of the Fox Valley for Garman Nature Preserve
- \$16,161.50 - Three ***Brew with a View*** fundraising events at Korth Park with Tyrannena Brewery
- \$17,000.00 - Oconomowoc Rotary donation for the Interurban Trail
- \$10,000.00 - Jefferson Community Foundation donation for the Glacial River Mountain Bike Park
- \$ 6,750.00 - (Revenue) 8th Annual Dog Park Calendar sales and advertisements

CURRENT DEPARTMENT SUCCESSES

- Fundraising and special events hosted in partnership with our highly-valued partners and Friends groups
- Alternative sources of income for capital projects through private donations and foundations
- High level of support from the community
- Successful grant writing efforts on larger projects (Recreation Trail Program, Transportation Alternatives Program, Stewardship, County Conservation Aids)
- Strong partnerships with local municipalities and organizations on projects, events, and programming
- Creative funding and partnerships to keep Master Plans and large projects moving forward
- Gold Star standard designation from Wisconsin Healthy Communities
- Incorporation of staff position focused on Forestry and Natural Resources
- Maintained high level of staffing throughout the year
- Support from County Board and Administrative Staff for park projects

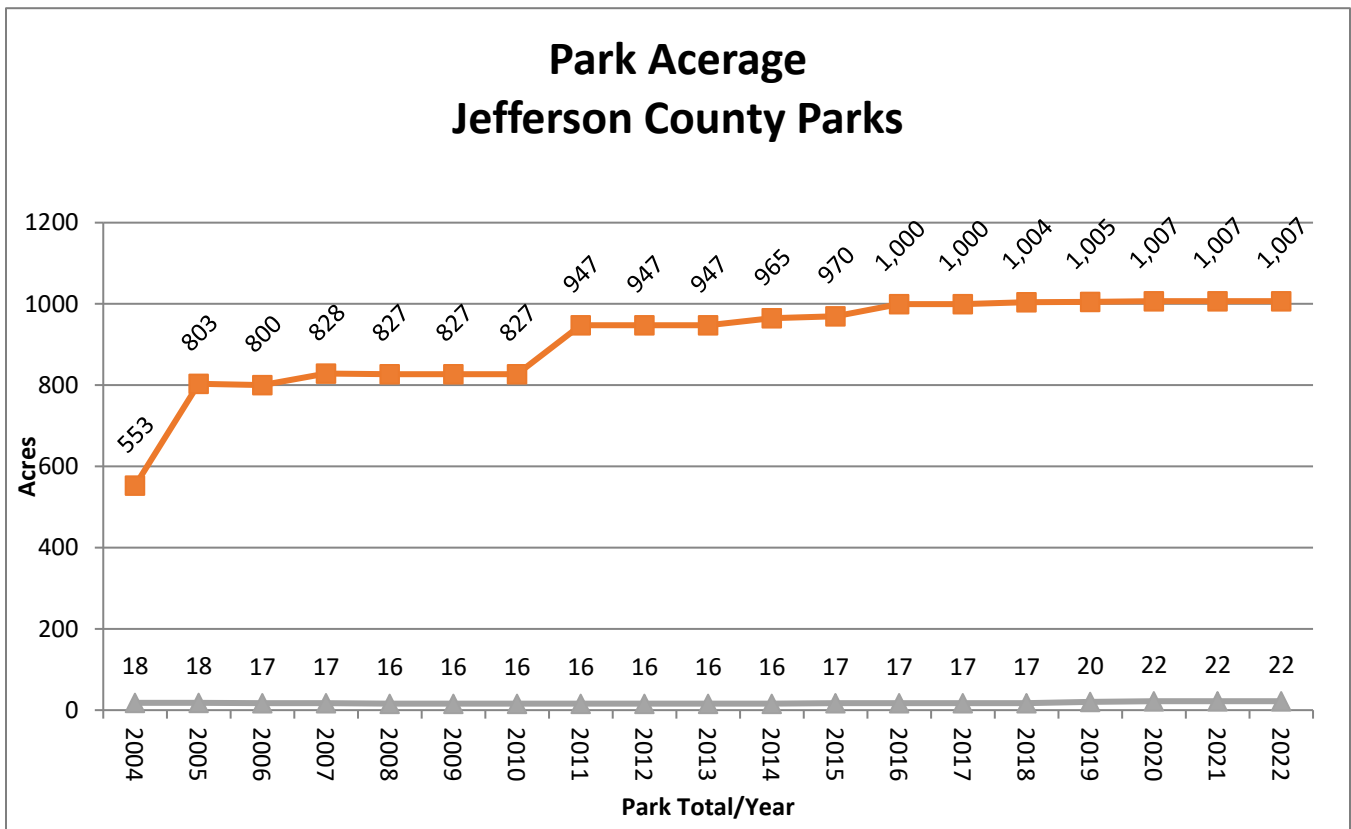
CURRENT DEPARTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Update and Implementation of the Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan
- Implementation of the 2021 Jefferson County Comprehensive and Land Use Plan
- Expansion of marketing efforts to include a social media platform
- Redevelopment of webpage resources and streamlining of scheduling/reservation and payment systems
- Expansion of digital and web-based platforms for recreational assets and trails
- Expansion of on-line and GIS based tools for inventory and asset management
- Partnerships with State & Local municipalities and organizations to build regional recreational assets and increase working capacity
- Fostering Friends groups to help with long-term maintenance and fundraising goals
- Build our Natural Resources Foundation fund, research other funding options, i.e.: donor advised funds
- Development of Implementation Plan to include recreational and joint/management opportunities at the Holzhueter State Park in partnership with Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WIDNR)
- Update Strategic Plan

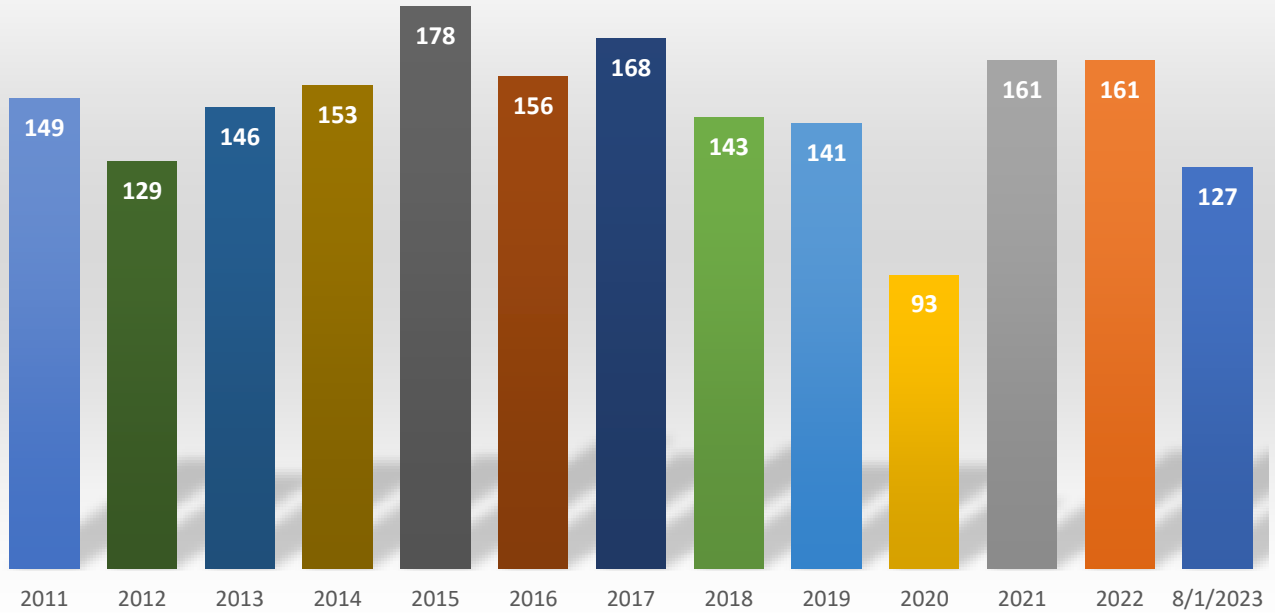
CURRENT DEPARTMENT CHALLENGES

- Funding and fundraising for larger Capital projects such as the Interurban Trail
- Maintain staffing levels sufficient to meet the objectives of park plans and expectations of the public
- Recruitment and retention of staff, competitive wages

- Management and recruitment of volunteers
- Enforcement of County Park Ordinances – Lack of Park Ranger Services
- Community outreach, advocacy, and fundraising (Public Relations)
- Reaching and engaging our community members in planning and information sessions
- Continually expanding scope of responsibility for the department



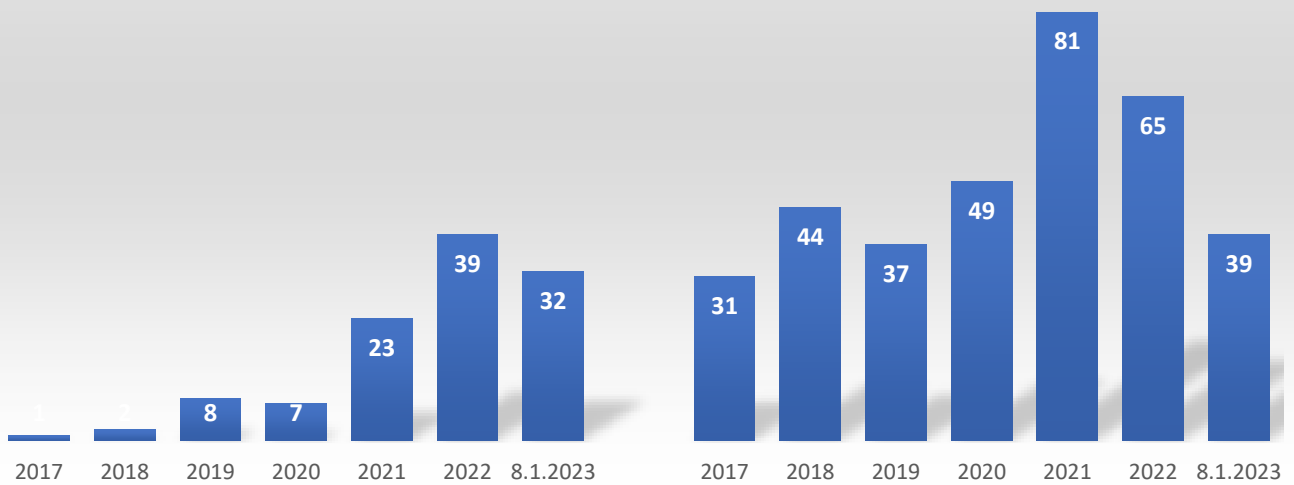
Jefferson County Parks Annual Shelter Rentals



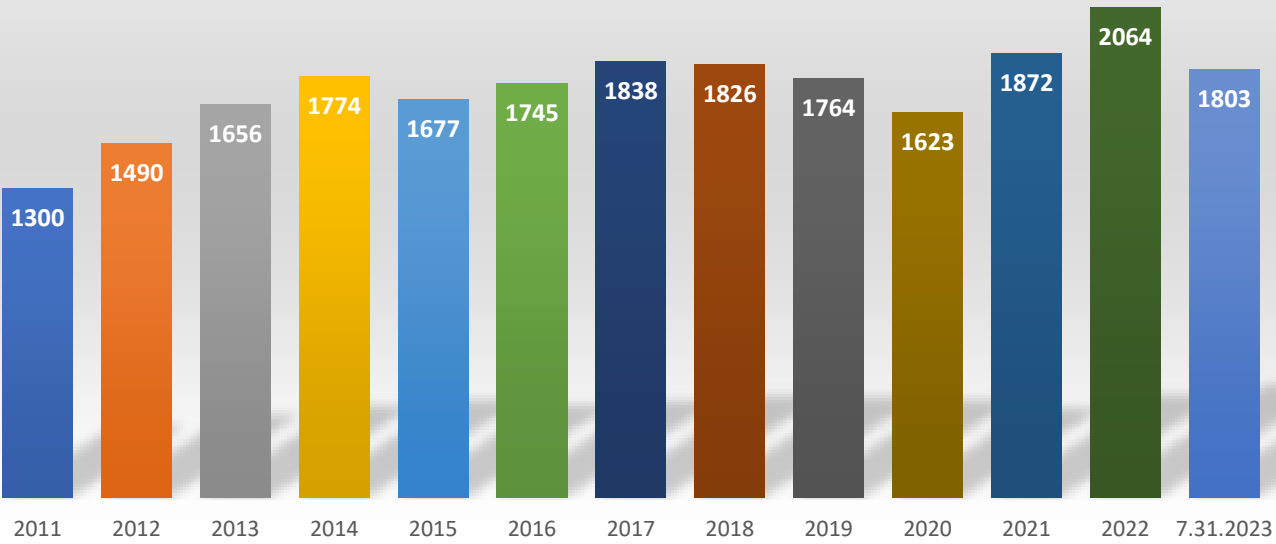
Jefferson County Parks Camping

Cappies Landing

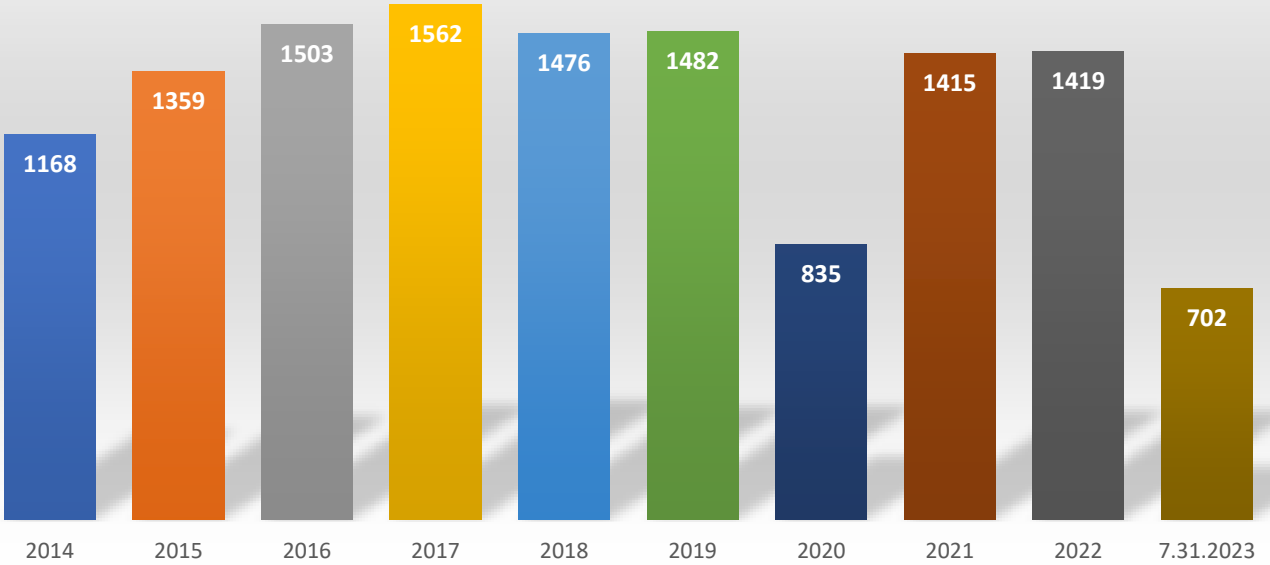
Dorothy Carnes Park



Jefferson County Dog Park Annual Tag Sales



Jefferson County Dog Park Daily Tag Sales



Jefferson County Boat Launch Sales

Daily

Annual

