

Twelve Mile park upgrades planned

BY GREG OLIVER
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CLEMSON — The Twelve Mile Recreation Area is a little quieter this time of season, but the park leased by Clemson from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will still feature some activity in the form of upgrades.

"At some point, going into this offseason, we want to address some things hopefully infrastructure-wise and hopefully limb some trees up and take care of some things we couldn't take care of by taking everything on in the spring right when everything got busy," city horticulturist Tony Tidwell said recently. "Now we can sort of take a deep breath and have a little better strategy for next year."

Tidwell said the city has also been working with two parks, recreation and tourism management classes at Clemson University for master planning and management strategies for Twelve Mile. Conceptual master plans were set to be presented last month.

"What we're hoping to do is take the strongest ideas of those plans and have another presentation to the park advisory committee and city council," Tidwell said.

"We want to have some fresh ideas, some fresh young eyes looking at these spaces and give us some good ideas on what might be possible for us in the future of that park."

The city signed a 10-year lease last year with the Corps for Twelve Mile Recreation Area, which is used for swimming, boating and picnics. Tidwell said he feels the first summer the city operated Twelve Mile went very well and the maintenance program showed significant improvement.

"I thought we kept the park very clean and visible," he said. "I thought the park functioned very well during the summer."

Tidwell said the park has always experienced a strong tradition of usership and he doesn't see that diminishing. He said the city is working to update and repair a number of items.

"We replaced a few grills and had to do some bathroom repairs and things like that, just trying to put some band-aids on," he said. "Once we start building some revenue and things like that, we'll look into doing more upgrades."

He said the bathrooms have been closed for the season "in order

to winterize them," and the beach is also closed until April. The electronic gate that will eventually require paid admission is in, but hadn't been activated as of last month.

"We're hoping it will be by the first of the year," Tidwell said. "We were having some issues with software and connectivity. Public works has installed this gate, and they're working diligently with the distributor on the issue and hopefully we'll have everything up and running. We're going to hold off on any sort of permits or passes until the first of the year."

Suggestions for the park have included more than 25 RV spaces manned by two park hosts, who would work alternating weeks. Estimations are more than \$1,000 per day of income that could come into the city for those spots and less cost incurred on the city by using camp hosts.

Tidwell said, as of now, those are "just some ideas that have been thrown about."

"There's no solid ideas for anything in particular

right now," Tidwell said. "Our biggest thing right now is just to maintain the park as it is, to try to make improvements. There has been some stormwater improvements out there so just try to make everything functions properly and make the park cleaned and maintained so we can service the usership right now."

"We're leaving ourselves open to ideas as they come along. As we start getting these funding sources and can prioritize what happens at that park, along with the rest of our parks system, that's probably how those decisions will be made. We have a lot of things in the balance right now with the Nettles Park master plan, Clemson Park is experiencing some revitalization projects, there's upgrades and things that will need to happen at all 15 of our parks, 15 or 16 at this point. So, we'll have to strike a balance with priority with our parks system now that we've incorporated Twelve Mile into that."

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