IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
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LAKE MANAWA RECREATION USE PLAN

In advance of the 100th anniversary of Iowa's state park system in 2020, the Iowa DNR is developing plans for future recreation opportunities that are compatible with the resources in each state park.

Lake Manawa is one of Iowa's oldest state parks, although it was a regional recreation attract as early as the 1880s. It once included a grand hotel (later destroyed by fire); a large pavilion with 800' boardwalk, restaurant, soda fountain, and saloon; band stand; an amusement park with Midway, large roller coaster, skating rink, ballroom and vaudeville hall; magnificent two-story 180' long "refectory" and dance floor built over the water; and the nearby Ben Mark's casino. Lake Manawa was dubbed the "Coney Island of the Midwest." Natural disaster (tornado of 1913), World War 1, and changing times caused the closure of the resort in 1927.

Dedicated in 1932, lake improvements, reliable water levels, and roads were the primary focus of early development. In the 1960s and 1970s, redevelopment included relocation of the beach, a beach concession, campground and utilities. Later picnic shelters and a "Dream Playground" were added.

Popular activities include boating, fishing, swimming, camping, picnicking, kite surfing and trail use. Lake Manawa continues to enjoy its status as the major water oriented recreation facility in the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area and is one of the most heavily visited Iowa state parks.

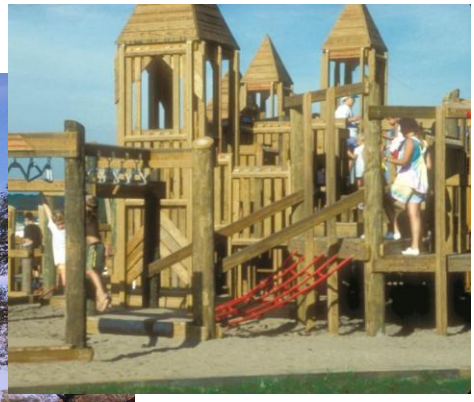
The Lake Manawa State Park Recreation Use Plan is intended to provide guidance for the park's future. This draft plan was prepared with input of DNR staff, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Army Corps of Engineers. Several public meetings were previously held. In addition, a public meeting will be held May 7, 2015 at 6:30 PM at the Western Historic Trail Center located at 3434 Richard Downing Ave, Council Bluffs, IA 51501.

The DNR is currently seeking input from park visitors and stakeholders. Please review the plan and provide comments on a short online Feedback Form.

KEY ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS AT LAKE MANAWA

Campground

- Reconfigure campground layout to accommodate larger vehicles and provide a higher quality camping experience
- Upgrade all campsites to 50 amp electrical service with as many full utility hook-ups as possible
- Plant a visual screen to create more separation of the campground and residential development
- Remodel shower building in campground



Picnic Facilities

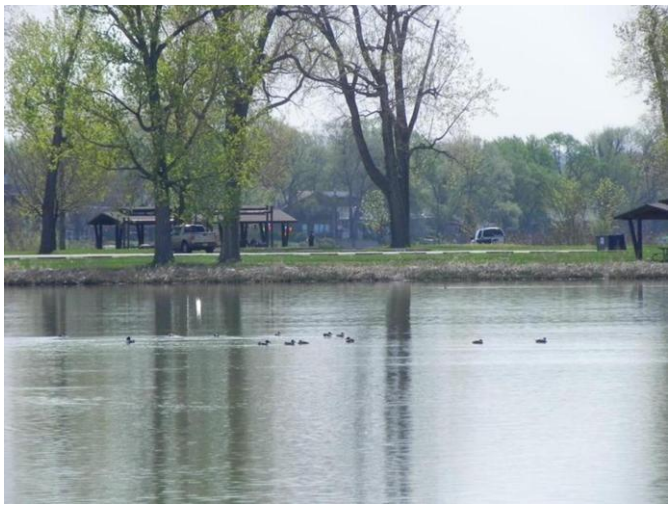
- Improve all picnic facilities with shelter replacements and provision of electricity
- Develop the north peninsula as the premier picnic area with an extra-large shelter and new restrooms
- Replace the playground on the north peninsula
- Conduct a structural analysis on the Dream playground to determine short and long-term plan

Roadways

- Replace and widen the park roadway to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians where possible
- Add gates to enable controlled access after hours

Park wide Facility Improvements

- Remove un-used parking lots that serve no purpose that are isolated and hard to monitor
- Remodel the beach concession
- Improve the park entrances
- Provide park orientation, interpretation and way-finding



After reviewing the draft plan for Lake Manawa, please take a minute of your time to provide us with your comments and feedback by clicking on the link listed below. Once on this website there is the opportunity to see the full park history and draft recreation use plan.

Feedback Form

Thank you for your time.