**Commission Approves Outdoor Trail Projects for Federal Funding**

LINCOLN – The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission approved funding four outdoor trail projects for 2016 through the Recreational Trail Program at its meeting Jan 14 in Lincoln.

Funding is provided by legislative apportionment authorized under the Federal Highway Administration. The approved projects are:

-- City of Kearney, $250,000, to build a 5,400-foot-long, 8-foot-wide concrete Archway Trail with a 5-foot-wide crushed rock shoulder for use by pedestrians and bicyclists.

-- City of Genoa, $184,694, to build a 5,420-foot long, 8-foot wide concrete Genoa Park Trail for use by pedestrians, bicyclists and inline skaters.

-- Lincoln County, $250,000, to continue the development of a 5,000-foot-long, 8-foot-wide concrete trail at Lake Maloney State Recreation Area to be used by pedestrians and bicyclists.

-- Village of Sutherland, $192,256, to build a 3,200-foot-long, 8-foot-wide concrete trail in Anchor Park to benefit pedestrians, bicyclists and inline skaters.

In other business, the Commission approved grant awards for the Fiscal Year 2015 Land and Water Conservation Fund Stateside Assistance Program (LWCF).

The LWCF is a program administered by the National Park Service for outdoor recreation projects. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, baseball fields, soccer fields, swimming pools, picnicking facilities, playgrounds, park acquisition and development, shelter houses and related support facilities. All projects must encourage outdoor recreation. Project sponsors must be political subdivisions. LWCF provides reimbursable matching grants for up to 50 percent of the project costs.

The approved grant recommendations are:

-- Village of Greenwood, $80,881, to replace old park playground equipment and resurface to Americans with Disabilities Act and safety standards at the Greenwood Village Park

-- Village of Prague, $60,000, to replace old park playground equipment and replace gravel play surface with playground safety rubber interlocking tile at the Prague Family Park

-- City of Pawnee City, $87,500, to renovate the community swimming pool at North Park

-- Lower Loup Natural Resources District, $60,000, to make several improvements to Pibel Lake Recreation Area, which includes installation of an ADA compliant fishing pier near the day-use area

In other action, the Commission voted not to approve a package of wildlife amendment recommendations. The Commission also requested that staff further research a recommendation concerning fur harvesting.

In addition, the commissioners:

-- heard a report from Director Jim Douglas regarding the engagement Nebraskans have with wildlife conservation, citing wide hunter participation in two surveys.

-- heard Nancy Kile of Dawes County speak about her concerns of the impact of mining on natural resources in the Panhandle. She asked the Commission to draft a position on the issue.

-- heard a staff report of a plan to further develop the state park system as a destination for wedding events.

-- elected officers for the coming year as follows: Chairman, Mark Spurgin of Paxton; Vice Chairman, Rex Fisher of Omaha; and 2nd Vice Chairman, Dick Bell of Omaha.

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