

FOCUS

The Official Publication of the North Dakota Recreation and Park Association

Summer 2024



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

What just happened? The date I'm composing this message is July 12, and we are on the downhill slide for summer 2024. For as busy as we all are with summer programs and events, I cannot believe we are all actively planning and finalizing our activities and programs for the fall season.

Visiting our facilities and parks this summer, I'm just amazed at all the individuals taking advantage of the beautiful parks, trails and facilities we have in Bismarck, and then I think the same is happening across North Dakota within each individual park district. Sometimes, we must take a step back and admire the job well done providing recreational opportunities for our communities.

This summer in Bismarck, we opened all three of our outdoor pools, with lessons as well. Our operations division was fully staffed, and staff were able to pace themselves with the duties that needed to be done. I am starting to believe we might be turning the corner on staffing issues we have all experienced in the last few years. I hope the same is happening in your district. We all must be proud of the hard work that each park staff across the state has done recruiting and training others so we can provide the many activities we offer during the summer. Now comes the challenge of keeping them working for us during the fall and winter or getting them to return next summer.

As we focus on the activities, we are going to provide this fall and winter, do not forget to enjoy the work you and your staff have done this summer. Good job, everyone, and here's to the summer of 2024!

There are some important dates we should look at adding to our calendars.

The NDRPA State Conference is Sept. 10-12 in Watford City (NDRPA will be celebrating its 50th anniversary), and

the NRPA Conference is Oct. 8-10 in Atlanta, Ga. If you have the opportunity to attend these conferences, I would highly recommend you do so. They both have great educational sessions and are a good opportunity to network with fellow park professionals.

Finally, I want to say I have been honored to serve as the NDRPA president this past year. It's been a great learning experience for me. If you think you would like to be more involved with NDRPA in some capacity, please let NDRPA Executive Director Shannon Schutt or a current board member know. I would like to thank Shannon and her staff for helping guide me through this past year, and I also want to thank the rest of the members of the NDRPA board for all their work for the association. Your time and dedication to NDRPA is greatly appreciated.

Mike Wald, NDRPA President



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

SEPT. 10, 2024

Playground Maintenance Course, Watford City

SEPT. 10-12, 2024

2024 NDRPA State Conference
– 50th Anniversary, Watford City

OCT. 8-10, 2024

NPRA Conference, Atlanta, Ga.

OCT. 15

FOCUS Deadline

Mission

Advancing parks, recreation and conservation for an enhanced quality of life in North Dakota.



North Dakota Recreation & Park Association

Strategic Goals

1. Member Services: Provide training, information and networking for parks and recreation stakeholders.
2. Policy Advocacy: Represent parks and recreation interests on public policy issues.
3. Public Outreach: Promote the benefits of parks and recreation and the importance of conservation, health and wellness, and access.

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FOCUS is the official newsletter of the North Dakota Recreation & Park Association (NDRPA). It is distributed quarterly to almost 900 parks and recreation professionals and posted on the NDRPA website. Submission of articles and photographs are encouraged in digital format to ndrpaoffice@gmail.com. Photographs should be high-resolution (300 dpi or greater). Advertising information is available online at www.ndrpa.com.

Next *FOCUS* deadline: Oct 15, 2024

Cover photo:
Jack Hoeven Wee Links Golf Course, Minot Park District

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NDRPA Members Encouraged to Submit Articles



North Dakota Recreation and Park Association (NDRPA) members are encouraged to submit articles for inclusion in the *FOCUS* magazine.

The quarterly publication is the conduit to industry peers and decision-makers. NDRPA members can use it

to inform others what their respective districts are doing to enhance the quality of life and livability standards in their regions.

Send your stories to spursley@clearwatercommunications.net or contact NDRPA Communication Specialist Scooter Pursley at 701-355-4458 with questions regarding articles for upcoming issues.

2024 NDRPA State Conference and Business Meeting

NDRPA will hold its annual business meeting at the NDRPA State Conference, Sept. 10-12, in Watford City. Agenda items include election of board members and review of association activities. An agenda and associated materials will be distributed to members via email prior to the meeting. All members are encouraged to attend.

Plan to Attend the 2024 NPRA Annual Conference in Atlanta



The 2024 NPRA Annual Conference, the largest gathering of park and recreation professionals in the world, is Oct. 8-10 in Atlanta. Get

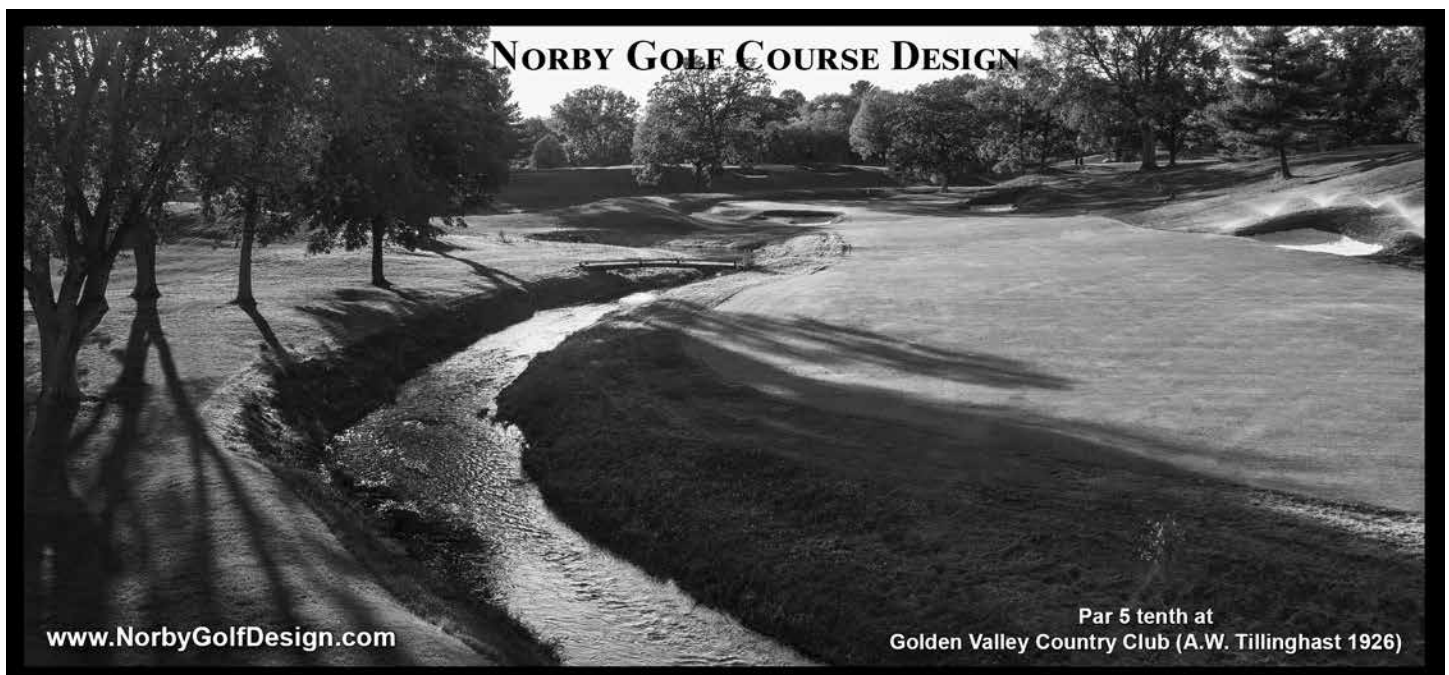
an inside look at the latest products and services at the interactive exhibit hall, have the chance to connect with colleagues and experts in the field, and have access to hundreds of CEU sessions. More details are available at <https://conference.nrpa.org/>.

North Dakota Park Board Manual and Commissioner Training Webinar

The North Dakota Park Board Manual equips both new and experienced park board commissioners and staff with the information necessary to effectively carry out their authorities, roles and responsibilities. The manual also includes sample documents such as a joint use agreement and board member job description.

The latest edition of the North Dakota Park Board Manual (2022) is available as a FREE downloadable PDF to NDRPA members. Email ndrpaoffice@gmail.com for access to the manual.

NDRPA also has a North Dakota Park Board Commissioner Training Webinar available, which is an introduction to the topics and material provided in the manual. The training is a great resource for park board members and staff. Access the webinar recording on the NDRPA website at ndrpa.com/resources/publications.



REGISTER TODAY for the 2024 NDRPA State Conference



The NDRPA State Conference will be held in Watford City Sept. 10-12. NDRPA is celebrating its 50th anniversary and invites North Dakota park and recreation professionals from across the state to participate in the spectacular celebration, educational sessions and networking opportunities!

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



**Tim Eggebraaten,
The Off Duty Chief**

Tim Eggebraaten knows the importance of paying attention to the rhythm of life. Having worked in law enforcement for 25 years, he is an expert at “working the beat,” and has learned through experience the value of discovering the harmony in it all.

We all face challenges that create our own beat in life when balancing family and careers, and struggling to find time for ourselves and our physical, mental and spiritual health. Prepare to be energized, inspired and entertained as “The Off Duty Chief” shares strategies and tactics for working YOUR BEAT!

A police officer since 1992, Eggebraaten has had many different roles during his law enforcement career with the Detroit Lakes (Minnesota) Police Department: Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) instructor, patrol sergeant, investigative sergeant, K-9 handler, and chief of police. Eggebraaten retired in November 2016 after 25 years in law enforcement and three years as a correctional officer in Clay County, Minn.



Brent Sanford, Sanford Consulting LLC, former ND Lt. Governor & Watford City Mayor

A Watford City native and third-generation business owner, Brent Sanford served as mayor of Watford City from 2010 to 2016 and later as North Dakota’s 38th lieutenant governor.

During his time as mayor, Watford City found itself in the middle of the Bakken oil boom. Large-scale development of horizontal drilling and fracking in the northwest corner of North Dakota brought historic growth to the area. Watford City welcomed newcomers and grew to the size necessary to handle the new energy economy and its new workforce. Community infrastructure investments were required, including parks and recreation facilities and services. Accomplishing that within a five-year window took tremendous collaboration and cooperation among local

community leaders. Sanford will share how the city navigated through this time of immense growth with the help of its partners.

Sanford was selected as North Dakota’s 38th lieutenant governor in November 2016. After concluding his service as the lieutenant governor, he founded Sanford Consulting LLC and Sanford Ventures LLC. He has worked with Minnkota Power Cooperative on its Project Tundra – a venture to capture and store carbon beneath North Dakota soil – and with the North Dakota Petroleum Council to bring refugees from Ukraine to work in North Dakota.

TUESDAY KICK-OFF

Enjoy Watford City and its beautiful surroundings as the conference kicks off Tuesday afternoon with these fun activities:

Participate in the golf tournament at Fox Hills, an 18-hole golf course that rides the rolling prairie hills into large greens that can be approached equally well through the air or under the wind along the ground.

Take a Bakken Discovery tour and check out all Watford City has to offer. Stops include Wild Cow Coffee & Cream, Stonehome Brewing Company, Veteran’s Park, and more!

Explore the road less traveled with a hike into the Theodore Roosevelt National Park’s North Unit. Experience the rugged splendor of the park for yourself!

After these activities, Tuesday night’s social and dinner will take place at Kent Pelton Nature Park.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SMALL PARK BOARDS

NDRPA has five conference registration scholarships available to park board commissioners or staff from park districts with up to two full-time, year-round staff. The scholarship is limited to two people per park district and distributed on a first-come, first-served basis. If a park district submits more than two scholarship requests, additional requests will be placed on a waiting list to be awarded after Aug. 16. To request a scholarship, contact the NDRPA office at 701-355-4458 or email ndrpoffice@gmail.com.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Registration: Register online at www.ndrpa.com. If your agency wishes to register a large group at one time, you may submit the group registration form found on the website. **The registration deadline is Aug. 23.**

Lodging: Reserve rooms at Teddy's Residential Suites or Little Missouri Inn & Suites. All education sessions, the awards banquet and the exhibitor showcase will take place at the Rough Rider Center. To book, call the hotels directly and reference group ID: NDRPA State Conference Block. The hotel contact information and room rates are:

Teddy's Residential Suites, 701-842-6480 - \$119/night
Little Missouri Inn & Suites, 701-842-6262 - \$104/night
The room block deadline is Aug. 10.

Raffle/Silent Auction Items: Each park district is invited to donate an item valued at \$50 or more to raise funds for scholarships during the raffle/silent auction.



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BANQUET & MORE

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SEPTEMBER 10-12, 2024





SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 - MULTIPLE LOCATIONS

11:00 AM REGISTRATION & LUNCH
Rough Rider Center

12:00 PM GOLF COURSE SCRAMBLE
Fox Hills Golf Course

12:15 PM BAKKEN DISCOVERY TOUR
History, Art & Local Flare
TRNP NORTH UNIT HIKE
Caprock Coulee Trail
Depart from Rough Rider Center

5:30 PM PARK SOCIAL
Food, Music, Mini Golf & More!
Kent Pelton Nature Park
501 7th St NE, Watford City

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 - ROUGH RIDER CENTER

7:00 AM REGISTRATION
Breakfast & Past Presidents Breakfast

8:00 AM CONFERENCE WELCOME - MAYOR PHIL RIELY & SARA FITZPATRICK

8:15 AM KEYNOTE - TIM EGGEBRAATEN OFF DUTY CHIEF
Tim knows the importance of paying attention to the rhythm of life. Having worked in law enforcement for 25 years, he is an expert at "Working the Beat"; and has learned through experience, the value of discovering the harmony in it all. We all face challenges that create our beat in life when balancing family, careers, and struggling to find time for ourselves and our physical, mental and spiritual health. Prepare to be energized, inspired and entertained as "The Off Duty Chief" shares strategies and tactics for working YOUR BEAT!

9:15 AM BREAK WITH EXHIBITORS/RAFFLE & SILENT AUCTION

10:00 AM ROUNDTABLES
After School/Summer Program, Aquatics, Campgrounds, Directors, Finance & Human Resources, Fitness Facilities, Forestry & Horticulture, Ice Arenas, Marketing & Special Events, Parks Maintenance, Recreation

11:30 AM LUNCH

12:15 PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Well Being - Nikki Johnsrud Cope Counseling

Nikki will give voice to the real-life struggle between work and home that many feel; the sense of inadequacy and never being able to measure up in either environment. We often feel as though we are robbing Peter to pay Paul. If we go the extra mile at work, something suffers in our personal life or vice versa. We fall into the trap of believing that everything is our responsibility. Nikki will share her journey of self-discovery, how she found her compass and how we can too.

The Time is Now to Engage, Invite, and Inspire - Pat Bertagnolli ND Job Service

The current labor market presents challenges for all employers and there isn't a one-size-fits-all solution to solve this issue affecting every community statewide. Join Patrick Bertagnolli, Executive Director for Job Service North Dakota, as he explains his approach to leveraging partnerships for community integration. Through his gift of lifting others up and storytelling, Pat will enlighten you with an inspirational message about celebrating individuality, engaging employees, and connecting to our youth. He will provoke thought by sharing his experiences in creating a pathway to effective community building and how, by working together, we can all make a difference.

Pros and Cons of Astro-Turf - Christian Cox Mid-American Golf

Participate in this session on athletic field projects and learn how to get the best life out of your turf fields, house repairs and maintenance, the future of synthetic turf, pros and cons of turf in North Dakota, and more.

Aquatics - Cindy Dassow Red Cross

Learn about program updates and development with the Red Cross suite of programs, and best practices and guidelines to submitting classes on the Red Cross Lifeguard Certification.

1:15 PM

FINAL BREAK WITH EXHIBITORS

1:45 PM

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

NDIRF/Event Liability - Corey Olson NDIRF

Corey will review specific park and recreation loss types and trends and provide you with information about available NDIRF tools to help your entity enhance its risk management program. Also learn about the importance of capturing updated building and property valuations and recently introduced North Dakota State Fire and Tornado Fund coverage enhancements.

Maximizing Your Event - Matt Shanadore Mandan Progress Organization

Explore the art and science of creating memorable community events and attractions. Matt will discuss the impact of strategic event planning and seasonal attractions on enhancing community engagement and fostering a sense of belonging. Drawing on his extensive experience with state park programming like the Haunted Fort, the 12 Months 12 Hikes Challenge, and Mandan's signature Holiday Lights on Main, Matt offers valuable insights into developing vibrant community experiences that promote belonging and attract visitors. Discover how to use community events and attractions to bolster social connections, civic engagement and economic growth, making every season an opportunity to celebrate and establish a sense of place.

Grant Writing - Vawnita Best Long X Development Team

There are recipes for successful, vibrant, rural communities. We will cook up vibrant projects, focusing on the necessary key ingredient: community alignment. Spending time reviewing local projects and the recipes that baked them to perfection, you can add recipes to your community's VIBRANT PROJECTS cookbook. Call the hour a recipe exchange!

Sports Astro-Turf Grooming - Christian Cox Mid-American Golf

On field demonstration.

3:00 PM

FACILITY AND PARKS TOUR Depart from Rough Rider Center

6:00 PM **SOCIAL** Convention Hall

7:00 PM **AWARDS BANQUET** Convention Hall

8:30 PM **AFTER PARTY** Downtown Watford City

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12 - ROUGH RIDER CENTER

8:00 AM **BREAKFAST & ANNUAL MEETING**

9:00 AM **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

Effective (& Profitable) Tournament Management - Larry Grondahl & Jeremy Ludlum

Discuss “best practices” in tournament management, and how to maximize your success as well as improve your bottom line. Discussions will be held on philosophy, fundraising, efficiency, and how to best manage staff and volunteers. We will discuss working with the media and how to best promote your event. This will be a great opportunity for open discussion and question and answer session.

Marketing 101 - Brock White Long X Development Team

Every good story has three main parts—a beginning, a middle and an end. When thinking about how to market or talk about your events, don’t stray from the basics! Learn how to leverage storytelling in your content marketing, and maximize the utilization of assets year over year.

The Art & Science of Fundraising - Jill Nelson Grand Forks Park District

Whether you’re looking to support specific programs or build new facilities, fundraising can make a significant impact on your budget. It’s been 15 years since the Grand Forks Park District established their nonprofit foundation. Learn about the successes and challenges they have experienced along the way, the essentials of fundraising and helpful tools to start your own fundraising campaign.

Find Your Passion - Nick Ybarra Save the Maah Daah Hey

We live in a world where the average person spends 93% of their life indoors, sealed inside a home, office or climate-controlled vehicle. The need for outdoor recreation in our society has never been greater than it is right now. Finding your passion in outdoor recreation, experiencing it regularly and sharing it with the next generation is critical for the physical and mental well-being of humanity. Nick will tell some of the hilarious, and not so hilarious, stories from his own unique journey in the outdoor recreation world and offer you some practical ways to find your own unique path through the wild adventures of outdoor recreation.

10:15 AM **CLOSING KEYNOTE - BRENT SANFORD Former ND Lt. Governor & WC Mayor**

In 2010, Watford City found itself in the middle of the Bakken Oil Boom. The large scale development of horizontal drilling and fracking in the northwest corner of North Dakota brought historic growth to the area. Watford City chose to welcome the newcomers and build into a community of the size necessary to handle the new energy economy and its new workforce. Community infrastructure investments were required in water, sewer, roads, schools, daycares, hospitals, and recreational facilities. To accomplish this within a 5 year window of time, it took tremendous collaboration and cooperation among the local community leaders. Brent will share how the city navigated through this time of tremendous growth during his service as mayor of Watford City.

11:30 AM **GRAB & GO OR GRAB & STAY LUNCHES**



CONFERENCE LODGING

HOTEL ROOM BLOCKS

Room blocks have been reserved at Teddy's Residential Suites and Little Missouri Inn & Suites. Special room block rates are available September 10-12, 2024. To book, call the hotel directly and reference Group ID: "NDRPA State Conference Block."

Deadline to book accommodations under room block: August 10, 2024.

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COMMISSIONER'S CORNER

Ryan Sott – Hettinger Park Board Commissioner



Ryan Sott had two reasons to actively seek a seat on the local park board after his family settled in Hettinger.

"I have two children (Brody, age 14, and Elizabeth, age 12) that are very athletic," Sott said. "I wanted to make sure they and other children in the community continue to have the great

things that our park and rec has to offer, along with showing my children how or what it takes to maintain such things."

With two active kids, the Cavalier, North Dakota, native and member of the 188th heavy equipment company of the North Dakota Army National Guard, takes a keen interest in making sure all people in Hettinger have diverse recreational opportunities. Sott and the park board oversee six parks.

Hettinger Country Club is a nine-hole public golf course for those who enjoy a day on the links. For those who enjoy a "hole" with chain links, the Hettinger Disc Golf Course awaits, courtesy of a partnership between the park board, the local 4-H club and NDSU's Hettinger Extension Service. It runs along Mirror Lake, a recreational centerpiece in Hettinger.

Mirror Lake is a place to spend a day camping, boating, fishing, birding, hiking, and biking. The district will likely be looking soon at repair or replacement work at the dam. "This will be a very big project for our community," Sott said. "We offer a variety of parks and facilities around town. (But) our main park surrounds Mirror Lake and offers a campground with water and electricity. This is on the south side of town, offering some picture-perfect sunsets and sunrises."



Sott and his family lived in Fargo and Lisbon before settling in Hettinger, a town known for its wrestling program, in 2012. His relationship with the park board began with the youth football program in 2020 and he became a board member in 2022.

When Sott isn't at work for Jacam Catalyst, he's with his wife, Nicole Olson-Sott (who grew up in nearby Reeder), and his kids enjoy the outdoors and competition. Brody wrestles and plays football, and Elizabeth wrestles and plays volleyball. Like many young people in Hettinger, they participate in many recreational pursuits. That keeps Sott and the board busy.

"I would say watching and coaching youth football and enjoying the great outdoors that our parks offer are my most favorite activities," Sott said. "My goal, first and foremost, is to maintain our parks, along with our recreational programs. Budgeting, of course, is always a challenge. However, we are truly grateful for the grant system and our supporting communities."

Sott added networking with other NDRPA members is beneficial to a small district. "It's a great tool to have for questions, guidance and networking," he said. "It is great to see what other communities are doing and how they are doing it."



PARK DISTRICT NEWS

Grand Reopening for Kraft Memorial Field at Oxford Sports Complex

The Grand Forks Park District held a grand reopening for the recently renovated Kraft Memorial Field at Oxford Sports Complex in June.

Fans were treated to free admission for the evening's Grand Forks Legion baseball game, giveaways, free hot dogs, prize drawings, and a special ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the renovated field.

Grand Forks Park District board members and staff, area baseball association members, major project contributors, and family of the field's namesake, Harold "Pinky" Kraft, participated in the ribbon cutting and short program. To kick off the game, Mike Opp, owner of Oxford Realty and major naming donor for the complex's renovation, threw out the ceremonial first pitch.

Through community philanthropy and support from local businesses, families and fans, the Kraft Field Renovation Committee renovated iconic Kraft Memorial Field at Oxford Sports Complex in two phases. Phase I was completed in 2023 and consisted of replacing the infield turf at Montgomery Field. It was funded by a \$366,000 Land & Water Conservation Fund grant, a \$100,000 donation from the Blue Line Club and \$309,000 from the park district budget. After the turf's installation, Montgomery Field hosted the 13U North Dakota state tournament in 2023.

Phase II focused on the new grandstand construction, new bleachers, overhead awning, home and away locker rooms, restrooms, and



concessions stand, as well as the replacement of the infield turf at Kraft Field. In spring 2022, a matching grant through the state of North Dakota for \$605,000 led to the demolition and replacement of the grandstand. Oxford Realty pledged \$500,000 in summer 2022 for the renaming rights of Apollo Sports Complex. The campaign also received \$150,000 from the Blue Line Club and a Garrison Diversion Grant for \$75,000.

The new exterior grandstand structure was completed in fall 2023. Bleachers were installed over the winter months, and the interior of the grandstand was finished last spring. The installation of the new turf was completed in June, just in time for the grand reopening. Future project plans for the complex include outfield turf installation and lighting improvements.



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Memorial 4-H Playground Dedicated in Bismarck



Bismarck Parks and Recreation District (BPRD) dedicated the Louise and Loren Gobbs and ElRoy Haadem Memorial 4-H Playground at the Joann Hetzel Memorial 4-H Building on June 20.

Burleigh County 4-H donated the building at the Missouri Valley Complex, 3715 E. Bismarck Expressway to BPRD in early 2021. The indoor space is a popular venue for wedding receptions, nonprofit events and training, and Burleigh County 4-H and NDSU Extension activities.

The playground installation was supported by funding from Burleigh County 4-H, the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District and BPRD.

BisParks BCycle Expands Program Accessibility

In May, Bismarck Parks and Recreation District opened its third season of the BisParks BCycle bike share program with the addition of pedal assist e-bikes. Stations are located at Sertoma Park, Pioneer Park, BSC Aquatic and Wellness Center, and Peace Park in Bismarck.

While classic pedal bikes make up the bulk of BisParks BCycle's fleet, 10 pedal-assist e-bikes have been added this year with support from the Tom and Frances Leach Foundation. E-bikes increase program accessibility for people who are not able to ride a traditional pedal bike. An electric motor and

battery help riders power their bikes. The power assist only works when a rider is pedaling, providing a ride experience like a traditional pedal bike.

Single ride passes may be purchased at each station through the BCycle app. Rates for classic pedal bikes are \$5 plus \$.02 per minute and pedal-assist e-bikes are \$10 plus \$.04 per minute.

Learn more about the program at www.bisparks.org/bcycle.



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2023 NDRPA Outstanding Young Professional Award

Through its annual awards program, the North Dakota Recreation and Park Association recognizes member individuals and organizations who, in the past year, went above and beyond to deliver exceptional programming to the public. The 2023 NDRPA awards were presented at the state conference in September in Grand Forks. More detailed stories are shared in subsequent *FOCUS* magazines.

Dylan Thiem was the recipient of the **2023 NDRPA Outstanding Young Professional** award, presented to an NDRPA member 35 years of age or younger who exhibits leadership skills through involvement in local associations, advocacy efforts, community outreach, elected positions within local organizations, and volunteering. They must have achieved accomplishments including awards, commendations, honors, and professional advancement through their work in parks and recreation; and must contribute to the park, recreation, and leisure field in North Dakota.

Thiem has been with the Bismarck Parks and Recreation District (BPRD) since 2012 and was promoted to facility manager in 2021. In his current role, he manages two indoor ice complexes and works with the district's ice partners, including the youth and adult hockey, figure skating and curling clubs. He also oversees three outdoor pools while coordinating lifeguarding and swimming lessons with the district's aquatic specialist.

Thiem currently serves on the

NDRPA Board of Directors as the chair of the Engagement Committee and has been a member of several committees. He was a member of the Bismarck Parks and Recreation District's Risk Management Committee from 2014-2016.

Thiem is always willing to take on additional responsibilities and bring new ideas to the table. He was an integral part of a BPRD team that opened the renovated Hillside Aquatic Complex in 2015. He also researched, proposed and led the implementation of a point-of-sale program at all three outdoor pools that streamlined management of daily admissions and concession sales.

He revamped the preschool ice class, Preschool Skate Date, by updating the program's recreational goals and outcomes. Thiem was also a part of the team that opened the Capital Ice Complex in 2017. When the 2021 American Collegiate Hockey Association Division II Tournament was looking for a site due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University of Mary approached BPRD to work together to host the event in their community. Thiem was an essential member of the team at the Capital Ice Complex that made the event a memorable success.

Thiem's commitment to his profession is exemplary, and he never fails to go the extra mile. On Christmas Eve in 2022, equipment failed at the Capital Ice Complex (CIC) and one sheet of ice was lost at the peak of skating season. Forgoing the holiday with his family, he led his team at CIC to



get ice back up and ready for use in just four days. In Spring 2023, the national lifeguard shortage hit home in Bismarck. Thiem tackled the situation head on, working tirelessly to recruit guards and manage available staff to open outdoor pools for the summer, even while down one full-time staff member in his department. In addition, he was actively involved in a project to add a third rink to the VFW Sports Center and provide enhancements to the entire facility. He has done an exceptional job coordinating user groups and planning for the third ice arena at the VFW which opened in February.

In early 2023, Thiem taught a local reporter how to drive a Zamboni for a "Try My Job" TV feature. He is always willing to be interviewed by local media and is a regular guest on the "Park Talk" podcast.

Thiem earned his bachelor's degree in recreation and sports management from St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. He is trained in first aid/CPR and has earned two certifications: Certified Pool Operator and Certified Park and Recreation Professional.



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New Splash Pad and Park Open at Bowman Rotary Park



Bowman Rotary Park is the new home of a splash pad and playground designed for children of all ages. The playground, tailored for children ages 1-5, complements the existing equipment for ages 7-12. Additionally, the new splash pad features 28 water attractions suitable for kids of all ages.


This project was a collaborative effort between Brosz Engineering Inc., School of Promise and Bowman Parks and Recreation. By integrating the wet and dry playgrounds, the projects shared resources and labor.

The splash pad began as part of the 2020 Bowman County Community Challenge, initiated by Brosz Engineering. Since then, the project has grown significantly, thanks to numerous donations and grants. Key contributors to the splash pad include Brosz Engineering Inc., Bowman County Development Corporation, North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department, City of Bowman, Bowman County, Apex Clean Energy, Dakota Western Bank, and Dakota Community Bank and Trust.

Major contributors to the dry playground include the School of Promise through its generous donors and Bowman Tax and Tourism.







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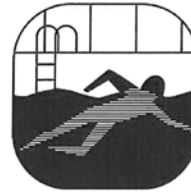
PEOPLE ON THE MOVE



Moses Johnson joined the Grand Forks Park District Forestry/Parks departments as an arborist specialist in April. His family was in the Air Force, and he has lived in many states. Johnson previously worked for a landscaping company. He enjoys spending his time hiking, foraging for native herbs, gardening, and spending time with his family.



Lauren Matson joined the Grand Forks Park District as a marketing and digital media specialist in June. She is from Grand Forks and graduated from the University of North Dakota in spring 2024. She enjoys hiking, painting, being outside, and spending time with family and friends.



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NDIRF Announces New CEO

The North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund (NDIRF) Board of Directors has chosen director of claims Keith Pic as the organization's new CEO. He assumed the position on July 16.



Pic is responsible for working with the organization's management team to uphold NDIRF's mission to be the source of risk services for North Dakota political subdivisions and to fulfill the organization's strategic plan goals.

"I'm grateful to have the opportunity to lead NDIRF," Pic said. "By building strong relationships with local agents, members, member associations, and other partners for the past 38 years, NDIRF's board of directors and employees have built an incredible organization to provide risk services to North Dakota

political subdivisions. I look forward to continuing those relationships and serving NDIRF's membership."

Pic has a bachelor's degree from North Dakota State University and a master's degree in risk management and insurance from Florida State University – College of Business. He has obtained the CPCU, CIC, AIC-M, AINS, and SCLA insurance designations.

Pic joined NDIRF in June 2012 as an outside claims adjuster. In January 2018, he was promoted to assistant director of claims. He was promoted in October 2021 to director of claims, overseeing all operations within the claims department.

Pic served 14 years in the Army National Guard. His military career included deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as state activations for various flood response efforts, COVID-19 support and a humanitarian mission to Haiti.

New FLSA Overtime Rule Effective July 1, 2024

By HR Collaborative Executive Director Joanna Drennen

On April 26, the Department of Labor (department) finalized updates to regulations under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) regarding exemptions from minimum wage and overtime pay requirements for certain categories of employees.

Effective July 1, the final rule "will increase the standard salary level that helps define and delimit which salaried workers are entitled to overtime pay protections under the FLSA" (Looman, J., *What the New Overtime Rule Means for Workers*, accessed 2 May 2024 from <https://blog.dol.gov/2024/04/23/what-the-new-overtime-rule-means-for-workers>).

Full-time salaried workers who meet FLSA requirements and earn less than \$844 per week (\$43,888/year) will be eligible for overtime pay as of July 1, per this new rule.

This new rule also sets future eligibility limits. As of Jan. 1, 2025, full-time salaried workers who meet FLSA requirements and earn \$1,128 per week (\$58,656/year) will be eligible for overtime pay and, starting July 1, 2027, "the eligibility thresholds will be updated every three years, based on current wage data" (Looman, J.).

Additionally, this new rule as of July 1, raises the highly compensated employee (HCE) annual compensation threshold to \$132,964 per year and, as of Jan. 1, 2025, raises the HCE annual compensation threshold to \$151,164 for those who meet FLSA requirements.

Per the department, "employees are exempt from

the Fair Labor Standards Act's minimum wage and overtime protections if they are employed in a bona fide executive, administrative, or professional capacity... To fall within the EAP [executive, administrative or professional employees] exemption, an employee generally must meet three tests:

1. be paid a salary, meaning that they are paid a predetermined and fixed amount that is not subject to reduction because of variations in the quality or quantity of work performed;
2. be paid at least a specified weekly salary level; and
3. primarily perform executive, administrative, or professional duties, as provided in the Department's regulations." (U.S. Department of Labor, *Final Rule: Restoring and Extending Overtime Protections*, accessed 2 May 2024).

Overall, this new rule addresses concerns raised by previous approaches to setting salary levels, seeking to strike a balance between ensuring fair compensation for employees and providing flexibility for employers. By aligning salary thresholds with contemporary wage data, the department aims to uphold the integrity of the exemptions while safeguarding against unintended consequences, such as the misclassification of employees.

If you have further questions about the department's new rule, visit <https://www.dol.gov>.

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