

Forks of the Illinois River State Park

DISC GOLF

Proposal



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Introduction

Cave Junction is located on Highway 199 in southwest Oregon and is one of the few communities in this state with a state park immediately adjacent to its municipal border. This represents a significant opportunity for the Oregon State Recreation Department to benefit one of the state's lowest income communities.

The recreational benefits that this park offers to the community is significant but there is a well known problem of transients living in the area, which has discouraged visitor use of the area and has created law enforcement problems.

A possible solution to resolve this issue would be to increase the use of the facility by family groups and decrease the places where transients can comfortably live in that area. This might be accomplished by establishing a family oriented recreational facility such as a disc golf course.

Disc golf statistics and demographics

The sport has grown at a rate of 12-15 percent annually for more than the past decade, with nearly 3,000 courses in the US and over 3,000 globally. The game is now played in over 40 countries worldwide, primarily in North America, Central and Western Europe, Japan, New Zealand and Australia.

Disc golf has one of the most diverse demographics of any sport. Even though everyone can play, the active players have been primarily males from age 15-50. Active women players have typically been spouses or girlfriends of male players but now groups of women, especially those who play another disc sport called ultimate, have been trying it. Families with young children are also regular users depending on how rugged the course terrain is. Some flatter courses serve the disabled. Some courses have an active group of seniors who prefer to play disc golf rather than just take a walk.



Benefits

Residents of Cave Junction would gain a significant recreational facility that will increase community quality of life, provide for outdoor recreation opportunities, and increase tourist spending in local businesses by attracting visitation from outside the community.

Users of the course generally walk around in groups, which reduces the potential for assaults and ambush in areas where heavy brush provides cover for malicious activity. Activity by disc golfers increases the likelihood that a suspicious character might be observed and reported.

The construction and maintenance of the course would reduce underbrush that has been an attractant to transients. The increased numbers of people circulating around the area may reduce the appeal of the park as a transient camp area and help reduce law enforcement problems in this area.

Increasing park security and safety would make this site suitable for use by the local elementary schools, both of which are within walking distance of the park. With budgets tightening, bus trips out of the area are more difficult to afford and a state park with secure surroundings would make this an appealing walking destination for special activities.

Youth groups such as the Boys and Girls Club might also continue using the course in the summer.

Disc golf competitions are popular fund raising events for nonprofit organizations and if the course can be developed to professional specifications the local community would benefit economically through hosting competitive events that would attract participants around the region or from other states.

Installing the course

There are five things that need to be done to establish the course:

1) Installation of tee pads

Tee pads need to be level and have a stable surface that provides consistent footing for participants. These are located only at the beginning of each hole in the course. An eighteen hole course would have eighteen tee pads.

The type of surface used for a tee pad may vary according to environmental restrictions or availability of funding. Some examples are given below.



Dirt pad excavated into the ground



Rubber mat sitting on leveled ground



Wood frame filled with gravel



Wood deck



Cement pad

2) Installation of baskets

Baskets are the target or objective that disc golfers throw toward at each hole they play.

To install each of the 18 baskets in the proposed Forks of the Illinois River State Park disc course, a hole will need to be excavated for the basket to sit in and filled with cement to make it difficult for vandals to remove them. These holes will likely be about one foot in diameter and two feet deep.



3) Installation of signage

Signage and markers will need to be installed to help participants find their way through the course. Two orientation signs will be needed at the beginning of each of the two loops to provide basic information about the configuration of the course. An orientation sign at each tee pad will tell the participant which hole they are playing and describe terrain ahead.

In all cases, signs will be set up on 4x4 treated posts each set about two feet into the ground.

4) Construction of trails

Two loop trails will need to be established for participants to follow from one hole to the next. Loop B has been significantly impacted by vehicles and excavation by bulldozers. A trail may not be necessary since most of this area is open but this is also the most level ground in the park and may offer the best opportunity for creating a wheelchair accessible disc golf course.

5) Clearing of brush and snags

Loop A (see map on following page) traverses an area that was heavily burned during a wildfire in 2005. There are many standing snags, mostly small diameter oak and pine, and many fire adapted plants such as mountain mahogany and white oak now form thickets of resprouted growth.



Hazard snags need to be cut away from the course route and it is recommended that brush in the fairway be thinned rather than removed, perhaps cutting back multiple crown sprouts to one or two vigorously growing branchlets.

Cultural and Ecological Concerns

The park contains areas of ecologic concern and possible areas of archaeological importance., notably areas that have the potential for having been used by Native Americans.



Low depressions in the eastern part of the park form vernal pools.

The most significant areas of ecological concern are low lands in the eastern part of the park where depressions form vernal pools during the rainy season. These are most notable in along both sides of the entrance road to the park.

NOTE: A review of both loops was made in mid May and resulted in alterations being made to the course layout. These are discussed on following pages.

Archaeological features or artifacts were not noted while walking around the proposed course but the proximity to the river and the presence of oaks may have attracted Native Americans to use this area.

Archaeological concerns

The clearing of brush is not expected to cause disturbance to archaeological features and tee pads will be constructed above the surface without disturbance to the ground (probably leveling the pad area with black shale from the Galice Formation (same as is on site) and covering with a rubber pad or pouring a cement pad).

Ground disturbance will be caused by the excavation of holes for signs and baskets. Each of these holes will be about a foot in diameter and approximately two feet deep.

Ground disturbance may also be caused by construction of a path in some parts of the course, especially for the first three holes of Loop A. Holes 4, 5, and 6 of this loop are on a bluff where the course follows an old, two-track road. This road cuts down the embankment and crosses a small creek, the only creek crossing on the entire 18 hole course.

Financing

Purchase of equipment

It is expected that sometime near the end of 2010, 18 used disc golf baskets will be donated by the Grants Pass Disc Golf Association for this course.

Construction of the course

Businesses in Cave Junction will be asked if they would like to sponsor the construction of one of the holes (“adopt a basket”) and if 18 sponsors can be found, they will collectively pay for the materials needed to install the course.

Volunteer groups would do what ever clearing of brush is necessary to open fairways. Disc golfers from clubs in the local region would be asked to also participate.

Volunteer Coordination

The coordinator of the equestrian trails being built on the west side of Forks of the Illinois River State Park, Sue Williams, has offered to help with organizing and tracking volunteer work. Roger Brandt, retired Park Service and volunteer coordinator for 15 years has also offered to help with recruiting volunteer help and conducting job hazard analysis of all work areas.

Annual Maintenance Plan

Annual maintenance is expected to be coordinated and completed by the Grants Pass Disc Golf Club. The Illinois Valley Rotary has expressed interest in the project and may be a possible sponsor of annual cleanup projects. It is expected that once this course is established it would not be difficult to hold annual or biannual cleanup days, probably mostly to mow weeds and trim back brush, blackberry brambles, etc.

Local service organizations or student groups may be interested in establishing an Adoption Program where residents or clubs can sign up to be responsible for cleaning and maintaining designated parts of the course.

The Course - Hole by Hole

The following pages will provide information on each of the 18 holes that make up the proposed course. See the map on the following page to reference the location of each hole.

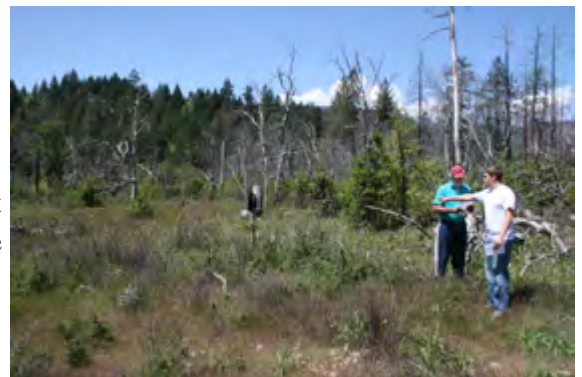
LOOP A

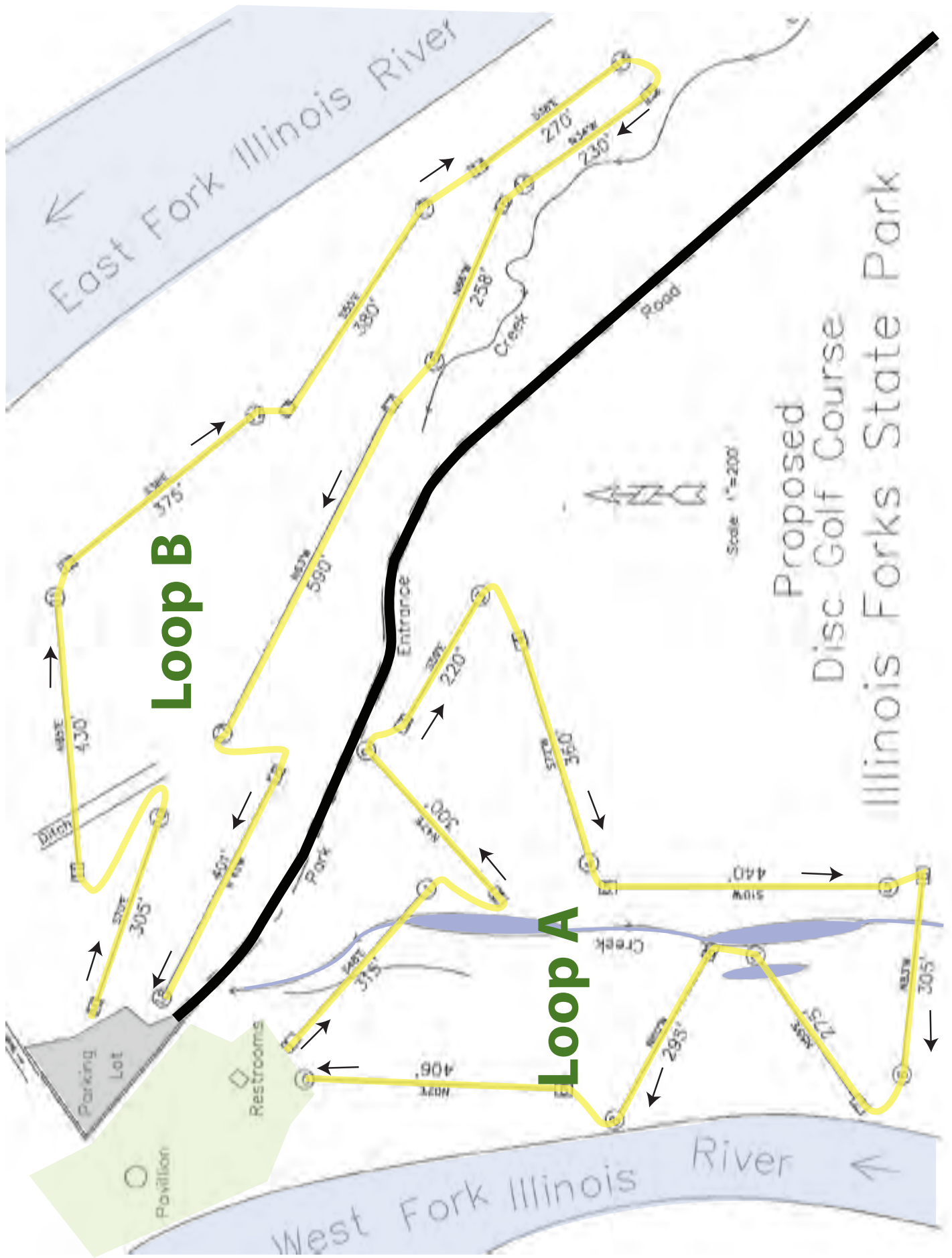
Hole 1

The map shows a creek going through this part of the course but this is actually a low area with little evidence of water flow. The map also shows the course going close to a pond but, on the ground, the pond is actually a fair distance away from the proposed course.

Hole 2

This segment is on a raised area well above and away from vernal pool and riparian areas. On the map, the basket appears to be immediately adjacent to the entrance road but on the ground it is actually about 200 or more feet away. A vernal pool runs close to the road in the area just beyond the basket.







Hole 3 - Tee pad would be in the foreground with the basket on the rise in the center background.

Hole 3

This segment of the course climbs up a small bluff through heavy brush and downed trees that were killed during the 2005 fire. A fair amount of excavation will need to be done to establish a trail along the slope of the bluff to the top. The basket is located just this side of the heavily tree covered hill in the background of this photo.



Hole 4

Hole 4

This segment enters into a natural, park-like setting of open meadows and large oak trees. The course generally follows the traces of an old two-track road. This area may be of archaeological interest.



Hole 5

Hole 5

This segment follows along a ridge overlooking the flood plain of the West Fork of the Illinois River. The course follows an old two track road, which can be seen running up the lower center of the photo. No archaeological artifacts or features were noted but this area is still likely to be of archaeological interest.



Hole 6

The tee for this segment of the course is on a bluff where participants will throw to a basket located near the West Fork of the Illinois River on the flood plain below. This hole represents a potential safety problem because the basket is located near an informal trail to a swimming hole. The basket will be moved to a location away from the trail.

Hole 6 - upper picture is the tee area at the top of the bluff with the flood plain in the middle background. Lower photo is on the flood plain where the basket will be located.

Hole 7

This hole is intended to present participants with a challenge of throwing to a basket on a narrow piece of high ground between two pools of water. This may result in many players having to wade into the pools to retrieve their discs. There was a discussion about relocating the basket in a site away from these pools.



Hole 7 - Person is standing on the rise between the two ponds. The west pond is visible in the foreground.

Hole 8

This segment is on the flood plain and generally covered with both buckbrush and mountain mahogany. Archaeological features may be present but flooding during the 1955 and 1964 season may have obliterated these resources.



Hole 8 - Mountain mahogany is one of the prominent plants in this area.

Hole 9

Hole 9 will be rerouted to prevent going through a vernal pool area near the park restroom. The reroute will take it into a dense stand of snags of small diameter trees that were killed during the 2005 fire. Considerable clearing of hazard trees and down debris will be needed in this part of the course.



Hole 9 - This was originally routed through a vernal pool area. It is now going to be moved up to the high area to the right of this photo.

LOOP B

Loop B goes through parts of the park that have been heavily disturbed by both vehicle traffic and bulldozer work.

Hole 10

This traverses an open field with no obstructions between the tee and basket.



Hole 10



Hole 11



Hole 12



Hole 13

Hole 11

The course starts on a man-made rise that appears to have been created by dirt pushed up by a bulldozer to create a drainage area. Beyond the drainage is an open field criss-crossed by vehicle tracks.

Hole 12

This starts on a small rise that appears to have been created by a bulldozer and follows a dirt road through a low area past some willow trees. A well traveled dirt road to a popular swimming area passes through the middle of this course.

Hole 13

This generally traverses high ground between some large pine trees and into a heavily disturbed flat, open area

Hole 14

This segment of the course crosses an open, gravel covered field criss-crossed with vehicle tracks and into a forested area seen in the right center of the photo. This is a natural meadow among oak trees. There were no archaeological features noted and it is likely this area was impacted by the 1955 and 1964 floods.



Hole 14

Hole 15

The course returns back to the open, gravel covered area via another natural opening in the brush and trees. Vehicle tracks are seen in this area and it likely has experienced a long history of human disturbance.



Hole 15

Hole 16

The route follows a well defined road through an area with signs of significant vehicle activity.



Hole 16

Hole 17

The course climbs over a small abutment, possibly man made and continues into other areas with significant human disturbance. No archaeological features are expected to be found in this area.



Hole 17



Hole 18

Hole 18

The final hole parallels the entrance road to the park (seen on left) and ends at the main parking lot. The basket is located away from the parking area where a poorly thrown disc may drift into areas used by other visitors.

Next Steps

The project leader already has a source of 18 used baskets for the course and a limited source of funding. Some local service groups, individual volunteers, and school groups have offered to help establish the course. The project leader is also actively obtaining letters of support from community businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, and service groups such as the Lions, Rotary, Masons, Community Development Organization, Senior Center, and others. These will be useful for soliciting grants if necessary.

The project is generally in a good position to be started but will need the following to proceed:

- 1) Authorization will be needed to set up the course on State Park and Bureau of Land Management property.

- 2) Environmental and cultural resource surveys may not be necessary due to the minimal impact of the course to botanical and cultural resources. In addition to this, most of the area where the course will be set up has already been subjected to disturbance by human activity. For this reason, it may be possible circumvent NEPA requirements with a categorical exclusion.

- 3) Funding needs to be obtained to install the course. The source of funding is expected to come from local businesses and service groups.

- 4) Conduct a Job Safety Analysis of the project area and procure safety equipment for volunteers before work begins to install the course.

- 5) Organize and schedule work days to install the course.

- 6) Produce a maintenance plan.

End