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Slow park progress irks supervisors

El Dorado Trail's extension to receive Bass Lake funding.

By Cathy Locke - Bee Staff Writer

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El Dorado County supervisors voiced frustration with the lack of progress on two major park projects, while a Parks and Recreation Commission member suggested it's time to update the county parks master plan.

Jordan Postlewait, county parks manager, recently presented a status report on parks and trails projects.

Supervisors sought the review after reluctantly agreeing in September to allocate to the El Dorado Trail extension project \$564,000 in grant funds initially intended for developing Bass Lake Regional Park.

Staff members explained that the grant application had to identify a project ready to advertise for bid.

The Bass Lake project has not reached that stage, and neither have plans for Pollock Pines Park, to be built on 26 acres the county purchased in 2001.

Supervisor Helen Baumann said she is frustrated that the county keeps inviting the public to meetings and showing beautiful drawings of proposed park facilities. "Then," she said, "the funding gets diverted to something else."

Plans for the regional park on a 40-acre site on the perimeter of Bass Lake, between El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park, have been delayed because the county is negotiating the possible sale of 10 acres for a school. Revenue from the sale, Postlewait said, could be used to develop the remaining 30 acres as a park.

The environmental study for the park was initiated in 2003, he said, but the design and environmental review process are contingent on the outcome of negotiations with the Rescue Union School District.

Postlewait said \$183,306 currently is available for the park, which is expected to cost about \$3.75 million.

As for Pollock Pines Park, he said, \$466,522 is available for a project expected to cost \$5.5 million.

During a series of community workshops, Postlewait said, Pollock Pines residents asked that the park include baseball and soccer fields, and basketball and volleyball courts.

The project also involves providing access to the property, drainage to an El Dorado Irrigation District canal, a timber harvest, off-site improvements, grading and site layout. Plans call for developing the park in phases, beginning with a nature trail, proceeding to tree removal and grading and then constructing playing fields, a playground, amphitheater and restrooms.

Postlewait said construction documents will be developed in 2007.

Bob Smart, a member of the Parks and Recreation Commission, said, "I'm pleased with the passion that caused this presentation to come about."

Smart said the county finally has adequate staff members to move projects forward. But, he said, the parks master plan needs to be updated.

"The world changes, and we're still grinding away," he said.

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