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Morgan Conservation Park still has room to grow

Improvement list includes new shelter

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One of Shauna Buchert's favorite parts of the Morgan Conservation Park in Oldham County is the cedar glade.

"It's beautiful back in there," said Buchert, a district program coordinator for the county's conservation district.

The 217-acre park opened in northeast Oldham more than three years ago and now offers nearly 4 miles of hiking trails, including a "bluebird trail" with nine bluebird houses.

Fiscal Court used a \$900,000 federal grant to buy the property, which is off of Ky. 524, not far from the Trimble County line and about 8 miles north of downtown La Grange.

It's not clear how many people like Buchert use the park, but the information brochures near the entrance keep disappearing — an indicator that people are going there, parks director Tim Curtis said.

He said he foresees improvements to the park that will attract even more people, including Boy Scouts and school groups.

"I think it's still a little bit of an undiscovered gem, even though it's on our Web site," Curtis said. "The people who've gone out there, I've gotten a lot of positive feedback from it."

The Morgan Conservation Park opened to the public in May 2006 with 2 miles of trails and native grasses that had been planted to attract quail.

Since then, more trails have been added, and the county has spent \$22,500 in federal funds on a parking lot, Oldham financial officer Shawn Boyle said. He said that money also may have covered costs for signs that have been added to the property.

More work is ahead. Curtis said the parks department plans to build a basic shelter house on the property sometime this year. The building will cost about \$20,000, which is in the department budget, he said.

Also, volunteers have constructed much of what will be a half-mile trail on flat land, he said. The conservation park already has more than 3 miles of trails.

Later, the parks department hopes to add a nature center with restrooms on the property, though "funding is the main issue," Curtis said. He said parks officials would like to have utilities such as

water on the property, which would make it easier for school groups to visit, and add more trails on the land.

Now, the park is “definitely useable if you're looking for a place to get away from the city and stuff,” he said. “It's a very nice scenic place to go.”

He added: “It's a work in progress, just like anything else.”

The park is the only one of its kind in Oldham that the county owns, Curtis said.

Still, Westport resident Bruce Breitmeyer said he questions why the county bought the property, which is “so far from La Grange and really any populated area.”

“I've been out there and I've never seen anybody out there,” he said.

He said the county could have bought property near the river in Westport for the same price.

Buchert said she takes a group of around 30 to the Morgan Conservation Park each fall for leaf identification tours, though she'd like to see even more people out there.

“You could take a picnic; you could go back there and walk,” she said. “It's beautiful.”

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