

Chapter 11

TOURISM, PARKS, AND RECREATION

Tourism, parks, and recreation are important components to the equality of life in the County and Magic Valley as a whole. However, the amenities, opportunities and sites provided in this chapter need to be managed to ensure their sustainability and be environmentally responsible. A map depicting the location of some of the sites discussed in this chapter can be accessed in Appendix B: 11-1.

TOURISM

Jerome County is located in the central portion of the Magic Valley. Interstate 84 runs through the southern part of the County with the canyon and Lincoln County creating boundaries to the south and north, respectively. It is an ideal stop over location for travelers along Interstate 84. The proximity to the interstate is a desirable attribute to travelers with destinations outside of the Magic Valley.

Three nationally branded hotel properties are located in the County with a handful of smaller lodging properties available as well. Two family oriented campgrounds are also located in Jerome County. These overnight accommodations offer a variety of options for tourists. The County also features a number of chain and independent hospitality minded businesses. Travelers can conveniently and comfortably stay, eat, shop, recreate, and service their vehicles in Jerome County.

Additionally, Jerome County features several unique recreation opportunities. Public lands make up a large portion of the County's area. These spaces are open to many types of recreation including but not limited to hiking, OHV trails, single track trails, bird watching, horseback riding, hunting, target shooting, and more.



Two private/public golf courses located along the Snake River in Jerome County offer breathtaking views of the river and greens. A third course located away from the canyon is open to the public and provides unique experiences to travelers and locals alike.

SPECIAL SITES

Wilson Lake Reservoir in Hazelton, operating primarily as a regulating reservoir in the North Side Canal Company's canal project, is an ideal place for camping and water

recreation. Many visitors fish, water ski, wakeboard and even wind surf on the lake. The developed campgrounds and park area are a great place for families to spend the night and recreate.

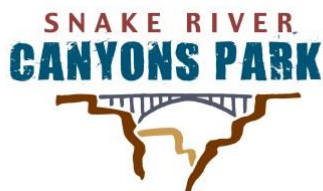
The Minidoka National Historic Site is the location of a WWII Japanese Relocation Camp also known as Hunt Camp. The National Park Service is actively working to improve facilities and open an onsite interpretive center.



Jerome's Museums and historical preservation of agriculture heritage are tourist attractions unique to the County. The Idaho Farm and Ranch Museum (IFARM) is a great place for visitors to learn about the Magic Valley's founding and evolution as an agrarian community. The annual Live History Days is a unique tourist experience. The Jerome County Fair is also a celebration of the community's agrarian roots. Additionally, the facility provides year round events and overnight camping.

The Northside Military Museum was founded in January 2015. Their goal is to create a place where they can educate the public on the services and sacrifices of the U.S. military service members. They educate on all branches and in every American conflict, while placing a special emphasis on the veterans in the community.

The Snake River Canyon corridor provides a vast amount of recreational opportunities. Activities that may be enjoyed along the river canyon include but are not limited to hiking, fishing, hunting, trapping, wildlife viewing, and water sports. Since much of the land is in private ownership, access to--and in--the Snake River Canyon is restricted (For a map depicting private and public lands, refer to Appendix B: 11-2). The Middle Snake River Recreation Work Group (formerly the Access committee)--under the Region IV Recreation Forum and with assistance by the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (of the National Park Service)--developed a program to look at recreation issues along the Middle Snake River Corridor. The objective of the project was to develop a series of recommendations on recreation issues such as resource management, access, future facilities, and opportunities--as well as preservation of cultural and historical resources. The committee produced a recreation inventory map of the Middle Snake River Corridor. The map identified land ownership and access trails, as well as other types of recreation along the Middle Snake River Corridor.



Snake River Canyons Park (also known as North Rim Park) is under development in the County. A managing board comprised of eight members has been established. The board is currently reorganizing the recreational activities happening on the property and installing legal access to grounds north of the canyon and east of Route 93. Other

plans that are underway include placing signage, establishing a Shoshone Falls viewpoint, delineating a defined area for the discharge of weapons, and creating a website. A map of the park is located in Appendix B: 11-3.

Other recreational opportunities in Jerome County that have yet to see improved

public access include: Yingst Grade/Broken Bridge, Scotts Pond, Vineyard Lake, Devil's Corral, and other BLM sites. These locations along the canyon rim are potential sites for developed access to the Snake River Canyon. Entry into the canyon is possible, but improvements would mean tourists and locals could more easily enjoy the canyon, Auger Falls, and Centennial Park via the north side of the canyon.

TOURISTS ATTRACTIONS

Many of the locations listed below whether in public or private ownership would be enhanced and likely used if they included items such as developed pathways, boat ramps, day use facilities, or connectivity to the south side of the river. Areas under private ownership would likely benefit from some commercial or residential uses that enhance tourism and recreational opportunities.

Current features:

- Campgrounds
- Private/Public Golf Courses
- BLM Recreational Use Land
- Snake River Canyon Access
- Wilson Lake Reservoir
- Cauldron Linn "Star Falls" Waterfall
- Minidoka National Historic Site
- Jerome County Fairgrounds
- Idaho Farm and Ranch Museum (IFARM)
- Jerome County Historical Museum
- The Northside Military Museum
- Gateway to Sun Valley
- Crossroads between Boise, Salt Lake City Utah, Sun Valley, and Jackpot Nevada
- Snake River Canyons Park
- Ascension Priory
- Snake River Recreation
- Base Jumping

Potential:

- Devil's Corral
- Scott's Pond
- Snake River Access
- Yingst Grade/Broken Bridge
- Vineyard Lake
- Clay Caves
- Idaho Power Shoshone Falls Viewing Platform

RECREATION AND PARKS

Jerome Recreation District (JRD) is one of two recreation districts within Jerome County. The JRD operates as an independent taxing organization with its own governing Board of Directors with a service area of roughly 22,000 residents. The JRD is essentially the primary provider of organized parks and recreation services for Jerome County. The east side of the County is served by the Valley Recreation District. However, there is crossover and partnering between the organizations to help in providing services for eastern Jerome County residents--particularly youth programs. A map showing the districts can be found in Appendix B: 11-4.

Jerome Recreation District Services and Facilities

The Jerome Recreation District (JRD) was formed in November 1976 and began full-time operation in June 1977. Through years of successful operation, the district has assumed many ongoing specific responsibilities and functions including:

- Recreation program development and administration
- Park construction and development
- Landscape planning and improvement
- Park and pathway maintenance
- Swimming pool operation and administration
- Ongoing review and evaluation for future programs and facilities

Current Services:

- Youth and Adult Sports Programs
- Individual Fitness
- Group Fitness
- Aquatics (seasonal)
- Senior Citizen Fitness Programs
- Various Leisure Programs
- Educational Programs
- Physical Education Programs

Jerome Recreation District Facilities:

- Jerome Recreation Center (32,000 sq. ft. plus an outdoor pool)
- Forsyth Park (20 acres developed)
- Rotary/Thompson Memorial Park (2.5 acres developed)
- Candlelight Park (2 acres developed)
- Spears Park (7 acres developed)
- Becker Park (7 acres partially developed)
- Three Miles of Separated Pedestrian Pathway (paved)



Recreation Center and Pool

The Jerome Recreation Center was expanded to 32,000 square feet in 2005 and

opened for business full-time in March of 2006. Annually, the recreation center sees as many as 70,000 entries. The recreation center also operates the lone public pool (seasonal, outdoor) located at the recreation center. The recreation center features indoor sports courts, fitness facilities, indoor track, group fitness room, and locker room facilities.

Pedestrian/Bike Paths

The Jerome Recreation District currently has three miles of developed, paved pathway. Connecting a pathway to the Snake River Canyon and perhaps to Twin Falls has been identified as a priority within the plan. Also, creating greater connectivity within centers of population has been identified as a priority for pathway development. As the population continues to increase it will be important to develop pathways and designated bike routes to meet the needs of citizens. Proper planning and involvement of other partners (i.e. City of Jerome, Jerome County, and Jerome Highway District) will be essential in achieving this objective.

Jerome Recreation District – The Future

Jerome County will continue to see steady growth for the foreseeable future. This will create challenges and opportunities for parks and recreation service providers. Coordination and planning among the various public entities will be crucial in meeting recreational needs of the population. Preservation of open space both developed and undeveloped will be important for parks and recreation opportunities. Population will also have impacts on programming and existing facilities. The Jerome Recreation District will continue to pursue opportunities to expand and develop facilities to meet these needs. Recreation center expansion as well as park and pathway development will be high priorities for the foreseeable future. Aquatics will also be a challenge. Operational and maintenance costs of the existing pool as well as examining the logistics of year-round pool operations present fiscal challenges but will be important in meeting the needs of Jerome County residents.

Valley Recreation District Services and Facilities

The Valley Recreation (Rec) District was formed November 3, 1998, per Idaho Statute 31-4304. Three commissioners were appointed by Governor Kempthorne to organize a governing board. One of the first orders of business was to create the following Mission Statement:

"It is the mission of the Valley Recreation District to enhance the quality of life in our community by providing diverse recreational opportunities and physical resources to help build strong families and healthy communities through solid economic guidelines."

In 1999, a director was hired to:

- Originate and supervise programs
- Oversee all facility improvements and maintenance
- Hire staff to mow, irrigate, and help with maintenance

Greenwood Park and Schools

The first properties used by Valley Rec were Greenwood Park and ball fields at Hazelton and Eden schools, owned by the Valley School District. The school eventually sold the Greenwood Park and the Eden ball fields. In 1999, a lease agreement was formed between Valley Rec and Valley School District 262 for the use of the high school gymnasium and the ball field at the Hazelton School. There are three baseball diamonds and parking available at this facility.

Valley Community Park

In 2001, a lease agreement was formed for the use and maintenance of property donated to the City of Hazelton. Valley Rec designed and constructed a community park including three baseball fields, soccer fields, a disc golf course, walking trail, and parking lot. Additions have been ongoing which include an underground sprinkler system, trees, handicap access, benches, water fountains, a lighted flag, and a rock with the park name. A contest was held and the winning name for the park became Valley Community Park. In 2004, a grant was obtained from First Federal Savings Bank. This money was used to build the first ball field at Valley Community Park. Since then the Valley Recreation District has continued to budget money for improvements and maintenance for the Valley Community Park--which encompasses 20 acres of grass and parking along with playground equipment and four covered picnic areas.



Wilson Lake Park

In 2002, a transfer was made from the Lions Club to Valley Rec for BLM property adjacent to Wilson Lake. Included in this park are a picnic area, grass playing field, restrooms, boat docks, and a camping area. In July of 2011, a grant was obtained for new docks, children's swimming area, and bank renovations. Through Valley Recreation District's budget and money generated from boat registrations by the department of Waterways, they are able to maintain and continue to improve Wilson Lake Park.

Services and Programs

Valley Rec has provided computer classes and exercise classes for adults. Valley Rec provides soccer, volleyball, football, basketball, wrestling, baseball, and softball for the youth in the community.

District Goals

The Valley Recreation District has a long range goal of building a community facility that could possibly double as a senior citizen center and a recreation center. The vision for the facility would include a gymnasium, exercise equipment, offices, a fully equipped kitchen, and a conference area capable of hosting various large gatherings along with afterschool and weekend youth and adult activities.

The Valley Recreation District wants to be that cohesive agent responsible for bringing the entire community, which encompasses both Eden and Hazelton, together as one.