

# **Section I: GENERAL INFORMATION**

## **Section IA: Description of Jennings County Parks & Recreation**

### **Sec. IA-1: Origin of Jennings County Parks & Recreation**

Jennings County Parks and Recreation (JCPR) is a department of Jennings County Government created by Jennings County Ordinance 4-93 (see attachment A), under the authority of Indiana Code IC 36-10-3-3. (see attachment B)

### **Sec. IA-2: Initial Property (Muscatatuck Park)**

JCPR came into being in 1967 prior to being gifted to Jennings County in 1968 by the State of Indiana. The property (formerly known as Muscatatuck State Park, equaling approximately 215 acres) is located south of North Vernon and is bordered in part by IN State Hwy 3, the Muscatatuck River, and an abandoned railroad along South Gum Street which was converted into the Muscatatuck Walking Trail in 2015. The parcel of property, known as Muscatatuck Park, provides the following opportunities for visitors (not intended to be all inclusive):

- a) Picnicking
- b) Hiking
- c) Mountain biking
- d) Volleyball
- e) Basketball
- f) Camping

Multiple differing shelters are present in the park and available for use by the public. Reservation options are available for most shelters.

### **Sec. IA-3: Additional Acreage (Eco Lake Park)**

In 2007, additional acreage north of North Vernon was acquired by Jennings County from a Columbus Indiana Employee Recreational Organization. The parcel (approximately 127 acres), known as Eco Lake Park, includes a fishing lake, basketball court, volley court, playground and a campground that opened in 2023.

### **Sec. IA-4: Staffing**

Staffing for JCPR consists of one Park Superintendent (henceforth referred to as “superintendent”, but often “Director”) and 3 subordinate staff positions. At times trainees, interns, and/or other interim positions may exist as JCPR partners with community agencies in the implementation of specific training programs. A

Board of Directors consisting of five appointed members provides oversight and direction.

**Sec. IA-5: Administration**

The JCPR main office is located at the Muscatatuck Park and is housed in the historic William Read Home. This location also functions as a visitor's center providing interpretive displays and information of local interests. The address & phone number of the office/visitor center is:

325 North State Hwy 3  
North Vernon, IN 47265

Phone: 812-346-2953

Department email: [parksandrec@jenningscounty-in.gov](mailto:parksandrec@jenningscounty-in.gov)

**Sec IA-6: Extreme Sports Area**

- a) The Muscatatuck Park's options for visitors include its use as an Extreme Sports Area, as defined in the State of Indiana Senate Enrolled Act 141 (See Attachment E). Extreme activities include, but not limited to, the following (all non-motorized)
  - 1. Skateboarding
  - 2. Inline skating
  - 3. Freestyle biking
  - 4. Mountain biking
  - 5. Snow sledding
  - 6. Hiking
  - 7. Canoeing
- b) Visitors to the Muscatatuck Park engaging in extreme sports activities are:
  - 1. Notified at the entrances to the park of the inherent danger associated with extreme sports, including injury, disability and even death;
  - 2. Expected to adhere to all JCPR agreements, rules and policies; and
  - 3. Expected to behave in a responsible and commonsense manner.
- c) Rock climbing (bouldering) and rappelling are NOT permitted on JCPR properties.

## **Section II: PARK OPERATING POLICES**

### **Section IIA: Park Hours of Operation Policy**

#### **Sec. IIA-1: Park Hours**

Muscatatuck Park and Eco Lake Park are open during each day to the public on a year-round basis. Access to Muscatatuck Park is limited during the night. With access one hour after sunset to one hour before sunrise restricted to visitors not in possession of a dated park pass. This nighttime restriction is supported by Jennings County statute and is enforced by Jennings County and other law enforcement authorities.

Occasions may occur during the year resulting in temporary limited access to the parks, or certain areas of the parks, contingent upon special reservation/rental situations approved by the superintendent. Notices of such limited access are posted at the appropriate park entrances during these events.

#### **Sec. IIA-2: Office Hours**

Park Office and Visitor Center are open with limited hours during the week. Staff can usually be found in the office most mornings, but if you have business then coordination by phone or email is recommended. Reservations done online or over phone are recommended. The number of personnel available to the parks for weekday office duty may result in unavoidable temporary office closures, at which times visible communication is posted describing timelines for staff return.

### **Section IIB: Park Staffing Policy**

#### **Sec. IIB-1: Weekday Staffing**

Staffing of the office is limited. Scheduling a meeting is recommended. Business by phone or online is recommended. Staff can usually be found with the park(s) and are glad to assist you. No ongoing staffing is provided at Eco Lake Park, although interim activities are performed there by existing JCPR staff as directed by the Superintendent.

**Sec. IIB-2: Weekend Staffing**

At minimum, one park staff person is on duty covering both Muscatatuck Park & Eco Lake Park, during each weekend on an 8:00AM to Noon, and 4:00pm to 7:00pm schedule to assist campers, maintain a safe and sanitary park conditions, and to perform other tasks as determined by the Superintendent, during regular season.

**Sec. IIB-3: Seasonal Staffing**

JCPR does not maintain weekend staffing during the off season, roughly November 1<sup>st</sup> till April 15<sup>th</sup>. Staff will be present during the off season to check the Dining Hall when needed.

**Section IIC: General Park Rules & Policies**

**Sec. IIC-1: Public compliance with the law**

Any person entering a JCPR area shall comply with all existing County, State, and Federal laws and/or statutes. Individuals violating such laws or statutes will be reported to the appropriate law enforcement authority. Such violations include but are not limited to:

- a) Destruction of property,
- b) Theft
- c) Illegal drug use
- d) Underage consumption of alcohol
- e) Public intoxication
- f) Assault/battery, and
- g) Ignoring speed/traffic signage

**Sec. IIC-2: Manipulation of natural and manmade park features**

Any person entering a JCPR area is prohibited from altering or repositioning and natural or manmade features of the property without the consent of the Superintendent. All animate and inanimate objects within the parks are protected by this policy.

Exceptions:

- a) Use of drawing chalk devoid of profanity on flat surfaces is permitted.
- b) Rearranging of picnic tables within park property to meet particular picnic needs is permitted.

**Sec. IIC-3: Use of alcohol with park property**

The responsible use of alcohol is allowed within the park property, contingent upon compliance with County, State, and Federal laws and statutes. Should behavior be observed that is deemed irresponsible by park staff, the following will occur as determined appropriate by park staff:

- a) Verbal warning by park staff, of behavior determined by park staff to be bordering on irresponsible.
- b) Eviction from the park, by park staff, following determination by park staff that behavior is inappropriate.
- c) Reporting to law enforcement authorities of behavior determined by park staff to most likely be in violation of County, State, or Federal law or statute.

**Sec. IIC-4: Maintaining a healthy and safe environment**

Any person entering a JCPR property shall ensure any refuse of any type generated during their visit is deposited in the dumpster centrally located in the parking lot by the maintenance area. Otherwise, we note that if you can pack it in you can pack it out. Trash bags will be provided for paid rentals. Failure to leave a park area free of debris and filth may result in restriction of future access to the park for the responsible individual or group.

**Sec. IIC-5: Water usage within park property**

Water is available within park properties for visitor usage, to include camping, drinking, the cleaning of picnic equipment, and for toys such as slip-n-slides. The filling of water containers for usage outside of park properties is prohibited, unless purchased with office approval. \$1 per gallon.

**Sec. IIC-6: Firearms**

Unpacked, un-stored, or otherwise unsecured firearms are prohibited on JCPR properties.

**Sec. IIC-7: Hunting & Trapping**

- a) Hunting and trapping for wildlife is prohibited in the parks.
- b) Harvesting natural fruits and nuts is prohibited in the parks, with the exception of seasonal mushrooms for human consumption.

**Sec. IIC-8: Bow & Arrow usage**

Usage of bows and arrows are allowed on park properties only following confirmation by park staff of:

- a) The presence of qualified instructors for each usage event, and
- b) A park staff approved location for each usage event.

**Sec. IIC-9: Paint guns & Air Soft guns are prohibited in the parks**

**Sec. IIC-10: Fireworks**

- a) Fireworks are prohibited in JCPR campgrounds.
- b) Fireworks are allowed in open areas of the parks, with staff approval per each usage event.

**Sec. IIC-11: Fires-Charcoal**

- a) Fires are allowed in the park's camping and picnicking areas, but are restricted to fire rings and fireplaces installed in the parks by park staff.
- b) Charcoal for cooking is allowed in the park's camping and picnicking areas only when used in park supplied grill units, or personally owned barbecue grills.

**Sec. IIC-12: Music**

- a) Musical events involving bands and/or amplified loud speakers are allowed in the park contingent upon a Special Use Permit. (see Sec. IIE)
- b) Music used by visitors in shelters, picnic, camping and other areas of the parks is permissible when used with the consideration of other park visitors. **Determination of when music is inconsiderate to other visitors is at the sole discretion of park staff.** Park staff shall intervene when they have determined music to be inconsiderate to others using the following sequence:
  1. Requesting the user to lower the volume to that considered by park staff to be considerate of others
  2. Requesting the user to terminate the music if the request to lower the volume is ignored
  3. Evicting the user if request to terminate the music is ignored.

**Sec. IIC-13: Littering**

- a) Park visitors are asked to deposit all refuse and debris in either the dumpster or trash barrels.

- b) The use of confetti is prohibited.

**Sec. IIC-13: Motorized Vehicles**

- a) Visitors to the parks shall not operate motorized vehicles on any surface other than paved or gravel roadways. Motorized vehicles include but may not be limited to:
  - 1. Motorcycles
  - 2. Mopeds
  - 3. Scooters
  - 4. Go carts
- b) Exceptions to the above include:
  - 1. Campers bringing their motorized vehicles to their campsite
  - 2. As otherwise determined necessary by the superintendent for a particular event.

**Sec. IIC-14: Geocaching**

- a) Geocaching is allowed on JCPR properties after office approval of individual caches and location. Unauthorized caches may be removed upon discovery.

**Section IID: Park Building Usage Policy**

**Sec. IID-1: Park Shelters**

- a) Specific shelters within the Muscatatuck Park may be reserved through the park office or online. These shelters include shelters numbers 1-6, Canyon Creek Shelter, and the Vinegar Mill shelter. Park staff will post 'RESERVED' notices on shelters the day of the reservation. When the party reserving the shelter leaves the park and abandons the shelter on the date of the reservation, the shelter then becomes available to visitors on a 1<sup>st</sup> come basis.
- b) Any shelter that has not been reserved through the park office is available to visitors on a 1<sup>st</sup> come basis.
- c) The Campground Shelter is only for paid campers and is available to campers on a 1<sup>st</sup> come basis.
- d) All shelter users are expected to leave the shelter with no trash, filth, or other debris following their usage. Failure to leave a shelter in a healthy and safe

condition may prohibit the responsible party from future use of park shelters. Trash bags and barrels will be provided for paid shelter rentals.

- e) The shelter at Eco Lake Park is available on a 1<sup>st</sup> come basis for informal usage. Formal usage by a large group must be approved by the superintendent, and must involve the placement of portable toilets
- f) Refunds will not be provided with 3 weeks of the scheduled reservation date.

**Sec. IID-2: Community Building/Dining Hall**

The Muscatatuck Dining Hall is open and available to the public on a rental basis only. The hall has both heat and air conditioning. Rental cost is a flat fee. Each rental also includes a deposit fee for the key, cleanup, and damage; which is refundable upon key return as long as the hall is left without cleanliness or damage issues. Access to the hall is limited to the time covered by the reservation. Signature by the responsible party is required on a rental agreement (See attachment C) that includes, but may not be limited to, the following components:

- a) Reservations allow access to the hall from 6:00AM through 2:00AM. Earlier access for preparation or other reasons is not permitted.
- b) Refunds will not be provided with 3 weeks of the scheduled reservation date.
- c) Clean-up and damage costs will be subtracted from the deposit.
- d) Cost incurred beyond the deposit amount may be pursued through legal channels.
- e) Any tacks, staples, tape, adhesive, or maker of any type applied to the hall is strictly prohibited. Removal/repair due to use of such items will be subtracted from the deposit.
- f) A checklist will be used to confirm compliance with the rental agreement prior to the return of the deposit.

**Sec. IID-3: Walnut Grove School House**

- a) The historic one room school house can be rented. It has limited space, as seats are secured to the floor. A key and damage deposit will be an additional fee and is refundable in the same manner as the community building/dining hall rental

**Sec. IID-4: Building Reservations**

- a) Reservations for park buildings can be made online via our reservation management system or by speaking with park staff in the office.

- b) Reservations are made using the numerical sequence (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, etc.) that a day (Monday-Sunday) falls within a particular month (January-December). An example of a shelter rental would be 'the third Sunday in August' rather than a specific calendar date. There are no considerations for days other than as described above. Days such as the '4<sup>th</sup> of July', 'Christmas', 'St. Patrick's Day', etc. will not be considered when making reservations.
- c) A party wanting to reserve a building for the same day the following year must make the reservation by contacting the park office within 7 days of the party's most recent building reservation. **EXAMPLE:** If a family reserves Shelter 1 for the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of August in 2015, they will have 7 days from that date to make a reservation for the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday in August 2016.
- d) Should a party fail to make a reservation within those 7 days, the reserved amenity then becomes open to the public.

**Sec. IID-5: Usage of Signs by Building Renters**

- a) Park visitors renting buildings with the park may place signs in and around the building they have reserved. Each building is surrounded by adjoining space, and signs are permitted in the space.
- b) Signs are prohibited in other areas of the park not adjacent to the rented building, including:
  - 1. Entrances to the park, and
  - 2. Roadway intersections with the park
- c) Signs must be in good taste and be inoffensive (as determined by park staff), and have no negative physical or aesthetic consequence to any feature of the park.
- d) Nailing, stapling, or tacking signs to buildings, trees, or other park property is prohibited.
- e) Staking signs into the ground or hanging signs using twine are recommended and permitted.
- f) The park visitor renting the building is responsible for removing all personal signs upon leaving the area. Failure to remove signs following a rental may prohibit future building rentals.
- g) Any sign deemed to be in violation of this policy will be removed by park staff upon discovery, and dependent upon circumstances, the park visitor/renter may or may not be notified of the removal. All removed signs will be treated as refuse and discarded.

- h) The superintendent may make exceptions to this policy as deemed necessary to accommodate the needs associated with a special use/event occurring at the park. (See Section IIE)

## **Section IIF: Use of Athletic Fields**

### **Sec. IIF-1: Use of Athletic Fields**

- a) Informal use of any of the athletic fields on JCPR property is allowed and is available on a first come basis unless the fields in question have been previously reserved through park administration.
- b) Formal team practices using the athletic fields is prohibited, except when Sec. IIF-1-e criteria are met.
- c) Events scheduled/reserved through the park administration will take priority over informal use.
- d) Jennings County School events will be given priority status over other organizations when scheduling conflicts arise.
- e) Park Administration may schedule an organization's use of athletic fields, contingent upon the following:
  - 1. The organization signs a use/indemnification agreement. (See attachment 'H')
  - 2. Each participant or parent/legal guardian of a participant, signs a waiver. (See attachment 'I')
  - 3. Usage schedules are approved by park administration, and entered into the reservation management system.
  - 4. Proof of liability insurance including Jennings County as an insured party is presented to park administration.
  - 5. For events during which participants or spectators pay to participate, usage fees are collected by the park as determined by park administration.
  - 6. Each vendor procured by the organization for the events presents:
    - i. A JCPR vendor permit, and
    - ii. If selling food, Jennings County Health Department certification.

## **Section IIG: Campground Rules & Policy**

### **Sec. IIG-1: Campground Health and Safety**

- a) Muscatatuck & Eco Lake Park's campgrounds are family oriented outdoor experiences made available to the citizens of Jennings County and all other visitors.
- b) All campers are expected to maintain their campsites in a healthy and safe manner.
- c) Park staff has the sole authority to determine if and when a site is not maintained in a healthy and safe manner and to request the camper to clean up or otherwise make the campsite appropriate.
- d) Failure of the camper to comply with park staff's request to rectify an identified issue at a campsite may result in the camper's eviction from the park. Three significant issues or warnings of any kind will result in automatic removal.

### **Sec. IIG-2: Campsite Availability**

- a) Campsites at Muscatatuck Park campground are available year-round, with water and shower access generally available from April 1<sup>st</sup> through November 1<sup>st</sup>, each year. Water is available at the campground entrance year-round.
- b) Eco Lake Park's campground closes each winter from approximately November 1<sup>st</sup> until April 1<sup>st</sup>.
- c) Campsites are available on a 1<sup>st</sup> come basis, except when reservations are made.

### **Sec. IIG-3: Campsite Reservations**

- a) Campsite reservations require payment in advance
- b) Campsite reservations may be made in person, by phone, or online.
- c) Campsites must be paid for in advance.

### **Sec. IIG-4: Campsite Registration**

- a) Check in time is any time after 2:00PM
- b) Check out time is any time before 1:00PM
- c) An individual 18 years or older is required to register a campsite as the responsible party for that campsite.
- d) No more than 6 individuals (children included) may camp at any one campsite.
- e) No more than 2 motor vehicles may be parked at any one campsite without park staff approval. Nor may your vehicle infringe upon another campsite.
- f) Drive up campers are to register with park staff, dependent upon arrival time, in the following priority:
  - 1. At the park's visitor center, or if not available
  - 2. With a park staff within the park, or if not available
  - 3. With the campground host.
- g) If circumstances prohibit registration as listed above, the camper may select a campsite as follows (Note: pre-reservations are discounted)
  - 1. Choose an un-tagged site
  - 2. Register at self-pay station, submit payment with provided envelope, and take back portion of said envelope to
  - 3. Any vacant site (un-tagged) for drive up campers.
- h) Campers may request/select a specific site during registration, but park staff retains authority to assign all campers based on previous reservations and other issues as determined priority by the park staff.
- i) If a camper prefers a site change, and park staff determines the preferred is available, park staff may approve one site change per registration.
- j) Park staff (usually the camp host) will make rounds through the campgrounds each evening to confirm all campers are correctly registered.
- k) Campers wishing to extend their camping beyond their original registration must contact park staff who will assist them, pending site availability.
- l) A campsite registration cannot exceed 14 consecutive days, unless determined to be 'long term camping' as described in this policy. A camper leaving after camping for 14 days may make a follow-up reservation only after being absent from JCPR properties/campgrounds for a period of at least 48 hours. Exemptions to this rule are the sole discretion of park staff.
- m) JCPR acknowledges certain camping clubs and pre-determined discounts. Specifics listed in charts of fees.

**Sec. IIG-5: General Campground Rules**

- a) All campers are required to abide by all park rules and policies, which includes the rules and policies specific to the campground
- b) A camper determined to be non-compliant with a park rule and/or policy, as determined by park staff, shall be asked to:
  - 1. Take actions to become complaint with park rules and policies, or
  - 2. Leave the park if unable or unwilling to comply with park rules and policies, or
  - 3. Leave the park if the noncompliance is deemed by park staff to be a serious threat to the health and safety of other campers and/or park visitors.
- c) Quiet hours are observed by all campers from 11:00PM to 7:00AM.
- d) Campers must locate their tent, trailer or motor home on the assigned campsite.
- e) No more than 6 individuals (children included) may camp at any one campsite in the parks, unless otherwise authorized by park staff.
- f) No more than 2 motor vehicles may be parked at any one campsite in the park, unless otherwise authorized by park staff.
- g) The bathhouses are for paid campers only for the sole purpose of showering. The washing of dishes, equipment, or pets in the bathhouses is prohibited.
- h) Possession of fireworks in the campgrounds is prohibited.
- i) Any firearm or bow is required to be unloaded and stored in a case or within a locked vehicle.
- j) Fires are allowed in designated arears with the campsite only. All fires must be totally extinguished by the camper following use. The park staff may prohibit fires within the campgrounds when determined by the park staff that such fires present a significant risk to health and safety. Firewood collection from forest is prohibited.
- k) Smokers are required to be vigilant with matches and cigarette butts, ensuring they are completely extinguished and discarded in an appropriate non- flammable container and NOT on the ground.
- l) All pets are required to be on a leash and attended to at all times while in the campgrounds. Limit 2 pets per site.
- m) Campsites must be clear of debris of all types, with debris and refuse placed in the appropriate receptacles. No nails, stakes, wires, etc. should be added to any trees. Failure to maintain a campsite or leave a campsite in a healthy and safe status may prohibit the camper from future campsite registration.

**Sec. IIG-6: Campsite fee refunds**

- a) Reservations must be paid in advance.
- b) Full refunds are not available during the 7 days prior to the reservation date/s except when the park staff determines the existence of exceptional circumstances. First night paid is lost if cancellation occurs with 7 days.
- c) Exceptional circumstances allowing a refund within 7 days of the reserved date/s are the sole discretion of park staff and include:
  - 1. Loss of utilities in the campground, and
  - 2. Serious illness or injury of the camper, as determined by park staff.Inclement weather such as rain or cold is not considered unusual circumstances.
- d) Approved refunds are available in the form of a:
  - 1. Claim to the Jennings County Auditor
  - 2. Credit Card reimbursement, or
  - 3. Rain-check for a future reservation equal to the approved refund.
    - i. Must be rescheduled within 7 days of request.
  - 4. Transaction fees will apply to refunds.
  - 5. Note: removal from property will nullify refunds.

**Sec. IIG-7: Long Term Camping**

- a) Long term camping is camping for more than 14 consecutive days, and is available primarily for full-time campers and regional contractors. Job references may be requested for long term camping reservations.
- b) Long Term camping is limited to 10 campsites with the campground
- c) Long term camping opportunities will be approved on a case-by-case basis by the superintendent and are only available at Muscatatuck Park.
  - a. Long term campers cannot stay in tents.
- d) Long term camping requires adherence to all JCPR rules and policies.
- e) Long term camping is scheduled in monthly increments.
  - a. Term limit is 3 months. Afterwards, camper must leave JCPR properties for 1 month before returning.
  - b. Payments must be paid in advance and in full each month.
- f) A discount of 20% off the daily campsite fee is available to long term campers.
- g) A signed long term camping agreement (See attachment 'F') is required prior to any long-term camping is approved.

**Sec. IIG-8: Campground Host**

- a) The position of campground host is a non-paid benefit position with routine, yet specific campground maintenance responsibilities.
- b) The superintendent is responsible for recruitment selection and supervision of the campground host.
- c) The campground host's responsibilities are outlined with the Camp Host Agreement. (See attachment 'G')

**Section IIH: Community Partnership Policy**

**Sec. IIH-1: Community Partnership**

- a) JCPR is a community wide recreational department, and is therefore a willing participant in the sharing of technical support, physical property and other resources with agencies and organizations throughout Jennings County
- b) Partnership with other community resources is at the discretion of the superintendent, contingent upon the availability of resources and the safety and security of JCPR employees and property.