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LONG-AWAITED TRAIL IS COMPLETE

January 13, 2021

By Heather Rule

Vergas debuted phase three of its Long Lake Trail in summer 2020. The 846-linear-foot boardwalk is an extension of the trail, built right on the water.

The trail can be used for walking, cycling and running. The trail isn't maintained in the winter, though people can still use it. No motorized vehicles are allowed on the boardwalk.

There are many ways to access the trail at either end or in the middle. Visitors could first stop at shops and restaurants uptown and then walk the trail from there. There's trail access by the parking area at the city beach, and more parking at the entrance to Tin Can Alley.

The primary reason for developing the trail connecting the city to the beach – a project that began in 2008 – was safety. Before the trail, people walked along the busy State Highway 228 which got busier as years went by. The second reason was finding a way to use this “beautiful, natural resource” to make it convenient and user-friendly, said Sherri Hanson, a Vergas park board member.

The boardwalk got plenty of use in its first summer, according to Hanson, who lives in that area. She saw families fishing off the boardwalk, some making a day of it, and picnicking with peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

Hardly a day goes by that someone is not using the trail, Hanson said. “I see more people out and just getting to enjoy, not only the lake, but just some exercise and some time with their families,” Hanson said.

Visitors can use the trail to walk toward the world's largest loon, a popular attraction and photo opp spot located at the city beach overlooking Long Lake. The loon's presence dates back to the early 1960s when the Vergas firefighters recognized the need for an attraction to bring people to the small Vergas community, according to Hanson. So, they took the state bird, the loon, and created a large structure of it. Many people stop to take photos of the loon. During the holidays, the city decorates the loon with a wreath around its neck.

Not only is the loon located at Long Lake Beach, but the beach is a popular spot on its own for families and visitors during the summer. The area includes a swimming beach (with fresh sand hauled in every year), a fishing pier with a separate fishing dock, several picnic tables/areas, two picnic shelters, running water/electricity available and a playground. Boat access isn't far away, and some people bring their kayaks to use, too.

The Vergas park board is also planning long-range for the beach, seeking community input about ways to enhance the beach area in family-friendly ways, Hanson said.

This is definitely a time right now when people recognize that it's good just to spend time outside with your family, Hanson said.

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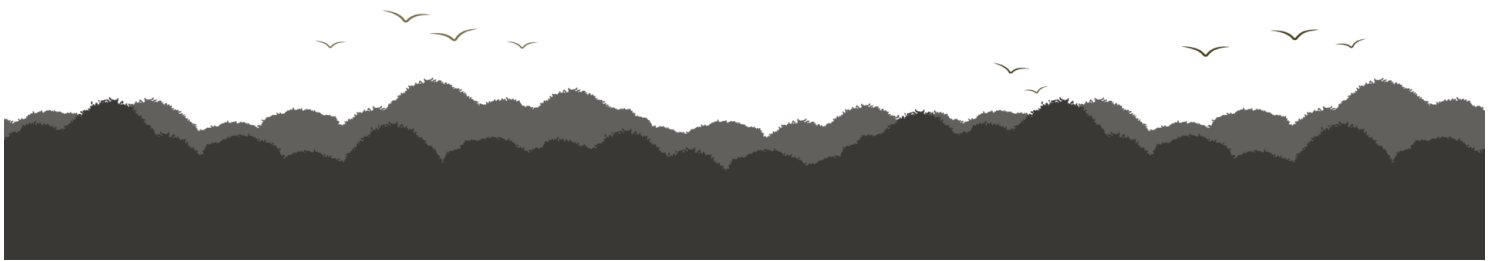
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