

# Forum Update

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## Ford Becomes Director of State Parks



Ramie Ford, former Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Jackson and a former MRPA President has accepted the position of State Parks Director for Mississippi. Ford was the director of the Jackson department for the past eight years. Prior to the Jackson position, he was in Tupelo for fourteen years. In his new position Ford will oversee the operations of 25 state parks and other park related facilities under the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks.

## Laugh, Live, and Learn – Experience MRPA

Save the date!!! The 2007 Mississippi Recreation Park Association Convention will be September 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> in Tupelo. The Convention will take place at the BancorpSouth Conference Center. The Hilton Garden Inn Tupelo will be the host hotel. The theme of the convention will be Laugh, Live, and Learn – Experience MRPA. Deborah Tierce of Tierce Motivational Training will be our opening speaker. Please make plans to attend. We are working on a prize package for the District that has the most members who attend the conference.

## Be a Part of MRPA

### **Don Lewis – Tupelo Department of Parks & Recreation**

Mississippi Recreation and Parks Association is changing and we want you to be a part of the change. As all of you are aware, the old ways of doing business are slowly falling by the wayside and MRPA must be willing to embrace change and address the needs of its members. Our profession is evolving into a more specialized and professional industry. MRPA is starting to address these issues by developing a Strategic Plan but we need everyone's help to accomplish our goals. Agencies and professional members must be willing to get involved. The number one question is, "How can I help?"

- Join MRPA. Our goal should be 100% membership of all city and county parks and recreation departments. If your local department is not a member, please ask them to become a "Member Agency."
- If you are working in the park and recreation field you should join MRPA. We would be a much stronger association and we would be able to offer more services if all Professionals joined.
- There are four MRPA District's in the state. Member's must become more involved at the District level. Attend your district meetings! All agencies should participate in district events and members should actively serve on district committees. If more people were involved we could start having some friendly competitions between districts. Take some ownership and pride in your district.
- As the strategic plan develops, get involved with the various committees that will help develop and implement our goals.
- Ask to serve on state committees. There is always room for more workers and volunteers.



The motto "Leave it better than you found it" should be a constant reminder to all MRPA members that we are all in this together and we must all work together to meet the changing needs of our members and all of the people we work for, the end line users.

If you are interested in getting involved please contact MRPA Executive Director Lamar Evans or President-Elect Don Lewis for more information.

## **Additional Daylight & More**

The Energy Policy Act of 2005 that took effect on March 11<sup>th</sup> this year has increased the amount of time Americans have to spend outdoors during daylight hours. The beginning of Daylight Savings Time will now begin one month earlier than we've been used to and end one month later. For park and recreation departments across the state, it has meant more traffic. More Mississippians are taking advantage of the additional time to spend time outdoors. Maybe this is one tool we can use to increase our goals for better physical fitness.

The time change brings about other issues that park and recreation directors should be aware of. The forecasts are that power rates are going up as much as forty-percent in the next few years. In fact, some of you may have already realized a power rate increase of about twenty-percent since January 2006. These increases mean you need to budget forty to sixty percent more in order to keep the lights on. That is a substantial amount when you consider that it costs as much as \$10,000 and more a month just to keep the lights on at the ball fields. Maybe it's time for us to rethink practice schedules and game times?

Some of us lived through the Arab Oil Embargo back in the early 70's. We remember sitting in gas lines (a lot like those during Katrina). We remember President Jimmy Carter telling us we had an energy crisis and we needed to do something about it soon; and we did. We changed practice and game schedules. We did energy inventories of all of our facilities and found ways that we could reduce lighting and reduce heating and cooling costs.

Municipalities and counties grounded all non-emergency vehicles and instituted motor pools for employees. We all changed our vehicle specifications and insisted that tax dollars be used only for the most energy efficient vehicles. Maintenance crew equipment was strategically stationed throughout the cities at fire and/or police departments where they did not have to travel great distances before beginning their daily tasks. We increased insulation in our buildings. We insulated our water heaters to make them more efficient. We installed lighting controls that turned tennis court and baseball fields lights off at a certain time, preventing those lights from remaining on all night after the parent's group failed to turn the switch off.

Then oil became abundant once again. Gasoline became readily available, although more expensive. We accepted all those energy saving controls we'd instituted and then promptly forgot about increasing our efforts to save more energy. Cars and trucks got bigger and their

fuel requirements increased. We, as an American society, began again to live our lives of luxury.

Recent news events and scientific findings are bringing these issues back to the forefront. Maybe its time for us to find and dust off those energy audits from back in the 1970's or conduct a new one. It is clear that we must find something to do to help us control the rising cost of energy and the emission of greenhouse gases.

There is a great deal of new technology available to help you conserve energy. Visit the Department of Energy's website. Radiant barriers in ceilings can reduce you summer cooling bills substantially by deflecting the summer sun's radiant heat back out of the attic. You may have heard recently that the world's largest manufacturer of incandescent light bulbs will no longer make them. They produce much more heat and light. By changing one 100 watt incandescent bulb for one of the new compact florescent bulbs you will save about 70 percent on that one light fixture. Attic insulation recommendations for our area have been increased from R-30 to R-38. That's the equivalent of about 12 inches of insulation.

Its time for us to begin finding ways to use less energy. If you would have reduced your consumption by 20% during the past 12 months your electricity bill would be the same this month as it was the same month last year. Without those cost saving moves, you'll be paying 20% more. Imagine having to pay 40% more?

## **District I Field Maintenance Workshop**

On March 7, 2007, District 1 held a Field Maintenance Workshop in Oxford. There were nine vendors and 46 participants that attended this meeting. The meeting was held at the Oxford Park Commission. Musco Lighting sponsored our BBQ Lunch, Haynes sponsored our morning break and World Class sponsored our morning coffee and donuts. A special thanks goes out to these guys. District 1 took in a total of \$2,355.00.

## **West Side Park Rebuilt**

Keep America Beautiful was back on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in mid-March. The organization was coordinating hundreds of volunteers who worked through the day to rebuild Gulfport's West Side Park. This park was the scene of a Coast social during an earlier MRPA State Conference. It was totally devastated when Katrina paid her visit. About 400 elementary students, joined by high school and college students on spring break, neighborhood groups, AmeriCorps Seabees, the Coast Guard and members of Keesler Air Force Base personnel helped with the project. By summer, the park will have walking trails leading to a water feature, a shoofly circling a tree, a pavilion and a playground. Mayor Brett Warr, who helped remove debris from oak trees, said a community center will be built on the north end of the park. If the city receives grant money, an indoor four-lane lap pool may be built for training promising young swimmers.