

Upgrades coming to Red Rock Park

Written by By Holly J. Wagner Sun Correspondent
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Supply chain issues, labor shortages and the ongoing quest for funding will make things take a little longer, but McKinley County is assessing structural issues at Red Rock Park to update and repair the facilities.

That includes renovating the kitchen, bathrooms and concession stand and some possible remodels to make the park more appealing.

The City of Gallup handed control of Red Rock to the county last August and the county took it over Oct. 1. Since then it has staffed up to 10 full-time workers, and the county is vetting contractors for specialized repairs.

Together, the city and county have racked up \$7.5 million in state and federal grant funding to get the park in tip-top shape.

“The highest priority will be the roofs. After that we have a list of items we have to prioritize,” County Manager Anthony Dimas said.

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The events center and concession and hospitality buildings, and possibly the museum roof, are in line for repairs or replacement. Bathrooms at those facilities will also be redone.

The events center kitchen has been gutted. After the paint and flooring are upgraded, appliances that haven't worked for years will be replaced with shiny new refrigerators, stoves and food warming and cooling units.

Next up will be the events center HVAC system. Technicians are assessing the HVAC system in the main building, which is so old nobody is even sure what was originally installed, Dimas said.

"There is no control system, so some parts of the building are just blowing hot or cold air," he said.

The audit should be finished at the end of the month, then vendors can order equipment.

Dimas said that HVAC equipment has about a 40 to 52-week waiting period. Before the pandemic the county would have been able to get the equipment sooner.

Some changes will be very visible: The performers' quarters building is so dilapidated it will be torn down. Others are invisible: the arena is getting an internet upgrade to improve data access and speeds for staff working events.

The county is having architects look at the concession stand with an eye toward a possible remodel, but staff are certain the stand will get electrical system upgrades and new equipment.

Another potential target for remodel is outside the east doors of the auditorium.

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“Right now it’s just sand and a playground that I have never seen used, so we’re trying to make better use of it,” Dimas said.

He said he envisions a park-like area with a pergola or outdoor pavilion for shade and benches for socializing.

The crowning glory will be \$5.2 million in improvements to the campgrounds, which were built in the 1950s and ‘60s when cabover campers were hitting their heyday, but those will have to wait until funding for it is secured.

“That park was made in the ‘50s, when RVs were on the back of a truck. Now you get 30-foot RVs,” Dimas said. “We anticipate losing a few spots [in reconfiguration], but it will accommodate bigger rigs.”

Other facility improvements will be noticeable much sooner, Dimas said, “In the next year to 18 months, that park is going to look a lot different.”

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