

Fireman's Park to be fixed, three years after floods

By Alicia Abercrombie, Times-Press | Posted: Wednesday, September 21, 2011 10:00 am

More than three years after flooding destroyed Rock Springs, the Fireman's Park baseball field finally is getting a much-needed facelift today.

Although funding had been available after the flooding for things such as repairing park bathrooms and planting new grass, money ran out before the village could tackle renovating the ball diamond, Rock Springs trustee J.T. Pfaff said. Now, with a "Total Field Makeover" by the Wisconsin Sport Turf Management Association, Rock Springs is getting its field back almost for free. The WSTMA and local businesses pledged to donate more than \$15,000 worth of labor, equipment and materials, leaving Rock Springs to cover a scant \$1,000 of the cost.

"We had to pay a little bit of the trucking to get the materials there, but everything else has been donated," Pfaff said. "That's actually being covered by the Jodi K. Busser fund and fundraisers we've done in the past. So the little bit of cost isn't going to technically cost the village anything."

Fireman's Park is the fourth field that WSTMA has renovated over the last four years, member Craig Schlender said. Schlender, who owns Ball Diamond Fine Sports Turf in Baraboo, said after he saw the Rock Springs field, he knew it would be the perfect renovation project for 2011 and presented it to the WSTMA Board.

"We try to pick a field every year where something has happened where they can't maintain it or pick it up themselves," Schlender said. "After I saw the Rock Springs field, I thought 'That's a likely one,' since it hasn't been used since the flooding and the community misses it."

In addition to helping a community, WSTMA uses the renovation sessions as an example to their members of how to install and take care of their own grounds.

The project began three weeks ago, with Holtz Lime Gravel & Excavating Inc. donating its time by laying out the new field and getting rid of the weeds growing on the diamond, Schlender said.

Today, companies from around the state will cut the outline of the diamond, aerate, fertilize and seed the outfield, and put down the new infield, including a new home plate and bases. Pfaff estimates the entire project should take about six hours with about 30 to 40 volunteers.

"We're going to make it a brand new park when we're done," Pfaff said.

The diamond also has been designed to better withstand heavy flooding like that of 2008, Schlender said. The infield will be raised above the surrounding area so that water will run off into the grass instead of sitting on the infield. Pfaff said the culverts around the park have an automatic shutoff now so that they will close if water from the river starts pushing back toward the road.

"If the river comes over the road again, obviously there's not much we can do," Pfaff said, "but at least the field will be in the kind of shape where we can get it up and running again quickly."

Pfaff said he and others already are reorganizing the Rock Springs softball and kickball leagues and want to have at least one game of each before winter hits.

Anyone wishing to help renovate the diamond is welcome, Pfaff said. The workers will begin at 8 a.m. and hope to be finished by 2 p.m. The Coach House, Flood Zone and C J Rock N Step are providing free lunch for the workers.

aabercrombie@capitalnewspapers.com