

# PARKS

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"All the Game and Parks calls now come to us and the state patrol," Henery said.

The sheriff's department feels a significant burden with no permanent conservation officer available.

"We are short the manpower," he said.

Nebraska Game and Parks Commission assistant administrator Craig Stover said the commission has started looking into a hiring process to fill conservation officer vacancies around the state — not just at the Lewis and Clark State Recreational Area.

He cited the state's limited budget as the reason why vacancies have not yet been filled.

Stover said the number of imported conservation officers in the northeast Nebraska lake area varies from week to week.

He declined to comment on the alcohol ban situation.

If the proposed alcohol consumption policy is passed, Henery thinks Knox County's law enforcement situation could only get worse.

"I worked here before the alcohol ban and I know from first-hand experience what the lake area was like before," he said. "I have nothing against responsible, proper consumption of alcohol by people who are old enough, but without proper law enforcement there, I'm afraid the area could get out of hand."

In May, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission voted 8-1 on a policy that would allow alcohol in the parks, except between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. The proposed regulation also prohibits alcohol on all roadways, designated swimming zones and parking areas.

The policy would go into effect on Jan. 1, 2011, if signed by Gov. Dave Heineman.

"I don't think there's a cooler that has a padlock on it that will close at 10 p.m.," Henery said.

Holmberg agreed the proposed policy has many flaws.

"The thing is now, if we do see a problem and we do see alcohol, we can put a stop to it before it develops into a larger party," he said. "Once you open it up for alcohol, there's not a lot we can do until a disturbance happens, and by that time, it's created a problem for other campers and families."

The Knox County Board of Supervisors has passed a resolution stating their opposition to allowing alcohol in Nebraska state parks, said Knox County Clerk Joann Fischer. The resolution noted alcohol consumption in the state parks meant more driving while intoxicated, boating while intoxicated, minor in possession and disturbance of the peace.

From an economic perspective, Holmberg does not think lifting the alcohol ban in Nebraska would open up any new business in the state border parks, either. The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks, for example, allows alcohol consumption in all South Dakota state parks, with the exception of the Bear Butte State Park and the Lake Alvin Recreation Area swim beach.

Holmberg said nearly every weekend throughout the summer is booked at the Lewis and Clark State Recreational Area.

"If we'd get an influx of people, we'll have no place to put them," he said.

And while Holmberg has gotten mixed reactions from campers on the removal of the alcohol ban, he said most of them have been fairly vocal about leaving the policy as it is.

Mick Jensen, the Nebraska Game and Parks commissioner for District Three, voted to allow alcohol consumption in the state parks due to an outpouring of constituent support, he said. He said allowing alcohol would make the parks a more comfortable atmosphere.

Jensen said constituents felt the commission's decision to ban alcohol in the parks back in the 1990s — before he was on the board — was a "knee-jerk reaction" to a few incidents at Lake McConaughy.

"It's not our desire to have to go up and down and check each campsite, causing our campers and our park participants to feel like they're being spied upon," he said.

To Jensen, the regulations drawn up by the commissioners make drinking possible, yet include provisions that will maintain the family atmosphere in the recreation areas.

While the fate of lifting an alcohol ban in Nebraska State Parks now rests in the hands of the Attorney General Jon Bruning and Heineman, the issue is still very much alive for local park officials.

Heineman made a trip to Lake McConaughy in western Nebraska recently to talk with citizens about the advantages and disadvantages of allowing

alcohol consumption at state parks.

On July 31, the *Omaha World-Herald* reported that Heineman's biggest concern is making sure law enforcement has the resources to prevent the alcohol usage.

Jensen noted that alcohol consumption is already "without a question" going on in parks around the state.

"I'm absolutely certain it's happening today, and that's really unfair," he said. "The law-abiding people would like to have an alcoholic drink, but it's against the law, so they don't. But the people who disregard our law or regulations go ahead, and that's really not fair."

# TRUCK

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Tyler Schrant, who works as a salesman there, was surprised as anyone.

He had ordered a Raptor while living in Kansas, but because the supply was so limited and the demand so great, Schrant was told he would not get one.

"Lo and behold, we had one show up on the grounds because we've had such good numbers for the region and done so well for Ford," Kelly said.

In the meantime, Tyler had bought an F-150 Lariat.

"I was in it for five or six months," he said. "When the Raptor showed up one day, I asked our owner if we could work a deal against my old pickup. He said yes, so I bought it."

Pricing for the Raptor begins at \$46,000.

Ford's Special Vehicle Team (SVT) designed the truck to perform well in the conditions experienced in the rugged Baja 1000 race.

It can deliver 400 horsepower and 400 pound-feet of torque, and has \$8,000 worth of Fox Racing shocks. Additionally, it has a wider track than other Fords and a softer suspension

that help it glide over obstacles. The 35-inch tires on the vehicle are designed for both on- and off-road use.

It also has trailer sway control, an integrated trailer brake controller, an electronic locking differential, hill descent control and an off-road mode.

"I've used every feature I can," Tyler said. "I haven't really used it to the best of its ability, but I have used it. Sometime in September I do plan on taking it down to my grandpa's (in Oklahoma) and taking advantage of all those features."

Sand dunes near his grandfather's residence will make for an ideal playground.

"If (Tyler) doesn't take advan-

tage of it, grandpa will," Kelly added.

The vehicle doesn't get great mileage, Tyler said he's only managed to get 10-15 miles to the gallon.

But sometimes you have to pay a price for an attention-grabber like the Raptor.

"I think what he likes best is the looks he gets while driving down the road," Kelly said.

So did Tyler get the truck for its off-roading capabilities or to grab the attention of the ladies?

"Probably a little bit of both," he admits. "But my girlfriend would probably kill me if she heard me say that!"

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