

HISTORY OF DRY RUN CREEK

Norfolk National Fish Hatchery is situated in a predominately rural area in North Central Arkansas. It is the largest producing Federal hatchery and draws in excess of 200,000 visitors annually. It was in this context that the need for some form of “park” had been envisioned for several years.

In August 1989, during a station visit, Assistant Regional Director John Brown and Hatchery Manager Dr. William Lindsay discussed the potential of such a project. Offered as a result was a Challenge Grant of \$5,000. Shortly thereafter, the grant was increased to \$10,000.

In September, Hatchery Manager Lindsay recruited Don McFadden as the chairman of the “Norfolk Fish Hatchery Park Committee”. By early October 1989, Lindsay and McFadden had recruited a 15-member working committee to begin the project.

Beginning in mid-October, Lindsay began extensive public speaking to numerous groups and organizations. Each of the committee had specific assignments to visit local businesses and industry. The committee began meeting twice each month to report progress and plan strategy.

In November 1989, the committee recruited input from representatives of advocacy organizations for several disabilities. The committee settled on design criteria for those confined to wheel chairs and the blind. The requirements for all others would fall within the design for these two groups.

The committee decided that the park should be adjacent to the hatchery along Dry Branch Run. This creek carries the hatchery effluent (32 million gallons/day) and has significant numbers of large trout trying to migrate from whence they came. The creek also contains populations of beaver, mink, muskrat, and other animals that use or live in the stream. It is well shaded and a very pleasant place to be. The main aspect of the park was an elaborate “ramp” to allow the disabled (and anyone else) to get to the water level. The State of Arkansas accommodated the project by allowing the disabled to fish on a catch and release basis.

In December 1989, the committee selected an engineering firm to design the park and incorporate the accommodations for the handicapped. Isbell Engineering then donated half their

fee as an in-kind contribution to the park. Design, blueprints, and revisions went on throughout December and January.

The committee decided on March 1, 1990, as the kick-off of the formal fund-raising. By the end of January 1990, the committee had raised \$15,000 in advance contributions.

In January 1990, a major cable TV company servicing Northern Arkansas offered a contribution of making a 30-second-spot commercial and airing it eight times per day in February and March 1990. They set up a date and sent a filming crew to the hatchery. Committee Chairman McFadden and Hatchery Manager Lindsay were used in the spot. A script was written, choreographed, and rehearsed on the site of the proposed park. Several “takes” were done until all concerned were satisfied. They aired the spot as promised. It was even on once during each of two separate broadcasts of the University of Arkansas basketball games.

In early February 1990, final plans and blueprints were presented to the committee and approved. Hatchery Manager Lindsay took these to the Regional 4 Project Leaders’ Meeting in mid-February. They were presented to the Regional Office Fisheries’ Staff and the Regional Director. Based on the blueprint presented and the advanced funds collected, the Challenge Grant was increased to \$30,000.

On March 1, 1990, the formal fund-raising was kicked off with a considerable fan fare and a local “media-blitz”. At that point the committee had \$21,000 in advance contributions. By the end of March, contributions from the private sector totaled just under \$61,000. This made \$91,000 available to construct the park.

Excessive rains in April and May prevented any on-site work. June and July were devoted to surveying, layout, and brush cutting in preparation for park construction. Construction began on August 15 and the dedication ceremony took place on October 28.