

Ilwaco spins differing visions for Black Lake

Frisbee golf competes with nature in forest

By AMY NILE
EO Media Group

ILWACO, Wash. — City leaders are moving forward with plans for a disc golf course north of Black Lake. But concerns about clearing roughly 50-foot-wide fairways in the forest could stymie progress.

Ilwaco's volunteer Parks and Recreation Commission Chairman Nick Haldeman is ready to spearhead efforts to raise at least \$12,000 for the city to build a 12-hole course along a 1-mile route that winds through the woods.

The 32-year-old has successfully led cash-collection drives and found grant money to cover past parks projects. However, financial costs aren't the only handicap to consider for this course.

"There's so little land in the city to give it up for Frisbee golf," City Councilman David Jensen said.

Players of disc or Frisbee golf, sometimes called "folf," compete to get discs into elevated baskets with the fewest throws. Unlike regular golfers, they don't have to worry about paying greens fees, buying expensive equipment or wearing certain outfits.

Activity for almost anyone

The sport is growing with players of all ages and skill levels, Haldeman said. It's popular among young people, particularly older millennials.

The now 30-something crowd or so-called Oregon Trail generation, a reference to the classic computer game, of course, is also becoming more affluent. Bringing disc golfers to town would benefit businesses, Haldeman said.

A new outdoor offering at Black Lake could also draw people who live elsewhere on the peninsula to the city.

The Ilwaco Merchants



Ilwaco City Councilman David Jensen, who walks the Black Lake trail with his dog daily, opposes the proposed construction of a Frisbee golf course in the dense forested areas above the lake.



Thick forest covers the areas proposed for a Frisbee golf course in the upper portions of the Black Lake Trail in Ilwaco.

Association and Saturday Market have backed the proposal. In 2016, the nonprofits donated \$1,200 for the Portland-based Firefly Disc Golf to evaluate a potential course and design it.

Altering the forest

Jensen, 69, doesn't want to lose the city's quiet getaway

and disrupt wildlife in the woods for disc golf. He takes his Spanish mastiff, "Trainwreck," on morning walks

along the Sitka spruce, western hemlock and red-cedar tree-lined trails.

"I like the forest experience of Black Lake," Haldeman said. "I want to maintain it as much as possible."

Building the course, however, would include a "minimal removal" of underbrush to clear the fairways and make room for baskets, tees and signs. Players would use existing trails to get to tees but they would throw away from them to reach baskets.

Jensen is reluctant to take on extra costs with city resources already stretched thin.

"We really don't have the manpower to maintain the Black Lake trails very well," he said.

At least, the city would

need to provide garbage cans, trash pick-up and a porta-potty if the course is built. More expensive upgrades, such as expanding the small parking lot, might be needed too.

Jensen would prefer to put in a smaller course south of the lake near Ilwaco High School. Designers considered the site but said they couldn't

"in good faith" recommend it in their evaluation. They concluded the hilly area along the northern shore is "not perfect" but it suits an intermediate course.

City Councilman Matthew Lessnau, 29, said he'd like to see both sites developed, one for warmup or practice rounds and the other for advanced play, leagues and tournaments.

"The city of Ilwaco has untapped potential in the Black Lake area," Lessnau, a former parks commissioner, said. "It's fairly pristine so things are being done very consciously and have been well thought out."

Details to come

The City Council approved the course design and has asked for more information before moving forward with construction. Haldeman is working on a plan for operations and upkeep, including a budget. He's researching possible environmental effects and permit requirements while the city looks into potential insurance and law enforcement issues.

City Councilman Fred Marshall said he's "perfectly neutral" on the controversial proposal. The 77-year-old isn't opposed to building a course but he's not exactly excited about it either.

"The people who have the energy and the interest need to make it work," he said.

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