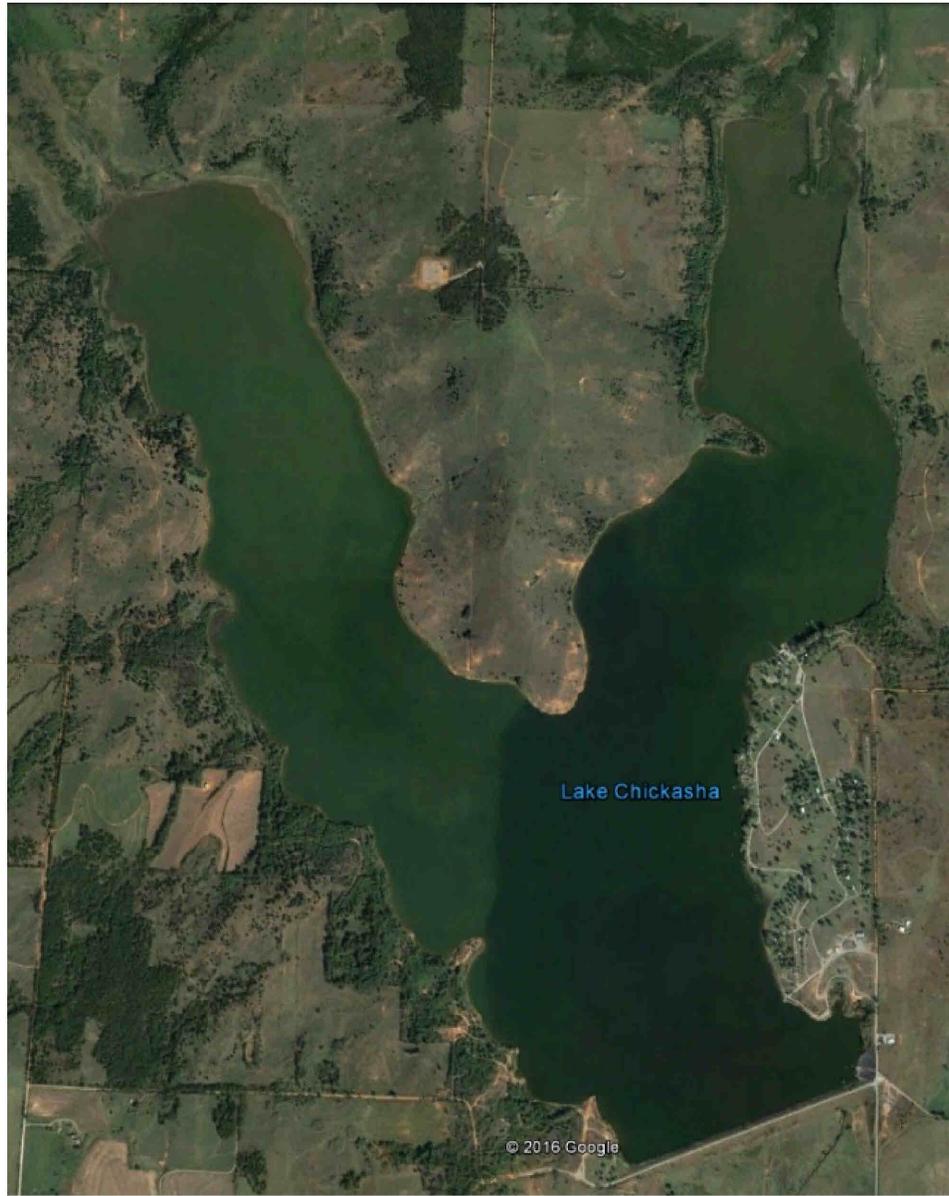




Chickasha Lake

Park Improvement Recommendations



Chickasha Parks and Recreation
Site meeting April 23, 2016
Steve Chapman, Director
www.chickasha.org/parks

Introduction:

Open-space and park facilities are vital components in the development of any community.

Across the state, park systems are key components of a city's identity, livability and economic sustainability. Communities realize the significance of developing a park system that balances athletic and non-athletic pursuits; therefore, parks, recreation facilities and open-spaces are recognized as important. Parks not only benefit the physical and mental well-being of the citizens, but preserve the heritage of the city and they are an important connection to the natural environment.

Purpose of this Plan

There is no argument that Shannon Springs Park is the most popular and well used park in the Chickasha Park System. The other parks throughout the community offer the same opportunities that are offered at Shannon Springs only on a smaller scale. The popularity of Shannon Springs Park is based not only on the memories of generations of pleasant family experiences at the park but also on the quiet natural environment that is featured in the parks setting. The other parks in the system are located in areas that are somewhat quiet but do not provide the same atmosphere that Shannon Springs offers.

Even though the Park's Department would like to develop the other parks in the system into the same pleasant natural environment that is found in Shannon Springs Park our other parks are set in sterile environments that will take years of planning and development to bring them up to the same natural beauty and appeal that is found in Shannon Springs Park. The exception to this sterile setting is Lake Chickasha. With the lake facility we have the opportunity to develop a park that will be worth the time and effort it takes to drive the 20-minutes to get there. Our challenge is to make it convenient and accessible, with features and amenities that will make our citizens want to spend time there.

The Plan

Currently the only area that is currently developed is the southeast end of the lake. This area is the only part of the lake property that has access to potable water and electricity. The amenities that are found here are minimal and could be equated to parking in a pasture that you share with annoying neighbors.

The lake is in dire need of being operated as a "Municipal Park". For as many years as anyone can remember the lake has been dominated by the presents of privately held camping and dock spaces. This use has dominated some of the most popular and accessible areas of the lake. Due to past policies and practices these private areas have become dilapidated and junk ridden eyesores. The general public is pushed to areas that have limited access to the water and they are welcomed by views of the dilapidated and trash ridden private dock areas. This is not what a park is supposed to be.



Here we are going to discuss the problems and short comings of this park. We will also recommend changes and plans that we believe will make the lake as popular Shannon Springs Park.

Enforcement Issues

For many years, it has been debated whether or not the Chickasha Police Department has the jurisdiction to write citations at the lake. We cannot find any instance where a citation has been written. To make matters worse, the Caddo County Sherriff's Office looks at the lake as being under the jurisdiction of Chickasha and is slow or reluctant to provide response or patrol.

We have recently asked for and received an opinion from the City Attorney that has verified that the police and other officials for the city may issue citations for violations of city ordinances at the lake. The municipal court judge has recently stated that if we could get an opinion that the ordinances could be enforced at the lake than he would adjudicate any citations issued. The police chief has also indicated that he would step up enforcement efforts.

With this recent opinion we believe that we are in a position to turn the public perception of Chickasha Lake as being a no-man's land around.

To assist in this effort we need direction from the Council. The consumption of alcohol at the lake has become a major issue. It is basically a party place. Our current ordinance state that it is unlawful to consume intoxicating or nonintoxicating beverages upon any city park or city owned property. Since this is ordinance we will be installing signage and ask the police department to begin enforcement of the ordinances on all lake property. If the council desires to allow consumption at the lake we will need to modify the current ordinance.



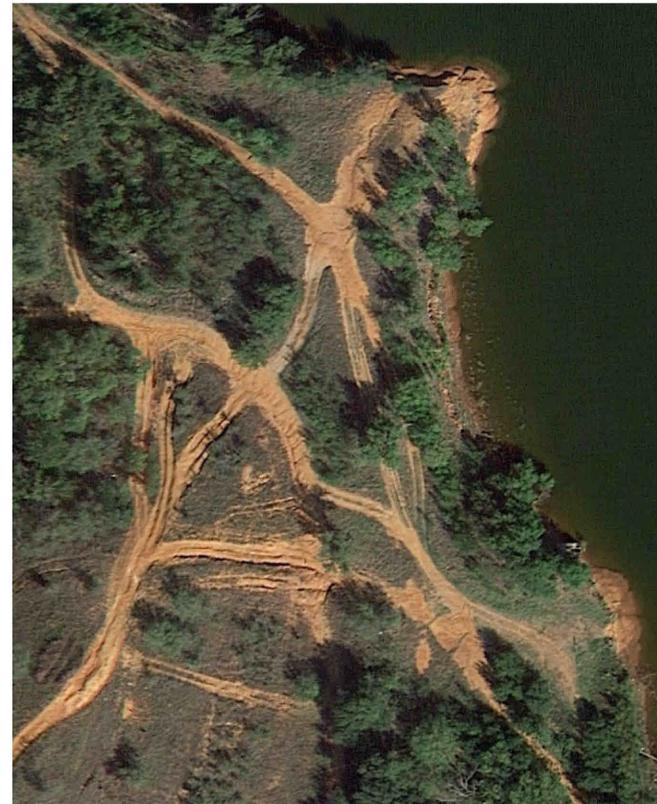


Problem Areas

West side of the lake.
Trails being made by illegal off-road activities

Erosion and damage to trees, fences and other infrastructure.

Proposed improvement to this area is walking and bicycle trails and disk golf course



Improvements and Recommendations

In the Park System Master Plan adopted January 21, 2014, the consultant made several recommendations for improvements for the lake. Staff has reviewed the recommendations and we feel that they provide a good start for cleaning up the lake and making it a great family destination.

- We would first and foremost like to remove the private trailer and dock spaces from the lake. To offset the impact to the people that have their trailers at the lake we would like to develop an RV Park in the area around the mobile home park. We would develop this park to the same standards that have been used for the RV parks recently developed in Chickasha. This would give people the opportunity to have their trailers at the lake so they can enjoy the park without being in the middle of the park. We would also develop an RV-Boat Storage area, south of the dam, where customers may rent storage for their boats and RV's so they do not need to pull them back and forth to town. This would make using the lake and its facilities more convenient.



- We would like to develop a new entrance to the residential area of the lake. The new entrance would bring access directly off of the county road on the east side of the lake. We would also close direct access to the lake from the residential area as well as cable the area off so that only foot and bike traffic would have access without driving through the front entrance to the lake. This will allow us to have better control over access and permit purchases.



- We would develop a main entrance to the park. This would allow us to have a lake host station where we would be able to control entrance, collect fees as well as close the park during the winter months. (During winter months, access to fishing would still be available by self-permitting at the south boat ramp).
- We are in the process of closing access to the lake property from the west side. This area has become an issue with people using ATV and other off-road vehicles to cut their own trails through the park which has caused trash and erosion issues.

- We propose to end the agricultural leases on the north end of the lake and develop this area for trails and primitive camping. We see the local scouts and visitors using this area for overnight trips. We would mark trails, install signage and develop rest areas in this semi-wilderness area.

- We would like to develop a parking area on the west end of the dam where visitors may park and have foot and bicycle access to the west and north end of the lake property. We would also develop a large Disk Golf Course in the area northwest of the dam along with fishing access.



- We lack adequate facilities. The development of properly paved RV parking spaces with a picnic table, vehicle parking and room to stretch out and enjoy your weekend would go a long way to make the park a more enjoyable destination. This would be developed in areas in the park where they would have access to the lake with unobstructed views of the lake while giving day users access to the shoreline as well.
- Day use facilities would be developed including a playground, picnic shelters, swimming access, restrooms and showers.

Programmed Events

To enhance the use of the lake park we would hold special events at the lake. These could include but are not limited to the following:

- Fishing Tournaments sponsored by the Park Department
- Tagged fish release. Tags can be turned in for prizes, such as Park Department t-shirts, cash and other prizes.
- Disk Golf Tournaments
- Trail races
- Mud runs
- Mountain bike rides
- Festivals
- Music concerts
- Staff would also like to develop vendors who could rent kayaks and other recreational equipment



Summary

The lake has never been treated like a park. It is important that we provide the general public fair access to the shoreline with the facilities that are warranted by any park user. We would operate the park similar to the state and Corps of Engineers operations where it concerns camping. Recreation access would be enhanced by sponsored programs to help bring people to the lake. Revenue would be enhanced as we develop the facilities and programs that will show our customers that we have cleaned up the lake and prove it is a family friendly designation that will draw visitors from all over.

This of course will be a multi-year project. The first phase is to clean the lake up and start the process of turning it into a park facility just like any park that is located in Chickasha proper.



NOTE: The report was revised prior to meeting with the Council.

Under Improvements and Recommendations the report states that Staff wished to end the agricultural leases. Since the report was produced Staff has reviewed the agricultural contracts and we are recommending keeping the leases on the lake but modifying the lease terms when the contracts are bid out this fall to better fit our desire to develop recreational opportunities for the north end of the lake.