

## EIGHTH ANNUAL FOREST FEST

**What:** 2012 Forest Fest bluegrass music festival

**Where:** Jefferson Memorial Forest's Horine Section off Holsclaw Hill Road

**When:** 11 a.m. until 8 p.m. May 19

**Bluegrass lineup:** Larry Sparks & the Lonesome Ramblers, Hog Operation, 23 String Band, and NewTown. The event also will feature wood crafts and family activities.

**Cost:** Admission is free; parking is \$10.

**Information:** Visit [memorialforest.com](http://memorialforest.com) or call (502) 368-5404.

Knox and other Metro Parks officials say they'll need \$70,000 for planning and design work on the new welcome center, and up to \$6 million to build it.

In December, Louisville Metro Parks bought about 25 acres for the new welcome center from the Grace family for \$239,280.

"You've got the hints of the knobs to come and then you've got open areas," Knox said of the new property, which also has a house on it that Knox said soon will be razed.

Bee Lick Creek, a small stream, also winds around the property.

"It's also about a half mile closer (to Fairdale) so it puts us closer to sidewalk connections and ultimately the Louisville Loop connection," Knox said.

"In that regard, it really is an important piece — one of the main pieces — to help us better connect to the community that we serve in the immediate area. And it allows those folks to make better use of the forest than they may have in the past."

It's in stark contrast to the densely wooded area and trails that surround the current welcome center. The 2009 forest master plan recommends that it be used as a museum and meeting space.

"Our master plan — now that we've gotten a lot of land purchased over the last 10 years or so — has allowed us to really think about the forest as a whole," Knox said.

The current visitors center sits where a schoolhouse stood from 1878 to 1929.

"This served as a schoolhouse until a larger school was built in Fairdale," Knox said, adding it



The current welcome center was renovated nearly 20 years ago. It sits where a schoolhouse stood from 1878 to 1929.



**Jefferson Memorial Forest manager Bennett Knox says the new center would be closer to the Louisville Loop connection.**

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was expanded and served as a house and a church before the 1990s renovations.

The forest began with 1,300 acres in 1948, when a forestry commission including Fiscal Court members, veterans and conservationists was charged with buying land for a forest to be dedicated to World War II veterans.

It was later rededicated to veterans of all wars.

By 1979 the forest had grown

to 2,100 acres and then nearly doubled in size to 4,000 acres from 1979 to 1984 under then-Judge-Executive Mitch McConnell. A big addition came in 1989, when the heirs of Emmet and Helen Horine donated a 1,000-acre tract at the top of Holsclaw Hill previously occupied by the Boy Scouts.

After Dave Armstrong took office as county judge-executive in 1990, he created the welcome center and stepped up programming to increase public awareness of the forest.

The forest now includes about 6,200 acres, which Knox said makes it the second-largest deciduous forest in the eastern

United States and one of the largest urban forests in the country.

"For the first time, we're able to start planning what the forest of the future is going to look like, where do these facilities need to be," Knox said.

In December, Metro Parks also acquired two other forest properties, spending \$80,000 for 7.8 acres at 11714 Old Mitchell Hill Road adjacent to existing forest land, and \$131,500 for 1.6 acres at 11403 Holsclaw Hill Road.

The latter property, in the forest's Yost section, is where new equestrian trails have been built and other trailhead amenities are planned. Metro Parks consultants have completed design drawings for the new site on Holsclaw Hill, which call for adding several trailhead facilities for equestrians and hikers, including shelters, restrooms and a parking area for eight trucks equipped with horse trailers.

The proposed facilities, which are expected to cost \$750,000, have yet to be funded. But Knox said this is a major priority in the upcoming city budget talks.

That project also could be implemented in phases with a \$300,000 first phase including parking facilities only.

The shelters and restrooms would be a second phase, Knox said.

Parks officials hope the Yost changes, also recommended in the 2009 forest master plan, will help direct the heaviest traffic to the outskirts of the forest to better preserve interior areas.

The Yost section is one of five areas in the forest. Other areas are Tom Wallace, Horine, Scotts Gap and Moorman Hill.

The master plan calls for an eastern gateway in Fairdale and a western gateway in the Blevins Gap/Moorman Hill area, but Knox said the Fairdale entrance will continue to be the main gateway because of its central location.

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» **COVER PHOTO:** Jefferson Memorial Forest manager Bennett Knox is at the new site.