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Vandalism at park major concern

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Scott Church Park has been vandalized and has become a meeting place for homosexuals, the Johnson County Conservation Board was told Thursday night.

Board Director Red G. Dunlap said nearly $680 was spent on vandalism repair at the park between July 1, 1977 and June 30, 1978.

He supplied Board members with a list of graffiti copied off the restroom walls as evidence family groups aren't using the park as much as they did a few years ago.

Furthermore, Dunlap said, the Johnson County Sheriff's Department has reports on a man soliciting homosexual favors at the park.

Until 1975, Scott Church Park, which is located about six miles east of Iowa City near Highway 6, was a "popular, heavily used area," he added.

"Then we could see a change in the area. In 1975, excessive amounts of graffiti began appearing on the inner walls of the men's and women's restrooms."

Board members agreed to authorize removal of the restroom facilities and to consider replacing them later if problems in the area decrease.

The restrooms need to be removed for repair work anyway, they said.

In other matters, the Board learned that a court settlement in Massachusetts will have an impact on insurance rates for sledding activities at Kent Park.

Robert N. Alderman of the Iowa City Association of Independent Insurance Agents said a lawsuit filed by a ski accident victim resulted in a $1.5 million judgement against a ski lodge.

The settlement indicated the courts are holding ski lodge operators to "near absolute liability" for any accidents that occur on ski slopes.

As a result, most insurance companys no longer insure ski areas and those that do have increased their rates, Alderman said.

The Conservation Board's rope tow at the Kent Park sledding area has traditionally been included in an "umbrella" policy covering all activities in Johnson County, he said.

Additional coverage will now have to be tacked on to the existing policy to cover the Kent Park rope tow area.

The single premium fee for a policy covering the area through Jan. 1, 1979 would be $350. Alderman added that the fee could increase substantially in future years.

The additional coverage would provide $300,000 in bodily injury coverage and $100,000 in property damage coverage.

Should the Conservation Board decide to charge fees at the ski area as recommended by Dunlap, the policy cost would increase to $2,500, he said.

Board members agreed to consider whether to continue the rope tow after they have been given more information by Dunlap on how much the area has been used and what the costs have been in recent winters.

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