

County loses parks director on eve of election

By Tim Richard
staff writer

Wayne County revealed it has big plans for its dormant park system by hiring R. Eric Reickel away from the Oakland County Parks and Recreation Commission.

Reickel, 49, of West Bloomfield resigned effective Aug. 10 and will start work the following Monday as superintendent of parks in Wayne County, which wants to quadruple its parks budget.

"We recruited him," said William Oakley, managing director of the Wayne County Road Commission, overseer of the six county parks. "I read his resume and talked to a lot of people. Then I called him one day and asked him, 'What'll it take to get you here?' I spent some time convincing him."

Reickel has a national reputation as one of the top professionals in community recreation. Only last week he received an award from the National

Association of State Outdoors Liaison Officers.

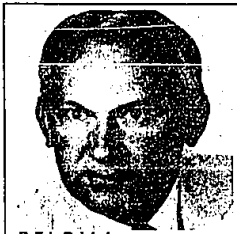
REICKEL'S DECISION made Oakland officials nervous because they have a property 35-mill tax renewal question on the Aug. 7 ballot.

"While we regret his decision to leave Oakland County," said Lewis E. Wint, chairman of Oakland's Parks and Recreation Commission, "we recognize Eric's desire for the new challenges before him in Wayne County."

Jon J. Kipke will serve as interim manager of Oakland parks until Reickel's successor is named.

Oakley said Wayne County Executive William Lucas will propose increasing the parks budget from \$800,000-plus to about \$3.1 million. The current budget has a position of super-

Programs, facilities blossomed under Reickel



R. Eric Reickel
off to Wayne County



A NATIVE of southern Wayne County, Reickel earned a bachelor of science in community recreation from Michigan State University. His first major jobs were as assistant superintendent of recreation in Wyandotte and director of parks and recreation in Treston, both downriver Wayne County suburbs.

From there he went to Bucks County, Pa., as executive director of parks and recreation. Oakland County hired him in 1972 to manage its expanding parks system.

Under Reickel's management, Oakland's system grew from six parks on 2,200 acres to nine parks with 3,700 acres.

Reickel left his marks by improving facilities, organizing activities, promoting public use of the parks and raising fee revenues to supplement tax funds.

- Golf Dome during winter months at Red Oaks, which was built over an old drain.
- A court games complex at Waterford Oaks.
- Modern campsites at Groveland Oaks and Addison Oaks.
- Acquisition of a private golf course, now Glen Oaks in Farmington Hills.
- Addition of nine holes at Springfield Oaks golf course.
- A mobile recreation program to travel around southern Oakland urban areas; in particular, with puppet and other shows.
- A 4,000-square-foot nature center to open this fall.
- A water coaster at Groveland Oaks.
- Naturalist programs.
- A citizen-based foundation to raise money and land for recreation.


REICKEL HELD every major post in the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association.

He is particularly active in prodding parks people to lobby their congressmen for land and water conservation funds.

In 1982-83 he was chairman of the board of the National Recreation and Parks Association's Revenues Sources Management School.


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Intendent of parks and recreation in it, but the position has been unfilled.

WAYNE COUNTY parks — the most well known of which is Edward Hines, in the Middle Rouge River valley — have been in a weed-grown condition in recent years and for much of this year. Except for an "Activities Day" this spring, there have been virtually no recreation programs for years.

Wayne County parks are financed by the general fund budget, with the three-member County Road Commission acting as park trustees.


"My idea is, if we're going to have all this real estate in parks, we gotta make use of it," Oakley said. "Eric has a lot of imagination."

Oakley and Bill Johnson, press secretary for County Executive William Lucas, said they visualize cross-country skiing and many organized activities for the Wayne parks system.


WINT, WHO revealed Reickel's job switch, listed these achievements during Reickel's 12-year tenure:

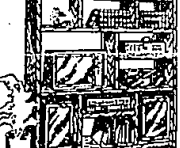
- The state's first wave-action pool in Waterford Oaks, with a second to follow next year at Red Oaks.
- A waterlily at Waterford Oaks.
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