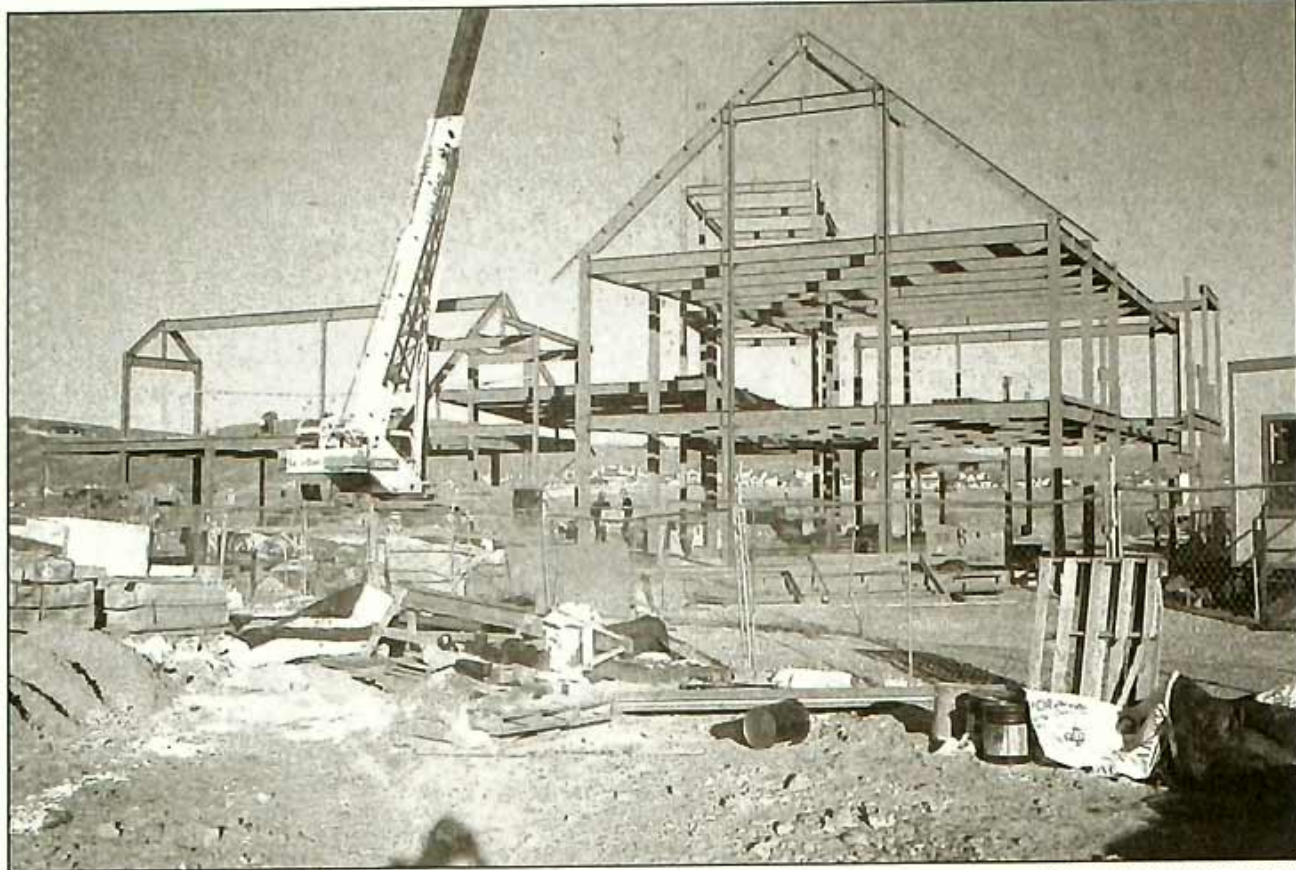


COUNTY SEAT

COUNTY EDITOR:
Patrick Parkinson
649-9014 ext.112
countynews@parkrecord.com

Nature center in the works



SCOTT SINE/PARK RECORD

Officials at the Swaner Nature Preserve are busy building a new nature center at Kimball Junction. The Nature Center at Swaner Nature Preserve will feature an observation tower and a 400-foot boardwalk for visitors to venture onto the 1,200-acre preserve in the Snyderville Basin.

New education center is built with environmentally friendly materials

By PATRICK PARKINSON
Of the Record staff

The countertops are made from sunflower seeds, the plants are drought tolerant and insulation inside the solar-powered building comes from the same material as blue jeans.

"It will make a difference in our little SUV-dominated community," Swaner Nature Preserve Chief Executive Officer Colleen Reid Rush said about the organization's new nature center. "One of our goals for this building is to be a place that connects people to the natural world."

The center is under construction at Kimball Junction and Swaner officials hope it will open next fall. The Swaner Nature Preserve was founded in 1993 and consists of more than 1,200 acres of critical habitat for plants and wildlife that is preserved for perpetuity.

"People love Swaner because people feel the crisis of development now," Reid Rush said. "The crisis is all around us. The development abuts us on all sides."

Crews have framed the new building at the edge of the preserve, which Reid Rush expects to be certified 'platinum' by the non-profit Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. The group helps ensure buildings are constructed with environmentally friendly methods and materials.

"We're not going to be a typical nature center. We have an opportunity to do something better," Reid Rush said. "We want

to take it up a notch and make it more sophisticated."

The U.S. Green Building Council oversees the program, which seeks to reduce the impact new development has on the natural environment, Reid Rush said, adding that a platinum designation is the group's highest honor.

"It's ambitious. Setting a platinum goal was about staying true to our mission ... everything was chosen for a reason, with an

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**- Colleen Rush
Swaner CEO**

emphasis on recycled, reclaimed and rapidly renewable resources," Reid Rush said, adding that fewer than 25 buildings worldwide have received the group's prestigious platinum certification. "We feel it is our way of being a leader in the environmental community ... We're not doing this just for ourselves, we're doing it to show the community that it's doable."

The building is 10,000 square-feet and features a 400-foot long boardwalk pier that stretches onto the preserve.

"We'll be away from the light pollution and we'll be able to do our stargazing," Reid Rush explained.

But she is most excited about future programming at the Nature Center at Swaner Nature Preserve.

"We're going to have high-end exhibits that are dynamic and are

changing," she said, adding that she expects the center to become "an educational hub for the community."

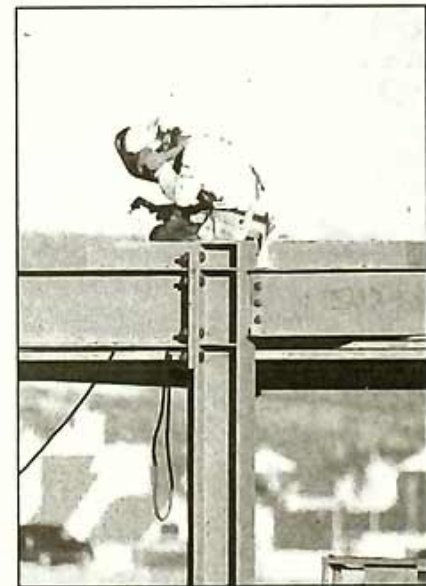
"It's going to be for both adults and children and we want this to be a place that people keep coming back to."

An observation tower with binoculars will allow visitors to study different levels of the complex western Summit County watershed.

"When you're skiing the snow at Jupiter Bowl, it's connected to the rest of us," Reid Rush said. "As you move up through (the tower) you get an increasing perspective of the watershed. What I would love people to understand is that there is an ecological value to this land that is important to the wildlife of this state."

For the holidays, officials at Swaner hope people will pay to adopt cranes as gifts for loved ones. "Give the gift of nature," Reid Rush said about baby birds that live at Swaner.

Information about adopting a bird on the preserve is available by calling Swaner at (435) 649-1767.



SCOTT SINE/PARK RECORD

A construction worker endures the changing weather at Swaner Nature Preserve.

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