

## Heat

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summer relief.

El Paso Parks and Recreation has been increasing its cooling-off options with its public pools and additions of free spray parks (splash pad areas with interactive features) throughout the city.

Parks and Recreation Public Information Officer Wayne Thornton said last year a total of 318,530 persons visited the area's indoor pools with 35,154 more taking advantage of the outdoor pools. He said the response to the new spray parks has been big.

"We don't count (the visitor numbers), but I would say grand openings involved thousands, and that hundreds use the facilities daily, with use increasing with warmer temperatures," Thornton said.

In response to public request, all of the city's eight spray parks now have shade canopies, benches, picnic tables and added trash cans.

The parks are open daily 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. from mid-April through October, located at Sue Young Park, Hidden Valley Park, Grandview Park, Westside Community Park, Marty Robbins Park, Braden Aboud Memorial Park, Salvador Rivas Jr. Park and San Jacinto Plaza.

There is also one "enhanced" spray park at Pavo Real on Alameda, with two separate spray park areas, one for humans and one for dogs.

El Paso Parks and Recreation Interim Assistant Director Joe Rodriguez said people have responded very positively to their Spray Parks, particularly with the easy access for people of all ages.

"They're the best gift that has been given to the citizens of El Paso, especially the fact that they are free and safe for young and old," Rodriguez said.

The newest addition to the pools, the Westside Natatorium, offers a 50-meter competitive swimming pool that recently opened on Wallenberg, near south Mesa Hills.

"It is open for over 100 hours of operation to meet the needs of the competitive swimming community, but also serve (the community with) recreational swimming, programmed hours for open swim, water aerobics, water polo, water obstacle course, a water fitness mat and Learn to Swim classes," Thornton said.

More cooling off options are also in the works by the city as, as it was recently reported that the City of El Paso and El Paso Independent School District are negotiating to put a water park at the current site of Ross Middle School. Nothing has yet been decided yet.

El Paso has several hotels with attractive pool areas that encourage local residents to book a weekend stay. Most notable is the Wyndham Airport Hotel and Waterpark near the Airport and Fort Bliss. The hotel's seasonal water park boasts the "largest hotel swimming pool in El Paso," as well as a four-story corkscrew waterslide, and kiddie pool with a waterfall.

The planned four-acre Resort at Montecillo on the West Side will include extensive water attractions for its residents and their guests. According to the resort announcement, the water attractions will include a "lazy river pool, a beach entry resort pool, a children's splash pad, private



The planned Resort at Montecillo will have extensive water attractions.

(Artist's rendering courtesy of Barracuda PR)

cabanas, an outdoor movie screen, outdoor bars with poolside food and drink service and 40 feet vertical water slides."

One well-known resort chain, Great Wolf Lodge, may also be considering El Paso as for a future location. The family resort, which evolved from similar Wisconsin Dells family resorts in the 1990s, is known for its extensive indoor water parks, and other attractions. So far the closest Great Wolf resorts to El Paso are in Scottsdale, Ariz., Colorado Springs, and Grapevine, Texas, but any plans for El Paso have not yet been officially announced.

Other watering holes in El Paso include free splash pad areas for quick cooloffs at local open air shopping sites, including the Outlet Shoppes of El Paso, Fountains at Farrah, and Freedom Crossing at Fort Bliss.

Also at Fort Bliss is their annual Aquapalooza water event, held this year June 16 at Biggs Park in Fort Bliss. The event is open to the public with free water fun, games, rides and slides. A fire truck will be on site to soak willing participants.



Wet N' Wild's Atlantis Adventure

## WET N' WILD

One of the area's most popular places to cool off is Wet N' Wild Waterworld, which will celebrate its 40th anniversary season next year. The water park's annual attendance of about 250,000 includes a lot of repeat customers, many of them season pass holders.

"Most of our guests are from El Paso, Las Cruces and Juarez, as well as surrounding areas like Alamogordo, Silver City, and Albuquerque," Wet N' Wild President and General Manager Chandra Edwards-Cottingham said. "We also get our fair share of visitors from all over the United States and even overseas. July is probably our busiest month, with June running a close second."

She said some of Wet 'N' Wild's most popular events, including live music, happen in June. Mexican singer-songwriter El Komander performs June 10.

"We usually do at least two or three Spanish language concerts per year," she said. "People love these, and it's an opportunity to highlight some of the regional music we are lucky enough to have available."

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EL PASO ART ASSOCIATION

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EL PASO ART ASSOCIATION



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