Thousands will flock to Illinois’ new World Shooting and Recreation Complex this month to witness the transition of a 100-year-old competition.

A New Lease on an Old Tradition

“Illinois—and the nation—is on the verge of providing something new and exciting for outdoor enthusiasts,” Acting Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Director Sam Flood is fond of saying. “The new World Shooting and Recreational Complex (WSRC) will not only allow Illinois to host a variety of large shooting sports events, but the overall design of the facility forges new ground for the type of recreational facilities the agency provides the public.”

The WSRC has been designed for shooters but built for recreation, building on traditions present at the Amateur Trapshooting Association’s (ATA) Vandalia, Ohio facility since its debut in 1900. “Our Association is excited to have three tournaments—the 2006 Grand American, the U.S. Open Trapshooting Championships and an October shoot—

 Shooters competed at the Amateur Trapshooting Association’s Ohio facility for more than a century. Now shooters line up at Illinois’ state-of-the-art facility.

Story By Kathy Andrews Photos By Adele Hodde
at the World Shooting & Recreational Complex,” Ken Duncan, 2006 ATA president, remarked. “These tournaments will bring a large number of people to Illinois and in return our shooters will have a wonderful new home for our championship events.”

Developing the WSRC has provided unique opportunities for the state. “So many agencies and organizations have worked for several years to make the complex a reality,” said State Representative Dan Reitz, Steelville. “This is the best shooting sports facility in the nation—and probably the world—and it won’t take but a few minutes for visitors to realize that this multi-faceted state park is an exciting addition to the Illinois park system.”

Randy Mitchell, DNR chief architect, explained how coordination played a key role in completion of the nearly 1,600-acre construction project on time. “Almost immediately after the ink dried on the purchase agreement transferring ownership of land from Peabody Energy to the state, contracts were competitively bid to bring 12 different contractors on site,” Mitchell said of the project expected to generate $13.5 million annually for the state.

The Capital Development Board, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), City of Sparta and Illinois Department of Corrections were major players in getting the process off the ground. “IDOT crews came on board early, grading and constructing roads within the complex,” Mitchell continued. “With nearly 150,000 people expected to...
attend the August Grand American, clear informational signage is crucial, and we were able to rely on the expertise of IDOT in developing the multitude of directional signs needed."

Creation of the water, sanitary and sewer systems necessary for operation of the complex has in large part been the responsibility of the City of Sparta.

According to Mayor Randy Bertetto, Sparta and communities throughout southwest Illinois are rolling out the red carpet for visitors to the shooting complex. "The WSRC will be a destination for hundreds of thousands of people each year," Bertetto remarked. "And with the Grand American drawing participants from outside the United States, this is an excellent opportunity to showcase everything that Randolph County, and all of southwest Illinois, has to offer."

Custom yet affordable infrastructural amenities—picnic tables, seating in the Events Center, benches, signs and trash receptacles—were constructed at Department of Correction facilities.

Also involved early in the process was the DNR heavy equipment crew, responsible for construction of the initial pistol berms, and creating a shallow wetland habitat in the process. Constructed at a cost savings to the state of nearly 50 to 60 percent, the berms provided the backdrop for the Randolph County Ruckus, a single-action shooting event sponsored by the Prairie State Cowboy Action Shooting Association.

"The 2005 Illinois state cowboy action shooting championship was held at the WSRC, and with 311 shooters it was the largest state championship in the United States—a great feat considering this was the state’s first state championship," said Tab Baumgardner, Randolph County Ruckus match director. "The 2006 ruckus drew nearly 400 shooters, due in large part to the availability of on-site camping facilities."

Baumgardner attributes much of the event’s success to the citizens of Sparta. "The local community hosts the opening event, the Friday Night Fracas," Baumgardner explained of the Old West-style block party with costumed shooters providing action-draw demonstrations. "The community welcomed the Randolph Ruckus with open arms and have embraced this as a part of their summer festivities."

Sparta, and all of southwest Illinois, will welcome an estimated 150,000 people to the 10-day Grand American August 8-18, a crowd that will return each August to compete, or to support

\textbf{Sixteen lighted fields will be utilized during the Grand American finals, and in other events.}
some of the nation’s best trap shooters.

And to meet the needs of these shooters are 120 trap houses stretched out along a 3.5-mile-long shooting line. Miles of sidewalks and pull-in parking lots provide easy access to the ranges, although during large events a trolley service will shuttle shooters and observers between the range, campground and facility headquarters. Golf cart rental also will be available on site. Canopy-covered benches provide shady retreats for watching the action. And as the competition narrows, shooters will continue into the night on the lighted fields at trap houses No. 9-24.

A variety of support services are necessary to handle the Grand American crowd and participants attending other large events throughout the year. Five vendor buildings will provide permanent storefront space for sales and service of firearms and a range of other goods and services related to the shooting sports industry. A vendor mall and tent/portable vendor spaces accommodate more transient businesses (see sidebar).

The hub of the facility is the Events Center, a 34,000-square-foot building housing a 7,000-square-foot registration area, conference rooms, a pro shop and a full-service restaurant where patrons may dine indoors or on the outdoor terrace overlooking one of the five lakes on the property.

Set against one of the largest lakes are 341 premium camp sites (equipped with water, sewer and electricity). Nearby are an additional 350 standard sites (in groups of 50 units with water, sewer and electricity) and 310 overflow sites with electricity. See sidebar for additional information on campground amenities.

"Not only is the WSRC campground three times larger than facilities available at any other DNR site," Flood explained of the unique design, "it was specifically designed for large recreational vehicles, with roomy, paved, pull-through pads long enough to accommodate a towed vehicle."

### Facts at a glance

**Address:** World Shooting and Recreational Complex, One Main Event Lane, Sparta, IL 62286.

**Telephone:** (217) 782-5706 or toll free at 1-866-850-2564.

**Website:** [www.dnr.state.il.us/worldshooting/home.htm](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/worldshooting/home.htm).

**Directions:** The WSRC is northeast of Sparta in Randolph County and can be accessed from Route 4 or Route 154.

Event information: Visit [www.dnr.state.il.us/worldshooting/index.htm](http://www.dnr.state.il.us/worldshooting/index.htm), call the numbers above or contact Bob Ruff at bob.ruff@illinois.gov.

### Camping

The WSRC campground will open for public use in September 2006. Features of the site include:

- 691 premium and standard sites with water, sewer and electricity ($20/night, including utility fee)
- 310 premium overflow or electricity-only camp sites ($15/night, including utility fee)
- 24 premium disabled-accessible sites ($20/night, including utility fee)
- asphalt pads, fire ring and picnic table
- a 22-unit shower facility near the overflow camping area designed to accommodate families and people needing assistance
- availability of portable shower houses during large events
- vault toilets
- six dump stations
- firewood, propane and ice available on site
- dogs allowed on leashes
- in the future, playgrounds will be built throughout the facility

The WSRC was designed to accommodate a variety of shooting events, including the Randolph County Ruckus, a cowboy-action shooting championship.
Merchandise and services are available at the WSRC through vendors housed in the five vendor buildings, a vendor mall and portable vendor tents.

With 184-acres of open water remaining in four lakes from the surface mining operation, visitors will soon be able to pass their time fishing from shore for some of the 19 species of fish collected by biologists in recent surveys, including excellent populations of white crappie as well as largemouth bass, bluegill, green sunfish, warmouth and yellow bass. Site specific regulations will be posted on site, and published in the 2007 Illinois Fishing Information digest.

And as the sun sets on Illinois’ first Grand American, stockings will be under way to improve the fisheries. Several small gravel boat access areas will be developed and landscaping crews will return to set additional trees in the ground. Once again, construction equipment will move freely about the property as the DNR heavy equipment crew works on the sporting clays area and as skeet houses are erected, creating another shooting opportunity in 2007.

All the while, campers will be settling in and visitors dropping by to enjoy events or a meal at the new facility.

“The WSRC is a tremendous showcase for the state, and the nation,” Flood concluded. “Whether they are here for the shooting sports activity, an overnight in the campground or a special program in the Events Center, visitors will get a hint of the great resources Illinois has to offer.”

And a visit in 2007 will include an even bigger and better Grand American.

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### World Shooting and Recreational Complex Vendors

**Vendor Building**
- Americase
- ATK Federal Ammunition
- Beretta
- Boyt Harness
- Browning
- DuPont Krieghoff
- Dawson Enterprises
- Dr. Frank Rively
- Gamaliel Shooting Supply
- Giacomo Sporting USA
- Gift Box Boutique
- Great Outdoors Company
- G.U. Inc. (SKB)
- Guns Unlimited
- Hodgdon Powder
- Jaqua’s Fine Guns, Inc.
- Jess Briley Manufacturing
- Jim’s Cutlery
- Joel Etchen Guns
- Kolar Arms/Target Arms
- Krieghoff International
- Little Egypt Golf Cars
- Mayville Engineering
- Morgan Optical
- National Rifle Association
- Perrazzi USA
- Remington
- Sig Arms
- Silver Sietz - Santa Fe
- Spolar Power Loads
- Trapper's Cabin
- Whitellfer
- Winchester (Olin Corp)

**Vendor Mall**
- 100 Straight Products
- Chester Chamber of Commerce
- Claybuster Wads
- Corps of Engineers
- DKG Trading
- Extreme Shooting Gear
- IL Dept. Of Transportation
- J&C Collectibles
- James T. Owens
- Mile High Shooting Accessories
- Shooting Sports Souvenirs
- Target 4 Optics
- Silver Sietz - Santa Fe
- Spolar Power Loads
- Trapper's Cabin
- Whitellfer
- Winchester (Olin Corp)

**Portable Vendor Tents**
- Battlefield Sporting Goods
- Beach Logos (Rich Dillon)
- Betty Havens
- Bob Shultz Target Shotguns
- Brite Ears
- CG Gunfitting Shop
- Cornfield Products, Inc
- Custom Sportswear and Optical
- Decot HY-WYD Sportsglasses
- Downrange LLC
- Gota Hav It, Inc.
- Graf's Reloading
- Gray's Shotgun Cache
- Gunstock Blanks.net
- Hi grade Shooters Supply
- Hunter Originals
- II. State Rifle Assoc.
- Keith Heeg Stockworks
- L&B Supplies
- Lonesome Charlies
- Lewis & Drake Associates
- Lynn Gipson LLC
- Mark Deprez, Stockmaker
- Mertyn's Trap Guns
- Mid America Custom Trailer Sales
- Myers Cycle & RV Sales
- Natures Gifts Trading
- Pete Elsen, Inc.
- Philips Gunsmithing
- Pro-Matic Traps
- Pro Shot Products
- Red Bud Chamber of Commerce
- Rod's Custom Stocks
- Shamrock Leathers
- Shooter Solutions LLC
- Shotgun Sports magazine
- Siemer Enterprises
- Skip's Specialties
- Sparta Chamber of Commerce
- Sports Medicine of Atlanta
- Storm Shooting Apparel
- The Stock Shop
- Topline Porting
- Trappers Cabin
- Warwick Case Co.
- Wendell August Forge
- Wright's Inc.

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