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EastSide Centre dealing with erosion problems

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EAST PEORIA — Dave Rodgers Field at EastSide Centre is heralded as one of the premier fields of the Midwest for high school baseball.

But the future of the ball diamond is in jeopardy if erosion behind the outfield fence isn't soon corrected.

"There's a vein of sand 12 feet below the (field's) surface," EastSide Centre Director Dan Cunningham said Wednesday. "All the water is washing through the vein."

The vein serves as a funnel for the rainwater, which has nowhere to empty except behind the field, where it trickles down the hillside and eventually drains into Farm Creek.

What once was a sidewalk, running about 50 feet long behind the field, is filled with gaping holes and cracks from the concrete being washed out. Heaps and chunks of rock and concrete litter the side of the bluff where the 110-acre multi-use facility sits on the site of a former abandoned gravel pit.

Before the sidewalk deteriorated, staff members used it as a passageway between the ball and soccer fields for mowing and other facility equipment. Access to the path is now barred and marked with orange and white striped road block signs. The public is prohibited from the area.

Four rows of wire baskets containing rocks lay near the piles of concrete behind the field. Once next to the sidewalk, they too have fallen into the thickly wooded ravine because of the erosion.

The sidewalk and rock baskets were constructed in late 2006 when the first signs of erosion were spotted at the site.

"We noticed slippage (and) hired an engineering firm and architect to correct it," said Cunningham. "It didn't work."

Several months later, in the spring of 2007, the first cracks started to appear on the sidewalk. It's been, literally, all downhill since then.

Cunningham has captured the progression of the erosion with his camera. He plans to show the snapshots, as well as results from recent soil boring tests, to engineers and architects.

But the problem won't be easy to fix, Cunningham said. A high pressure gas line and storm water drain intersect at the spot where erosion is occurring.

Another obstacle is the cost, estimated to be \$250,000. Where the money will come from for the project is anyone's guess. East Peoria Mayor Dave Mingus said funding is not currently available, but he hopes someday it is.

Even though the erosion is slow-moving, Cunningham wants to "address it sooner than later."

"We don't want to lose Dave Rodgers Field," the director said. "We don't want the erosion to interfere with play on the field."

The erosion does not pose a risk to public safety, as no homes or businesses sit below the bluff. Cunningham said a repeat of the deadly mudslide in May 1995 is doubtful. About a quarter-mile separates the sites.

A 34-year-old woman sleeping in her apartment was killed when tons of mud rolled down the 75-foot hillside when EastSide Centre was under construction.

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EastSide Centre director Dan Cunningham on Wednesday describes the process of erosion that has partially collapsed a concrete passageway behind Dave Rodgers Field. In 2007, the gabion baskets containing the light-colored rock at left were placed just beneath the edge of the concrete to stem the erosion. The baskets have since eroded down the hill.



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A drainage pipe is exposed with the erosion that has collapsed part of a concrete passageway at EastSide Centre.



Photograph courtesy of EastSide Centre

This photo shows the result of initial efforts to prevent erosion in 2007 by placing gabion baskets on the hillside just below the concrete passageway.