

For many, November is the month to celebrate Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving. For the Jack Allen Complex, it's soccer month.

The Southwest Decatur soccer center will host three tournaments predicted to generate a \$1.3 million economic impact.

"The State Cup, the Governor's Cup and the NAIA women's tournament will make November a very busy month," said Decatur Parks and Recreation Director Jeff Dunlap.

Since 2007, the Alabama Youth Soccer Association's State Cup and Governor's Cup have been held at the soccer complex.

This year, the city added the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics women's championship.

Tami Reist, president of the Decatur-Morgan County Convention and Visitors Bureau, estimated the six-day tournament will bring in 16 teams, 400 players and 500 staff and fans from across the country.

The 2008 championship featured teams from California, Georgia, Michigan, Kentucky, Iowa, Illinois, Oregon, Tennessee, Mississippi, Missouri, Florida and British Columbia.

For Decatur, the influx of tourists means a \$580,000 economic boost.

"November and December used to be dead — there just wasn't anything going on," Dunlap said. "Now November is one of our busiest months."

Officials expect the financial impact of the State Cup and Governor's Cup to mirror last year's numbers, \$342,015 and \$405,384, respectively.

Reist said the tournaments provide relief for local hotels, which typically rely on corporate business for revenue. During the past year, corporate travel has declined, directly impacting the hotels.

The financial impact of the tournaments extends past hotels — restaurants, sporting good stores and schools will all benefit.

"The schools are able to tap into the retail dollars," Reist said. "All of the tourism brought in affects the city, retail stores and schools. It has a triple affect."

Whether the state soccer tournaments will bring revenue into the city after this year remains in question. This is the final year of a three-year contract for the tournaments.

Reist hopes future plans for the facility, like a press box, will lure the tournaments back.

“We are up for re-bid on this one. We are stressing the new press box and that Jack Allen won a prestigious award for its greens,” Reist said, referring to the 2009 President’s Award of Excellence the complex received from the Alabama Turfgrass Association.

In July, the Decatur City Council approved \$150,000 for a press box.

Dunlap said contractors should start construction this week.

“We are pushing real hard to get it done by the NAIA women’s championship,” he said.

Recreation Superintendent Kelly Varnell said all of the NAIA games will take place at Jack Allen, while the state and governor’s cups will fill the fields at both Jack Allen and Point Mallard.

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