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## **WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL**

By BARRY ADAMS

A bit of Southern California baseball may be on its way to a Wisconsin ranch resort.

A \$20 million, 200-acre project could bring 1,200 athletes to the Mauston area each week for training and tournaments and employ 70 people.

The proposed Woodside Sports Complex would be on part of the 1,300-acre Woodside Ranch Resort and Conference Center in the town of Lemonweir, about five miles east of Mauston and about 70 miles northwest of Madison in Juneau County.

The complex, with up to 17 baseball fields and seven soccer fields, would also include dormitories for 1,500 players and coaches, a 30,000-square-foot indoor training facility and its own wastewater treatment plant. The ranch resort would remain open.

The owners of the project include Reggie Smith, who spent 16 years in Major League Baseball, and Damon Zumwalt, who bought the ranch in 2002 and is the founder, president and chief executive officer of Contemporary Services Corp. The California-based enterprise is billed as the largest crowd management company in the world and provides security at professional sporting events, Olympic Games sites, concerts and presidential inaugurations. Lloyd Pantell, a California lawyer, is also an owner in the Woodside project.

"These individuals are very capable of financing this," said Terry Whipple, executive director of the Juneau County Economic Development Corp. "It means a lot for Juneau County when you consider the size and scope of this project."

The three owners are scheduled to be at the ranch Monday, when they will unveil details of the plan. A public hearing before the Lemonweir Board and Plan Commission is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Monday at the town hall.

Town Chairman Greg Bires said some road improvements would be needed, but overall, he favors the project, which would be similar to a planned \$40 million, 24-field youth baseball project at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells.

"It looks to be a nice and clean proposal to us," Bires said of the Woodside project, which is about 20 miles northwest of Wisconsin Dells.

The owners would like to break ground this year and open in June 2011. The camp would be marketed to teams from throughout the Midwest, but they also could come from around the nation and other countries, said Mike Parent, president of H&K Sports Fields in Egg Harbor and the developer of the project. His company specializes in building baseball facilities and in 2006 completed the \$1.7 million Verona Little League Park.

"If everything falls into place, it's doable but it is an aggressive schedule," Parent said of the planned opening date.

One of the keys to the project that could dictate its opening is the construction of the wastewater treatment plant. It would be designed to treat up to 75,000 gallons a day, with the treated water used to irrigate the fields. The project is too far from Mauston to hook up to the city's waste system, Partner said.

The treatment plant would need state approval.

"That's one thing I tried to impress on them is that the planning process for a wastewater treatment plant can take some time," said Thomas Gilbert, wastewater facility planning coordinator for the state Department of Natural Resources. "We'll try and give them a prompt review."

Woodside Ranch in the 1920s began hosting guests primarily from the Chicago area, according to its Web site. By the 1960s, its capacity was increased to 150 guests. Since being purchased by Zumwalt, improvements have included the addition of a conference and business center, movie theater, fitness center and tennis, volleyball and basketball courts.

The baseball operations would be under the eye of Smith, a California native who played primarily with the Red Sox and Dodgers and won a World Series with the Dodgers in 1981. Smith has operated his own youth baseball training center in Encino, Calif., for more than 15 years.

"He not only knows baseball but he knows how to make kids better at all levels," said Jesse Woods, the former facility director and president of Encino Little League, where Smith runs his camps. "He's just a terrific guy."

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