

Rocky Branch renovation to poach parking spaces

Student Health lot, Carmichael lot to lose almost 150 spaces during nine-month construction

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The third phase of the Rocky Branch Creek restoration project will begin this Monday. The project, which is geared to revitalize the creek that runs through campus, will take up a large number of parking spaces in the long term and the short term, according to Christine Klein, the information and communication specialist for University Transportation.

The third phase will revamp the creek from Morrill Drive to Dan Allen Drive.

This follows the first phase, which restored the creek from Gorman Street to Dan Allen Drive, and the second phase, which worked on the section from Pullen Road to Morrill Drive.

Because the part of the creek runs directly through Central Campus, both the Carmichael Gymnasium lots and the Central Campus lot, behind the Student Health Center, will lose parking spaces.

Klein said the team estimated the Central Campus lot will lose 107 spaces while construction is ongoing and the Carmichael lot will lose 42. Once the construction is complete, Klein said about 56 spots will be permanently lost, 19 in the Central Campus lot and 37 in the Carmichael lot.

Almost all of the spots that will be lost are "C" parking permit spaces, designating University employee parking spaces. Klein is expecting backups and traffic problems in parking as employees try to find open parking spaces.

Klein said some employees were requesting to park in student parking zones, but says that is not an option.

"One of the things that I'm hearing is that staff would like to be able to go into the student zones. We can't allow that. Those spots are sold on a one to one basis," Klein said. "When summer sessions begin, employees can flow into those student zones."

A memo was distributed to University employees Thursday detailing the other employee parking options, and Klein was confident that there is enough parking to handle the demand.

"We do keep very close track on the number of permits we've sold. We know when our peak times are," Klein said. "What has been said to me is that the other parking options can absorb this."

The project is roughly scheduled to be finished in December, according to Klein.

While Klein is confident that this project will not cause any problems, some students, like Brantley Ellis, are not so sure.

"It'll definitely affect my ability to get to the gym," Ellis, a junior in computer science, said. "I guess I can always ride the Wolfline or park in the Coliseum lot."

Ellis lives off campus and travels to the gym after five, meaning he can park in the employee parking spaces that will be unavailable during the Rocky Branch renovation.

Ellis said he felt the project could have been delayed until the spring or summer when there is less traffic.

"Doing it during the winter seems like bad timing," he said. "A lot of people are going to the gym because it's too cold to be outside."

Nate Wanner, a graduate student in biomathematics, said the project is necessary, but if the transportation problem does arise, the University should not just let the problem go.

"I think the University should find a way to compensate for the situation if necessary, but I think the creek should be cleaned up," Wanner said.

Klein says the University is doing everything needed to treat this problem fairly.

"We're trying to manage the system to meet the needs of a varied number of folks with different concerns and issues. We just manage it fairly," Klein said. "That's all you can do. Basically this project was funded and been deemed something the University wants so we have to react and manage the inventory we have."