

## **ABATE rally moving to Kossuth County**

The 17th annual ABATE of Iowa Freedom Rally in 2001 will likely be the last one at Sheldon Park west of Humboldt.

ABATE of Iowa has purchased 140 acres in Kossuth County, about five miles northeast of Algona where they plan to hold the Freedom Rally starting in 2002.

Jim Berte, assistant state coordinator for ABATE of Iowa, said they were looking for a site in Humboldt County as well.

"It's not like ABATE wanted to leave Humboldt. We were outgrowing the park and it wasn't financially responsible for us to continue paying that kind of rent," Berte said. "Two years ago, we asked the Humboldt County Conservation Board for a five year contract. They agreed to a two year contract. We felt it was time to look for a place of our own."

Last year, nearly 8,900 people attended the Freedom Rally with ABATE paying Humboldt County rent in excess of \$18,000. Berte said the Chamber of Commerce estimates rally week generates more than \$1.5 million in extra income for the community.

"We've met with representatives of Kossuth County and they seem real enthusiastic about it," Berte said. Berte said he is hopeful Kossuth County will consider paving about one-half mile of gravel to the site.

The new site was formerly known as the Plum Creek Elk Ranch. It already has a nine foot tall fence around it. ABATE took possession of the property two weeks ago and has begun work on general clean up. A well is already on the property which is also served by electricity.

ABATE plans to build a permanent stage, ticket booths and roads.

"It will be a big job, but it will be something that doesn't have to be tore down every year. We have a lot of work yet to do," Berte said.

The site includes about 70 acres of pasture and 70 acres of timber.

"It's just a beautiful site with a creek running through it," Berte said.

ABATE is in the last year of a two year contract with the Humboldt County Conservation Board to rent Sheldon Park for the rally.

"We fully intend to honor the contract this year," Berte said.

Berte said businesses in the Humboldt area have been extremely supportive of ABATE over the past 16 years.

"We're sorry we're leaving, but we need to look out for what's best for the organization," Berte said.

"Humboldt's had a good run with this and made a lot of money. We're looking forward to having a place we can continue to develop and improve with time."