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OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Rod R. Blagojevich – Governor

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news

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GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES THE AMATEUR TRAPSHOOTING ASSOCIATION WILL HOLD ITS GRAND EVENT IN ILLINOIS

Event at Sparta's World Shooting Complex will generate millions for local economy

SPRINGFIELD, ILL - Governor Rod Blagojevich announced today that the Amateur Trapshooting Association (ATA) has agreed to bring its Grand American event, the oldest and most prestigious shooting competition in the world, to Illinois beginning in 2006 to the World Shooting Complex in Sparta. The World Shooting Complex is a key project in the Governor's *Opportunity Returns* economic development plan for Southwest Illinois that he unveiled in December.

"This is great news for Illinois - particularly the Southwest region - where we are developing the World Shooting Complex at Sparta," Governor Blagojevich said. "*Opportunity Returns* is giving more people the ability to earn a decent living, and this premier event will create even more jobs and spur economic growth and development throughout the Metro East area."

The ATA's Board of Directors voted overwhelmingly to move the Grand American event, which first debuted in 1900, from Vandalia, Ohio, to Sparta, Illinois. "We look forward to a great partnership with the state of Illinois and the Department of Natural Resources," ATA President Dave Kaiser said. "We believe the new, state-of-the-art facility to be built in Illinois will mean the grand traditions of the Grand American will continue and grow."

The Grand American is estimated to bring 150,000 people to the 10-day event in August 2006. Along with other ATA events, the annual economic impact to Illinois is anticipated to be about \$13.5 million.

The Governor announced the state's acquisition of 1,179 acres in Randolph County for the outdoor complex in August. Cochran & Wilken, Inc., of Springfield has been developing a master plan for the site. That plan, which will provide a broad overview of the site, is nearing completion. Knight Infrastructure of Chicago will be following up with a specific design for the facility and also will act as overall construction manager.

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The World Shooting Complex will have about 120 trap shooting stations over a 3.5-mile course, skeet stations, sporting clays, rifle and pistol ranges and a 3-D archery range. In addition it will have about 1,000 camp sites, 600 of which will have full-service hook-ups and another 400 that will have electricity only - three times larger than any existing Department of Natural Resources campground. The site will offer traditional outdoor recreational activities such as fishing and picnicking. Development of a large meeting facility and a full-scale camping/parking complex will allow the site to attract major motor home and camping rallies, car shows, conventions and entertainment venues, attracting thousands of visitors to the area.

"I want to thank Governor Blagojevich and Director Brunsvold and all the staff who have been involved in this project. Without their dedication and perseverance, we wouldn't be making this announcement today," Representative Dan Reitz said, who represents the region and helped convince the group to move its event to Illinois. "The Grand American will be a strong anchor for this facility and bring tremendous economic opportunity to the Metro East."

"It is very gratifying and exciting to see our vision for this facility coming together. Representative Reitz and I began working on this project three years ago when we served in the Legislature together and, with the Governor's strong support, we are making it a reality," said Illinois Department of Natural Resources Director Joel Brunsvold. "We're pleased the ATA is bringing the Grand American to Sparta, an event that we believe will be a cornerstone at this landmark development project."

The ATA is one of several groups that have expressed interest in the expansive recreational complex. The National Sporting Clays Association, the National Skeet Shooting Association and the Single Shooters Society also have said they would like to hold events at the park.

As part of *Opportunity Returns*, the Illinois Department of Transportation is already devoting \$500,000 to building a left turn lane from Illinois Route 4 into the main entrance of the World Shooting Complex to make it easier to enter the facility for the thousands of people expected to attend events. IDOT is responsible for the design and construction of this part of the development.

This project is in addition to the more than 50 projects announced by Governor Blagojevich for Southwestern Illinois last month at Lewis and Clark Community College in Godfrey. His *Opportunity Returns* regional economic development plan is the most aggressive, comprehensive approach to creating jobs in Illinois' history. Since a one-size-fits-all approach to economic development just doesn't work, the Governor has divided the state into 10 regions – finding areas with common economic strengths and needs, and developing a plan with specific actions for each region. This grassroots effort is a product of significant outreach over several months throughout each region, with business, civic and labor leaders, and elected officials. These economic initiatives are designed to be flexible and effective. Each plan is tailored to deliver real results that local businesses will see, feel, and, hopefully, profit from.

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