

STUART — Four months after it hosted hundreds of young basketball players in the Native American Youth Organization tournament, Seminole Tribe Recreation will roll out the welcome mat again, this time for throngs of adult softball players in the annual Native American Sports Association (NASA) tournament.

“Our goal is 50 teams,” said Recreation Director Richard Blankenship.

The tournament will be held Aug. 6-8 on five fields at Halpatiokee Regional Park in Stuart, a venue familiar to Blankenship because he helped design the park about 15 years ago when he worked for Martin County.

“It’s designed for this type of tournament,” he said.

The park is about 30 miles south of Chupco’s Landing in Fort Pierce. St. Lucie County, which includes Fort Pierce, was considered early in the process, but Blankenship said field accommodations didn’t pan out.

“We wanted to do it in St. Lucie County to kind of correlate with Chupco, but they didn’t have the fields in one location that we needed,” he said.

As of mid-July, teams registered for the tournament include Seminole, Cherokee, Choctaw, Coushatta and Poarch Creek. Co-ed teams will kick off the tournament on the first day followed by the start of the legends, men’s and women’s divisions on day two.

“This will be the first time we’ve done the co-ed in conjunction with the others,” Blankenship said. “In the past, the co-ed was Memorial Day weekend and everybody else was in August. In the last few years, co-ed hasn’t had enough teams, so we decided to put them together.”

Players have the option of staying at hotels near the park or close to the Atlantic Ocean, about 20 minutes away.

“We’re able to offer some good rates not only on the hotels by the park, but we’ve got good rates on hotels in the intercostal and on hotels on the beach. So folks, if they want to, can make a vacation out of it - \$139 a night at the beach is not a bad rate,” Blankenship said.

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