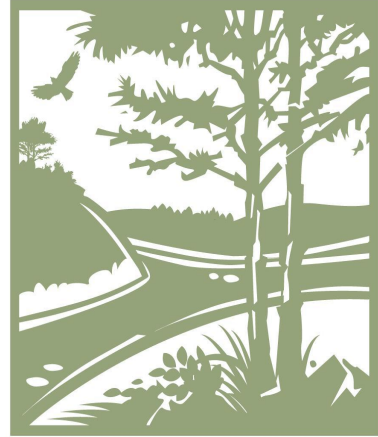


Friends of Chester Woods Annual Report

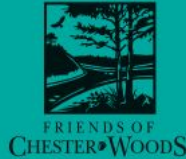
November 9, 2020
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FRIENDS OF
CHESTER  WOODS

Happy 25th Anniversary Chester Woods!

1995 - 2020



Friends of Chester Woods was in the process of planning a special celebration for the 25th Anniversary of Chester Woods. In early May, we realized that we would not be able to provide the planned celebration events that would bring larger crowds in small spaces.

FOCW provided a catered lunch for the staff on May 26, the exact anniversary date.

The year started out with the FOCW 25th anniversary committee planning for a special celebration in mid-July. Olmsted County opened Chester Woods County Park just prior to Memorial Day in 1995. Here is an article that appeared in the Post Bulletin.

**Happy 25th
Anniversary
Chester Woods!**
1995 - 2020





After receiving \$5 million in federal funding, construction on the park and dam began in 1991 and Chester Woods Park opened on May 26, 1995.

The land originally purchased to assist with Rochester's flood control project has evolved into a regional destination enjoyed by more than 150,000 visitors each year.

"We still want the community to come out and celebrate this important milestone by enjoying our park safely," Eckdahl said. "We encourage folks to visit Chester Woods and enjoy our trails by safely staying six feet away from others. We have 15 miles of primitive trails that run through prairies, woodlands, and wetlands. Eight-and-a-half miles of those trails can be used for equestrians and we have three miles of trails that can be shared with dogs on a leash."

Olmsted County Park Superintendent Karlin Ziegler said the park has much to offer in its 1,330 acres. "Within the park is the 118-acre Bear Creek Reservoir, also known as Chester Lake, which is enjoyed by fishers, canoers, kayakers, and swimmers," she said. "In addition to our trails, we have native prairies, woodlands, and a diverse habitat for wildlife."

Continued. . .

A 2020 addition to Chester Woods Park is a new dog park, where people can exercise their dogs off-leash and practice retrieving and water training.

While many activities are still happening at Chester Woods this year, Ziegler said not all activities will be open due to COVID-19.

“We are following guidance from the state level,” she said, adding that the goal is to have safety protocols in place before reopening some activities.

“The beach and beach house will be closed for the whole summer,” Ziegler said, outlining some plans. “Campgrounds will open on June 1. We hope to offer watercraft rentals to some degree and will keep our website updated as we have more information.”

Board has Great Interest in controlling Buckthorn



Joel's Dunnette's summary

"Prairie and savanna (open or semi-open grass lands) were a major part of our region prior to European settlement. Less than 1% of prairie and savanna remain in Minnesota now. What kept lands in prairie and savanna? Climate, soils, terrain, fire and grazing animals. But for decades, we have removed both fire and grazing animals from our landscape.

"Our county parks staff and volunteers have worked hard to use brush clearing, prescribed fire, seed collection and planting to maintain and enlarge remnant prairies and savannas. But after a decade and substantial progress, something seemed missing. Using grazing animals to maintain native prairies and savanna is now recommended. So this year Friends of Chester Woods decided to fund a trial of goat grazing to help remove unwanted vegetation in two areas.

"In the fen (west of the park office), the goats mostly stripped bark from the overgrowth of woody shrubs - in early spring that is all that's available! That should set back the shrubs and allow many flowers and sedges to grow better.

Continued . . .

“On the slopes and ravines to the east of the campground, the goats chowed down on the invasive garlic mustard, but when that ran out, they repeatedly escaped the electric fencing and got onto more enticing neighboring property.

“So they were removed earlier than planned. Goats eat many plants, but have preferences depending on what is available seasonally. In late spring and summer goats prefer leaves of woody plants, which sets them back and allows the ground layer of vegetation to grow better. This seasonal preference is important, but goat grazing can help areas move toward savanna again.

“Goat grazing is another tool in our kit to manage our natural areas. And besides, they're fun!”



FOCW Helps Prepare Bridges for Park Use



Friends of Chester Woods helped to fund and provide volunteer help to redeck 2 bridges to be used in the developed area of the park. One bridge replaced an existing bridge along the Chester Lake Trail. The second bridge now spans a low wetland along a new trail that will connect the Legacy Trail to the trail system on the west side of the park.



The ABCs of Chester Woods

This year, 2020, is the 25th Anniversary of Chester Woods County Park. The **Friends of Chester Woods** are planning a number of activities to celebrate this event. Due to the Corona Virus Pandemic and the social distancing that is required, these activities may need to be modified. The **Friends of Chester Woods** are offering a family activity to promote our beautiful Olmsted County Park, to encourage outdoor learning, and to explore new areas and the natural inhabitants of the park. This activity includes finding and exploring 25 highlights of the park.

Right around early May of 2020, we realized that all the plans for a major celebration in the park to mark the park's 25th anniversary need to be scrapped. We also realizing by this time that park usage was up. People were seeking the benefits of being in nature. Also, Gov. Walz had opened campgrounds starting June 1. So, a few of our volunteers came up with a family scavenger hunt to find different natural features and along with plants and animals that make up the park. This scavenger hunt was made available on our website.
www.friendsofchesterwoods.org.

Weed Warriors Stay Active All Year



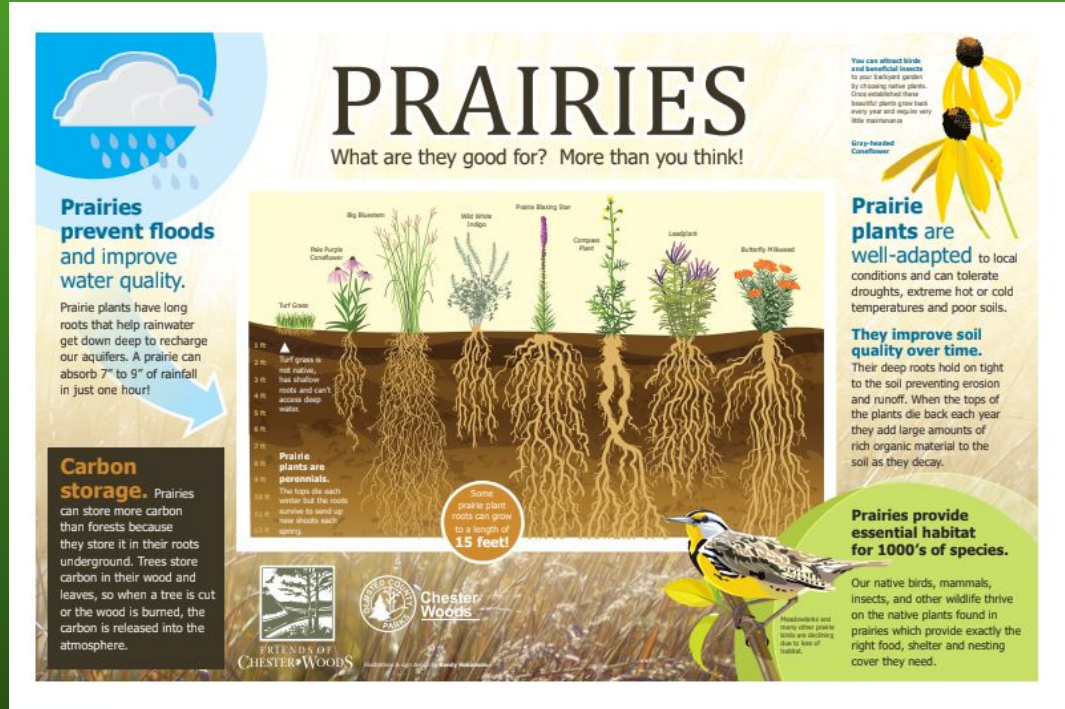
The weed warriors are a group of dedicated volunteers who meet weekly to work on invasive species eradication, seed harvesting, and planting native plants in the prairie. There is always a species that can be attacked during any season of the year. Chester Woods has really been affected with buckthorn. The FOCW Board is vigilant about wanting to gain on this invasive. Much of what was done a few years ago with a special grant for cutting and treating has returned. It is hard to tell if these areas were ever treated. Our Board has identified controlling buckthorn as a number 1 environmental issue for the park, and is looking into using some of our resources to help park staff with this problem.

In April, the FOCW Board was planning a volunteer work day at the park. This event was also going to provide a lunch and the opportunity to lift up all the volunteers who tirelessly serve of their time and talents to help make Chester Woods County Park one of the premiere Regional Parks in Minnesota. Like everything else in 2020, that event had to be cancelled. With the funds from Thrivent Financial for the lunch. we used these funds to purchase needed supplies for the Weed Warriors. Spades, clippers, a sawzall, battery and charger were purchased and placed in the Weed Warriors private storage cabinet.

Magnetic signs have been printed that can be placed on a personal car door stating that they are in the park on official business.



New interpretive signage has been designed by Sandy Hokinson and printed for the Prairie Maze. FOCW has also purchased the metal stands that will be placed at entrances to the Prairie Maze to display this signage.





FOCW Finance Report



Balance Sheet 11/05/2020

Assets

<u>Assets</u>		\$0.00
<u>Current Assets</u>	\$0.00	
<u>Cash in Wallet</u>	\$0.00	
<u>Business CD</u>	\$33,797.72	
<u>Checking Account</u>	\$7,781.48	
<u>Savings Account</u>	\$0.00	
<u>Imbalance-USD</u>		\$0.00
Total Assets		\$41,579.20

Liabilities

<u>Liabilities</u>	\$0.00
<u>Credit Card</u>	\$0.00
<u>Creditors</u>	\$0.00
Total Liabilities	\$0.00

Equity

<u>Equity</u>	\$0.00
<u>Opening Balances</u>	\$0.00
Retained Earnings	\$41,579.20
Total Equity	\$41,579.20
Total Liabilities & Equity	\$41,579.20

This report shows that the financial position of Friends of Chester Woods is quite healthy. Income has exceeded expenses in excess of \$3600. The major expense in 2020 was the funding of the goats in the park to help control buckthorn in 2 specific areas. Our major ongoing sources of income include the Canoe Rack Rental program and direct gifts to FOCW,

Cash Flow - 12/01/2019 to 11/05/2020

Selected Accounts

- [Assets](#)
- [Assets:Current Assets](#) and selected subaccounts
- [Imbalance-USD](#)

Money into selected accounts comes from

Income:Canoe Rack Rental	\$3,400.00
Income:Disabled Veterans DVA	\$4,100.00
Income:Gift - Goat grazing	\$3,025.00
Income:Gifts Received	\$3,225.26
Income:Interest Income	\$457.86
Income:Membership	\$345.00
Money In	\$14,553.12

Money out of selected accounts goes to

Expenses:Chester Woods Park	\$9,421.21
Expenses:Internship	\$599.00
Expenses:Miscellaneous	\$35.00
Expenses:Publicity	\$754.77
Expenses:Supplies	\$13.58
Expenses:Taxes:State/Province	\$25.00
Money Out	\$10,848.56

Difference	\$3,704.56
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Here we see that our income for this fiscal year has exceeded expenses by nearly \$3700.

Balance Sheet 10/08/2019

Assets

<u>Assets</u>	\$0.00
<u>Current Assets</u>	\$0.00
<u>Cash in Wallet</u>	\$0.00
<u>Business CD</u>	\$8,310.86
<u>Checking Account</u>	\$2,873.72
<u>Savings Account</u>	\$0.00
<u>Imbalance-USD</u>	\$0.00
Total Assets	\$11,184.58

This shows a comparison with our 2019 Finance Report. Our fiscal year starts with December 1. At the end of the last fiscal year, FOCW was the recipient of a generous bequest from an estate.

Cash Flow - 12/01/2018 to 10/08/2019

Selected Accounts

- Assets
- Assets:Current Assets and selected subaccounts
- Imbalance-USD

Money into selected accounts comes from

<u>Income:Canoe Rack Rental</u>	\$3,050.00
<u>Income:Gifts Received</u>	\$4,716.00
<u>Income:Interest Income</u>	\$89.10
<u>Income:Membership</u>	\$580.00
Money In	\$8,435.10

Money out of selected accounts goes to

<u>Expenses:Chester Woods Park</u>	\$5,519.23
<u>Expenses:Day in the Park</u>	\$45.00
<u>Expenses:Groceries</u>	\$198.84
<u>Expenses:Internet</u>	\$395.62
<u>Expenses:Internship</u>	\$599.00
<u>Expenses:Miscellaneous</u>	\$35.00
<u>Expenses:Publicity</u>	\$198.20
<u>Expenses:Taxes:State/Province</u>	\$25.00
<u>Income:Canoe Rack Rental</u>	\$0.00
Money Out	\$7,015.89

Difference **\$1,419.21**



FOCW Board Approves Plan to Add Watercraft Storage Racks

The park is in the process of making upgrades to the amount of parking and the watercraft rental program at the Boat Ramp Parking Lot. The lot has been greatly expanded, and the watercraft rental storage site will be moved adjacent to the beach. Since the park is abandoning the existing watercraft rental racks for their canoes and kayaks, FOCW has inquired if we can take them over as additional storage for private watercraft. This will give FOCW 14 additional spaces to rent. FOCW will have to install some split rail fencing and new signage to show that these watercraft are private. The board also approved keeping the rental rate for each spot at \$100 per season. The county is letting FOCW have these rental racks at no charge, but FOCW has committed to financial help for new life jacket storage at the new rental spot.

Redesigned Boat Ramp Parking Lot



This parking lot has been blacktopped. Now this parking lot will accommodate 26 boat trailer parking spaces and an additional 35 automobile parking spaces.

Existing Rental Racks for Park Rental Watercraft



New Location for Park Rental Watercraft



The new watercraft rental location adjacent to the beach. There still is much landscaping and infrastructure needed to be installed.



FOCW Fall Volunteer Work Days On October 14,17, and 20.



Due to the pandemic restrictions still in place at our parks, FOCW could not have the typical annual meeting, pot luck, and volunteer work afternoon. Instead, the board approved a plan to host 3 days where different volunteer activities would be set up. We had a great outpouring of support. Then, the week of the first volunteer work day, a regular weekly volunteer at the park tested positive for the Covid 19 virus only a couple of days after volunteering in the park. The county then made the decision that these 3 work days should be cancelled out of caution for the safety of all. This was a hard pill to swallow. When the volunteer sign up was tabulated, we were able to identify 31 unique volunteers who were ready to serve.

FOCW Board Elections for the Two Year Term -- 2021-2022

- ☐ Ernie Freudenburg, President
- ☐ Jim Peterson, Treasurer
- ☐ Jim Foote, Director
- ☐ Georgia Nothdurft (new)

These four board members have agreed to serve an additional 2 year term.



Park Staff Report

Tom Eckdahl

Park Manager



New Office Position Added

A newly hired 3 month seasonal office assistant was added to the park staff this year. This position really helped with making camping reservations and answering numerous phone calls.



Goat Dispatch LLC

This company had nearly 70 goats on a 20-acre site from late March to the end of April. 45 goats were then placed a 15-acre site until mid May.



Replaced the Chester Lake Trail Bridge

This is one of two bridges that FOCW volunteers removed old decking and then replaced with new decking boards.



New Canoe-in Campsites

Two remote camping sites along the southeast shoreline of Chester Lake were added for this camping season. This was an Eagle Scout project. Park staff has added a pit toilet for each site and maintains the site.



New Aquatic Exercise area for dogs

Located beyond the campground, this newly installed aquatic exercise area for dogs was developed.



Constructed a New Shop

A new 40 x 120 ft. shop and cold storage building has been added directly east of the existing office building.



Park Watercraft Rentals will be Relocated.

The path to the beach has been extended to incorporate an ADA water access dock and to support the park watercraft rentals relocation.



New Fire Pits and Electric Panels

All campsites now have new style fire pits and the electric sites have all been updated with new electric panels.



Trail Work Completed in 2020

A portion of the Prairie Ridge Trail, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, has been hardened along with several miles of other trails receiving new wood chips. This picture shows the new Legacy Trail extension under construction.



You can find us at
www.friendsofchesterwoods.org



Your membership is very important. It is \$15/year for the family. You can use the GiveMN tool on our website to use your credit card.

FRIENDS OF CHESTERWOODS

DO YOU ENJOY THIS PARK?

Want to help make it even better?

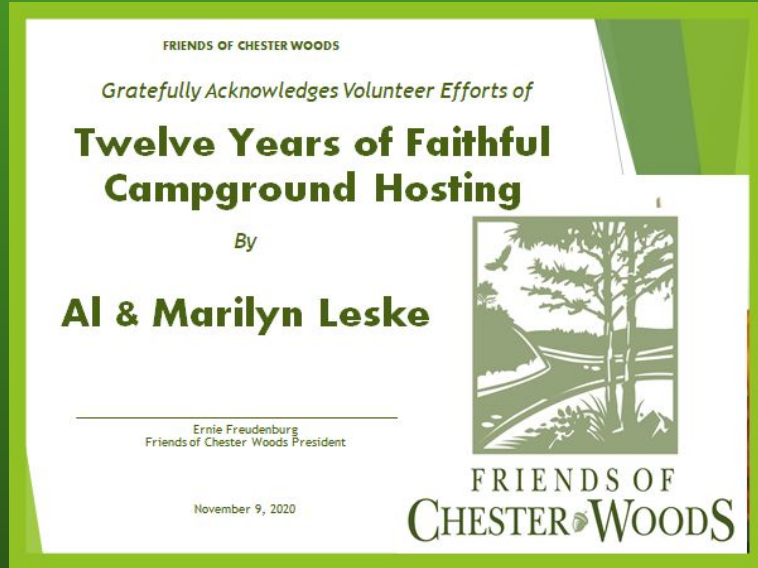
Then join Friends and make a difference! Be a part of this special park and help to make it even better for you and your children (and their children, too!).





Volunteer Award





Al and Marilyn Leske have served Chester Woods as campground hosts for the past 12 camping seasons. Even though they live in Rochester, they have devoted every other week to Chester Woods in the role of campground host. Many of those years required keeping the restrooms clean, picking up trash in the campground, patrolling the campground to make sure all campers were respectful of others, and helping to staff the gate house. Al and Marilyn not only took on these responsibilities, but willingly took on other tasks to help with our "Day in the Park" program, along with managing a Christmas in July weekend and Halloween in the campground event.

Our thanks to Al and Marilyn for helping to make the camping experience at Chester Woods a positive event that encouraged many campers to look forward to each year.

It is our pleasure to award Al and Marilyn a reminder of the greatest tool that campground hosts get to use. We award this with love and thanks.

