



CONNECTING PEOPLE TO THE OUTDOORS SMALL GRANT FUND

FY2023 Project Application

Project Name: Providing Outdoor Recreation Activities

Designated Park/Trail Name: Lake Washington Regional Park & Campground

District: 5

Applicant Organization (must be a qualified regional designee): Le Sueur County

Lead Contact Name: Tyler Luethje

Lead Contact Title: Parks Director

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Project Partners:

Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground, Ney Nature Center, Le Sueur County Parks

Attach official agency resolution (template provided)

Project Short Description (include how project meets program goals):

Lake Washington Regional Park has partnered with several local public, non-profit, and private organizations to bring in a variety of outdoor recreation, environmental, or educational programs during the summer months. Most of the programs are free or very low cost for participants to attend. One partner that can provide a very wide range of programs to Lake Washington Regional Park is Le Sueur County's own Ney Nature Center.

Both Lake Washington Regional Park and Ney Nature Center lack the transportation equipment needed to create additional programs and further connect people to the outdoors within our regional park. With the purchase of an enclosed trailer, Lake Washington Regional Park will be able to partner with Ney Nature Center on a wide variety of year round programming options.

In addition to the enclosed trailer, we would also like to purchase Kicksleds to provide a new and unique outdoor recreation opportunity during our Minnesota winters for people who may not be able to ski, when the snow doesn't allow for other uses, and for those looking to try a new and unique activity.

Attach preliminary project plan that meets GMRPTC Non-Infrastructure Project Management Policy requirements, particularly “Plans and Outcome Definition” section:

Applications shall include adequate preliminary plans to judge project efficacy... Application details should include detailed maps of the geographic space to be impacted or improved, program or event educational objectives, number/characteristics of people served, clear implementation timelines, program models or best practices used, detailed budgets, long-term sustainability or management plans (encouraged but not required for this grant), and other parameters that help define the outcomes and long lasting impact of the project.

Plans and Outcomes

Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground is a 172 acre regional park that sits along 1 mile of shoreline on Lake Washington. The campground features a 32 site campground with 2 playgrounds, an open air picnic shelter, and heated/air conditioned community building. Within the park is nearly 3.5 miles of natural trails, a recent 49 acre native prairie restoration and oakwood savanna restoration, native big woods, and Shanaska Creek winding through the park. In addition, the park will be working on constructing 1.5 miles of paved trails, a day use parking lot, beach, and PWC storage, amongst other amenities in 2022.

Lake Washington Regional Park is not just a summer destination, but a winter destination as well. In addition, Ney Nature Center also offers year round programming, both on-site and off-site. Through a Federal Recreational Trails grant, Le Sueur County purchased the equipment to groom cross-country ski trails within the park, beginning in 2021. Due to it's proximity to Mankato and a lack of groomed ski trails in the region, our park quickly became known as a spot for skiing with 5km of trails groomed and designated for skiing within our prairie. We were able to separate our ski trails from our snowshoe trails, to still allow for winter hiking and snowshoeing. Le Sueur County Parks received several messages and phone calls from people wanting to rent equipment for cross country skiing. Due to facilities, no equipment, lack of staffing, etc., we are not able to rent equipment out of this location.

Lake Washington Regional Park would like to partner with Ney Nature Center on a lot more programming options throughout the entire year, but a limiting factor in that is that we do not have a good way of transporting equipment from Ney Nature Center to Lake Washington Regional Park, and other parks, for off-site programming.

Currently, to transport equipment off-site, Ney Nature Center will utilize multiple trips (48 miles round trip) and vehicles to transport the needed equipment to Lake Washington Regional Park. Lake Washington Regional Park would like to use the Connecting People to the Outdoors Small Grant to purchase a 7' x 14' enclosed trailer to allow Ney Nature Center to transport equipment from their park to ours, to allow for more programming and introducing more people to a wide variety of outdoor recreation, education, and environmental programs.

The enclosed trailer would allow Ney Nature Center to safely transport equipment such as; kayaks, archery equipment, cross-country skis, snowshoes, fishing equipment, monarch butterfly tagging, maple syrup supplies, kicksleds (if awarded) and other programs to Lake Washington Regional Park to allow for additional programming options. Some of the new programming options that this would allow for us in addition to perfecting the existing ones (archery, kayaking, monarch butterfly tagging), would include cross-country ski and snowshoe programs and tours, weekend rentals of equipment, fishing programs, learning how to camp, and the popular maple syrup programs. With the addition of an enclosed trailer, Lake Washington Regional Park and Campground will work with Ney Nature Center to schedule at least 8 programs per calendar year within the park.

Lake Washington Regional Park is a Le Sueur County Park, as well is Ney Nature Center. To connect as many people to the outdoors as possible and to get the most use of the enclosed trailer, Le Sueur County will allow Ney Nature Center use of the trailer for any off-site programming that they perform away from Lake Washington Regional Park. Ney Nature Center has done off-site programming, and would do more if they could conveniently transport equipment to schools, libraries, community education programs, cities, and others within multiple counties across south central Minnesota.

Lake Washington Regional Park would even allow for equipment sharing to Ney Nature Center with the trailer. For example, Ney Nature Center does not have cross country ski grooming equipment – the local snowmobile trails organization volunteers to groom ski trails within the park. However, Lake Washington Regional Park does have grooming equipment and would allow Ney Nature Center use of their equipment and trailer, in addition to Ney Nature Center's own ski's, to conduct off-site skiing programs at local schools.

An additional equipment need that would be purchased with the Connecting People to the Outdoors Grant would be kicksleds. Kicksleds would provide increased winter participation within the park when the snow conditions do not allow for skiing, for people who are not physically able to ski, and for those looking to try a new and unique outdoor activity during our Minnesota winters.

With the purchase of 15 kicksleds, we could run programming options for 30 people at a time. The kicksleds would be available for rental on scheduled days at Lake Washington Regional Park. When not in use at our park, we would allow for Ney Nature Center to use them as part of their winter equipment rentals and allow them to create new on-site and off-site programming involving kicksleds. Ney Nature Center estimates that they would be used at 4 winter field trips, serving 400 participants and would also be available at the annual Winter Candlelight Event, which brings in approximately 200 park users each year. The kicksleds would be available for rental at Ney Nature Center on scheduled days that they are not rented at Lake Washington Regional Park.

On Going Management Plan

When not in use, the enclosed trailer will be stored at the Le Sueur County Highway Department in Le Center. The trailer will undergo routine maintenance and annual DOT inspection by the Le Sueur County Highway Department Mechanics. In addition, several trailers were reviewed by our mechanics to determine which one would best fit our needs and their ability to service it, along with purchasing it from a local company should any items, repairs, or warranties need to be addressed with it.

For use of the trailer, Lake Washington Regional Park will partner with Ney Nature Center for at least 8 off-site programs each calendar year but we will strive to make that number grow each year as we foster a better partnership and are able to create new programming options with the ease of transporting off-site.

The programs with Ney Nature Center will follow our current low cost pay structure (ranging from free to \$5/participant or max of \$15/family). Our goal is not to make money off of the participants, but simply to increase the opportunities that youth and families have to try a new outdoor activity. In addition, Le Sueur County Parks has, and will continue to seek out donations from local organizations such as Lake Washington Improvement Association, that will help keep the registration costs low.

The user fees associated with the kicksled rentals at Ney Nature Center would follow their current low-cost structure that is used for Cross-Country Ski and Snowshoe rentals. \$3 per member, or \$9 per family of 3+/people. \$5 per member, or \$15 per family of 3+/people.

Anticipated number of participants/users involved in/attending project:

Enclosed Trailer: 840+/year

Programs at Lake Washington Regional Park: 8 programs by Ney Nature Center x 30 participants =
240+/year

Ney Nature Center additional off-site programs: 600+/year

Kicksleds: 800+/year

Group kicksled programs at Ney Nature Center: 200+/year

Group field trips at Ney Nature Center involving kicksleds: 400/year

Kicksled rentals at Ney Nature Center: 200/year

Greater Minnesota Legacy Grant Funds Requested: \$ 17,622.00

Eligible Local Matching Funds (encouraged but not required; with source): \$ 1,750.00

Our match will involve putting our logo's on the side of the trailer for increased marketing of our park system, campground, and Ney Nature Center. If requested, we will also put on a logo for Greater Minnesota Regional Parks & Trails or Legacy Funding.

Total Project Cost: \$ 19,372.00

Funding Request Breakdown (Add rows as necessary; Additional detail may be attached):

| Eligible Item Details | Item Cost |
|--|------------------|
| ATC Raven Cargo Limited 7' x 14' Trailer | \$ 12,162.00 |
| 15 Kicksleds | \$ 5,460.00 |
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| | |
| Total Eligible Project Cost: | \$ 17,622 |
| | |
| Other Ineligible Item Details | |
| Trailer Wrap / Logo | \$ 1,750 |
| | \$ |