

Governor Dodge State Park Equestrian Campground Project FAQ's

Have equestrians been included in the planning of the new campground?

Feedback from equestrians has been sought and incorporated in all phases of the campground planning. A series of interviews conducted by FOGD Equestrian committee members with individuals and horse clubs in Spring 2017 gave valuable information about how potential users viewed the 3 design options the DNR created based on the wish-list equestrians provided. Interview feedback led the committee, in January 2018, to hire Ayres Associates to create a completely new concept plan that fit the expressed needs of users while reducing the estimated construction budget from over \$2 million to a more attainable \$650,000. The resulting concept plan was available for review at the 2018 Midwest Horse Fair and at many horse club meetings in Southern WI and has been posted on our website for the past year. More recently, suggestions from the park's horse day ride users led to improvements of the day ride parking area scheduled for spring 2019.

Why isn't the DNR paying to build the new campground?

The Governor's budget for the 2015-2017 biennium changed the funding formula for State Parks, directing that parks be self-funded through camping fees and vehicle admission fees. That budget eliminated money from the State General Fund that had previously been part of the parks budget. Parks are now scrambling to pay for much-needed infrastructure repairs (plumbing, electrical, etc) on systems that are now 40+ years old. Funding for park development projects is separate from the state park operating budgets and has also been cut over the years. Funding for the Stewardship Fund, which assisted with many park development projects in years past, has been reduced. In the State Park's current tight fiscal climate, it is highly unlikely that a large new project like the equestrian campground would be funded.

When will it be built?

Actual construction depends on fundraising progress. All funds must be committed or in hand before we can break ground. Our hope is to begin construction in 2020.

How do we know the project will really happen? If it doesn't, who gets the money that has already been donated?

Building an equestrian campground on the north side of the park was approved as part of Governor Dodge State Park's 1984 Master plan. In fact, water and electricity are already in place at the site. The park management and the DNR are fully supportive of the project and are providing all possible assistance to the Friends group as we plan the campground and raise funds. Money that is donated to the Friends Campground Fund remains under the control of the Friends until the project is built, even if it takes longer than hoped.

If the Friends are paying for the campground, why don't they get to keep the camping fees?

Once the campground is completed, it will be titled to the DNR, who will then become responsible for operating and maintaining the facility. Camping fees for the new campground will be handled the same way as all other camping fees.

Will the sites have electric hookup?

Sites will be wired and electric-ready. Exactly how many sites will have electricity turned on is yet to be determined. There is a State Statute that limits the number of electric sites in State Park campgrounds. Legislative action to increase the cap would be needed to "turn the lights on" at additional State Park campsites including sites in the new campground.

What happens to the day ride parking? the old campground?

The main horse day ride parking will stay right where it is. Overflow day ride parking is available at the nearby Twin Valley picnic shelter parking lot and may also be allowed at the old campground, pending approval of park management.

How can we be assured that the park will have the resources to operate and maintain the new campground?

The Friends' fundraising plan includes bolstering a healthy endowment fund.