

Governor Dodge State Park Horse Campground Campaign Advances

By Pat McKnight, Correspondent for The Country Today / thecountrytoday.com

A 34-year-old dream of horse campers at Governor Dodge State Park is on the trail to becoming reality. The Friends of Governor Dodge State Park Equestrian committee is working to make the dream come true through its fundraising campaign.

A nonprofit organization, FOGD was formed in 1996 to support and enhance the programs and facilities at Governor Dodge State Park located near Dodgeville in Iowa County.

FOGD Equestrian Committee co-chairs Jean Warrior of Verona, and Sandy Rogers of Whitewater, are heading up the campaign to raise \$650,000 to build an all-new horse campground at the site that was originally envisioned in the park's 1984 master plan.

"Governor Dodge State Park is one of Wisconsin's largest and most beautiful state parks," said Rogers.

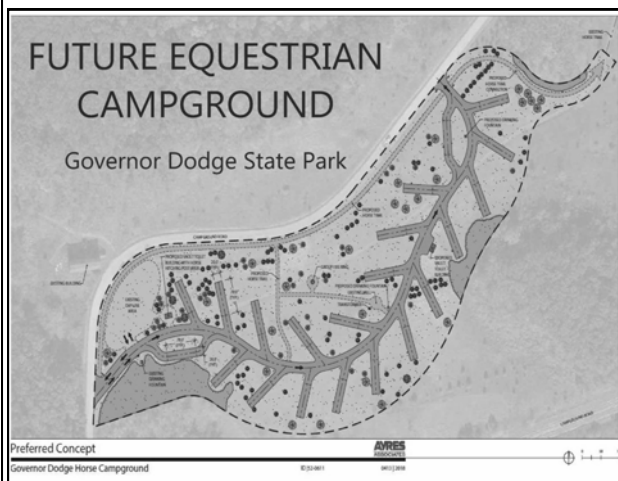
Located in the heart of the Driftless region of southwest Wisconsin, the 5000-plus acre park features over 40 miles of trails through rolling terrain, with two lakes for swimming, fishing and paddling, gorgeous rock outcroppings and beautiful vistas. The 25 miles of designated horse riding trails are some of the most beautiful in the state.

Rogers explains, "Our committee, organized as part of the Friends group in 2015, has been working with the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) to complete several trail enhancements, while our ultimate goal is to see the park's master plan for a new horse campground become a reality. We have DNR approved plans in hand and have raised almost \$100,000 since our campaign began in mid-2018."

The group's fundraising was recently given a major boost with the offer of a \$25,000 matching grant to launch the Rise to the Challenge campaign.

"As the donors intended, the challenge grant has been a great motivation for the horse community to contribute to the campground fund," said Warrior. "To me, it is especially meaningful because the donors are not even horse campers. They will not use or benefit personally from the new campground. They are just long-time park supporters saying, 'thank you' for the many gifts the park has offered them over the years."

The success of the challenge grant will allow the project's first phase to proceed next season. Phase one will be the construction of a permanent toilet at the day-ride parking. The restrooms will be built next to the parking lot and will begin serving riders when it's finished. When the new campground is finished, the restrooms will be available to the campers staying there.



Contributed photo

The current campground has only 11 sites and was always meant to be temporary. The asphalt parking lot is in need of repair and its size limits the number of trailers that can be brought in. It is located in a busy area of the park with little privacy for campers.

The 21 sites at the new Trails End Campground will be generously spaced for privacy and ease of use, with scenic views of the park's peaceful north side. The site for the new campground has water and electricity already in place.

While the timeline for construction of the new campground itself depends on fundraising efforts, the Friends group has set a goal of beginning the project in 2020.

The design for the proposed horse campground at Governor Dodge horse campground shows the layout for the 21 campsites.

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With more miles of trails than can be explored in a single day, users from outside the immediate area camp at the park with their horses. By providing improved camping facilities, the park can draw riders from outside the immediate area to see and enjoy some of the most beautiful trails in the state.

With nearly double the capacity of the current campground, hundreds more users will be able to access the park each season. The improved ambience will encourage families to camp with their children and horses, helping introduce youngsters to the pleasures of outdoor recreation with their animals.

Funding for parks by the state government has been reduced significantly in recent years. Many parks now receive barely enough funding to cover annual emergency and infrastructure repairs with facilities as old as 40 years in some of the parks.

Recognizing that state funds are unlikely to be available any time soon for the new campground, the Friends group is stepping up to raise funds for the project. They are seeking funding from a range of sources and are inviting individuals, organizations and businesses that recognize the benefits of outdoor recreation for mental and physical health as well as informing donors of the economic value equestrian activities bring to the local and state economy.

Although Warrior admits she doesn't do much horse camping, she often does day rides at Governor Dodge.

"I am so grateful for the horse trails there and at other parks because they allow me to visit beautiful and remote areas that I could never, ever reach on my own two feet," said Warrior. "With each passing year I find that trail riding becomes more important as my main means for getting out in nature. Remembering the seasons' beautiful rides helps me make it through the long winter."

For more information about the fundraising campaign, or to make a donation, visit www.GovDodgeEquestrians.com.

The Mane Attraction

Article and Photos by Benjamin Wideman, Regional Editor
for The Country Today / thecountrytoday.com

Farmer brings miniature horse Rosie to cheer up hospital patients

GREEN BAY — Julie Brooks' prognosis wasn't promising.

For three days, the Green Bay woman was bedridden at Aurora BayCare Medical Center as doctors and nurses diligently worked to determine the source of her pain.

"It was a pretty tense situation," she said. "I was in critical condition, very worried."

And then, into the hospital room trotted Rosie, a white and brown miniature horse officially standing 26 inches tall.

"My mood totally changed," Brooks said. "Seeing this tiny horse, it just floored me. She came up to the bed and stood there. What a sweet little horse she was.



Sue Binsfeld, a cash crop farmer from Glenmore, secured unicorn attire on her miniature horse, Rosie, before entering Aurora BayCare Medical Center in Green Bay to visit patients. Assisting Binsfeld was her friend Karen Nelsen.

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