



Press Release

For Immediate Release
Aug. 31, 2021

Contact: Bernadette Greenwood, (608) 393-5042, bgreenwood@friendsofdevilslake.org

Capital campaign begins for new educational/interpretive center at Devil's Lake State Park

BARABOO, Wis – A campaign to raise \$18 million to build a multi-use educational/interpretive center at Devil's Lake State Park has begun, aiming to enrich visitors' experience at Wisconsin's largest and most-visited state park.

The Friends of Devil's Lake State Park launched the campaign after nearly 40 years of visioning, studies and preparation. The campaign will support construction of a new facility that will promote stewardship of the park and provide much needed year-round amenities for park visitors and employees.

"The center will help us better meet the needs of current visitors, and also promote and encourage visitors to go out and explore other Wisconsin natural areas," said Bernadette Greenwood, president of the Friends of Devil's Lake board of directors.

The 9,217-acre park attracts more than 2.5 million visitors annually; on par with visitation numbers for Grand Teton National Park and Glacier National Park, which are among the nation's top 10 most-visited national parks.

The campaign begins at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has sparked surging interest in outdoor recreation, causing significant increases in the use of Devil's Lake State Park and park systems across the country. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources anticipates this increased popularity will continue.

The center will serve as an outdoor recreation educational resource and hub for Devil's Lake State Park, introducing visitors to the Baraboo Hills region, the entire Wisconsin state park system and the state's numerous other nationally significant recreational, natural and cultural treasures.

The center also aims to acknowledge, honor and respect the historical and cultural significance of Devil's Lake for area Native American populations by including area tribal leaders in the planning and campaign process.

As currently envisioned, the new center will include interactive and interpretive exhibits for all ages, educational spaces, outdoor recreation displays, a café, gift shop and administrative space for park staff. It will offer dynamic historical, cultural and educational exhibits to enhance the experience of park visitors year-round and be built with versatility in mind to serve a broad spectrum of functions and purposes.

The Friends, in partnership with the Devil's Lake Concessions Corporation and the DNR, have retained the Stevens Point, Wis.-based firm of Baker Street Consulting Group to organize, direct, and implement the campaign. Baker Street recently completed a planning and feasibility study to verify the potential of conducting a successful fundraising campaign to achieve the vision for a new center.

It is anticipated that funds toward the campaign goal will come from the generosity of individual donors, foundation grants, and state or national funding sources. The campaign will consist of a three phase, 38-month program, beginning this month with planning, organization, and preparation for the public kick-off phase down the road.

Baker Street is creating the internal structure and materials needed for conducting a successful comprehensive campaign.

“To establish a solid base for going forward, we are currently in the process of preparing the campaign plan and organizing leadership roles necessary to implement a first-rate, best-practices guided campaign for Devil’s Lake State Park,” said Jim Radford, Baker Street president.

The campaign will be largely volunteer led, with many important roles to be filled as the project begins. While the campaign will rely heavily on Baraboo-area volunteers, organizers say they will also reach out for regional and national support because of the park’s national reputation.

Organizers encourage those with or without fundraising or capital campaign experience to become involved in the effort.

Greenwood thanked those involved in the campaign so far for their support and patience.

“This is a big undertaking, and we want to make sure we are doing everything correctly. Now, we invite your continued support and participation as we begin the next exciting chapter of Devil’s Lake State Park,” she added.

To find out more about the project, volunteer opportunities and to donate to the campaign, contact Greenwood at (608) 393-5042 or bgreenwood@friendsofdevilslake.org.

###