

BIG WOODS LAKE CAMPGROUND

A cooperative project between the City of Cedar Falls and Black Hawk County Conservation Commission.

The City of Cedar Falls, Black Hawk County Conservation Board and numerous other agencies are joining forces to construct a state-of-the-art RV Campground in the NE corner of Big Woods Lake, within the Cedar Falls city limits. When complete, the 11.7 acre site will hold 55 hard surfaced RV camp sites, two permanent cabins, tent camping, hard surface roadways, bath house, playground equipment and wireless internet service. The RV sites will include full hookups (water and electric). The big Woods Lake Recreation area provides a myriad of outdoor recreation opportunities including access to the metropolitan recreation trail system, boating, fishing, hiking and picnicking and a newly established 10-acre prairie. The remaining park grounds consist of floodplain-associated woodlands and wetland areas, interlaced with smaller lakes, which were once old quarries and are now used for fishing.

The establishment of the Big Woods Lake Campground was originally nothing more than casual conversation between other campers, interested community members and some city and county personnel. Up until two years ago, the City of Cedar Falls was taking a cautious approach and wanted to see what recent additions to George Wyth State Park and Black Hawk County Park campgrounds brought and if these additions met the demand for campsites in the metropolitan area.

When it was obvious there continued to be a demand for quality campsites, especially those that are not located in flood prone areas, a committee of interested citizens and city/county officials started to talk about possible locations for an additional campground. Recognizing that the City of Cedar Falls had land available near a growing recreation area, and that Black Hawk County Conservation personnel had the experience to manage campground facilities, both the City and County entered into a cooperative relationship to establish the Big Woods Lake Campground.

Waterloo Landscape Architect, Craig Ritland, provided a preliminary concept plan. This plan was instrumental to solicit excitement for the project, to receive approvals from the State of Iowa Archeology agency, to develop cost estimates, partnership responsibilities and for use when applying for various grants that would be used to fund much of the project.

To start, the City and County entered into a 28E agreement that would establish a governing board to oversee the partnership between the local governmental agencies and make necessary decisions to make sure all allocated dollars were being expended according to established State of Iowa and local jurisdiction regulations.

Original cost estimates for the project were in the neighborhood of \$300,000 for a bare bones facility. However, as the project was developed, keeping in mind the demands of today's campers, it was obvious that the campground would need to be provided with more advanced features.

With the assistance of Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments, various grant applications were submitted to Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP),

Land And Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), Community Attractions and Tourism (CAT) and the Black Hawk Gaming Association (BHGA). The project proved to be very popular and received the following grant dollars:

REAP	\$300,000
CAT	\$ 84,400
LAWCON	\$ 69,042
BHGA	\$ 45,000
Private	\$ 22,000
Total	\$520,442

In addition, the City of Cedar Falls has dedicated \$162,000 in Capital Improvement Project funds and Black Hawk County \$200,000, bringing the total contributions for the project to \$882,442. The total anticipated build-out cost for the project is near \$1,110,000. In order to reduce the gap between the revenues and anticipated expenditures, City and County staff will continue to seek private donations or modify the plans to meet available revenues.

It is anticipated that work will begin during the summer or fall of 2008 and the campground open for public use in 2009.

