



Garrison Diversion Invests in Recreation Opportunities

By Kimberly Cook

The enhancement of one of North Dakota's most treasured resources, its recreational opportunities, is a key initiative for the Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (Garrison Diversion). Investing in the promotion, development, and preservation of the state's natural resources is important to ensure the continued and future utilization of these areas.

Matching Recreation Grant Program

Through its Matching Recreation Grant Program, Garrison Diversion can help offset the high costs of recreation projects to communities within its member counties. The Matching Recreation Grant Program is funded with 20 percent of the one-mill levy provided by each of the 28 counties within the district. The grant program has been in place since 1990 and has awarded more than \$4.4 million in matching grants throughout the district.

To be eligible for the matching recreation grant benefit, the project sponsor must be a political subdivision located within one of the counties that comprise Garrison Diversion. Eligible entities include park boards, water resource districts, and county or city commissions. Park development, such as purchasing playground equipment and benches, and enhancing campground facilities are a few examples of the projects that can be completed.

Garrison Diversion's Recreation Committee comes together twice a year to award matching recreation grants. The program is able to provide up to a 25 percent matching grant to eligible recreation projects within the district. In order to be considered for a matching recreation grant, completed applications must be postmarked prior to April 1 or Sept. 1 to be considered for the next meeting.

Many communities within the district have been able

to enhance and develop recreation areas both big and small with the assistance of the Matching Recreation Grant Program. Two projects in particular have benefited immensely from the program, the North Dakota 4-H camp near Washburn and the Hankinson American Legion Natural Resource Learning Center in Hankinson. Both projects have a reach above and beyond their small communities and benefit students and individuals across North Dakota and beyond.

North Dakota 4-H Camp Facilities Renovation and Conference Center Project

The North Dakota 4-H Camp, located 1.5 miles west of Washburn, was established in 1967 on 87 acres of wooded riverfront property on the Missouri River. The primary purpose of the residential 4-H camp is to provide education, outdoor recreation, and leadership opportunities for youth. The North Dakota 4-H Camp is the only 4-H camp in North Dakota. Over the past several years, 4-H camp attendance has skyrocketed, hosting campers from 50 counties and seven states.

"For some time, there has been a dramatic need to enhance the learning environment available for 4-H students," says NDSU Extension Service Emeritus Director Duane Hauck. "The camp facilities were severely lacking, as there hadn't been any updates since the camp was established." The desire for safe, wholesome, and comfortable facilities prompted the proposal to modernize the existing facilities and construct a modern learning and conference center.

The Johnsrud Education Center enables the expansion of the educational utilization of the camp and allows for year-round programming. The multi-purpose building will, upon completion, have the capacity to host meetings and conferences and be a gathering space for campers.



The front of the Johnsrud Education Center from the road at the 4-H Camp. When completed, it will have the capacity to host meetings and conferences and be a space for campers.



The eastern side of the Johnsrud Education Center shows one of the camp's two new cabins. It will feature two glass garage doors that can be opened to open the space up. The area in between the Johnsrud Education Center and the cabins will feature a brick patio and fireplace.



The second new cabin is directly behind the cabin in the foreground of this photo.



The opposite view of the Johnsrud Education Center and the two new cabins.

The facility will feature a fireplace and new shower facilities that can also serve as a storm shelter, if necessary. The Johnsrud Education Center can be rented for public events, as well.

The interior renovation of the existing dining hall, kitchen, and three cabins brings them to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Two new cabins were constructed to provide additional sleeping space for campers.

Construction and renovations at the 4-H camp began last year. Projects are expected to be completed in June, in time for the camp season, which runs from June through August. Camp coordinators are expecting strong attendance this year.

Garrison Diversion provided a \$50,000 matching recreation grant to the NDSU Extension Service for the improvements at the camp. The grant helped bring existing facilities up to ADA standards and assisted with the construction of the Johnsrud Education Center. "We really appreciate what Garrison Diversion has done for us, along with our other contributors," says Hauck. "The project was really needed for our campers."

Hankinson American Legion Natural Resource Learning Center and Veteran's Memorial

In 1940, Richland County deeded nearly 18 acres of land to Post 88 of the American Legion with the stipulation that it be used for education and recreation. Since 2005, project coordinators have been working to create an education and recreation facility that would benefit the local area. Thus, the Hankinson American Legion Natural Resource Learning Center (Learning Center) and Veteran's Memorial began to take shape.

Along the shores of Lake Elsie in rural Hankinson, the Learning Center and Veteran's Memorial provides cultural, historic, and recreational experiences unlike any other. In addition to the deeded land, the Learning Center also borders 25 acres of natural wetlands and is connected to 800 acres of Lake Elsie, which harbors aquatic vegetation.

The project construction began in 2006, and has been continually ongoing in multiple phases. Project co-coordinator Dwight Boucher

estimates an additional two years of project construction is remaining. However, the center is open to the public even as construction is ongoing.

The purpose of the Learning Center is to provide an outdoor leisure learning site for students, groups of individuals, families, or anyone interested in the different ecosystems and cultures that once characterized the area. An outdoor classroom educates local school children, Cub Scouts, 4-H, and the Richland County Wildlife Club, to name a few. Recreational components are also included in the design of the Learning Site which is utilized year round for summer and ice fishing, hunter safety training and archery, among other activities. A pathway provides walking and biking access to all areas of the project and also connects the site to the city of Hankinson.

The indoor classroom has become very popular for small gatherings. “The community really grabbed ahold of the availability of the center and has really been utilizing the facility,” says Boucher.

The Veteran’s Memorial includes the American flag, North Dakota flag, the MIA/POW flag, the American Legion Flag and the VFW flag. The lighted memorial is a tribute to our country and to those who have served in the armed forces.

The Learning Center and Veteran’s Memorial has

been made possible through a partnership between the American Legion Post 88, Hankinson Park District, the City of Hankinson, and Hankinson Public School. Local organizations and individuals have also made monetary donations and committed valuable time to volunteer work at the Learning Center.

Garrison Diversion has awarded two matching recreation grants totaling \$37,500 to the Hankinson Park Board, which supplemented funding for the indoor classroom and bathroom facilities and helped construct an access point to South Lake Elsie for small boats, kayaks, and canoes. “Garrison Diversion has played an instrumental part in helping us get here,” says Boucher.

For more information on the Matching Recreation Grant Program or to download a grant application, visit Garrison Diversion’s website, www.garrisondiversion.org/recreation, or contact Merri Mooridian at 701-652-3194.

(Below) Garrison Diversion recognized the progress of the Hankinson American Legion Natural Resource Learning Center with the presentation of signage for the project. Two matching recreation grants totaling \$37,500 were awarded to the Hankinson Park Board through Garrison Diversion’s Recreation Committee to assist in the completion of the Learning Center.

