

Dane County Exec. Parisi: Announces Land Acquisition to Double Size of Verona's Fireman's Park

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Land Includes Public Access to Popular Sugar River

Today Dane County Executive Parisi announced a grant will be awarded to the City of Verona to purchase 13.1 acres of land that will double the size of the Verona's Fireman's Park and contains over 1/3 mile of Badger Mill Creek, a tributary to the Sugar River.

"Protecting our beautiful natural resources is critical to ensuring our high quality of life in Dane County," said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. "I am proud of all the conservation efforts Dane County has lead. This is another important part of our efforts to increase access to outdoor recreational activities."

The majority of the land consists of wetland and consists of Badger Mill Creek, a "cool water fishery" which has the potential to sustain some trout populations. Acquisition of the property will create opportunity to improve habitat for fish and wildlife and provide public access for public recreation including hiking and fishing. The City intends to remove invasive woody plants and reestablish an open meadow with natural walking paths allowing access to the Badger Mill Creek. The City will partner with Trout Unlimited, the Upper Sugar Watershed Association and the

Department of Natural Resources for habitat and streambank improvement and management of the parcel.

The project costs for the acquisition total \$80,200 with Dane County contributing \$20,500. The remainder of the acquisition costs will be provided by funds from the City of Verona.

This is just the most recent step in the investment into the popular Sugar River area. In February Dane County purchased a 60 acre parcel in the Town of Montrose that contains a meandering stretch of the West Branch of the Sugar River and a public hunting easement of an additional 110 acres. The new land will have a new fishing easement along the Sugar River to make it easier for trout fishing in the popular fishery. The land was be purchased for \$636,000. The purpose of the purchase and easements is to provide permanent public fishing and hunting access, protect water quality and preserve fish and wildlife habitat.

In 2015 Dane County acquired more than 100 acres south of Paoli, a property that includes over 4,800 feet of frontage on the Sugar River and is known as the Sugar River Basco Unit Wildlife Area. This is after the County's historic acquisition that forever protected more than 450 acres and several miles of the Sugar River just north of Paoli. That property, now named the "Falk Wells Sugar River Wildlife Area," has since had parking areas developed to improve outdoor recreation and access to the river for fishing, kayaking and canoeing.

The County added new hiking trails and bridges which opened in 2017 at the Falk Wells Sugar River Wildlife Area. In County Executive Parisi's 2018 budget he allocated \$75,000 for a multi-year restoration of the Sugar River to improve the health of the fishery and ease of navigation. He also added a new Restoration Crew, modeled after state counterparts at the Wisconsin DNR. These teams will be trained in restoring waterways and help accelerate the conversion of natural spaces.