

Dane County Exec Parisi: Announces expansion of McCarthy Youth and Conservation County Park with nearly 35 acre purchase

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Today, County Executive Joe Parisi announced Dane County will purchase nearly 35 acres of property in the Town of Sun Prairie to expand McCarthy Youth and Conservation County Park. This parcel is located on the northeast corner of the intersection of County Highway N and County Highway TT and is within the Koshkonong Creek Natural Resource Area boundary.

“By purchasing this property, we are saving this area from potential development and continuing our commitment to restore wetlands,” said Dane County Executive Joe Parisi. “This parcel will provide greater visibility of McCarthy Youth and Conservation County Park on County Highway N and more opportunities for Dane County residents to enjoy the outdoors.”

The parcel contains a mix of cropland on the western side, wetlands through the middle portion of the property, and woods on the eastern side adjacent to the park. Two ponds can be found on the northeast and south sides of the property. The wetlands connect to wetlands on existing park land and ownership of this parcel will allow for wetland restoration to occur.

“This is a terrific addition to McCarthy Youth and Conservation County Park and will provide increased conservation and recreational opportunities for generations to come,” said County Board Supervisor Melissa Ratcliff.

Acquisition of the property will extend the park boundary out to the roads and

provide a buffer from planned development along County Highway N. The Dane County Land & Water Resources Department is currently developing a new timber-frame shelter, parking lot, and playground at McCarthy Youth and Conservation County Park that should be complete in 2023.

The vision for McCarthy Youth and Conservation County Park began in 1974 with a donation of 180 acres of land that was owned by Russell and Ella McCarthy. The McCarthys' primary goal was for the park to become "a place where kids from the city could learn about nature." The park offers a group camp, hiking, cross-country skiing, equestrian trails and camping, picnic opportunities, and a beautiful prairie/wetland restoration.

Dane County will purchase the 34.7-acre property for \$1.2 million. Funds for the purchase are available in the 2023 Dane County Conservation Fund budget. A resolution to approve the property acquisition will be introduced at tonight's County Board meeting.