

Dept. of Natural Resources: Door County State Park Friends groups receive \$250K from room tax

Posted on Tuesday, May 30, 2023

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DOOR COUNTY, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is pleased to announce that the Friends groups at Newport, Peninsula, Potawatomi, Whitefish Dunes, and Rock Island state parks will receive a substantial contribution from Destination Door County (DDC).

This comes after the Door County Tourism Zone Commission approved a proposal to invest higher-than-anticipated 2022 room-tax collections in area parks. The new program will distribute \$800,000 among Municipal Parks, the Friends of Door County Parks and five Wisconsin State Park Friends Groups.

The local state park Friends Groups will receive an initial contribution of \$250,000 from Destination Door County, with each group receiving \$50,000. Additionally, the Friends Groups' own fundraising efforts will be matched up to another \$250,000 by Destination Door County.

Newport, Peninsula, Potawatomi, Whitefish Dunes and Rock Island state parks saw almost 2 million visitors in 2022, and visitation continues to grow. The location of these properties on the Door County peninsula makes them top destinations for outdoor recreation.

“This is a great opportunity for us to partner with our Friends Groups and the local communities of Door County to make a significant investment in these five properties,” said Steve Schmelzer, DNR Parks and Recreation Management Bureau Director.

The Friends have expressed interest in directing the funds to outdoor recreation infrastructure projects, enhancements to the visitor experience, and preservation of the local ecosystems and natural resources that draw in visitors from both near and far.

“With the matching funding from Destination Door County, we’ll be able to expedite the implementation of many projects. By offering new hiking trails, winter sports trails, and improving existing infrastructure, we hope to leave park visitors with many fond visual memories and an educational experience in nature,” said John Swanson, Friends of Whitefish Dunes.

“Our parks provide our residents with incredible outdoor recreation opportunities and are key drivers of visitation to Door County as well,” said Julie Gilbert, President/CEO of Destination Door County. “We are very excited to be able to provide this special funding to enhance these important natural attractions.”

The state park Friends Groups located in Door County have already raised funds for several major projects recently, including the preservation, restoration and maintenance of the Pottawatomie Lighthouse at Rock Island, Eagle Tower at Peninsula, improvements to the Brachiopod Trail Boardwalk at Whitefish Dunes, accessible fishing pier replacement at Potawatomi and the Fern Trail Boardwalk restoration at Newport.

The investment of higher-than-anticipated room-tax collections from Destination Door County will allow these groups to continue to make a positive impact by investing tourism dollars back into the local community. Learn more about these [Wisconsin State Park Friends Groups on the DNR's website](#).