

2004 FOPL ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Homestead Parklands on Perch Lake has wrapped up a successful summer season after its Dedication on June 7. Dick Henning (site manager for the park) reports that usage the past six months was strong with over 3,000 vehicles entering the park, and an estimated total of 10,000 individuals using the facilities the first summer season. Dick indicated that all activity areas of the park were used, including the playground, hiking trails, fishing pier, swimming beach, picnic, and lake diving areas.

Students from New Richmond, Stillwater, Hudson, Somerset, and St. Paul have spent time studying environmental subjects, with plans to return in the spring. During the winter months the park will be closed to vehicles, but still available for skiing, skating, and snowshoeing. The parking area just outside the gate will be plowed. Please sign in to show parks committee there is desire for park to be open in winter.

This fall the board concluded we needed to test the idea of funding an educational building for the park. We commissioned a study (paid for by designated donations), which included interviewing a sampling of business and community leaders from the Valley (Baldwin, Ellsworth, Hudson, New Richmond, River Falls, Somerset, and Stillwater). Our feasibility research indicated that many people were not yet familiar with the park and our educational plans for school children.

Area schools, however, have expressed enthusiasm for the curriculum being prepared. FOPL is working toward completing additional lesson plans, which are both unique to the educational opportunities provided at Homestead Parklands, as well as those that would be complementary to existing school field studies. At a recent board meeting it was suggested and approved that FOPL's first curriculum project be a collaborative lesson plan with OWLs. Students would visit both Willow River State Park and Homesteads Parklands and focus on comparing the two types of aquatic environments. Committee leaders will work on developing said collaborative relationship.

Since fundraising for an education center will likely be a long-term effort; it was suggested that FOPL adopt a single season project as well. The board as decided to raise funds for and volunteer labor for the construction of the trail connecting the upper parking lots with the beach.

In another exciting development, a member of FOPL has volunteered to develop a web site for the group. This will likely be a two-fold development. Initially primarily used as a means of communication including calendar and minutes postings. Later, as lesson plans are created a more in-depth site will be added for them to be accessed by teachers.

FOPL is seeking persons with marketing, brochure design, teaching, data base development, and secretarial skills. Any with desire to assist in various needs may include such info with their membership renewal.