

## Former Camp Fire USA Camp Sold to Chisago City



Chisago City purchased Camp Ojiketa, a former Camp Fire USA Minnesota Council summer camp, on Dec. 17. This deal completes a three-year plan to right-size the organization and ensure the integrity of its mission to build caring, confident youth and future leaders. It also marks the largest project in the history of Chisago City, who plan to create a regional park at Camp Ojiketa.

The proceeds from the \$3.655 million deal will go into a foundation managed by Camp Fire USA Minnesota Council for long-term sustainability of the organization. "This marks a very important direction for Camp Fire, as we focus our efforts on delivering programs with high-impact, in terms of both the number of youth we serve and the quality of our programs," said Marnie K. Wells, chief executive officer at Camp Fire USA Minnesota Council.

Camp Fire USA Minnesota Council currently operates one summer camp program, Camp Tanadoona in Chanhassen. In recent years, Camp Tanadoona has seen significant growth in participation numbers, while Camp Ojiketa saw steady declines. The organization decided to sell the camp as it became apparent the resource-dependent facility that wasn't serving the community. "We made this decision after an extensive and deliberate examination of our council operations." said Marnie, "We realize, to best serve youth we must focus on our programs that receive strong community support and participation."

The process of selling the camp was challenging. It went on the market as the housing market was declining. This situation, while difficult for many, has been beneficial to conservation groups who have seen a boon in their ability to purchase large tracts of natural land for preservation. This opened the doors for the Trust For Public Land (TPL), a nonprofit with the mission of preserving land for people, to begin fundraising efforts to purchase Camp Ojiketa while working with Chisago City to create a regional park. TPL's work was boosted by the efforts of Camp Ojiketa alumni who rallied many former campers to donate to preserve the camp. This group of alumni along with the energy and forward-thinking vision of many Chisago City officials, including Mayor Don Taylor made this project possible.

TPL became involved with prompting from public officials, concerned citizens and Camp Ojiketa alumni. "This project really resonated with us," said Robert McGillivray, senior project manager at TPL, "especially when thinking about the compelling history this piece of land holds." Additionally, this sale is in step with Camp Fire's core value of believing in the power of nature to awaken the senses, curiosity and desire to learn. "We are thrilled that Camp Ojiketa will continue to be a place people can experience the outdoors," said Marnie.