

Campfire Girl Camp in Chisago City Saved from Development (MN)

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Chisago City, MN, 12/17/08: Camp Ojiketa was loved by many generations of Minnesota Camp Fire Girls, and thanks to a deal finalized today by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) it will remain open to the public for hiking, swimming, fishing, canoeing, picnicking, star gazing and day dreaming.

"A couple years back, the Ojiketa Preservation Society came to us with a lot of energy and enthusiasm, but they needed help with real estate and conservation funding," said Bob McGillivray, of TPL. "It took all the enthusiasm, energy, expertise and funding we could muster, but together we cobbled together a deal to save Ojiketa."

Camp Ojiketa was operated by Camp Fire USA for over eight decades. However to meet financial obligations and reflect changing priorities, the organization announced in 2006 that it was putting the property up for sale. This news, and subsequent news that there was interest in making the area a commercial or residential development, caused a group of Camp Fire Girl alumni to organize to save the land.

"Generations of women learned a lot about nature and themselves at Camp Ojiketa," said Judy Montgomery of the Ojiketa Preservation Society. "It would have broken our hearts to see this special place become commercially developed, so this is a day of great relief and celebration."

Chisago City and Preservation Society officials initially attempted to raise funding to make the land a park, but ultimately turned to TPL for help. In early 2008, TPL secured an option good through December 31, 2008 to purchase the land for \$3,800,000, well below the \$4,200,000 million the land was appraised for in March 2008. TPL announced today that it has closed a deal for \$3,655,000.

Situated on the shores of Green Lake in Chisago City, just a half hour north of downtown St. Paul, the 70-acre area will be converted into a much needed regional park in rapidly growing Chisago County. The property features 3,100 feet of lakeshore, a natural bay, a high quality marsh, and an oak forest. It is frequented by a variety of wildlife, such as Bald Eagles, Canada Warblers, Common Loons, Barred Owls, Downy Woodpeckers, and Red Fox.

Funding for the project came from Chisago City, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) Non-Metro Regional Park grant program, the DNR Metro Greenways program, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund as recommended by the Legislative Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources, Metro Conservation Corridors, the Chisago Lakes Lake Improvement program and a number of private contributions.