

Grant Updates and Thank You to our Partner Organizations!



Wild Ones Root River Chapter - Native Plant Grant

It's been a busy start to the spring and summer seasons here at RBSRA, thanks to a grant from the Root River Wild Ones chapter. The BNA and volunteers have been hard at work, using the grant resources to enhance the entrance station, the NEC, and the butterfly garden.

Between planning, preparing and planting, this grant has created quite a buzz as BNA volunteers add native forbs and grasses. The existing entrance station garden is getting a facelift thanks to the additional plants, filling out the area with essential native plants. Creating a larger space for this garden has been quite the project. Non-native grasses, invasive species, and other non-native species were removed while prepping the area for the new plants. Now that the preparations are done, visitors will be treated to a display of essential native plants on their way in to RBSRA. These plants serve a vital role for the pollinators and butterflies that call Southeastern Wisconsin home.

Beyond the entrance station, the BNA volunteers are also adding plants to two other pollinator havens—the butterfly garden and the NEC garden. Adding vines to the willow wigwam in the NEC garden will make this structure even more interesting. Plus additional common milkweed in the butterfly garden will act as a nectar and habitat source for pollinators. Between the NEC and the butterfly garden, the BNA is adding native shrubs to help minimize foot traffic.

Come see these amazing and extensive improvements! Thank you to all the amazing BNA volunteers who have put time, energy, and enthusiasm into this project. And a very special thank you to the Root River Wild Ones chapter for making these improvements possible through your generous support!



Friends of Wisconsin State Parks – Incentive Grant

Because of the generous support of a grant from the Friends of Wisconsin State Parks (FSWP), the BNA will have the opportunity to educate more visitors, bring part of RBSRA's history to life with a new sign at Lot G, and help orient visitors with an illustrated welcome sign.

This generous Incentive Grant from the FWSP continues RBSRA's mission to educate visitors by contributing to a portion of the LTE Naturalist's post Labor Day salary. The LTE Naturalist is a

vital position for RBSRA. Though the summer is the busy time for visitors, educational opportunities at RBSRA don't stop there. Field trips, the Halloween hike and the First Day hike are all excellent interpretive and educational programming run by the LTE Naturalist after Labor Day. The LTE Naturalist also works with the BNA and RBSRA staff in developing weekly programming for all ages and abilities, while coordinating RBSRA volunteers. Helping to fund this position post labor day creates benefits for visitors, the BNA, and RBSRA staff alike.

With the help of the FWSP Incentive Grant, the BNA will work with RBSRA to create a new 3'x4' interpretive welcome sign. The sign will show a new map of RBSRA, marking significant landmarks and usage areas. This will allow visitors to see significant aspects of the park, making their navigation that much easier. Features like the Nature Explorer Classroom, the new photography/nature viewing blind, pheasant/ adaptive pheasant hunting and other unique parts of the park will be highlighted. The hope with this new sign is to create a welcoming and visually attractive introduction to the great things RBSRA has to offer visitors.

Along with the welcome sign, the BNA and RBSRA will be adding an interpretive sign at Lot G. RBSRA has a rich cultural and historical story. Often, the natural beauty of this park takes center stage, but thanks to the FSWP grant, Lot G/\$4 Flowage Accessible Trail will be getting an 18"x24" interpretive sign telling about the historical significance of sites in this area of the park. During the 1950's, the land that would become RBSRA was set to be an airforce base. Creating a base required significant changes to the landscape, as well as the installation of infrastructure for moving around the base. Along the Lot G/\$4 Flowage Accessible Trail, visitors can see evidence of the Soo spur track from the days of the air force base construction. After the state acquired the area and created RBSRA, the remnants of the base faded away as efforts to reclaim the land and rehabilitate the natural landscape took shape. The new sign at this trail will help to tell this story— showing visitors how far the land has come in the time since RSBRA's inception.

Thanks to the FWSP grant, the BNA along with RBSRA will be able to put the funding to great use through a variety of avenues. Ultimately, this grant will be a fundamental tool for education—helping to keep programming going post labor day through the help of the LTE Naturalist, providing an educational welcome for visitors, and finally, offering historical insight into a lesser known park of RBSRA. Thank you to the FWSP for this generous and greatly appreciated opportunity for growth!



Natural Resources Foundation/David and Joyce Weizenicker Fund for State Parks Grant

Thanks to the help of a generous grant from the David & Joyce Weizenicker Fund for State Parks, Richard Bong State Recreation Area

will soon have a new way to view wildlife. The David & Joyce Weizenicker Fund part of the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin awarded the Bong Naturalist Association a generous award to build an accessible blind for wildlife viewing, birding, and photography.

The blind will be built by volunteers and it will feature seating, an accessible path, and signage for identifying birds with suggestions for attracting different species to your personal yard. The Bong Naturalist Association hopes to create a unique and inviting space for multi-generational use. The wildlife viewing blind and accessible path will be placed near the Outdoor Nature Classroom and the Nature Trail. Along with the blind and seating, invasive species of plants will be removed and appropriate perches and a water feature will be added to enhance the viewing experience for visitors.

This will truly be a group effort by non-BNA and BNA volunteers, along with the generous funds from the David & Joyce Weizenicker Fund. We hope you come out to enjoy the newest addition to Richard Bong State Recreation Area once its completed late fall of 2024.



Natural Resources Foundation/Norma and Stanley DeBoer Quiet Trails Grant

The Bong Naturalist Association (BNA) recently received a generous grant from the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. Thanks to the Norman & Stanley DeBoer Quiet Tails Fund, there will soon be new maps on the trail signs along the Blue and Green paths at Richard Bong

State Recreation Area.

The new signs will feature a directional property map of Richard Bong State Recreation Area, providing clarity and a better sense of direction for hikers, runners, and walkers enjoying the park. We are excited to be able to enhance the experience of people venturing out into this beautiful space through this much appreciated grant.

This project is scheduled to be completed in Fall 2024.