

Great Places

South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation works to provide more great places to take the family outdoors!

by Sue and Dick Brown, Development Directors, South Dakota Parks and Wildlife Foundation



Today's children are encouraged to stay indoors by video games, television, and concerns about safety. The result is an epidemic of childhood obesity and a decrease in understanding of and participation in our natural world.

Author Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods* coined the term “nature deficit disorder” to describe the results of today’s child lifestyles. Concern over this and related trends gave rise to a national movement called “No Child Left Inside.” Educational, public health, environmental and wildlife organizations from the YMCA to the National Wildlife Federation, Izaak Walton League, and Ducks Unlimited have endorsed programs to provide our children with great outdoor places to be active and to learn. Research shows that getting kids outside helps create happy, healthy, and more focused children.

The Parks and Wildlife Foundation in partnership with other private organizations, donors and the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks is working to provide more great places to get kids and adults outside. The Foundation is building on a strong South Dakota tradition

of stewardship and enjoyment of our natural resources.

Below are just a few of the examples of how private donations through the Foundation are making great places outdoors more accessible to South Dakotans.

Outdoor Campus West

Thousands of children and adults visit the Outdoor Campus

in Sioux Falls each month for conservation, wildlife, hunting, fishing, and outdoor skills education. Classes range from a “Sprouts” program for children 3-4 and Young Naturalist program for children 5-7 to Family Ice Fishing, Archery, Bird Walks, Fantastic Frolicking Frogs and lots of other age- and season-appropriate interactive experiences. In addition to indoor classroom space, there are tens of acres to hike, fish, learn and observe. The facility, land, and programs are an operation of Game, Fish and Parks.



Fishing is a skill people of any age can learn at The Outdoor Campus.

People west of the Missouri are about to have the same opportunity with the scheduled late 2010 opening of the Outdoor Campus West in Rapid City. Both private and public funds have been used to purchase a beautiful natural site off Sturgis Road and adjoining Wilderness Park. Meadows, trees, sloughs, a creek and ponds as well as an education facility will provide exciting new opportunities to learn about and love the outdoors. Plans for facilities and programming are now being developed. The west river site will have its own unique take on outdoor activities, but the central theme is the same: get kids and families outside for fun, health, and education.

Private donations to support getting kids from west river classrooms to the Campus and contributions for some exhibits and activities will be needed and volunteers recruited. To learn more about what is available at the Sioux Falls Campus, visit the site off Kiwanis Avenue or the Web site www.outdoorcampus.org. For more information about the new campus, or to schedule a program about the Campus for your group, call Dick or Sue Brown at 605-673-4017 or e-mail PWF@state.sd.us. To make a contribution, go to the Foundation's Web site at www.parkswildlifefoundation.org.

Mickelson Trail Extension

The existing 114 mile trail is a great place to get a workout or a walk next to nature. Imagine the beauty and challenge of a 20-mile extension from near Hill City to Mt. Rushmore through the Norbeck Wildlife Preserve. Although a final route will not be determined until 2010, it is not too early to express an interest in sponsorship of the bridges and rest stops that will be needed along the trail. For more information, call us at 605-673-4017 or e-mail PWF@state.sd.us.

Tony Dean's Acres

Scores of public places to hunt, fish, hike, bike, climb and camp have already been provided by and for South Dakotans. But more public access is needed. One of the most exciting projects the Foundation is currently facilitating is Tony Dean's

Acres, a memorial to South Dakota's famous host of "Tony Dean Outdoors" television and "Dakota Backwoods" radio shows for over two decades before Dean's death in 2008. The Foundation is helping Tony's family and supporters make this project a reality. Dean was a tireless advocate for passing on our outdoor legacy to future generations.

Contributions to the Tony Dean fund in the Foundation will carry on Dean's mission to support wildlife habitat, provide public access hunting and carry on environmental education. For more information or to make a contribution, go to www.parkswildlifefoundation.org and click on the picture of Tony Dean on the home page.

Friends of Parks and Wildlife

A great way to support all South Dakota's great places in nature is to join "Friends of Parks and Wildlife." More information about his program can be found on the Foundation Web site.

Reminder

Getting outdoors is a great way to take a break from your phone or computer. So, take a break in one of South Dakota's great places outdoors! And if you have kids or grandkids, take them along!



Possible vista from the proposed Mickelson Trail Extension.

