



Spring 2025

[friendsofmaplewoodstatepark@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmaplewoodstatepark@gmail.com)

<https://friendsofmaplewood.org>

# The Maple Leaf

## MEET THE NEW MAPLEWOOD STATE PARK MANAGER – WELCOME BILL ANDERSON!

“I'm excited to be at Maplewood State Park and look forward to meeting its visitors and supporters. It's great to return to a state park where my journey began 35 years ago! As a Concordia college student in 1990, I interned with Minnesota State Parks for two summers as a park naturalist, then was a seasonal naturalist at Lake Shetek State Park. After transferring to Interstate State Park, I became the Assistant Manager and later the Park Manager at William O'Brien State Park. In 2008, I joined the DNR Headquarters in St. Paul to manage Minnesota State Parks' reservation system and retail program. In 2013, I worked for a New York software company, managing reservation projects for multiple state park systems, including Missouri, Minnesota, and California.

“After 30 years in state parks, my wife and I chose to start a new chapter to engage in our kids' high school lives and community and enjoy flexible schedules. We bought a restaurant, remodeled it and named it the the Red Maple Eatery, which we planned to operate until our children completed high school in 2026.

### Life Takes a Turn

After operating the restaurant for nearly 6 years, a new path began revealing itself in 2024. I attended a funeral for a Minnesota State Park naturalist who was taken from us far too early by cancer. During that service, I was reminded of the passion so many “park people” have for the natural world, for parks, and for people. Carly was an amazing example of a person who had that passion. On the way home from that service, I stopped at William O'Brien State Park and chatted with the current manager and assistant. Again, I was reminded of the passion so many folks in this organization have for state parks.

(continued on page 2)



*New Park Manager Bill Anderson and Bob Hanson cooking maple syrup in the Sugar Shack.*



*Park Manager Bill Anderson in 1995. Thirty years later, he would land a job in the best state park in Minnesota! Wishes really do come true.*

In fall 2024, I saw a post about the Maplewood manager job and jokingly told my wife, “Maybe I should apply!” She replied seriously, “Yes, you should.” At that time, eight park manager and assistant positions were open in Minnesota, so I quickly applied for Maplewood and another park as a backup.

### Why Maplewood?

“I had visited once for a meeting with the Friends group regarding the Sugar Shack. One of my connections to the park stems from my lifelong involvement in the maple syrup business, from a backyard operation as a kid to helping my uncle and eventually running my own small operation post-college. Additionally, our dog, Maple, is excited to visit too!

### Where is Your Nest?

“We’re looking for a home in Fergus Falls where our daughter will complete her final year of high school, graduating in 2026. We’re eager to meet new people, connect with the community, and enjoy park activities. When asked if we’ll open a restaurant, my wife firmly responds, “No.”

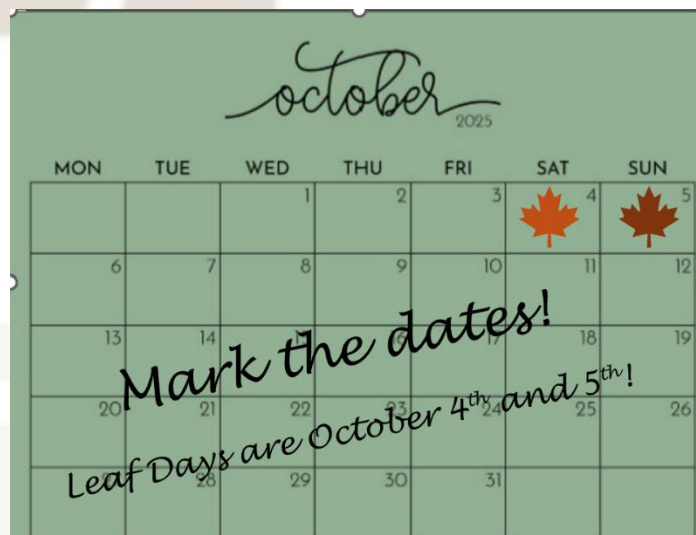
### What Makes Maplewood Special?

“Compared to 71 others in Minnesota, Maplewood stands out as the 7th largest, allowing us unique opportunities like having miles of roads through undeveloped landscapes and miles of equestrian trails through the park’s rolling hill.

“Most of the park features a Maple Basswood vegetation type with a scattering of upland prairie and prairie wetland, while many other parks tend to be more diverse. For our visitors, that means they not only get to experience a high-quality hardwood hills landscape but also enjoy a plentiful hardwood hills experience, which is rare. The park’s location, on the “Glacial Edge,” just miles from endless prairie and farmland in the heart of Lake Country and between two major urban centers, sets the stage for an excellent park. This also contributes to its busyness. I would like to add a fourth element to what makes this park special: the affection that many people have for it. I receive the same reaction from everyone when I mention I’m at Maplewood State Park – “I love that park,” “We go there every fall,” “That’s our favorite park,” and so on. All Minnesota State Parks are cherished, but this one truly seems to hold a special place in the lives of many.

### Exhale

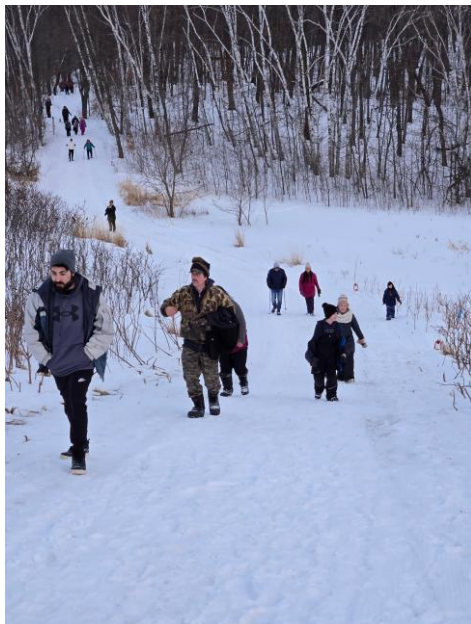
“I will conclude by sharing one of the guiding words that will shape our work in the park. Do you know that sensation you experience when you drive into a park? In some parks, it’s a “Wow”; in others, it’s a “Let’s Go!”. For me, as soon as I pass the Maplewood State Park entrance sign, I exhale. I suspect many others share that reaction as well. I intend to harness that “feeling” in a way that helps us create spaces and experiences in the park that allow visitors to simply live in the moment and “Exhale,” whether on Park Drive, atop Hallaway Hill, or sitting next to the fire at their campsite. Just be here now and relax. *Exhale.*



## A Trek of a Good Time!

The Friends of Maplewood's Candlelight Trek was a success, with 2,200 attendees who came to walk or ski around Cataract Lake.

According to the DNR, at least 600 vehicles lined up – all the way to the highway – to enjoy the sensational sights and sounds that make the Trek a “must-do” on your bucket list. Traffic was bumper-to-bumper at times, with some saying the line resembled “one gigantic semi-truck” entering the park. “We had record turnout in 2024, and we attributed much of that to the warm weather,” said Denise Laymon, President of Friends of Maplewood. “But this year, even more people turned out. We got the message loud and clear that we need to be prepared for that size crowd!”



**Chili, desserts and a warm campfire awaited trekkers at the trailhead.**

The DNR is already planning changes, including mile markers with interpretive signage to assist visitors in knowing how much longer they must drive before reaching the trek parking area and the warm campfire where the trail begins. Other considerations include a shuttle service from each parking area to relieve pressure on the main parking lot.

“We are considering adding more lantern hikes throughout the year, including one exclusively for skiers,” said Riley Finnegan, Assistant Park Manager. Friends of Maplewood are collaborating with park management on additional ideas, such as lighting Hallaway Hill to keep visitors more dispersed.

It's a good problem to have – everyone loves visiting Maplewood State Park! But park management and Friends of Maplewood understand that to keep visitors coming, we need to be prepared when they do. So, put Candlelight Trek on your list for 2026!

## Between the Ears

Our equine enthusiasts should notice improvements to some of the horse trails when heading out between the ears this spring. The Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa have been working on trail maintenance, with work expected to be completed by May. Last fall, we were optimistic about receiving a grant for work at the horse camp, which would allow us to install corrals for our overnight campers. Although we did not receive the grant, we continue to work with park officials on other funding options.

## We Take Pride in Our Park

Our organization consists of members who enjoy and appreciate this great natural resource. Our goal is to work with park management on various projects and events so that you and your family can enjoy the park year-round.

**Maplewood State Park**  
39721 Park Entrance Road  
Pelican Rapids, MN 56572  
Phone: 218-863-8383

[https://stateparks.com/maplewood\\_state\\_park\\_in\\_minnesota.html](https://stateparks.com/maplewood_state_park_in_minnesota.html)



## Bob Hanson, Volunteer Extraordinaire, Recognized by DNR

Bob Hanson has made his mark on Maplewood State Park in more ways than one. He was assistant park manager at Fort Snelling State Park in 1974 and became Park Manager of Maplewood State Park in 1978, retiring from there in December 2010. Bob has been an instrumental member of Friends of Maplewood since 1997. He knows the park like the back of his maple syrup-covered hand.

Bob's talents make him invaluable at all park events. Bob Hanson founded Maplewood State Park's maple syrup program in 2009 during his time as Park Manager. Since his retirement, he has been volunteering for over a decade as the ground leader of the program, which has become quite popular with park visitors over the years since its inception.



*"I was inspired by a local commercial syrup producer to do something in [Maplewood State Park](#) because it would fit the park name," he explains. "We had no educational programs in the park, so we thought we'd give it a try." With a passion for providing new experiences to park visitors and some loaned equipment, the program began – and Bob has enjoyed meeting new people and passing on his maple syrup knowledge ever since.*

### **Bob's advice for anyone interested in volunteering but not sure where to start:**

*"If you have a talent or interest that could contribute to projects at state parks, consider joining a local group! Whether you have just a couple hours or a few days every week, any amount of volunteering benefits our parks."*

## Heart of Lake Trail Update

The Maplewood segment of the Heart of Lakes trail is about half-paved. Drainage concerns interrupted forward progress and need to be addressed before the rest of the trail can be paved. Crews can then turn their attention to a punch list of items to finish.

Otter Tail County and park officials are optimistic for a June all-clear but stay up to date with the latest information by following Friends of Maplewood on Facebook.

**Check out our corporate sponsorship option on the back page.!**

### **Friends of Maplewood Mission**

The MISSION of the Friends of Maplewood State Park is to support and encourage the Park's recreational, interpretive, educational and environmental activities through leadership, volunteerism, program development and fund raising. Founded in 1994.





## Maplewood State Park

Located in west-central Minnesota, this 9,250-acre park has eight major lakes. Great fishing, swimming, hiking, boating, and camping abound. The rolling hills and hardwood forests along Park Drive make it an exciting place to see wildlife.

The park has 25 miles of hiking trails, 20 miles of horse trails, 10 miles of cross-country ski trails, and 21 miles of snowmobile trails. The 31-mile Heart of Lakes Trail goes through Maplewood State Park.

Visitors appreciate the two campgrounds plus an equine campground. The Josh Hanson Memorial Shelter is perfect for groups to gather or meet. Visit the Trail Center for a nice respite after a walk.

## Make a difference and volunteer!

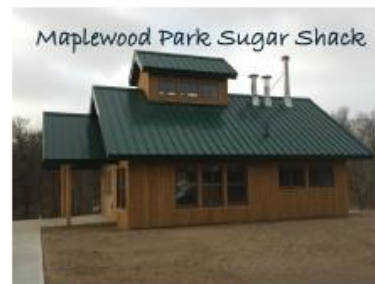
Maplewood State Park is a precious natural resource worth preserving for generations.

As a 501(c)3 organization, we rely on donations and memberships to fund educational and recreational events in the park, such as:

- ✧ Candlelight Trek
- ✧ Maple Syrup Days
- ✧ Leaf Days
- ✧ Educational workshops
- ✧ Recreational activities
- ✧ Hobby seminars

Friends of Maplewood volunteers are dedicated to the park and honoring its beauty, history, countless treasures, and boundless opportunities.

Join us or donate today and start making a difference!



## Our Projects

Friends of Maplewood raise funds for projects in the park, such as:

- ✧ State-of-the-Art Sugar Shack
- ✧ Picnic shelters
- ✧ Trail center
- ✧ BBQ grills
- ✧ Benches
- ✧ Storage sheds
- ✧ Trail maintenance
- ✧ Horse camp improvements and facilities



Candlelight Trek and Maple Syrup Day 2025!



## The Wine of the Woods

According to a song by Gordon Lightfoot, love and maple syrup go together. We couldn't agree more and this year's Maple Syrup Day was a great example.

The Sugar Shack was buzzing as volunteers cooked the last maple sap of the season. The sap quit running the week prior, so the timing was good. 1,220 gallons of sap were collected, producing around 30 gallons of finished syrup. Friends of Maplewood served five gallons of ice cream with maple syrup, along with a light lunch and some legendary maple cookies!

About twenty-five Friends of Maplewood volunteers demonstrated how to identify and tap a maple tree, how Native Americans cooked sap in the very beginning, and the history of how the process developed. Visitors took it all in, including hiking a few trails during the beautiful weather.



Ten schools are registered to attend Maple Syrup Education Days during May. John Nordstrom, a long-time member and volunteer, coordinates the event, which has become a favorite for school spring field trips and education days. About 565 students from Underwood, Frazee, Detroit Lakes, Bemidji, Breckenridge, Hillcrest

Lutheran Academy, Perham, Fergus Falls, Pelican Rapids, and home schools are expected to attend this year .



**FUN FACT:** Maple trees symbolize various concepts, including strength, endurance, protection, love, and prosperity, depending on the culture and context. In Canada, the maple leaf is a national symbol of strength and endurance. In Native American cultures, the maple tree is often seen as a tree of protection and a source of blessing.





## FRIENDS OF MAPLEWOOD STATE PARK ART and PHOTO CONTEST



### Art or Photo Contest: Junior Division

Ages: 12 to 17 years

Draw a picture or take a photo at Maplewood State Park in one of the following categories:

- Scenery
- Wildlife or plant life
- Activity/recreation (hiking, fishing, horseback riding, camping, etc.)

1st prize \$25

2nd prize \$15

3rd prize \$10

### Photo Contest: Senior Division

Ages: 18 years old and older

Take a photo at Maplewood State Park in one of the following categories:

- Scenery
- Wildlife or plant life
- Activity/recreation (hiking, fishing, horseback riding, camping, etc.)

1st prize \$40

2nd prize \$30

3rd prize \$25

### Contest Rules

All art/photos must be taken in Maplewood State Park within the contest dates from **2/15/25 to 10/15/25**.

All entries should include a 3x5 card with the following information: category, artist/photographer's name, address, phone number, email, and age if under 18.

Each person may submit one printed 5x7 picture/photo per category.

All art/photos will be displayed at the Pelican Rapids Public Library.

Judging will be done by 10/31/25; winners will be notified and announced.

#### **To submit your entry:**

Mail to Friends of Maplewood State Park, PO Box 259, Pelican Rapids, MN 56572

or

Drop off at Pelican Rapids Public Library, 25 West Mill Street, or Maplewood State Park Ranger's Office.

All entries become the property of Friends of Maplewood State Park. Entries may be posted on social media and our website and used in our marketing materials.



Candlelight Trek 2025 participants enjoyed the trails and chatting in the Trail Center.

□

## Spring 2025 Memorials

### IN MEMORY

J. Nick Demuth  
Duane Mickelson  
Herb & Eileen Kohler  
Jerilyn Baker  
Walter & Lavonne  
Albright  
Ervin Ohman  
Linda Nelson  
Walkup  
Connie Michaelson

Laura, Erwin, Evar &  
Glenn Fladmark  
Josh Hanson  
Bruce Thom  
Roger Johnson  
Alexa Bekkerus

Alexa Bekkerus  
Alexa Bekkerus  
Alberta Baker

### GIVEN BY

Kim & Lyndon Johnson  
Dwight Mickelson  
Susan Kohler  
Ron & Cheryl Baker

Thomas Albright  
Iris Ohman  
Dewey & Donna

Dale & Elizabeth  
Michaelson

Bob & Mary Bowers  
Galen & Sharon Vaa  
Cliff & Phyllis Knutson  
Cliff & Phyllis Knutson  
Dewey & Donna  
Walkup

Tom & Lynn Carlson  
Brian & Denise Laymon  
Jenny Piazza

### IN HONOR OF

Don Del Greco  
All the Westby's who  
have walked the hills of  
Maplewood for more  
than a century  
Volunteering  
Friends of Maplewood

### GIVEN BY

Nancy Palubicki  
Ann Marie Westby

Davis Anthony Scott  
Ed and Sanday Ahonen

### 2025 FINANCIAL DONATIONS

Jill Sinner  
Denise and Lisa Ouren  
Robert Bachman  
Steve and Diane Millard  
Patricia and John Lindholm  
Dave and Joal Ellison  
Kirk and Janet Lindberg  
Landon Ohe  
Tom McDougall  
Dave and Sharon Kline  
Don and Sue Kunelius  
Faith Sunday School Youth Noisy Offering  
Mark Brinkman

*If you are receiving this newsletter by mail, did you know we can email you a copy instead? If you choose to continue to receive a paper copy – no problem! But if we can save money by sending it electronically, just drop us a note at [friendsofmaplewoodstatepark@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmaplewoodstatepark@gmail.com), and we'll make the change!*

### 3 Ways to Join or Donate to Friends of Maplewood

1. Scan the QR code and choose the membership and payment option that works for you.
2. Click on this link to access our membership form and payment options.  
<https://form.jotform.com/241023977604153>
3. Complete and return this application with a check **payable to Friends of Maplewood** and mail it to PO Box 259, Pelican Rapids, MN 56572.



**Choose one:** ☐ I am a new member. ☐ I am renewing my 2025 membership.  
AND/OR ☐ I want to donate.

**Choose one:** ☐ Single \$10 ☐ Couple \$15 ☐ Family \$30 ☐ Lifetime \$500  
☐ Corporate \$250 ☐ I am interested in information about a planned gift.

☐ I am interested in hearing more about volunteer opportunities! **(check if interested)**

☐ I prefer to receive my newsletter electronically OR ☐ in the mail **(choose one)**

Name

Address

City State Zip

Phone  email

☐ Additional Donation in MEMORY OF

☐ Additional Donation in HONOR OF

Friends of Maplewood is a 501(c)3 organization.

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Cut here and return to Friends of Maplewood at PO Box 259, Pelican Rapids, MN 56572

**Friends of Maplewood**

P.O. Box 259

Pelican Rapids, MN 56572