

**Merry
Christmas**

THE

PRESS

PELICAN RAPIDS, MINNESOTA

Maplewood Park's Sugar Shack construction set for spring 2016

By Stu Peterson
Friends of Maplewood

Every spring for six years the Friends of Maplewood State Park has sponsored the maple syrup demonstration-interpretive program using a temporary outdoor sap boiling set-up.

The objective has been to demonstrate and educate the public—particularly area school-age students—on the production of pure maple syrup from the Park's magnificent stand of sugar maples. The temporary and primitive out-door venue is about to be upgraded with construction of a first-class "sugar shack" building, a first within the MN State Park system.

The Friends of Maplewood volunteer group has been working with the DNR Parks and Trails division to construct a new building with food-grade equipment as the center piece of Maplewood's interpretive program.

The building plans and specifications designed by DNR architects recently received required approval from the MN Dept of Labor and Industry (DOLI). Construction is set to begin in the spring of 2016 and the maple syrup interpretive program will move into the new building in time for the 2017 maple season.

\$50,000 still needed for \$100,000 project

Current efforts are aimed at final fund raising through donations and grant applications. The current cost esti-

An artist's rendition of the proposed "Sugar Shack."



mate of the new building is in the neighborhood of \$100,000. The Friends of Maplewood plan is to fund the project 50-50 from existing funds with the balance from new fund raising efforts aimed at grants and special donations for the sugar shack project.

John Nordstrom, member of the Friends Sugar Shack Committee, indicated that "...public response to our fund raising efforts has been very positive" and he is confident that the necessary funding will be in the bank prior to ground breaking.

Two years ago, the Friends group received the generous donation of a complete and nearly new small-scale maple sap evaporator system which will be installed in the new building.

The new building will allow the Friends group, DNR naturalists and volun-

teers from the MN Maple Syrup Producers Association to provide expanded demonstration and teaching of the maple sugaring process.

The arrangement between the MN DNR and the Friends of Maplewood calls for the Friends group to fund the building and provide the processing equipment, while the DNR will provide design, landscaping, parking, sidewalks, ADA access compliance and related infrastructure.

Maplewood to be first park with top quality maple syrup capacity

The entire project will be under State supervision, with Friends managing the project and engaging licensed local contractors. Nordstrom indicated, "We intend to keep construction costs down with the use of volunteer labor provided from the Friends'

membership and support from local suppliers. This is going to be a wonderful addition to the Park. No other state park will have a maple interpretive program of this quality."

Spring syrup events attract more than 400

The program has become increasingly popular each season with nearly 400 students and adults participating this past season. The interpretive program is under a formal partnership agreement with the MN Department of Natural Resources, Parks and Trails.

The Friends of Maplewood is designated 501(c) 3 through affiliation with the Parks and Trails Council of Minnesota which serves as its fiscal agent.

Any contribution to Friends of Maplewood donated in the name of "Parks and Trails Council of MN, c/o Friends of Maplewood" is considered a tax deductible 501(c) 3 donation. Contributions can be sent to Friends of Maplewood, PO Box 259, Pelican Rapids, MN 56572.

Additional information is available at the Maplewood State Park office, through the Friends of Maplewood web site www.friendsofmaplewood.org or by contacting John Nordstrom at 218-334-6527.

Gifts of any amount will help support the planned state-of-the-art maple syrup interpretive program at Maplewood.