



Minnesota Maple Syrup Producers Association
www.mnmaple.org

Maple Syrup Production Coming to Maplewood State Park

A small outdoor demonstration maple syrup operation is being established in Maplewood State Park for spring 2010. The public is invited to visit the Park during the March-April maple syrup production season. This represents the first step towards the long term goal of establishing a dedicated modern sugar house and maple syrup demonstration / interpretive attraction for Maplewood State Park, located just east of Pelican Rapids, MN on State Highway 108.

The project is the focus of a collaborative effort involving the Friends of Maplewood State Park, the Minnesota Maple Syrup Producers Association (MMSPA), the Minnesota State Parks-DNR, and local high school vocational agriculture programs.

Funding for needed equipment and supplies is being provided by the Friends of Maplewood, a citizen volunteer group, and from a recently approved grant from the Minnesota Ag Education Leadership Council (MAELC). Members of the Minnesota Maple Syrup Producers Association are donating specialized equipment and are providing technical advice and training. Park Manager Bob Hanson and his assistant Jeff Fjestad will oversee the actual sap collection and boiling operation in March and April of 2010.

The effort began in earnest last August when the "Friends" Advisory Committee first endorsed the initiative as presented by local representatives of the MN Maple Syrup Producers Association, Jerry Jacobson and Stu Peterson. A detailed plan/budget was developed and funding requests were presented to "Friends" and MAELC. Both funding requests were approved and construction of a small "arch" (fire box) was begun before winter arrived. The project is supported by regional MN State Park staff and the area Park Naturalist will develop educational information to support the interpretive program. Frazee High School FFA/vocational agriculture students are fabricating specialized pieces of equipment required for the operation and may provide volunteer help during the maple sap season.

For 2010, the plan calls for a small “hobbyist-type” operation tapping approximately 50-75 trees in early March. Sap will be collected and boiled outdoors over a wood fire as quickly as possible after collection. The 2.5 X 6-foot stainless steel cook pan will be located near the Park’s trail building where there is ample room for visitor parking. Bulk syrup will subsequently be “finished” and bottled.

Maple sap “runs” every spring, typically in late March and early April on warm sunny days which follow hard freezing nights. The primary objective for 2010 is for Park staff and volunteers to gain experience in the production of maple syrup and to attract visitors to the Park to observe the operation. The Maplewood State Park project is expected to be one of the syrup production facilities featured in the Vergas MN Maple Fest maple tour in early April.

Eventually, a small but modern maple syrup production facility is envisioned for Maplewood State Park. The goal is to have a dedicated “sugar house” where a small commercial evaporator can be permanently housed with enough room for bleachers where the public can safely observe the operation first hand. The program will emphasize sustainable forest practices, food-grade processing equipment, quality control, food safety and accepted industry practices for the entire process. The focus will be on teaching and demonstrating modern maple syrup production techniques, particularly for young people.

For further information, contact Bob Hanson, Maplewood State Park Manager at 218-863-8383; Stu Peterson, Secretary MMSPA at 218-758-2796; Jerry Jacobson, Vice President MMSPA at 218-863-2508, or visit www.mnmaple.org .