



Custer State Park Campground Expansion

South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks

Overview

Custer State Park has not expanded camping facilities since 1981. A campground study conducted in 1971 listed the campground capacity of Custer State Park at 465 campsites in 1970. Currently, there are 395 designated campsites, equestrian sites, and camping cabins. Usage of Custer State Park campgrounds is at an all-time high. In 1983, campground occupancy was 52 percent during May-September. In 2021, May-September occupancy was 89 percent. Occupancy from Memorial Day through Labor Day for all non-equestrian sites was 97 percent.

A proposed expansion plan would increase overnight capacity of non-equestrian camping by 52 percent, adding 175 campsites. The increased capacity would provide an additional 20,000 camping units a year and generate an estimated \$500,000 of new revenue annually.

Project Description

The proposed campground would be located about one mile south of the State Game Lodge Campground near the airport off the Wildlife Loop Road. It would consist of approximately 175 electrical sites with gravel pads and paved roads, four modern comfort stations, and other amenities such as playgrounds, picnic areas, and access to trails.

The location is close to existing infrastructure and utilities. The topographic layout lends itself towards a very non-intrusive campground design. The location of the site has good access and proximity to other park facilities such as the Visitor Center, State Game Lodge, and the new Bison Center. Final design of the project is complete, and construction could begin in 2022. The campground would be open to visitors for the 2024 season.

Funding

The total estimated cost of the Custer State Park Campground Expansion project is \$9,890,640 in state funding. Operational costs and staffing will be administered by the Department of Game, Fish and Parks through park user fees and other revenues. This investment will pay for itself in approximately 12 years.