

PRESS RELEASE

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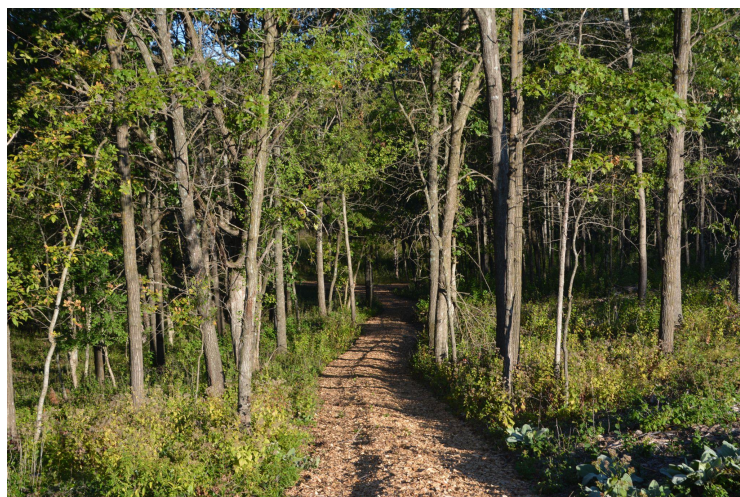


BELWIN

OXBOW TRAILS GRAND OPENING

*On June 15th, Belwin Conservancy will open Oxbow Trails
for Public Hiking Just North of Downtown Afton*

Afton, Minn. — Starting **Thursday, June 15th**, Belwin Conservancy will open its newest trail system, Oxbow Trails, for public hiking, every day from dawn to dusk. Visitors to Oxbow Trails (located at 2398 St. Croix Trail South, Afton, MN 55001) can enjoy 1.25 miles of chipped hiking trails along wooded ridges, shaded areas, and Valley Creek. Belwin staff will be available at Oxbow Trails on June 15th from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm to answer questions about the 19-acre site, its restoration, and the partnership that made this new hiking area available to the public.



Oxbow Trails is the result of a partnership between Belwin Conservancy, the MN Department of Natural Resources Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund, the City of Afton, and the Washington County Land and Water Legacy Program. The opening of Oxbow Trails is a win for the partnership as well as for local residents who will get to enjoy these trails for years to come.

“Washington County residents are supportive of the Land and Water Legacy preservation program,” says Commissioner Gary Kriesel, District 3. “This project provides the public an opportunity to enjoy new trails and views protected by the program.”

Restoration on the land, made possible by funding from the Outdoor Heritage Fund, began in earnest in 2022. Oxbow Trails was opened in a limited capacity later that year to give hikers a preview of the natural features, which many local residents enjoyed. “I was so excited that there would be trails near where I grew up and

explored as a kid that I jumped at the chance to bring my hiking group for the limited opening in 2022!" says Erin Smillie, local resident. "I plan to keep returning to explore and see what wildlife I can spot."

With the help of suggestions gathered on social media, Oxbow Trails was formally named in May 2022. The name comes from the term "oxbow wetland," which is a meander of a stream, river, or creek that has become separated from the flow of water. Oxbow wetlands store excess water that might otherwise lead to flooding, filter water to improve water quality, and provide habitat to a variety of wildlife.

We look forward to celebrating the opening of Oxbow Trails on **Thursday, June 15th** from dawn to dusk at 2398 St Croix Trail South Afton MN 55001. Oxbow Trails will be open seasonally and will close for the winter following the first major snowstorm in Fall of 2023.

INFORMATION

Please note: No dogs allowed at any Belwin event.

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ABOUT BELWIN CONSERVANCY

[Belwin Conservancy](#) is a nonprofit organization with a mission of inspiring connection and engagement with the natural world. At Belwin, we spark passion for wild places through a variety of innovative experiential programs that include the arts, astronomy, athletic fields, bison, education, and public access to our restored lands. Through land protection and habitat restoration, we revive threatened ecosystems so wildlife can thrive for generations to come. Located in Afton, Minnesota, on the ancestral home of the Wahpekute Dakota people, Belwin's 1,500 acres of permanently protected land includes woodland, prairie, oak savanna, ponds, streams, and wetlands.

ABOUT THE LAND AND WATER LEGACY PROGRAM

The Land and Water Legacy Program is a voter-approved program that allows the county to acquire and improve land and interests in land for the purposes of improving water quality of rivers, lakes and streams; protecting drinking water sources; purchasing parklands; preserving wetlands and woodlands; and protecting land along water bodies from development.

