

## **Mequon Nature Preserve, Inc. Summary Report**

### **Information about the Applicant**

Mequon Nature Preserve, Inc. (MNP) is a 510-acre active ecosystem restoration site and outdoor laboratory that sits on the urban/rural edge of NW Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Conceived from a dream to “save a little land” from rapid development in 2000, MNP is now the largest protected greenspace in SE Wisconsin and a unique model of large-scale green infrastructure, farm-to-forest land restoration, award-winning outdoor education, wildlife monitoring, sustainable agriculture, and accessible recreation. This nearly one-square-mile of land is a magnet for student and professional field research, and a 100% donor-supported community hub for individuals of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

With an efficient team of seven, MNP is able to achieve this breadth of programming through a 150-Year Master Plan and its mission to be a guiding example of habitat restoration by returning the land to a mosaic of forests, prairies, and wetlands; and to establish an educational conservancy that inspires exploration and cultivates stewardship. To ensure that this mission is achieved to a broad audience, MNP prioritizes inclusivity among all its patrons, which includes heeding feedback directly related to improving accessibility across all of its offerings.

### **Statement of Need**

In order to increase accessibility within the preserve to all patrons, MNP is seeking funding to help purchase two Not-a-Wheelchair rigs, which are fully electric off-road wheelchairs that can travel a range of about 20 miles at 12mph on terrain that would otherwise be difficult to traverse via traditional wheelchairs. Through these rigs, patrons with physical disabilities will not only be able to see parts of the wetlands, prairies, and forests in the heart of the preserve that were previously inaccessible to them, but will also be able to see the wildlife that live in these different habitats up-close without distraction from navigating a rougher terrain. Students with mobility impairments will now be able to have the same in-person educational experience as their able-bodied peers and expand their capacity to participate in conservation initiatives.

### **Project Goals and Expected Benefits**

By attaining the Not-A-Wheelchair rigs, MNP will achieve the following goals:

- More people with mobility impairments will be able to enjoy the trails and natural areas for a longer amount of time with less fatigue and greater ease, including families with members of varying physical abilities.
- Individuals with physical disabilities will now see outdoor recreation and environmental stewardship as a viable option for them.
- Those with mobility impairments will see improvements in their physical and mental well-being resulting from being able to spend more time outdoors in a relaxed setting, with students seeing improvements in their school performance as well.
- The quiet motor of this rig will provide physically disabled patrons the ability to see up-close the native wildlife in their respective restored habitats throughout the preserve.
- Students with limited mobility will be able to engage in the same educational experiences as their more mobile classmates.
- Physically disabled visitors will be able to assist on restoration projects, such as joining MNP's Restoration Rangers volunteer group.
- Guests of all physical abilities will be able to enjoy MNP's community events, clubs, and activities that are free to the public.

## **Project Implementation Plan**

In order to prepare the Not-a-Wheelchair rigs for public use, MNP will allocate the 2023 calendar year to purchasing the rigs and developing marketing and policies:

- Winter 2023: Not-a-Wheelchair rigs will be purchased and shipped to MNP using funding from the Wispact Foundation. Staff and interns will test these rigs on the trails and at previously inaccessible regions of the preserve to be able to inform marketing and policy development. Marketing will begin shortly before Spring, at which point the policy development should be in place.
- Spring 2023: The rigs will be heavily marketed and used on field trips for any students with physical disabilities. The rigs will also be encouraged for any adults with mobility impairments during adult environmental education programming. MNP anticipates that the free rentals for the rigs will begin in Spring, with the hopes of increasing in Summer and Fall. MNP staff will collect any feedback received from initial users and renters and assist those who may not have previously seen equipment like this.
- Summer 2023: Marketing for the rigs will continue. MNP staff will continue to encourage the rigs for physically disabled attendees of educational programming, free community events, and volunteer workdays.
- Fall 2023: Marketing for the rigs will continue, as will any assistance and encouragement for use. The hope is for the rentals to spike in Summer such that the surrounding communities recognize that the rigs are a regular offering at MNP, not just seasonal, as well as the value of the rigs in navigating the varied terrain on the preserve.

## **Evaluation Plan**

As a baseline for success of the Not-A-Wheelchair rigs, MNP currently has over 45,000 visitors annually and reaches over 5,000 K-12 students through in-person educational programming. Therefore, success of the rigs at the preserve will be defined and quantified as follows:

- Patron's increased use and enjoyment of the trails and other outdoor recreational offerings at MNP, quantified by at least 20 free rentals over the year following purchase of the rigs based on Midwestern weather
- Mobility-impaired visitors' increased environmental stewardship, quantified by a headcount at Restoration Rangers workdays, corporate and collegiate workdays, and other restoration-related volunteer opportunities
- Increased inclusivity with MNP's community offerings, quantified by the number of corresponding positive feedback, additions to MNP's monthly e-newsletter mailing list, and participants at MNP's events, activities, and clubs

## **Budget**

The total budget for improving accessibility at MNP through the Not-A-Wheelchair rigs is \$29,013, consisting of staff time for testing the rigs and assisting in rig usage; purchasing and shipping the rigs; and program development, which includes creating policies surrounding rig usage and marketing the rigs themselves. For additional details on this budget and other funding sources that support this project, please see the attached budget entitled "MNP2002\_Wispact Budget\_Final.xlsx."

| Not-A-Wheelchair Rigs to Improve Accessibility at MNP           |                      |                    |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| Grantee Name: Mequon Nature Preserve, Inc.                      |                      |                    |
| Date: June 01, 2022   |                      |                    |
| Grant Period: 01/01/2023-12/31/2023                             |                      |                    |
| Total Project Budget: \$29,013                                  |                      |                    |
| Amount Requested from Wispact Foundation: \$7,500               |                      |                    |
| Proposed Project Budget   | Total Project Budget | Wispact Foundation |
| <b>Salaries and Benefits</b>                                    |                      |                    |
| <i>Executive Director (20hrs x \$43/hr)</i>                     | \$860                |                    |
| <i>Director of Restoration and Operations (80hrs x \$35/hr)</i> | \$2,800              |                    |
| <i>Ecological Restoration Manager (40hrs x \$21/hr)</i>         | \$840                |                    |
| <i>Ecological Education Manager (120hrs x \$20/hr)</i>          | \$2,400              |                    |
| <i>Ecological Outreach Manager (160hrs x \$20/hr)</i>           | \$3,200              |                    |
| <i>Fringe Benefits (15%)</i>                                    | \$1,515              |                    |
|   |                      |                    |
| <u>Subtotal Salaries and Benefits</u>                           | <u>\$11,615</u>      | <u>\$0</u>         |
| <b>Materials and Supplies</b>                                   |                      |                    |
| <i>Not a Wheelchair with 2 batteries (Qty: 2)</i>               | \$11,398             | \$7,500            |
| <i>Flat-rate Shipping (Qty: 2)</i>                              | \$1,000              |                    |
|   |                      |                    |
| <u>Subtotal Materials and Supplies</u>                          | <u>\$12,398</u>      | <u>\$7,500</u>     |
| <b>Equipment</b>  |                      |                    |
|   |                      |                    |
| <u>Subtotal Equipment</u>                                       | <u>\$0</u>           | <u>\$0</u>         |
| <b>Other Direct Expenses</b>                                    |                      |                    |
| <i>Program Development (policies, marketing, etc.)</i>          | \$5,000              |                    |
|   |                      |                    |
| <u>Subtotal Other Direct Expenses</u>                           | <u>\$5,000</u>       | <u>\$0</u>         |
| <b>Contract Services</b>  |                      |                    |
|   |                      |                    |
| <u>Subtotal Contracted Services</u>                             | <u>\$0</u>           | <u>\$0</u>         |
| <b>Overhead</b>   |                      |                    |
|   |                      |                    |
| <u>Subtotal Overhead</u>  | <u>\$0</u>           | <u>\$0</u>         |
| <b>Total Project/Program Budget</b>                             | <b>\$29,013</b>      | <b>\$7,500</b>     |
|   |                      |                    |
|   |                      |                    |
| <b>Sources of Funding</b>                                       |                      |                    |
| Wispact Foundation 2022   | <i>Pending</i>       | \$7,500            |
| Cabela's/Bass Pro Shops   | <i>Secured</i>       | \$2,000            |
| Antonia Foundation  | <i>Pending</i>       | \$8,500            |
| Mequon Community Foundation                                     | <i>Pending</i>       | \$7,500            |
| Individual Donors   | <i>Pending</i>       | \$3,513            |
| <b>Total Project Funding</b>                                    |                      | <b>\$29,013</b>    |

**Staff Recommendation**

The grant application can recommended, for approval in the amount requested of \$7,500.00. The grant will provide for the purchase of the wheelchairs that will directly benefit the disabled individuals who visit the park. The grant aligns with the initiatives of the foundation.