

## LaSalle Council Strategic Plan - Properties Evaluation

At the 2007 Annual Meeting in May the LaSalle Council Board of Directors passed the Council Strategic Plan. One item in the strategic plan reads:

*PROPERTIES: Continuous evaluation of property relevance, utilization and readiness; and report findings annually.*

In light of this Strategic Goal an assessment was done on the utilization of our camping facilities. Each of the council's properties was evaluated for its role as a Strategic Resource. This assessment confirms our opinion that of the four Council properties, the use of Rice Woods is contributing the least to the support of programs for the Council as a whole. In 2005 Rice Woods was visited by 529 youth and 178 adults from 46 units<sup>1</sup> (approximately 1,237 camper days). In 2006 the numbers were 602 youth, 434 adults and 62 units<sup>1</sup>, resulting in approximately 1,813 camper days. This compares to approximately 2,695 youth and 2,085 adults (16,256 camper days) at Wood Lake in 2005 and 2,568 youth 1,894 adults (14,907 camper days) in 2006. Camp Topenebee saw 8,094 camper days in 2006, with 3,381 youth and adults and 9,178 camper days (as of July) so far in 2007.

The assessment team considered the value of the Rice Woods Property to see if the available resources could be better utilized in areas that would serve more of the Council and Unit youth programs. The assessment team recommends that Rice Woods be sold and that the proceeds be split into two parts. 70% would be put into our Council Endowment Fund as the Dan & Estelle Rice Camp Maintenance Endowment and that these funds are earmarked as Board Restricted Funds providing camp maintenance and improvements for future generations of Scouts. Guidelines for use of our Endowment Fund would apply in perpetuity. 30% would be committed to short and mid-term priority camping and camp maintenance projects identified by the properties and camping committees, following the Strategic Plan.

Creating such an endowment will honor the Rice's memory and spirit, and ensure that both short and long term improvements are achieved for our program and camping resources. The assessment team also decided that if the property was to be sold, alternative rustic camping resources need to be identified. In addition, any funds derived from the sale would be used for the betterment of the other council camps, including further developing a plan to enhance and foster rustic camping experiences at our Council camps. On 8/15/07, after input from Marshall County volunteers Clarence Shively and Kent Borggren, the Executive Committee passed a motion to further pursue the Properties Assessment Team's recommendation seeking an alternate solution to funding the camp maintenance endowment in the amount of at least \$350,000 in lieu of selling Rice Woods. This means that if we can fund this endowment through donations, the property would not be sold. Designated donations will be placed in a custodial account until the camp maintenance endowment is established.

Equivalent or better alternatives to Rice Woods exist now at two Council camps. This area will need to be further evaluated for more possibilities, and shared on the Camping section of the Council Website: for example, expanding primitive camping experiences at Wood Lake Scout Reservation (Camps Jim Bridger and Kit Carson) and Camp Topenebee. Primitive camping experiences are also available in a number of convenient areas, for example: Tippecanoe River, Mississinewa Lake, Chain O' Lakes, Salamonie Lake State Parks and Potawatomi Wildlife Park (Marshall County).

The assessment team presented these findings to the Council Executive Board in July 2007, with a recommendation to continue to study the sale of the Rice Woods Property with the stipulations outlined above. Prior to any sale the assessment team will solicit and evaluate feedback from throughout the council. **At their September meeting, the Executive Board passed a motion to extend the study through March of 2008, to allow time to evaluate the progress of Camp Maintenance Endowment gifts.**

The assessment team consisted of Jim Welborne, VP Administration, Ken Sherry, Council Commissioner, and Don Parker, Past Council Properties Chair.

If you have feedback or suggestions, contact Jim Welborne: [Jim.Welborne@welborne.com](mailto:Jim.Welborne@welborne.com)

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<sup>1</sup> Rice Woods camper data provided by Clarence Shively