

# FONTENELLE FOREST



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®  
MID-AMERICA COUNCIL

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## Fontenelle Forest Grows with New Land from Boy Scouts

Camp Wa-kon-da's 37 acres and facilities were sold from the Boy Scouts of America - Mid-America Council to Fontenelle Forest for \$1



**Camp Wa-kon-da in Bellevue changed ownership from the Boy Scouts of America - Mid-America Council to Fontenelle Forest yesterday. There will be an official ribbon-cutting ceremony with the Boy Scouts and Fontenelle Forest January 31. We will send out more information about the ribbon cutting in the coming week.**

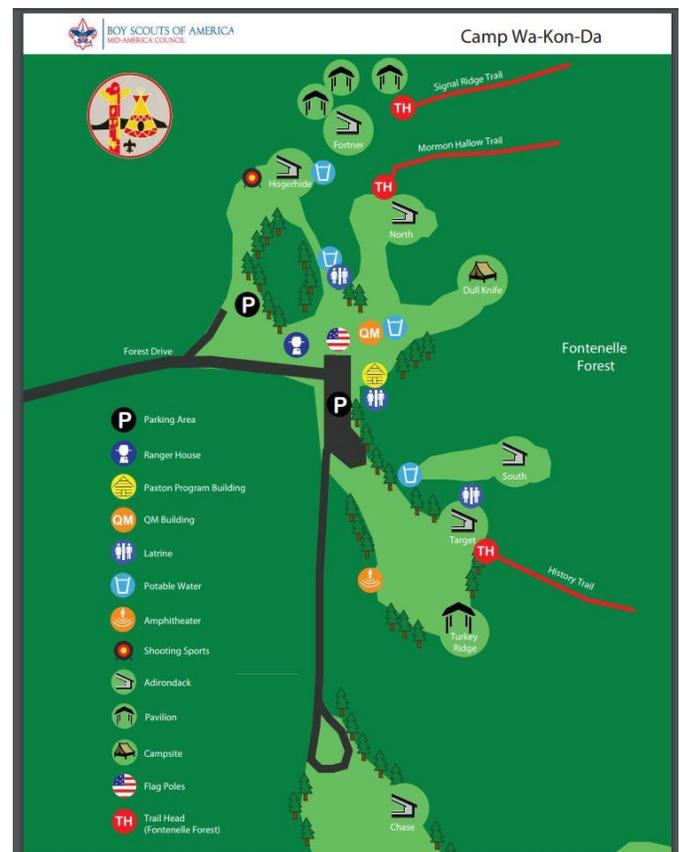
"Fontenelle Forest and the Mid-America Council's Camp Wa-kon-da have been good neighbors for nearly 80 years," said Mid-America Council CEO Chris Mehaffey. "I have hiked the Forrest trails and experienced nature in close proximity to the Omaha Metro area. Scouts should not see a difference in their use of the property, in time, enhanced facilities and expanded program offerings will be evident. Our partnership in Camp Wa-kon-da will expand usage to more people in our community. We are excited about the future of Camp Wa-kon-da and its impact on young people."

Camp Wa-kon-da is in Bellevue, Nebraska and covers 37 acres of wooded bluffs, adjacent to Fontenelle Forest. The camp has six Adirondack style shelters. Wa-kon-da will be added to the 2,000 acres that Fontenelle Forest encompasses currently.

Both non-profits have utilized this space for nature education and recreation since the 1940s as partners, with Fontenelle Forest allowing campers to use the trails, and the Boy Scouts allowing the Forest to hold programs there.

"Fontenelle Forest was founded and is charged to acquire land along the Missouri River in Douglas and Sarpy Counties for the purposes of land conservation, public education, and enjoyment," said Fontenelle Forest executive director Merica Whitehall. "Over the last century, Fontenelle Forest has grown acre by acre with gifts of acreage, and this is a continuation of that legacy."

In fact, it says in the Fontenelle Forest meeting minutes April 2, 1946 that Fontenelle Forest was first offered the property but decided the Boy Scouts could make more immediate use out of the land but stipulated, "If the Boy Scouts ever decide to dispose of the land it shall be first offered to the Fontenelle Forest Association..." so this acquisition is more than 70 years in the making. The



minutes go on to say, "This consummates to what is thought to be a very desirable arrangement for both the Boy Scouts and our Association."

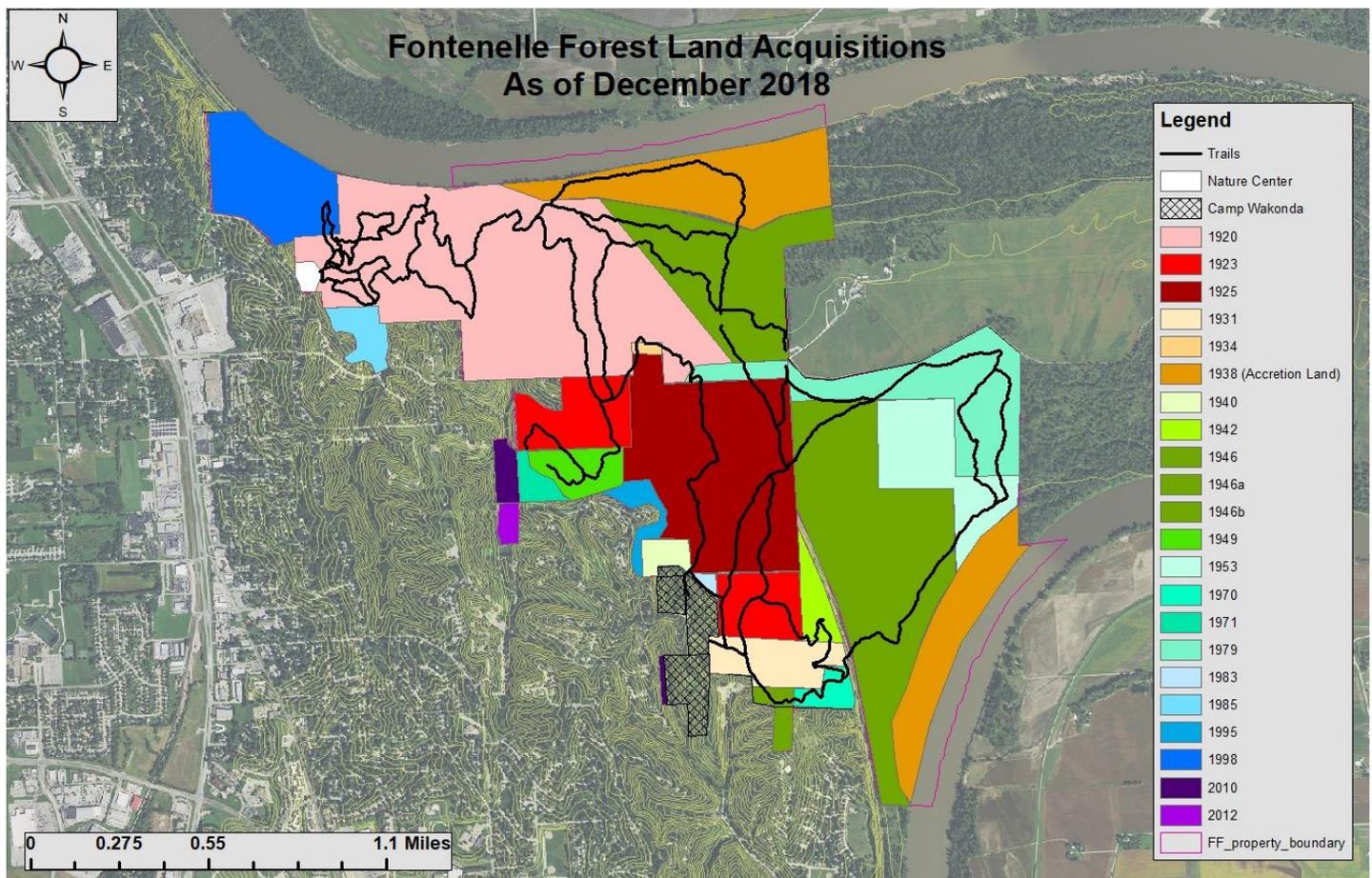
"This contribution to Fontenelle Forest once again displays the Scouts commitment to the greater Omaha community and further strengthens the relationship between these two organizations while expanding the boundaries of one of the regions greatest treasures," said Gerry Lauritzen, who, along with her family, has had a life-long commitment to the Boy Scouts and Fontenelle Forest. "As a mother of an Eagle Scout who spent countless hours hiking Fontenelle Forest and camping throughout the region with his Troop, it brings me great pleasure to see the commitment these two organizations have to improving the lives of our youth and the community as a whole."

Fontenelle Forest is excited to add this camp to our Forest, and include it in our conservation work to keep it protected for generations to come. Moreover, the structures, restrooms and other buildings offer opportunities for events, programs, and camping.

"We have such a long history with the Boy Scouts," said Whitehall. "Looking through Forest archives, we see nearly a century of partnerships, and this acquisition of Camp Wa-kon-da just continues this special relationship into the 21st Century."

"Having a camp this close to the area gave them a lot of outdoor experience – camping, fire building, cooking, etc; it also taught them how to respect nature – animals, plants, trails, environment," said Tami Brinkhous, mother of three Boy Scouts.

You can find Camp Wa-kon-da at 402 Forest Dr., Bellevue, NE 68005.



The above map shows all of the acquisitions of land since Fontenelle Forest was founded in 1913.



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**About Fontenelle Forest**

*Fontenelle Forest's mission is to provide a place where people can experience and enjoy the quiet wild of nature. We want to inspire current and future generations to care for the natural world. Fontenelle Forest is one of Nebraska's oldest conservation organizations and one of the largest private nature centers in the nation. With Fontenelle Forest Nature Center in Bellevue and Neale Woods in Omaha, FF encompasses nearly 2,000 acres of forest, prairie, wetlands, and Native American historical sites along the Missouri River. Fontenelle Forest is the only organization in Nebraska permitted by the state and federal government to rehabilitate orphaned or injured raptors. Raptor Woodland Refuge, located at the Fontenelle Forest Nature Center, opened in 2016 and provides visitors with an opportunity to observe many species of birds of prey in a unique, tree-top environment.*

**About the Mid-America Council**

*Since 1910, the Boy Scouts of America has instilled timeless values of character, citizenship and leadership in each young man and woman who has entered the Scouting program. The Mid-America Council continues this tradition through educational based skills and activities.*