

LOWER JAMES RC&D

RESOURCE
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 USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service



Wessington Springs Park Improvements

The City of **Wessington Springs, SD**, population 1011, is the Jerauld County seat located in east central SD along SD HWY 34. Their city logo is "Pride of the South Dakota Prairie". A 2003 June tornado wrecked major havoc to the mature trees found in the Wessington Springs City Park.

To address this damage and other community concerns, a strategic planning process was hosted by the Wessington Springs Area Development Corporation. A park improvement committee formed as a result of the planning process. During this community inventory (personal interviews, focus groups, and town hall meetings), **park development** and **beautification** were identified as top priorities by the community. The park improvement committee enlisted the assistance of the Lower James (LJ) RC&D to help with the planning process.

"We walked the park (hands on) with our park improvement team, a member of the forestry department, John Deppe, LJ RC&D Coordinator, and me to help

Community Benefit - It is the team's goal to create an attractive setting, which will encourage both tourist/camper visits while at the same time showcasing a vibrant community setting for families and businesses that are looking to relocate. Visitors, residents and businesses all contribute to a healthy local economy through purchases of local products and services, which generate local tax income and assist in local job retention and or job creation (the marketing team).

everyone get a visual picture of what our idea would become. John then worked tirelessly to help us obtain the funding to make our dream come to fruition", according to **Laura Kieser** Wessington Springs Area Development Corporation.

LJ RC&D assisted with grant writing for a SD DEPT of AG Division of Resource Conservation & Forestry Grant. The grant proposed one activity for Springs Park; **Site Preparation and Tree planting**: "The City of Wessington Springs, the Park Improvement Committee, and other committee volunteers will prepare the sites for planting, order trees, transport trees, and plant the trees based on the methods, species recommendations, and locations provided by the SD DEPT of AG Community Forester".

The value of the park to this community can be found in a **Springs Park** inventory, featuring: natural beauty in its wooded draws alive with native trees, Pony Hills rolling topography, a tournament quality

baseball field (David Jost Field), modern swimming pool, camping near a spring fed lake (Magic Mirror Lake), picnic area with pavilion, historic field house (**Works Progress Administration** project circa 1936) for meetings, tennis court, ice skating area, sledding hill, Old Grade Nature Trail, location of the area's first settler's cabin (Levi & Maribee Hain), and part of the area's multiple natural springs utilized by **Wessington Springs** for their community drinking water supply.



Old Grade Nature Trail Head