**Background**

Marsh Haven Nature Center is a non-profit, volunteer-based nature center located on the north end of the nationally recognized Horicon Marsh. Situated on 46 acres of property on the north side of highway 49, we are located just 3 miles east of Waupun. Marsh Haven is home to the Vine/Griffith education building, just under 3 miles of hiking trails, permanent resident animal ambassadors, a rentable old-style lodge, and a picnic area. It is a special place that offers an escape from the everyday hustle and bustle of life, where visitors can traverse through varied habitats, observe wildlife up close and personal, and learn about the people and wildlife that are critical to the Horicon Marsh and surrounding areas. In short, Marsh Haven offers visitors a unique, educational experience for minimal to no cost.

Marsh Haven’s mission is to provide a refuge for visitors and wildlife, where engaging activities facilitated by valued volunteers and community collaboration spark environmental awareness so that nature is appreciated, conserved, and celebrated. Being a non-profit organization, we rely heavily on the kindness of our donors, support from our loyal members, and the many wonderful visitors to our facility to support the needs of Marsh Haven.

**The Project**

One of those pressing needs is our aging boardwalk along Lake LaPresto. The boardwalk along the west side of Lake LaPresto is in dire need of repair due to decaying wood. In addition, during the spring thaw it is rendered unusable for as many as several months due to flooding. The original boardwalk was built in 2000, rebuilt in 2016 thanks to community support, and last year the north side boardwalk was redone thanks to a grant from the Fond du Lac Community Foundation and Compeer. Now we are asking for your help in raising funds to upgrade the west side.

The proposed upgrade includes expanding the current boardwalk 300 feet to connect to the north boardwalk as well as raising the boardwalk so it is flood resilient. In addition, this project will include a raised observation deck to allow views of beautiful Lake LaPresto from the east side. Separately, we are working on a project to clear some of the cattails from the east shore of Lake LaPresto to open it up for viewing wildlife that are utilizing this critical habitat of Marsh Haven as well as increasing the aesthetic value of Lake LaPresto.

**The Cost of the Project**

Total project cost is $30,00 for expanding and raising the boardwalk plus a 12 foot by 12 foot, raised, ADA accessible observation deck. Thanks to the generosity of 2 anonymous donors, all donations raised will be matched to $15,000! So, we are asking your help to raise the $15,000 with your donations having double the impact! We are hoping to raise the funds this spring and summer with an anticipated start date of the project in fall of 2025.

**How you can Help**

Marsh Haven Nature Center is working with the Beaver Dam Area Community Foundation through our non-endowed fund with the foundation. All donations can be made at the Beaver Dam Area Community Foundation donation website at <https://pay.xpress-pay.com/pt/3b59a0a661fb47ba859d2c06b3b27cb1>. Once on the website, simply select the Marsh Haven Nature Center Fund and designate the funds for Building Boardwalks to Wildlife. Other ways you can help is donating on our website [www.marshhaven.org](http://www.marshhaven.org) or in person at Marsh Haven Nature Center, being sure to designate the funds for Boardwalks to Wildlife. All donors will have their name added to the sponsors plaque for the project.

**The Outcome**

The Vine/Griffith Education Building is open 11 months out of the year from February to mid-December with the trail system open daily 10am to sunset year-round. On a yearly basis, Marsh Haven serves people from Dodge and Fond du Lac counties, the state of Wisconsin, across the country, and even a few international visitors. In 2024, we saw just over 2,500 visitors to our museum, and just under 5,000 students and individuals took part in an educational program. This number, however, does not include the countless number of visitors who hiked the trail system, a unique and important part of Marsh Haven’s mission, which includes our observation tower on the woodland trail, wildflowers on the prairie trail, views of Lake LaPresto and several boardwalks along the wetland trail.

With the completion of this project, we aim to provide an improved visitor experience with an enhanced view of Lake LaPresto and the wildlife that utilize the critical wetland habitat. Currently, it is difficult to view, but with the observation deck and the cattail project it should allow a clear view of the lake from the building as well as the shore. In addition, it will allow us access to Lake LaPresto for educational programs or activities such as pond studies or wildlife viewing for the many school groups who come through Marsh Haven’s gate.

 Marsh Haven Nature Center sincerely thanks you for your continued support and consideration of this important project. Without the continued support of our community, Marsh Haven would not be what it is today. Any questions or concerns regarding the project, please contact our director at 920-318-9518 or director@marshhaven.org