



LA CROSSE COUNTY
Exceptional services. Extraordinary place.

La Crosse County Parks Overview

June 9, 2025

Our Parks & Forests

- **Public Lands:** We manage over 2,000 acres of public land, including 4 county parks and 2 forests.
- **Recreation & Conservation:** Our parks provide year-round recreation and serve as valuable natural reserves supporting sustainability.
- **Economic Impact:** In 2024, more than 125,000 campers stayed at Goose Island and Veterans Memorial parks — traveling from 40 states and several countries.

Goose Island

- Owned by the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**, managed by La Crosse County
- Wisconsin's largest county campground — **308 sites**
- **Amenities:** 5 shelters, hiking trails, canoeing, fishing, disc golf, mini golf, woods & wetlands



Veterans Memorial

- 120 campsites
- 4 shelters
- Fishing, picnicking, disc golf, **wooded trails**
- Paws Dog Park
- Nature trail connects to **La Crosse River State Trail**



Other Parks & Forests

- **Neshonoc Swarthout:** 1 park shelter and boat ramp.
- **Neshonoc South:** 1 boat ramp.
- **Bice Forest:** 462-acre wildlife habitat.
- **Hoeth Forest:** 439-acre wildlife habitat.



Recreation & Education

- **Outdoor recreation** opportunities at our parks include volleyball, basketball, hiking trails, disc golf, shoreline fishing, boat ramps, bird watching, ski trails, and playgrounds.
- Our parks also host multiple **educational and outreach** events annually.
- In **2025**, that includes events by River Valley Raptors, Bluff Country Snakes, the Critter Mobile, and more.



The Parks Team

- 5 full-time permanent staff (3 at Goose Island and 2 at Veterans Memorial).
- 15 to 25 seasonal staff join the team each year.
- Hardworking crew that handles campground and park maintenance, operates park stores, general repairs, and more.



Recent Improvements

Accessibility: Improved accessibility through addition of ADA bathrooms, boat ramps and shore access.

Habitat Restoration: Hundreds of trees planted, reduced mowing for prairie restoration (helps pollinators and cuts costs).

Capital Repairs & Upgrades: Road repairs, bathhouse updates, solar added at Goose Island, new playground equipment, shelter roof replacements.



2025 Projects (\$400k)

- Veterans Memorial Pond Improvements – \$50,000 (Aerators, ADA fishing pier & sidewalk – more to come)
- Vault Toilet Replacement (Veterans Memorial) – \$108,000
- Electrical & Water Upgrades (Goose Island) – \$40,000
- Tree Removal & Replacement – \$10,000
- Miscellaneous Road Repairs – \$42,000

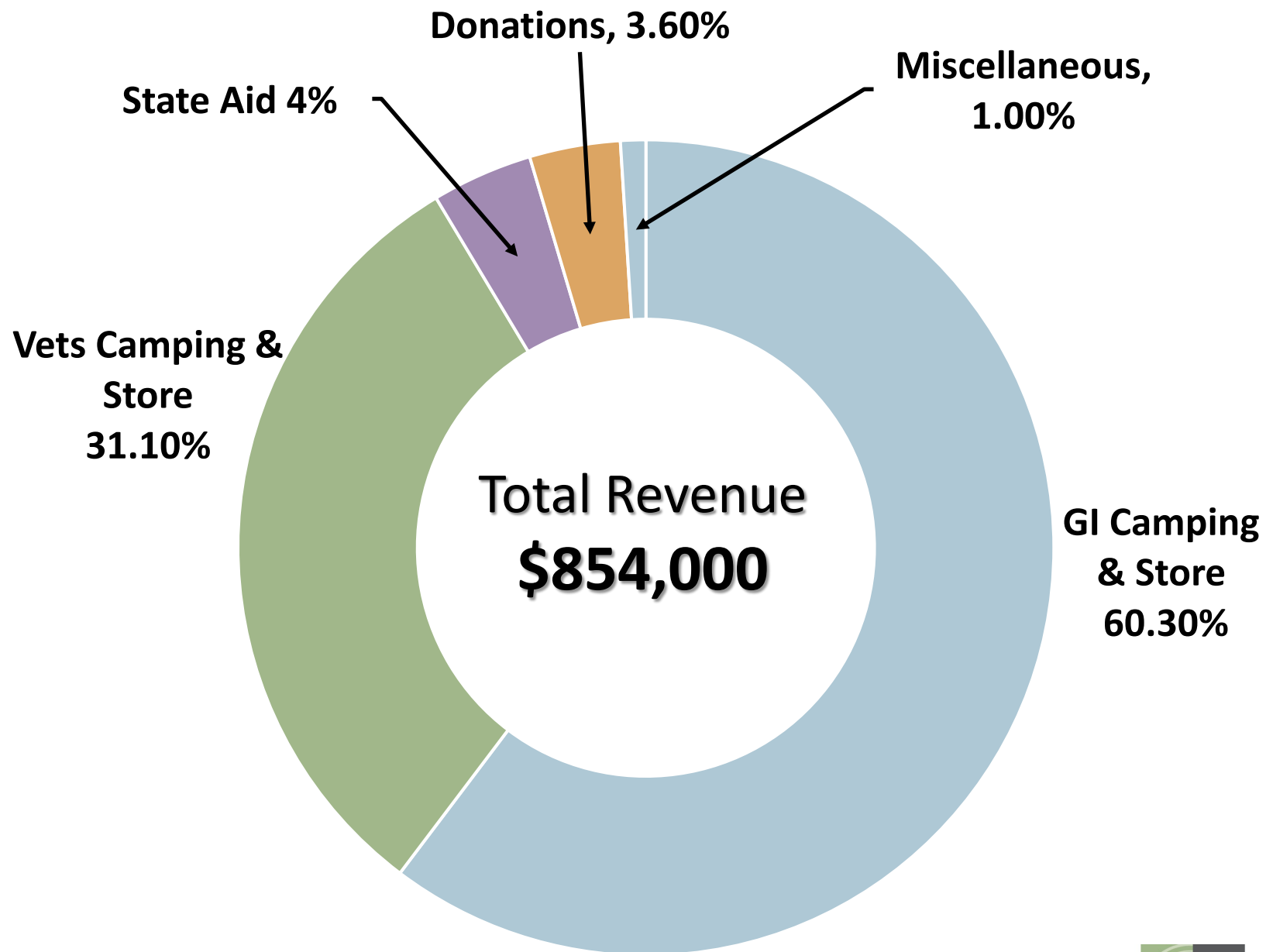


Major Unfunded Projects (\$5.1 million)

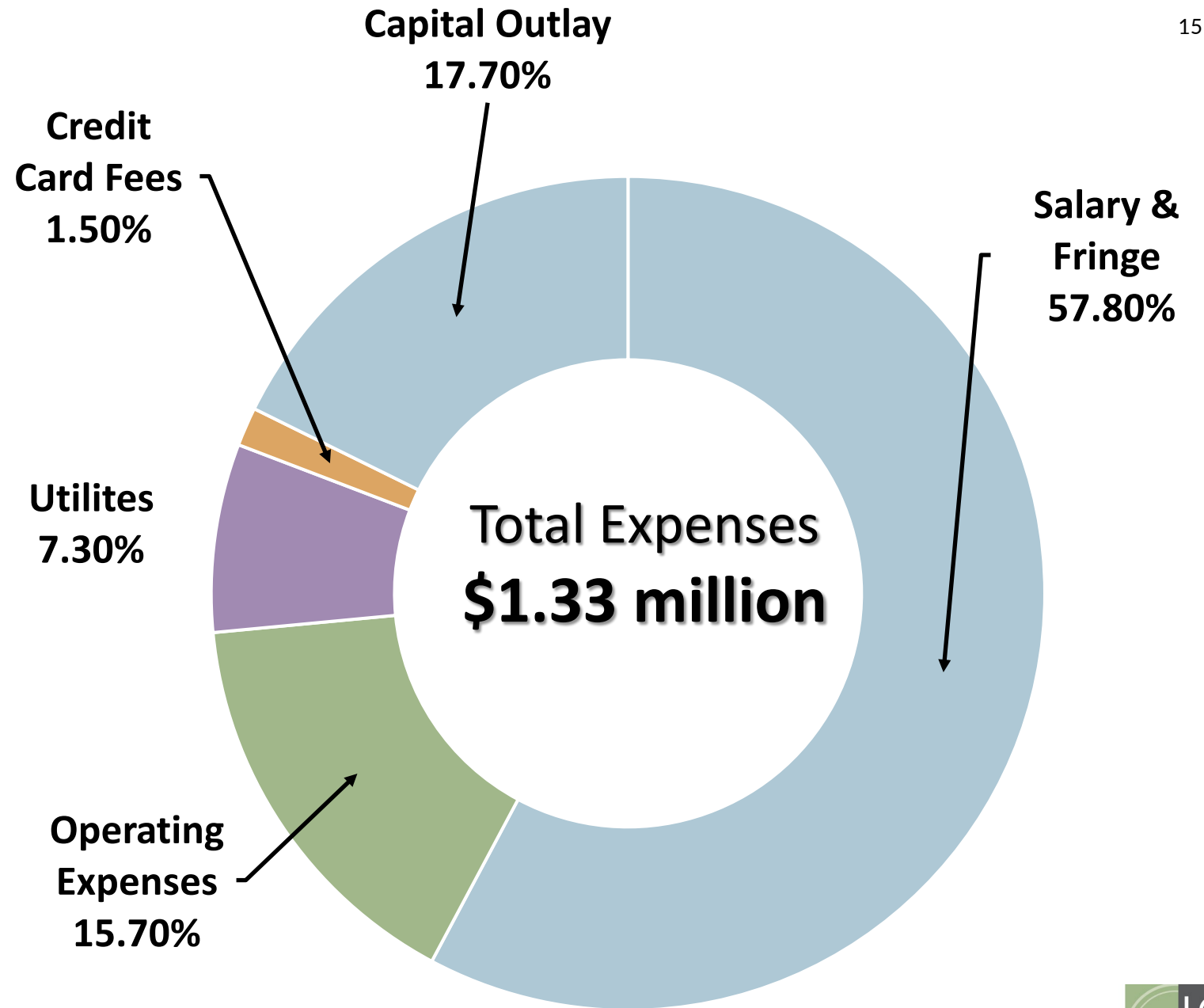
36 projects awaiting funding, including:

- Goose Island: **Goosey Golf** replacement – \$25,000
- Goose Island & Veterans: **Playground & shelter upgrades** – \$745,000
- Bice Forest: **Disc golf course** – \$20,000; Vault toilet – \$75,000
- Veterans Memorial: **Kayak rentals** – \$15,000; pave gravel roads – \$300,000

2024 Parks Revenue



2024 Parks Expenses



Flood Risk

- Flooding is an **annual risk** at Goose Island and Veterans Memorial
- Record flooding at **Goose Island** in 2023 and 2024 resulted in months of lost camping and significant damage.
- Cost in lost revenue was about \$100,000 in 2024 alone.



Campground Pricing

- Rates are on the **higher end** for public parks in Wisconsin.
- Still significantly lower than **private campgrounds** (which often have more amenities).
- Our goal: Provide high-quality **public parks**—not make a profit.



Key Takeaways

- **Community Assets:** Our parks are open to all, support sustainability, and strengthen the local economy
- **Continued Investment:** Ongoing capital investment is essential — \$2.5 million in unfunded projects remain.
- **Opportunities:** Increase sustainability/restoration efforts, prioritize capital projects, review campground pricing structure.