

Eastbay Campground

Devils Lake SBDC

William (Bill) and Valerie Wood started the Eastbay Campground, Inc. in 1998 on the east shore of Devils Lake. Over the years the campground has grown from 32 seasonal and 8 overnight camping spots to over 250 seasonal and 19 overnight sites. Eastbay Campground has added 13 cabins, a bait shop/convenience store, and in 2013, a 75 slip marina to its list of amenities. Eastbay Campground also offers tent and primitive camping, a fish cleaning station, handicapped restrooms/showers, fishing boat rentals, boat launch, RV dump, gas, propane, and coin operated laundry. Eastbay Campground boasts one of the nicest sand beaches on the lake.

Since 1998 Eastbay has seen their share of difficulty and has had to relocate most of its campground due to the rising elevation of Devils Lake. The Woods, not afraid of hard work, have taken this in stride and saw opportunity in the excellent fishery that Devils Lake has become. Each time the Woods made changes or added facilities to accommodate growth and opportunity, the Devils Lake SBDC was there to assist them.

The Woods are very excited about a massive expansion in 2016—an additional 42 slips added to the marina, a large maintenance shop, and the *Odessa Event Center*, which is an all-purpose finished building with a full kitchen, restrooms, and reception area. The building overlooks a sandy beach on Devils Lake and is able to accommodate 400 people for weddings, family reunions, large hunting parties, promotional events and other special events.

Eastbay is a family oriented campground that targets families and fishermen looking for a great camping and fishing experience. In the winter months Eastbay staff attend trade shows throughout North Dakota, Minnesota, South Dakota and Nebraska. Eastbay works with Devils Lake Tourism office to promote the Devils Lake area and the Eastbay Campground information is listed on the Devils Lake Tourism website. Bill and Val have been promoting North Dakota, the Devils Lake area and their facility for 17 years.

In the past six years Eastbay has averaged over 600 reser-

vations per year for the RV, tent sites, and cabins. Cabin rentals have increased 118% since 2006, when the cabins were added. Eastbay has 4 full-time employees and 13 seasonal. In 2016-2017 they will be adding an additional 4 seasonal staff to help maintain the facilities.

Visitors to Eastbay come from all over the United States including Washington, California, Texas, Florida, New York, Pennsylvania and many of the mid-western states. Eastbay saw visitors from 23 different states in 2015 and from 30 states in 2014. The 2015 numbers show that 41% were from Minnesota, 39% are from North Dakota, Canadians account for 2% of business, and the remaining 18% of customers come from other states. Eastbay has, in the past, seen customers from England and Australia.

“ND SBDC has been an integral part of our business, especially the office located in Devils Lake. Over the past 18 years we have relied on the expertise provided by this office to acquire funds for the expansions to the facility. From its inception in 1998 through the past 18 years we have had 5 major expansions. These expansions were generated by a need. People want to come to Devils Lake and especially Eastbay Campground. We have numerous small communities of families within the campground. Family members want to be with family hence the expansions to provide this service for them. Our newest expansion of the Odessa Event Center will meet a need in the Lake Region area.

Each of the times we have expanded we have contacted the SBDC to help with our business plan, financial projections, funding sources and overall advice. Sandy at the Devils Lake office has been a tremendous source of advice. Without her assistance we would not have been able to make these expansions a reality. We are truly grateful for all the help we received.”

