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**NEY NATURE CENTER KICKS OFF ITS 2016 MAPLE SYRUP SEASON**

**Henderson, MN, March 10, 2016:** Over 35 visitors stopped out on Saturday, March 5, 2016 to get a taste of the maple syrup season at Ney Nature Center. This is Ney Nature Center’s third year in the maple syrup business, and it continues to grow. Last year, they tapped around 100 trees and have tapped close to 135 trees this year along with installing a gravity line along the property’s western boundary, which can stay in place for up to 10 years.

“Maple Syruping here at the Ney Nature Center wraps up our winter programming and allows volunteers and participants to welcome spring while tromping around in the woods.  Tapping trees and collecting sap connects us to the seasons and nature, giving us a great sense of place and an opportunity to participate in a project that was once readily practiced by the many settlers to the MN river valley,” says Executive Director Becky Pollack.

After all of the trees were tapped, groups started collecting the sap from the bags on the trees. Once collected, the sap is heated on site using a basic wood-fired evaporator. At this point, the sap has a 2% sugar concentration but increases as it continues to boil. Then, the sap is transferred to a finishing pan and continues to boil until a hydrometer indicates the sugar content is 59-67%. The Ney Nature Center filters the niter (sugar sand) out in order to make the syrup clear and then bottles it in various sized containers. This year, the center has 12 oz bottles available for $10, 16 oz bottles available for $15, and refillable legacy bottles available for $200. The first bottles of the season will be ready to purchase on March 11, 2016.

If you are interested in assisting with the maple syrup season, the Ney Nature Center has volunteer opportunities available for collecting sap, boiling sap, and bottling syrup. Please contact them at info@neycenter.org or 507-248-3474 as soon as possible with your information so that you can be added to the volunteer list.

**About the Ney Nature Center**: Conveniently located halfway between the Twin Cities and Mankato, the Ney Nature Center (NNC), which sits on the bluffs of the Minnesota River near Henderson, MN, is home to 446 acres of native prairie and woodlands.  This unique blend of biomes allows staff to educate youth and adults alike about the native plants and wildlife important to Southern Minnesota.  Visit [www.neycenter.org](http://www.neycenter.org) for more information and view a schedule of upcoming programs to attend.

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