

Sauk County, Wisconsin
Parks Department Annual Report

2017 Highlights:

In 2017, the Sauk County Parks Department completed a large step toward making our parks more user friendly, efficient and profitable. This was accomplished by the addition of accepting online reservations, credit card payments, as well as improved firewood sales.

The Parks department successfully negotiated the purchase of White Mound County Park for one dollar, transferring the ownership from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to Sauk County. This process was a coordinated effort between Sauk County staff, Sauk County elected officials, state staff and state elected officials. This transaction demonstrates what can be done when multiple groups/agencies work together.

On July 29th, Man Mound Park celebrated its inclusion as a National Historic Landmark. There are only 42 other National Historic Landmarks in Wisconsin. This event was planned and held by the Man Mound Advisory Committee. This committee includes representatives from Sauk County Parks, Sauk County Historical Society, Ho Chunk Nation, UW-Baraboo Center for Wisconsin Archeology, Wisconsin Archeological Society and the Office of the State Archeologist/Wisconsin Historical Society.

2017 Goals Review

2017 GOALS REVIEW

OBJECTIVE	WAS THIS OBJECTIVE REACHED IN 2017?
	Yes or No (If no, please provide comment)
Assure safety of county-owned dams by completing proper inspections, maintenance and improvements, as well as keeping the EAP and IOM updated and active with the personnel named within them.	Yes
To promote Sauk County and increase park usage	Yes, ongoing
Make camping at White Mound more user friendly	Yes

Changes / Accomplishments:

Snowmobile: Administration of the Snowmobile Grant Program through the Wisconsin DNR allowed the Association of Sauk County Snowmobile Clubs \$52,975 to maintain and groom 211.9 miles of snowmobile trails throughout the county. The Parks Department is primarily responsible for the financial administration of the grant. Other responsibilities include trail

inspections, maintaining an updated development, maintenance and grooming contract, applying for grant funding, and obtaining written and verbal permission from all snowmobile trail landowners.

Camping: In previous years, firewood was gathered and stored using park staff. This was inefficient and the real cost of the wood was not easily achievable. The purchase of prepackaged firewood bundles were contracted out to a vendor. This change has dramatically reduced the labor and allowed the Parks Department to accurately calculate the total, real cost and revenue of firewood sales.

To encourage a more user friendly and safer campground experience, updates were made to the bathrooms, shower building, and acceptance of online reservations and credit cards were implemented. Updates included painting the bathrooms, both exterior and interior, to cover up leaded and aging paint.

Park/Forestry Operations: Ho-Chunk Gaming Compact Funds were made available to the parks department. These funds will allow the Parks Department to make necessary updates to Man Mound Park and Yellow Thunder Memorial. Some of those improvements have been completed.

The Highway and Parks committee approved the Parks Director to offer vouchers for camping and entrance passes for promotion of the Parks Department. Promotion of the Parks Department continued with a new logo, which features a pinecone.

Data was collected through a car counter, to determine park usage during the months of April through October. The results determined that White Mound County Park receives the most traffic on Sundays, followed by Saturdays and Fridays. It was also determined that more park users are using the park during the hours of 10:00 AM through 5:00 PM, and the busiest month appeared to be June. This data will be used annually, for comparing park usage.

White Mound County Park saw an extremely destructive storm in late July. The power was out for an extended period of time. Many of the trails and public use areas were also closed for over a month. Park staff restored the damaged trails and use areas.

In July, it was determined that new style entrance fee envelopes would not fit into the self-registration tubes at most parks and boat landings. The parks department coordinated repairs with the Sauk County Highway Shop. The combination of storms throughout the year and self-registration tubes being closed likely decreased our revenues for the month of July.

All trails at White Mound County Park were mapped by the Parks Department staff, at the Sauk County GIS Department office. The maps provide park users with an accurate location of all trails – including hiking, horse, snowmobile, and ATV/UTV trails.

Initial discussions were started with active park users regarding the creation of a White Mound County Park friends group.

The Parks Director engaged in conversation with the State of Wisconsin to discuss the possibility of the purchase of roughly 1,100 acres at White Mound County Park, transferring ownership to Sauk County. After speaking with the Senate and Assembly, a bill was passed unanimously to transfer the land. On August 2nd, Governor Scott Walker signed Senate Bill 276, selling White Mound County Park back to Sauk County for \$1.00.

Lake Management: Lake monitoring continued throughout the year, allowing staff to measure water clarity, collect high quality data, and share data with the public to inform them on White Mound Lake.

Fish and Game: The Parks Department applied for a County Conservation Grant in the amount of \$4,200, with a 50% cost share. A grant was awarded to install a kayak pier south of the beach area at White Mound County Park. The pier will be installed in spring of 2018, and provides multiple opportunities to park users.

Dam Maintenance: The Sauk County Parks Director and Sauk County Corporation Counsel met with Wisconsin DNR officials to discuss the concerns of the Lake Redstone Dam conditions. It was determined that a geophysical investigation was needed. Ayres Associates worked closely with the Parks Director and completed a seismic refraction test and soil borings. The tests determined no alterations to the dam were needed.

As part of the annual maintenance to the Lake Redstone Dam, the Sauk County Sheriff's Department Dive Team dove to inspect the sluice gate. After finding the sluice gate clear of debris, the gate was opened temporarily to confirm successful operation, and was closed shortly after.

In mid-October, it was discovered that the water level at Hemlock Slough was abnormally high. The intake pipe was cleared of vegetative debris by the Sauk County Sheriff's Department Dive Team, resulting in a lower than usual lake level. Some Sauk County residents had concerns that the impoundment level was too low. Staff from the Sauk County Conservation, Planning and Zoning Department and the Parks Department surveyed the lake surface elevation, and confirmed that the slough was near its original intended elevation.

Trails: The engineering and design of the Great Sauk State Trail was started in January. Removal of rails and ties were completed by the Sauk County Highway Department and construction followed in summer. The trail was opened on October 19th, and has seen a considerable amount of use. Planning for continued trail development is ongoing.

Personnel: Staffing changes were made during the 2018 budget building process. As of January 1, 2018, Parks Program Coordinators replaced the Assistant Parks Director and Parks Program Specialist. The Assistant Parks Director, Pat Cowan resigned on October 5, 2017.

Outlay: Galbraith Carnahan Architects let bids for a new community building at White Mound County Park. There were three bids received, none of which were awarded. All bids were rejected, and the architects redesigned the building to more accurately reflect Sauk County's budget.

Statistical Summary:

OUTPUT MEASURES

DESCRIPTION	2015 ACTUAL	2016 ACTUAL	2017 ACTUAL
Entrance Fee Revenue	\$64,970	\$86,040	\$86,465
Number of miles snowmobile trail maintained	211.9 miles	211.9 miles	211.9 miles
Number of days snowmobile trail open	0 days	25 days	9 days
Number of volunteers serving the parks	20 volunteers	20 volunteers	25 volunteers
Number of times shelters rented	28 reservations	20 reservations	26 reservations

OUTCOME AND EFFICIENCY MEASURES

DESCRIPTION	2015 ACTUAL	2016 ACTUAL	2017 ACTUAL
Camping Revenue	\$44,517	\$52,313	\$54,337