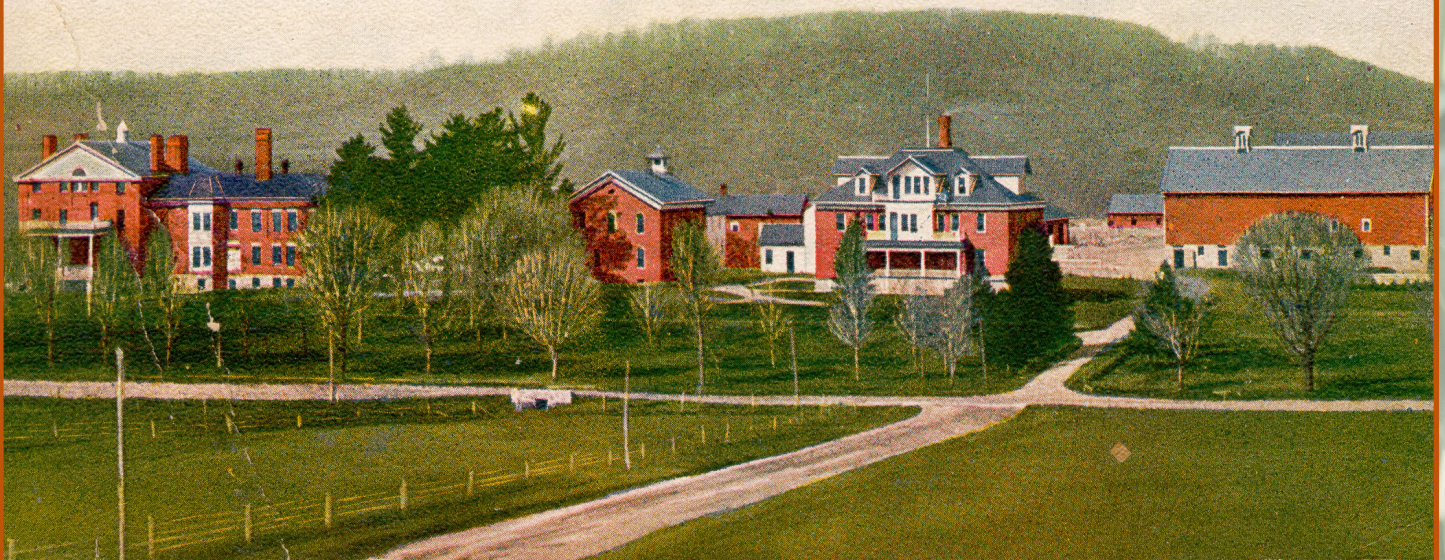


# The Sauk County Farm

Property Master Plan | 2022 - 2042



Approved 03/15/2022



Original County Farm agricultural facilities and barns circa 2009. Photo courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.

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**SAUK COUNTY**  
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# Introduction

The Sauk County Farm is a roughly 566-acre property located within the unincorporated Town of Reedsburg, approximately three miles south of the City of Reedsburg, in Sauk County, Wisconsin. Originally called the County Poor Farm and Asylum, the site was initially purchased in 1871 to provide care and housing for impoverished, mentally ill, and disabled people. The institution was a self-sustaining economically productive farm operation in which residents worked to support the institution's residents and staff, then sold the excess. The County Farm's healthcare institutions evolved significantly over the course of the 20th century and the farm was transitioned to be rented to area farmers and the hospital was eventually renamed to the Sauk County Healthcare Center in the 1970's. It remained in use until 2009 when the decision was made to relocate the Healthcare Center to the City of Reedsburg.

Today, the County Farm is under the oversight of the Land Resources & Environment (LRE) Department and Sauk County Board of Supervisors, with the Land Conservation Service Area overseeing most of the property's management and the Parks & Recreation Service Area providing maintenance for the historic fire house and the Sauk County

Cemetery—the final remnants of the site's former public health institutions. Most of the property is comprised of cropland and pasture, which have been rented out to local farmers since the 1980's. In fact, the land at the County Farm has produced food consistently throughout its 150-year history. The remainder of the property is comprised of the land where the former healthcare center stood, wooded forest, wetlands and streams, which run through a significant portion of the site.

The Sauk County LRE Department has created the following master plan for the County Farm to ensure the continued management of the site's agricultural and natural resources, preservation of its historic features, and the transformation of the space into an educational resource for the communities of Sauk County. The master planning process was designed for targeted collaboration with key community stakeholders and educational institutions centered on the following goals: to create educational opportunities for Sauk County's current and future farmers through community partnerships; utilize the space for agricultural demonstration and research; and pay homage to the history and people of the property.

Over the next 20 years, the County Farm is envisioned to become an important educational resource for Sauk County residents of all ages and backgrounds to learn about regenerative, profitable and resilient agricultural practices through on-site demonstration, research, and collaborative partnerships. The County Farm will become a space where educational institutions, non-profit organizations, public agencies, private entities, and any interested person in Sauk County can converge to learn about farming and train the leaders who will carry forward our community's agricultural legacy. The implementation of this vision will require partnerships between the LRE Department, local high schools and universities, agricultural producers, conservation non-profits, other public agencies, and all interested community members.



*Original agricultural shed at the County Farm.  
Photo courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.*

# Property History

*“The fields of the farm have been laid out anew and one section has been set apart for an agricultural demonstration plat...In that section of the farm is shown what can be done in the way of breeding corn, growing alfalfa, raising high-class oats and other produce. [The County Farm Superintendent] obtained samples of corn from different parts of the country and these were planted and the nature of the crops raised from them carefully noted. When the stalks were ripe and the ears turned golden, all the farmers within convenient distance of the farm were invited to gather in a sort of picnic and note the results; and, on several occasions, professors from the agronomic department of the state university gave instruction lectures. Thus the experimental field at the poor farm became a source of education to the agricultural community.”*

*- A Standard History of Sauk County by E.H. Cole (1918)*



E. W. MEYER,  
REEDSBURG, WIS



*Original residential building at the County Farm, year unknown. Photo courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.*

For over 100 years, the County Farm was home to many elderly, disabled, and impoverished people in Sauk County. Today, the visible traces of this legacy include the historic firehouse, built in 1921 to house the property’s small fire department, and the Sauk County Cemetery, where at least 180 residents of the County Farm were laid to rest between 1887 and 1973. These remaining vestiges offer a glimpse into the rich and complex history of the site, where numerous healthcare buildings and agricultural facilities stood as recently as 2009.

The first parcel of land that would become the “County Poor Farm and Insane Asylum” was purchased in 1871; this was the original name given to the property, and where its current title is derived. While there is relatively little detail about life at the County Farm in the late 19th and early 20th century, Sauk County’s establishment of a poor farm at this time fits within a larger pattern of county governments across the United States using public monies to care for burdened or outcast members of their communities. This was enabled in part by then-President Franklin Pierce’s veto of legislation in 1854 that would have set aside 10 million acres of federal land to care for indigent, mentally, and physically disabled people.<sup>1</sup> In doing so he asserted it was not the federal or state government’s domain to provide public welfare, therein shifting the onus to local and regional

governments. This would remain the status quo until the 1930’s.

Individuals typically came to public institutions like the County Farm after tapping out the capacity of their families and local charities to provide the care they needed. The conditions leading to such a predicament were far ranging, from alcoholism, ‘feeble mindedness’, and poverty to a lack of stable employment, blindness, deafness, and even old age. Also included were people with a spectrum of mental illnesses and physical disabilities who were often lumped together under the single label ‘insane’—a term that fell out of usage and acceptability by the mid-twentieth century. In the era before the Social Security Act, poor farms were a catch-all safety net for marginalized people.

In addition to these facilities, the County Farm was also a productive and diversified agricultural operation for many decades. This combination of public health institution and working farm is what differentiated the rural ‘poor farm’ from its urban counterpart—the poorhouse or almshouse. For almost 100-years, all able-bodied residents were expected to work in one of the property’s numerous farming and industrial activities, the fruits of which directly supported the County Farm’s employees and residents. A Baraboo News-Republic article boasts that the farm at one time



*Out buildings circa the 1920’s. Photo courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.*



*Aerial view of the County Farm circa 1985. Photo courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.*

produced 200 turkeys, 400 laying hens, and 50 head of cattle, enabling the “consumption of 425 lbs. of whole milk per day.”<sup>2</sup> The author went so far as to proclaim that the farm “appears to be better kept than most private properties.”<sup>3</sup> The County Farm at this time also featured a bakery, capable of producing fifty loaves of bread daily, a cannery that could produce 400 quarts of fruits and jams, a slaughterhouse, and even a smokehouse.<sup>4</sup>

The farm was also a demonstration space for testing different corn, oat, and alfalfa varieties from across the country, and nearby farmers and professors from the state universities would occasionally gather at the County Farm to note the results of these experiments.<sup>5</sup> Later on, contour farming was “done in all possible fields” and lime was applied to help rebuild the site’s soil.<sup>6</sup> Alongside producing food and maintaining the facilities, able-bodied residents would spend their days weaving baskets and rugs, upholstering furniture, and working in the quarry located on the property, where the foundation for many of its buildings was sourced.<sup>7</sup>

While the County Farm was essentially a self-sustaining operation, it is important to recognize that the residents were not compensated for their labor and likely could not leave the property at

their own discretion. “At best the life of an inmate is quite monotonous, [and] quite a few come to us when in their prime and remain the rest of their days”, remarked the County Farm’s matron in a 1913 letter published in the Reedsburg Times Press; it was common for certain residents of the County Farm to be referred to as ‘inmates’ well into the 20th century.<sup>8</sup> At least 180 people who lived at the County Farm would also find their final resting place there. The majority of the gravestones were removed for maintenance purposes or originally were unmarked. While location of their individual graves is unknown, a sign memorializing their names and year of death was installed in 2014.

The practice of requiring able-bodied residents to farm as a condition of their stay would last until 1974 when the federal government outlawed the practice, which was known as ‘Industrial therapy’.<sup>9</sup> The farm at the Healthcare Center would continue to produce much of the food consumed by those who lived and worked there for nearly another decade, this time with hired hands. However, the farm struggled to be profitable under this arrangement and by 1985 the County Board of Supervisors decided to close the farm and rent out the land to local-area farmers.<sup>10</sup> The land continues to be worked by local farmers today.



By 1946, the healthcare complex had been renamed the Sauk County Hospital and Home; it would be renamed again to the Sauk County Healthcare Center in 1970.<sup>11</sup> Its facilities underwent significant renovation and rebuilding during the 1940's after state health officials investigated reports of substandard conditions.<sup>12</sup> In response, a new and modern three-story building was completed in 1949 and was met with celebration by the community. The Baraboo Weekly News proclaimed that "every resident of the County may well take pride in this splendid building...and County Board members are to be commended for having rectified a situation long in need of changing".<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the 1950's and 1960's society's understanding of mental illness and developmental disabilities was changing rapidly, ultimately leading to a cascade of regulatory changes in the 1970's and 1980's known today as deinstitutionalization: moving away from state-funded mental health institutions to more community-based and individualized forms of care.<sup>14</sup> In 1973, the State of Wisconsin terminated all long-term contracts with county mental hospitals and many patients at the Healthcare Center's mental hospital were transferred to alternative care facilities, the site's nursing home, or locations closer to their families.<sup>15</sup> This propelled the Healthcare Center to shift more of its focus to elder care relative to



*A nurse caring for a resident at the Sauk County Healthcare Center. Photo courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.*



*Residents at the Sauk County Healthcare Center playing cards. Photo courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.*



*View of the new Sauk County Healthcare Center built in 1949. Photo courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.*

mentally ill and disabled folks as more appropriate care opportunities became available.

By the early 1990's, the Sauk County Healthcare Center was serving 200 geriatric residents, but only 31 developmentally disabled residents;<sup>16</sup> compare this to 187 mental hospital residents and 40 nursing home residents in 1946.<sup>17</sup> "Even a few years ago developmentally disabled patients were not taught community skills, but now every DD resident follows an individualized plan including daily skills classes and ventures into the community", remarks a 1993 article in the Baraboo News Republic.<sup>18</sup> By the turn of the 21st century, the cost of maintaining the Sauk County Healthcare Center's large and aging buildings prompted the county to reevaluate its future at the County

Farm, especially since the number of folks living at the center had declined in recent years.<sup>19</sup> The County Board of Supervisors made the decision in 2007 to close the healthcare complex and build a new, smaller facility in Reedsburg, which opened its doors in 2009.<sup>20</sup> The original complex was demolished the following year after auctioning off its belongings, bringing to a close the site's nearly 140-year history as a public health institution.<sup>21</sup> Its agricultural legacy continues on through today, and provides the groundwork for the future vision of the property. Overall, the County Farm's history reflects the significant evolution America's welfare and healthcare systems underwent over the course of the 20th century, giving meaningful context to the social safety net that exists in America today.



*Demolition of the Sauk County Healthcare Center in 2008. Photo courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.*

## Endnotes

- 1 Warder, G. (2017, February 10). Franklin Pierce's 1854 Veto. Socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu; Disability History Museum. <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/issues/franklin-pierces-1854-veto/>
- 2 Improvements Now Underway At County Farm. (1946, August 1). Baraboo News Republic.
- 3 *ibid*
- 4 *ibid*
- 5 Cole, Harry Ellsworth. (1918). A Standard History of Sauk County Wisconsin. Volume I. The Lewis Publishing Company. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/WI.ColeStandardv1>. pp. 249.
- 6 Improvements Now Underway At County Farm. (1946, August 1). Baraboo News Republic.
- 7 Cole, Harry Ellsworth. (1918). A Standard History of Sauk County Wisconsin. Volume I. The Lewis Publishing Company. <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/WI.ColeStandardv1>. pp. 249.
- 8 Amusements For Insane At County Farm: Paper Read by Mrs. C. Christensen at Waukesha June 1. (1913, June 20). Reedsburg Times.
- 9 Early History of the Sauk County Poor Farm. (2009). Publication made possible through a grant from the Sauk County Arts and Culture Committee.
- 10 *ibid*

11 *ibid*

12 *ibid*

13 Many Visitors Accept Invitation for "Open House": Fireproof Structure Can Accommodate 70 Residents. (1949, June 9). Baraboo Weekly News.

14 Wisconsin Department of Health Services. (2017, April). Wisconsin History of Advocacy and Mental Health Services for people with Mental Illness. <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wcmh/ada-mh-history-document.pdf>. pp. 53.

15 Early History of the Sauk County Poor Farm. (2009). Publication made possible through a grant from the Sauk County Arts and Culture Committee

16 Chickering, P. (1993, March 3). Inside the county's care center: Family visits are the best medicine, director says. Baraboo News Republic.

17 Improvements Now Underway At County Farm. (1946, August 1). Baraboo News Republic.

18 Chickering, P. (1993, March 3). Inside the county's care center: Family visits are the best medicine, director says. Baraboo News Republic.

19 A lot of history left behind as Sauk County Healthcare Center moves to town. (2009, November 19). Reedsburg Independent.

20 Early History of the Sauk County Poor Farm. (2009). Publication made possible through a grant from the Sauk County Arts and Culture Committee.

21 A lot of history left behind as Sauk County Healthcare Center moves to town. (2009, November 19). Reedsburg Independent.



*Drawing of the original buildings at the County Farm circa 1895. Photo courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.*



*Aerial photo of the Sauk County Farm circa 1981. Photo courtesy of the Sauk County Historical Society.*

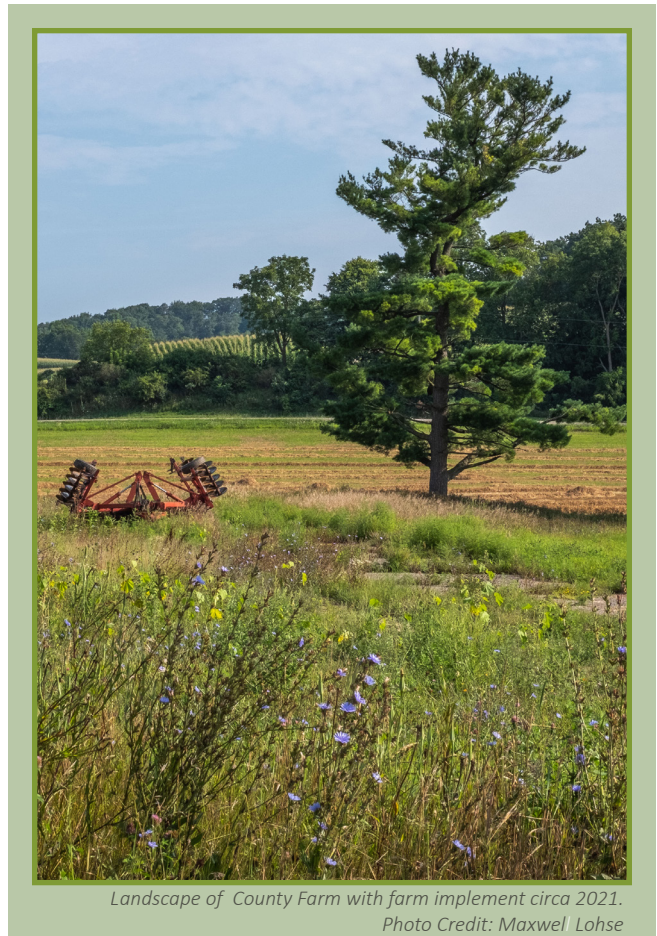
*Up-close view of corn leaves. Photo courtesy of Maxwell Lohse.*

# Site Inventory

Beyond its historical legacy related to the Sauk County Healthcare Center, the County Farm is a unique property within the LRE Department's portfolio given it is predominately used for agricultural production as opposed to outdoor recreation; while it is open to the public for hunting and open space, it is not a park. In total, the roughly 566-acres of the County Farm property is zoned as Agricultural, with almost all the surrounding land zoned as Exclusive Agriculture; land use intensity and the number of dwelling units permitted per acre are two significant differences between these zoning designations. Three roadways run through and along the property: State Road 23, State Road 154, and County Road CH. Although the property is bordered by two major highways, the surrounding landscape is predominately cropland and pasture with some steep wooded hillsides and few houses. The largest development pressure comes from the City of Reedsburg, located two miles to the north along State Road 23.

The main entrance to the property is located near the intersection of State Road 154 and County Road CH. The gravel drive leads to the remaining structures on the property and splits off into gravel farm roads that lead to the cemetery and the unnamed creek. The majority of the paved areas on-site were removed during demolition except for a few remnant areas of broken concrete. The County Farm also has two satellite properties: an 82-acre wetland protection area south of the farm and 13-acres of cropland adjacent to the new Sauk County Healthcare Center in the City of Reedsburg. However, this plan focuses predominately on the County Farm's main property near State Roads 154 and 23.

The majority of the County Farm is in production growing a rotation of commodity crops, and rotationally grazed pasture. The remainder of the property is comprised of woodlands, a riparian corridor along an unnamed tributary to Narrows



Creek, the Sauk County Cemetery, and the former site of the Sauk County Healthcare Center where storage facilities and the historic fire house can be found. The agricultural land and storage facilities on site are rented out to local farmers and organizations, with the Land Conservation Service Area managing lease agreements and communication with renters. The LRE Department maintains the infrastructure on site, providing fencing, electricity, water lines for livestock, and maintaining grassed waterways and agricultural drainage ways. The LRE Parks & Recreation Service Area has a limited role in maintaining the grounds of the Sauk County Cemetery, mainly through routine mowing, as well as overseeing the historic fire house.

The wooded acreage and riparian corridor along the unnamed tributary is relatively unmaintained. The woodland has no active forest management plan and has not been harvested for quite some time. Woody vegetation has grown along the stream, allowing a buffer between the cropland but shading the majority of the corridor. There are banks that are in need of stabilization and wetland areas that could be restored. A snowmobile trail crosses through the southern area of the property and spans the creek by a bridge managed by the Sauk County Snowmobile Club Association.

The wetland protection area located to the south of the farm on Pine Bluff Road, was part of the original extent of the County Farm but became disconnected from the main area after a portion of the property was sold when the farm was closed and the remaining acreage transitioned to rental land. The site which contains significant wetlands and a

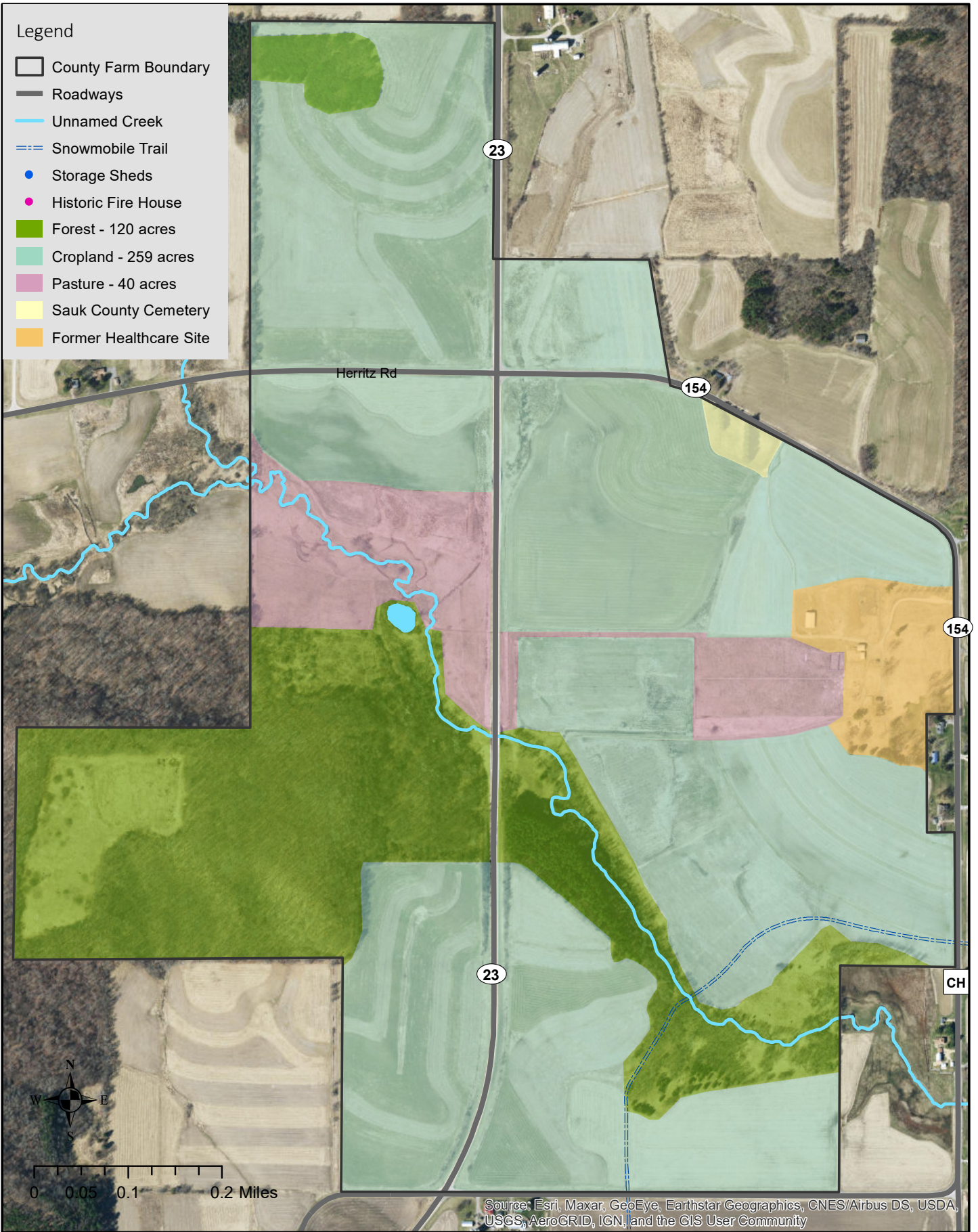
stretch of Narrows Creek was utilized as pasture until 2000 when staff from the Land Conservation Service Area pursued converting the space to a prairie and wetland restoration area for public education. That same year, a Stream Bank Corridor Easement was sold to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources along with additional funds donated by local non-profit organizations. Overall, 3,100 linear feet of streambank were restored, along with 30 acres of restored wetland and 24 acres of prairie. Since its restoration the property has had sitings of endangered whooping cranes, sandhill cranes, trumpeter swans, ducks, geese, killdeer, chorus frogs, spring peepers, bullfrogs, American Toads and is now home to an eagle nesting site.

The Current Land Use Map displays how the property is currently broken down by land use type, with acreage listed in the Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Current Land Use**

<b>Land Use</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Leased</b>	<b>Oversight</b>
Cropland	259 ac	Yes	LRE Land Conservation
Forest	120.5 ac	No	LRE Land Conservation
Pasture	40.2 ac	Yes	LRE Land Conservation
Sauk County Cemetery	2.3 ac	No	LRE Parks & Recreation
Former Healthcare Center	20 ac	No	LRE Land Conservation
Storage Sheds	n/a	Yes	Sauk County Building Services
Historic Fire House	640 sq ft	No	LRE Parks & Recreation
Wetland Protection Area	82 ac	No	LRE Land Conservation
Snowmobile Trail	0.6 mi	No	Sauk County Snowmobile Clubs
			<i>Total: 566 acres</i>

# Current Land Use Map



# Agricultural Demographics

Statewide, agricultural producers, food processors, and agricultural-related businesses generate more than \$104.8 billion dollars annually and provide 11.8% of the state's employment. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2017 Census of Agriculture, Sauk County's agricultural community generates 743 million in economic activity and provides 4,312 jobs. However, these numbers have decreased over time along with declining agricultural acreage, numbers of farms, and farm-related income.

Overall, the state has seen a 16% decrease in the number of farms from 2002-2017. In Sauk County that equals a loss of 261 farms over 15 years or an average loss of 17 farms per year. This cannot be solely contributed to the conglomeration of farms as the County has lost over 15% of its acreage in farms in the same time period or a total of 54,198 acres. This is 6% higher than the state's overall loss of agricultural acreage. Between 2012 and 2017, the Census on agriculture recorded Sauk County farm-related income decreased by 17%. The exhibits show additional 2017 County agricultural statistics.

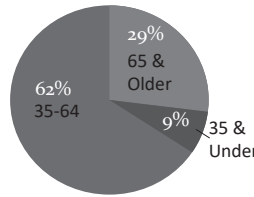
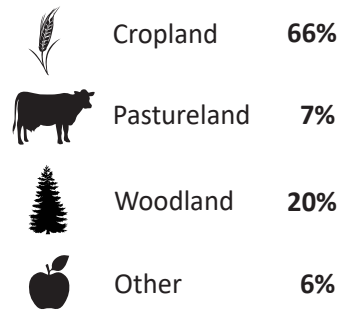


Exhibit 1: Age of Producers

## Exhibit 2: Land in Farms by Use



## Exhibit 3: Market Value of Sauk County Agricultural Products Sold



Milk



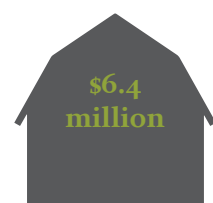
Grains & Beans



Cattle & Calves



Hogs & Pigs



Hay & Other Crops

# Planning Process

The master planning process for this property was designed and carried out by the Sauk County LRE Department, specifically its Land Conservation and Planning & Zoning Service Areas. This planning process was initiated to coincide with the renewal of the property's lease agreements. Rental agreements at the County Farm run for five years, and the current leases for the property's cropland, pasture, and storage facilities end in January 2023. In the fall of 2022, the LRE department will open the bidding for new rental agreements at the County Farm that incorporate the goals and objectives laid out in this master plan, as detailed in the Strategic Planning section of this document.

The planning process began in June 2021 with a meeting between LRE Department staff. Here, the Land Conservation team outlined their prospective idea to turn the property into an agricultural education space for area farmers, educators, students, fellow natural resource professionals and themselves to partner on cultivating regenerative agriculture resources for the edification of the entire Sauk County Community. Given the property's long and unique history, Planning & Zoning staff also consulted with the Sauk County Historical Society to access archived photos and news articles about the County Farm, the oldest of which dated back to 1913. This research helped inform how the property was used over the past 150 years and came to its current condition. A current land use map was created to inventory the different elements of the property as it exists today, and a future land use map was created to visualize the prospective plan staff were formulating.

A planning and citizen participation outline was developed and was approved by the LRE Committee on June 29, 2021 and the next month the public participation process was initiated. Twenty-seven landowners adjacent to the County Farm were sent letters and maps notifying them of the master planning process underway, the proposed transformation into an agricultural education center and were invited to participate and offer feedback. Staff met with adjacent landowners to discuss any

concerns, comments, or personal memoirs of the property through the years. Landowners provided positive feedback and expressed excitement over the idea of the property being fully utilized once again.

A group of local organizations, ranging from local school districts, universities, FFA chapters, non-profit organizations, public agencies, and more, were also initially invited into the planning process as potential key stakeholders; the LRE Department selected these groups based on their proximity to the property and potential to collaborate with LRE staff on educational programming for the property. These key stakeholders were then expanded to include organizations from throughout the County. LRE staff met with organizations individually to discuss current agricultural education courses offered, community needs, desires, and infrastructure necessary to make the property viable for them.

These conversations led to the creation of initial goals, objectives, and an implementation timeline. An educational stakeholder meeting was held on October 14, 2021 at the property to provide a tour, brief history, walk-through of the proposed timeline, and discussion of community partnership projects to be installed on-site. The installation of community projects on the property were expressed to be one of the most vital portions of the project and further details can be found in the Partnership Projects section of this document.

A citizen informational meeting was held on November 17, 2021 which presented on the property history, current land use, planning process, draft vision statement, goals, objectives, partnership projects and phased implementation. This was followed with a question and discussion period with citizen attendees.

The draft plan was then circulated to all stakeholders and posted online for public comment for four weeks before it was brought before the LRE Committee for approval on March 10, 2022.





## Relationship to the Sauk County Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP)

While the County Farm is not considered a traditional park, it is an open-space property with significant recreational potential. The property is overseen by the Land Resources and Environment Department, and is seen both as an educational and recreational amenity. For this reason, it was included in the Sauk County Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) and was identified as a property in need of an individualized master plan. The County Farm meets the following priorities and objectives laid out in the CORP:

- Priority 1: Further Development of the County Park System  
Objective: Develop master plans for Sauk County Properties
- Priority 2: Resource Management and Stewardship  
Objective: Community education  
Objective: Improved water quality
- Priority 3: Partnerships  
Objective: Consider Multiple outcomes when planning for cross-boundary recreation  
Objective: Intersect with other units of government and non-government organizations (NGOs)  
Objective: Leverage recreational and planning grants
- Priority 4: Economic Development & Tourism  
Objective: Promotion, Branding and Marketing

# Partnership Projects

The partnership projects are an essential part of transitioning the County Farm into a recognized community space. These projects will allow community partners to have a stronger connection and stake in the property. Space for implementing projects are a critical need expressed through stakeholder discussions. The County's role is to provide the infrastructure necessary to make the property a usable education, experimentation, and demonstration space. However, beyond the Land Resources and Environment Department's current agricultural, conservation, and outdoor recreational education programs we are anticipating additional programming through community partners utilizing the property. The partnership projects are split into two categories: demonstration fields and small-scale projects. Projects may be proposed by any individual or organization, however preference will be given to locally based educational institutions and conservation, or agricultural non-profit organizations. All projects will need to meet or align with the vision, goals, or objectives of this plan.

## Demonstration Plots

The demonstration fields will be on five year leases to be bid out on the same timeline as the rented cropland and pastureland. Demonstration fields will not have a rental fee, but instead will be paid through the community partners' input and maintenance into the land. The demonstration fields have an educational requirement, where the fields are publicly accessible to all visitors and will be used for educational events to promote and share the practices being demonstrated. It is anticipated that a number of proposals will be submitted for demo plots, therefore proposals will be evaluated with the following criteria.

- **Soil Health or Conservation Practices:** Proposals should note the soil health or conservation practices planned for implementation on the field(s) including but not limited to: no-till, cover crops, buffer strips, ungulate foraging, high-diversity seeding, or any other such practice.
- **Education & Outreach:** Projects should have an educational or community outreach component built in, whether it includes planned events, class(s), or its capacity for educational opportunities.
- **Capacity or Feasibility:** Organizations will be assessed on their capacity to implement the proposed project as well as the actual feasibility of the proposed project itself.
- **Innovation:** Proposals are encourage to take innovative approaches to problems that our agricultural community faces.
- **Partnership Capability:** Partners are urged to collaborate on projects to share resources and will assess proposed projects for their capability to include or bring in additional partners. County staff may assist with creating connections among partners.

## Small-Scale Projects

Small-scale projects may be submitted for approval at any point throughout the year. Projects may entail any objective as noted in this plan, or any other such design that meets a goal of this plan. Projects will be evaluated for approval based on: the alignment with the visions, goals, and objectives of this plan; education or community outreach components; and, the organization's capacity to implement the proposed project.



*Wheat field at County Farm with wooded hillside in distance. Photo courtesy of Justine Bula.*



# Strategic Planning

## **Vision Statement:**

The LRE Department envisions the County Farm becoming an important educational resource for Sauk County residents of all ages and backgrounds to learn about regenerative, profitable and resilient agricultural practices through on-site demonstration, research and collaborative partnerships. The County Farm will become a space where educational institutions, non-profits, public agencies, private entities, and any interested person in Sauk County can converge to learn about farming and train the leaders who will carry forward our community's agricultural legacy.

The Land Conservation Service Area was primarily responsible for setting the vision for the property given its role in overseeing the land in production, drafting lease agreements, and communicating with renters, as well its role coordinating educational programming and events. Over the next 20 years, the LRE Department foresees several changes to the County Farm in order to bring this vision to fruition. The most significant change involves the area where the former healthcare complex stood. Currently, this space is relatively dormant but has ample opportunity for activation. This plan proposes transforming the space into an educational learning hub for students across Sauk County. Community members will also be encouraged to utilize the space for educational events and programs. Another significant change for the County Farm will be setting aside acres of previously leased land to be used exclusively by community partners for demonstrating and researching with regenerative agricultural practices.

These changes and many more will be elaborated on in the subsequent sections, detailing the steps to reach this vision. The following goals and objectives have been developed to guide the evolution of the County Farm through the 20-year planning period. Some of these objectives are strategies that will continuously be enacted throughout the plan, such as partnerships, while infrastructure based items have a proposed installation timeline. The implementation of these goals and objectives in the next section are broken into three phases of development with corresponding phase maps noting possible locations of each installation.

## GOAL I:

**Encourage Sauk County farmers, through demonstration and research, to adopt conservation and resilient agricultural practices that improve soil health, promote biodiversity, wildlife, increase profitability, and protect water quality for the creation of resilient farms and communities.**

This goal will be achieved through the following objectives:


- Conduct regular soil health monitoring, such as Haney, phospholipid fatty acid analysis (PFLA) and infiltration tests. This will allow the Department to track the property's soil health longitudinally.
- Convert approximately 38 acres of cropland to rotational-grazing pasture. These areas were selected due to the relatively low performance for commodity crops and persistent standing water. This area located parallel with the unnamed tributary creek contains predominately hydric soils. Throughout the years, drainage tiles have been installed and replaced multiple times but continue to fail.
- Dedicate field(s) of high-visibility cropland to regenerative agriculture demonstration and research fields for use by community partners. Demonstration fields shall be provided rent free to community partners in exchange for their investment and management of the fields along with the Departments and other community partners opportunity to utilize the fields for education.
- Draft new lease agreements for farmers with the following baseline requirements:
  - Renters must meet all state Agricultural Performance Standards.
  - Renters must share profitability and production statistics with LRE staff for the purpose of public education and longitudinal analysis.
  - Renters must commit to follow nutrient and conservation management plans which will include practices such as : no-till; cover cropping; contouring; and rotational crop and grazing practices.
- The LRE Department will evaluate the efficacy of these different regenerative practices on an annual basis by reviewing the profitability and production data shared by renters and will work with them to iterate adjustments and solutions to ensure sustainable harvests and resilient soils.
- Develop a long-term forest management plan for the wooded region of the property with the assistance of the Wisconsin DNR. This will be the first time the wooded acreage on the property has been actively managed in decades. Management will focus on the reduction of invasive species, sustainable harvests, and supporting a diverse forest habitat.
- Develop a stream corridor restoration plan to stabilize the stream bank and reduce erosion. This area will be utilized as a riparian conservation demonstration area in which an array of practices will be installed along the corridor. Like the forest, this will be the first time the site's riparian corridor has been actively managed in decades.
- Create pollinator-friendly habitats by integrating native pollinator buffer strips into the cropland and plant pollinator-friendly perennial tree and shrub species throughout the property and wetland satellite area. This will provide critical habitat to native pollinators and provide additional educational opportunities.

## GOAL II:

**Educate the Sauk County agricultural community and broader public about the benefits of regenerative agriculture through collaborative and sustainable partnerships, on-site events, interpretive signage, and educational programming.**

This goal will be achieved through the following objectives:

- Install signage at the entrance near the intersection of State Road 154 and County Road CH to display site name and ownership. Since the closure of the Sauk County Healthcare Center, the County Farm has not had proper signage to identify the property and notify the public of the activities therein.
- Collaborate with School Districts across Sauk County and their FFA chapters to explore opportunities for students to conduct Supervised Agricultural Experience (SEA) projects, or other educational programs.
- Improve site access and facilities, including entrance road, site circulation, parking, ADA accommodation, and restrooms. While there is existing circulation and ingress-egress through the property, the roads are unpaved and rustic. An improved driveway, circulation and parking area will need to be developed with stormwater runoff infrastructure.
- Build an indoor classroom and outdoor shelter for hosting educational and public events. Alternatively, an existing storage shed could be retrofitted into an indoor event space. These facilities not only have the potential to host educational programming and activities for the County Farm, but function as an event rental space for broader use by Sauk County and the public.
- Develop a raised community garden bed area with ADA accessible pathways and collaborate with area Master Gardeners to provide educational initiatives. A commercial kitchen will be considered as an addition to the indoor classroom area to provide food processing, preserving, and cooking classes. This has the potential to serve as additional rental space and to be utilized by other County Departments for health and food security programming.
- Collaborate with educational institutions, public offices, local nonprofits, and others to create meaningful partnerships, programming, and events centered on educating the rising generation of farmers and the general public on the legacy and evolution of our local agricultural community.
- Construct a boardwalk and overlook at the wetland protection area south of the County Farm for public bird watching. Provide educational signage on flood control, importance of wetland habitat, prairie ecosystems and restoration efforts. This will improve public accommodation and access to the site.
- Encourage community partners to become involved or head projects on the property such as prairie restorations, community gardens, or any other such projects that promote the goals and vision of this plan.

- 
- A photograph of several tall, green stems of Common chicory (Cichorium intybus) with bright blue, daisy-like flowers. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The image is used as a background for the text on the page.
- Create recreational walking paths on either side of State Road 23 to guide visitors through the property’s different ecosystems and historical significance. Compliment walking paths with interchangeable, interpretive signage that highlight the various conservation and agricultural practices on site; integrate new signage with existing at the fire house and cemetery. The following paths are planned to highlight the property features.
    - Historic Path: This three-quarter of a mile path is designed to provide an ADA accessible path to expand on the property’s existing signage, and highlight the demonstration fields.
    - Southern Trail: The southern trail will feature the rotationally grazed pasture and follow along the unnamed tributary past the various stream corridor conservation practices.
    - Western Trail: This trail will provide access to the western portion of the property across the unnamed creek, call attention to aspects of the forest management plan, and provide an overlook.
  - Install a solar energy system on site; consider integrating a solar array into an outdoor event shelter or within the pastureland where animals could graze underneath. The installation of photo-voltaic solar arrays at the County Farm fits broadly within the County’s Grow Solar initiative.
  - Collaborate with community partners, cropland and pasture leaseholders to place temporary fencing around the cropland for forage and cover crop grazing. This may be utilized for educational events on grazing, temporary fencing and soil health components.
  - Continue to allow hunting on the property to maintain healthy community wildlife populations. Allow the property to be used for wildlife education and safety trainings.

*Up-close view of Common chicory. Photo courtesy of Maxwell Lohse.*

### GOAL III:

**Pay homage to the historic nature of the property by: preserving the historic fire house and cemetery; and, chronicling the people and events that have converged here.**

This goal will be achieved through the following objectives:

- Convert the historic fire house into a storage shed for tools and materials used by students and the public during on-site educational activities. The structures appearance shall remain the same but the renovations will allow it to become a usable structure again. This action will require a contractor to assess the current condition of the structure and recommend improvements to ensure safe use by staff and visitors.
- Donate the original horse-drawn fire hose that is currently stored within the fire house to a local museum or historical society. This action will give this historic object a more appropriate, permanent home as well as put the object to greater educational use.
- Install a community memorial garden in the front of the property that may include those people that have lived or worked on the property, or contributed to our local agricultural legacy. The former Healthcare Center maintained a memorial rose garden which will be restored in a new location and open to various plant species.
- Encourage the creation of an oral history or video project to record the stories of area citizens who have a connection to the former Healthcare Center. These recordings would be utilized as part of the History Walk interpretive signage.
- Encourage the use of a garden bed or open space for illustrating Ho-Chunk Nation cultivation practices and/or land stewardship.



*View of the back of fire house. Photo courtesy of Maxwell Lohse.*



# Implementation

After the 2022 adoption date, new leases for the Acropland, pasture, and demonstration plots will be announced for bidding in the fall. New leases will commence in February of 2023 along with enactment of other plan objectives. The implementation of this plan has been broken up into three development stages: Phase I: 2023-2027; Phase II: 2028-2032; and, Phase III: 2033-2042. The implementation timeline is suggested and is subject to change based on budget, staff time, and community involvement. Community partners and property stakeholders will be encouraged to contribute input at each stage of development.

**Phase I: 2023-2027.** The first phase will be concentrated on establishing the property as a public education/recreational space. This will include the first round of demonstration/test plots; the design and layout of the education hub by a landscape architect; construction of an indoor area with restroom and parking facilities; soil tests; pasture expansion; first set of ADA accessible garden beds/paths; prairie restoration; and an interpretive history trail with educational signage.

**Phase II: 2028-2032.** The second phase of implementation will be focused on expanding and improving areas installed/started in our first phase. The largest areas of expansion are expected to be needed for the demonstration plots and trail system. The community garden will be expanded as needed and the prairie restoration will be done in conjunction with other installations or as part of community projects. New additions to the educational area include an outdoor amphitheater/class room and a memorial garden.

**Phase III: 2033-2042.** The third phase of implementation will be centered on improving areas of existing infrastructure and strengthening community partnerships. Further expansion of the trail system will provide access to the western portion of the property. Any additional infrastructure such as a greenhouse, or commercial kitchen, will only be added with significant community support. All planned installations or expansions of infrastructure or projects shall be based on demonstrated community need.



Bumble bee on a sunflower. Photo courtesy of Justine Bula.



Murray cows in a pasture. Photo courtesy of Justine Bula.

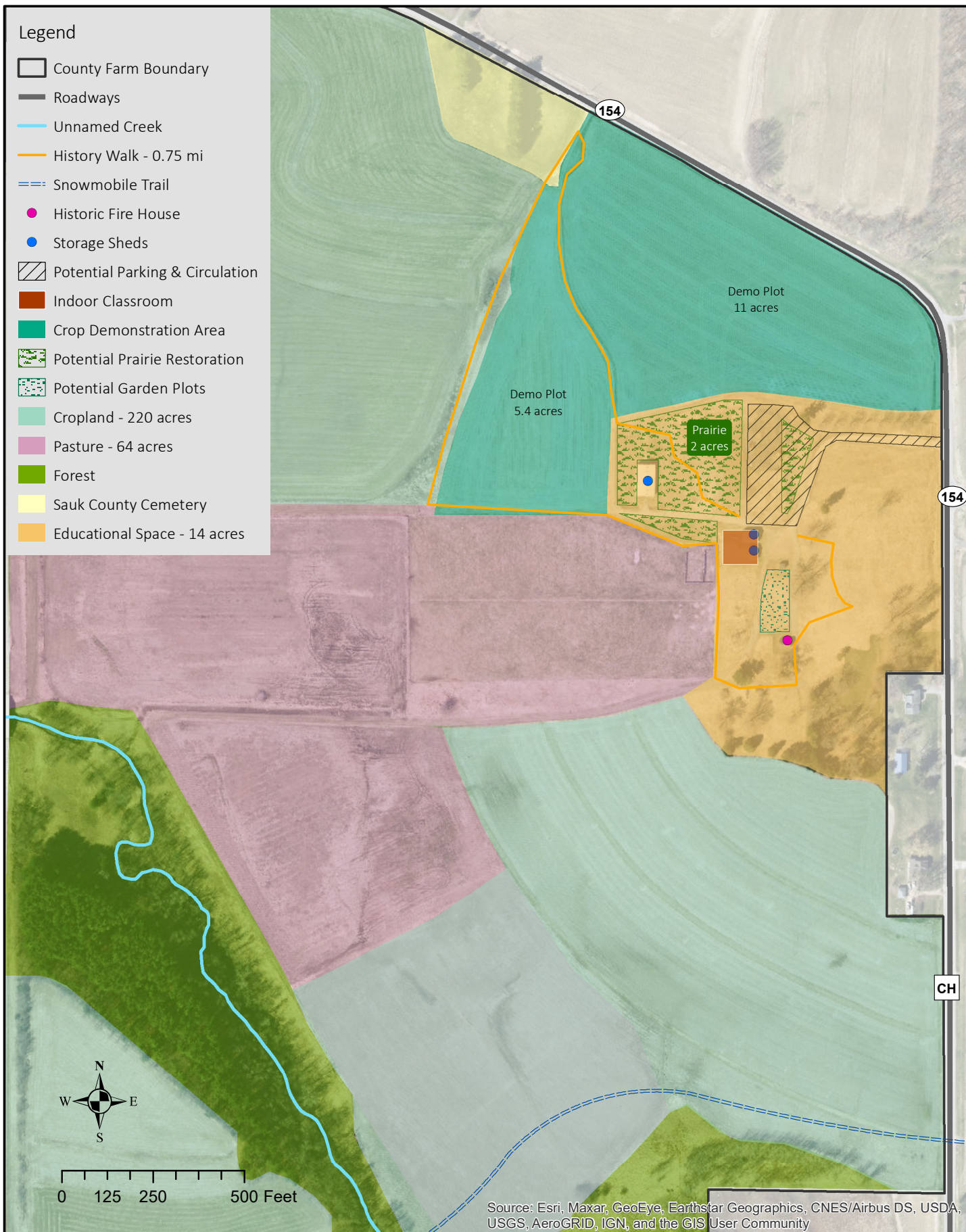


Hands holding soybean and rye plant with soil and root structure. Photo courtesy of Justine Bula.

# Phase I: 2023 - 2027

2023				
Task	Project Scope	Responsible Party	Funding Source	Estimated Cost
Pasture Expansion	22 acres of unproductive cropland will be transitioned to pasture, by extending fencing, waterlines, and seeding.	LRE	County Farm Revenue	\$14,000
Waterway & Agricultural Drainage Maintenance	Waterways and ditches will have woody vegetation removed, be regraded, and reseeded with native grass species where appropriate.	LRE	County Farm Revenue	\$5,000
New Cropland & Pasture Leases Begin	New leases will be announced and chosen in 2022 for 220 acres of cropland with a storage shed and 64 acres of pastureland. Staff will encourage the planting of pollinator friendly buffer strips, where appropriate.	LRE	N/A	N/A
Stream Corridor Restoration Plan	The unnamed tributary will be surveyed and plans drafted to stabilize banks, improve habitat, increase diversity, revamp vegetation and identify conservation practices for future exhibition. Construction will begin as funds are available.	LRE	County Farm Revenue	TBD
Demonstration Plots Begin	Demonstration plots planted and maintained by community partners will start on a five-year lease.	Community Partners, LRE	Community Partners, Grants	N/A
Engineering & Landscape Plans for the Educational Hub & Indoor Classroom	A landscape architect and engineer will be hired to design the Hub for superior ADA access, traffic flow, stormwater control, and placement of all features of the plan. Engineered construction plans for the indoor classroom, drive, parking lot, pathways, and stormwater facilities will be included.	LRE	General Fund	\$75,000
2024				
Construction Begin	Site clearing should begin during the winter months to clear hazard trees and remnant concrete to prepare for the construction of the improved drive, parking area, pathways and indoor classroom.	LRE	General Fund	\$750,000
Renovation of Historic Fire House	The fire hose and wagon will be donated to a local museum or historical society. The fire house will be renovated to be utilized as a garden/small equipment storage shed.	LRE	General Fund, Grants	\$25,000
Community Gardens	Installation of first set of raised community garden beds and gravel paths for ADA accessibility.	LRE	Grants/General Fund	\$10,000
Forest Management Plan	Work with WDNR Forestry to create a managed forest plan for the 120 acres of woodland.	LRE, WDNR	General Fund	TBD
2025 - 2027				
Interpretive History Walk	Installation of 0.75 mile path and educational signage to detail history of the property and description of demonstration plot practices.	LRE	General Fund, County Farm Revenue	\$15,000
Entrance Signage	Install signage at the entrance when construction is finalized.	LRE	County Farm Revenue	\$1,000

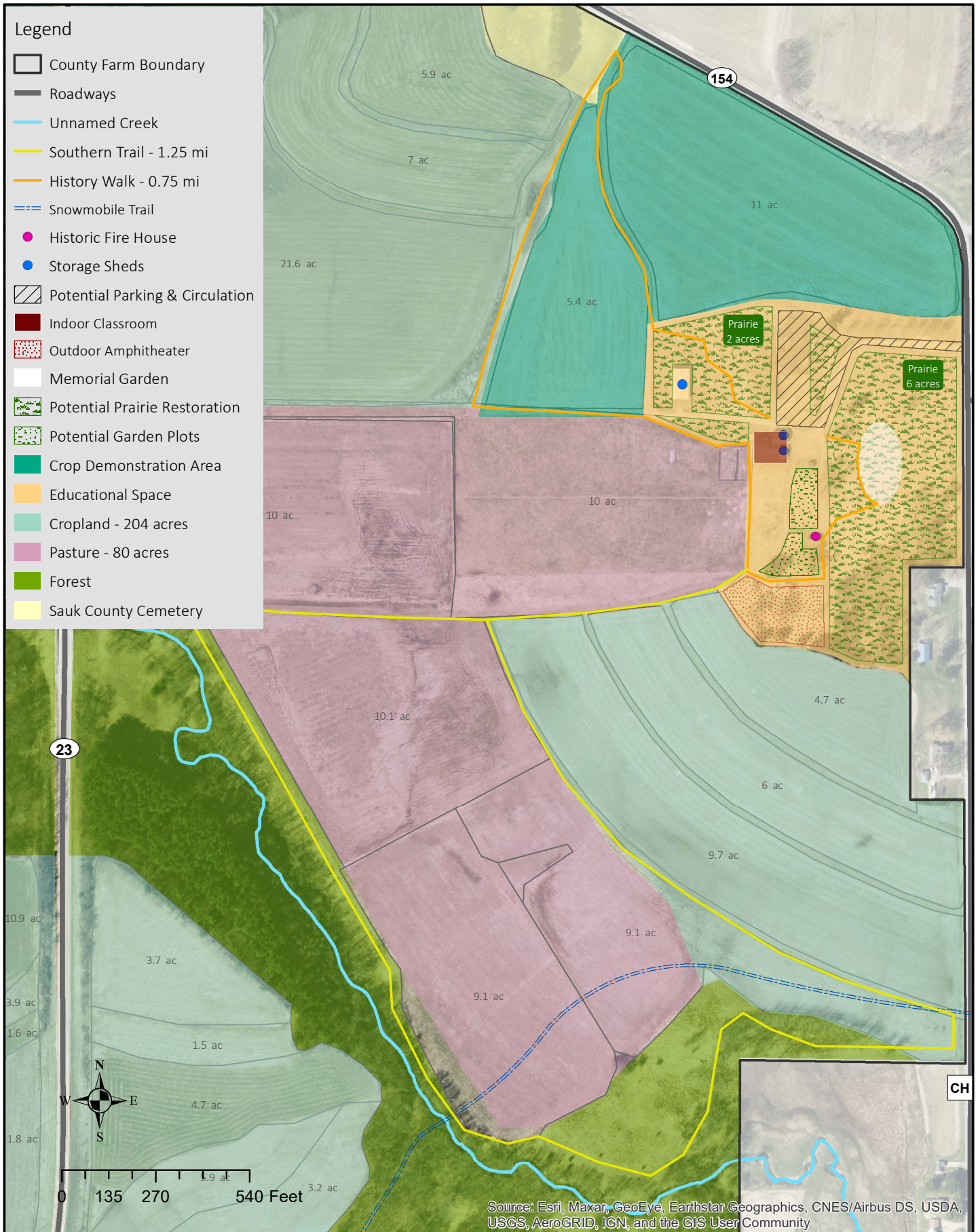
# Phase One: Proposed Development



# Phase II: 2028 - 2032

2028				
Task	Project Scope	Responsible Party	Funding Source	Estimated Cost
Pasture Expansion	Additional 16 acres of unproductive cropland will be transitioned to pasture, by extending fencing, waterlines, and seeding.	LRE	County Farm Revenue	13,000
New Cropland & Pasture Leases Begin	New leases will be announced and chosen in 2027 for 204 acres of cropland with a storage shed and 80 acres of pastureland.	LRE	N/A	N/A
New Demonstration Plot Leases Begin	Demonstration plots planted and maintained by community partners will start on a new five-year lease. Educational signage will be updated.	Community Partners	Community Partners, Cost-share	\$500
Engineering Plans for Outdoor Classroom Area	Engineered construction plans for the creation of an outdoor theater or amphitheater and connecting paths will be developed.	LRE	General Fund	\$25,000
2029				
Construction Begin	Outdoor shelter or amphitheater and ADA accessible connecting paths.	LRE	General Fund	\$150,000
Memorial Garden	Create a memorial garden to commemorate those that: lived or worked on the property; or that is a member of the agricultural community. A commemoration ceremony shall be held for the initial plantings.	LRE	County Farm Revenue	\$25,000
2030 - 2032				
Expand Community Gardens	Install additional raised beds and accessible paths. Work with local Master Gardeners to create programming.	LRE	County Farm Revenue, Grants	\$5,000
Stream Corridor Restoration	Continued restoration in accordance with the plan. Improvements along the corridor shall move from north to south. Restoration work located east of State Road 23 shall be used to illustrate conservation practices.	LRE	General Fund, Grants	TBD
Interpretive Southern Trail	Installation of 1.25 mile path and educational signage to detail pollinator buffer strips, rotational grazing and stream conservation practices.	LRE	General Fund, Grants	\$15,000
Snowmobile Trail Maintenance	Work with the Sauk County Snowmobile Association to replace the bridge over the unnamed tributary for safe passage of recreational vehicles and pedestrians.	LRE	Grants	\$100,000

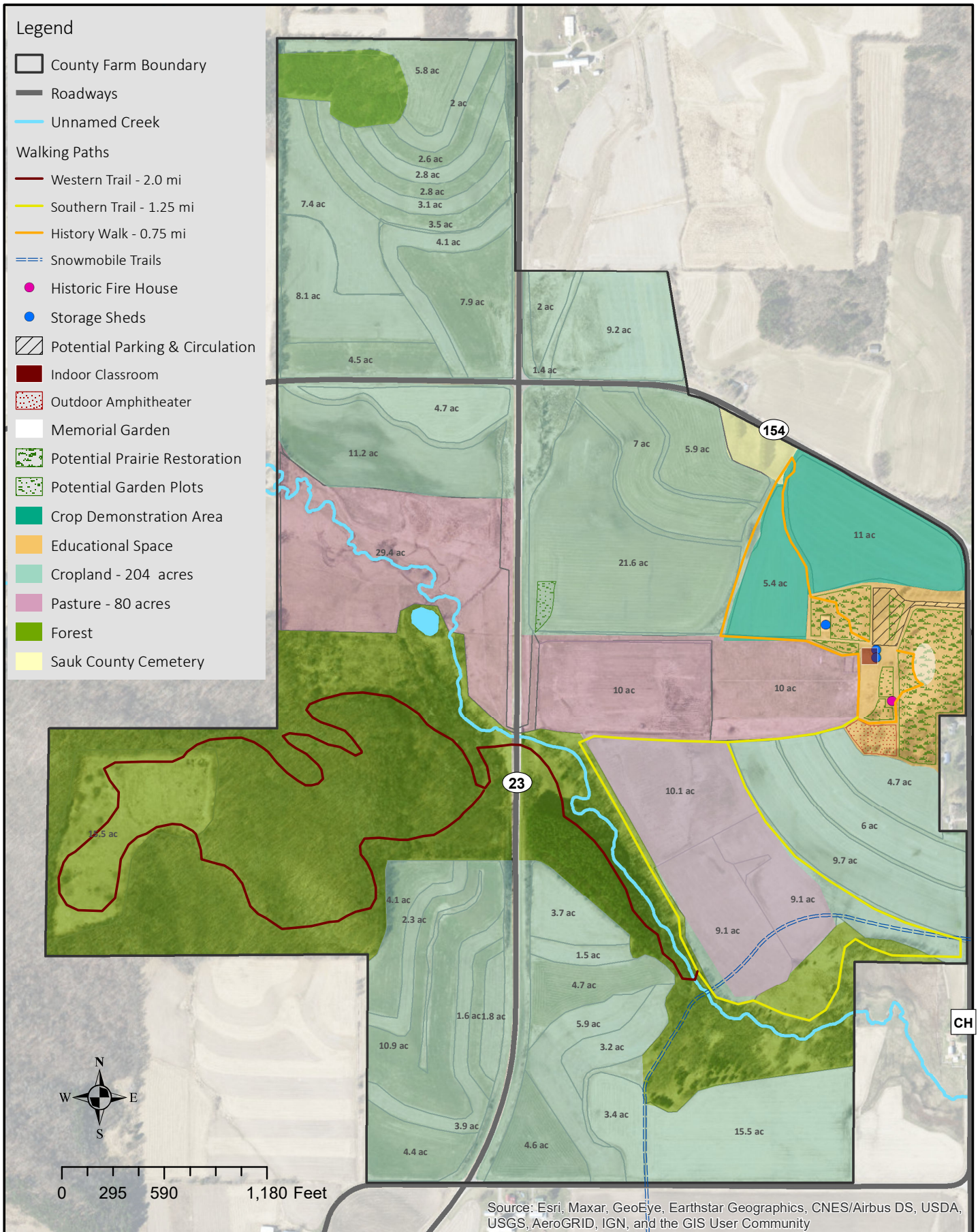
# Phase Two: Proposed Development



# Phase III: 2033 - 2042

2033 - 2037				
Task	Project Scope	Responsible Party	Funding Source	Estimated Cost
New Cropland & Pasture Leases Begin	New leases will be announced and chosen in 2032 for 204 acres of cropland with a storage shed and 80 acres of pastureland.	LRE	N/A	N/A
New Demonstration Plot Leases Begin	Demonstration plots planted and maintained by community partners will start on a new five-year lease. Educational signage will be updated.	LRE	Community Partners, Cost-share	\$500
Stream Corridor Restoration	Continued restoration in accordance with the plan.	LRE	General Fund, Grants	TBD
Expand Community Gardens	Install additional raised beds and accessible paths. Work with local Master Gardeners to create programming.	LRE	County Farm Revenue, Grants	\$5,000
Expansion of Memorial Garden	Additions to the memorial garden may be submitted at any time and there will be annual spring plantings for those being memorialized.	LRE	County Farm Revenue	TBD
2038 - 2042				
Expansion of Demonstration Plots	Consider the expansion of demonstration plots based on community partner needs, the number of proposals being submitted, and utilization of existing plots.	LRE	Community Partners, Cost-share, Grants	N/A
Western Interpretive Trail	Installation of 2.00 mile path and educational signage to detail forest management practices and provide an overlook on the southwest bluff.	LRE	County Farm Revenue, Grants, General Fund	\$70,000
Wetland Boardwalk	Install a boardwalk in the wetland restoration area to provide a more immersive experience and add educational signage.	LRE	Grants, General Fund, County Farm Revenue	\$20,000
Commercial Teaching Kitchen	Add an addition to the indoor classroom with a commercial teaching kitchen to teach seasonal cooking, preserving, and processing classes.	LRE	Grants, General Fund	\$300,000
Storage Buildings	Construct additional storage buildings as needed for renters, demonstration plots or other community projects.	LRE	General Fund	TBD

# Phase Three: Proposed Development



# Appendices





# Supplemental Funding Sources

The following supplement funding sources are listed by project eligibility: Agricultural Research, Educational, Education and Habitat Rehabilitation, Gardening, General Use, Infrastructure, Staff and Programming. Funding sources listed are eligible to a variety of organizations, projects, funding amounts, and application deadlines. There are also additional funding sources listed in the CORP. All funding details should be found with the organization as this serves as a general list only.

Agricultural Research				
Organization	Grant Name	Projects	Amount	Eligibility
American Farmland Trust	Brighter Future Fund	The Brighter Future Fund assists farmers in successfully launching, growing, and sustaining farms in the face of forces impacting the food and agricultural system, including the COVID-19 pandemic, changing markets, severe weather, and climate change.	Max \$5,000	Individual farmers or farm families
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)	Research and Education Grant Program	Projects that explore and promote environmentally sound, profitable, and socially responsible food or fiber systems.	\$10,000-\$250,000	
	Farmer Rancher Grant Program	Exclusively to fund farmers and ranchers striving for agricultural sustainability through on-farm research, demonstration, and education projects.	\$15,000-\$30,000	Individual or teams of farmers and ranchers
	Partnership Grant Program	Intended to foster cooperation between agriculture professionals and small groups of farmers and ranchers to catalyze on-farm research, demonstration, and education activities related to sustainable agriculture	Max \$40,000	Ag Professionals: University & Extension Educators, NRCS Field Staff, Ag consultants, Local nonprofit or agency staff
USDA WI Natural Resources Conservation Service	Environmental Quality Incentive Programs (EQIP)	The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary program that promotes agricultural production, forest management and environmental quality. EQIP offers financial and technical assistance to farmers and landowners to install or implement conservation practices on their and that protect soil and water quality. Example eligible practices: Grassed waterways, Cover crops, Nutrient management, Prescribed grazing plans, Forest management, Buffer strips, Contour strip cropping, Watering systems, Stream exclusion, Critical area plantings, and Pollinator Habitat.		Landowners or agricultural producers who farm agricultural land are eligible. Projects are selected on addressing resource concerns and providing environmental value.

USDA U.S. Department of Agriculture	Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities	USDA is committed to supporting a diverse set of farmers, ranchers and forest owners through climate solutions that increase resilience, expand market opportunities and strengthen rural America. The new Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities opportunity provides up to \$1 billion for pilot projects that create market opportunities for commodities produced using climate-smart practices.		State, County, city or township governments, Special district governments, Small businesses, For-profit organizations other than small businesses, Native American tribal governments and organizations, Nonprofits with or without 501(c)(3), Private and public institutions of higher education.
<b>Educational</b>				
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Grant Name</b>	<b>Projects</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>
American Farm Bureau	White-Reinhardt Grant Program	For education programs for grades K-12 to initiate new agricultural literacy programs or expand existing programs. Organizations and individual schools can work with their local Farm Bureaus to apply.	\$1,000	County and State Farm Bureaus
Compeer Financial	Agricultural Education Grant	This grant program is designed to help fund agricultural education and classroom equipment, so students have access to modern resources to broaden their perspective of the rapidly changing agricultural industry.	Max \$3,000	High School Agricultural Departments – located within Compeer’s Territory
Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin	Go Outside Fund	The Go Outside Fund provides funding to connect youth to outdoor, nature-based learning experiences. Teachers or partner organizations may apply for funding to cover costs that facilitate getting kids outside and hands-on with nature, such as purchasing field supplies, or paying for transportation, substitute teachers, or educator costs.	\$100- \$500	501(c)(3) non-profits, federal, state, or local government unit, tribal organizations, or an accredited school, college, or university
	Teachers’ Outdoor Environmental Education Fund	The Teachers Outdoor Environmental Education Fund was established to provide meaningful outdoor environmental education learning experiences for public school students.	Max \$1,000 One-to-one match required	Applicant must be a teacher at a Wisconsin public school (K-12).
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)	Youth Educator Grant Program	Youth educators that encourage youth to try sustainable practices and explore sustainable agriculture as a viable career option.	Max \$6,000	Educators
U.S. Department of Agriculture – National Institute of Food and Agriculture	Secondary Education, Two-Year Postsecondary Education, and Agriculture in the K-12 Classroom Challenge Grants (SPECA) Program	The (SPECA) program seeks to: (a) promote education in the food, agriculture, natural resources and human (FANH) sciences to help ensure the existence in the US of a qualified workforce to serve the FANH sciences system; and (b) promote complementary and synergistic linkages in education programs in the FANH sciences to advance excellence in education and encourage more young Americans to pursue and complete a baccalaureate or higher degree in the FANH sciences.	\$50,000-\$300,000	Public secondary schools, public or private, nonprofit junior or community colleges, Independent School Districts, State Controlled Institutions of Higher Ed and nonprofit organizations.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Environmental Education (EE) Grants	This grant program provides financial support for projects that design, demonstrate, and/or disseminate environmental education practices, methods, or techniques. All applicants must address at least one of the following educational priorities: Community Projects, Career Development, Environmental Education Capacity Building, Environmental Justice.		Local education agency, state education or environmental agency, college or university, 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, noncommercial educational broadcasting entity, tribal education agency
<b>Education &amp; Habitat Restoration</b>				
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Grant Name</b>	<b>Projects</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>
the bee conservancy	Sponsor-a-Hive	Places native bee houses and honeybee hives across the U.S. and Canada to empower underserved communities to grow food, bolster local ecology, and protect vital keystone species. They provide bee homes, ongoing support, and educational materials to schools, gardens, and other community groups to foster local native bee resilience.	Native bee home, instructions, and educational materials	Pre-K-12 schools, colleges, universities, tribal organizations, representatives of community gardens, environmental centers, public parks, and nature preserves
KidsGardening	Budding Botanist Grant	The Budding Botanist grant will help our young students learn about plants, explore their world, and inspire them to take care of the life they discover in their local ecosystems.	\$1,000	Any public, charter, or private school serving students in grades K to 12 that can demonstrate at least 40% of their students qualify for free or reduced meals.
	Little Seeds Pollinator Pals Grant	Designed to support youth garden programs interested in preserving and creating pollinator habitat to help rebuild declining pollinator populations in new or expanding pollinator gardens.	\$500	Any nonprofit organization, public or private school, or youth program.
Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin	C.D. Besadny Conservation Grants	The C.D. Besadny Conservation Fund was established to invest in grassroots conservation and education projects that benefit Wisconsin's lands, waters, and wildlife, and that connect people to Wisconsin's natural resources.	\$500- \$2,000 One-to-one match required	501(c)(3) non-profits, federal, state, or local government unit, tribal organizations, or an accredited school, college, or university
Sand County Foundation	High School Pollinator Habitat Grants	Gives high school students hands-on experience growing native wildflowers and establishing habitat for imperiled insect pollinators and monarch butterflies.	Seeds, Seedlings, Webinar, Consultation, and \$1,000	High School Teachers
Wild Ones	Lorrie Otto Seeds for Education (SFE) Fund	Wild Ones awards grant projects to purchase native plants and seeds to help establish a hands-on nature education area for youth engagement.	\$150- \$500	U.S. Schools, nature centers, public and non-profit places of learning.

## Gardening

Organization	Grant Name	Projects	Amount	Eligibility
The Fruit Tree Planting Foundation (FTPF)	FTPF Orchard	Dedicated to planting fruitful trees and plants to alleviate world hunger, combat global warming, strengthen communities, and improve the surrounding air, soil, and water. FTPF programs strategically donate orchards where the harvest will best serve communities for generations.	Trees, shrubs, on-site orchard design, horticulture workshops, and aftercare training.	Nonprofits, NGOs, public schools, government agencies serving a charitable purpose
KidsGardening	GroMoreGood Grassroots Grant	The GroMoreGood Grassroots Grant, brought to you by The Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation and KidsGardening, is designed to bring the life-enhancing benefits of gardens to communities across the United States.		Any nonprofit organization, public or private school, or youth program.
	Youth Garden Grant	The Youth Garden Grant supports school and youth educational garden projects that enhance the quality of life for students and their communities.	Gardening tools and supplies, \$250	Any nonprofit organization, public or private school, or youth program for students in K to 12.

## General

Organization	Grant Name	Projects	Amount	Eligibility
Compeer Financial	General Use Grant	The purpose of the General Use Grant Program is to fund programs and organizations whose work aligns with our mission of “Enriching agriculture and rural America”. In order to be considered for funding, requests for support must align with our mission, as well as one of the following focus areas: education, environment, technology, and quality of life.	Max \$10,000	Anyone that meets guidelines and criteria located within Compeer’s Territory
The National FFA Organization	Living to Serve Grant	Provide an opportunity for funding to support various types of service projects within one of the following focus areas: community safety; hunger, health and nutrition; environmental responsibility; or community engagement.	\$400- \$3,000	Middle/high school FFA chapters and state FFA associations/foundations
Sauk County Extension Education, Arts & Culture Committee	Good Idea Grant	The “Good Idea” grant program is designed to support the creativity of Sauk County artists, craftspeople, musicians, writers, historians and non-profit arts, humanities or historic preservation organizations to culturally enrich Sauk County communities.	Max \$500	Open
The Lawrence Foundation		The Lawrence Foundation is a private family foundation focused on making grants to support environmental, human services and other causes.	\$5,000- \$10,000	501(c)(3) non-profit organization
Patagonia		They support innovative work that addresses the root causes of the environmental crisis and seeks to protect both the environment and affected communities. They encourage work that brings underrepresented communities to the forefront of the environmental movement and defends communities whose health and livelihoods are threatened by environmental exploitation.	\$5,000- \$20,000	501(c)(3) non-profits or comparable non-profit status

Regenerative Agriculture Foundation (RAF)	grantmaking process	To date RAF's grantmaking has focused on farmer to farmer programs, supply chains, communications, and networks. In addition, RAF has a strong commitment to advancing racial equity and justice as essential components of a regenerative agricultural system.		Invitation-only process for grantmaking.
Waste Management	Community Impact Charitable Giving	They work with involved citizens, organizations, and corporate partners to promote civic pride, economic development, and revitalization. The following causes are supported: environmental conservation, environmental education, and community vitality.		501(c)(3) non-profits or public organizations where donations will be used exclusively for public purposes
<b>Infrastructure</b>				
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Grant Name</b>	<b>Projects</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>
Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin	The Norma and Stanley DeBoer Quiet Trails Fund	The Norma and Stanley DeBoer Quiet Trails Fund provides funding to support the creation and maintenance of quiet trails (e.g., walking, hiking, or skiing) in Wisconsin.	\$500- \$1,000	501(c)(3) non-profits, federal, state, or local government unit, tribal organizations, or an accredited school, college, or university
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Rural Development	Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program	This program provides affordable funding to develop essential community facilities in rural areas (>20,000 population). An essential community facility is defined as a facility that provides an essential service to the local community for the orderly development of the community in a primarily rural area, and does not include private, commercial or business undertakings.	Grants & Loans Vary	Public bodies, community-based non-profit organizations, federally recognized tribes
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources	County Conservation Aids	The development of structures, utilities, facilities or landscaping necessary for outdoor recreation use of an area. The implementation of a specific activity or set of activities to restore or enhance wildlife or fish habitat, natural communities, or shorelines. Repair or refurbishment of structures, fixtures, or substrates to restore to functional condition in a routine, scheduled, or anticipated fashion.		County and tribal governing bodies participating in the county fish and wildlife programs are eligible for this program
	Snowmobile Trail Aids	Snowmobile trail aids are entirely funded by sledders from registrations, trail passes, and gas tax. These grants are used to reimburse WI snowmobile clubs for their expenses related to snowmobile bridge and trail rehabilitation.		Wisconsin Counties administering a snowmobile program with local clubs

<b>Staff &amp; Programming</b>				
<b>Organization</b>	<b>Grant Name</b>	<b>Projects</b>	<b>Amounts</b>	<b>Eligibility</b>
AmeriCorps	AmeriCorps State and National Grants	AmeriCorps brings people together to tackle some of the country's most pressing challenges through national service and volunteering. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve with organizations dedicated to the improvement of communities through community development; disaster prevention and relief; education; employment, labor and training; environment; food and nutrition; health; and housing; natural resources.	Amounts Vary- Match Required	City, Township, State or County governments Native American tribal organizations or governments, nonprofits institutions of higher education, Special district governments Independent school districts, Public housing authorities/Indian housing authorities
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)	Professional Development Program Grant	Competitive grants emphasizing training agricultural educators in extension, NRCS, private, and not-for-profit sectors, using farmers as educators and addressing emerging issues in the farm community.	Max \$90,000	Extension, NRCS, Non-profits for State or multi-state PDP projects
U.S. Department of Agriculture – Food and Nutrition Service	Farm to School Grant Program	Competitive grants that support planning, developing, and implementing programs to help state, regional, and local organizations as they initiate, expand, and institutionalize farm to school efforts.	Max \$500,000	Local governments 501(c)(3) status nonprofits Native American tribal organizations, school districts

# Stakeholder Lists

## Educational - Youth

- Interview or Meeting Attendees:
  - Baraboo School District and FFA
  - Reedsburg Area School District and FFA
  - WI Dells School District
- Contacted:
  - Sauk Prairie School District and FFA
  - Spring Green School District
  - Weston School District

## Educational - Adult

- Interview or Meeting Attendees:
  - UW-Platteville Baraboo Sauk County
  - MATC Reedsburg
  - UW-Madison Division of Extension Sauk County

## Government Organizations

- Interview or Meeting Attendees:
  - Sauk County National Resource Conservation Service
  - Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - Sauk County Foresters
- Contacted:
  - Ho-Chunk Nation

## Non-Profit & Community Organizations

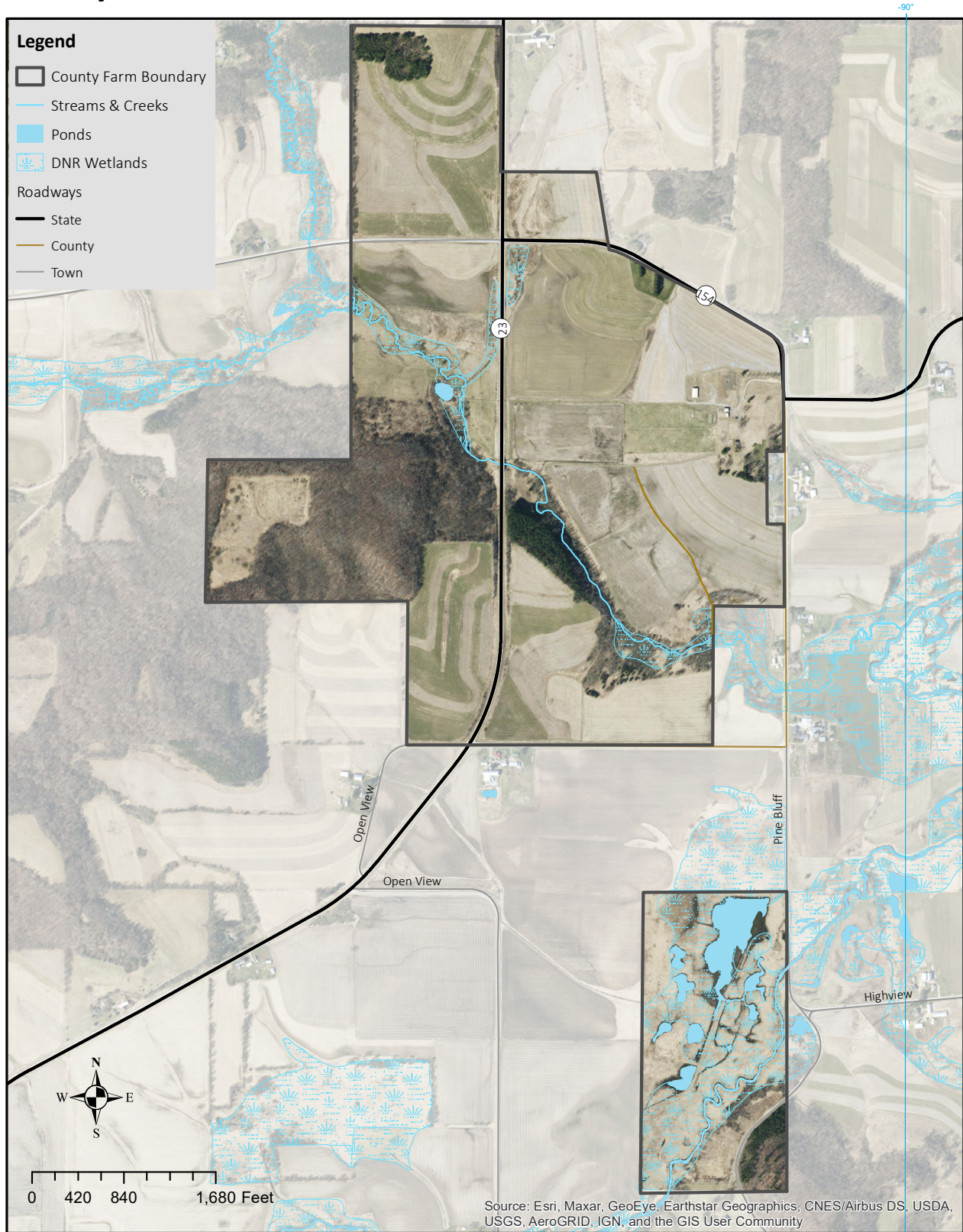
- Interview or Meeting Attendees:
  - Master Gardeners
  - Pheasants Forever
  - Sauk County Historical Society
  - Sauk County Snowmobile Association
  - Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SSWIG) - farmer led watershed protection group
- Contacted:
  - Driftless Area Land Conservancy
  - Ducks Unlimited
  - Farm Bureau
  - Farmer Angel Network
  - Ho-Chunk Nation
  - Lake Virginia Lake Association
  - Madison Audubon
  - Riverland Conservancy
  - Sauk County Farmer's Union
  - Savanna Institute
  - The Nature Conservancy
  - WI River Alliance
  - Wisconsin Wetlands Association

## Surrounding Landowners



# Property Maps

## County Farm Overview

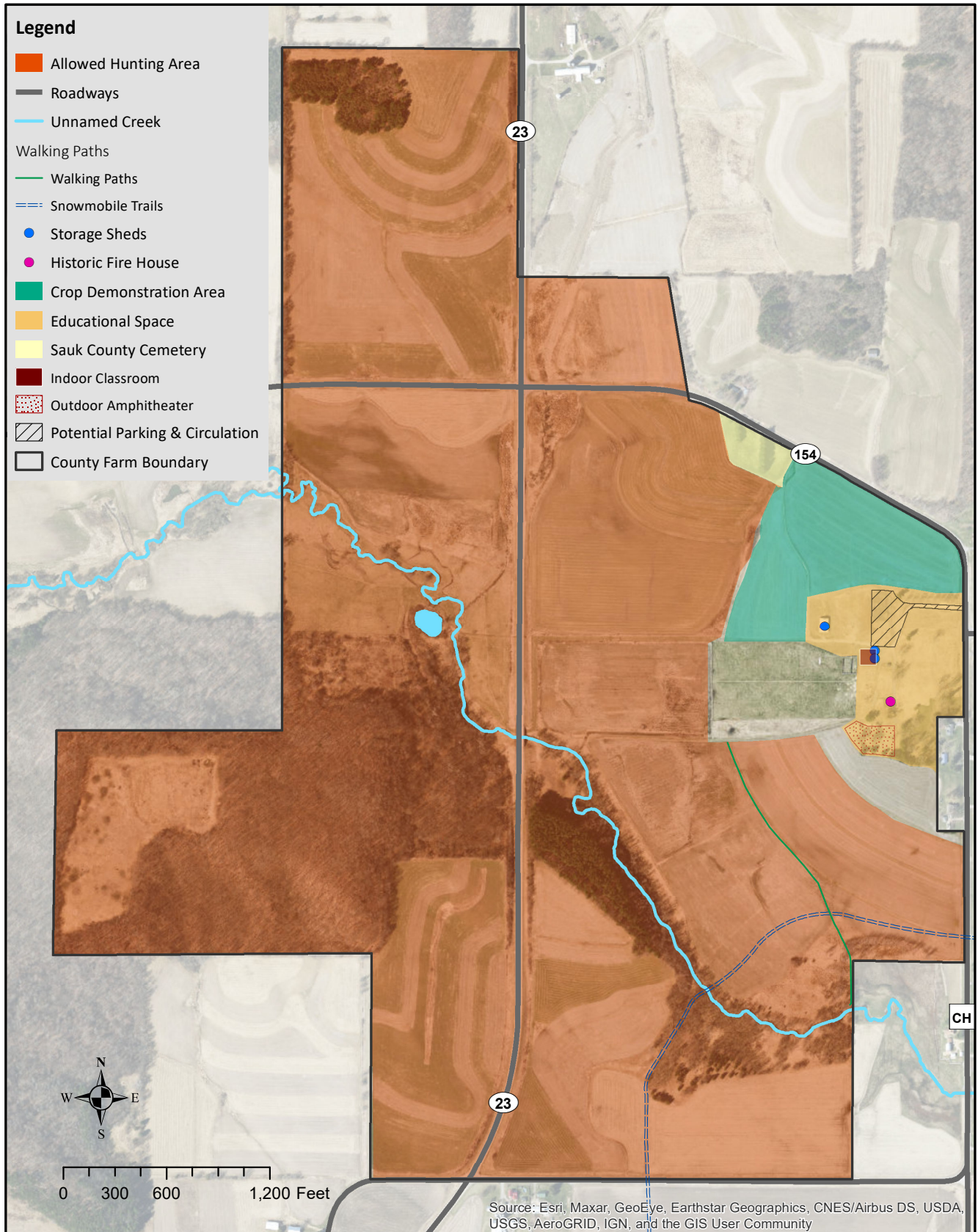




# County Farm Wetland Restoration Site



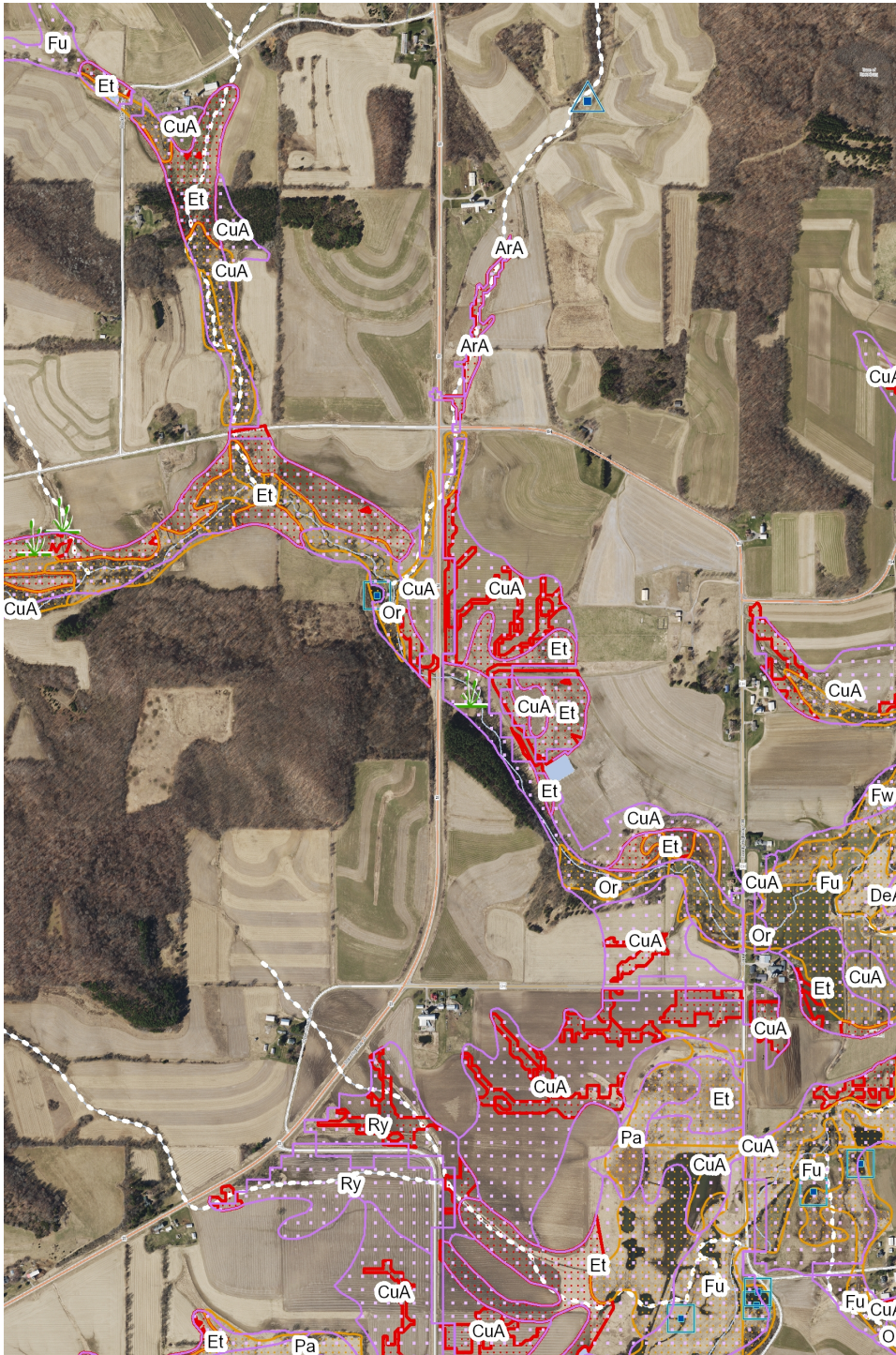
# County Farm Hunting Area



\*All hunting on Sauk County lands is subject to the regulations of Chapter 10 of the Sauk County Code of Ordinances.



# Sauk County Farm Water Resources



**Legend**

- Wetland Indicators
- Wetland Class Areas
- Wetland Class Points**
- Dammed pond
- Excavated pond
- Filled/draind wetland
- Wetland too small to delineate
- Filled excavated pond
- Filled Points
- Wetland Class Areas
- Filled Areas
- Wetland Identifications and Confirmations
- Potentially Restorable Wetlands (2016)
- Municipality
- State Boundaries
- County Boundaries
- Major Roads**
- Interstate Highway
- State Highway
- US Highway
- County and Local Roads**
- County HWY
- Local Road
- Railroads
- Tribal Lands
- Rivers and Streams
- Intermittent Streams
- Lakes and Open water
- Index to EN\_Image\_Basemap\_Leaf\_Off

0.5                      0                      0.25                      0.5 Miles  
 1: 15,840

NAD\_1983\_HARN\_Wisconsin\_TM  
 DISCLAIMER: The information shown on these maps has been obtained from various sources, and are of varying age, reliability and resolution. These maps are not intended to be used for navigation, nor are these maps an authoritative source of information about legal land ownership or public access. No warranty, expressed or implied, is made regarding accuracy, applicability for a particular use, completeness, or legality of the information depicted on this map. For more information, see the DNR Legal Notices web page: <http://dnr.wi.gov/legal/>

**Notes**





**SAUK COUNTY**  
PARKS + RECREATION



RESOLUTION # 35-2022

Resolution to adopt the 2022-2042 Sauk County Farm Property Master Plan as an Appendix to the 2020-2024 Sauk County Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Resolution offered by the Land Resources and Environment Committee

Resolved by the Board of Supervisors of Sauk County, Wisconsin:

**BACKGROUND:**

The Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department has created the 2022-2042 Sauk County Farm Property Master Plan (Appendix A) to ensure the continued management of the site's agricultural and natural resources, preservation of its historic features, and the transformation of the space into an educational resource for the communities of Sauk County. Over the next 20 years, the County Farm is envisioned to become an important educational resource for Sauk County residents of all ages and backgrounds to learn about regenerative, profitable, and resilient agricultural practices through on-site demonstration, research and collaborative partnerships. The master plan was designed for targeted collaboration between community stakeholders centered on the following goals: to create educational opportunities for Sauk County's current and future farmers through community partnerships; utilize the space for agricultural demonstration and research; and pay homage to the history and people of the property. The County Farm will become a space where educational institutions, non-profit organizations, public agencies, and any interested person in Sauk County can converge to learn about farming and train the leaders who will carry forward our community's agricultural legacy.

Additionally, the Plan is intended to expand upon the principles laid out in the Sauk County 2020-2024 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP). Primary priorities throughout the planning process include further development of the County Park System; resource management and stewardship; partnerships; and economic development and tourism.

**WHEREAS**, Resolution No. 150-2019 adopting the 2020-2024 Sauk County Outdoor Recreation Plan was approved by the Sauk County Board of Supervisors on January 21, 2020; and,

**WHEREAS**, the four goals, or priorities areas of the CORP are identified as: 1) Further development of the County park system; 2) Resource management and stewardship; 3) Partnerships, and; 4) Economic development and tourism; and,

**WHEREAS**, The Sauk County Farm Property Master Plan intersects with the following priorities and objectives of the Sauk County Outdoor Recreation Plan; priority: further development of the County Park System, objectives: develop master plans for Sauk County properties; priority: resource management and stewardship, objective: community education, and improved water quality; priority: partnerships, objectives: intersect with other units of government and non-government organizations (NGOs), and leverage recreational and planning grants; priority: economic development and tourism; and,

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Sauk County Board of Supervisors, met in regular session, does hereby adopt the 2022-2042 Sauk County Farm Property Master Plan attached hereto as Appendix A as an appendix to the 2020-2024 Sauk County Outdoor Recreation Plan.

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Approved for presentation to the County Board by the Land Resources and Environment Committee, this 15 day of March, 2022.

Consent Agenda Item: [ ] YES [ ] NO

Fiscal Impact: [ ] None [X] Budgeted Expenditure [ ] Not Budgeted

Vote Required: Majority = X 2/3 Majority = \_\_\_\_\_ 3/4 Majority = \_\_\_\_\_

The County Board has the legal authority to adopt: Yes X No \_\_\_\_\_ as reviewed by the Corporation Counsel, [Signature], Date: 03/10/2022.

Offered and passage moved by: Land Resources and Environment Committee

[Signature]  
MARTY KRUEGER, Chair

PETER KINSMAN, Vice Chair  
[Signature]  
DENNIS POLIVKA

[Signature]  
ROSS CURRY

[Signature]  
ROB NELSON

[Signature]  
VALERIE MCAULIFFE

[Signature]  
BRANDON LOHR

[Signature]  
RANDALL PUTTKAMER

Fiscal Note: The LRE 2022 Budget includes donation funds in the amount of \$4,055 for the maintenance of the area surrounding the historic 1921 fire house located on the property. Any additional improvements outlined in the Master Plan would be reviewed in future budget cycles.

MIS Note: The property would require the installation and maintenance of a wireless internet connection upon construction of the educational building. This will be reviewed in future budget cycles.





Dear Sauk County Board,

We, members of the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group (SSWIG) advisory board are writing to inform you of our support for the Sauk County Farm Master Plan proposed by the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment (LRE) Department. We ask for your support to approve this plan and establish this farm as a space where farmers and community members can demonstrate and research innovative farm management systems. This plan is very much in alignment with our organization's goal of increasing public awareness and understanding of the impacts regenerative systems have on soil health, water quality, and farm resilience.

The county farm could become a central location where local farmers can ground proof the viability of new management practices and share results with their peers. This kind of data sharing is more important than ever before in a time when farmers are faced with increasingly turbulent markets and weather conditions. To stay competitive Sauk County farmers must find ways to build more resilient operations capable of withstanding these conditions. To do so, farmers must identify management systems that can improve the productive capacity of their soils and reduce reliance on purchased inputs.

In recent years producer-led watershed protections groups across Wisconsin have been able to show that peer learning opportunities are one of the most efficient ways to accelerate the adoption of new farming practices. Farmers around the state have rallied around the peer-driven on-farm research, demonstration plots, and outreach events offered by these groups to improve management of their operations and the soils upon which they rely. Utilization of the farm as a demonstration site could bolster current peer-learning initiatives, building upon the efforts of SSWIG, Sauk County LRE, and numerous partner organizations.

Sauk County has a rich agricultural and conservation history. SSWIG asks for your support in building upon this legacy by adopting the Sauk County Farm Master Plan.

Sincerely,

Roger Bindl

Darren Yanke

Ron Schoepp

Ron Bula

Dale Gasser



**RIVER ALLIANCE**  
of WISCONSIN

To the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department,

River Alliance of Wisconsin would like to voice its support for the Sauk County Farm Property Master Plan. We would like to see the plan approved because it is a spectacular opportunity to provide a unique point of access for the community to learn about conservation work in farming. Giving the public a stronger understanding of where their food comes from, and an opportunity to get first-hand experience of conservation work in agriculture.

Opportunities to develop a property like this into a hub for community education and participation is a unique opportunity. There simply are not many sites that could be redesigned to achieve this, and we are excited to see it become a successful example that other counties can look to as a model. It's a forward-thinking approach to building new cultural, educational, and economic opportunities for residents in Sauk County and visitors from beyond it.

Over the last year, River Alliance has had the good fortune to build a relationship with the Sauk Soil and Water Improvement Group. We share a mission to protect and restore Wisconsin's water. We decided to work with producer-led groups like SSWIG because we firmly believe that there's a lot of good work being done by farmers to protect the environment and we want the leading lights of conservation agriculture in Wisconsin to get the resources they need to influence their peers. The SSWIG farmers are incredible advocates for conservation who do more than just talk about the importance of water protection, and we want to help them thrive.

The Sauk County Farm is a significant boon for both groups like SSWIG and the prospects for making conservation farming the industry norm. First, it could provide them with an excellent space to do field demonstrations that could convince farmers who are hesitant to try better practices on their own farm to try something new. Field plots are also educational for the public and could provide chances to work with researchers on the next big thing in conservation.

Our experience with producer-led groups in the state shows that the counties showing the greatest successes in agricultural conservation have active watershed groups that include not only farmers but also conservation organizations, citizen water protection groups, and business supporters. The Sauk County Farm plan is a unique chance to build a diverse hub for learning and advocacy that brings these groups together. We encourage you to adopt the plan.

Best Regards,

Michael Tiboris  
Director, Clear Water Farms Program  
River Alliance of Wisconsin  
mtiboris@wisconsinrivers.org | 608-257-2424x125



Van Orden Mansion  
1903

# Sauk County Historical Society

INCORPORATED NOVEMBER 24, 1905.

OUR AIM: TO COLLECT, PRESERVE AND SHARE SAUK COUNTY HISTORY.



Sauk County History Center  
1917

March 8, 2022

Land, Resources and Environment Committee  
Sauk County Board of Supervisors

As one of the oldest properties owned by Sauk County, the land now known as the Sauk County Farm has a storied past rooted in community care and agriculture. The master plan developed by the Sauk County Land, Resources, and Environment staff for the property provides a clear and detailed use for the property that honors its past and lays out a plan for the future that will benefit Sauk County residents.

The Sauk County Historical Society is pleased to support this plan and encourages its adoption. SCHS offers its support wherever possible for implementation of the plan especially related to projects involving the history of the land.

Sincerely,

Mona Larsen  
President

**SAUK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
900 Second Avenue ❖ P.O. Box 651 ❖ Baraboo, WI 53913  
608-356-1001 ❖ history@saukcountyhistory.org ❖ www.saukcountyhistory.org

March 8, 2022

Land Resources and Environment Committee  
Sauk County Board of Supervisors  
505 Broadway  
Baraboo, WI 53913

To the Land Resources and Environment Committee,

I am writing to demonstrate my support for the proposed Sauk County Farm Master Plan. I am a fourth-generation farmer on my family's home farm in the towns of Honey Creek and Troy. I think this plan represents a great opportunity to achieve several important goals:

- showcase regenerative agricultural practices and share that experience with local farmers to promote their use and understanding.
- educate the public, which is increasingly more disconnected from farming.
- inspire youth (K-12, 4-H, FFA) that visit or work on projects at the county farm to get involved with agriculture.
- maintain and improve upon the property that has been owned by the county for 150 years.

I believe that the alternative of selling this important property would be short-sighted and contrary to the interests of promoting the future of agriculture in Sauk County. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Dale Gasser

E7415 Spring Drive  
Sauk City, WI 53583

cc: Brandon Lohr, District 26 Supervisor



**Marty Moses**

**Wisconsin State Coordinator**

**Pheasants Forever, Inc.**

S8524 Giese Drive, Plain, WI 53577

p. (608) 712-8625

[mmoses@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:mmoses@pheasantsforever.org)

03/04/2022

Dear Land Resource and Environment Committee,

On behalf of *Pheasants Forever Wisconsin* I am pleased to offer our endorsement and support of the Sauk County Farm Master Plan. Sauk County has a diverse landscape and as such, has just as much diversity in the farms that exist here. This diverse landscape also provides challenges to farming including soil erosion, agricultural runoff, flooding, and drought. I am pleased to see the Sauk County Farm Master Plan taking the initiative to seek innovative methods to address these challenges in Sauk County.

One of the goals of *Pheasants Forever Wisconsin* is to support high quality wildlife habitat by helping the farmers and landowners of Sauk County, along with other areas of Wisconsin, achieve their land management objectives while also adopting best management practices for natural resource conservation.

We support how the Sauk County Farm aims to strengthen relationships between agriculture and conservation. *Pheasants Forever Wisconsin* is prepared to dedicate time from our Precision Agriculture and Conservation Specialist, our Farm Bill Biologist, and our Sauk County Chapter network to support this Master Plan. We see how the Sauk County Farm can be a place to promote conservation practices, perennial vegetation cover, alternative crops, and other practices that make economic sense for farmers while also enhancing the local habitat availability.

We encourage the committee to approve the Sauk County Farm Master Plan. The County Farm will help to strengthen existing partnerships and provide new opportunities for producers in Sauk County to learn and adopt resource conservation actions. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at through email at [mmoses@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:mmoses@pheasantsforever.org) or phone at 608-712-8625.

Sincerely,

Marty Moses, Wisconsin State Coordinator for Pheasants Forever



To Whom it May Concern,

The Baraboo FFA Chapter and Agricultural Education Program is in full support of the Sauk County Farm Master Plan. We believe it will provide invaluable experiences for our students and FFA members. Our program does not currently have land to run test plots, practice regenerative agriculture, or the ability to experience many of the learning opportunities that will be provided by the farm. Having access to this facility allows our students first hand experience with current industry practices and the ability to witness scientific experimentation. We are grateful to have access to such a cutting edge facility and look forward to utilizing this partnership in the future.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions!

Sincerely,

Kristi Puntney & Marlee Kuhn

[kpuntney@barabooschools.net](mailto:kpuntney@barabooschools.net) 608-355-3940 x 2140

[mkuhn@barabooschools.net](mailto:mkuhn@barabooschools.net) 608-355-3930 x 3216



Cassandra Fowler, *Associate Planner*  
Land Resources and Environment

Dear Ms. Fowler,

The Farmer Angel Network (F.A.N.), builds strong rural communities that support agriculture by providing education, resources, and fellowship with a focus on mental health, through;

- Fellowship and support for farmers
- Build community connections/ networks among farmers and between farmers and their communities
- Education and resources
- Mental health support
- Appreciation for farmers
- Celebrate and embrace rural culture

Since 2019, the Farmer Angel Network has been working across Sauk County to provide education about 8 key areas of wellness to agricultural audiences, to increase resilience, expand access to resources and facilitate strong, healthy communities. As strong farm & community advocates we were excited to learn of the Sauk County Master Plan.

The proposed Sauk County Master Plan *not only* directly supports the research, education and regeneration of the long term future for agriculture in Sauk County, it also clearly sets out conservation plans regarding the existing history, practices and legacy that speaks to the heart and soul of the rural communities of Sauk County. So many farmers and their families have been, and continue to be, devastated by the ongoing economic struggle to sustain their livelihoods. The formidable loss and trauma experienced by this crisis and the long road to recovery makes growth and expansion a challenge at best.

That Sauk County would invest now, and into the future, to change the face of this crisis for area farm families speaks volumes towards the care of the people and the land they've cultivated for decades. In order to succeed and come through the farm mental health crisis, our farmers need to see real investments like this. The open partnership with education, business and local community creates endless possibilities that help mitigate risk and loss for the individual farmer, while allowing for that much needed swing in growth on our existing agricultural geography. We know that the overall progress of this plan will take time, but if given the opportunity to succeed, the potential is far and wide reaching.

On behalf of the families, agricultural business partners, and communities we support; the Farmer Angel Network fully supports the Sauk County Master Plan and looks forward to promoting its success in years to come.

Sincerely,

Farmer Angel Network Committee





**Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON  
SAUK COUNTY

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March 3, 2022

Land Resources & Environment Department  
Attn: Cassandra Fowler  
505 Broadway  
Baraboo WI 53913

RE: Sauk County Farm - Letter of Support

The UW-Madison Division of Extension, Sauk County enthusiastically supports the development of the Sauk County Farm as an educational showcase for all the people of Sauk County. This educational farm has the potential enrich so many lives in numerous, positive ways. The many educational, recreational, research and natural entertainment opportunities truly provide something for everyone. The added public value for county residents and potentially many Wisconsinites will be enjoyed for many years. This special opportunity does not come along very often; it is incumbent on the Sauk County Supervisors to take full advantage and approve the proposed Sauk County Farm Plan.

Respectfully,

Jeff Hoffman  
Area Director, UW-Madison Division of Extension

JH/jlg

**From:** [Marti Prorok](#)  
**To:** [Cassandra Fowler](#)  
**Subject:** Sauk County Farm  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 9, 2022 5:59:11 PM

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Dear Cassandra,

Thanks for sending me the draft of Sauk's project.

I really appreciate the grant I received from Sauk last year. Everything my team and I do on Metcalf Prairie focuses on education and creating a sense of community. Your team has made this possible. Thanks so much!

I am fascinated by the scope of your prospective project! You truly have engaged many-hands-helping with this educational and community site.

As a retired Clinical Psychologist and professor, I am particularly interested in the "Poor Farm." I know little of its history and I hope to learn more. All I know is that when people connect with Nature it is very therapeutic and can be life-changing. I wonder if the "Poor Farm's" residents learned useful skills as well as healthy ways to interact with humans, plants and animals that changed their lives. Your gardens will keep their experience alive.

Your project has great potential. I look forward to providing a pair of helping hands along the way. You invested in my projects so why shouldn't I invest in yours (and our community)!

Thanks again, Marti Prorok, PsyD