



Sauk County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

2025 - 2029





SAUK COUNTY
PARKS + RECREATION

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Sauk County Residents,

It has been almost five years since the adoption of the most recent Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The Department worked hard to implement the goals and objectives identified within that plan. But now, it is time to update the plan and create new goals and identify new opportunities for the Department to achieve in the upcoming years. It is with great pride that I present to you the 2025-2030 Sauk County Outdoor Recreation Plan.

The Sauk County Park system does more than provide recreational amenities and open spaces for our residents and visitors; the system exemplifies our cultural identity and embraces a natural legacy that we hope will be available for future generations. It is the goal of department staff to provide well-maintained facilities, creative educational opportunities, and recreational diversity that allows a broad spectrum of residents and visitors to enjoy their outdoor experiences. The Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan is the document that sets the baseline for where we are now, provides a vision for our parks and open spaces in the future, and identifies the opportunities and challenges that we may face through plan implementation.

While the vision of the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan remains unchanged; which is "to connect people to the rich natural, cultural and historical resources of Sauk County, and create outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities now and in the future"; the strategies and implementation goals have changed due to the adoption of several other related plans, to include: While Mound County Park Master Property Plan, Bluffview Community Park Master Plan, ADA Facility Audit and Transition Plan, Man Mound National Historic Landmark Property Master Plan, Yellow Thunder Memorial Property Master Plan, and the Sauk County Farm Property Master Plan. Each of these plans furthers the overall goals identified within the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and forges the path to ensure a viable and sustainable environment for future generations.

Currently, our parks and natural areas offer a broad range of opportunities for recreation activities and exploration throughout the County. From picnicking in the park to learning about the rich Native American history and traditions; from biking the Great Sauk State Trail to taking a horseback ride through White Mound or riding along one of our many ATV and snowmobile trails; from paddling the Baraboo River to exploring the area's ecosystems and discovering unique flora, fauna, and wildlife that call Sauk County home – there is something for everyone.

While the future holds great opportunities, it continues to present us with challenges. As our population increases, so does the demand on our park facilities and natural areas. To ensure the viability of these natural spaces, an analysis of the carrying capacity for each property, to identify what an area can sustain without degrading our natural resources is an important consideration prior to further development. While the plan identifies opportunities for acquiring land and planning for additional County parks as well as investing in facility upgrades at current facilities, a balance of these needs to potential costs and additional staff is necessary.

As we work to implement the plan's goals and objectives, communication, collaboration, and partnerships with other local units of government, businesses, and non-profit groups to plan for improvements will be a key to our success. Sauk County understands the importance of these collaborations to support the shared goals that we all have for Sauk County's natural environment and recreational resources.

The Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan continues to serve as a critical first step to ensuring that we can reach our goals. I invite everyone to join the staff of the Land Resources and Environment Department and our partners in the implementation of the 2025-2030 Sauk County Outdoor Recreation Plan.



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Special Thanks:

A special thanks to members of the public who took the time to fill out the survey, offer online feedback on the goals and objectives, and/or attended the open house at White Mound County Park. Thank you to the stakeholder groups who took the time to speak with CORP team staff members and share their interests, concern, and ideas for the Plan.



Sunrise over White Mound Lake



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Executive Summary

Sauk County understands the social, economic and environmental elements of implementing the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. Residents of and visitors to Sauk County have also consistently placed a high value on land and natural resource protection, planning and community development, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Historically, the three disciplines of land conservation, planning and zoning, and parks and recreation were structurally under separate and distinct county departments: Land Conservation, Planning and Zoning, and Parks and Recreation. Overtime, public expectations and policy direction by elected officials emphasized the need to achieve greater and measurable results that had the desired and intended impact to plan for and protect the County's vital natural resources for future generations. To meet this demand, it was incumbent on Sauk County to identify synergies and efficiencies between these three departments. Initially, the three separate departments relied on staff expertise from one or both of the other departments to accomplish tasks or implement programs that were unique and crossed traditional department responsibilities. However, as the demand for measurable outcomes increased, this model proved too cumbersome and expectations were increasingly difficult to meet.

Today, the three departments now form a single department called the Land Resources and Environment (LRE) Department. Now under a single budget and common oversight committee, the LRE Department maintains its original department titles, but now as LRE Department divisions: Land Conservation, Planning and Zoning, and Parks and Recreation. Under the direction of an LRE Department Director, a division manager, is responsible for meeting public expectations and policy direction within their respective program area as well as to cooperate and collaborate with other areas of expertise within the department. The CORP represents public expectations and as adopted by the Sauk County Board of Supervisors, the Plan represents the policy direction to the LRE Department. With the combined department structure and synergies between the three divisions, Sauk County is well positioned to improve and expand park and recreational opportunities in Sauk County.

This document comprises the 2025-2029 Sauk County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The Plan is necessary for grant eligibility and articulates a vision for expanding parks and nature-based outdoor recreation opportunities in Sauk County. As the LRE Department works to implement the Plan, the goals and objectives will provide guidance for planning and policy decisions over the next five years.



Sandhill crane at the North End Boat Landing in winter

The first CORP for Sauk County was developed in 1970. Since that time, the County has seen modest growth, demographic shifts, and several extreme flooding events, that have challenged local communities. Since the establishment and implementation of the 2020 CORP, park and recreation projects have generated enthusiasm for recreation opportunities in Sauk County, such as the Great Sauk State Trail, with progress being made towards constructing a pedestrian bridge across the Wisconsin River; the County has done extensive renovations at White Mound County Park since taking ownership and most recently renovated the equestrian campground on-site; and in 2022 established the Sauk County Farm as a recreational and agricultural demonstration site.

The first chapter is an introduction to the CORP and includes the vision statement, a brief outline of the goals and priority areas, and a brief description of the importance of outdoor recreation in Sauk County. The second chapter is a full inventory of public properties owned by the County. The third chapter outlines outdoor recreation trends nationally, in the State of Wisconsin, and the Southern Gateways region of Wisconsin, which includes Sauk County.

The fourth and fifth chapters offer a description of Sauk County as a whole, including an overview of demographics, education, and economy, as well as topography, resources, and climate.

The sixth chapter is the culmination of the Plan, outlining the values, goals, and objectives that were originally developed over a period of three months with input from staff meetings, public surveys, and stakeholder interviews. Upon the five year update, each value, goal and objective were scrutinized for their effectiveness and implementation to establish the direction for the next five years. The core values guiding the plan are: Community Well-being, Extreme Weather Preparedness, Sustainable Building Practices, Economic Benefit, Equity, and Stewardship of Natural Resources. Four goals or priority areas have been identified: 1) Development of the County park system; 2) Resource management and stewardship; 3) Partnerships, and; 4) Economic development and tourism. Each of the four areas have objectives, which are clearly defined action steps that will enable the LRE department to measure progress during implementation. The seventh chapter summarizes the planning process and offers a brief description of past versions of the CORP along with other relevant documents from various units of government and other entities.

The CORP concludes with appendices. Appendix A is a list of grant and funding programs. Appendix B lists non-profit conservation organizations active in Sauk County. Appendix C are the County Parks and Recreation Master Plans. A list of stakeholders and our public input survey has been included in Appendix D.



Dried berries on a twig



Introduction

OUTDOOR RECREATION IN SAUK COUNTY

Located in south central Wisconsin, Sauk County sits at the edge of the Madison Metropolitan area, where public demand for access to outdoor natural spaces and recreation is steadily increasing. Sauk County is rich in natural resources, diverse wildlife habitat, and opportunities for outdoor recreation, which is a major source of tourism income. Uniquely positioned to serve the growing interests of regional outdoor enthusiasts, Sauk County must continue to protect its natural heritage while maintaining, improving and expanding public access to open spaces, waterways, parks and trails.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Sauk County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) is to establish outdoor recreation priorities; which protect, conserve and manage lands owned by Sauk County for current and future generations. This includes recreational programming and opportunities for the five-year period from 2025-2029. This document serves as a guidance tool for current and future outdoor recreation decisions. The plan encourages an integrated and connected system of public lands, recreation spaces and unique places that a diverse population has the ability to access and a range of opportunities to enjoy. Lastly, the plan identifies the linkages between outdoor recreation, natural spaces, community health, and a thriving economy.

The County works in coordination with municipalities, the State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and non-profit conservation organizations to provide a full range of outdoor recreation opportunities and natural spaces for its residents. However, it is not the intent of the Sauk County CORP to serve as the plan for the individual units of government within the County, the WDNR, WisDOT or non-profits. Other planning documents from these entities will be referenced as necessary.

MISSION STATEMENT

While the Sauk County CORP is necessary for maintaining eligibility to apply for and receive grants; the CORP offers a vision for the future and sets the course for long-term preservation and expansion of outdoor recreation opportunities by setting goals and clearly defining objectives to achieve them. The Plan is ambitious, but it is with boldness and ambition that we set forth to accomplish these goals and secure the County's future as a leader in Wisconsin for outdoor recreation.

STATEMENT ON EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Sauk County provides an inclusive parks system for all residents, regardless of age, race, gender or gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, place of residence, veteran status, physical ability, cognitive capacity, or family, marital or economic status.

Sun filtered through hemlock forest

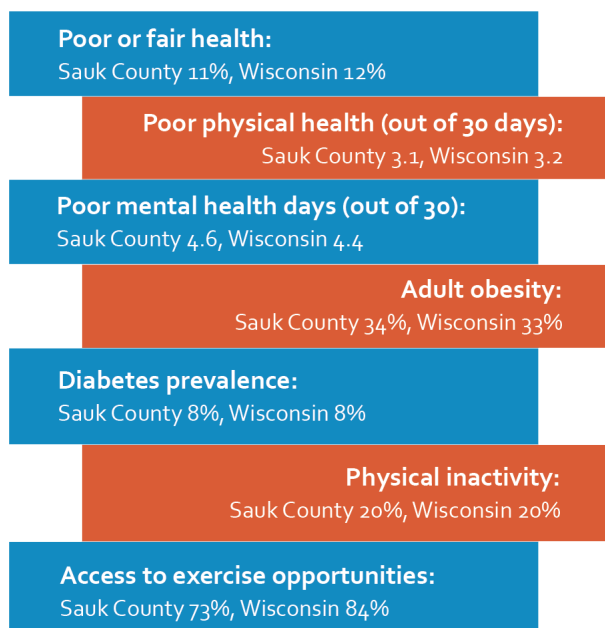


Bicyclists on GSST rails with trails segment

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Health and wellness are top priorities for parks and recreation plans and programs across the country. This is in response to a growing awareness of the role outdoor recreation and access to natural open spaces play in physical and mental health, and overall quality of life. Access to parks, trails and open spaces encourage active lifestyles, which help counteract health challenges like heart disease and obesity. Parks, open spaces, and nature are also associated with improved mood stabilization, stress reduction, better mental functioning, increased creativity, and a greater sense of well-being. Not only is the access to parks vital but studies have shown that the greater the resources (i.e. funds, staffing, maintenance, etc.) spent on parks and the activities available, the greater the physical activity levels of the surrounding community. According to a study in 2007 looking at youth activities, “an extra \$10 spent per capita on parks and recreation is associated with a third a day more per week of vigorous exercise” (Cawley et al. 2007)

2023 County Health Factors



Source: <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>

As noted, Sauk County is compared with the State of Wisconsin on several measures of environmental factors, such as access to exercise opportunities and health outcomes.

The findings also include the determination that 10% of health outcomes are related to physical environment. In Sauk County, over 1 in 3 adults are obese, nearly 1 in 12 adults have diabetes, 1 in 5 adults are physically inactive, and 1 in 4 adults lack access to exercise opportunities. While many environmental and social factors contribute to poor health outcomes, access to outdoor recreation can encourage healthy living and help mitigate some of these outcomes. The act of participating in outdoor recreational activities and simply viewing natural scenery has been found to reduce stress and promote healthy habits, so much so that parks and recreation facilities have been recognized as a health service (Godbey, 2009). Fortunately, Sauk County is well-positioned for meeting a wide variety of outdoor recreation needs year-round. State, county, municipal and private properties provide an array of attractions for people of all ages and abilities.

In 2021, the Sauk County Health Department conducted a Community Health Needs Assessment. The findings include the determination that the top three community health issues facing Sauk County residents are: Mental Health, affordable housing, and substance abuse. Improving health and wellness, both physical and mental, is fundamental to the core mission of the Sauk County Parks and Recreation service area, which reads: “It is the mission of the Sauk County Parks and Recreation service area to acquire, develop, protect and maintain our parks and facilities for all citizens and to provide outdoor recreational opportunities that contribute to the well-being of individuals and families.” Health and wellness are integral to all aspects of outdoor recreation and infuses all the goals and objectives of the CORP, from expanding opportunities for exercise through bicycle trails, to protecting water quality in the interest of public health, to building community by sponsoring events at county parks. For this reason, health and wellness is not identified as a separate goal or priority, but is a lens through which the objectives are informed in the CORP.

PRIORITY AREAS:

DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

In order to meet the needs of a wide range of park users, Sauk County will expand recreation opportunities and improve infrastructure in the County parks. Acquisition of property will be dependent on property availability, property location, and cost considerations. Donations of land may be considered pending property location and ability to meet the goals and objectives identified by the County. Land acquisition will focus on protection of natural resources and unique places.

Park Development should be safe, accessible and efficient to maintain. Even while reviewing new development options, the County must keep in mind the need to renovate, repair, and upgrade the existing park and recreational facilities.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP

The County will focus on the protection of natural resources, promotion of community education and outreach, and sustainability of natural resources. The County understands the carrying capacity of the land resources as it relates to tourism and supports limitations and evaluations of projects to review potential impacts on the environment.

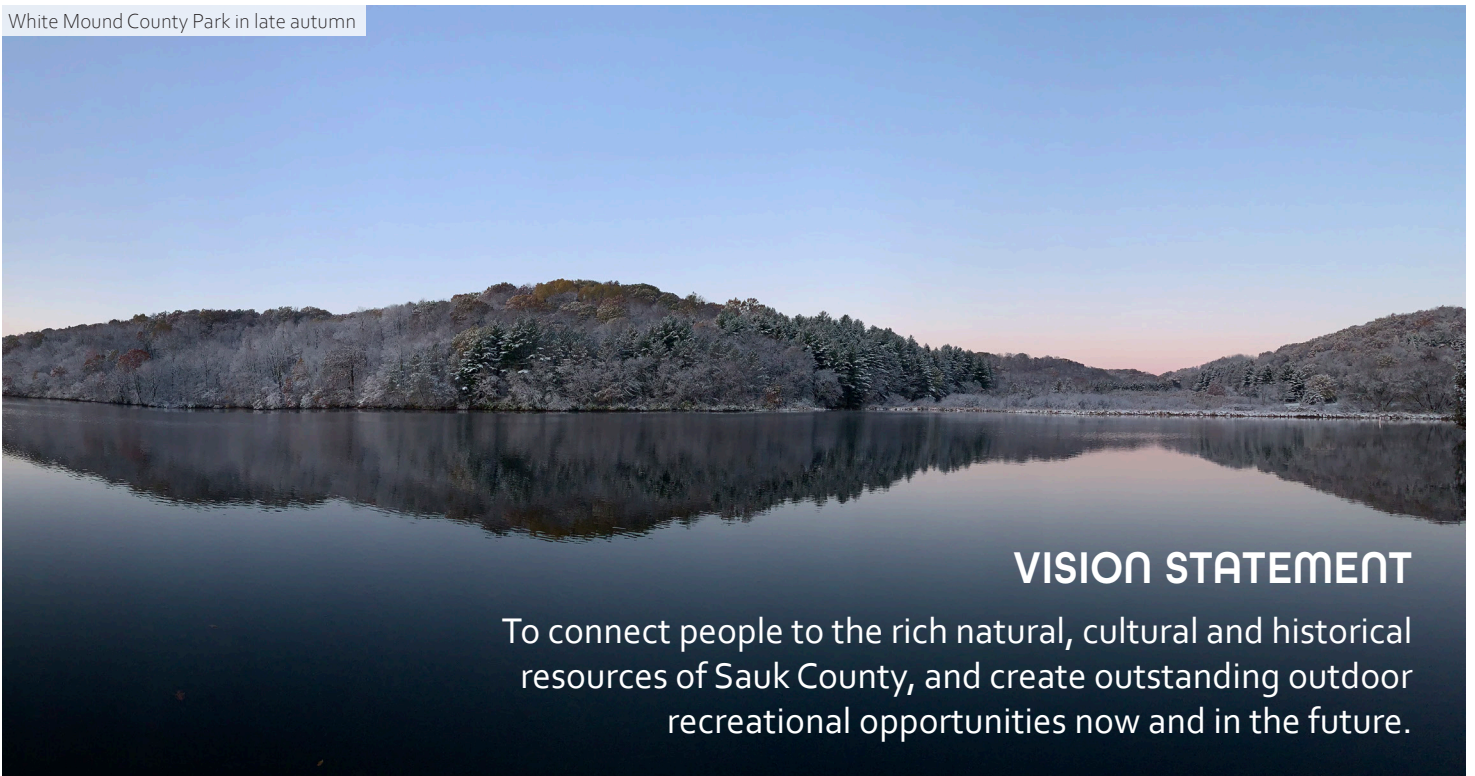
PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with private, public and non-profits are essential for building a broad base of public support and sustainable funding. These partnerships may assist in cost-sharing for land acquisition and park development, furnishing of equipment and materials, and assist with maintenance. Intergovernmental cooperation will enhance development of recreational opportunities throughout Sauk County.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

The County will pursue economic development opportunities related to the expansion of recreational programs and activities. The connection of properties through shared activities such as hiking, boating, ATV, snowmobile, etc. spur tourism in our communities and generate economic activity.

White Mound County Park in late autumn



VISION STATEMENT

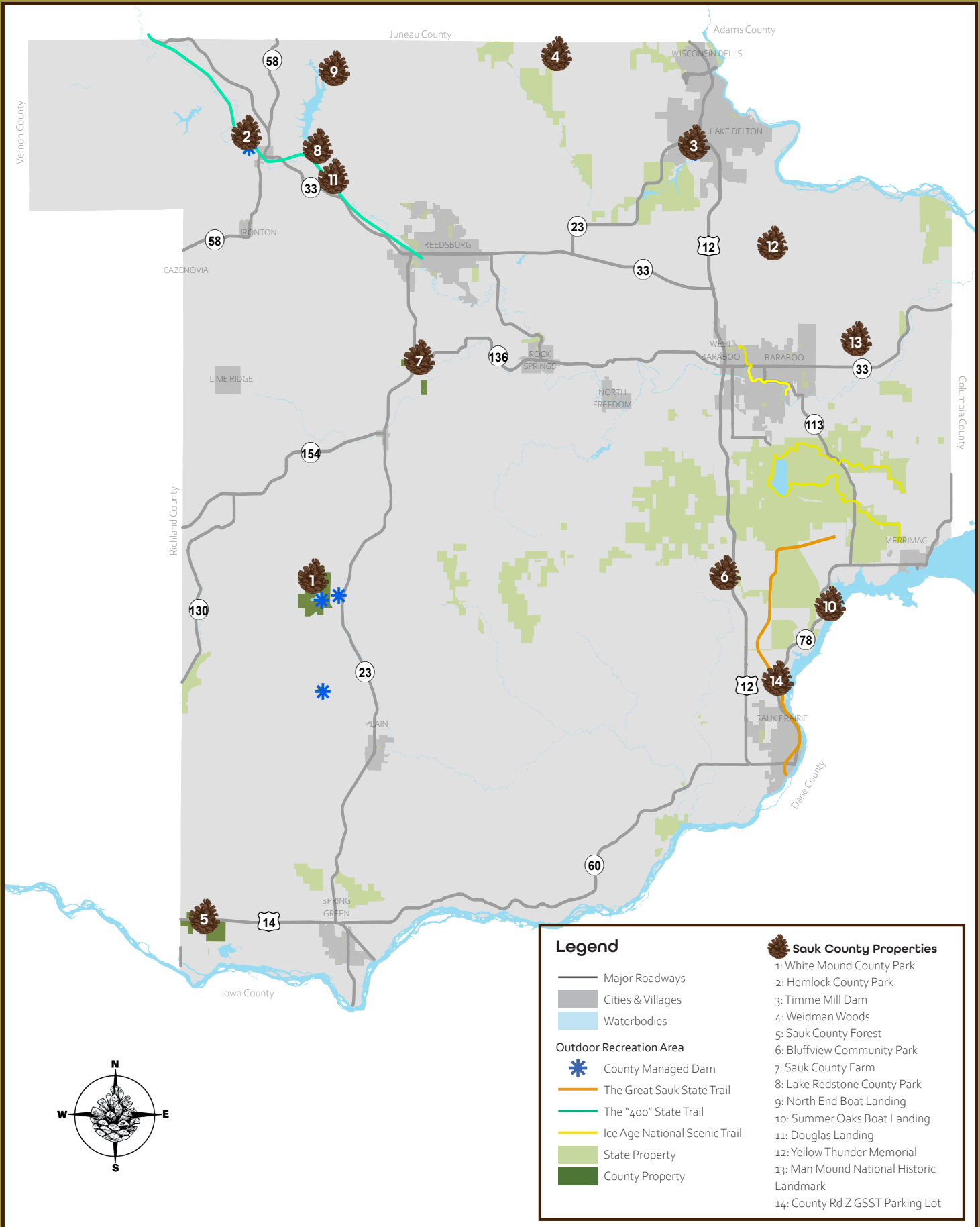
To connect people to the rich natural, cultural and historical resources of Sauk County, and create outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities now and in the future.

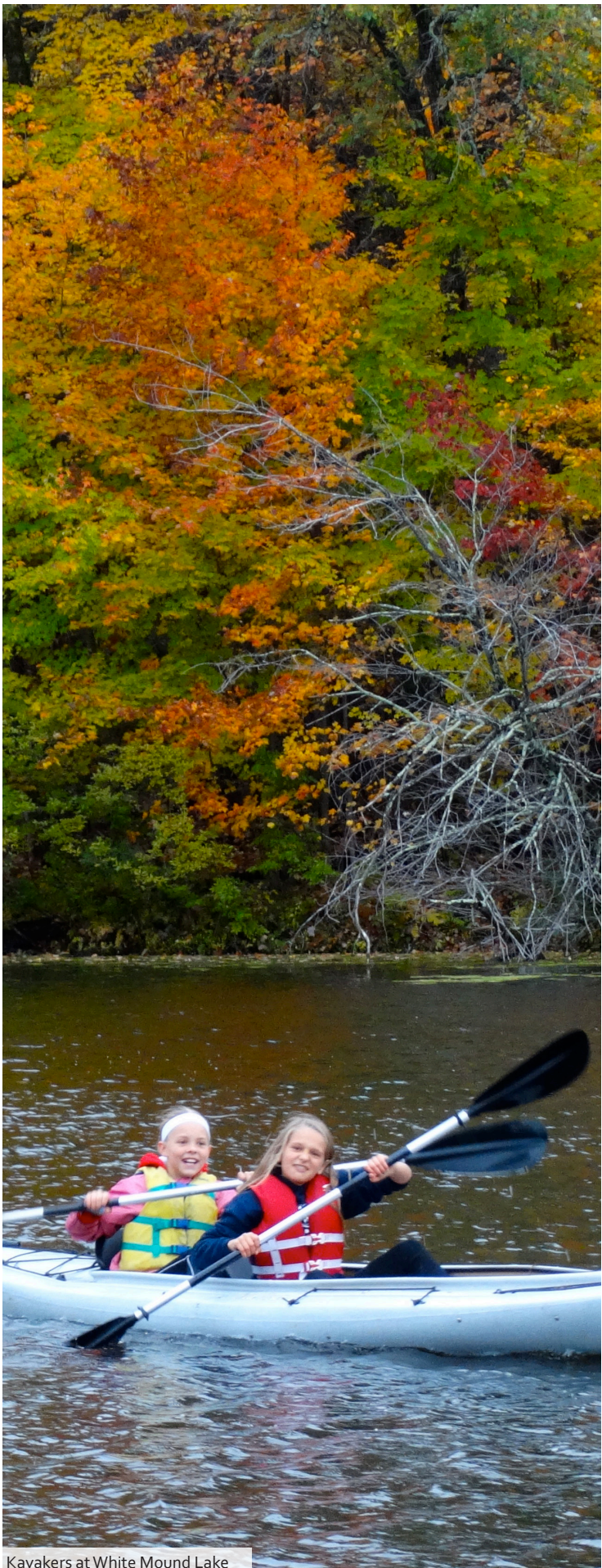
"There are two things that interest me: the relation of people to each other, and the relation of people to the land" - Aldo Leopold



Sunrise along the Great Sauk State Trail

Sauk County Parks & Recreation





Kayakers at White Mound Lake

Property Inventory

SAUK COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION

It is the mission of the Sauk County Parks and Recreation service area to acquire, develop, preserve, protect, and maintain our parks and facilities for all citizens and to provide outdoor recreational opportunities that contribute to the well-being of individuals and families.

What follows is an inventory of nature-based recreational activities available in Sauk County parks and properties. "Nature-based" is defined in the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) as "activities that are related to natural resources and where experiences are enhanced with higher quality natural habitats."

The most common activities on properties owned or managed by Sauk County are nature-based, such as walking/hiking, biking, hunting, paddle sports, horseback riding, fishing and wildlife viewing, with public camping available at White Mound County Park. Wisconsin state parks and natural areas are not part of the Sauk County CORP; nevertheless, they provide opportunities for many of the same activities, including public campgrounds in two state park locations in Sauk County: Devil's Lake and Mirror Lake.

INVENTORY LEGEND:

ADA Accessible	Boat Launch	Hiking
Restrooms	Paddle Sports	Biking
Campground	Swimming Area	Snowshoe
RV Camping	Fishing	Horse Trails
Shelter	Wildlife Viewing	Snowmobile
Picnic Area	Foraging	ATV /UTV
Playground	Hunting	Historic Marker
Pet Area	Night Sky Viewing	Park Marker

White Mound County Park

57995 White Mound Dr
Hillpoint, WI 53937

At approximately 1,100 acres, White Mound County Park offers a little bit of everything. White Mound gets its name from a vanished village located south of the park. The village was named for the white-like mounds of limestone found in the area. An abandoned limestone kiln can still be seen in the park.

White Mound County Park offers a campground with 46 campsites, 37 of which include electrical hookups. The camping season typically begins in May and closes in November – weather permitting. A dump station and water fill-up stations are provided. White Mound County Park also offers rustic walk-in campsites and an equestrian campground comprised of 7 campsites and horse trails for those who bring their own horses. The horse trails are open May 15 through November 1 – weather permitting.

The park surrounds the 104-acre White Mound Lake that many use for kayaking, canoeing, swimming, fishing, and boating at a slow-no-wake speed. Users can access the lake via the boat landing, shoreline or via the ADA fishing pier. Types of fish found in White Mound Lake include panfish, largemouth bass, northern pike, and catfish. Kayaks, paddle boards, and a canoe are available to rent. White Mound County Park possesses an exceptional and distinguished quality of starry nights – many astronomers visit the park to see the night sky.

Built in 2018, the Prairie Smoke Terrace overlooks White Mound Lake, and is available to rent all year, providing seats for about 64 people indoors. There are miles of trails throughout the park. Trails include access for hiking, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling (weather permitting). Scattered around the park are many picnic areas that include playgrounds, grills, picnic tables, hammock stations, bathrooms, and shelters (available to rent for a fee). Hunting and trapping are allowed in many areas of the park. Trapping is not allowed within 5 feet of the shoreline of White Mound Lake. An entrance fee is required for motorized vehicles.

Starry night on the shore of White Mound Lake Credit: Randy Halverson







Hemlock Dam handicap pier in autumn

Hemlock County Park

E3601 N. Dutch Hollow Road
La Valle, WI 53941



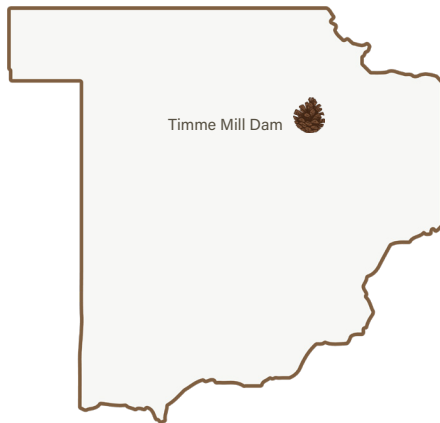
Hemlock County Park has much to offer in almost 73 acres of property – offering picnic tables, grills, and an ADA accessible bathroom. There is an unmarked hiking trail and access to fishing from many spots around the slough, including an ADA fishing pier and a boat ramp to launch a boat (electric motors only). The 22-acre slough and wetland complex provide opportunities to catch northern pike, largemouth bass and panfish. Archery and shotgun hunting are also available in this park. No muzzle-loaders are allowed. The dam was replaced in 2024 which stabilized water levels. There is ample parking, and no entrance fee is required.

Note: At the time of this plan, this property is in the planning process to create a twenty-year master plan which may alter future recreational opportunities available.



Timme Mill Dam

S. Burritt Avenue
Lake Delton, WI 53940



Timme Mill Dam provides a canoe and kayak launch to Mirror Lake. Timme Mill Dam gets its name from a flour mill that was operated on Dell Creek by the Timme family. The dam located at the park, Delton Dam (locally known as the Mirror Lake Dam), powered the mill for around 100 years until it burned down in 1957. An intriguing grotto located adjacent to the property once housed one of the first bars of Wisconsin Dells in the early 1900s. Parking is located by the dam, or at a parking lot located off South Burritt Avenue. There is no entrance fee required at this park.



Timme Mill Dam and sandstone formation in fall

Weidman Woods

S443 Town Hall Road
Reedsburg, WI 53959



Neighboring with the Dell Creek Wildlife Area (owned by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources), Weidman Woods provides another area to explore nature at approximately 130 acres. 80 acres of Weidman Woods was donated to Sauk County in 1976 by Harvey Weidman, as a memorial to his son, Mark Weidman. Conditions of the donations were that it would be kept in its present state, with no buildings erected, no roads constructed, and no timber taken from the property. Access to Weidman Woods is granted through an easement approximately 775' east of the entrance gate. Archery and gun hunting are allowed at this property, but not on the easement. No entrance fee is required.



Grassy path through pine forest

Sauk County Forest

S12604 Porter Road
Spring Green, WI 53588



With approximately 677 acres of land, the Sauk County Forest has a handful of recreational activities to offer year-round. Sauk County acquired this property through tax delinquency in the 1930's. The county originally intended to resell this land, but because of serious wind erosion problems, it was decided to retain possession of it.

The original tract consisted of 272 acres. Sauk County immediately went to work to plant trees in the open areas where the erosion was the worst. Approximately 25,000 trees were planted in the spring of 1939. During the next ten years, a total of 170,000 trees were planted. From 1939 to 1966, a total of 521,000 trees were planted on the forest.

From unmarked walking trails to hunting, there is plenty to explore. Archery and gun hunting are allowed on this property and no entrance fee is required.



Sign along Highway 14 for the Sauk County Forest

Bluffview Community Park

E11073 Center Rd
North Freedom, WI 53951



Bluffview County Park, located in the Bluffview Community within the Town of Sumpter, opened in October 2022 and is approximately 3.58 acres. The site is surrounded by the highly developed landscape of the Bluffview Community. This park contains space for walking, gathering, and an accessible playground. With few available outdoor recreation facilities within the Bluffview Community, the park gives residents improved outdoor opportunities.

Parking is available along East Road, behind the Citgo fuel station. There are no bathrooms available at this park and no entrance fee is required. There are picnic tables available and a scenic overlook of a small pond on the property.



Path leading to playground with grassy lawn

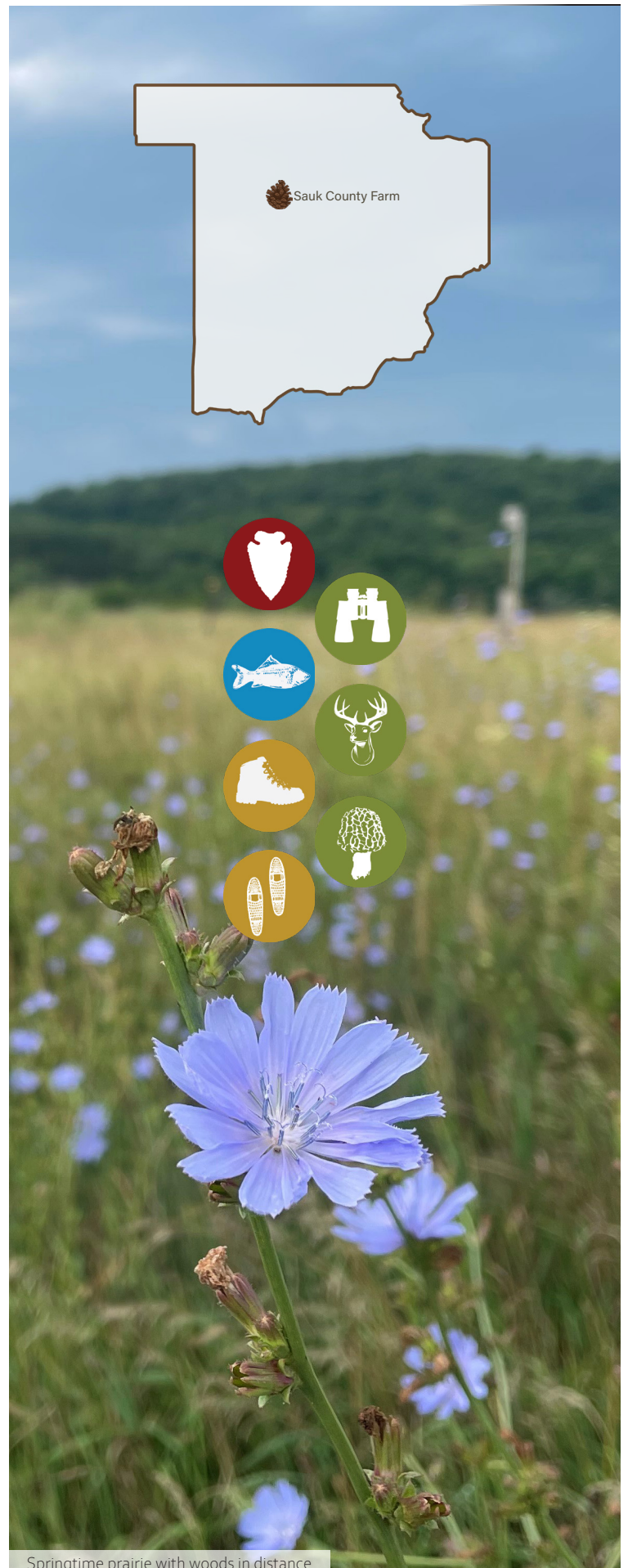
Sauk County Farm

S4555 County Road H
Reedsburg, WI 53959

The Sauk County farm, formerly known as the Sauk County Health Care Center, is located three miles south of Reedsburg, Wisconsin, at the intersection of State Roads 23 and 154. The County Farm is a roughly 566-acre property, originally called the County Poor Farm and Asylum, the site was initially purchased in 1871 by Sauk County to provide care and housing for impoverished, mentally ill, and disabled people. The County Farm's healthcare institutions evolved significantly over the course of the 20th century and was renamed the Sauk County Healthcare Center in the 1970's. It remained in use until 2009 when the decision was made to relocate to the Healthcare Center to the City of Reedsburg.

Today, the County Farm is under the oversight of the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment (LRE) Department and Board of Supervisors, with the Land Conservation Division overseeing most of the property's management and the Parks and Recreation Division providing maintenance for the historic fire house and the Sauk County Cemetery – the final remnants of the site's former public health institutions. The Sauk County farm is diverse, consisting of flat bottom fields along the stream that bisects the property as well as gently rolling to steeper hills. Most of the property is comprised of commodity cropland and pasture, which has 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, and Narrows Creek, which runs through a significant portion of the property.

The Sauk County LRE Department has developed a property master plan for the County Farm to ensure the continued management of the site's agricultural and natural resources, the preservation of its historic features, and the transformation of the space into an educational amenity for the Sauk County community. The site is open to the public for walking, educational events and activities, hunting, and community gardens. There are also active agricultural demonstration plots available for public edification and research. Archery and gun hunting are allowed on this property and no entrance fee is required.



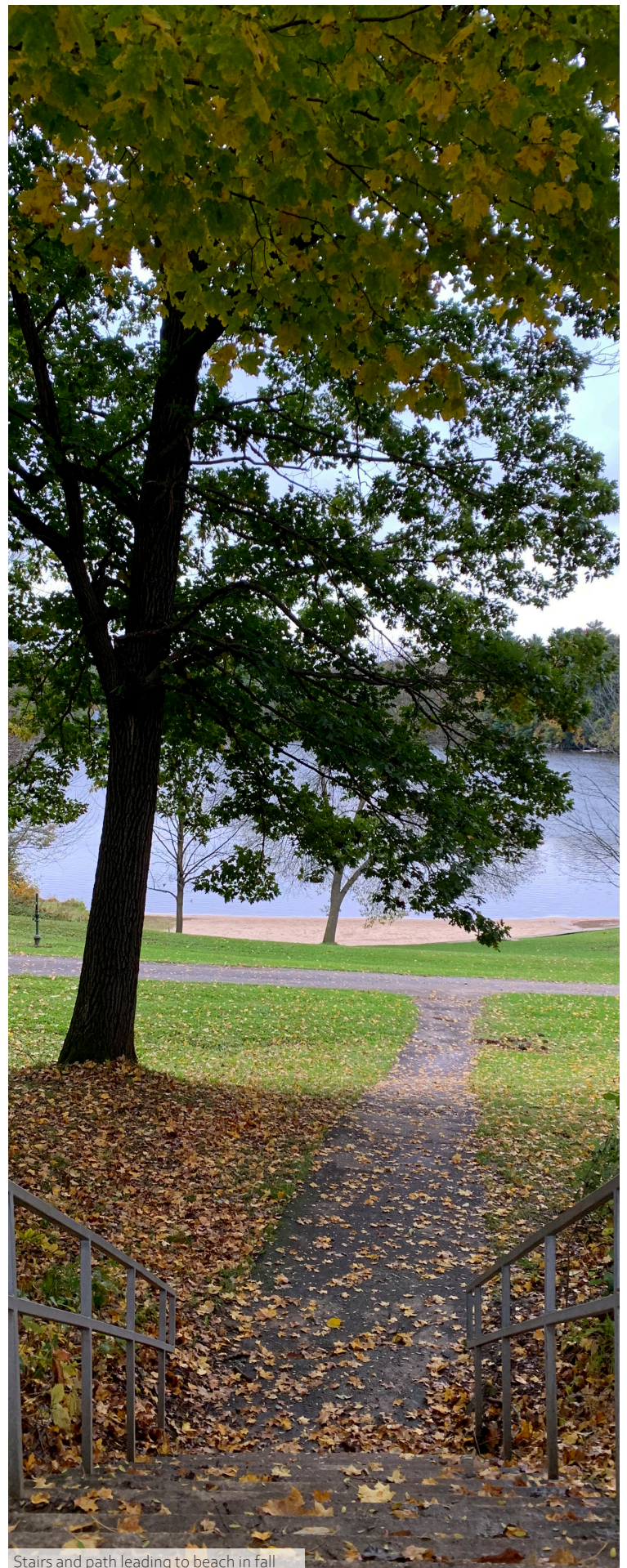
Springtime prairie with woods in distance

Lake Redstone County Park

S4522 Douglas Road
La Valle, WI 53941



Lake Redstone County Park is located on the south end of Lake Redstone. At approximately 30 acres, this park has a large parking lot that gives access to a playground, beach, and waterfall. There are two pumps to get water from and opportunities to hike along the unmarked hiking trail. Lake Redstone County Park is a popular spot to fish for panfish, largemouth bass, musky, northern pike, and walleye. A snowmobile trail runs through the park, but it is not a park-and-ride for motorized trails. Bathrooms are provided and an entrance fee is required for motorized vehicles.



Stairs and path leading to beach in fall



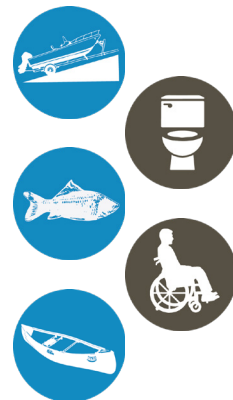
Pier in lake at North End Boat Landing

North End Boat Landing

S4765 La Valle Road
La Valle, WI 53941



At the north end of Lake Redstone, just off County Road F on La Valle Road, sits the North End Boat Landing. This landing provides a launch for canoes, kayaks, and boats to Lake Redstone. Fishing opportunities via the ADA fishing pier include panfish, largemouth bass, northern pike, musky, and walleye. A bathroom is provided during the summer months and an entrance fee is required for motorized vehicles.





Pier in Wisconsin River

Summer Oaks Boat Landing

E12614 Kilpatrick Point Drive
Merrimac, WI 53561



With access to Lake Wisconsin, the Summer Oaks Boat Landing provides ample parking with opportunities to catch smallmouth and largemouth bass, northern pike, walleye, panfish, catfish, musky, and sturgeon. This landing also includes a park-and-ride for the snowmobile trail. A bathroom is provided during the summer months and an entrance fee is required for motorized vehicles.



Douglas Landing

E4603 Douglas Rd
La Valle, WI 53941



Dedicated to America's veterans, Douglas Landing provides access to the Baraboo River. The .75 parcel of land was donated to Sauk County by Russell and Pearl Douglas. Russell was a member of the United States Army Air Force during World War II, where he proudly served as a bombsight maintenance technician in the 390th Bomb Groups 569th Squadron. Douglas Landing was improved in 2019 to help stabilize the shoreline and provides a quiet spot to fish or launch a canoe or kayak. There is no entrance fee required at this property.



Bench overlooking Douglas Landing on the Baraboo River

Man Mound National Historic Landmark

E13085 Man Mound Road
Baraboo, WI 53913



Located northeast of Baraboo, on Man Mound Road, sits Man Mound National Historic Landmark. The land was purchased by the Sauk County Historical Society, the Wisconsin Archaeological Society, and the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs in 1907 and dedicated as a park the following year. Man Mound National Historic Park is named after the rare, man-shaped effigy mound found on the property, measuring about 214 feet long by 48 feet wide. The legs of the Man Mound were partially destroyed by the construction of Man Mound Road in the 1800s and the feet were destroyed by agricultural use of the land.

The Man Mound was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 with a new nomination being written and accepted in 2010 which included the land where the feet were located. In 2016 the property became a National Historic Landmark. Much of the park property is a catalogued burial site monitored by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

There are three basic forms of mounds, conical, linear and effigy. All have been found to contain human remains and are protected by state law. Man Mound is one of the few surviving effigy mounds in the area. At least 900 mounds of all types existed in Sauk County at one time. Over 85% have been destroyed by plowing, floods, looters, and construction.

Man Mound National Historic Landmark is owned by the Sauk County Historical Society and is managed by the Sauk County Parks and Recreation service area under an intergovernmental agreement. A merry-go-round, picnic tables, educational signage and benches are provided at this park. There is no entrance fee required at this park.



Bench in grassy viewing area of the ManMound

Wakajazi Maagex (Yellow Thunder) Memorial

S2653 County Road A
Baraboo, WI 53913



The Yellow Thunder Memorial is a 0.51-acre property dedicated to the life and achievements of Ho-Chunk Chief Wakajazi, or Yellow Thunder. Chief Wakajazi's perseverance for his people and culture, along with his partner Washington Woman, is commemorated along County Rd A in the Town of Fairfield between Wisconsin Dells and Baraboo. The land on which the memorial currently sits was donated by a local farmer in 1963 and is near the 40-acre parcel that Wakajazi purchased in 1849 as a refuge for himself and other tribal members.

The Sauk County Historical Society has owned the memorial since its dedication in 1909 when the monument was constructed to protect the remains of Wakajazi and Washington Woman. Over the last 50+ years, the Society has partnered with Sauk County to manage the property as part of the County Park System. The Historical Society as the owners of the property, are responsible for the preservation of the site for its significance as a historic burial site. As the site is privately owned by the Society, the Historical Society has the authority for its use, maintenance, and enhancement. Yellow Thunder Memorial is owned by the Sauk County Historical Society and managed by the Sauk County Parks and Recreation service area. The site is a catalogued burial site monitored by the Wisconsin Historical Society. There is no entrance fee required at this park.



Restored prairie at Yellow Thunder Memorial

Great Sauk State Trail



The construction of the Great Sauk State Trail began in 2017, utilizing the rails to trails program, is located in the former right-of-way of the Union Pacific rail corridor. The current 11.4-mile trail parallels the Wisconsin River through the communities of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City, and into the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area. Visitors can enjoy beautiful views as they pass through historic Villages, and the Wisconsin River valley on this ADA accessible trail paved with asphalt.

A trail pass is required for all bikers and roller bladers, 16 years of age and older. The trail pass fee is \$5 / day or \$25 / year. Trail passes can be purchased at the trail (near the Ruth Culver Library) or at the Sauk Prairie Chamber of Commerce, Prairie du Sac Village Hall, Sauk County Clerk's Office, Merrimac Town Hall and the Sauk County Parks and Recreation Office. A portion of the proceeds from permits purchased at the local vendors listed above or at the trail will directly benefit the Great Sauk State Trail.

Currently, parking to access the Great Sauk State Trail is available along multiple sections of the trail, including at the intersection of Water Street and Washington Street, next to Ruth Culver Library; the corner of County Hwy Z and State Hwy 78; and, on Goette Rd off of State Rd 113. There is no fee to park at any location.

The current trail is part of a larger idea that will continue adding successive segments and eventually connect this trail heading north to Devil's Lake State Park, the 400 State Trail in Reedsburg, and the Elroy-Sparta Trail in La Valle. Ultimately, the GSST will be part of a trail system connecting the cities of Milwaukee and Lacrosse. To realize this vision, concurrent efforts are underway:

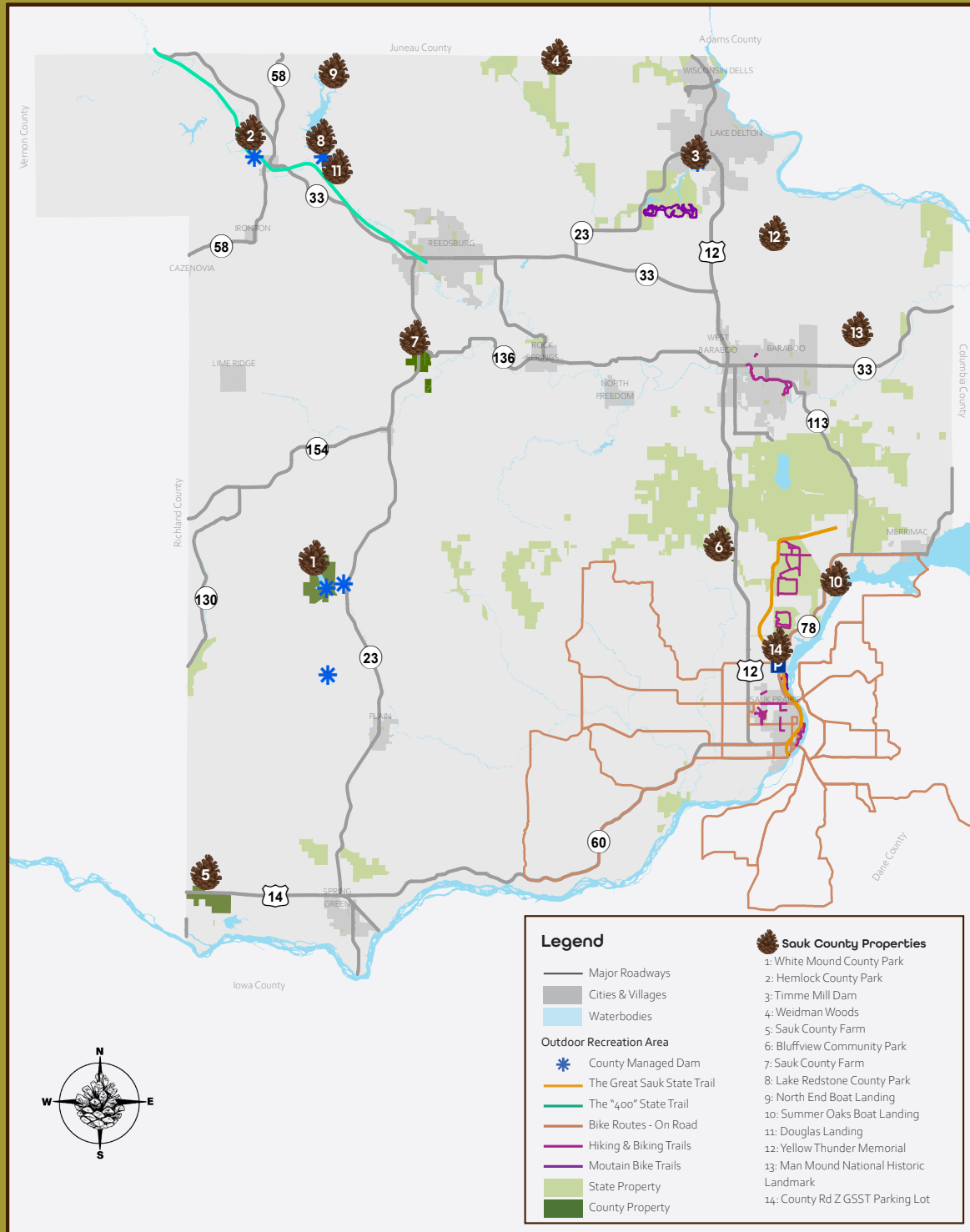
Through a partnership with Dane County, Sauk County is planning the construction of a bridge over the Wisconsin River to connect the GSST in southeastern Sauk County to the proposed Walking Iron Trail in northwestern Dane County.

A trail routing plan was completed in 2024, working with various communities and agencies between the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area and the 400 State Trail, Sauk County has identified primary and alternative routes for the GSST to be constructed.

Development of the GSST remains a priority project for Sauk County and participating communities. Sauk County will continue as the lead agency to oversee trail construction, and once constructed, trail operations and maintenance. Being designated as a state trail, users are required to obtain a day or annual state trail pass.



Sauk County Bike Trails & Routes





Snowmobile Trails

Sauk County annually participates in maintaining, acquiring, insuring, or developing lands for public motorized trail use and these public motorized trails are eligible for snowmobile grant funds. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) administers a grant program that is 100% funded for the acquisition, development, insurance, and maintenance of public snowmobile trails. Funding for the program comes from snowmobile registration fees, which is a portion of tax on gasoline and user fees.

The development, maintenance and grooming of the snowmobile trails in Sauk County are managed through a contract with the Association of Sauk County Snowmobile Clubs (ASCSC). The Sauk County Parks and Recreation service area is primarily responsible for the financial administration of the grant program. Other responsibilities include trail inspections, maintaining an updated development, maintenance and grooming contract, applying for grant funding, and verifying that all written and verbal permission from all snowmobile trail landowners is obtained. Currently, there are 238.5 miles of funded snowmobile trails throughout Sauk County. The trails are funded at \$300 per mile, with the grant program totaling \$71,490.

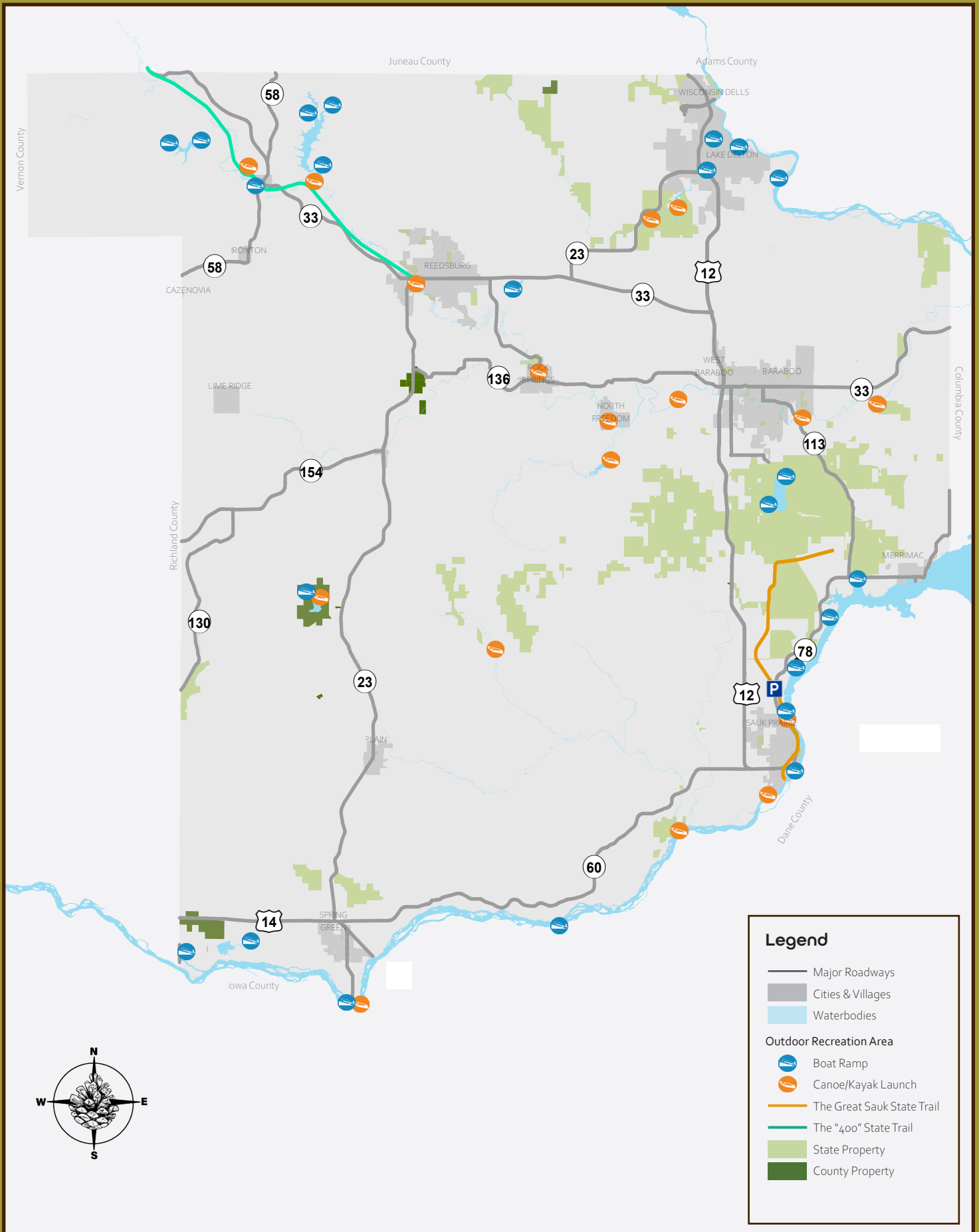
ATV/UTV Routes

There are ATV/UTV routes throughout much of the County. ATV/UTV routes are along identified routes on Town and County highways. Routes on County highways are open year-round. The routes are marked by signage that is maintained and paid for by the ATV/UTV clubs. The clubs also manage off-road trails with funding assistance from the WDNR and administrative assistance from Sauk County Parks and Recreation for grant administration. An interactive motorized trail map with route hours can be found at the following website:

<https://saukgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Viewer/index.html?appid=2235911fc3074bce898aefag98bb54652>

Wooden bridge at White Mound County Park in winter

Sauk County Water Access Points



Outdoor Recreation Trends

NATIONWIDE

Nationally, participation in nature-based outdoor recreation has been steadily increasing for many decades. Camping, canoeing, kayaking, and bicycling have grown the most in popularity since the 1960s, likely due to improvements in equipment technology. In general, outdoor recreation has increased significantly in popularity since the turn of the 21st century, though the mix of chosen activities and their relative popularity changes through the decades (Cordell, 2012). According to the Supporting Wisconsin's Vital Outdoor Economy: Economic Data and Impact Report 2020-2022, a report by the Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation, in 2021 the outdoor recreation industry contributed \$8.7 billion to the state GDP, growing faster than the state's overall economy at a rate of 14.5%. Outdoor recreation has been found to be a large push for Wisconsin tourism, attracting both residents and people from out of state, leading to \$771 million increase in value added from local trips. National surveys also indicate that while nature-based outdoor recreation is generally far more common among Whites than racial minorities, there are several activities that are popular across all ethnic groups: running, hiking, biking, camping, and fishing.

As the population of the U.S. and Wisconsin continues to diversify, particularly among Millennials and younger generations, attracting a wide range of users to outdoor activities is vital for maintaining support. Millennials make up the largest portion of the population, and they are more diverse than any preceding generation. A 2023 report by the Outdoor Industry Association identifies hiking, running, bicycling (road, mountain, BMX), fishing, and camping as the five most popular activities in 2022. The fastest growing categories in outdoor recreation participation were reported to be snowshoeing (21% increase), camping (12% increase), cross-country skiing (8.5% increase), and BMX cycling which had an annual growth of 8.3%. However, in comparing the fastest growing categories in terms of value added by the activity, climbing, hiking, and tent camping has been leading with a 27% increase of \$127 million in 2021.

At the same time, many baby boomers are committed to active lifestyles as they age. Low-impact activities like visiting developed sites, wildlife viewing, and nature photography continue to be popular among older adults, along with motorized sports. The percentage of senior citizens participating in outdoor recreation has been on the rise in recent years, and in 2022 a record high of 35% of citizens aged 55+ reported participating in outdoor recreation.



Rock escarpment in Hemlock County Park in autumn

It is important to stay abreast of national recreation trends and adapt to changing demographics, but local and regional recreational demand does not always reflect national trends. Some activities that are projected either not to grow or to decline nationally, such as hunting and snowmobiling, remain popular in Sauk County, while other activities with rapid growth projection, such as developed skiing and motorized water activities, have limited availability here. It must be stated that participation rates and economic impact are not directly correlated and as a County we have a responsibility to offer outdoor recreational opportunities not only for the economic impact but for our community's overall health and well-being.

STATEWIDE TRENDS: FINDINGS FROM THE WISCONSIN SCORP

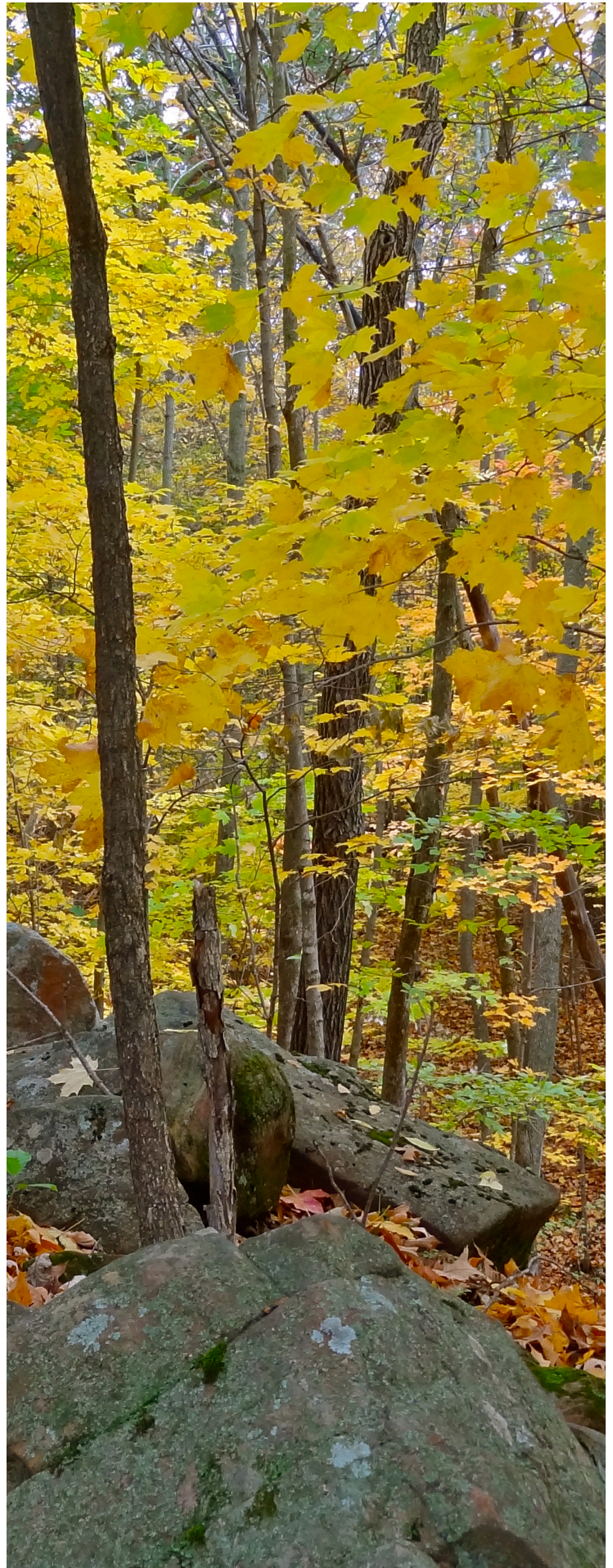
Wisconsin's most recent Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) was published in 2019. The SCORP's purpose is to identify trends in nature-based recreation and to provide a range of information "to help the public and elected officials place local conditions, needs and opportunities into a broader framework." Nature-based outdoor recreation is crucial to Wisconsin's identity, both for residents, who enjoy high participation rates in outdoor recreation, and as an economic driver in the state.

In 2022 outdoor recreation in Wisconsin generated \$8.7 billion to the state GDP, and supported 89,360 jobs. That same year, Sauk County produced \$1,603.1 million in direct visitor spending and supported 11,455 jobs.
– Wisconsin Office of Outdoor Recreation

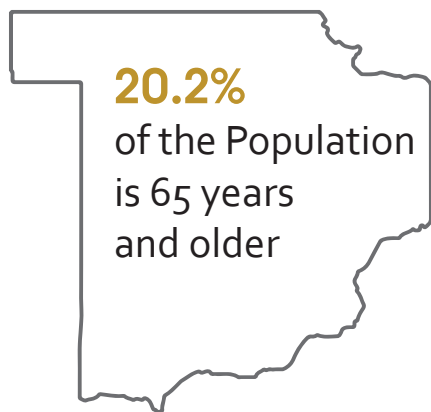
Broadly, the SCORP findings indicate increased demand statewide for opportunities for more trails (both motorized and non-motorized) and water and shore access for boating, fishing and swimming. Additionally, rural populations are experiencing increased pressure on areas close to urban centers for access to outdoor recreation activities.

Sauk County is in the "Southern Gateways Region" of the state, an area noted for a combination of important geologic features that make for remarkable scenery: rolling hills, marshes, glacial lakes and bluffs. The region also includes the rapidly developing urban area in and around Madison.

The SCORP identifies gaps in recreational opportunities by region, though there are broad similarities across the state; every region has a high need for more bicycling, bird/wildlife viewing, camping, canoeing/kayaking and hiking. Many additional needs were identified in the South Gateways Region, with motorized trails and primitive campsites at the top of the list. While the SCORP specifically refers to needs in state owned and managed properties, counties can help fill these gaps. Sauk County is well-positioned to help meet the growing needs of the region's recreation demands, both because of the County's established parks, trails, and waterways available, and its proximity to Madison.

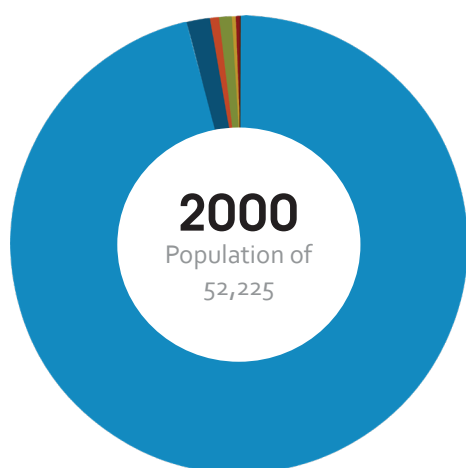
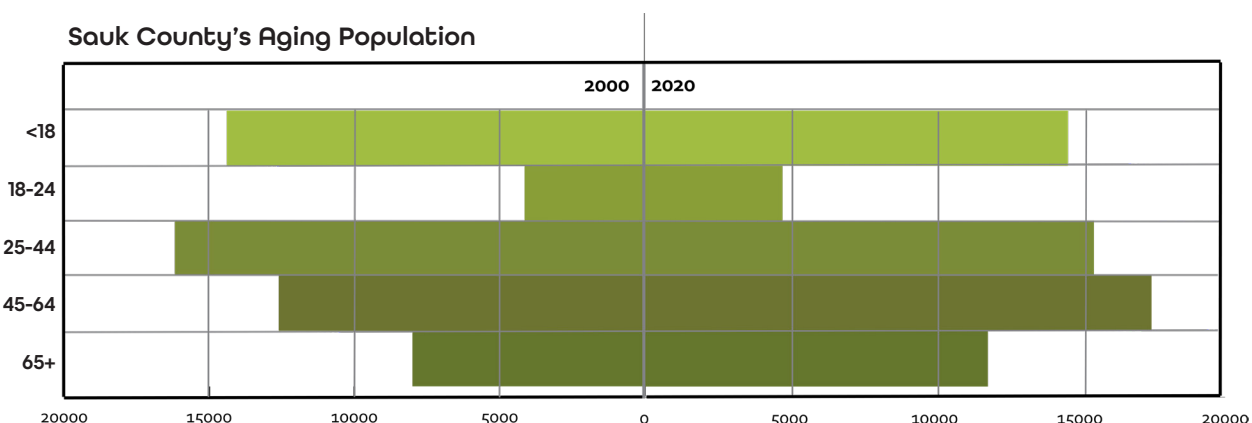


Population, Demographics, Education & Economy



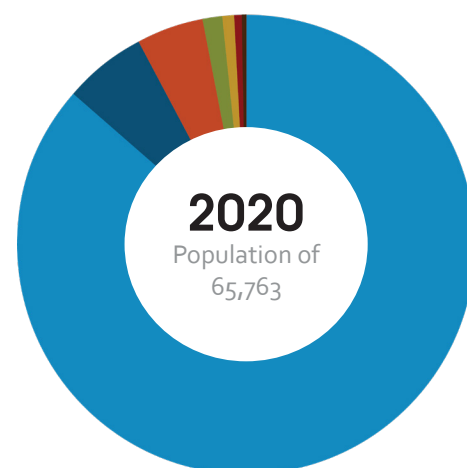
Sauk County has a population of just over 65,700. Between the 2010 census and 2020 census, the County saw a population increase of over 6%. There is a relatively healthy age population matrix in the County with 20.2% of the population 65 years and older, 22% under age 18, and a median age of 41 which is in line with the state average of 40. According to a 2015 report by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the County's population is estimated to increase to 75,660 by 2030, and is noted as one of the fastest growing Counties in the state.

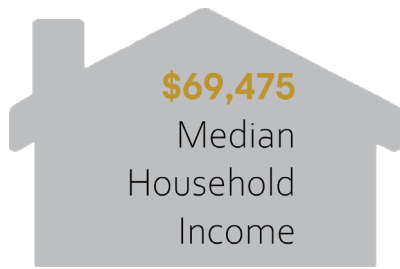
While Sauk County remains predominantly White, the County has seen a significant increase in minority populations since 2000; those who identify as Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, or being of two or more races have all more than tripled in number, and their percentage of the overall population has significantly increased.



Changes in Population & Diversity

- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Asian
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Native American
- Two or more races
- Hispanic/Latinx
- Caucasian



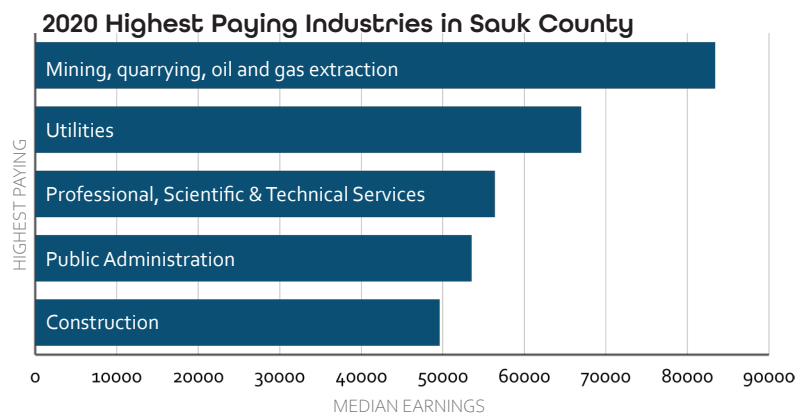
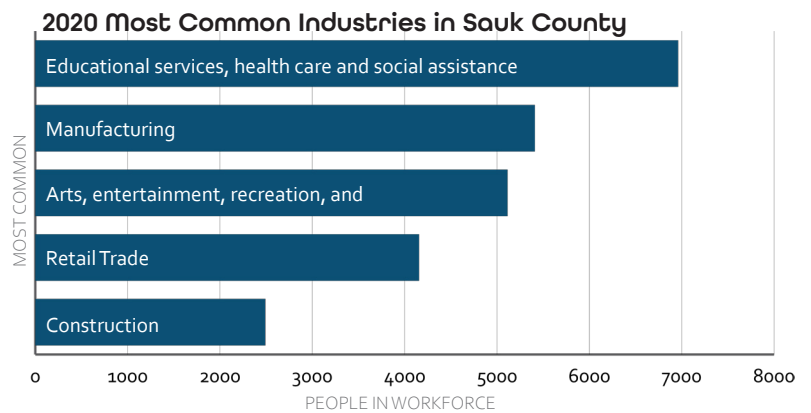


8.9% Poverty Rate
The average Wisconsin poverty rate is 10.7%.



The median household income in Sauk County is \$69,475, which is slightly lower than average for the state of Wisconsin, although the County has fewer households living in poverty. Educational attainment has steadily increased in Sauk County for all levels of education. However, the County consistently lags behind the State of Wisconsin in percentage of adults over the age of 25 who have completed some college, or have a bachelor's degree or higher.

While recreational tourism is an important economic driver both statewide and for Sauk County, there is also overlap in major industrial employment. In both Sauk County, and Wisconsin, the largest industries are educational services, manufacturing, arts/entertainment/recreation, and retail trade. However, the highest paying jobs come from different industries; in Sauk County, the highest-paying industries are mining/quarrying, utilities, and professional technical services. Statewide, the highest paying jobs are in utilities, professional technical services, and finance/insurance.



Playground at Bluffview Community Park

Values, Priorities & Objectives

Orange turkey tail mushrooms on log



Trail-head and sign of Willie Walsh Nature Trail in White Mound County Park

VALUES

While the scope of the CORP addresses nature-based outdoor recreation needs in Sauk County, the impact to other aspects of life is far-reaching. As the Land Resources and Environment Department moves forward with the implementation of this Plan, the following core values should be considered:

COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

Fair and equal access to nature-based outdoor recreation, regardless of age, gender, race, citizenship, socioeconomic status, sexuality, or disability status, benefits the well-being of the whole community. Furthermore, access to natural open space and trails has the potential for positive impact on community health, specifically outcomes related to mental health and obesity. Sauk County acknowledges the public health and community benefits of natural spaces and outdoor recreation and strives to provide fair and equal access to all.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

A growing body of research shows that nature-based outdoor recreation provides economic benefit to rural areas. A 2017 report by UW-Extension estimates that natural resource organizations support 170 jobs and millions of dollars in labor and business income in Sauk County alone. Large investments in recreation amenities in Sauk County would benefit from an economic impact analysis to help local communities determine how best to develop a sustainable economic base for both visitors and workforce development.

EXTREME WEATHER PREPAREDNESS

In recent years, Sauk County has experienced extreme weather events that have impacted waterways and infrastructure in local communities. Changes to and investments in park and recreation infrastructure that considers flooding, high groundwater levels, extreme temperatures, and fluctuating snow cover in winter will contribute to long-term resilience from damaging weather.

STEWARDSHIP OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The iconic conservationist Aldo Leopold once wrote, “When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.” Sauk County, which Leopold called home from 1935 until his death in 1948, contains thousands of acres of land under protection for wildlife habitat and conservation. Sauk County recognizes the value of its natural resources and continues to work with conservation partners and the surrounding community to protect and preserve the land now and for generations to come.

EQUITY

Sauk County’s population is steadily becoming more racially diverse, with the highest growth in groups who identify as Hispanic/Latinx or multi-racial. School districts across Sauk County have rising percentages of students of who are economically disadvantaged. Sauk County’s aging population will increase demand for low-impact and ADA accessible recreation. Efforts to promote equity will be strengthened when land acquisition and program development are accompanied by outreach efforts to target populations in Sauk County that historically have not had equal access to parks and recreation opportunities.

SUSTAINABLE BUILDING PRACTICES

Sauk County is known as a leader in conservation. Any new infrastructure for County parks and recreation should use materials and methods that are energy efficient, re-purposed, and sustainability sourced whenever applicable or practical.

PRIORITY AREAS:

The Plan identifies four priority area for the County's parks and recreational opportunities. Each priority area has a series of objectives, which are action items for implementation over the next five years.

PRIORITY 1: DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY PARK SYSTEM

Sauk County currently enjoys an array of high-quality recreational resources and facilities. However, the County's growing population, increased number of visitors to the parks, and the range of recreational interests all place a greater pressure on park staff to maintain programs and infrastructure. Additionally, unpredictable weather patterns have increased the likelihood of extreme events such as flooding, storms, and heat waves, which contribute to infrastructure challenges and potentially threaten human safety and wildlife habitat. The following objectives and recommendations will make County parks and recreation systems more robust and accessible.

PRIORITY 2: RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP

Recreational uses in Sauk County as well as their economic health and vitality, are natural resource based (e.g. hiking, birdwatching, fishing and boating), requiring that land and water resources be protected and maintained through active and well-designed stewardship programs. Sustainable management practices shall continue to be utilized to preserve natural resources and public enjoyment for the long-term, while building community capacity for stewardship of the land through volunteer and educational partnerships with local conservancy organizations.

PRIORITY 3: PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with businesses, non-profit organizations, and other units of government are essential for building a broad base of public support and to sustain funding for complex initiatives. Developing outdoor recreation opportunities as an economic development tool and for improving quality of life are of critical interest to Sauk County and area municipalities. Interest has increased in future collaboration to support these shared goals. While collaboration is not a novel idea, Sauk County and local municipalities must pursue organized efforts to assure successful coordination of expanded outdoor recreation opportunities. To establish functional partnerships, Sauk County must allocate dedicated personnel and capital resources to the development of recreational opportunities that cross municipal boundaries. Sauk County should also act as a liaison between municipalities, as well as state and federal government to achieve expanded outdoor recreation outcomes.

PRIORITY 4: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM

Sauk County's important geologic features and outdoor recreation opportunities are a strong economic driver locally and regionally. Sauk County is only a few hours' drive from large metropolitan areas: Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN, and Chicago, IL. Rapid urban growth in neighboring Dane County has increased demand for people looking to get out of the city and spend time doing a variety of nature-based recreational activities. The economic value of outdoor recreation is more than just dollars coming in from outside tourists. When parks, trails, and waterways are close to home and accessible, the economic vitality and livability of local communities are uplifted as well.





Development of the County Park System

OBJECTIVE: PROMOTE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FRIENDS OF SAUK COUNTY PARKS GROUP

Volunteer organizations such as Friends groups are essential to the success of many parks and public institutions. They provide volunteers, raise money, promote stewardship, assist with communication, and help maintain a relationship between parks and the broader community. One local example is the Friends of the Great Sauk State Trail, which was established in 2015 “with a mission to enhance, promote, manage and advocate for the continued development of the Great Sauk Trail.” They have raised funds for building and maintaining the trail, and have installed signs, artwork, benches, and other amenities. A Friends of Sauk County Parks group would provide benefits such as organizing volunteer workdays for invasive weed removal, raising funds for special projects, connecting the parks with other organizations and non-profits, and developing and promoting programs at County Park locations. Friends’ groups can focus on one specific location or park; or could support the whole park system.

OBJECTIVE: DEVELOP A 5-YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) TO EXPAND RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPROVE INFRASTRUCTURE

The CORP sets forth policy direction for potential acquisition of land for future park and recreation uses as well as identifies improvements needed for existing park facilities. The CORP should be identified as the primary source of park-related projects included in a capital improvement plan. The CIP will address the following:

Evaluate existing park infrastructure, and schedule for repairs, and replacements, or improvements. This may include correcting health and safety standards, meeting ADA standards, upgrading deficient facilities, and modernizing outdated facilities. These types of projects should rank highest in the CIP. Future projects should also be resilient to extreme weather such as boat launches built to be adaptable to flood events; acquiring land along the Baraboo River that will serve as access points for both recreation and emergency services, and acquiring land that can double as flood storage during extreme rain events. Land acquisitions will be prioritized based on locations that would be best suited to meet the gaps where County outdoor recreational facilities are found to be deficient.

OBJECTIVE: DEVELOP MASTER PLANS FOR SAUK COUNTY PROPERTIES

In addition to the CIP, master plans identify the individual needs of each property. The plans will include further updates to infrastructure, and considerations for future amenities and recreation opportunities. The planning process allows for greater public involvement in specific properties and encourages connections with our community partners. A master plan will codify recreational use and natural resource management and will outline in detail updates and improvements to the park. Once completed, plans will be included in Appendix D.

OBJECTIVE: ADA ACCESSIBILITY

When planning for and designing parks, it is critical to ensure that all parks are inclusive and welcoming to visitors of all backgrounds and abilities. Sauk County provides accessible and accommodative spaces to all visitors. In 2022, Sauk County performed and adopted the ADA Facility Audit of Parks and Recreation Facilities which outlines maintenance and renovations to all existing park facilities at the time of the audit. This plan is included in Appendix D and is incorporated into all property specific master plans. New facilities, the renovation of existing facilities, events, and communications will be designed with accessibility in mind.

OBJECTIVE: MAINTAIN SUFFICIENT STAFFING & RESOURCE LEVELS FOR FACILITIES

The Parks and Recreation division area oversees programming and maintenance for all parks, trails and public lands owned by the County. In order to maintain healthy ecosystems, safe facilities, educational programming, and desirable locations for people to recreate, we need sufficient staffing levels to maintain our facilities and provide services. The division will utilize specific performance measures to evaluate staff needs and budget accordingly.



Resource Management and Stewardship

OBJECTIVE: COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Sauk County is notable for its diverse ecosystems and wildlife habitat. Prioritizing community education to convey the importance of preserving habitat for native plant and wildlife species will increase public support for conservation efforts. There are many non-profit organizations who own land, operate programs and volunteer events to promote ecologically responsible land use. The following recommendations will increase public awareness of conservation needs and boost outdoor education opportunities for people of all ages:

Continue to partner with local non-profits, agencies, and municipalities for maintenance, volunteer opportunities, and educational programming. Many non-profit nature, wildlife, and conservation organizations are active in Sauk County, and some own property for habitat preservation. Staff will work with local "bird city" designated municipalities such as Sauk City, Reedsburg, and Prairie du Sac to expand and promote educational events. Public education and community events are areas of opportunity to expand upon the County's conservation efforts. A list of local non-profit organizations in Sauk County is included in Appendix A.

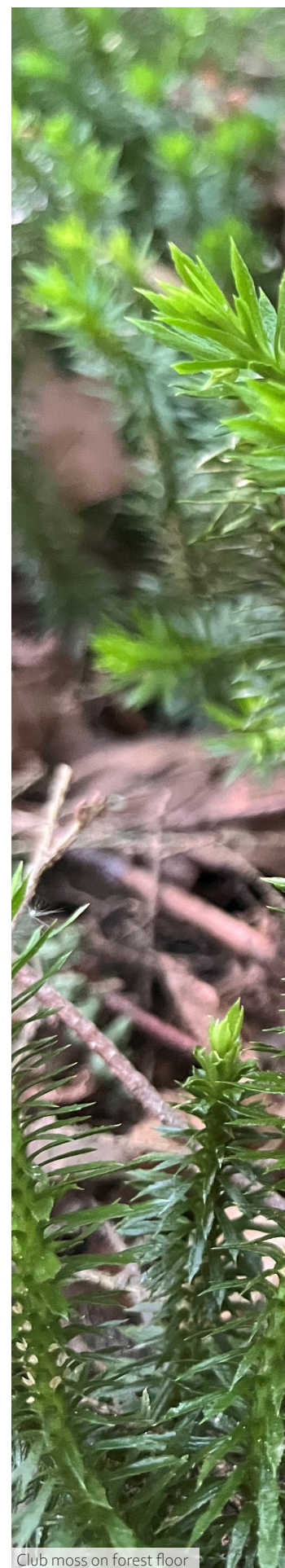
Pursue programs and events that emphasize the unique topography, and ecosystems of Sauk County. Programs should also focus on resource stewardship and the vital component that outdoor recreational plays in our general health, safety, and welfare. Sauk County properties should be portrayed as not only valuable for outdoor recreation, but as integral to citizens' physical and mental wellness, along with being utilized as a tool for extreme weather resilience.

OBJECTIVE: IMPROVED ECOSYSTEM QUALITY

With a diverse offering of ecosystems throughout the County Park system, natural resource management is among the most important objectives. Effective natural resource management allows the Parks to maintain its ecological health and scenic character. Additionally, many recreational experiences are directly tied to the condition of the surrounding natural resources. All future natural resource management decisions will be made with sustainable practices in mind as an effort to preserve our properties' resources for long-term use. Each park should have an ecological carrying capacity study performed to assess the number of recreational opportunities that can be made available without becoming a detriment to the natural resources and the amount of visitors to the scenic virtue. Focus areas on natural resource management include the following areas and are specified in the property specific master plans.

Surface water quality is an ongoing concern in Sauk County, with several lakes and waterways listed as high priority on the Wisconsin DNR's Impaired Waters List. Much of the pollution originates from phosphorous and sediments from erosion and non-point source pollution. This leads to algal blooms in lakes and fish contamination. Sauk County will continue to support conservation efforts to improve water quality in the county's lakes and rivers as outlined in the Land and Water Resource Management Plan and utilize distinct water management areas. Staff will continue to work with WDNR to monitor water quality and fish habitat, along with continuing the dam management program. Sauk County will also continue with outreach and education efforts to landowners and recreational visitors to promote stewardship of water quality.

The Parks and Recreation Service area is dedicated to preserving and restoring natural ecosystems within County properties, such as our forest, oak savanna, and prairie ecosystems. Individual forest management plans will be created for each property with woodland habitat to maintain forest canopy, manage wildlife, and promote native species proliferation. Many properties throughout the County Park system contain native or historic prairie habitat. Staff are dedicated to maintenance of existing sites and restoration of additional acreage of prairie to expand pollinator habitat and utilize sites for education opportunities.



Club moss on forest floor



Partnerships

OBJECTIVE: EXPAND COUNTY PLANNING SERVICES

Sauk County can coordinate planning projects that span multiple municipalities, state/federal/tribal units of government and non-government organizations, especially when local municipalities do not have the resources to plan for and develop outdoor recreation opportunities that cross political boundaries. An example of a highly successful multi-government unit project where Sauk County took the lead in planning and coordination across multiple entities was the development of Wisconsin's newest state trail, the Great Sauk State Trail. Planning for and implementing cross-boundary projects will necessitate expanding available personnel resources.

OBJECTIVE: CONSIDER MULTIPLE OUTCOMES WHEN PLANNING FOR CROSS-BOUNDARY RECREATION

The expansion of recreational opportunities benefits communities in ways that go beyond economic development. Proposed recreational projects that cross municipal boundaries should consider the outcomes to conservation efforts, public health, education and more to justify the allocation of county and local planning personnel and capital resources. For example, new bike trails could potentially enable safe routes to schools and be mutually beneficial for local school districts and economic development. To achieve this objective, County planners will need to coordinate with other agencies to ensure goals are met across entities.

OBJECTIVE: INTERSECT WITH OTHER UNITS OF GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS)

Sauk County is in the position of coordinating recreational development opportunities with units of government not directly involved with outdoor recreation. Recreational development initiatives should include fire and ambulance districts, economic development departments, and other agencies relevant to projects. Additionally, NGOs have a lasting interest in the types and intensity of recreational uses as they pertain to their individual objectives. Establishing platforms for collaborations as they relate to cross-boundary recreational projects will strengthen the relationship between the County and NGOs.

OBJECTIVE: LEVERAGE RECREATIONAL AND PLANNING GRANTS AND OTHER FUNDING

Sauk County can leverage grant funding by working with partners to pursue cross-boundary recreation grant opportunities. Sauk County can establish a program that seeks grants to help the County and its municipalities expand outdoor recreation facilities and land acquisitions; this will require additional planning staff. Sauk County should also study the feasibility of establishing a transient room tax to increase funding for recreational development.





Bench overlooking White Mound Lake in autumn



Economic Development & Tourism

OBJECTIVE: EXPANSION OF THE GREAT SAUK STATE TRAIL

The Great Sauk State Trail (GSST) is a multi-use trail connecting the Sauk Prairie community to Devil's Lake State Park. A plan is underway to extend the trail so that it connects with larger trail systems statewide: east into Dane County on a bridge over the Wisconsin River to connect with the Walking Iron Trail; and from Devil's Lake State Park into to Reedsburg, where it will meet the "400" State Trail. Eventually, the GSST will be part of a statewide trail system that will make it possible to travel from Milwaukee to La Crosse by bicycle. There is significant potential for economic development in communities along the GSST, especially given its route through Devil's Lake State Park, thus attracting visitors from outside the County. Continue to partner with the Friends of the Great Sauk State Trail and municipalities along the trail for event planning and installation of public art, interpretive signs, fix-it stations, benches, and signs promoting local businesses and amenities where the trail passes through.

OBJECTIVE: LOCALIZED ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY

As the impact of outdoor recreation has grown in recent years at both the State and County level, it is pertinent to assess the economic impact specifically from County owned or managed properties. A completed localized economic impact study will assess the impact of outdoor recreational activities and properties on local municipalities, visitor demographics, effects of branding, promotion of local businesses, and how we can best utilize our county resources to responsibly maintain and expand our county properties. This study will also provide evidence for the importance of local parks, community spaces, and natural areas to our community economy and how investments in these areas provide a return on that investment.



GSST through Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area

OBJECTIVE: IMPROVE ACCESS TO WATERWAYS

Two phases of a plan for the Baraboo River Corridor were completed in 2016 and 2019, respectively. Phase I (2016) provided recommendations to improve water quality and enhance recreational use of the River Corridor. Phase II (2019) includes recommendations for improving water access points, community-specific conceptual plans, and guidelines for development in floodplains. Most of the conceptual plans are for land owned and managed by municipalities, but the County still plays a large role in developing and promoting recreational opportunities related to the Baraboo River Corridor.

Sauk County will continue to coordinate with municipalities to continuously establish and maintain water access points and connecting the river to other County recreational opportunities. The County also recognizes and supports the Friends of the Baraboo River's efforts to have the river designated as a National Scenic Water Trail.



Entrance to Weidman Woods in autumn

OBJECTIVE: COORDINATE MOTORIZED TRAIL GRANTS

Sauk County has active and enthusiastic groups for both ATV/UTV and snowmobile use. Local businesses such as eating and drinking establishments benefit year-round from visiting riders. Currently, snowmobiles have access throughout the County to a combination of county/state trails, private trails, and multi-use trails. ATV access has been extended to most public highways throughout the County and municipal streets. The County assists local snowmobile and ATV clubs with motorized trail grant administration, and coordination with the WDNR. This partnership allows us to benefit from trail user spending by assisting clubs with maintenance and expansion of trail systems.

OBJECTIVE: PROMOTION, BRANDING, AND MARKETING

Sauk County Parks benefits from recognizable branding and marketing efforts that advertise recreation opportunities and connect properties through shared activities. There is potential to attract those visiting other popular destinations (such as Devil's Lake State Park and the Ice Age Trail) to recreation elsewhere in the County through promotional materials such as activity-based maps. Promotional efforts should also encourage cross-recreational activities, i.e., placing literature advertising paddle sport opportunities along the bike trails. Action steps include:

- Launch a website exclusively for Sauk County Parks and Recreation that includes a guide to recreation opportunities, links to online reservations, calendar of events, and so on.

- Continued event planning, sale of branded merchandise and promotional efforts at Sauk County Parks.

- Increase online engagement through social media and apps to post events, promote activities, and generate public enthusiasm and support for recreation in Sauk County.



Mossy rock and pine cone covered path in woods

Topography, Water Resources & Climate

TOPOGRAPHY

Sauk County's topography supports many types of natural habitats, which makes the County of particular interest to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, several non-profit organizations dedicated to conserving areas of natural habitat within the County, and wildlife enthusiasts. Opportunities for nature-based recreation and wildlife viewing abound in Sauk County. What follows is a brief overview of the entire County, along with descriptions of featured areas of particular interest for recreational use.

The western 4/5th of Sauk County is known as the Driftless Area and is so named because it was minimally impacted by past glacial activity. It is a landscape deeply cut by ancient streams into narrow, angular valleys and ridges several hundred million years old. The eastern 1/5th of the County was greatly modified by Wisconsin's last glacier, the Laurentide Ice Sheet, over 10,000 years ago. This section is now an area of terminal and ground moraines, and the terrain is gently undulating to hilly with complex slopes.

Sauk County exhibits a continental climate where temperature and precipitation vary with each season. Weather systems frequently move in an easterly fashion across the county. There are some micro-climatic variations depending on terrain and proximity to water. Generally, valleys experience freezing temperatures later in the spring and earlier in the fall than do the hillsides, as well as colder temperatures during the winter months than the flats or hilltops. The map on the following page shows the varied topography of Sauk County and the waterways that cut their way through the hills and valleys.



Prairie flowers overlooking Prairie Smoke Terrace and White Mound Lake

Topography of Sauk County





THE BARABOO HILLS

The most predominant physical feature in Sauk County is the Baraboo Range. The distinctive pink quartzite of the Baraboo Hills is 1.6 billion years old. The Range is nationally recognized for its outstanding geology and diverse ecological features, which make the range a centerpiece for wildlife habitat.

DESCRIPTION FROM THE WISCONSIN LAND LEGACY REPORT:

The Baraboo Hills support one of the largest contiguous upland hardwood forests in the Midwest and harbor an incredible diversity of species, including more than 1,800 plant and animal species. Of particular note are the many rare birds that nest here, including both northern and southern species. The Hills are all that remain of a very old quartzite mountain range that is now characterized by steep slopes and shallow, stony soils. Scenic vistas, waterfalls, interesting rock formations, deep forests and wildlife are all part of the attractions of the Baraboo Hills. This area includes portions of the Ice Age Trail, as well as Wisconsin's most popular state park, Devil's Lake.

THE BARABOO RIVER

Sauk County lies completely within the drainage basin of the Wisconsin River. Except for some small, isolated depressions in the glaciated area, all parts of the County are reached by streams that serve as outlets for drainage waters. The Baraboo River drains most of the northern part of the County while smaller creeks and streams drain the southern part of the County. Many of the streams are fed by permanent springs, with wetlands generally found in the bottomlands of streams and rivers.

DESCRIPTION FROM THE WISCONSIN LAND LEGACY REPORT:

Scenic sandstone cliffs occur along the upper reaches of the Baraboo River and support hemlock and pine relics, forested seeps, and many rare plants and animals. These stands of hemlock and pine are found in deep, moist ravines or on cool, north- or east-facing slopes. Ground layer vegetation contains species typically found much further north, such as clubmoss, woodfern, and mayflower. Some headwater creeks contain trout. Until recently, the lower stretch of the river had been impacted by a series of dams that warmed and slowed the flow. The last of the dams was removed in 2001 and the aquatic diversity of the river system is already beginning to recover, setting the stage for the restoration of a good warm water fishery including smallmouth bass and walleye.



Railroad bridge spanning over the Baraboo River

Hoary Puccoon flower in a sand prairie in the Spring Green Preserve



SPRING GREEN PRAIRIE

Another important topographic feature of the County is the outwash terraces. The Spring Green outwash area was formed by the Wisconsin River. It is predominantly level and gently sloping except for the low rolling areas formed by wind deposition. This area is home to rare plant communities such as sand prairie, dry bluff prairie, and black oak barrens. The Spring Green Preserve is all called the Wisconsin Desert featuring sand dunes, prairie plains and rising into forested bluff.

DESCRIPTION FROM THE WISCONSIN LAND LEGACY REPORT:

Occupying an ancient, south-facing terrace of the Wisconsin River and adjoining bluffs, the Spring Green Prairie hosts a remarkably diverse set of plants and animals, ranging from prickly pear cactus to pocket gophers. At last count, fourteen species of reptiles had been recorded here. The invertebrates, however, are the most unusual of the Spring Green fauna. For several spiders and insects, the Spring Green prairie is their only known site in the state. Of special interest are the black widow spider, several types of wolf spiders, five species of cicada, eight species of tiger beetle and predatory wasps.

WATER RESOURCES

In addition to unique land features, surface waters are a determining factor in the success of a recreation area. This is well evidenced in Sauk County by the extensive recreational developments that have emerged around Wisconsin Dells, Lake Delton, Devil's Lake, Mirror Lake, Lake Redstone, Dutch Hollow and Lake Wisconsin. In all, Sauk County contains 22 named lakes, along with 49 named and 5 unnamed streams.

Sauk County contains a number of both public and private lakes. Depending on size, public access lakes are used for a variety of activities, including fishing, boating, and swimming. A few lakes offering excellent recreational opportunities are impoundments with dams. Examples of these are found at White Mound Lake, Mirror Lake, Lake Wisconsin, Lake Delton, Dutch Hollow Lake, and Lake Redstone.

The streams and rivers in Sauk County are often navigable and contain one or more different species of fish. Many of these also pass-through lands that are protected by the Nature Conservancy or the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

The Baraboo River, one of the longest restored free flowing rivers east of the Mississippi River, is host to many rare and endangered plants and animals. Plant species include species typically found much further north, and several headwater creeks contain trout.

Wetlands are a key component of supporting outdoor recreation activities such as wildlife viewing, hunting, and fishing, as well as enjoying scenic vistas while boating or hiking. Wetlands, which are generally found near many lakes and streams, are critical to environmental health and habitat. Wetland communities support the highest abundance of plant and animal life, infiltrate and slow water flow during flood events, and filter excessive nutrients from runoff. It is true that while wetlands may be protected from filling or other types of development, they are not well-protected from being drained, especially for existing agricultural purposes. Invasive species are affecting wetlands as well.



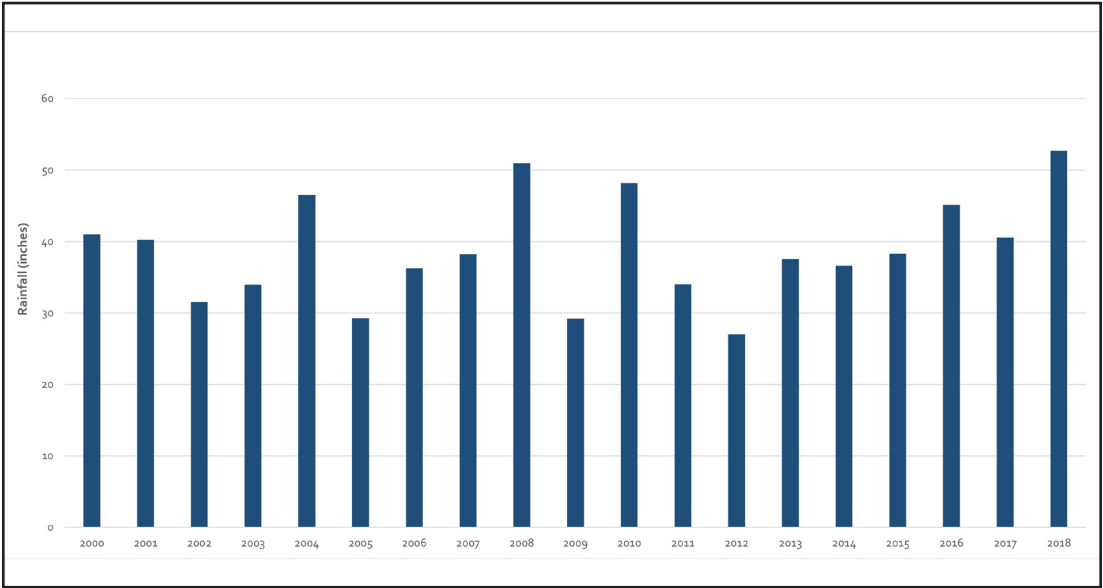
Stream and wetland complex at White Mound County Park in winter

CLIMATE AND EXTREME WEATHER

Outdoor recreation in Sauk County is highly dependent on season. Sauk County has a continental climate with seasonal variations in temperature and precipitation. Changing weather patterns can have profound and lasting local impact. Heavy rains causing flooding has become increasingly common just in the last few decades. For example, in June 2008, areas of Sauk County received 12 inches of rain over the course of a week. This storm caused communities to be underwater, closed many roads, and caused millions of dollars in damage throughout the county. More recently, historic flooding in the late summer and fall of 2018 impacted communities throughout Sauk County, damaging homes, businesses, and roads. The graphs below show annual precipitation data and monthly average temperatures from the National Weather Service for the City of Baraboo.

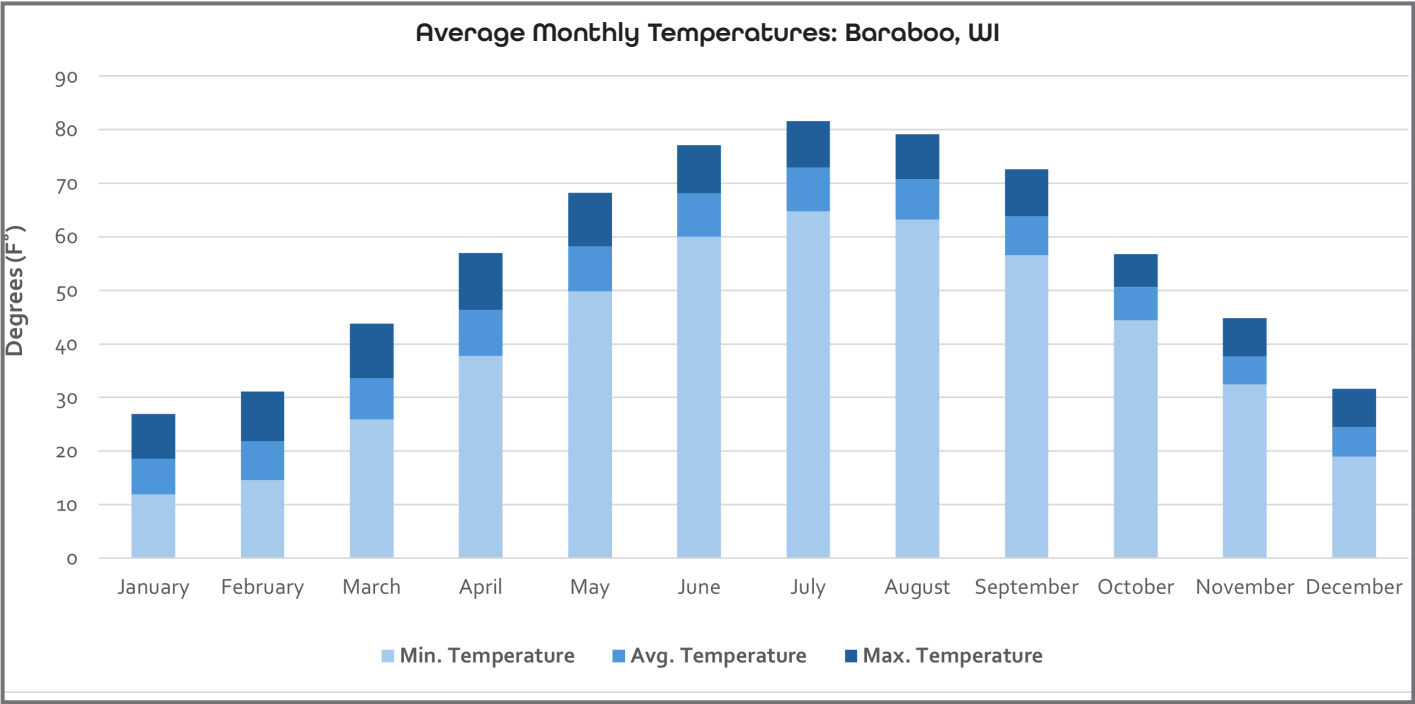
In addition to extreme weather events, milder winters, wetter springs, and hotter summers affect general conditions for outdoor recreation. Rising winter temperatures are causing snow-covered areas to shrink, and for snow cover to disappear earlier in the spring than in years past. Early snowmelt can exacerbate flooding and shorten the season for outdoor winter sports. More rain in the springtime limits the number of days people go outside to recreate. High water levels in aquifers lead to soggy ground, which seriously impact use and maintenance of trails and other outdoor areas.

Average Annual Rainfall Baraboo WI



There are public health risks as well. The rise of 90-degree days in summer increases risk of heat-related illness and injury. Conditions are favorable for vector-borne diseases carried by ticks and mosquitoes. These challenges, as well as more that are unforeseen, must be addressed as Sauk County prepares for the future. As Sauk County updates and expands outdoor recreation opportunities, the effects of extreme and unpredictable weather must be considered in order to prepare the parks and recreation system for the future.

Average Monthly Temperatures: Baraboo, WI



Planning Process

SAUK COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN 2020-2024

From April to July 2024, a core team from the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department met regularly to review and revise the CORP originally created in 2019. The public engagement process consisted of a public meeting review with the Land Resources and Environment Committee in April, a public open house at White Mound County Park on May 30, 2024, and online feedback accepted in July. A draft plan was completed by the end of June, presented to the LRE Committee on July 23, 2024 and adopted by the Sauk County Board of Supervisors on August 20, 2024.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

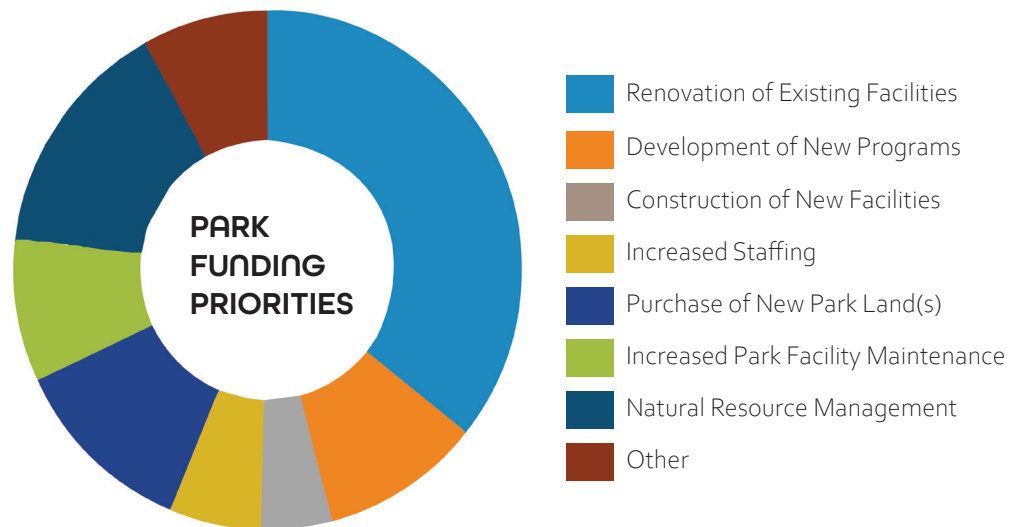
Public input was a critical part of developing and refining the goals and objectives for the Sauk County CORP. When the plan was originally drafted in 2019, an online survey was launched in mid-June to gather input from Sauk County residents and visitors. Paper copies were distributed at local libraries. More than 460 people filled out the survey online, and 6 people turned in paper surveys. It is important to note that the survey is not scientific and is not a representative random sample of the population. Regardless, the opinions shared in survey responses offer insight into public perception of the county park system. Overall, the survey indicated a deep appreciation of Sauk County Parks and Recreation efforts. Of the 466 respondents, 78.97% expressed satisfaction with the parks system. At the same time, there is broad concern about water quality and a desire to improve facilities and amenities, improve information-sharing, and increase access for a variety of user groups. The chart on the following page reflects respondent's priorities for utilizing park funds.

In order to improve Sauk County parks and conservation efforts, we requested information on ways to increase attendance, and which outdoor recreation activities people preferred. The large majority of respondents were local, yet 28.33% reported lack of knowledge of the opportunities available as having prevented them from visiting County facilities. Other issues that prevent visitors are: 11.48% are concerned with water quality, 10.19% marked that their desired activity was not offered, and 11.85% said they don't have the time. In order to increase attendance residents requested expansion of park facilities and increased educational opportunities with additional comments requesting improved water quality, and trail expansion. It is also important to note that 80.79% of people access information on the parks from the County's website or social media.



Sun filtering through a mossy forest

TOP 10 OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES



On August 15, 2019, Sauk County held a Community Open House to present and gather input on draft priorities and objectives. In lieu of the open house, the community had an opportunity to submit comments online. The results of the open house yielded a plan with a greater emphasis on motorized uses, specifically ATV/UTV and led to additional plan objectives to expand motorized opportunities. Overall, the community expressed their support for the plan as exemplified by the following comment: *"These objectives seem to be very reasonable and a good foundation which to improve, not just the park system overall, but also help increase community engagement in some rather underutilized areas of the county."*

Staff met individually with representatives from key stakeholder groups, which provided another vital component of public engagement for the CORP. Stakeholders were identified to represent a variety of interests and concerns. As expected, some of these interests come into conflict, but common themes emerged throughout the course of the stakeholder interview process. Broadly, stakeholders expressed a desire for the County to assume a bigger role in promoting recreation, coordinating efforts that have impact across communities, increasing connectivity with recreational trails, and partnering with organizations for economic opportunity, particularly along the Baraboo River, the Great Sauk State Trail, ATV/UTV trails and the Ice Age Trail. Additionally, many stakeholders articulated the tension between attracting visitors with a recreational tourism economy and maintaining natural resources in Sauk County, which includes protecting sensitive ecological areas. A full list of the stakeholders interviewed has been included in Appendix E.

Beginning in April of 2024 staff evaluated implementation of the CORP over the past five years to measure success of values, goals, and objectives. This assessment was then brought before the Land Resources and Environment Committee for discussion on progress and proposed edits to the plan for continued success. On May 30th, 2024, Sauk County held an Open House to present proposed changes to the CORP, review completed objectives and infrastructure improvement. Although the Open House was advertised through multiple platforms as well as notice sent directly to stakeholders, municipalities, and to citizens subscribed to the Department email notification system, the event was poorly attended. The draft plan was made available online and sent out to stakeholders, municipalities and through the email notification system to gather additional feedback.



AMENDMENTS

Situations may arise that were not identified in this CORP; therefore, it is important that the plan can be amended when necessary. Plan amendments are common and should be considered part of the planning process. They frequently represent consistent implementation of the plan and should be acceptable for consideration by local decision-makers. An addition to the plan would begin with the proposed amendment being placed on the agenda of the LRE Committee for a public discussion. Committee approval of the proposed amendment would then be submitted as a resolution supporting adoption by the County Board. Upon County Board adoption, the Plan amendment would be submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for approval, and incorporation into the County's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS CORP AND OTHER PLANS

The following plans intersect with and have contributed to the Sauk County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Sauk County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2020-2024

The most recent CORP was completed in 2020, and was a complete rewrite from the 2014 plan, with an updated inventory of county-owned land and infrastructure improvements. Unlike

the 2008 and 2014 plans, the current versions of the CORP do not include an inventory of parks and amenities not owned by Sauk County.

Sauk County Comprehensive Plan (2009)

The most recent Sauk County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in December 2009. This followed decades of planning that mostly served to preserve agricultural lands but expanded to natural resource preservation and economic development in the early 1990s. The public participation process for the 2009 plan was extensive and received a national award for website innovation from the National Association of Counties. The Comprehensive Plan includes the following vision statement for Natural Resources: "Sauk County will remain one of the nation's most beautiful and significant natural resource areas. Efforts to coordinate future conservation practices among public and private landowners and government and private conservation agencies will enrich the land and water resources and recreational and educational opportunities for the present and future." Objectives for natural resource protection centered on developing initiatives and programs for further preservation of historic landscapes, environmentally sensitive areas, waterways, and forests, as well as promoting understanding of the economic, ecological, and social value of protecting natural resources. As of 2024, Sauk County intends to begin the process of revising and updating the Comprehensive Plan.

Baraboo River Corridor Plan:

Phase I and II (2016 & 2019)

Phase I: The Baraboo River Corridor Plan was completed in 2016 by the consulting firm MSA in partnership with the Village of North Freedom, Village of West Baraboo, City of Baraboo, and Sauk County. The purpose was to plan for recreational development along the Baraboo River, as a regional amenity. Phase I includes several recommendations for making the Baraboo River Corridor an attractive, safe, and accessible destination by improving water quality, building partnerships for improvements and economic sustainability, and creating a system of access points for kayakers, canoers, and fishers.

Phase II: Baraboo River Corridor Plan was completed in 2019 by MSA in partnership with the Village of Rock Springs, City of Reedsburg, Village of La Valle, Village of North Freedom, Village of Wonewoc, Village of Union Center, Village of Elroy, Village of Hillsboro, and Sauk and Juneau Counties. Phase II includes a detailed inventory and analysis of townships and municipalities, historic and cultural sites, and other recreational amenities along the corridor, along with recommendations for conceptual plans and community-specific actions for implementation.

Baraboo River Corridor Branding & Marketing Study (January 2018)

In 2018, the Friends of the Baraboo River sponsored a Marketing and Branding study, prepared by MSA. Findings of the study include an overview of available amenities (sporting goods retailers, eating and drinking places, options for lodging), documentation of river and trail use in the corridor, piloting of the mobile app “Strive On: to further engage visitors to the corridor, and an analysis of ADA accessibility at two boat landings along the Baraboo River (one at North Freedom Park in North Freedom, and one at Haskins Park in West Baraboo). The study also includes recommendations for brand identity and logo creation, to reach target audiences through messaging and marketing methods.

Land and Water Resource

Management Plan for Sauk County (2017)

In 2017, the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department created a 10-year Land and Water Resources Management (LWRM) Plan. The Plan identifies challenges to protecting the natural resources of Sauk County and outlines a comprehensive strategy for soil and water conservation in the County. The challenges are numerous and include water quality affected by soil erosion and nutrient runoff from agriculture, loss of wildlife habitat, and threat of invasive species. The LWRM Plan addresses these challenges with goals centered on supporting and educating farmers in conservation practices, bringing landowners into compliance with state standards for minimizing non-point pollution, and partnering with other organizations for cost-sharing and other support.

Sauk County Hazard Mitigation Plan 2019-2024

In 2019, the Emergency Management Department updated the Hazard Mitigation Plan, which is a comprehensive assessment of natural and man-made disasters that could pose a threat to Sauk County. The assessment includes risks, emergency response plans, and strategies for mitigation, as well as an inventory of critical facilities and services in the County.

Local Municipal Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans

Many cities and villages in Sauk County recognize the importance and benefits their parks, open space, and trail systems have on community character and quality of life providing for the recreation needs of current and future residents and visitors. Individual comprehensive outdoor recreation plans intend to guide the continued improvement of parks and recreational opportunities while maintaining eligibility for state and federal park and recreation grants. The Sauk County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan recognizes the following municipal outdoor recreation plans by reference and incorporates them as such for joint recreational planning and development activities shared by Sauk County and the respective municipality.

- City of Baraboo Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2022-2026
- City of Reedsburg Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2023-2028
- City of Wisconsin Dells Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2023-2028
- Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2021-2026
- Village of Lake Delton Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
- Village of Spring Green Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2024-2028
- Village of West Baraboo Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2021-2026

Appendix A:

Non-Profit Organizations in Sauk County

ALDO LEOPOLD FOUNDATION

Mission: “to foster a land ethic through the legacy of Aldo Leopold,”
Vision: “to weave a land ethic into the fabric of our society; to advance the understanding, stewardship and restoration of land health; and to cultivate leadership for conservation.” The Center’s headquarters are located in Baraboo, but the Foundation helps to cooperatively manage several thousand acres of the Leopold-Pine Important Bird Area along the Wisconsin River in Sauk and Columbia Counties west of Portage. This land includes the 140-acre farm surrounding the Leopold shack, which was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2009. The Foundation has extensive educational and curriculum resources, workshops, and leadership programs.

BARABOO RANGE PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

Mission: “a land trust which works to preserve and protect the qualities and culture of the Baraboo Range through promotion of ecologically responsible land use...through collaboration with groups having similar goals, community education, and land protection projects.” They undertake and assist in land or conservation easement acquisitions, lead hikes and sponsor lecture series, Bird City Baraboo events, and work parties for community education.

DRIFTLESS AREA LAND CONSERVANCY

The Driftless Area Land Conservancy is committed to preserving natural and agricultural landscape by educating private landowners about land protection and conservation easements in Richland, Sauk, Iowa, and Lafayette counties.

DRIFTLESS AREA RESTORATION EFFORT

The Driftless Area Restoration Effort, spearheaded by Trout Unlimited, was formed to address natural resource challenges in the Driftless Area, specifically for stream habitat. DARE’s stated mission is to work together “to protect, restore and enhance cold, cool, and warmwater streams for fish and other aquatic life in the Driftless Area region for future generations.” The organization has goals to reduce sediment and nutrient deposits, increase conservation and restoration efforts, improve the quality of angling and other recreational opportunities, and increase public awareness about natural resources and the importance of aquatic conservation through outreach and education.

DURWARD’S GLEN RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

According to their website, “Durward’s Glen Retreat and Conference Center is dedicated to the preservation of its unique natural beauty, historic past, and spiritual heritage.” Durward’s Glen is located in the Baraboo Hills near Devil’s Lake State Park,



and the 40-acre property has scenic hiking trails and historic buildings open to the public year-round.

FERRY BLUFF EAGLE COUNCIL

Founded in 1988, the Ferry Bluff Eagle Council is a volunteer, grassroots organization dedicated to protecting, enhancing, and maintaining bald eagle habitat in the Sauk Prairie area. The Council collaborates with the DNR, the Lower Wisconsin State riverway, and local municipalities on land use to protect bald eagle habitat. The Council also maintains a public overlook of the Wisconsin River in Prairie du Sac, and they provide a wide variety of educational materials both for the public and school use.

FRIENDS OF THE BARABOO RIVER CORRIDOR

The Friends of the Baraboo River Corridor was established in 2016 to provide fundraising and volunteer support to preserve the natural environment, improve water quality, and enhance recreational opportunities along the Baraboo River. They hired a consulting firm to conduct a branding and marketing strategy in 2018 and assisted with planning Phases I and II of the Baraboo River Corridor River Plan. The Friends group has sponsored a river race and assisted with logjam removal. At the time of this plan, they are working on applying for a National Scenic River designation.

FRIENDS OF THE GREAT SAUK STATE TRAIL

The Friends of the Great Sauk State Trail was established in 2015 as a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization, with a mission to enhance, promote, manage and advocate for the continued development of the Great Sauk State Trail, a nearly 13 mile multi-use trail connecting the Sauk Prairie community to Devil's Lake State Park, Wisconsin's most visited state park. To make the trail the world-class attraction it should be, the friends group aimed to raise \$1.0 million. The Friends group provided funding for the first two phases. The group is also charged with enhancing the trail by installing signs, art, benches, and other amenities to make the trail experience safe, educational, and – most importantly – unforgettable.

INTERNATIONAL CRANE FOUNDATION

The International Crane Foundation “works worldwide to conserve cranes and the ecosystems, watersheds, and flyways on which they depend.” The Foundation owns a 224- acre tract of property in the Town of Fairfield. The property is the home of a diverse population of wild cranes, kept in captivity for research, breeding and ultimately for release. The Foundation offers educational programs, extensive educational resources, and exhibits open to the public.

LAKE REDSTONE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Lake Redstone is a 612-acre impounded lake located in Northwest Sauk County near La Valle. Most of the 17.5 miles of shoreline is privately developed, but Sauk County owns and manages a boat launch and a county park on different parts of the lake. The Protection District is made up of seven commissioners, five of whom are elected. They are charged with overseeing water quality and maintenance of Lake Redstone, including dredging projects.

LAKE VIRGINIA MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

The Lake Virginia Management District is local unit of government within the Town of Excelsior dedicated to the management of Lake Virginia. The district regulates and levies taxes in order to protect and improve the quality of the lake for future use.

LAKE WISCONSIN ALLIANCE

The Lake Wisconsin Alliance is a non-profit organization founded in 2014, primarily to maintain and educate about water quality. The Alliance “endeavors to balance the diverse interests of the Lake Wisconsin community while improving water quality, recreational opportunities, and sustaining a healthy ecosystem within the Lake Wisconsin watershed.” They hold frequent seminars related to water quality, fish health, shoreline preservation, and other related topics.

MADISON AUDUBON SOCIETY

The Madison Audubon Society is a large organization committed to habitat restoration and youth and community education. Madison Audubon partners with a great many other conservation organizations, county and municipal governments and parks departments, schools, community centers and other organizations to have a wide reach. In Sauk County, Madison Audubon has been involved in restoring bird habitat in the area formerly occupied by the Badger Army Ammunition Plant.

MIRROR LAKE ASSOCIATION & MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

The Mirror Lake Association is a non-profit organization founded in 1986, dedicated to promoting and improving; the physical appearance, well-being; and protecting the future of Mirror Lake. The Mirror Lake Management District was created in 2006 as a local government taxing authority. Together, the two organizations utilize the collected funds for the rehabilitation and enhancement of Mirror Lake.

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

The Nature Conservancy is dedicated to preserving and protecting wildlife habitat worldwide. TNC Wisconsin has acquired parcels of land and assists in protecting more than 10,000 acres throughout Sauk County. Some are open to the public, including Baxter's Hollow and Hemlock Draw in the Baraboo Hills, and the Spring Green Prairie. The Nature Conservancy sponsors local hiking events and volunteer opportunities.

RIVERLAND CONSERVANCY

The Riverland Conservancy's stated mission is “to promote the conservation, protection, and restoration of the lands, water, and natural communities that comprise our environmental heritage.” The Riverland Conservancy's Merrimac Preserve property, which was dedicated to conservation uses in the 1990s, is more than 1,800 acres of forest, prairie, savanna, wetlands, and streams in the Town of Merrimac. The preserve provides an integral wildlife corridor between the Baraboo Bluffs and the Wisconsin River. The Riverland Conservancy has established interpretive trails and offers courses in hunting, deer management, and master naturalist training.



Large-flowered bellwort

Appendix B:

Grant Opportunities

FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAMS

Land and Water Conservation Fund

Description from the National Park Service: The State Side of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/stateside.htm>

Active Transportation Investment Program (ATIP).

Description from the U.S Department of Transportation: The ATIP grants will allow communities to identify, prioritize, and implement improvements to the largest barriers to safe, accessible, and equitable pedestrian and bicycle network connectivity through the development of infrastructure that will provide substantial additional opportunities for walking and bicycling. Eligible organizations will be able to create plans or implement active transportation networks that connect destinations within or between communities or create plans or implement an active transportation spine connecting two or more communities, metropolitan regions, or States. The ATIP also provides an opportunity for eligible organizations to enhance their overall transportation network by integrating active transportation facilities with transit services, where available, to improve access to public transportation.

Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)

Description from the U.S Department of Transportation: RAISE discretionary grants help project sponsors at the state and local levels, including municipalities, Tribal governments, counties, and others complete critical freight and passenger transportation infrastructure projects. The eligibility requirements of RAISE allow project sponsors to obtain funding for projects that may be harder to support through other U.S. DOT grant programs. RAISE grants may be applicable to the construction of certain segments of the Great Sauk State Trail and in particular segments that offer intercommunity connections that project improved mobility and connectivity, economic competitiveness and opportunity, and partnerships for implementation.

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Description from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation Website: The Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) is a legislative program that was authorized in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (commonly abbreviated as BIL), the federal transportation law signed by President Biden on November 19, 2021. With certain exceptions, projects that met eligibility criteria for the Safe Routes to School Program, Transportation Enhancements, and/or Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities Program are eligible TAP projects.

Recreation Trails Program

Description from the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration: The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses. This includes hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, equestrian use, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, off-road motorcycling, all-terrain vehicle riding, four-wheel driving, or using other off-road motorized vehicles. https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/

STATE GRANT PROGRAMS

Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Grant Programs

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship program is the name for a family of funds supporting natural resource protection and nature-based outdoor recreation in Wisconsin. All descriptions are from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources website: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Stewardship/>

Aids for the Acquisition and Development of Local Parks (ADLP):

Stewardship sets aside 50 percent of the funds in the Local Assistance Program for projects that improve community recreation areas and acquire land for public outdoor recreation.

Urban Green Space (UGS) Grants:

The intent of the Urban Green Space Program is to provide open natural space within or in proximity to urban areas; to protect from urban development areas within or in proximity to urban areas that have scenic, ecological, or other natural value; and to provide land for noncommercial gardening for the residents of an urbanized area.

Urban Rivers (UR) Grants:

The Urban Rivers program aims to restore or preserve the character of urban riverways through the acquisition or development of land adjacent to rivers. Purposes of the program are economic revitalization, outdoor recreation, preservation (historic, natural, cultural), and resource conservation.

Wisconsin Arts Board Creative Communities Program

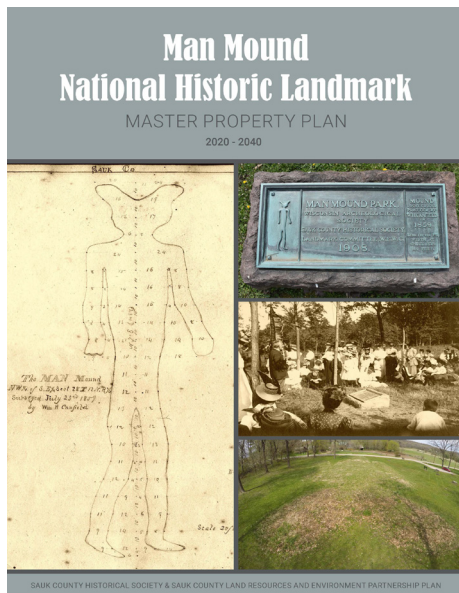
Description from website: The Creative Communities (CC) grants program encourages arts education and community arts development in Wisconsin. It provides support for projects that further the Arts Board's goals in the following three areas: Arts Education, Folk and Traditional Arts, and Local Arts. Through direct financial support of specific arts projects, the Arts Board sustains the vitality of Wisconsin culturally, educationally, and economically. <https://artsboard.wisconsin.gov/Pages/Community/CCP.aspx>

Appendix C:

Sauk County Parks and Recreation Master Plans

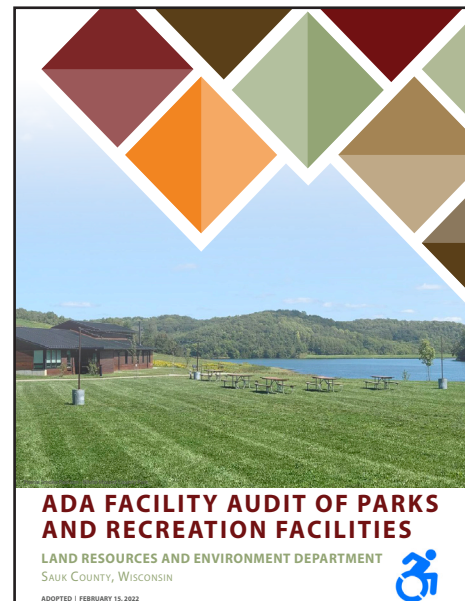
Man Mound National Historic Landmark Master Plan 2020-2024

Adopted December 15, 2020, Resolution 146-2020



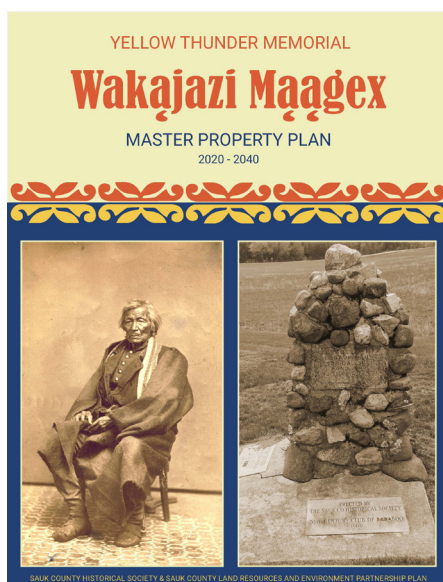
ADA Facility Audit of Parks and Recreation Facilities

Adopted February 15, 2022, Resolution 14-2022



Wakajazi Maagex (Yellow Thunder) Memorial Master Plan 2020-2024

Adopted December 15, 2020, Resolution 146-2020



Bluffview Community Park Master Plan 2021-2026

Adopted February 15, 2022, Resolution 15-2022



White Mound County Park Master Plan

2022-2042

Adopted March 15, 2022, Resolution 33-2022



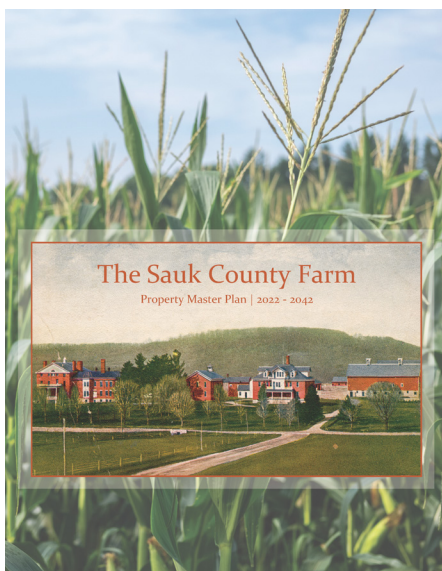
Great Sauk State Trail Master Plan

Adopted July 16, 2024, Resolution XX-2024

Sauk County Farm Master Plan

2022-2042

Adopted March 15, 2022, Resolution 35-2022



Appendix D:

Stakeholders & Public Input

STAKEHOLDER	GROUP
Astronomers	Iowa County Astronomers
	La Crosse Area Astronomical Society
	Rockford Amateur Astronomers, Inc
ATV Clubs	WI River Runners ATV Club, Inc
	Baraboo Bluffs ATV/UTV
	Sauk Ridge Runners
Chambers of Commerce	Baraboo Area Chamber of Commerce
	Reedsburg Area Chamber of Commerce
	Sauk Prairie Area Chamber of Commerce
	Spring Green Area Chamber of Commerce
	Wisconsin Dells Visitor and Convention Bureau
Colleges	UW-Baraboo
	Madison College - Reedsburg
Conservation and Wildlife Groups	Aldo Leopold Nature Center
	Baraboo Range Preservation Association
	Driftless Area Land Conservancy
	Madison Audubon
	Riverland Conservancy
	Sauk County Foundation
	The Nature Conservancy
	Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance
	International Crane Foundation
	Ferry Bluff Eagle Council
Department of Natural Resources	WDNR
Disc Golf Groups	Disconsin (Reedsburg, WI)
	Baraboo Lions Disc Golf
	Narrows Creek Disc Golf
	Fox Hill RV Park and Campground
Economic Development	Gateway to the Driftless
	Baraboo Young Professionals
	Sauk County Development Corporation
Friends Groups	Friends of the Baraboo River
	Lake Redstone Protection District
	Lake Wisconsin Alliance
	GSST Friends Group
	Friends of Devil's Lake State Park
	Friends of 400 Trail
	Friends of Moely Prairie in Sauk Prairie
	Friends of Mirror Lake State Park

	Greater Sauk County Community Foundation
	Friends of the Campus, Inc
Ho Chunk Nation	
Horse Riders	Domino Stables, Inc
	Canyon Creek Horseback Riding Stable
	BREAT (Baraboo River Equine Assisted Therapies)
	Happy Trail Ranch
	Willow Creek Saddle Club
Lake Protection Groups	Lake Redstone Protection District
	Lake Wisconsin Alliance
	Dutch Hollow Lake Association
	Lake Virginia Lake Association
Libraries	Reedsburg Public Library
	Kilbourn Public Library(Dells)
	Baraboo Public Library
	North Freedom Public Library
	Ruth Culver Community Library
	Spring Green Community Library
	Sauk City Public Library
	Kraemer Library and Community Center
Mountain Bike Clubs	Black Composite Mountain Bike Club
Park Departments	City of Baraboo Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department
	City of Reedsburg Park and Recreation
	Sauk Prairie Community Recreation Dept
	Spring Green Parks and Recreation Committee
	Wisconsin Dells/Lake Delton Parks & Recreation
	Merrimac Village President
	North Freedom
	Plain
	Rock Springs
	Ice Age Trail Alliance
Rod and Gun Clubs	Sauk Prairie Trap and Skeet Club
	Reedsburg Outdoor Club
	Circus City Sportsmen
	Merrimac Conservation Club
	Honey Creek Rod and Gun Club
	Delton Sportsman's Club
	La Valle Sportsman's Club
	North Freedom Rod, Gun, & Archery Club
	Spring Green Rod and Gun Club
	Rush Creek Sportsman's Club
Sauk County Historical Society	Sauk County Historical Society
Sheriff's Departments	Non-emergency Numbers
	Sauk County Sheriff
	Baraboo Police Department
	Reedsburg Police Department

	Sauk Prairie Police Department
	Spring Green Police Department
	Town of La Valle Police
	Wisconsin Dells Police Department
School Districts	Baraboo School District
	Reedsburg Area School District
	Sauk Prairie Area School District
	River Valley School District
	Wisconsin Dells School District
Snowmobile Clubs	Association of Sauk County Snowmobile Clubs, Inc
Trail Groups	Great Sauk State Trail Commission

The list above was compiled with the intention to meet with each stakeholder organization. The CORP team was unable to meet with every organization on this list, due to a variety of reasons, but we did reach out to everyone included here. All of the stakeholders that did meet with us were asked the following questions and discussion points:

- What parks or public lands in Sauk County do you use most often for outdoor recreation?
- As a representative of (organization name), what do you value most about outdoor recreation in Sauk County?
- What would you name as your top three priority areas for the LRE department to invest in outdoor recreation?
- What facilities improvements would you most like to see? Be as specific as possible.
- What concerns do you have about user conflicts in the county parks and public lands?
- What specific safety concerns do you have?
- What kind of public outreach/education efforts are important to your interests?
- Are there funding or partnership opportunities in Sauk County for the development or delivery of recreation facilities or programs?
- What do you think the County is doing well?
- What weaknesses or challenges for outdoor recreation in Sauk County need to be addressed in this Plan?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

2019 PUBLIC INPUT SURVEY

Thank you for participating in the survey of outdoor recreation in Sauk County. The survey should only take 5-10 minutes to complete. Please answer all questions for yourself; if other members of your household want to participate, they should fill out the survey separately. Public input is a vital component to help inform the development of the Sauk County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The Plan will provide guidance for the next five years in acquiring land and developing the County park system to accommodate the growing outdoor recreation needs and interests of residents and visitors.

Question 1: From the following list, please check up to five (5) outdoor activities or facilities that you enjoy the most.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ATV/UTV | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking/Hiking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping | <input type="checkbox"/> Mountain Biking | <input type="checkbox"/> Trail Running |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canoe/Kayak | <input type="checkbox"/> Fat tire Biking | <input type="checkbox"/> Wildlife/nature observation (birding, stargazing, photography, etc.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paddle boarding | <input type="checkbox"/> Playground | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not participate in any outdoor recreation activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cross country skiing | <input type="checkbox"/> Road/trail biking | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disc golf | <input type="checkbox"/> Rock Climbing | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dog park | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowmobiling | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foraging for edibles | <input type="checkbox"/> Snowshoeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horseback riding | <input type="checkbox"/> Swimming | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hunting | | |

Question 2. Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with Sauk County parks?

Very satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Question 3. Please rank the areas from highest priority for using park funds. (1 being the highest priority 10 being the lowest)

<input type="text"/>	Renovation of existing facilities	<input type="text"/>	Increased park facility maintenance
<input type="text"/>	Development of new programs	<input type="text"/>	Natural resource management (i.e. prairie restoration)
<input type="text"/>	Construction of new facilities	<input type="text"/>	Other _____
<input type="text"/>	Increased staffing	<input type="text"/>	Other _____
<input type="text"/>	Purchase of new park land	<input type="text"/>	Other _____

Question 4. Have any of the following prevented you from visiting or enjoying Sauk County parks facilities?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know what opportunities are available in the parks | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not feel safe in the parks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm not interested in any of the activities available in the parks | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not feel welcome or included in the parks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The activities I want to do are not available in the parks (Please specify activities): _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> There isn't a county park close to where I live |
| <input type="checkbox"/> It is too hard to make reservations | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm concerned about lake or river water quality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Park facilities are not accessible to my needs. | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not have time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Entrance fees are too high | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ |

Question 5. Which of the following would increase the likelihood that you would visit Sauk County parks?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> More parks closer to my home | <input type="checkbox"/> Culturally specific programs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Less crime | <input type="checkbox"/> Ease of making reservations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expanded facilities (picnic tables, grills, pavilions, restrooms, concessions, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____ |

Question 6. Rank how you prefer to access information about Sauk County parks and outdoor recreation? (1 being the highest priority 6 being the lowest)

	Sauk County Website		Newspaper
	Sauk County Social Media		Promotional Brochures
	Email list		Other _____

Question 7. What is your vision for a future Sauk County park system? Comment box

Sauk County is dedicated to making its parks and public spaces available, welcoming and inclusive to all members of the community. The demographic questions below are optional, but this information is helpful for us to collect as we strive to achieve this goal.

What is your 5-digit zip code?

What is your age?

- ☐ <18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-65
- ☐ 65+

How many children under the age of 18 live in your household?

- ☐ 0
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ More than 3

What is your yearly household income?

- ☐ <\$25,000
- ☐ \$25,000-\$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000-\$74,999
- ☐ \$75,000-\$99,999
- ☐ More than \$100,000
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

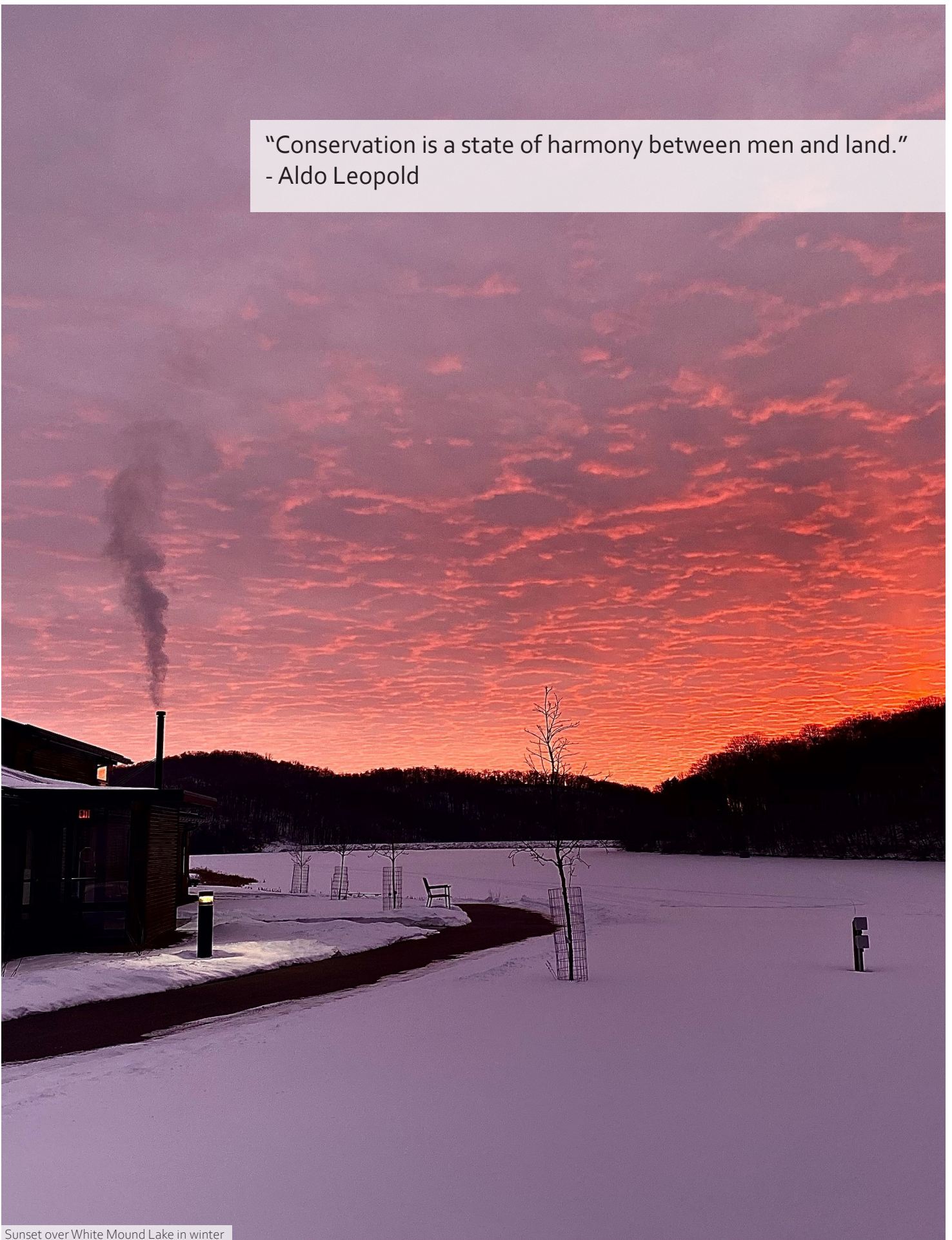
What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe: _____

What best describes your race?

- ☐ American Indian or Native Alaskan
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Latinx
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ☐ Two or more races
- ☐ White, Hispanic
- ☐ White, non-Hispanic
- ☐ None of the above; I identify as _____
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land."
- Aldo Leopold



Sunset over White Mound Lake in winter

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SAUK COUNTY

PARKS + RECREATION