



SAUK COUNTY
Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan
2020-2024





SAUK COUNTY
PARKS + RECREATION

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Sauk County Residents,

It is with great pride that I present to you the 2020-2024 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 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 a document that not only identifies where we are now, but how we envision our parks and open spaces in the future, and the opportunities and challenges that we may face in implementing our plan.

The vision of the Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 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.” In order to achieve this vision, the plan establishes four priority areas with action items for implementation including:

1. Further Development of the County Park System.
2. Resource Management and Stewardship.
3. Partnerships.
4. Economic Development and Tourism.

Each of these priority areas with their corresponding objectives aim to further the vision that we have for the Sauk County Parks and Recreation System; and bring us steps closer to ensuring 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 also presents us with challenges. As our population increases, so does the demand on our facilities and natural areas. In order 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. “The environment is where we all meet; where we all have a mutual interest; it is one thing all of us share” – Lady Bird Johnson. Sauk County understands the importance of these collaborations to support the shared goals that we all have for Sauk County’s natural environment.

The Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan serves 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 2020-2024 Sauk County Outdoor Recreation Plan.



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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.



Stone feet in sand

Bench overlooking 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 2020-2024 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



Sandhill crane at the North End Boat Landing in winter

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.

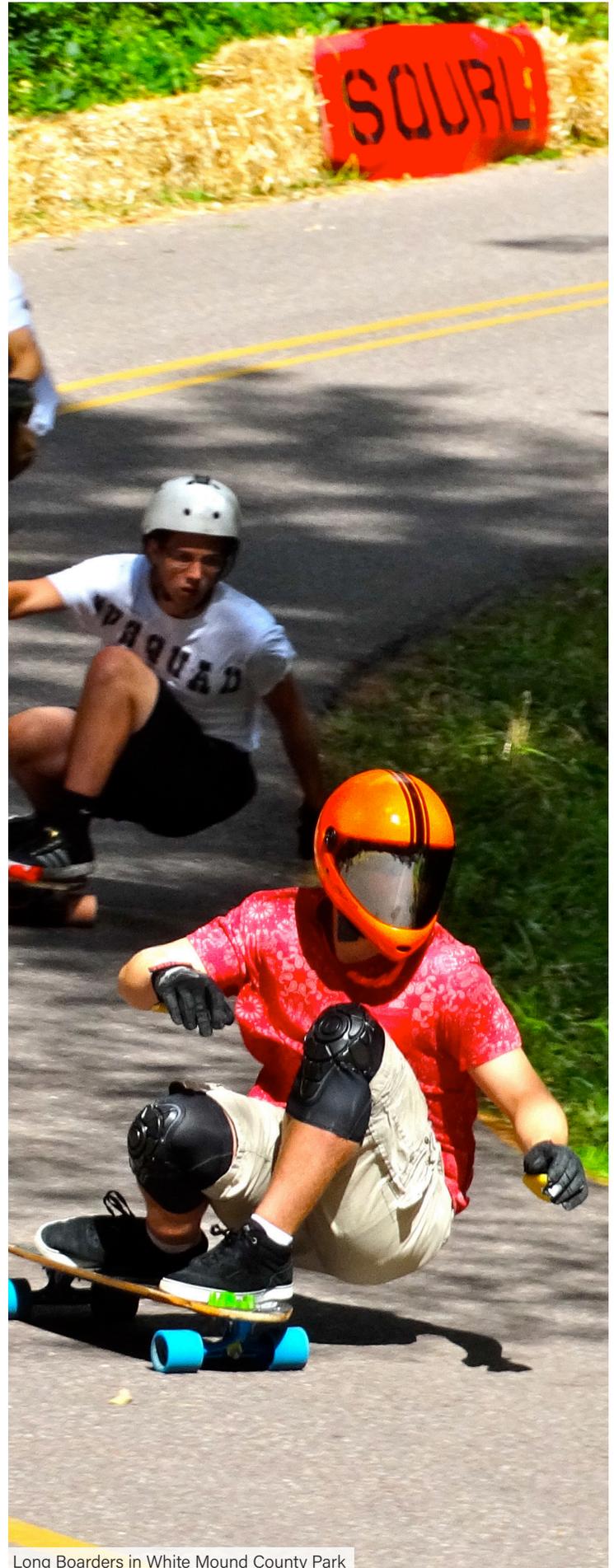
The first CORP for Sauk County was developed in 1970. Since that time, the County has seen modest growth, demographic shifts, and several extreme flooding events, that have challenged local communities. Recent park and recreation projects have generated enthusiasm for recreation opportunities in Sauk County, such as the Great Sauk State Trail, the first section of which opened in 2017; the County took ownership of the White Mound County Park Property in 2017 and constructed the new White Mound community building, which was completed in 2018; and has taken steps to connect communities through improved recreational access points on the Baraboo River Corridor.

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 developed over a period of three months with input from staff meetings, public surveys, and stakeholder interviews. 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) Further 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 Great Sauk Trail Community Plans. Appendix D are the County Property Master Plans. A list of stakeholders and our public input survey has been included in Appendix E.



Long Boarders in White Mound County Park

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.

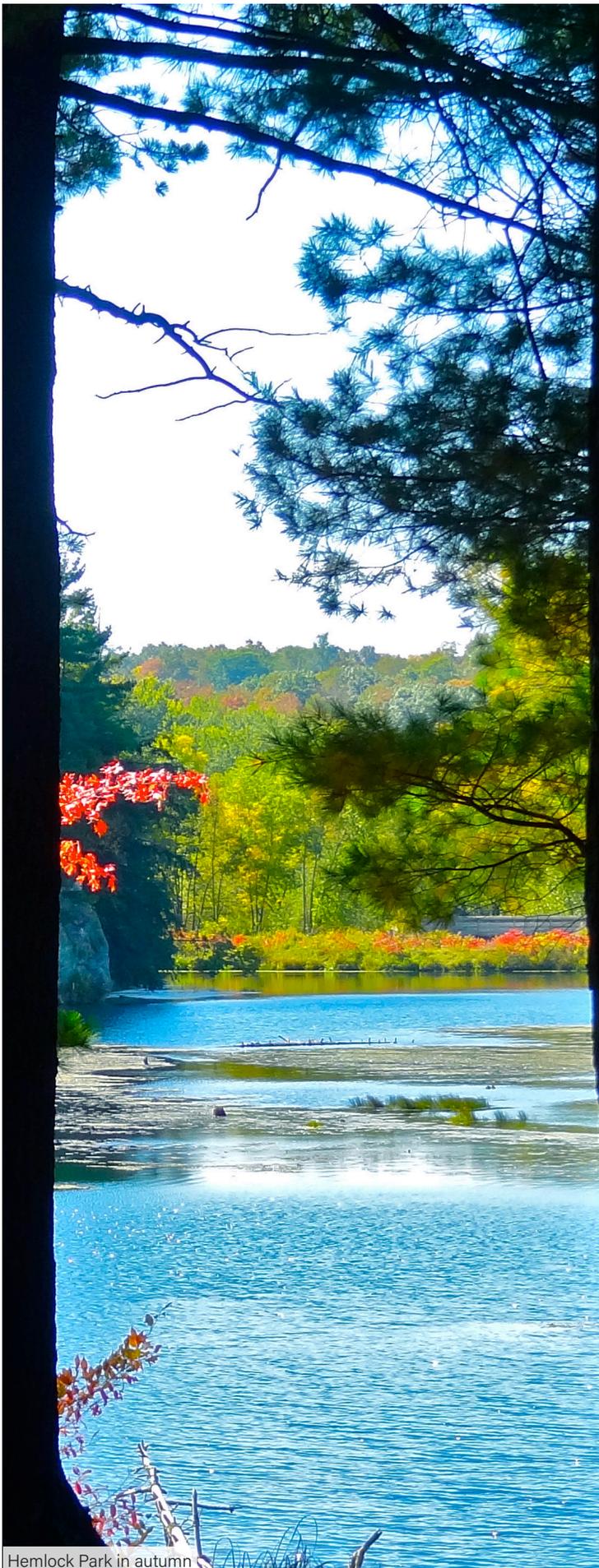
PURPOSE

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 2020-2024. 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 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.



Hemlock Park in autumn

Weather vane on top of barn with maple leaves in fall

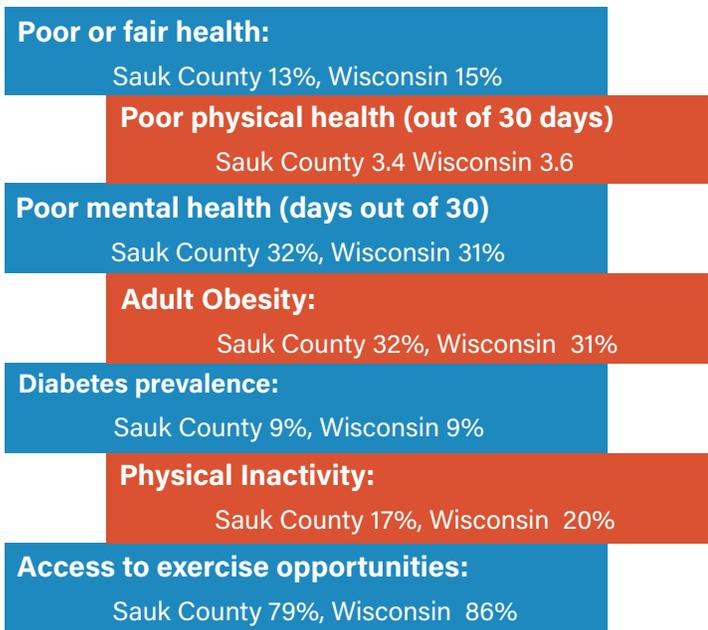


THE IMPORTANCE OF OUTDOOR RECREATION TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Health and wellness is a top priority 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.

As noted, Sauk County is compared with the State of Wisconsin on a number of measures of environmental factors, such as access to exercise opportunities and health outcomes such as rates of adult obesity and diabetes prevalence.

2019 County Health Factors



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

The findings also include the determination that 10% of health outcomes are related to physical environment. In Sauk County, nearly 1 in 3 adults are obese, nearly 1 in 10 adults have diabetes, 1 in 6 adults are physically inactive, and 1 in 5 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. 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 2015, 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, Obesity (including nutrition and physical activity) and Access to Dental Care. 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 is integral to all aspects of outdoor recreation, and infuses all of 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.

STATEMENT ON EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

Sauk County is dedicated to providing 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.

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.

Ice shack on frozen lake in White Mound County Park



VISION STATEMENT

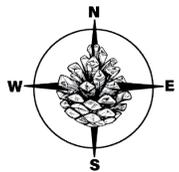
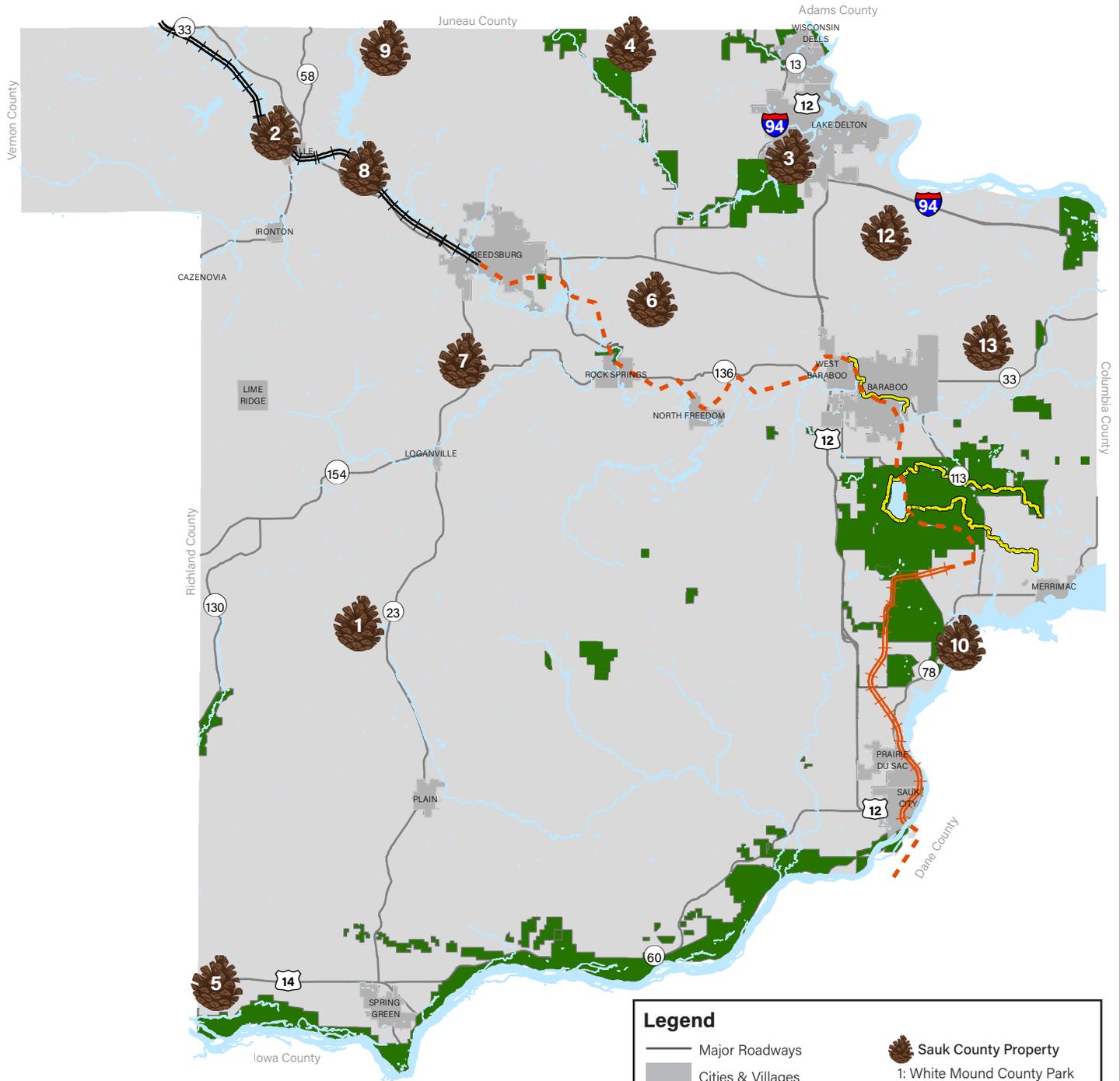
To connect people to the rich natural, cultural and historical resources of Sauk County, and create outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities now and in the future.

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



Prairie Smoke Terrace in White Mound County Park in winter

SAUK COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION



Legend

	Major Roadways		Sauk County Property
	Cities & Villages	1:	White Mound County Park
	Waterbodies	2:	Hemlock County Park
	Outdoor Recreation Area	3:	Timme Mill
	The Great Sauk State Trail	4:	Weidman Woods
	Proposed GSST Expansion	5:	County Forest
	The "400" State Trail	6:	County Landfill
	Ice Age National Scenic Trail	7:	County Farm
	State Property	8:	Lake Redstone County Park
		9:	North End Boat Landing
		10:	Summer Oaks Boat Landing
		11:	Douglas Landing
		12:	Yellow Thunder Memorial
		13:	Man Mound Park

Property Inventory

SAUK COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION

It is the mission of the Sauk County Parks and Recreation Division 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, fishing and wildlife viewing, with a public campground 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.



Children in a kayak on White Mound Lake in autumn

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
 Leashed Pet Area	 Night Sky Viewing	 Park Marker

White Mound County Park

S7995 White Mound Dr
Hillpoint, WI 53937

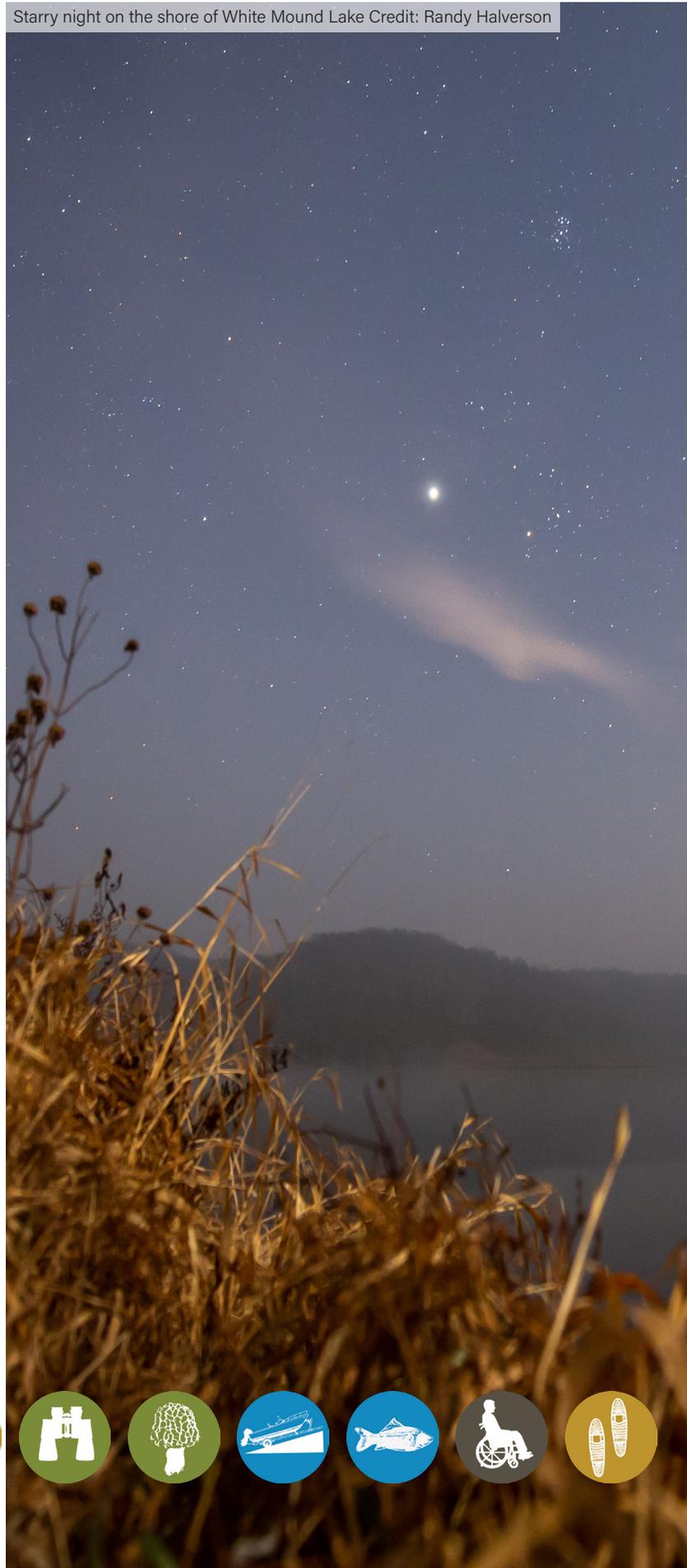
At approximately 1,100 acres, White Mound County Park offers a little bit of everything. White Mound gets its name from a vanished village located south of the park. The village was named for the white-like mounds of limestone found in the area. An abandoned limestone kiln can still be seen in the park.

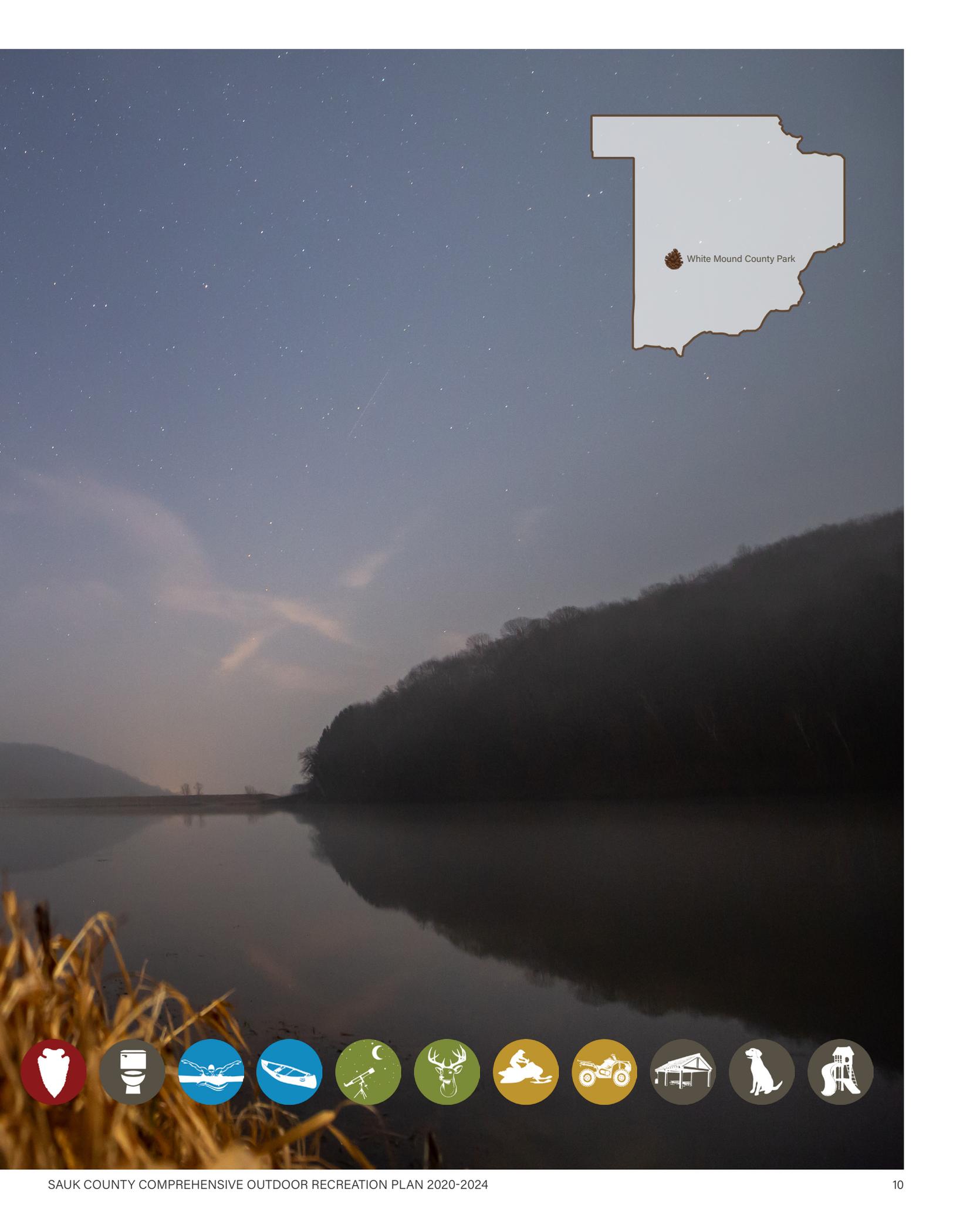
White Mound County Park offers a campground with 47 campsites, 38 of which include electrical hookups. The camping season begins in April and closes in November – weather permitting. A dump station and water fill-up stations are provided. White Mound County Park also offers a horse campground comprised of 10 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 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.

New to White Mound County Park is the Prairie Smoke Terrace. Built in 2018, the Prairie Smoke Terrace overlooks White Mound Lake, is available to rent all seasons and seats about 64 people indoors. There are miles of trails throughout the park. Trails include access for hiking, snowshoeing, snowmobiling and a short ATV trail (weather permitting). Scattered around the park are many picnic areas that include playgrounds, grills, picnic tables, bathrooms and shelters (available to rent for a fee). Hunting and trapping are allowed in many areas of the park. An entrance fee is required.

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





White Mound County Park





Hemlock Dam handicap pier in autumn

Hemlock County Park

E3601 N. Dutch Hollow Road
LaValle, 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 provides opportunities to catch northern pike, largemouth bass and panfish. Archery and shotgun hunting are also available in this park. No muzzle-loaders are allowed. There is ample parking and no entrance fee is required.

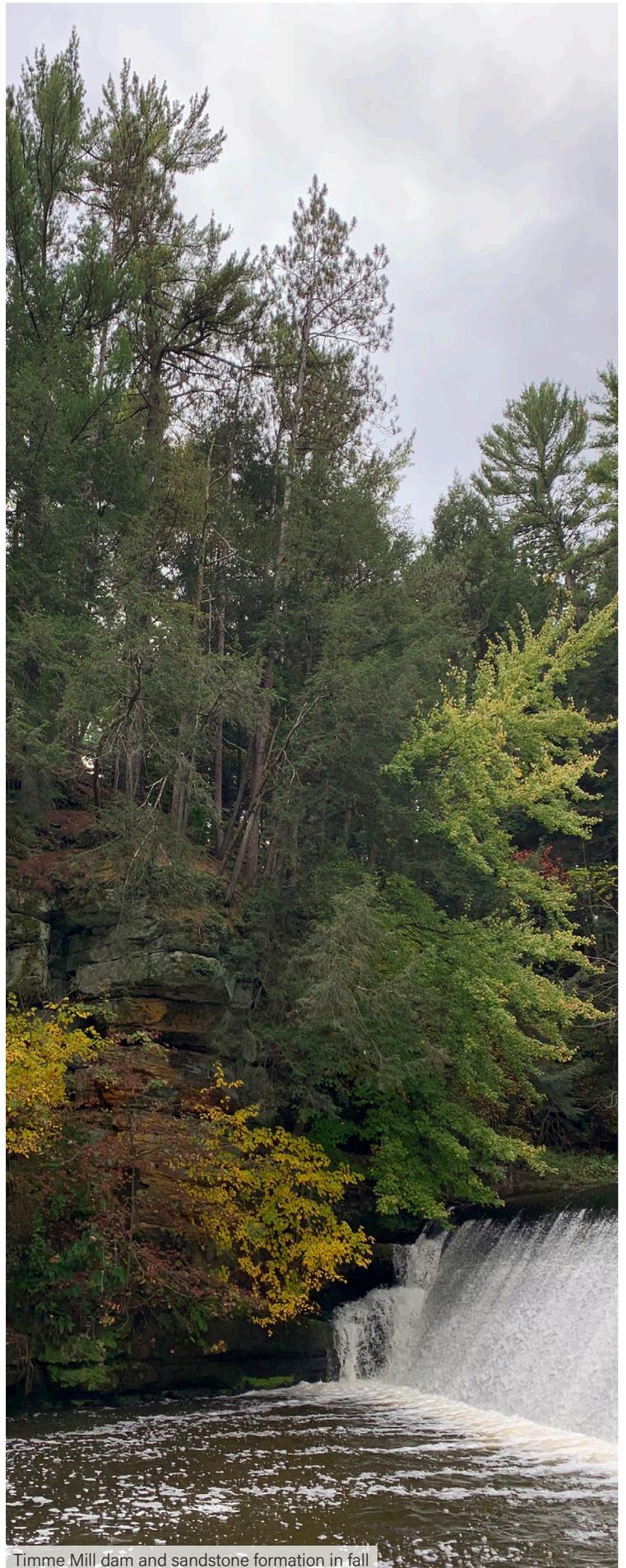


Timme Mill

S. Burritt Avenue
Lake Delton, WI 53940



Timme Mill provides a canoe and kayak launch to Mirror Lake. Timme Mill 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, 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 of South Burritt Avenue. Fishing opportunities include largemouth bass, walleye, panfish, northern pike and catfish. There is no entrance fee required at this park.



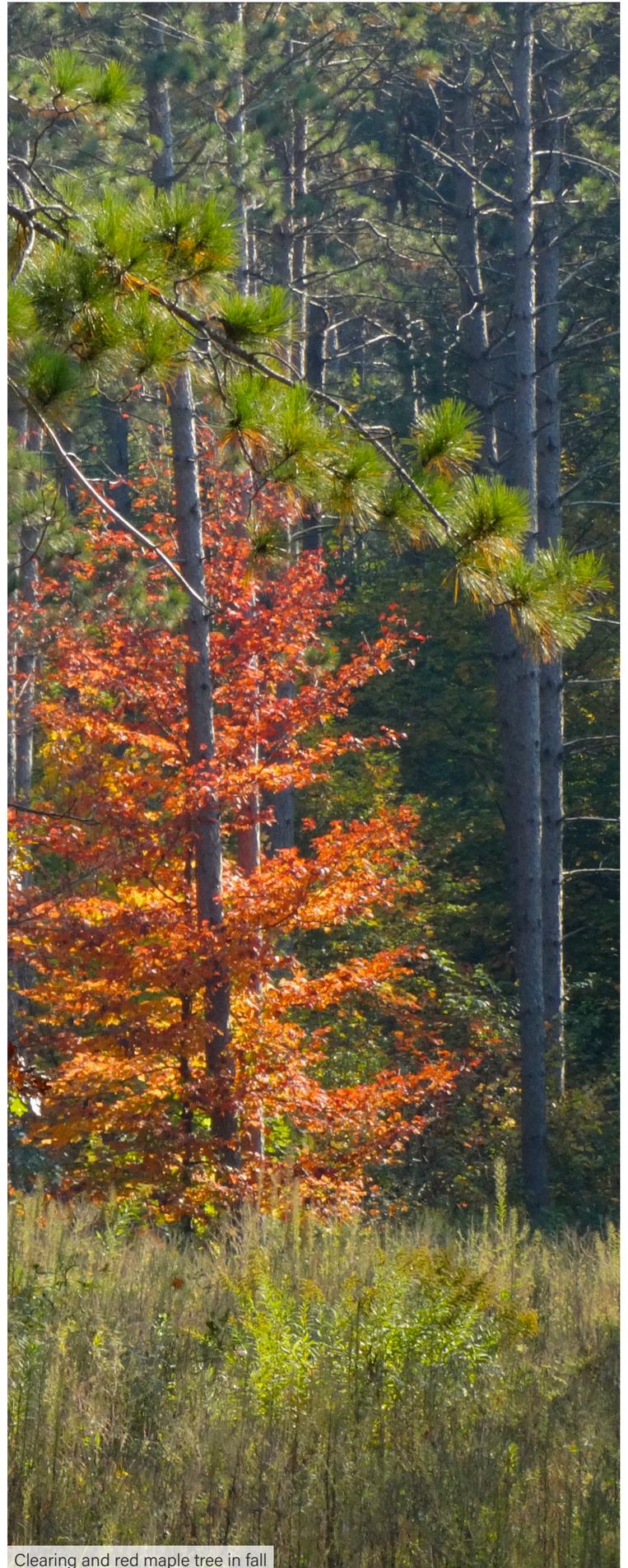
Timme Mill dam and sandstone formation in fall

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 off of the property. Archery and gun hunting are allowed at this property and no entrance fee is required.



Clearing and red maple tree in fall



Flooded trail through forest

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.



County Landfill

E8795 Evergreen Lane
Baraboo, WI 53913



The landfill covers 340 acres in the north range of the Baraboo Hills. The site includes mostly oak and pine forest and sand prairie, and is contiguous with at least 3,660 acres of privately owned forest. The property includes two closed landfills and associated structures, and a firearms qualification shooting range. In 1989, the site was added to the EPA's list of "Superfund" sites because of groundwater contamination. Monitoring at 34 well sites on the property indicate that although contamination remains, levels appear to be dropping and are within safe drinking water standards. The property is not currently open to the public, but is utilized by various County Departments for training, storage and special events.



Restored prairie and trees in landfill

County Farm

S4555 County Road CH
Reedsburg, WI 53959

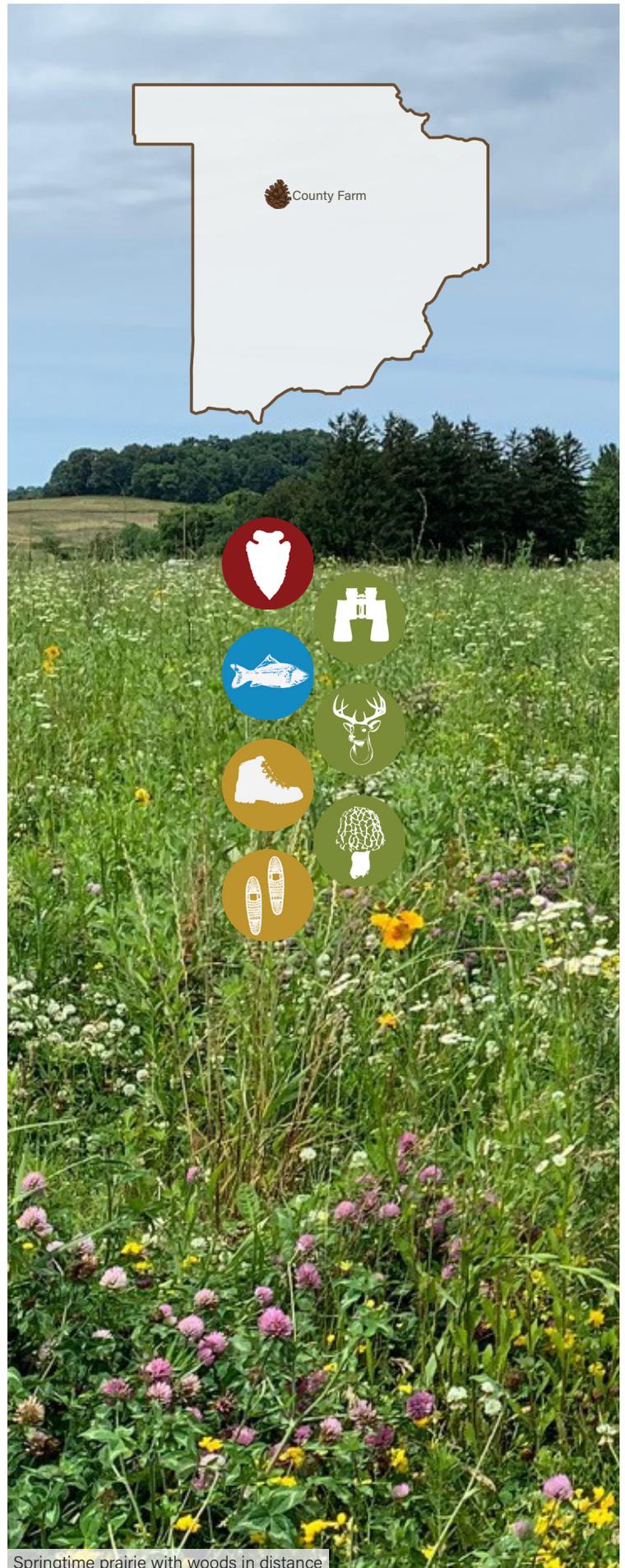
The County Farm property previously held the role as the site of the Sauk County Health Care Center. In 1871, land was initially purchased to establish a Sauk County Poor Farm, to provide care through a commitment to support those Sauk County individuals and families in need. The residents did most of the work on this self-sustaining farm, from planting corn, to caring for the animals and preparing meals. Many residents made products like rag rugs, upholstered furniture and woven baskets – which could all be sold.

In 1921, a fire department was erected on the farm. Made of red brick with a native sandstone foundation, which included a dressed sandstone water table course, the firehouse provides an important example of vernacular architecture with a jerkin or clipped roof. The firehouse was a significant addition to the property, as it was a time before motorized vehicles were speedy and much less dependable. Listed on the Sauk County Register of Historic Places, the building still stands at the farm and also currently houses the original horse drawn wagon.

Over time, a law was passed where the residents would no longer be allowed to work on the farm, and the Sauk County Health Care Center changed who was cared for. This reduced the number of residents and led to the farm shutting down and being leased to area farmers. The Sauk County Health Care Center downsized to its current location in Reedsburg and most of the original buildings were torn down.

Although there are no longer visible headstones, the property also is home to the Sauk County Farm Cemetery. Many markers were removed for purposes of grounds up-keep. Buried in the cemetery are the loved ones who were the Sauk County poor and mentally ill, residents who came for a place of rest ranging from veterans and farmers, husbands and wives, and family and friends. The first burials date back to 1887. All who are buried in the cemetery were residents of the County Farm.

The Sauk County Farm property remains in Sauk County ownership. The 565 acre parcel is managed by the Building Services Department and Land Resources and Environment Department. Much of the farmland and pasture is rented for agricultural use. Some areas are open to public access for hunting, fishing, hiking, wildlife observation and other uses. There is no entrance fee at this property.



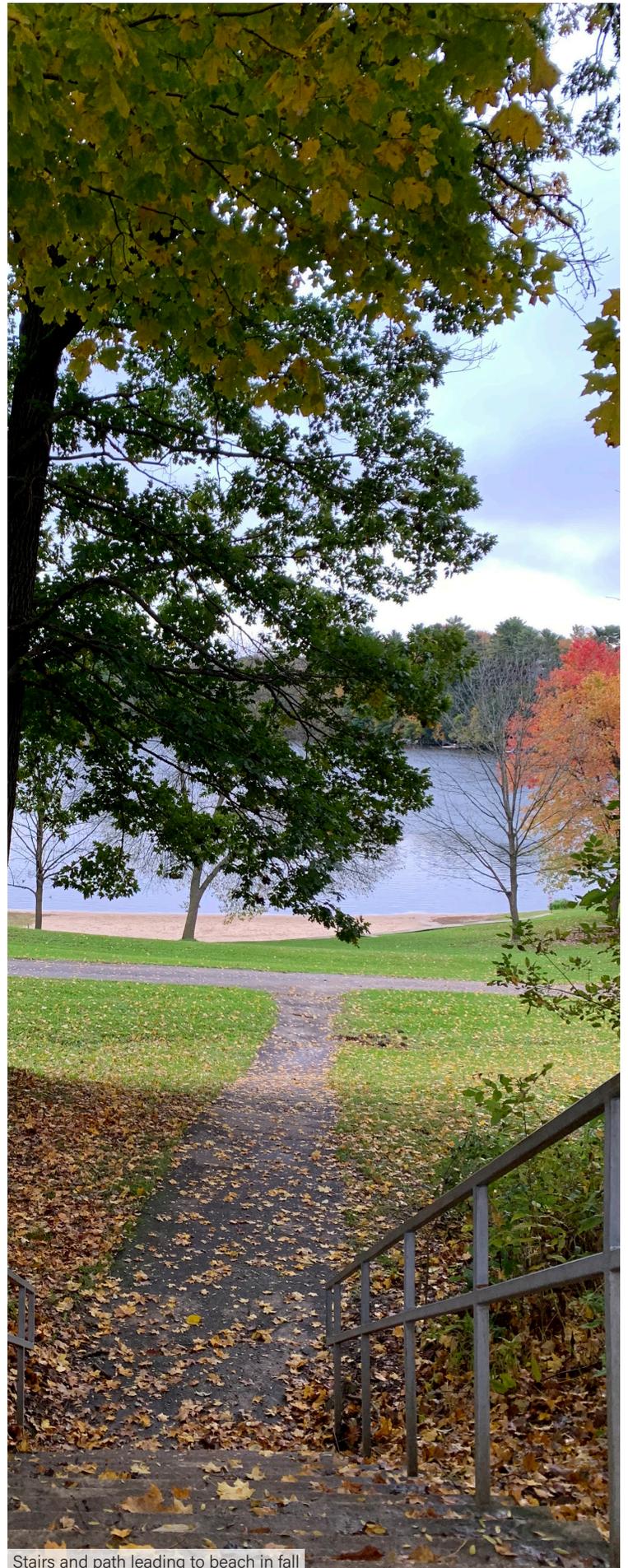
Springtime prairie with woods in distance

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/ATV trail. Lake Redstone County Park is a popular spot to fish for panfish, largemouth bass, musky, northern pike and walleye. A snowmobile and ATV/UTV trail run through the park, but it is not a park-and-ride for motorized trails. Bathrooms are provided and an entrance fee is required.



Stairs and path leading to beach in fall



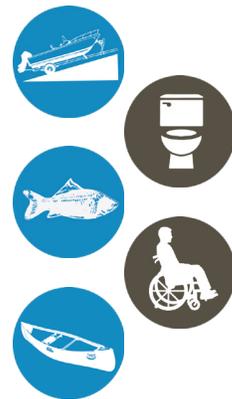
Handicap fishing pier by a maple tree

North End Boat Landing

S4765 LaValle Road
LaValle, WI 53941



At the north end of Lake Redstone, just off of County Road F on LaValle 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.





Metal dock extending out into Lake Wisconsin

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, trout, 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.



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.



Pink quartzite rip rap along Baraboo River bank

Man Mound Park

E13085 Man Mound Road
Baraboo, WI 53913



Located northeast of Baraboo, on Man Mound Road, sits Man Mound Park. The land was purchased by the Sauk County Historical Society, the Wisconsin Archeological Society and the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs in 1907 and dedicated as a park the following year. Man Mound 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. The majority 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.

Most of Man Mound Park is owned by the Sauk County Historical Society with an L-shaped piece to the east of the parking lot being owned by Sauk County. The entire park is managed by the Sauk County Parks and Recreation service area under a lease agreement. A pit toilet, merry-go-round, picnic tables and benches are provided at this park. There is no entrance fee required at this park.



Aerial View of Man Mound - Photo Credit: Ethan Brodsky

Yellow Thunder Memorial

S2653 County Road A
Baraboo, WI 53913



Yellow Thunder Memorial was erected by the Sauk County Historical Society and the Twentieth Century Club of Baraboo in 1909 to honor Chief Yellow Thunder, a member of the Thunderbird Clan of the Ho-Chunk tribe. In 1828 he was part of a delegation of 15 Ho-Chunk chiefs and one Ho-Chunk woman who were escorted on a tour of the eastern United States which culminated with a visit to the White House to meet with President John Quincy Adams. The trip was meant to impress upon the Ho-Chunk chiefs the might and power of the United States. The one woman who was on the trip was She Who Follows, the wife of Chief Yellow Thunder. After the trip she was often known as Washington Woman.

In October of 1837 Yellow Thunder was part of a Ho-Chunk delegation that was invited to Washington under the pretense of speaking with the President about their homeland in Wisconsin. After they arrived though, they were repeatedly pressured to sell all remaining lands east of the Mississippi. With winter approaching and no means to pay for the return trip home if they didn't cooperate, the delegation, including Yellow Thunder, finally signed the treaty.

Over the next few years the Ho-Chunk were slow to move to the reservation west of the Mississippi. By 1840, white settlement was putting pressure on federal officials to move the Ho-Chunk. Yellow Thunder was already known as one of the leaders of the treaty-resisting faction that refused to move. In May of 1840 Yellow Thunder was invited to Fort Winnebago to get provisions but when he arrived, he was incarcerated along with his wife. He was released after promising to bring his band to the fort for removal to lands west of the Mississippi, which he did. After a few years Yellow Thunder was back in the Portage area and was rounded up again in 1843. Late in 1846 Yellow Thunder returned to Wisconsin once more only to be rounded up again and deported in 1848.

In 1849 Yellow Thunder tried a different tactic to remain in Wisconsin. He purchased forty acres in the Town of Delton which made him a legal land owner. His property, known as Yellow Thunder's 40, became a haven for other Ho-Chunk Indians. Yellow Thunder died in February of 1874 near the Wisconsin River and was buried near his wife.

The Yellow Thunder monument was originally placed along County Road A, south of Shady Lane Road. Due to the widening of County Road A in 1965, the marker was moved north, to where it stands today. 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.



Yellow Thunder Memorial - Photo Credit: Susan Gaeddert

Great Sauk State Trail



The Great Sauk State Trail (GSST), designated by the State of Wisconsin as a state trail in 2016, is a 11.8-mile paved recreational trail that connects the Sauk Prairie Communities of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City with the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area.

The trail provides users a venue to experience the unique geology, rich history, and ecological importance of southeastern Sauk County through interpretive signs and art installations along the trail. The current trail stretches from the Wisconsin River through lands formerly known as the Badger Army Ammunition Plant, and onto the southern border of Devil's Lake State Park, one of the premier state parks in Wisconsin.

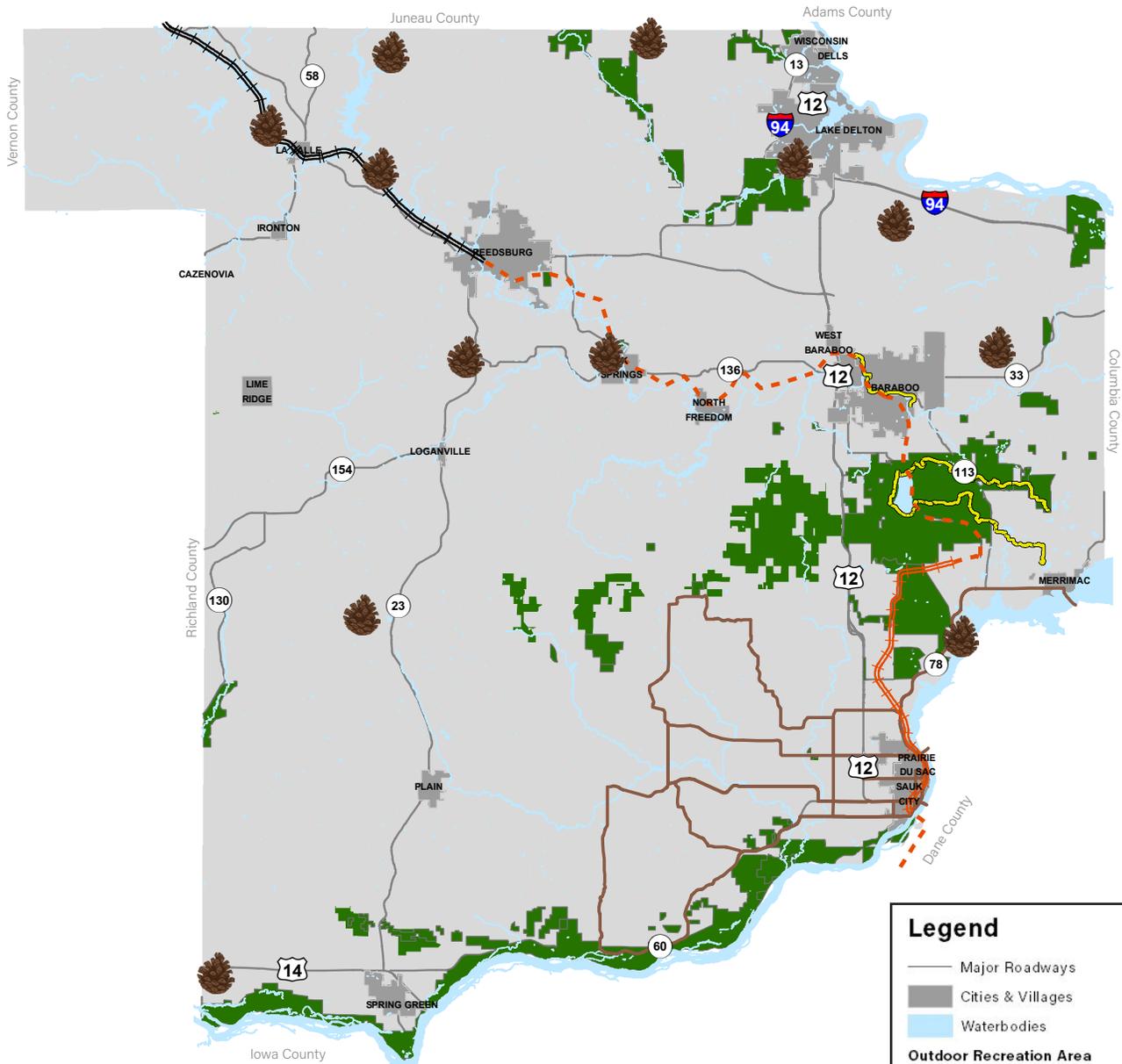
Referred to as a 'World Class Trail,' the final vision for the GSST will be a seamless connection through Sauk County that will connect the 400 State Trail in Reedsburg to the proposed Walking Iron Trail in Dane County. Ultimately, the GSST will be part of a trail system connecting the cities of Milwaukee and Lacrosse. To realize this vision, concurrent planning efforts are underway:

- Through a partnership with Dane County, Sauk County is facilitating a bridge feasibility study to connect the GSST in southeastern Sauk County to the proposed Walking Iron Trail in northwestern Dane County.
- Sauk County has formed a partnership with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to route the trail through Devil's Lake State Park.
- Working with various communities between Devil's Lake State Park and the 400 State Trail, including the Cities of Baraboo and Reedsburg, Sauk County will identify alternative routes for the GSST and assist these communities with trail planning and development.

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



SAUK COUNTY BIKE TRAILS

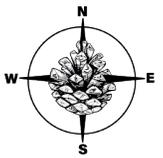


Legend

- Major Roadways
- Cities & Villages
- Waterbodies

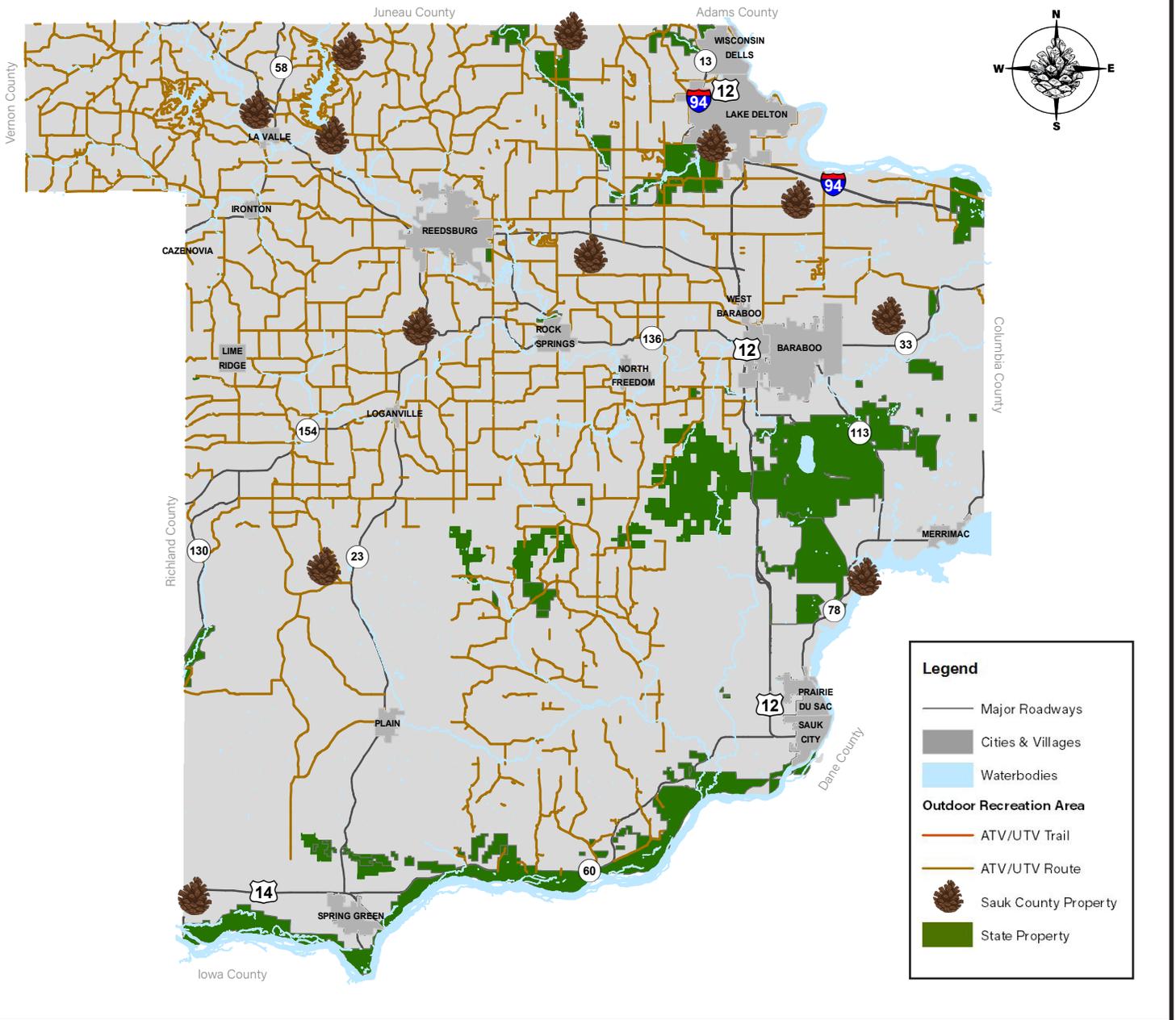
Outdoor Recreation Area

- 🌲 Sauk County Property
- The Great Sauk State Trail
- - - Proposed GSST Expansion
- |||| The "400" State Trail
- Ice Age National Scenic Trail
- Roadway Bike Routes
- State Property



Mother and Daughter viewing wildlife along the Great Sauk State Trail

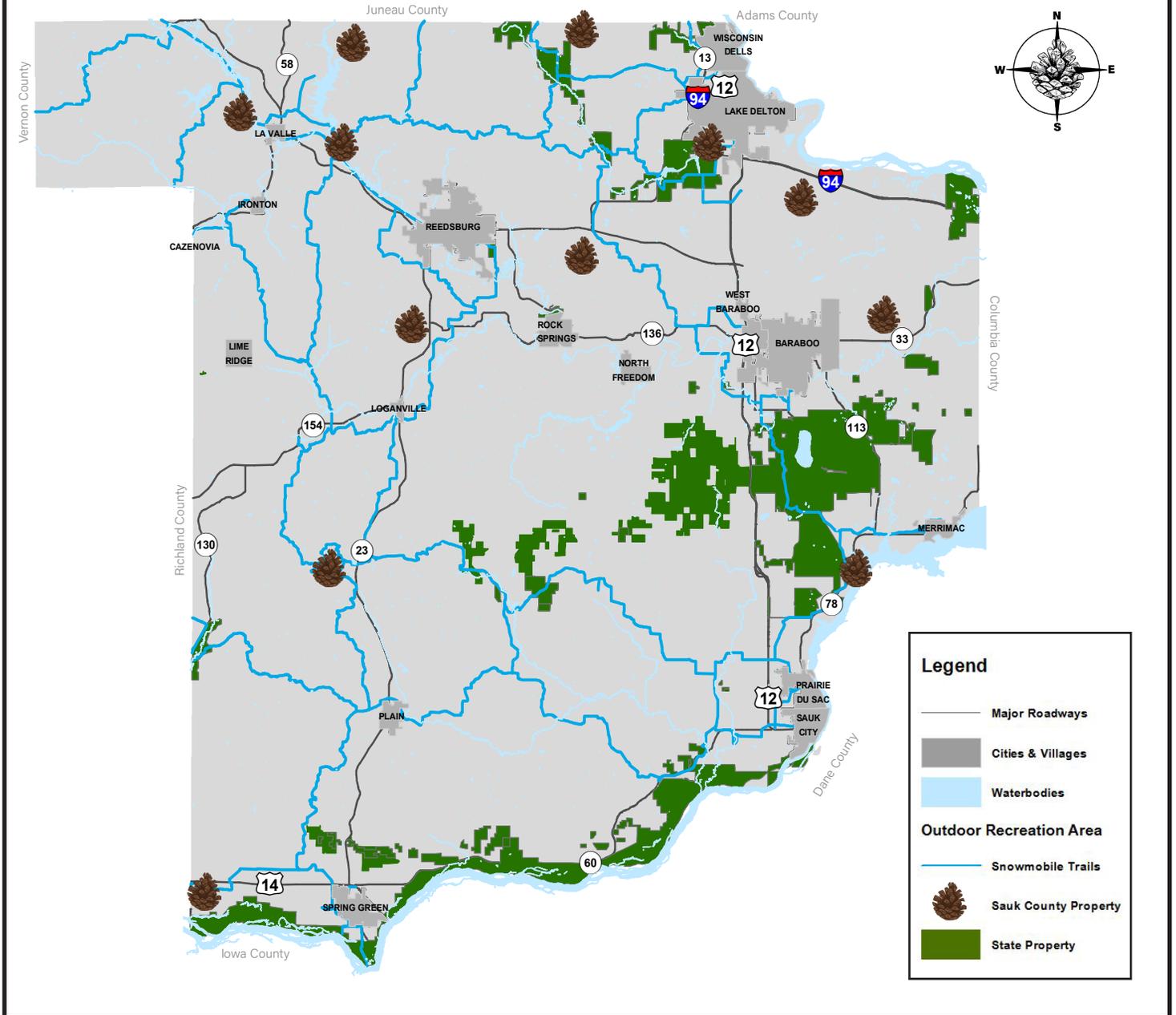
SAUK COUNTY ATV/UTV ROUTES & TRAILS



There are currently two off-road ATV/UTV trails that run through parks in Sauk County. One trail is located at Lake Redstone County Park, and the other at White Mound County Park. The trails are open 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM, April 15 through October 15, weather permitting.

There are ATV/UTV routes throughout the majority of the County. ATV/UTV routes are along the majority of Town roads and some County roads. 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. An interactive motorized trail map with route hours can be found at the following website: co.sauk.wi.us/highway/atvutv-routes.

SAUK COUNTY 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, 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 213.4 miles of funded snowmobile trails throughout Sauk County. The trails are funded at \$300 per mile, with the grant program totaling \$64,020.

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 is changing (Cordell, 2012). For example, hunting and fishing are declining nationwide, while nature viewing and photography is much more common. According to the 2016 Federal Outdoor Recreation Trends: Effects on Economic Opportunities, a report by the USDA, since 2000 there has been a dramatic increase in both participation rates and number of days spent doing activities like wildlife viewing and photography, off-highway vehicle driving, and physically challenging activities like kayaking (White et al, 2016). 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 2017 report by the Outdoor Industry Association identifies running, bicycling (road, mountain, BMX), fishing, camping and hiking as the five most popular activities for youth and young adults age 6-24.

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.

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.



Lake Redstone County Park in autumn

STATEWIDE TRENDS: FINDINGS FROM THE WISCONSIN SCORP

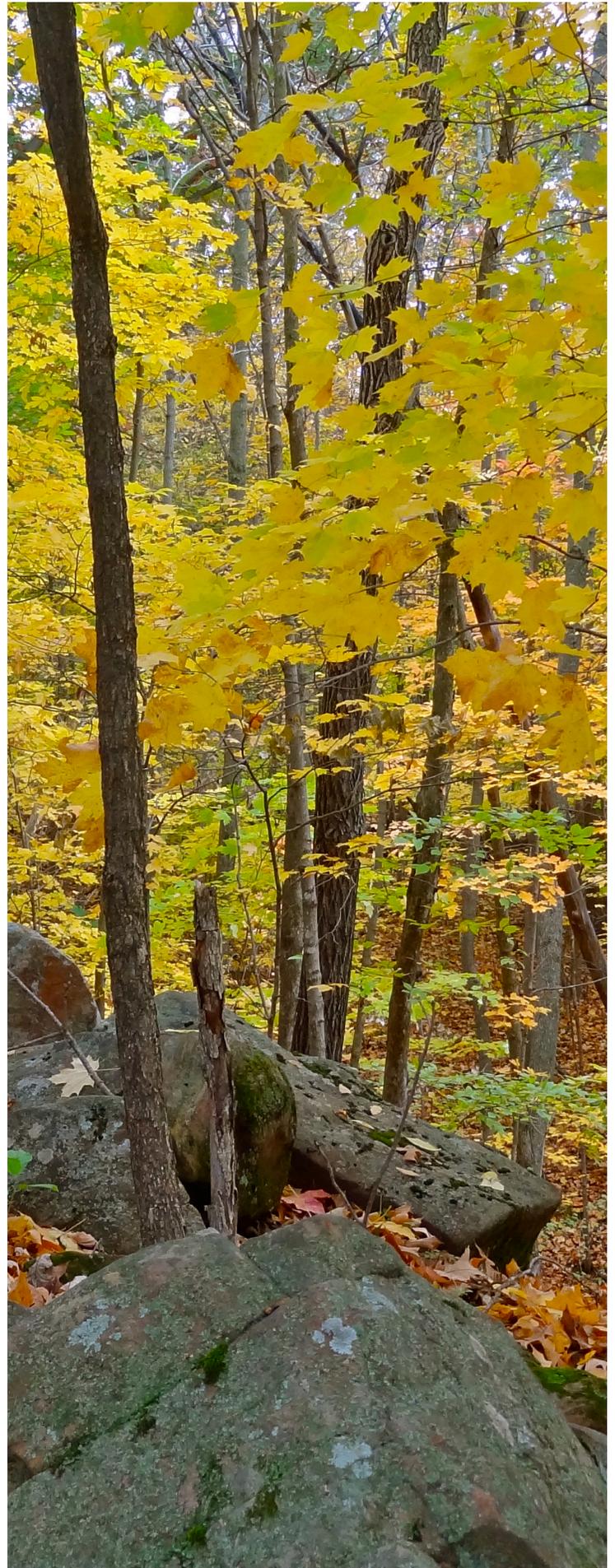
Wisconsin's most recent Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) was published in 2019. The SCORP's purpose is to identify trends in nature-based recreation and to provide a range of information "to help the public and elected officials place local conditions, needs and opportunities into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

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.

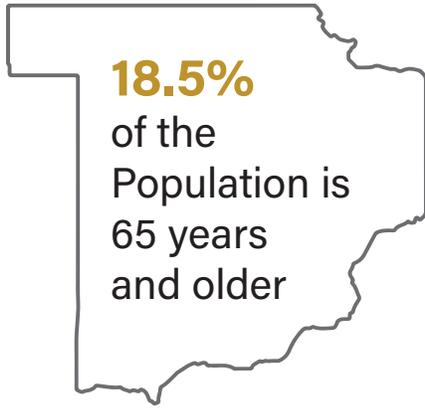
In the 2016 SCORP, it was estimated that outdoor recreation in Wisconsin generates \$18 billion in consumer spending, 168,000 jobs, \$5.1 billion in wages and salaries, and \$1.1 billion in state and local tax revenue.

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.



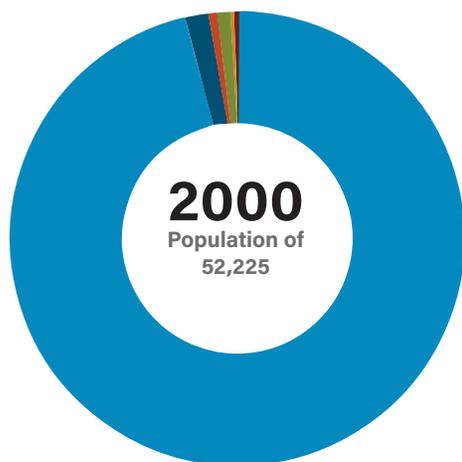
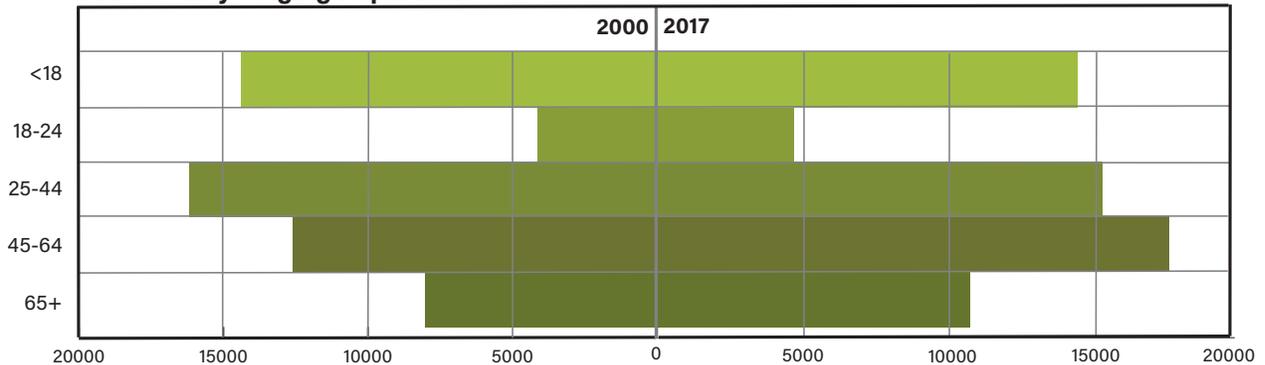
Population, Demographics, Education & Economy



Sauk County has a population of just over 63,000. Between the 2000 census and 2010 census, the County saw a population increase of over 10%, though growth has slowed since 2010. There is a steady outmigration of young adults moving out of the County, with the highest immigration rates for young professionals (age 35-45) and seniors. According to a 2017 report by the UW Extension Population Lab, since 2000, there has been a 38% increase in people over the age of 65, the biggest change for any group in the County.

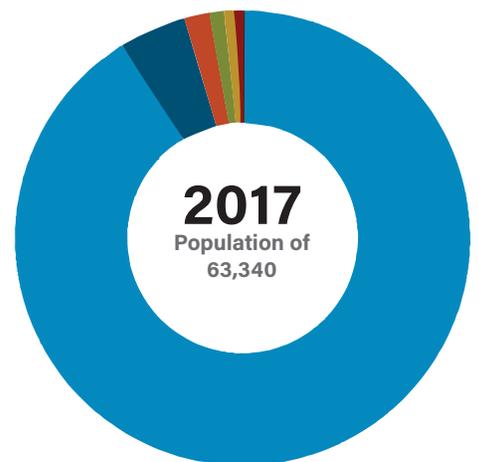
While Sauk County remains predominantly White, the County has seen a significant increase in minority populations since 2000; those who identify as Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic/Latino, or being of two or more races have all more than tripled in number, and their percentage of the population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

Sauk County's Aging Population



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





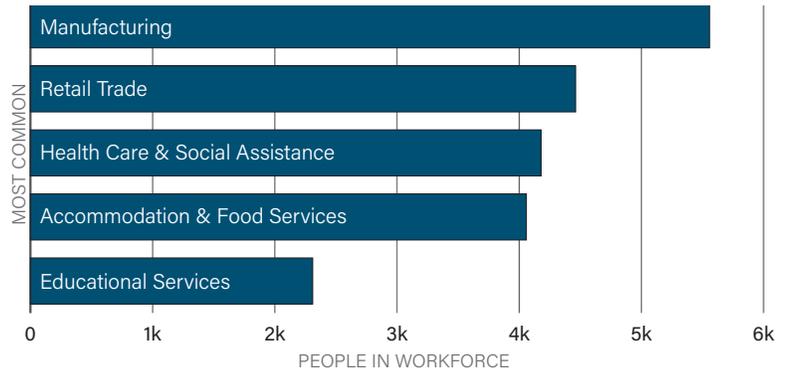
11.3% Poverty Rate
The average Wisconsin poverty rate is 12.3%.



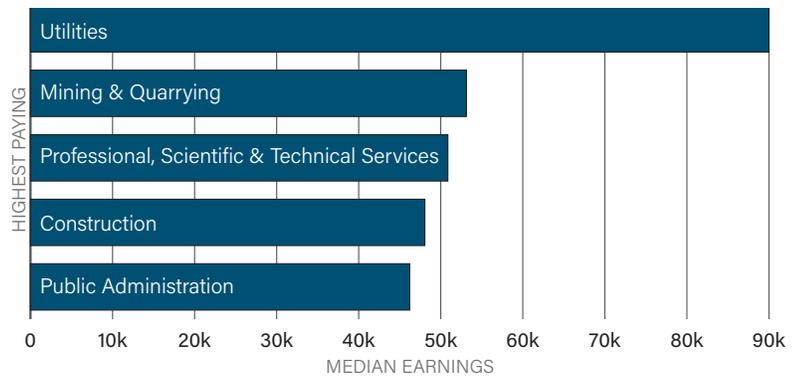
The median household income in Sauk County is \$54,447, which is lower than average for the state of Wisconsin, although the County has fewer households living in poverty. Educational attainment has steadily increased in Sauk County for all levels of education. However, the County consistently lags behind 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 little overlap in major industrial employment. In Sauk County, the largest industries are manufacturing, retail trade, and health/social assistance, and in Wisconsin they are elementary and secondary schools, restaurants and food service, and hospitals. The highest paying jobs come from different industries as well; in Sauk County, the highest-paying industries are utilities, quarry/mining, and science and technology support, while statewide, the highest paying jobs are in drug/chemical wholesale, finance and investment, and air transportation.

2017 Most Common Industries in Sauk County

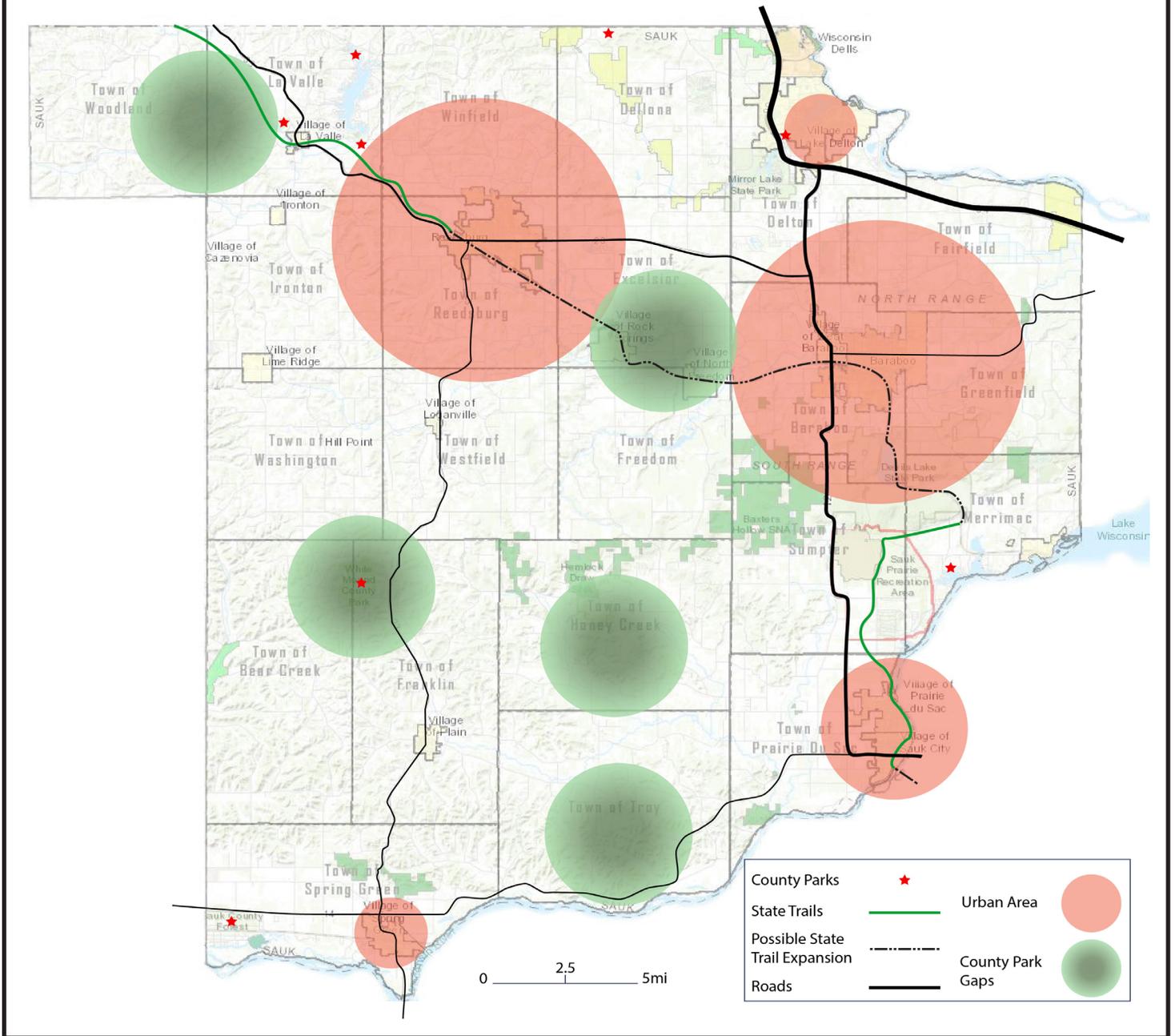


2017 Highest Paying Industries in Sauk County



Southern entrance to Ice Age Trail Devil's Lake Segment - Photo credit: Skillet Creek Media

Population & Outdoor Recreation of Sauk County



The above map of the County shows the relationship between urban populations and County operated outdoor recreation areas. The sizing of the population symbols represent the population size of that urban area. Gaps in County outdoor recreation opportunities have been identified based on the urban population that they serve.

Although, the connection between access to outdoor recreation and physical and mental health are still being studied, outdoor recreation has been proven to have a positive effect on chronic diseases, stress, and life expectancy. According to the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, Sauk County has an adult obesity rate of 32%, with 79% of the population having access to exercise opportunities.

In 2018, Sauk County received Silver in the Wisconsin Healthy Community Designation. This designation was earned by the County's efforts to improve health through available care, social and economic factors and physical environment. That same year, Sauk County had a diabetes prevalence of 9.7%, which is 3.4% lower than the state average. As studies continue to explore the relationship between outdoor recreation and physical/mental well-being, it is important to identify where the County could improve access for its residents.

"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise." - Aldo Leopold



Leaves on lichen covered stump - Photo Credit: Cassandra Fowler

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.

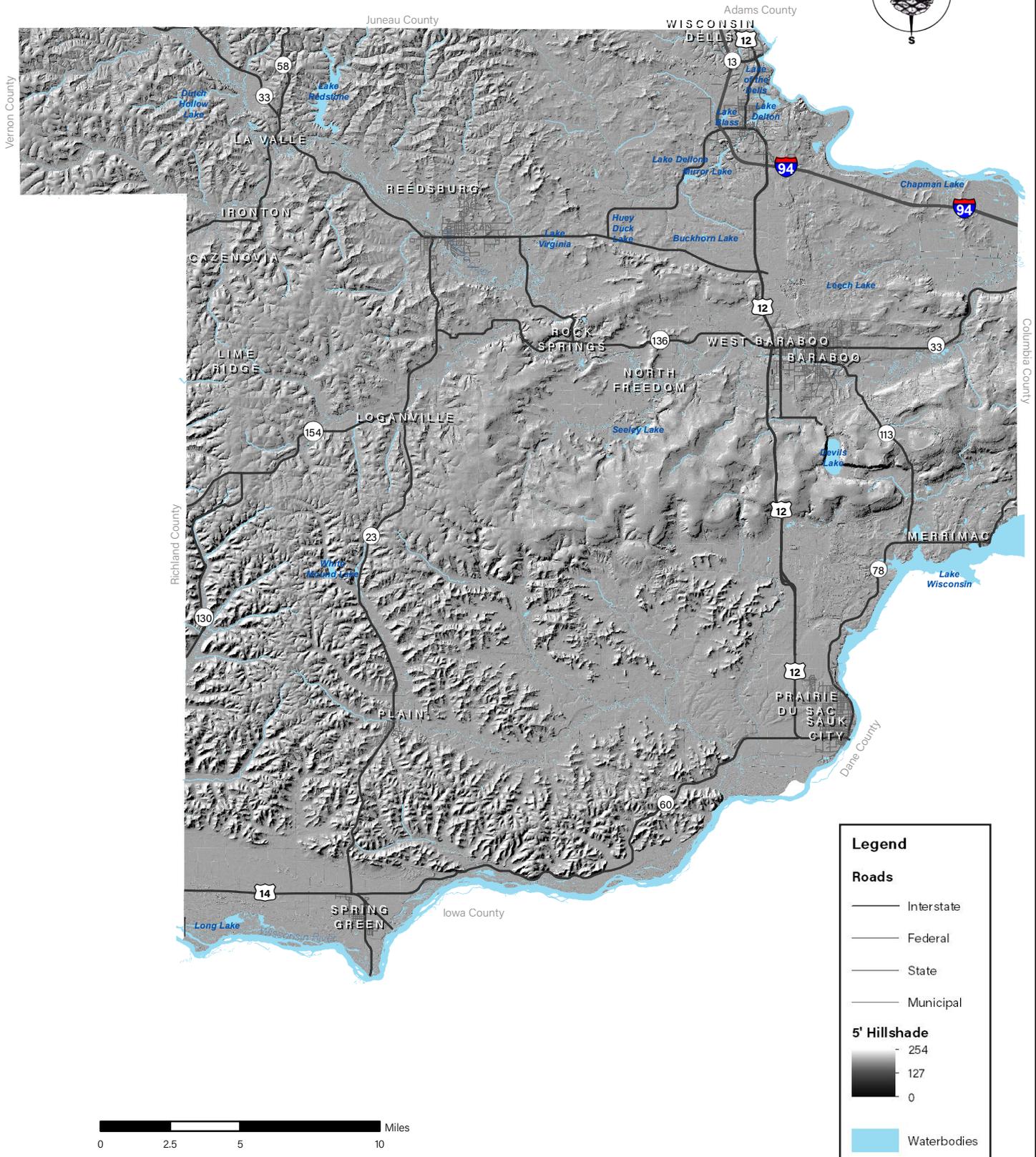
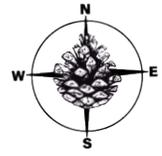
The western 4/5ths of Sauk County is known as the Driftless Area and is so named because it was minimally impacted by past glacial activity. It is a landscape deeply cut by ancient streams into narrow, angular valleys and ridges several hundred million years old. The eastern 1/5th of the County was greatly 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.

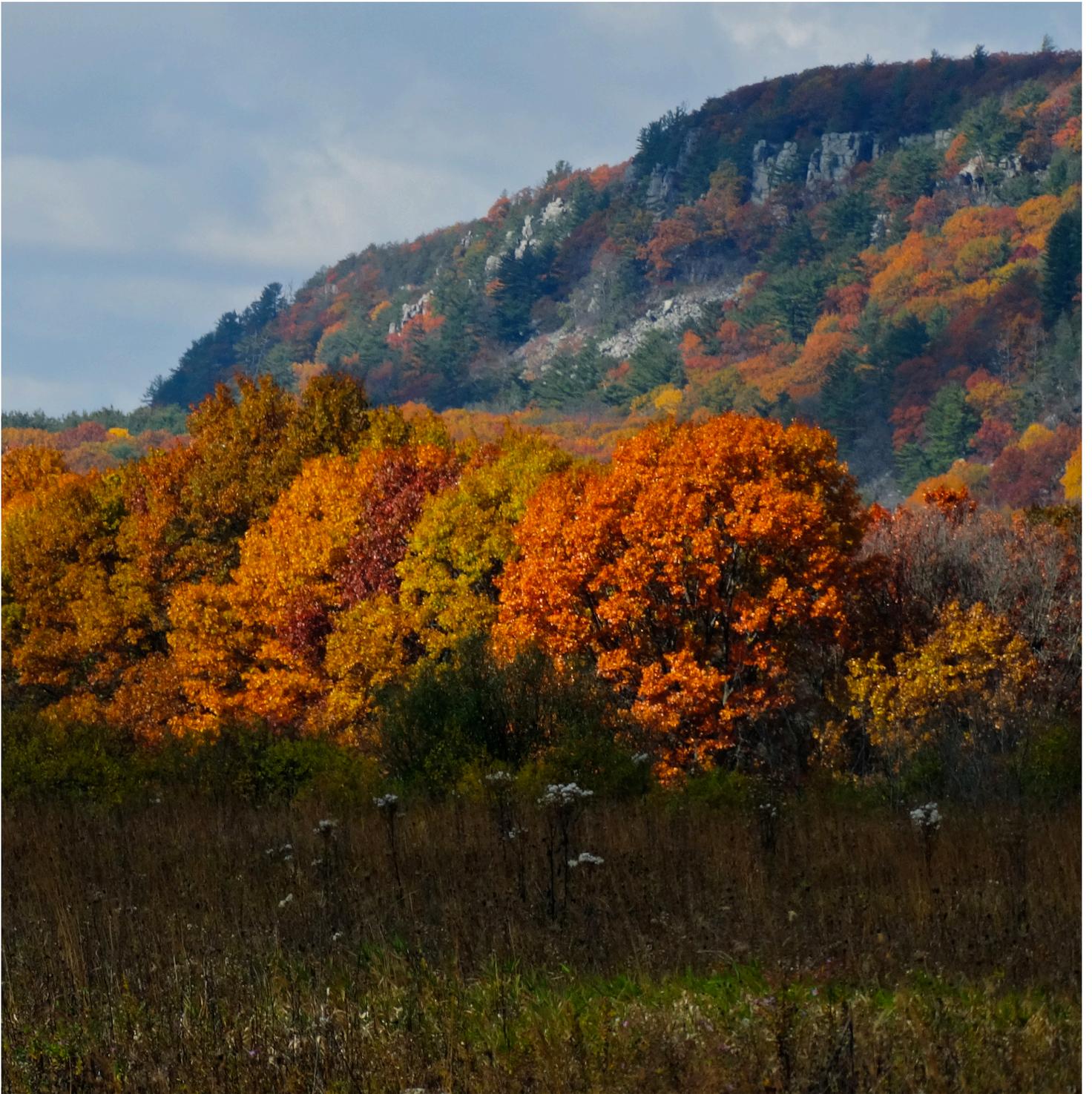
Sauk County exhibits a continental climate where temperature and precipitation vary with each season. Weather systems frequently move in an easterly fashion across the county. There are some micro-climatic variations depending on terrain and proximity to water. Generally, valleys experience freezing 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.



White Mound Park in Autumn

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

All of Sauk County lies 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 state for the restoration of a good warm water fishery including smallmouth bass and walleye.*

Hoary Puccoon flower in a valley prairie - Photo Credit: Cassandra Fowler

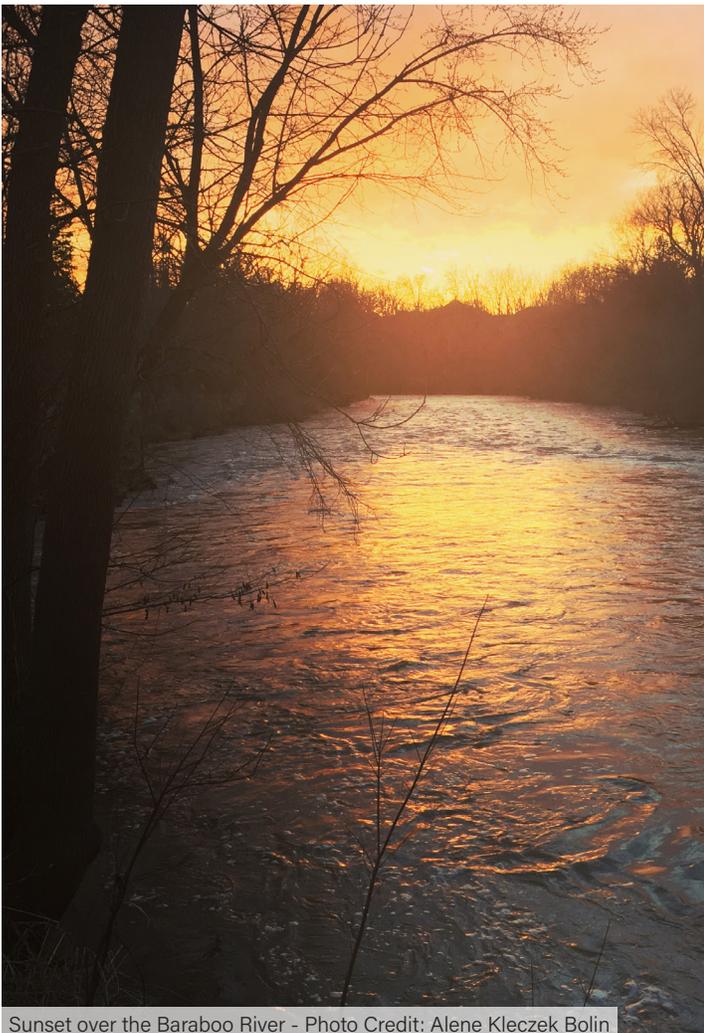


SPRING GREEN PRAIRIE

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. The Merrimac outwash terrace has several levels along the banks of Lake Wisconsin, encompassing most of the Badger Army Ammunition Plant. The property is identified by several terminal moraines and oak savanna remnants intertwined.

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.



Sunset over the Baraboo River - Photo Credit: Alene Kleczek Bolin

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 habitat and health. 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.

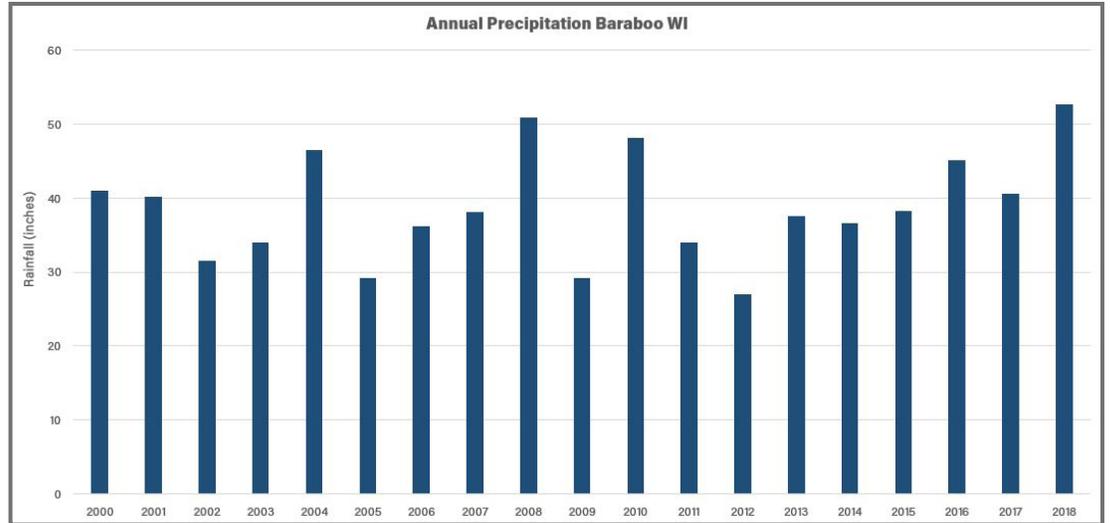


Canoes on the shore of White Mound Lake in autumn

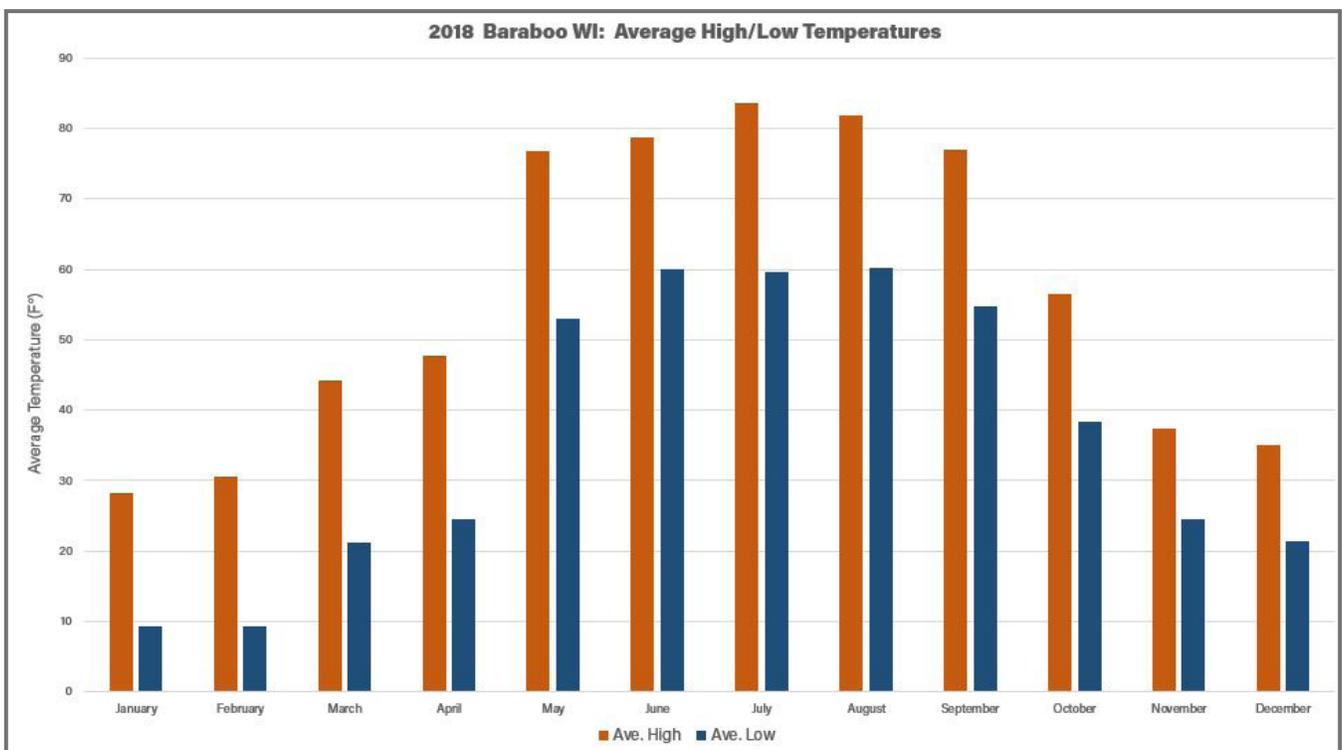
CLIMATE AND EXTREME WEATHER

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 decade. 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.



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 taken into account in order to prepare the parks and recreation system for the future.





Values, Priorities & Objectives



Yellow leaves on forest floor



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 analyses 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 take into account 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 areas 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: FURTHER 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, bird-watching, 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.



Photo Credit: Cassandra Fowler

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.



Further 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. 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: INCREASE STAFFING LEVELS FOR PARKS AND RECREATION IN THE LAND RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT.

The Parks and Recreation division area oversees programming and maintenance for all parks, trails and public lands owned by the County. Currently, the department is understaffed for meeting maintenance needs, planning for future events, and infrastructure updates. Additional staff will be needed for the division to run smoothly. The division will develop 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 a number of non-profit organizations who own land, run 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:

- Pursue a county-wide “bird city” designation according to the criteria from Bird City Wisconsin. Several municipalities in Sauk County already have this designation, including: Baraboo, Sauk City, Reedsburg and Prairie du Sac. While it is more common for municipalities to receive “bird city” designation, there are several Wisconsin counties designated as “bird cities”: Brown, Door, Kenosha, Marquette, Milwaukee, Ozaukee and Taylor. Sauk County already has in place many of the conservation practices outlined in the criteria. Public education and community events are areas of opportunity. A “bird city” designation will raise the profile of Sauk County as a destination for bird and wildlife enthusiasts.
- Continue to partner with local non-profit groups 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. A complete list 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 WATER QUALITY

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. Public feedback from surveys and stakeholder meetings indicate that algal blooms and invasive water plants continue to have a negative impact on activities like swimming and fishing.

Water quality of the Baraboo River is of particular concern. 58% of the Baraboo River watershed is within Sauk County, and efforts are underway to improve water quality through the Baraboo River Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The RCPP supports a number of conservation practices to prevent soil loss, reduce agricultural runoff, and improve aquatic and wildlife habitat. While individual landowners apply for RCPP incentives, financial and technical assistance to implement soil and water conservation practices are provided by a collaboration of partner agencies, including participating counties, state agencies and local non-profit organizations. The latter include: Lake Redstone Protection District, Lake Wisconsin Alliance, River Alliance of Wisconsin, Aldo Leopold Foundation, The Nature Conservancy and Trout Unlimited.

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. Sauk County will continue with outreach and education efforts to landowners and recreational visitors to promote stewardship of water quality.



Fallen leaves on ground with Birch T



Partnerships

OBJECTIVE: EXPAND COUNTY PLANNING SERVICES

Sauk County has the ability to 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 particular 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

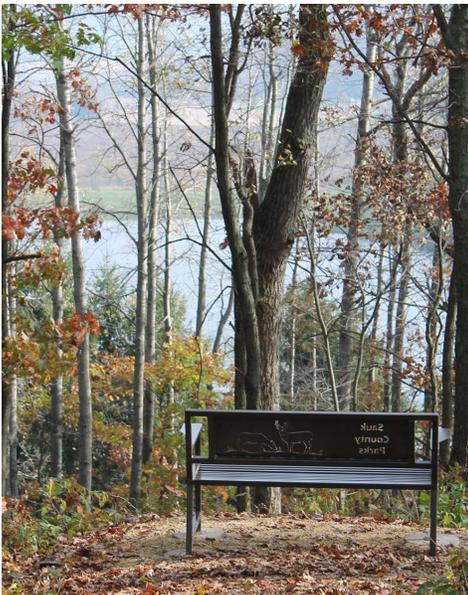
Sauk County is able to leverage grant funding by working with partners to pursue cross-boundary recreation grant opportunities. Sauk County can establish a program that seeks grants to help the County and its municipalities expand outdoor recreation facilities and land acquisitions; this will require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

OBJECTIVE: FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF MAN MOUND PARK AND YELLOW THUNDER MEMORIAL

Sauk County intends to form a partnership with the Sauk County Historical Society to develop a plan for the future of Man Mound Park and Yellow Thunder Memorial Park. This partnership will also consider historical resources in the acquisition and development of new parks and recreational opportunities.



Maple tree trunk in autumn with gold leaves



Bench overlooking White Mound Lake in autumn



Maple tree trunk with green and yellow leaves



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. Plans are 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; from Devil's Lake State Park into Baraboo, where it will overlap with the Ice Age Trail; and 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. Plans for GSST routes through individual communities from Baraboo to Reedsburg will be amended separately to the CORP. 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. The following recommendations are action steps that are specifically consumer-facing.

- Develop a master plan for the expansion of the Trail that partners with the local municipalities, Friends of the Great Sauk State Trail and the Friends of the Baraboo River. The plan will include individual community outdoor recreational plans that; identify community needs, possible future campsites, and connections with the Baraboo River. These community plans will be included in Appendix C.
- Continue to partner with the Friends of the Great Sauk State 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 towns.
- Strive for Sauk County to be designated as a bike-friendly community through the League of American Bicyclists.

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.

Phase II of the Baraboo River Corridor Plan also includes recommendations that Sauk County create river access to several locations between municipalities and add sign kiosks with historic and environmental information at boat launch sites.

- In order to move forward with infrastructure and economic development along the corridor, a commission should be formed with stakeholders representing the municipalities along the river. The commission would work with river communities, the Sauk County LRE Department, the County Board, Wisconsin DNR, emergency services, and other public entities along with the Friends of the Baraboo River to carry out the recommendations from Phases I and II of the Corridor Plan.

OBJECTIVE: EXPANSION OF TRAILS FOR MOTORIZED VEHICLES

Sauk County has active and enthusiastic groups for both ATV /UTV and snowmobile use. Local businesses such as eating and drinking places 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, such as the Great Sauk State Trail. As of April 2019, ATV access extended to many public highways throughout the County, though off-road trails on County-owned land are limited. The following will address motorized vehicle access:

- Coordinate with local communities to discuss possible use of motorized vehicles on streets and/or nearby trails to connect municipalities and encourage economic growth through motorized trail use.
- Consider the possibility of hosting a motorized vehicle event within the County's jurisdiction.

OBJECTIVE: PROMOTION, BRANDING, AND MARKETING

Sauk County parks will benefit 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 sports 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.
- Develop a "Guide to Outdoor Recreation in Sauk County" available online and in print for distribution at park facilities, information kiosks at state parks, and village/city visitors' centers.
- Continue event planning and promotional efforts at Sauk County's park locations.
- Increase online engagement through social media and apps to post events, promote activities, and generate public enthusiasm and support for recreation in Sauk County.



Eagle sculpture on GSST in Prairie du Sac - Photo Credit: Cassandra Fowler



Planning Process

SAUK COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN 2020-2024

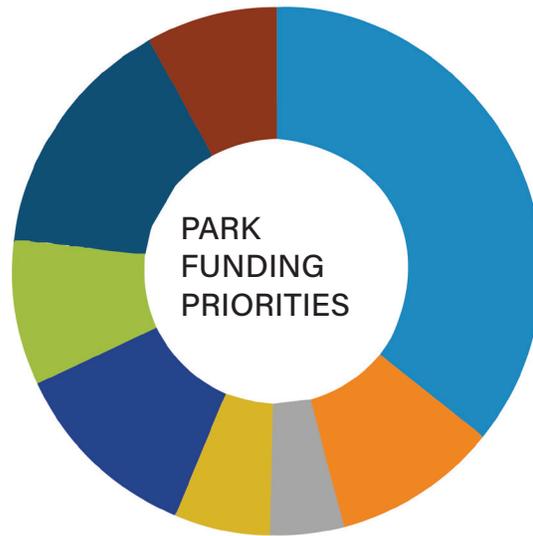
From April to August 2019, a core team from the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department met regularly to develop the CORP. The public engagement process consisted of a survey that was administered online and available in paper copies at local libraries in June, individual stakeholder interviews throughout the month of July, online feedback in early August, and a public open house on August 15, 2019. A draft plan was completed by early October and presented to the LRE Committee.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public input was a critical part of developing and refining the goals and objectives for the Sauk County CORP. 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 do offer insight into public perception of the county park system. Overall, the survey indicated a deep appreciation of Sauk County parks and conservation 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 on 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.

TOP 10 OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES



- Renovation of Existing Facilities
- Development of New Programs
- Construction of New Facilities
- Increased Staffing
- Purchase of New Park Land(s)
- Increased Park Facility Maintenance
- Natural Resource Management
- Other

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 have been included in Appendix E.



Cattails along edge of White Mound Lake



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 2008 and 2014

The most recent CORP was completed in 2014, and was largely similar to the 2008 CORP, with updated inventory of

county-owned land and infrastructure improvements. Unlike the 2008 and 2014 plans, the current version of the CORP does 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 2019, Sauk County is undergoing 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 LaValle, 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 and 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.

Great Sauk State Trail Cooperative Plan (2015)

Construction of the Great Sauk State Trail (GSST) is an ongoing project in coordination with Sauk County and the Wisconsin DNR. Currently, the trail runs approximately 11.8 miles from Sauk Prairie (the village of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac) to Devil's Lake State Park, but there are plans to add successive segments and eventually connect the trail through Baraboo to the 400 State Trail in Reedsburg and communities in Dane County, including Middleton and Mazomanie. Recommendations from the GSST Cooperative Plan include environmental considerations, strategies for addressing trail-roadway crossings, alternative routes, funding sources and considerations for construction, management and operation.

Hemlock Dam Feasibility Study (2019)

In 2018 after heavy rain and flooding caused damage and erosion to the Hemlock Dam, the Wisconsin DNR directed the Sauk County Land Resources and Environment Department to lower water levels until the damage can be addressed. In

June 2019, the engineering firm Ayres Associates completed a feasibility study with various options for repair or removal, as well as considerations for cost, permitting, and likely impacts of future flood events.

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.

Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2015)

In 2015, the Sauk Prairie Recreation Commission adopted the Sauk Prairie Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2016-2020 for the Villages of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac. Prepared with the assistance of Ayres Associates, Inc. and MD Roffers Consulting, the Plan outlines goals to improve existing parks and acquire new parkland to accommodate anticipated growth, improve cooperation and coordination with various municipal entities for efficient service delivery, and promote bicycle, pedestrian and water recreation facilities throughout the community. The Plan also includes an inventory of all municipal parks with a detailed budget for facilities improvements and updates through the year 2020.

City of Baraboo Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2016)

The City of Baraboo Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan 2017-2021 was adopted by the City Council in November 2016. The goals and objectives aim to fulfill park and recreation needs for current and future residents, reduce costs for operation and maintenance, and develop a trail system to link schools, bike paths, the Ice Age trail, and other places of interest in the community. Additionally, the Plan identifies the need to address bicycle safety at many community levels, emphasizing the need for incorporating bicycle route and trail planning into cooperative projects with the State of Wisconsin and Sauk County.

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 state 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."



Sandhill cranes nesting in spring

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 general 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.

FRIENDS OF THE GREAT SAUK STATE TRAIL

Mission: "to enhance, promote, manage, and advocate for the continued development of the Great Sauk State Trail." The Friends group was established in 2015. While they are committed to enhancing the trail with various amenities like benches and signs, their primary purpose at this time is fundraising.

INTERNATIONAL CRANE FOUNDATION

The International Crane Foundation "works worldwide to conserve cranes and the ecosystems, watersheds, and flyways on which they depend." The Foundation own 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 LaValle. 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 about 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

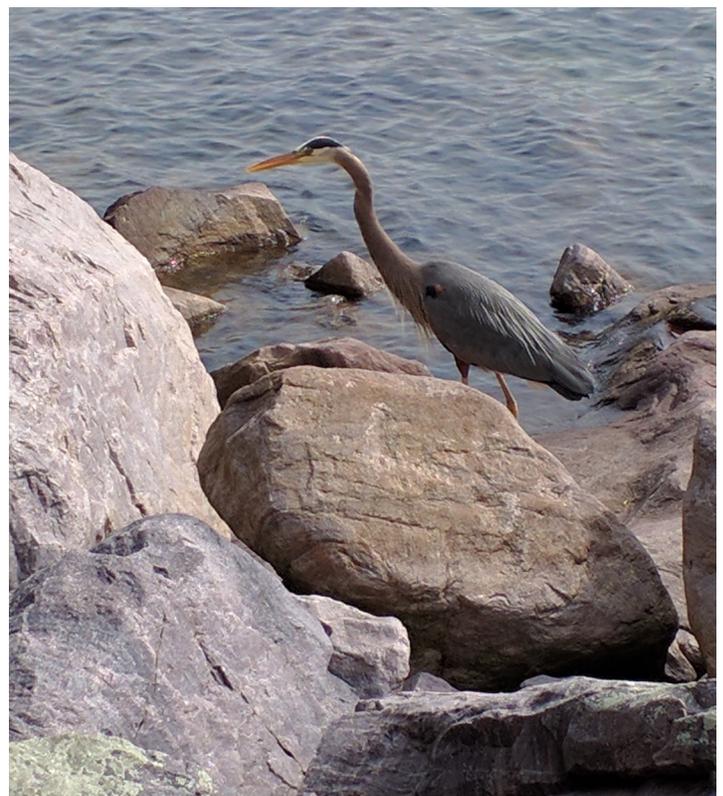
The Mirror Lake Association is a non-profit organization founded in 1986, dedicated to promoting and improving; the physical appearance; well-being; and protecting the future of Mirror Lake. The Mirror Lake Management District was created in 2006 as a local government taxing authority. Together, the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



Great Blue Heron on the shore of Devil's Lake - Photo Credit: Bryant Hazard

Appendix B:

Grant Opportunities

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.

Acquisition of Development Rights (ADR):

The purpose of the Acquisition of Development Rights Program is to protect natural, agricultural or forest lands that enhance and/or provide nature-based outdoor recreation. "Development Rights" are the rights of a landowner to develop their property to the greatest extent allowed under state and local laws.

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>



Coyote hunting for food in White Mound County Park in winter

FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAMS

Land and Water Conservation Fund

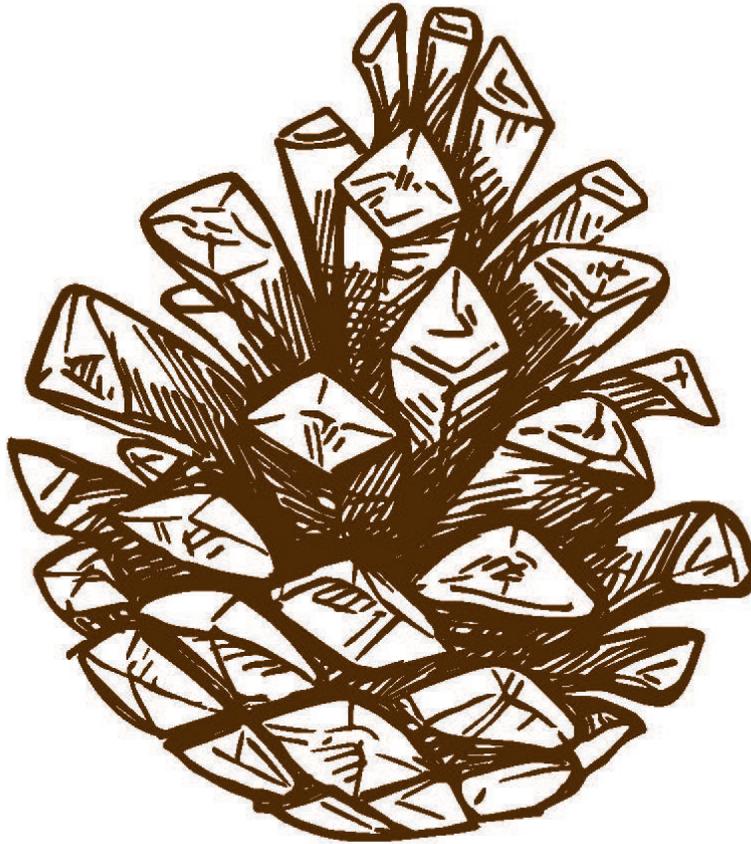
Description from the National Park Service: The State Side of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/lwcf/stateside.htm>

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/

Appendix C:

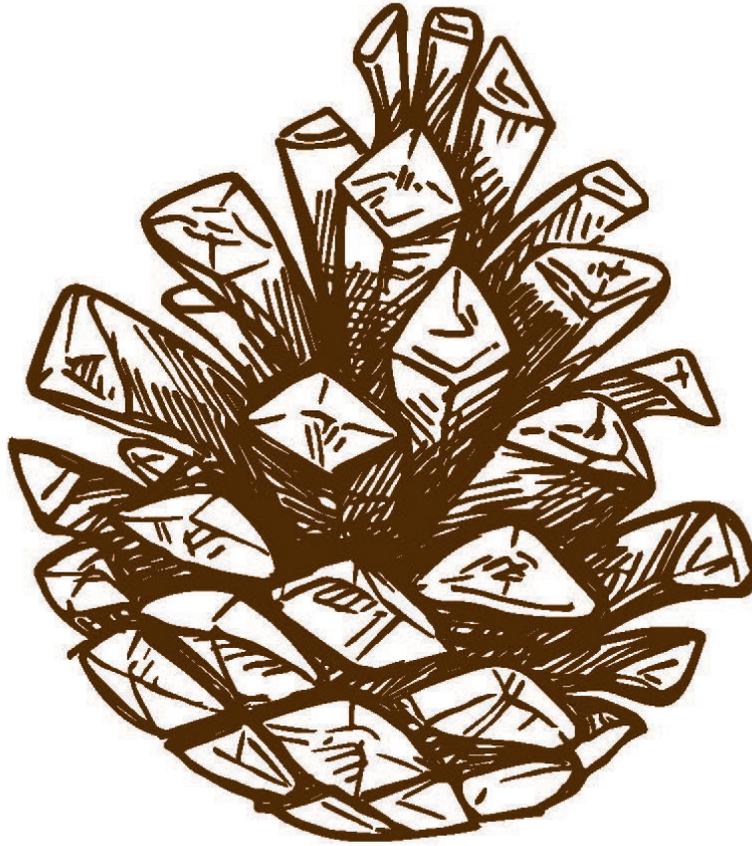
Great Sauk Trail Community Plans



These will be added via the amendment process once completed.

Appendix D:

County Property Master Plans



These will be added via the amendment process once completed.

Appendix E:

Stakeholders & Public Input

STAKEHOLDER	GROUP
Astronomers	Iowa County Astronomers
	La Crosse Area Astronomical Society
	Rockford Amateur Astronomers, Inc
ATV Clubs	WI River Runners ATC 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
	LaValle 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 LaValle 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?

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?

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

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

- More parks closer to my home
- Culturally specific programs
- Less crime
- Ease of making reservations
- Expanded facilities (picnic tables, grills, pavilions, restrooms, concessions, etc.)
- 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)

<input type="text"/>	Sauk County Website	<input type="text"/>	Newspaper
<input type="text"/>	Sauk County Social Media	<input type="text"/>	Promotional Brochures
<input type="text"/>	Email list	<input type="text"/>	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?

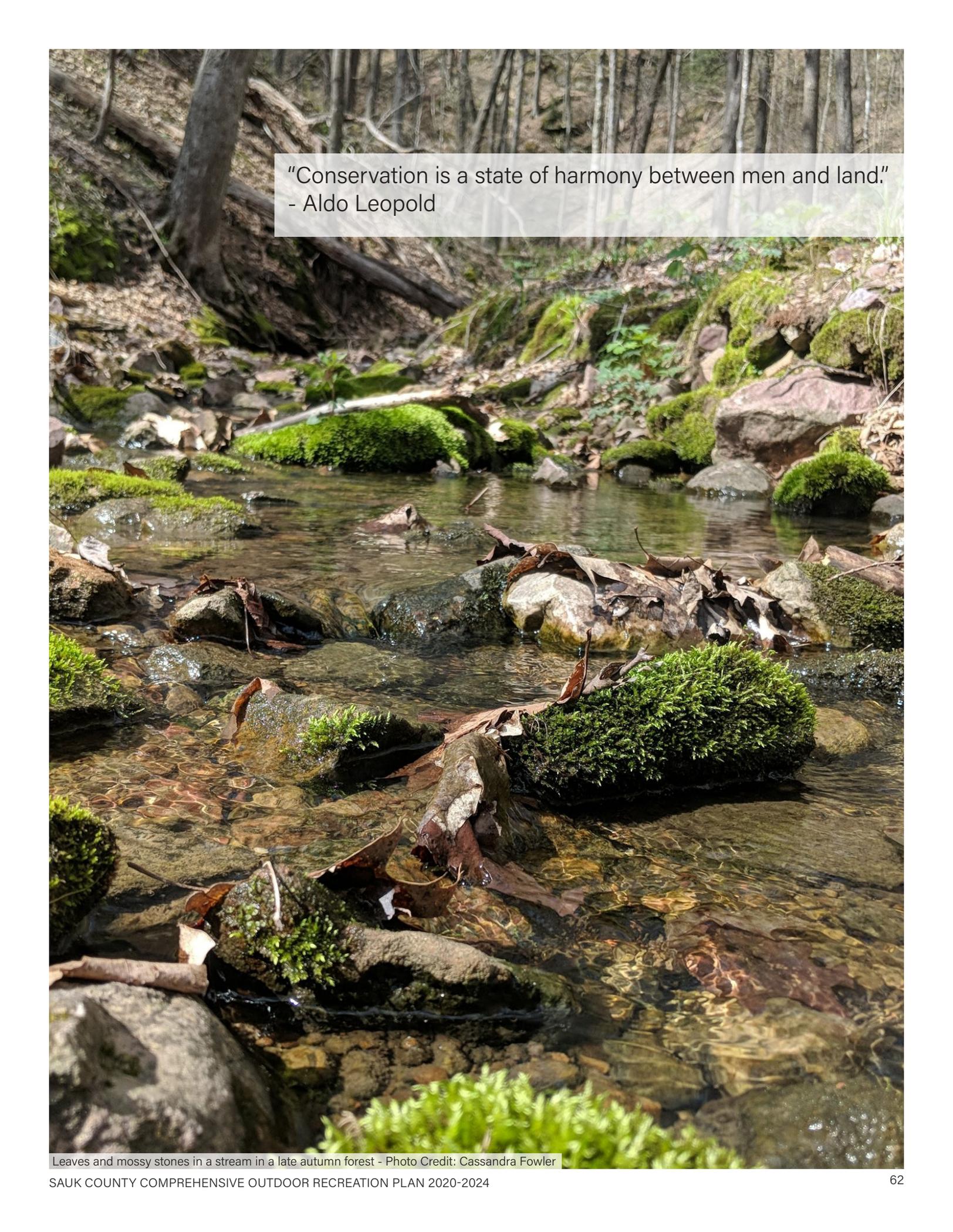
- <\$25,000
- \$25,000-\$49,999
- \$50,000-\$74,999
- \$75,000-\$99,999
- More than \$100,000
- Prefer not to answer

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

A photograph of a stream in a forest. The water is clear and flows over rocks covered in bright green moss. Numerous brown, fallen leaves are scattered throughout the stream and on the banks. The background shows a dense forest of thin trees, some with bare branches, suggesting a late autumn setting. A semi-transparent text box is overlaid in the upper left quadrant of the image.

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

Leaves and mossy stones in a stream in a late autumn forest - Photo Credit: Cassandra Fowler

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