



LAND RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



LAND CONSERVATION * PLANNING AND ZONING * PARKS AND RECREATION

OUR MISSION

The Land Resources and Environment Department protects, enhances, and supports Sauk County's natural, cultural, and historic resources through innovative approaches, public education, and collaboration with community partners.



A WORD FROM OUR DIRECTOR

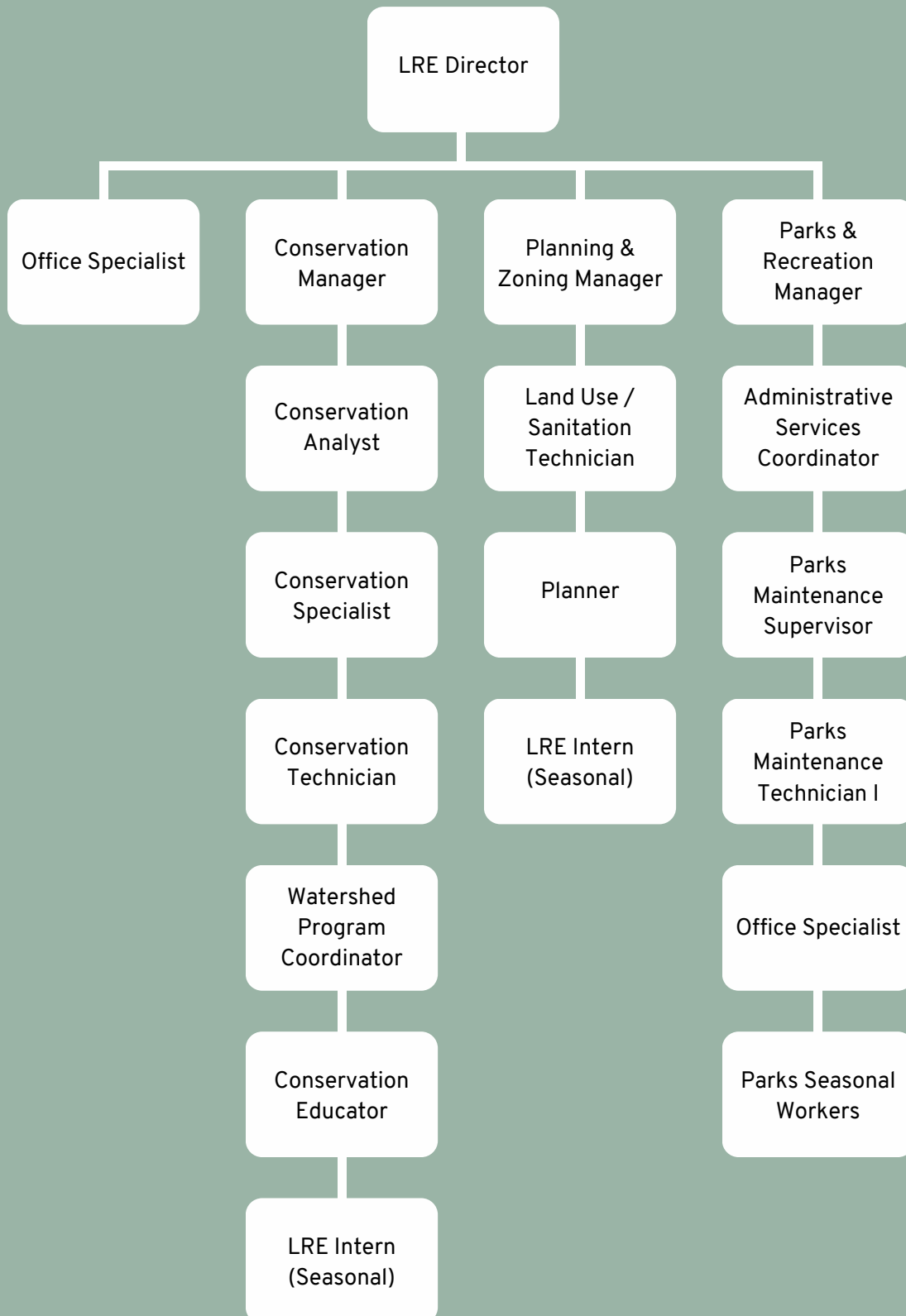
I am pleased to present the 2023 Land Resources and Environment Department Annual Report. This year's report has taken on a new format, to paint a better picture of the achievements of the department. Upon reading our report, I think it will become abundantly clear that we do amazing things together. From our elected officials to the people, we serve; from our cities, villages, and towns; to our community groups and organizations, we are creating a County that is enriched through innovation, collaboration, and partnerships.

The LRE Department programs and services are built on the values established within our Strategic Plan. These values include inclusivity, collaboration, respect, integrity, quality, resiliency, and innovation; and serve as the cornerstone to each program, policy, and initiative we undertake. This year, we accomplished a lot and are aimed to continue our work to bring a better future to Sauk County. This future includes equity for all, the ability to adapt to challenges to ensure a positive outcome, and promoting growth while protecting our natural, cultural, and historic resources.

As I look towards our future, I am hopeful that the partnerships we have formed throughout our work will continue to provide a strong foundation for more innovation. As we embark on 2024, we will continue to engage and connect with you along the way. We look forward to ongoing success for Sauk County in the future.

Lisa Wilson

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



PROGRAMS & SERVICES



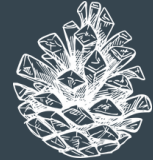
Land Conservation

- Clean Sweep
- Ag Plastics Collection
- Farmland Preservation Program
- Cost Share Assistance Programs
 - County Cost Share
 - Land & Water Resource Management
 - Multi Discharger Variance
- Chapter 26 - Agricultural Performance Standards and Manure Management
- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program
- Lake Management Grants & Program Assistance
- Sauk County Farm Management
- Producer Led Watershed Groups
- Outreach and Education
 - Wheat Week
 - Youth Conservation Days
 - Field Days & Pasture Walks
 - Email Notifications, Social Media & Program Literature
 - Workshops & Presentations



Planning & Zoning

- Comprehensive Planning
 - County Comprehensive Plan
 - Town Comprehensive Plans
 - Farmland Preservation Plan
 - County Outdoor Recreation Plan
 - Property Master Plans
 - Farmland Preservation Plan
- Ordinance Enforcement
 - Chapter 7 - Zoning
 - Chapter 8 - Shoreland Protection
 - Chapter 9 - Floodplain Zoning
 - Chapter 18 - Rural Identification System
 - Chapter 22 - Land Division and Subdivision Regulations
 - Chapter 24 - Non-Metallic Mining
 - Chapter 25 - Private Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems
 - Chapter 51 - Erosion Control and Stormwater Management
- Certified Survey Maps
- Land Use & Sanitary Permits
- Conditional Use Permits
- Septic Maintenance
- Fire Signs
- Baraboo Range Monitoring
- Board of Adjustment



Parks & Recreation

- Dam Management and Maintenance
- Snowmobile Trail Grant Administration
- ATV/UTV Trail Grant Administration
- OHM Grant Administration
- CCA Grant Administration
- Campground Maintenance and Operation
- Park Operations
 - White Mound County Park
 - Sauk County Cemetery
 - Lake Redstone County Park
 - Douglas Landing
 - Hemlock County Park
 - North End Boat Landing
 - Weidman Woods
 - Timme Mill Dam
 - Yellow Thunder Memorial
 - Man Mound National Historic Landmark
 - Bluffview County Park
 - Summer Oaks Boat Landing
 - Great Sauk State Trail
 - Sauk County Forest
- Lake Management (White Mound Lake)
- Outreach & Events



LAND CONSERVATION

BY MELISSA SCHLUPP

The Land Conservation service area was busy in 2023 installing conservation practices and providing high-quality outreach and education opportunities to youth and adults. Our service area welcomed a new conservation technician, Jenn Schneiderman, who will be working on implementing the Sauk County Farm Property Master Plan, Land & Water Resource Management Plan, and the Lake Redstone Watershed Nine Key Element Plan. We are excited to have her on board working on these important projects.

Sauk County continues to be a leader in rotational grazing, helping to not only convert land to pasture, but also support the additional needs of graziers including pasture walks, workshops, and one on one technical assistance.

This past year will be remembered as being very dry and one that challenged both cash grain farmers and graziers. The drought provided an opportunity to showcase how soil health practices can withstand extreme weather conditions. In the end, those fields and pastures following the soil health principals fared better than others.

We look forward to 2024 and our continued efforts to promote better land management practices that improve soil health, animal health, and human health.

2023 SPECIAL EVENTS

Education Award

Justine Bula was recognized as the 2023 Brad Matson Youth Education Award for Outstanding Youth Educator at the Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association annual meeting in March. Since 2018, Justine has made impressive changes to create the well organized and structured youth education program that is represented in Sauk County today. She is more than deserving of this award and we are grateful to have her on our team.



Farm Technology Days

Sauk County was the host county for Farm Technology Days in July, an event that attracted over 30,000 people from across the Upper Midwest. Land Conservation staff helped organize off-site farm tours and coordinated recycling efforts at the event. The rainfall simulator was also on display along with the LRE informational booth. Overall, it was a great opportunity to showcase conservation efforts in Sauk County.



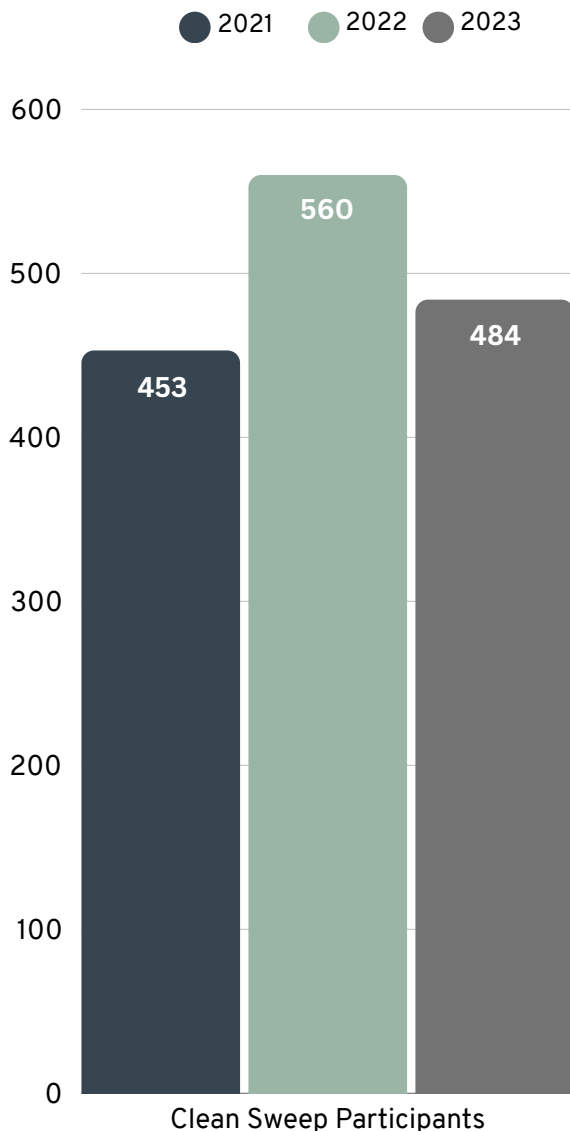
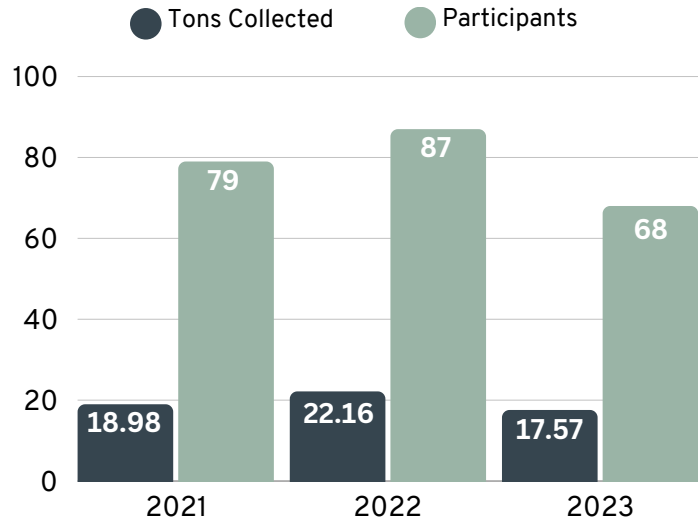
Conserve Sauk Film Festival

The third biennial Conserve Sauk Film Festival was held at the UW-Platteville Baraboo Sauk County campus in November with over 80 people in attendance. A variety of conservation themed films were screened at the event including many produced locally and regionally. Attendees participated in facilitated discussion after the films and learned more about local conservation efforts and opportunities for involvement.



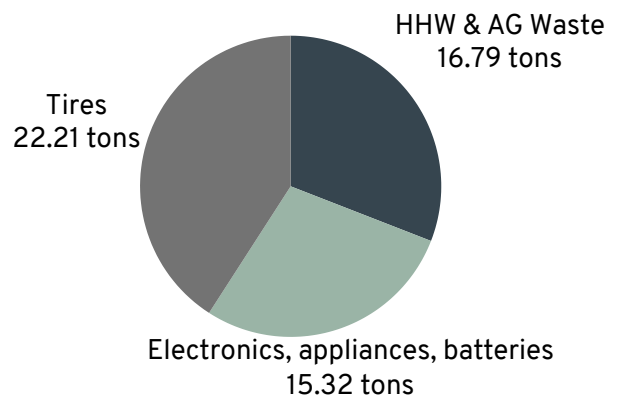
AG PLASTICS COLLECTION PROGRAM

A total of five Ag Plastics Collection events were held in 2023. The program interest continues to be strong and steady.



CLEAN SWEEP & VOUCHER PROGRAM

There was less interest in the voucher program than in 2022; however, the participation in the annual Clean Sweep event remained steady.



2023 Clean Sweep Waste Collection Summary

OUTREACH & EDUCATION

Outreach and education continues to be an important service offered by the department. In addition to our regular programs, we had unique opportunities to participate in statewide events that were hosted in Sauk County in 2023.

YOUTH EDUCATION

From in-classroom lessons to teaching out at area farms, and bringing Sauk County students on field trips to amazing locations such as Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center, we are always working to provide students with engaging, hands-on lessons and activities to learn about conservation, agriculture, natural resources and the environment.

Throughout 2023, our staff taught and provided **24 education events & programs** reaching **more than 1,733 students** in grades K-12.

We hosted **2 Youth Conservation Day** events at Upham Woods Outdoor Learning Center, taught at the Tower Rock Ag. Day, Baraboo 8th grade Career Day, taught at the WI Land + Water Middle School Summer Camp, taught at **4 on-farm field trip** events hosted by area farmers, taught **6 Wheat Week programs**, and **4 classroom conservation lessons**.

In addition to programs and lessons, **43 students** participated in the 2023 Sauk County NACD Conservation Awareness Poster Contest.

Sauk County awarded **2 scholarships**, 1 for the High School camp and 1 for the Middle School camp, for students to attend the WI Land + Water Youth Conservation Camps.





OUTREACH & EDUCATION

FIELD DAYS, TOURS, PRESENTATIONS, & WORKSHOPS

A total of **21 field days and tours** were hosted with **more than 2,004 participants**. Topics of field days and tours included managed grazing, Rainfall Simulator, planting green, and more.

Staff provided **20 presentations reaching 2,242 people**. Presentation topics included Farmland Preservation, water quality monitoring, recycling, grazing, Sauk County Farm, and more.

We hosted **13 workshops** with more than **256 attendees**. We collaborated with area Producer Led Watershed Protection groups, including SSWIG, to host the Annual Soil Health Workshop with David Brandt attracting more than 119 attendees, 72% of which were farmers. Workshops for absentee landowners, nutrient management, soil conservation, and winter grazing were also hosted in collaboration with community partners.

FACEBOOK

- 358 POSTS
- 37,356 PAGE REACH IN 2023
- 77,386 POST REACH IN 2023
- 145 NEW FOLLOWERS
- TOTAL OF 728 FOLLOWERS

MAILCHIMP

- 113 EMAILS SENT OUT
- 17,859 TOTAL RECIPIENTS

NEWSLETTERS

- 2 CONSERVATION CHRONICLES
- 2,524+ RECIPIENTS

PRESS RELEASES

- 7 PRESS RELEASES
- TOPICS INCLUDED: Clean Sweep, NACD Poster Contest, Pasture Walks, Film Festival, Rain Barrel Sale, Clean Sweep Voucher Program, and more.

2023 PASTURE WALKS



Pasture walks are gatherings that take place on farms throughout Sauk County that practice rotational grazing of animals. They are held monthly from May to December and generally last for 2-3 hours but attendees can come and go as they please. It is an informal gathering where learning and connecting takes place amongst producers and the general public. We focus on a particular topic at each walk but freely discuss other topics of interest. These are popular events with some people traveling from across the state and upper Midwest to attend.

285
Total number of attendees at 2023 pasture walks

COST SHARE PROGRAMS

In 2023, Sauk County LRE provided \$157,835 in financial assistance towards the installation of 26 conservation projects. The majority of conservation funding was used to convert cropland or over-grazed pasture to managed grazing systems. Funding was used to install fence, livestock pipeline, pasture seeding, and other associated practices. Prescribed grazing is one of the most cost-effective conservation practices at reducing soil erosion and nutrient loss from farmland.



3,115

Tons of soil saved and prevented from entering Sauk County waterbodies



3,015

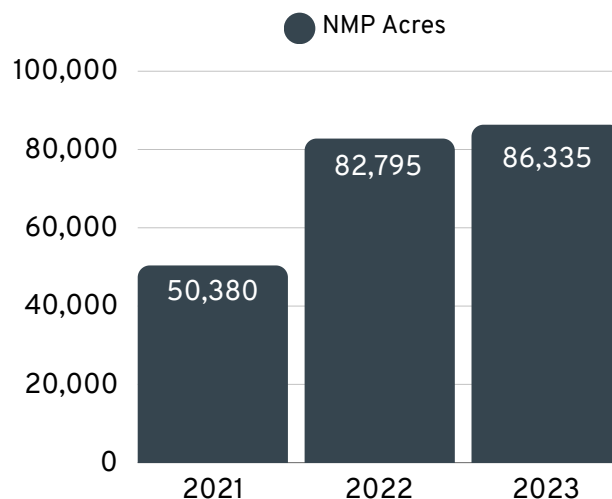
lbs of phosphorus reduced and prevented from entering Sauk County waterbodies



24 MILLION

Gallons of water infiltrated instead of running off and causing down stream flooding

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM



In 2023, we assisted with the implementation of 59 nutrient management plans (NMP) totaling 16,127 acres. In general, the number of acres covered under nutrient management plans continues to increase due to participation in the farmland preservation program and implementation of Sauk County Chapter 26 Agricultural Performance Standards and Manure Management Ordinance.

SAUK COUNTY FARM



New Cropland Renters

Echo-Y Inc. operates 1,350 acres of cropland near Loganville. They grow corn, soybeans, winter wheat and small grains for cover crop seed. They rotationally graze beef cattle on 350 acres of pasture and direct market their beef. They were the 2018 Wisconsin Land + Water Conservation Farm Family of the Year.

Connor Laukant rotationally grazes beef cattle on 900 acres near Reedsburg. He specializes in custom grazing and also owns a cattle shade company. He is a regular host of pasture walks and other events at his farm. Connor's farm was showcased as a farm tour for Wisconsin Farm Technology Days in 2023.

New Pasture Renter



Streambank Stabilization Project

A variety of projects occurred within the stream corridor at the county farm. Approximately 255 feet of streambank was stabilized including 75 feet of gabion baskets near the Highway 23 bridge. A rock lined waterway was also installed to address gully erosion leading into the stream.

Contour buffer strips have been present on the county farm for over a decade. There is no longer a need for these strips; however, having a strip in place to keep the farm fields on the contour is still important. As a result, a pollinator strip was installed in 2023 and additional strips will be installed in the upcoming years.

Prairie Strip Installation



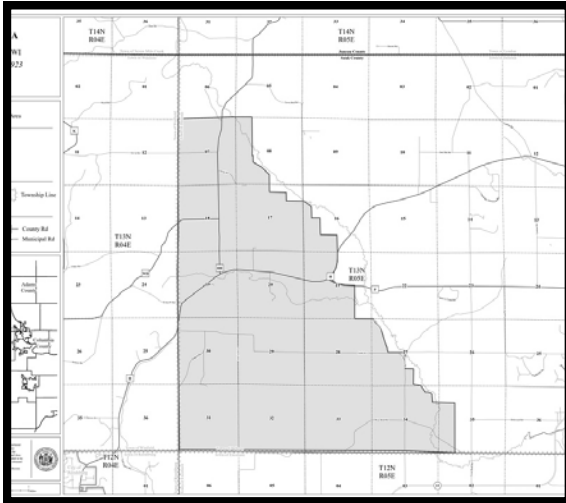
Photo Credit: Sand county Foundation



Demonstration Plots Installed


The Sauk Soil & Water Improvement Group (SSWIG) installed 6 demonstration plots at the county farm. The plots are planted in different crop rotations and cover crops. The goal of the project to share information on incorporating cover crops into any rotation on any farm in Sauk County.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION PROGRAM



Enrollment in the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP) remained steady in 2023 with 373 participants and more than 75,000 acres enrolled in the program. The Wisconsin State Legislature recently passed a farmland preservation program bill that increases the tax credit and reduces agreement lengths. We anticipate this will increase future participation in the program.

At the beginning of 2023, landowners from the Town of Dellona showed an interest in establishing an Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA). After generating enough landowner support and obtaining proper approvals from the town and county, a petition was submitted to the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and subsequently approved. Beginning January 1, landowners within the new Dellona AEA will have the opportunity to sign Farmland Preservation agreements and begin receiving the tax credit.



\$707,960
Total FPP tax credits claimed in 2023 by Sauk County Farmers



LAKE PROGRAMS

The Shoreland Stabilization program started in 2021 to address eroding lakeshore properties. LRE staff survey and design projects utilizing rip rap, as well as bioengineered or natural components to stabilize the shoreline and provide wildlife habitat. A total of **408 linear feet** have been stabilized resulting in an annual reduction of **52 pounds of phosphorus** and **32 tons of soil**.

Staff also worked closely with lake groups to provide outreach and education opportunities. In 2023 staff participated in “Take a Stake in our Lake” program hosted by Lake Redstone Protection District and provided a shoreline assessment presentation to Dutch Hollow Lake Property Owners Association.



BLUFFVIEW COMMUNITY PARK
 PHOTO CREDIT: DAMON FARBER LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

PLANNING & ZONING

BY BRIAN SIMMERT, AICP

“In The Middle of Difficulty Lies Opportunity”
 - Albert Einstein

$E=mc^2$. We have all heard of $E=mc^2$, otherwise known as Albert Einstein’s Theory of Relativity. But do we understand it? Do we even want to understand it? If not, there are plenty of other theories to ponder.

Take Planning Theory for instance, which is the study of concepts, principles, and assumptions that underlie planning as a social activity. That explains, perhaps too succinctly, where Sauk County’s Plans come from be it for the Bluffview Community Park or Great Sauk State Trail.

Then there is Zoning Theory. This one is a bit harder to define other than to say BFE, OHWM, PRD, CSM; all terms that can be found in county zoning ordinances.

Einstein’s quote, “In The Middle of Difficulty Lies Opportunity” is etched onto a rock that has been on my desk for over two decades.

In many ways this quote defines Planning & Zoning staff whether we’re working on plans that will transform communities or navigating complicated zoning issues. In every instance we traverse difficulties and find opportunities to listen, to learn, and be the best public servants we can. To that end we take pride in who we are and what we do for Sauk County.

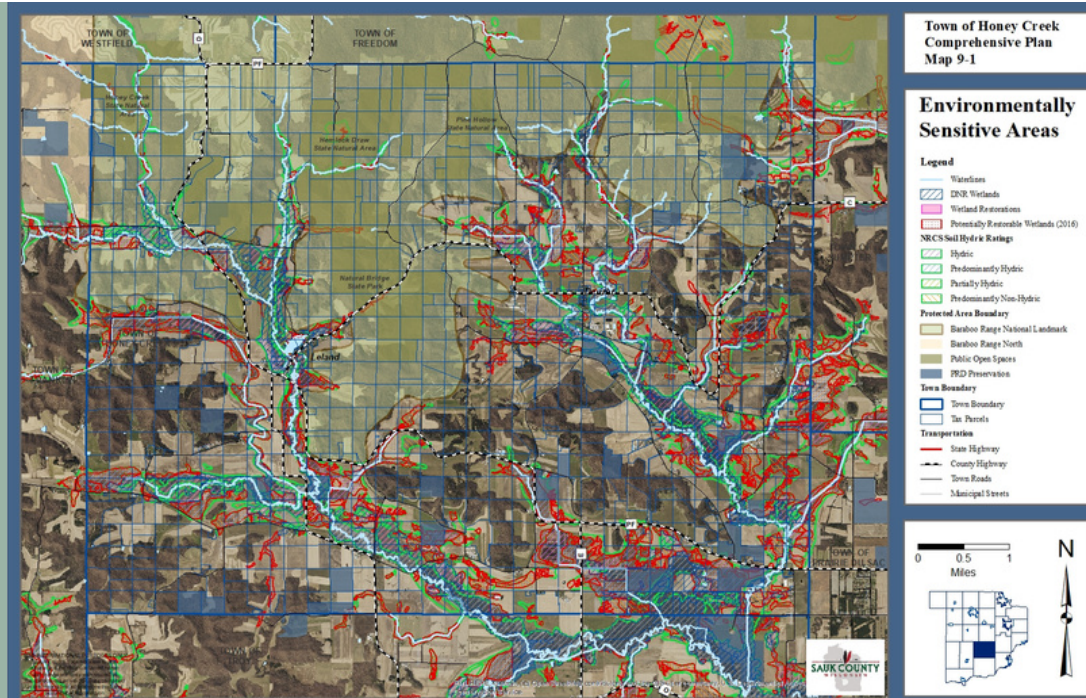
We’re looking forward to 2024 and the completion of many projects including finalizing a comprehensively revised zoning ordinance, adoption of the Great Sauk State Trail Master Plan and Farmland Preservation Plan and beginning planning for the Hemlock County Park Master Plan.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Comprehensive planning allows for municipalities to plan for their future economic, social, and physical development for the betterment of their community. The plans allow for basis on which Towns may make their land use decisions, direct policy, and Town ordinances. Over the past two years, the County has been assisting Towns with updates to their plans, many of which have not been updated in almost twenty years. Updating comprehensive plans is an extensive, months long process. Staff have assisted with updating census data and maps throughout the plans, along with attending monthly Town meetings to review plan narrative, aid in discussion, and answer general process questions.

9 KEY ELEMENTS OF COMPREHENSIVE PLANS

- Issues and Opportunities
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities and Community Facilities
- Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Intergovernmental Cooperation
- Land Use
- Implementation



HIGHLIGHTS



GSST Goette Road Connection

Working with the Town of Merrimac, Sauk County constructed the final one-half mile of trail to connect to Goette Road. In addition to the trail's construction, the area was improved through the addition of a small parking lot so that trail users can park cars outside of Goette Road's traveled right-of-way.

The Department has created five separate property master plans detailing each property's unique characteristics and outlining strategies to conserve natural resources while developing them as recreational resources. The planning process is a partnership between all service areas of the Department and allows for community engagement.

Property Master Planning



Stormwater Management Permitting

Sauk County Chapter 51 Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Ordinance, adopted in 2022, protects water resources and surrounding properties from construction activities. This year we issued four stormwater permits for large developments and 26 erosion control permits.

When a proposed building will be constructed near a minimum setback, staff inform landowners that a survey is required after the foundation is poured. Three setback violations were corrected in 2022 and none were found in 2023. Setback violations tend to occur more often when construction starts without permits.

Minimum Setback Violations



Septic Maintenance and Installation

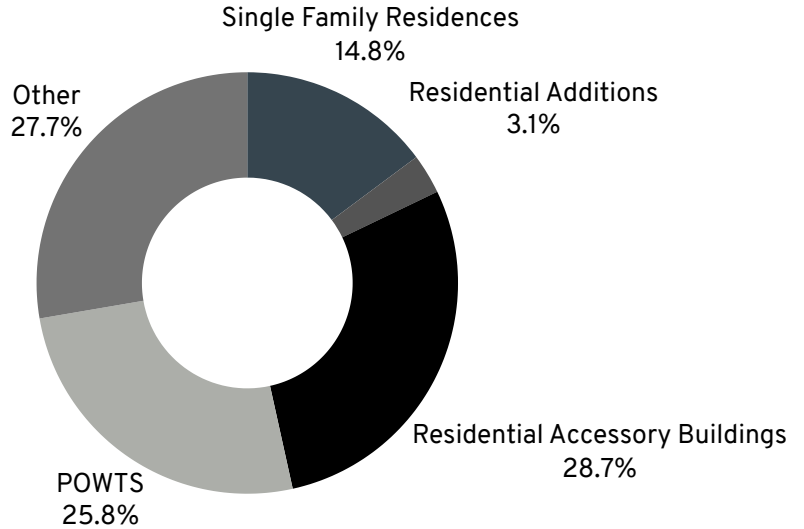
The Department manages septic system installation and maintenance county-wide. Staff ensures compliance by sending reminders and managing pumping data. Staff also reviews permits and inspects the new and replacement installations. There were 174 sanitary permits processed in 2023.

PERMIT & SURVEY SUMMARY

461

LAND USE PERMITS ISSUED

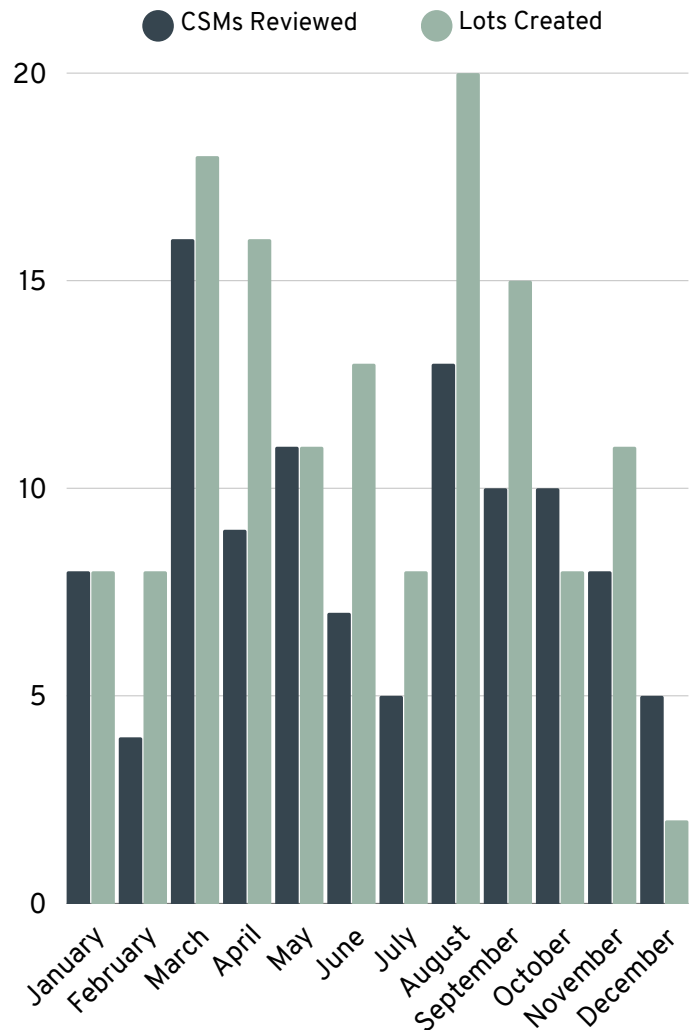
The number of permits issued for land uses in 2023 highlights the ongoing growth in the construction of new single-family homes and expansions to current homes. Additionally, many POWTS permits are connected to new residential building projects. The 'other' category of permits collectively includes signage, conditional uses, filling and grading, and erosion control.



110

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CERTIFIED SURVEY MAPS REVIEWED ANNUALLY

In 2023, the Department reviewed 108 Certified Survey Maps (CSM) with a recording rate at the Register of Deeds of approximately 92%.



130

AVERAGE NUMBER OF LOTS CREATED BY CSM ANNUALLY

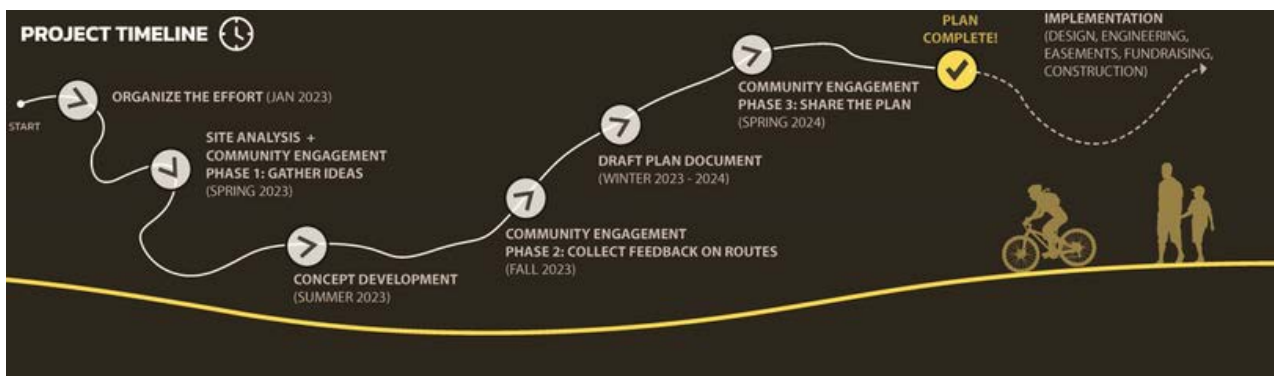
In 2023, the Department created 138 lots by CSM. After removing lots that were not part of a recorded CSM or created for reasons such as land transfers, the Department approved the creation of approximately 105 rural vacant lots that are available for new residential development.

GREAT SAUK STATE TRAIL PLANNING



Building from the success of the 10.5-mile completed segment of the Great Sauk State Trail (GSST) that connects from Sauk City, Prairie du Sac, up to the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area, this planning process will look to identify a route and route alternatives to extend the multi-use trail north and west to Devil’s Lake State Park, Baraboo and West Baraboo, North Freedom, Rock Springs, and terminate at the start of the 400 State Trail in Reedsburg. The intent is to provide a safe and enjoyable recreational trail for pedestrians and bicyclists through the unique landscape of the Baraboo River and the Driftless Area. Once complete, the GSST will provide a world-class trail experience, showcasing the natural landscape.

This planning process began in January of 2023, with the County contracting with the Minneapolis based consulting firm, HKGI to lead the project. During the first round of community engagement (Spring 2023), the project team gathered ideas and listened to concerns voiced by residents, community members, agency representatives and municipal leaders. With this feedback in-hand, the project team identified potential route options and worked through concept development (Summer 2023), the result of which was presented at an open house and online for public review. The project team collected feedback on the route options and will release a preferred route alternative in Spring 2024. The plan is anticipated to be complete in the Summer of 2024. From there, the LRE Department will work to secure funding for trail design and engineering followed by trail construction.



GRAPHIC CREDIT: HKGI

GREAT SAUK STATE TRAIL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public engagement in the context of planning seeks genuine inclusion in a process that encourages broad participation, as well as seeking ways to engage with community members who may not typically find their way to a public meeting. The value of public involvement with planning the future GSST cannot be understated as many comments and ideas gathered are being considered by the Department to formulate a preferred trail route, identify trail amenities, and make community connections.

SOCIAL PINPOINT / INTERACTIVE MAPPING

The planning process utilized an interactive mapping platform called Social Pinpoint during two distinct public input phases of the planning process. The second phase included both in-person traditional open houses (images to the right) to gather public feedback on trail route alternatives and also utilized Social Pinpoint to gather feedback. While participation at the open houses was good, the use of Social Pinpoint exceeded expectations.



SOCIAL PINPOINT PHASE 2 PUBLIC INPUT

1617	651	8:26	510
TOTAL VISITS	UNIQUE USERS	AVG TIME (MIN)	COMMENTS

ARCGIS STORYMAP

Storytelling can be considered both an art and a science, especially when the story is combined with spacial design and imagery. As a way to amplify engagement, the Department created an ArcGIS Storymap that explains the planning process and provides various ways to engage, but also takes the viewer through a virtual visit (or bike ride!) along the future trail to every community that trail will touch. The StoryMap also serves as the landing platform for both new and return interest in the trail project as the site is regularly updated with reports on progress, new ways to engage, results of prior engagement activities, and initial drafts of sections of final master plan.




STORYMAP
• 8,035 VIEWS



MAILCHIMP
• 435 SUBSCRIBERS



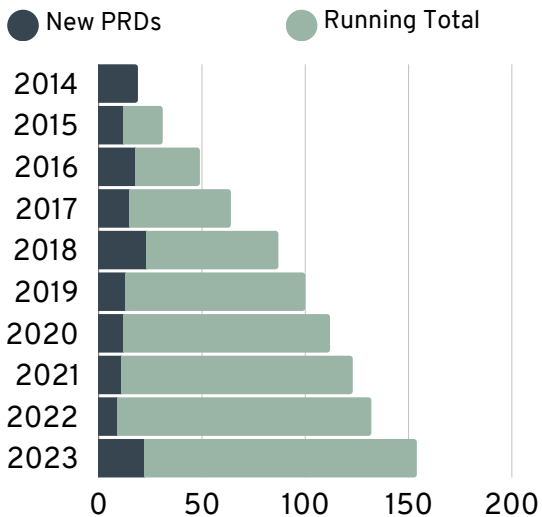
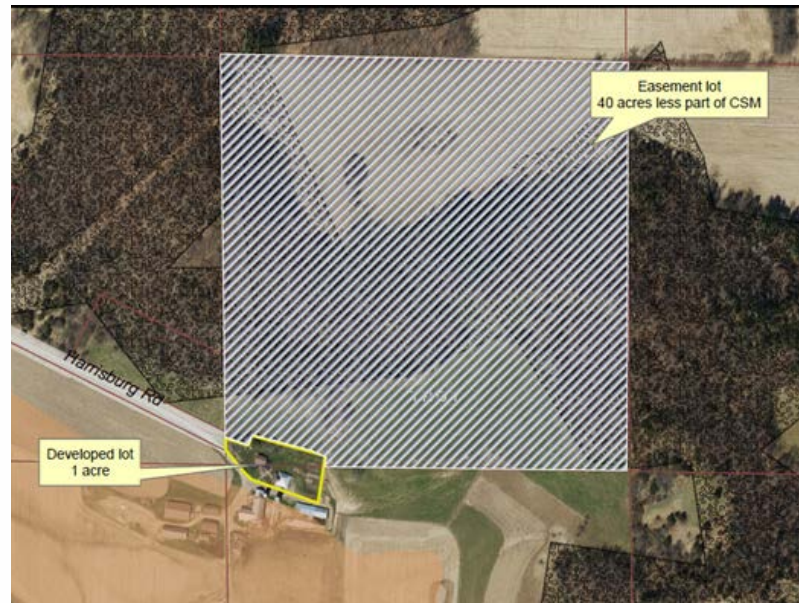
LANDOWNER LETTERS
• 2,276 RECIPIENTS PHASE 1
• 947 RECIPIENTS PHASE 2



SURVEY
• 240 RESPONSES COLLECTED
• 66% SAUK COUNTY RESIDENTS
• 34 % NON-RESIDENT RESPONSES
• 21% RESPONSES FROM BARABOO

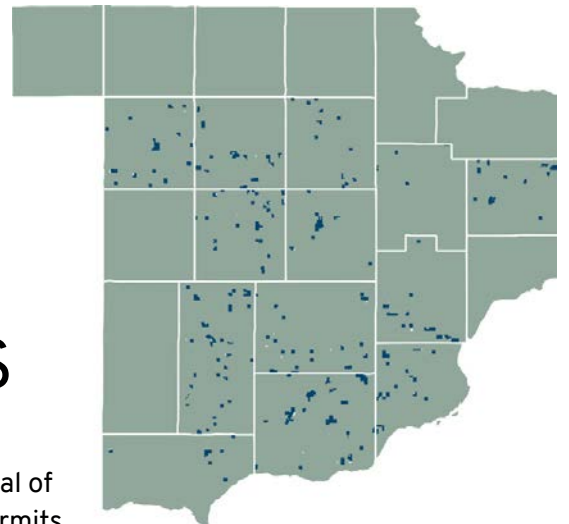
PLANNED RURAL DEVELOPMENT (PRD) PROGRAM

Our department offers an innovative Planned Rural Development (PRD) program that regulates rural residential housing to protect agricultural and natural features. It allows flexibility to property owners through the transfer of development rights and protects development density for Townships. It's the only program of its kind in the State, which required consulting with DATCP so Sauk County could break the mold without breaking statute. PRDs maintain the density policy of the underlying zoning district, which is 35 acres for Exclusive Agriculture and Resource Conservancy. A conditional use permit is issued to create a small (1-5 acre) development lot in lieu of placing a preservation easement on the remaining acreage. The PRD permit is based on standards that include adequate facilities, minimizing farmland loss, preserving high value soils, and compatibility with the surroundings.



154 PERMITS

Since the program's adoption in 2014, a total of 154 conditional use permits to create development lots with corresponding easements have been issued.



9,413 acres preserved
229 acres development



PARKS & RECREATION

BY MATT STIEVE

Sauk County Parks completed numerous projects throughout 2023 (detailed within this report). Some projects include developing an accessible hunting blind at White Mound County Park, furthering the Great Sauk State Trail, removing over 130 trees affected by emerald ash borer and adding outreach events. We've established inclusive opportunities with improved amenities meeting state guidelines for equestrian camping and ADA standard compliancy and have continued to make great strides in improving our Sauk County owned dams.

Equally, if not more important than individual projects, is providing a high-quality space for outdoor recreation. To provide a safe and inclusive, high-quality outdoor experience for our park users, the Sauk County Parks Team must be innovative, creative, productive and have a deep understanding of park user needs and wants. To provide this positive environment, we must understand new technologies, maintenance techniques, financial efficiencies, conservation, demographics and other park related best practices.

We were fortunate to add a Parks Maintenance Technician I to our full-time staff. This position helps our maintenance team expedite and increase the quantity of work completed.

Sauk County Parks has significant projects anticipated for 2024. These projects will certainly keep us busy this year, but we will not lose sight of our responsibilities of providing a quality outdoor experience for our park users.

SAUK COUNTY PARKS & PROPERTIES



104

Acres of lake maintained

2,041

Acres of land maintained

16

Parks/properties maintained

DAM MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

Dam management and maintenance includes inspections of each dam, implementation of Emergency Action Plans and Inspection, Operation and Maintenance Plans and minor maintenance to ensure the dams are operating adequately and safely.



DELTON DAM

Sauk County acquired, through a quit claim deed, a property that hosted a portion of the dam. Sauk County now is the sole owner / manager of the dam. Significant amounts of debris were removed by staff in an effort to prevent any flow disruption. Repairs are scheduled for 2024 - we are waiting for DNR plan review and approval.



HEMLOCK DAM

The design for the Hemlock Dam replacement construction project was completed and approved in 2023. Bids were let for the project and Janke Construction was the contractor awarded the contract to complete the project. Sauk County came to an agreement with Sprint / Cogent to relocate the fiber to the existing former rail bridge.



REDSTONE DAM

The Redstone Dam was randomly inspected throughout the year by the dam operator. After an extended application period lasting years, Sauk County received \$5,462.16 from FEMA as a result of the flooding in 2018. This dam is unique among Sauk County owned dams because it's a high hazard dam, which requires additional management.



PL566 DAMS

Sauk County owns 3 PL566 dams, including County N Dam, Shanahan Dam and White Mound Dam. These dams are inspected randomly on a routine basis.

GRANT ADMINISTRATION

Sauk County annually participates in maintaining, acquiring, insuring and developing lands for public motorized trail and event use and these public motorized trails and events are eligible for grant funds through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). 100% of these funds are applied to the costs for the acquisition, development, insurance and maintenance of public trails and events. Funding for the programs comes from registration fees, a portion of tax on gasoline and user fees. Grant applications must be submitted by the local governing body to the DNR. Sauk County Parks currently administers snowmobile trail grants, ATV / UTV trail grants, a off-highway motorcycle (OHM) event grant and a County Conservation Aids (CCA) grant.

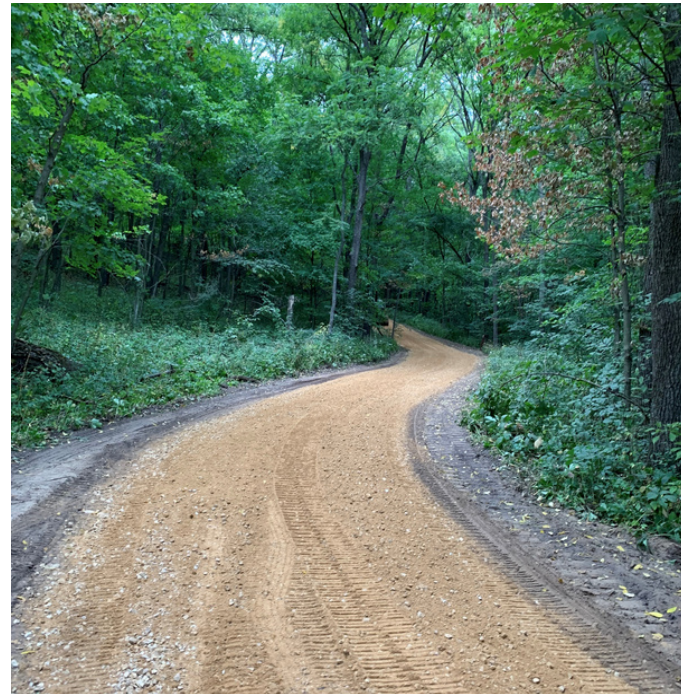
ATV / UTV GRANT

The DNR annually awards Sauk County \$472 for summer ATV/UTV trail maintenance and \$177 for winter ATV/UTV trail maintenance. Development and maintenance of ATV/UTV trails is managed through a contract with the Sauk Ridge Runners, Inc. There are approximately 0.59 miles of funded off-road ATV/UTV trails in Sauk County.

SNOWMOBILE GRANTS

There are 238.3 miles of funded snowmobile trails in Sauk County. The trails are funded at \$300 per mile, resulting in a total grant award of \$71,490. Development, maintenance and grooming of the snowmobile trails is managed through a contract with the Association of Sauk County Snowmobile Clubs.

Sauk County also applied for DNR funding to rehab a snowmobile trail in White Mound County Park as a result of groomers not able to traverse the hill. They awarded Sauk County \$40,000 to improve the trail. Improvements started and were completed in September of 2023. This trail will also allow access for park staff and equipment to efficiently reach the southeast part of the park.



26

Days snowmobile trail open
2021

4

Days snowmobile trail open
2022

11

Days snowmobile trail open
2023

GRANT ADMINISTRATION



CCA GRANT

The 2023 County Conservation Aid (CCA) grant was used towards developing a permitted hunting area with increased accessibility at White Mound County Park. Preparations started in 2022 with planting a food plot in the area, which acts as a pollinator habitat. Staff also sawed lumber from a white oak log that fell within the park to use for interior walls in a hunting blind. The hunting blind is located west of the park shop, which will be totally accessible and will provide heat and electricity.

The DNR awarded Sauk County a \$2,245 matching grant towards the project, and an additional \$3,500 was budgeted in the LRE budget as part of the White Mound County Park Master Plan implementation.

OHM GRANT

Sauk County facilitates the motorized recreation Off-Highway Motorcycle (OH)M grant on behalf of the Driftless Dual Sport Riders, a local OHM club. The club requested funds to cover the cost of a two-day special event for OHM riders. Sauk County was awarded \$1,925 to cover the costs of county staff time and club expenses such as insurance and signage. The OHM club volunteers their labor to administer, prepare, staff and clean-up after the event. The event was held at the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area.

CAMPGROUND MAINTENANCE & OPERATIONS

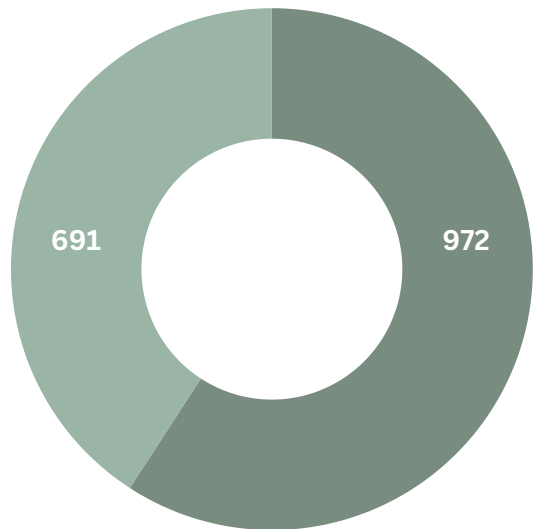
White Mound Campground (typically open 4/1 - 11/30) has 46 campsites, 37 of which have electrical hook-ups. ADA accessible, non-electric camper and walk-in tent sites are also available. Each campsite can accommodate tents and includes a fire ring and picnic table. The campground has a shower building with sinks and coin-operated showers, washer and dryer. Vault toilets are available at both ends of the campground. A playground is located at the entrance of the campground. Reservations can be made online or by calling the park office.

Thanks to recent improvements made in 2023, White Mound County Park offers horse camping for those who bring their own horses. The horse campground (typically open 5/15 - 10/31) offers 7 campsites, all with electrical and water hook-ups. There are also 2 ADA accessible campsites. Each campsite has a fire ring, picnic table and hitching post. The horse campground has portable toilets located in the middle of the campground. A manure collection pad is available at the west end. Reservations can be made online or by calling the park office.

\$110,100

Camping revenue
2023

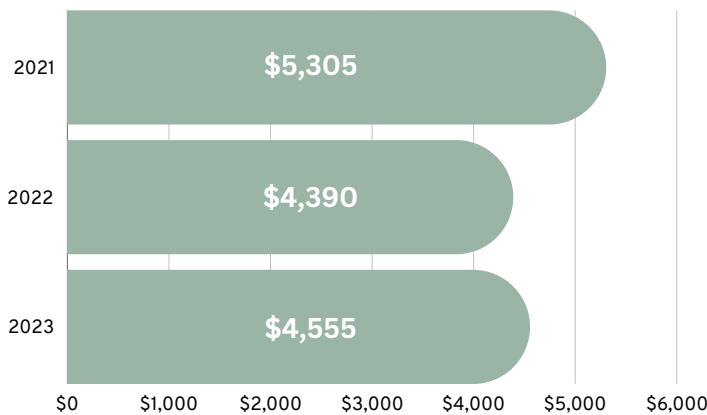
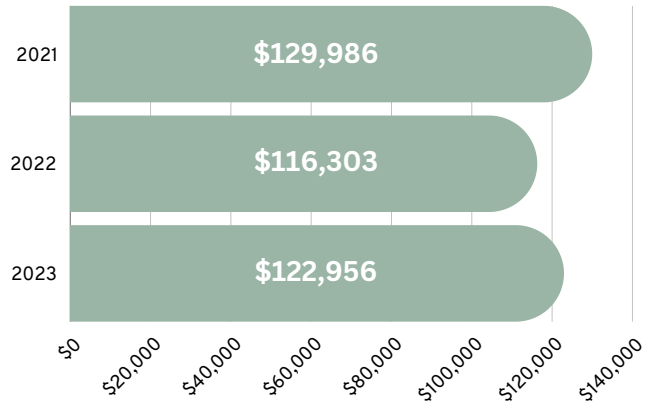
● Direct reservations ● Online reservations



PARK OPERATIONS

ENTRANCE FEE REVENUE

An entrance fee is charged at White Mound County Park, Lake Redstone County Park, North End Boat Landing and the Summer Oaks Boat Landing. Revenue collected also includes entrance fees from 4 boat landings owned by the Towns of LaValle and Woodland.

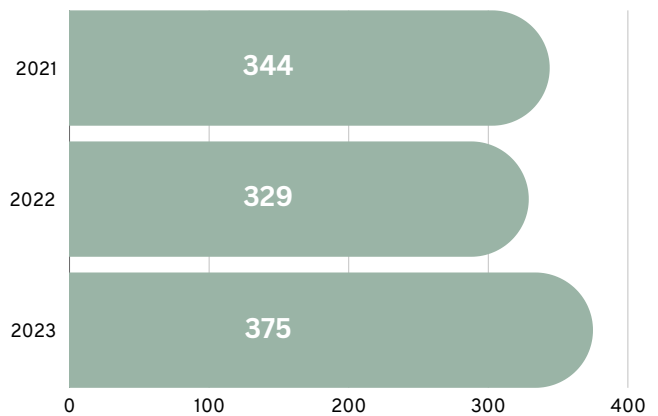


PADDLE SPORT REVENUE

To explore White Mound Lake, the Sauk County Park office has 1 canoe, 1 double kayak, 1 pedal boat, 2 single kayaks and 4 paddle boards available for rent. In 2023, there were over 175 rentals totaling over \$4,500.

SAUK COUNTY VETERAN PASSES

Honorably discharged veterans residing in Sauk County are eligible for one free Sauk County annual park sticker. Veterans must verify eligibility with the Sauk County Veteran’s Service Office and must be verified each year.



15
Volunteers

17
Shelter Rentals

41
Prairie Smoke Terrace Rentals

OUTREACH & EVENTS

Our first event of 2023 was an egg hunt. Staff hid 4 large eggs throughout White Mound County Park. When a park user found one, they were asked to bring it to the park office to redeem a prize. This event received such an enthusiastic response that a second egg hunt was held. This event had approximately 100 participants and will likely return in 2024.

Artists for the 2023 Music in the Park events included:

- Mark Croft (115 attendees)
- Water Street Jacks (75 attendees)
- Tis (150 attendees)
- Shawn Schell (140 attendees)

With nearly 500 attendees throughout the summer, planning efforts have already started for 2024 events.

New to Sauk County Parks and Recreation was our sasquatch search! Staff designed a life-size wooden sasquatch and hid him in the woods of White Mound County Park. Park users who found Sasquatch and took a picture with him were entered to win a prize. This event had approximately 56 park users submit photos, with well over that actually participating - hopefully they have better luck next year!

Also new to Sauk County Parks and Recreation was our outdoor movie nights! Towards the end of summer, staff set up an outdoor movie screen and lights near the office and showcased *The Parent Trap* and *The Great Outdoors*. There were over 140 attendees in total.



2 / 218
Events / Participants
2022

9 / 806
Events / Participants
2023

HIGHLIGHTS & PROJECTS



ADA Transition Plan

\$44,350 was budgeted in 2023 for implementation of the ADA Transition Plan. There are approximately 75 tasks that are outlined in years 1 and 2 in the transition plan. Many tasks have been completed, as they were considered minor - such as adjusting heights of signs or adding signage.

Ash Tree Removal

Ash trees affected by emerald ash borer have been removed from the use areas at White Mound County Park, Hemlock County Park and Lake Redstone County Park, with the logs sold at auction. Stumps have been ground down, holes have been filled with top soil and seeded with grass. Approximately 130 trees were removed.



Hemlock Park Master Plan & Upgrades

This project was not started in 2023, as upgrades will occur following a completed, adopted master plan for Hemlock County Park. The master plan process has started; however, a majority of the plan will be drafted once improvements to the Hemlock Dam are completed.

White Mound County Park Master Plan Implementation

Part of the master plan implementation is completed, such as removing Shelter #2, some vault bathrooms, improvements to the Lake Trail Bridge and the creation of 3 rustic campsites (minor improvements to occur in 2024). A managed forest plan will be completed in 2024.



Park Operations at MMNHL & Yellow Thunder Memorial

Funding was budgeted for park operations at Man Mound National Historic Landmark (MMNHL) and Yellow Thunder Memorial. Regular, scheduled maintenance has been completed such as repair to the merry-go-round, improvements to the parking lot and tree removal.

GREAT SAUK STATE TRAIL

509

Annual passes sold

96

Daily passes sold

361

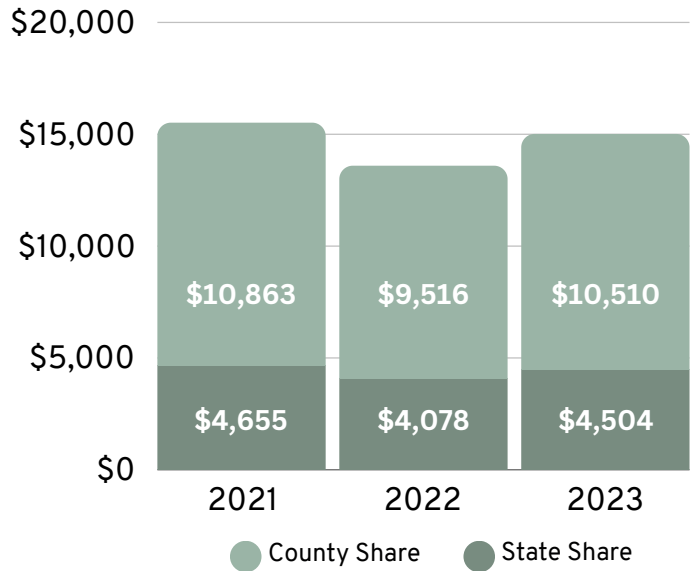
Self-registration passes sold

The Great Sauk State Trail was extended in 2023, with a connection from the end of the trail to Goette Road. Sauk County Highway Department completed the work, with plans to officially open the trail to Goette Road in 2024.

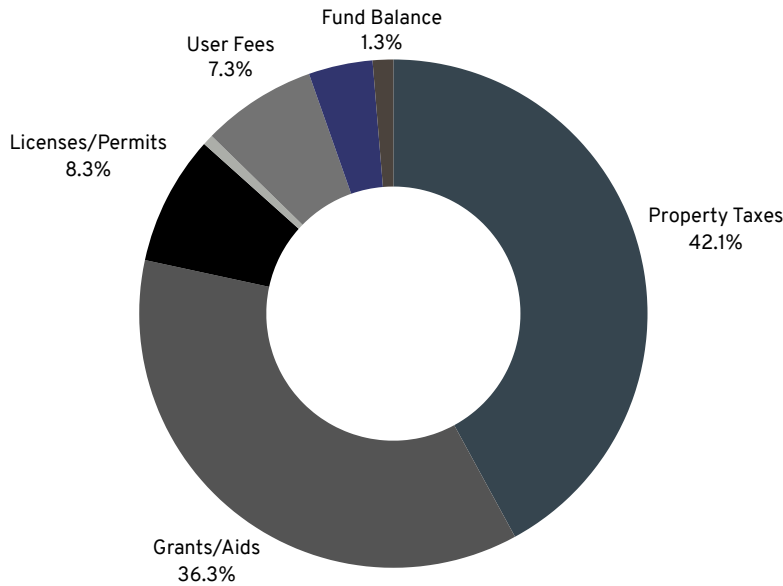
Planning and design continued for the Wisconsin River Recreational Bridge, with \$1,000,000 awarded from the Wisconsin DNR for snowmobile access on the bridge.

Work continued on the corridor plan to Reedsburg and retaining wall repair. Regular maintenance was completed throughout the year with \$6,543 in expenses.

State Trail Pass Revenue



2023 FINANCIAL & OPERATING STATEMENT



Revenues

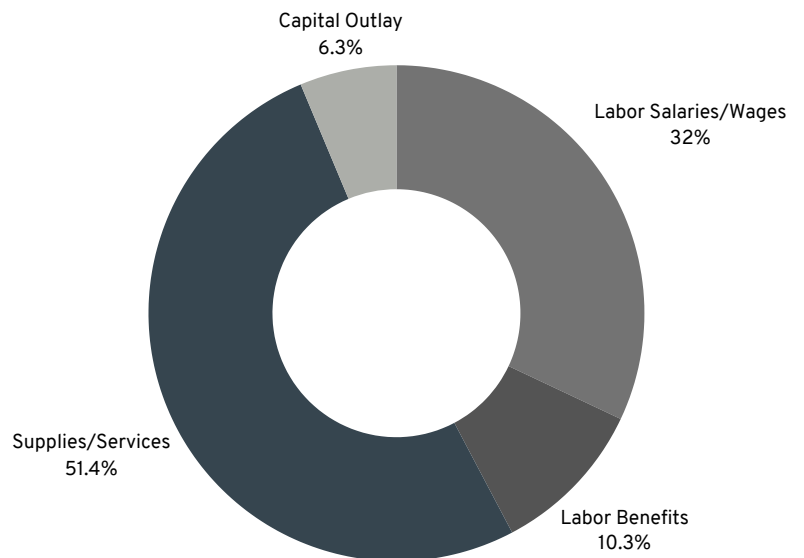
The Land Resources and Environment budget relies mainly on property taxes, fund balance, and grants/aids; as revenue sources for the department.

In recent years, the amount of user fees which include permit fees as well as park entrance and camping fees have seen an increase over prior years.

Expenses

On the expense side, much of the departments' expenses are in personnel costs (salaries/benefits). However, the department staff are what enable us to provide quality services and programs to the people of Sauk County. Supplies and services for the programs that we administer also constitute a large portion of expenditures.

While the department has ventured into more capital projects in recent years, the expenditure amount is around 6% of the budget. This can be attributed to large scale projects taking multiple years to construct.



Revenues and expenses summarized are those processed as of January 26, 2024.

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goal: Develop long and short range plans to guide growth and development in unincorporated areas and to promote healthy and sustainable communities as well as implement ordinances, policies, and programs consistent with proposed and adopted plans.

Measures: Outcomes are measured by meeting specific project or implementation objectives.

Objectives - Specific Projects	Was this objective reached in 2023?
Complete a comprehensive revision of the County Land Division and Subdivision Regulations Ordinance (Chapter 22).	Extend to 2024
Complete updates to Chapter 7 Zoning Ordinance.	Ongoing
Provide planning assistance to the Great Sauk Trail to Devils Lake, Baraboo-Reedsburg, and the bridge from Dane County to Sauk County to connect to the Walking Iron Trail.	Ongoing
Direct the Sauk County Comprehensive Planning Process.	Extend to 2024
Implement the Land Resources and Environment Strategic Plan.	Ongoing
Provide planning assistance to the Baraboo River Corridor Plan and assist with implementation.	Ongoing
Initiate updates to the Farmland Preservation Plan	Ongoing
Implement the White Mound Park Master Plan	Ongoing
Implementation of the Sauk County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.	Ongoing
Develop Hemlock Park Master Plan.	Extend to 2024

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goal: Enhance and protect Sauk County's natural environment, open space areas, and agricultural lands.

Measures: Align County and Department ordinances, policies, and plans that encourage the protection of agricultural and environmental resources as well as environmental corridors and open spaces. Management and mitigation of threats to agricultural and natural resources in the County. Educate County youth and adults on the importance of maintaining our County's natural resources.

Objectives - Specific Projects	Was this objective reached in 2023?
Implement Chapter 26.	Ongoing
Implement and assess proposed changes to County's Clean Sweep Program and Ag Plastics, to include the contract with Dane County HHW for the voucher program.	Ongoing
Implement parks and recreation programming and events.	Ongoing
Update and implement Chapter 10 County Parks, to include a Special Events policy.	Extend to 2024
Continue Nitrogen Use Efficiency Program in collaboration with Discovery Farms.	Completed 12/31/2022

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goal: Disseminate information through a variety of avenues in order to assist community leaders and the general public.

Measures: Increase the number of e-government services and transactions. Increase opportunities for dialogue and information exchanges between elected/appointed officials, contractor's and other groups that work closely with the Department. Increase collaboration, coordination, and partnerships throughout the County. Increase revenues to the park system. Increase the number of participants in department events/programs and patrons.

Objectives - Specific Projects	Was this objective reached in 2023?
Implementation of the Master Plan for the County Farm.	Ongoing
Provide training opportunities for the LRE Committee members to ensure a better understanding of Department operations, programs, and ordinance implementation.	Extend to 2024
Work with the MIS Department to update and organize the Department website.	Ongoing
Create promotional and marketing materials to encourage park usage and highlight historic, environmental and cultural significance.	Ongoing
Establish a better relationship with towns and coordinate planning and zoning efforts.	Ongoing
Implement a GovDelivery or similar type of program to inform Sauk County residents of upcoming events, programs changes, ordinance amendments, planning processes, etc.	Completed 12/31/2023
Monitor best practices and distribute information about Departmental resources, programs, and public educational activities through various media outlets, newsletters, workshops, and the internet.	Ongoing

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goal: Improve department and program operational efficiency as well as improve maintenance efforts.

Measures: Outcomes are measured by meeting specific project objectives and statutory requirements.

Objectives - Specific Projects	Was this objective reached in 2023?
Implement a capital improvement plan and maintenance schedule, which include results from the ADA Audit and Transition Plan as well as other property master plans.	Extend to 2024
Prepare, update, and monitor EAP and IOM for County owned dams, as needed.	Ongoing
Process map department policies and procedures to identify inconsistencies and inefficiencies; address as needed.	Ongoing
Create a department policy and procedure manual.	Extend to 2024
Review department programs and operations to determine level of service requirements and potential future changes.	Ongoing

2023 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goal: Implement programs focused on water quality improvement.

Measures: Implementation of strategies and programs to ensure reliable water sources, both in quality and quantity. Pursue funding mechanisms that may assist in implementation.

Objectives - Specific Projects	Was this objective reached in 2023?
Implement Sauk County's Groundwater Initiative in cooperation with UWEX, Public Health, and UW-Stevens Point.	Ongoing
Expand water quality monitoring program in area rivers and streams to identify resource needs.	Ongoing
Provide technical assistance to lake associations with water quality issues.	Ongoing
Install water quality improvement projects through Land and Water Resource Management, Baraboo River RCPP and other grant programs.	Ongoing
Review department programs and operations to determine level of service requirements and potential future changes.	Ongoing



2024 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

01

Develop long and short range plans to guide growth and development in unincorporated areas and to promote healthy and suitable communities as well as implement ordinances, policies, and programs consistent with proposed and adopted plans.

- Complete a comprehensive revision of the County Land Division and Subdivision Regulations Ordinance (Chapter 22)
- Complete updates to Chapter 7 Zoning Ordinance.
- Provide planning assistance to the Great Sauk Trail to Devils Lake, Baraboo-Reedsburg, and the bridge from Dane County to Sauk County to connect to the Walking Iron Trail.
- Direct the Sauk County Comprehensive Planning Process.
- Implement the Land Resources and Environment Strategic Plan.
- Provide planning assistance to the Baraboo River Corridor Plan and assist with implementation.
- Initiate updates to the Farmland Preservation Plan
- Implement the White Mound Park Master Plan
- Implementation of the Sauk County Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- Develop Hemlock Park Master Plan.

02

Enhance and protect Sauk County's natural environment, open space areas, and agricultural lands.

- Implement Chapter 26.
- Implement and assess proposed changes to County's Clean Sweep Program and Ag Plastics, to include the contract with Dane County HHW for the voucher program.
- Implement parks and recreation programming and events.
- Update and implement park policies and procedures, to include a Special Events policy.
- Implementation of the Master Plan for the County Farm.

2024 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

03

Disseminate information through a variety of avenues in order to assist community leaders and the general public.

- Define and implement outreach and education strategies to inform the County Board of Department programs and performance metrics.
- Provide training opportunities for the LRE Committee members to ensure a better understanding of Department operations, programs, and ordinance implementation.
- Work with Department staff and the MIS Department to update and organize the department website.
- Create promotional and marketing materials to encourage park usage and highlight historic, environmental and cultural significance.
- Establish a better relationship with towns and coordinate planning and zoning efforts.
- Continue implementation of MailChimp to inform Sauk County residents of upcoming events, programs changes, ordinance amendments, planning processes, etc.
- Monitor best practices and distribute information about Departmental resources, programs, and public educational activities through various media outlets, newsletters, workshops, and the internet.

04

Improve department and program operational efficiency as well as improve maintenance efforts.

- Implement a capital improvement plan and maintenance schedule, which include results from the ADA Audit and Transition Plan as well as other property master plans.
- Prepare, update, and monitor EAP and IOM for County owned dams, as needed.
- Process map department policies and procedures to identify inconsistencies and inefficiencies; address as needed.
- Continue record retention efforts. Organize record storage areas.
- Create a department policy and procedure manual.
- Review department programs and operations to determine level of service requirements and potential future changes.

2024 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

05

Implement programs focused on water quality improvement.

- Implement Sauk County's Groundwater Initiative in cooperation with UWEX, Public Health, and UW-Stevens Point.
- Expand water quality monitoring program in area rivers and streams to identify resource needs.
- Provide technical assistance to lake associations with water quality issues.
- Install water quality improvement projects through Land and Water Resource Management, MDV, and other grant programs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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