City of Merrill
Outdoor Recreation Plan

2013-2018

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

This Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP) was prepared pursuant to Wisconsin Statute §23.30 Outdoor Recreation Program. This section serves "to promote, encourage, coordinate, and implement a comprehensive long-range plan to acquire, maintain, and develop for public use, those areas of the state best adapted to the development of a comprehensive system of state and local outdoor recreation facilities and services..."

Submission of this adopted ORP to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources establishes eligibility for the local unit of government to apply for a variety of Federal and State Aids for outdoor recreation (Chapter NR 50.06(4), Wisconsin administrative code).

A. PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this outdoor recreation plan is to provide continued direction toward meeting the current and future recreation needs of the City of Merrill.

Adoption of this plan by the City of Merrill Council and subsequent acceptance by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) will continue the City's eligibility for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), and Stewardship Fund money.

Non-profit groups, foundations, and the general public may also use this document to coordinate their own private efforts for developing outdoor recreation facilities.

This plan is organized by:

1. Reviewing other plans and laws that affect outdoor recreation (Chapter 1);
2. Describing the City demographics (Chapter 2);
3. Inventorying what park facilities exist within the City (Chapter 3);
4. Asking the public about their needs for outdoor recreation (Chapters 4 & 5); &
5. Recommendations are made to satisfy identified needs (Chapter 6).

B. PROVISIONS FOR UPDATING PLAN

Plan amendments are common and should be considered part of the planning process. They frequently represent good implementation or plan usage and should be acceptable for consideration by local decision makers. Amendments must follow the same process as the original plan and generally prolong the effectiveness of the plan.

Establishing a plan amendment at least every five years will assure that the plan reflects changes in the recreational needs of the City, and will maintain the City's eligibility for grant programs.

C. REFERENCE PLANS & LAWS

Merrill is "The City of Parks," and has been involved with recreation planning since 1974 when a park plan was compiled and written by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. In 1977 the City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan was prepared by Vandewalle and Associates. The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) has prepared the Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan since 2002.

Each plan and law listed below affects outdoor recreation in the City of Merrill:

Complete Streets Law

Wisconsin's Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodations law addressing Complete Streets was codified in 2009. It was incorporated as State statute §84.01(35) and later into administrative rule as Transportation 75.

Complete Streets are roadways designed and operated to enable safe, convenient, and comfortable access and travel for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transport users of all ages and abilities are able to safely and comfortably move along and across a complete street.

All roads receiving state or federal funding through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation must also accommodate bicycles and pedestrians per this law. Local governments may pass their own Complete Streets ordinances to cover their own road networks. Specific guidelines related to traffic counts, and if the road is urban or rural, are used in these ordinances to determine whether a sidewalk, path, or lane is needed to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians.

State Trails Network Plan

This 2001 document clarifies the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) role and strategy in the provision of all types of trails. The plan identifies a series of potential trail corridors that would link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. This statewide network of interconnected trails would be owned and maintained by municipalities, private entities, and partnerships of the two. Preserving transportation corridors, such as old rail lines, is specifically discussed as a very important strategy in the creation of recreational and alternative transportation corridors.

One Segment affects Merrill:

<u>Segment 18 – Tomahawk to Wisconsin Dells</u>

From the end of the Bearskin/Hiawatha Trail in Tomahawk, this corridor would go south to Merrill, and then into the West Central Region terminating in Wisconsin Dells. Part of State Highway 107 has wide shoulders to accommodate bicycles and was identified in the *Wisconsin Bicycle Transportation Plan 2020*. When the remaining section of highway is reconstructed, wide shoulders will be included. Going south, this corridor links to Wausau, where it could link up to Mountain Bay Trail from there by road corridors.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2005-2010

Completed in August 2006, and reauthorized to remain in effect through 2016, this plan attempts to classify, measure, and ultimately provide for the preferences and needs of a statewide recreating public. Many factors, from changing demographic and land use trends, to recreational supply, and conflict with other recreation uses, affect the quality, supply, and demand for outdoor recreation.

This plan is summarized in Attachment B, and is what the State will use to determine where to approve grants.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2011-2016

Every five years, the Wisconsin DNR publishes a SCORP as required by the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965. At its core, this SCORP is used to help allocate federal funds equitably among local communities, but the document also transcends many levels of outdoor recreation discussion and policy. At the national level, this SCORP recognizes the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative, which is based on the idea that the protection of the country's natural heritage is a non-partisan objective shared by all Americans. The AGO encourages state and local communities to develop local conservation and recreation initiatives.

This document shows a clear vision of how preserving and improving recreation opportunities in Wisconsin fits within a broader national initiative of conservation and recreation.

A summary of this SCORP is in Attachment B.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle Facilities Network Plan, 2004

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission created this document to guide the development of an interconnected bikeway system for the North Central Wisconsin Region at the county level. Potential trails are identified and an improvement description was created for each county that trails exist in to facilitate implementation.

The routes for Merrill are part of a countywide loop that passes through Merrill from the west on STH 107, then continues east through the city on STH 64, and leaves Merrill on the east by traveling north on CTH G.

Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan, 2012-2032

This county plan updates the previous plan's demographics. Any recommendations that relate to outdoor recreation are inserted into the public participation part of Chapter 4.

City of Merrill Comprehensive Plan, 2010-2030

This plan was created according to Wisconsin planning law (s.66.1001 Wis. Stats.), and therefore allows Merrill to continue zoning their community to protect all land owners. each The City contracted with NCWRPC to assist with creating this plan. All maps show a sample of the land surrounding Merrill (exterritorial zoning area). A summary of this plan's issues relating to outdoor recreation were inserted into the public participation documentation in Chapter 4.

Wisconsin Land Legacy Report 2006-2056

This report is a comprehensive inventory of the special places that will be critical to meet future conservation and outdoor recreation needs for the next fifty years. Some of the questions asked to guide creation of this report were: Which lands and waters remain unprotected that will be critical for conserving our plants and animals and their habitats? What gaps exist now (and will likely emerge in the future) in providing abundant and satisfying outdoor recreation? How can we most effectively build upon the state's existing investment in protected lands to fill conservation and recreation gaps? What special places will our children and grandchildren wish we had protected? The study focused on identifying what of our state or regionally significant green infrastructure remains to be protected. These Land Legacy Areas are shown on MAP 1.

The report recommends protection of these lands by using federal, state, and local funding opportunities; along with possibly creating new kinds of incentives for landowners, working to draft comprehensive plans, or offering different types of technical assistance.

Recreation prioritization of Land Legacy Areas is described in SCORP's Chapter 3. Each Legacy Area near Merrill is summarized below with 5 stars representing the highest level for that category:

PR Prairie River

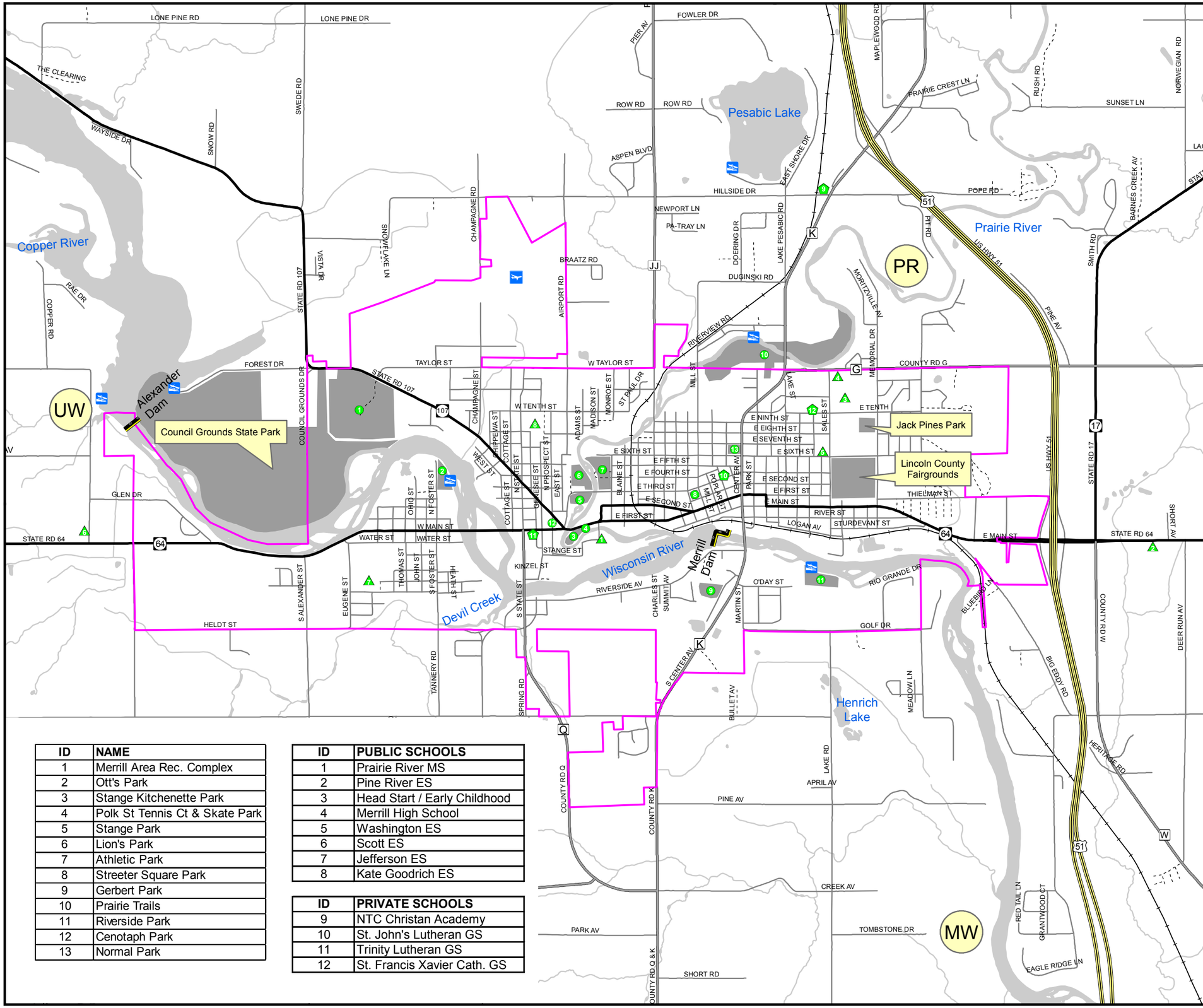
Size	Medium
Protection Initiated	Moderate
Protection Remaining	Substantial
Conservation Significance	☆☆☆☆
Recreation Potential	☆☆☆

UW Upper Wisconsin River

Size	Large
Protection Initiated	Moderate
Protection Remaining	Moderate
Conservation Significance	☆☆☆
Recreation Potential	☆☆☆

MW Middle Wisconsin River

Size	Large
Protection Initiated	Limited
Protection Remaining	Substantial
Conservation Significance	☆☆☆
Recreation Potential	☆☆☆☆



ID	NAME
1	Merrill Area Rec. Complex
2	Ott's Park
3	Stange Kitchenette Park
4	Polk St Tennis Ct & Skate Park
5	Stange Park
6	Lion's Park
7	Athletic Park
8	Streeter Square Park
9	Gerbert Park
10	Prairie Trails
11	Riverside Park
12	Cenotaph Park
13	Normal Park

ID	PUBLIC SCHOOLS
1	Prairie River MS
2	Pine River ES
3	Head Start / Early Childhood
4	Merrill High School
5	Washington ES
6	Scott ES
7	Jefferson ES
8	Kate Goodrich ES

ID	PRIVATE SCHOOLS
9	NTC Christan Academy
10	St. John's Lutheran GS
11	Trinity Lutheran GS
12	St. Francis Xavier Cath. GS

Map 1

Existing Parks

City of Merrill

- Minor Civil Divisions
- US Highways
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private / Other
- Railroad
- Water
- Private Schools
- Public Schools
- Airport
- Boat Launch
- Parks

State & County Parks

Wisconsin Land Legacy Areas

- UW Upper Wisconsin River
- MW Middle Wisconsin River
- PR Prairie River

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. NCWRPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.

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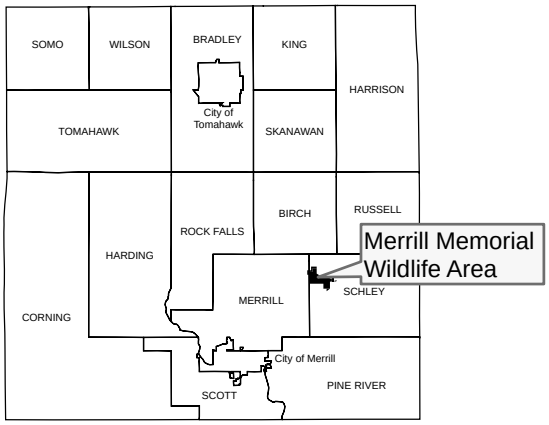
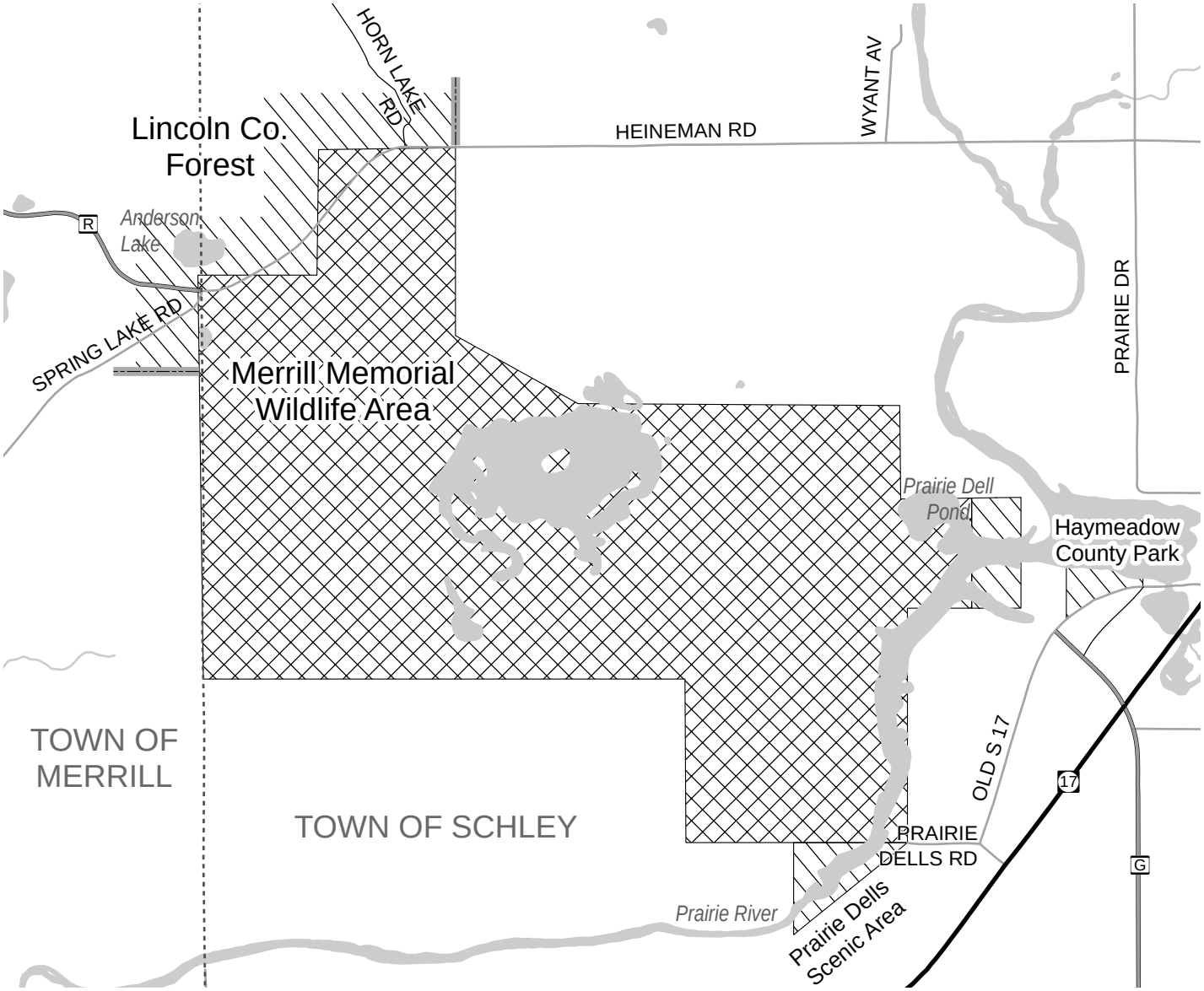
Map 2

Merrill Memorial Wildlife Area





- Minor Civil Divisions
- US & State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private / Other
- Water
- Merrill Memorial Wildlife Area
- County Land

N

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Source: WI DNR, Lincoln Co & NCWRPC

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Chapter 2
BACKGROUND OF MERRILL

A. INTRODUCTION

This section provides a basic feel for what the City of Merrill looks like physically, demographically, and economically. Potential opportunities and limitations start with understanding an area.

The history of Merrill as a Euro-American community began in 1847 when a dam was constructed on the Wisconsin River where a mill was established. By 2010, Merrill's Census recorded population was 9,661.

On April 10, 2011, the west side of Merrill was hit with an F3 tornado. Council Grounds State Park, the MARC, and the Smith Center are recreational facilities that were directly hit by the tornado and substantially damaged.

B. LAND USE

Merrill is located at the confluence of the Wisconsin and Prairie Rivers. The Wisconsin River dominates the surface water hydrology of the area with numerous streams flowing into it. Wetlands lie to the north of the city and a variety of terrains are found throughout the area, from steep slopes to flat plains.

The two rivers divide the city into three distinct areas, one is south of the Wisconsin River, while the other two areas are north of the Wisconsin River, and are east and west of the Prairie River.

The city is about 7.5 square miles running roughly three miles east to west and about one mile north to south. Commercial development is stretched along State Highway 64 from the U.S. Highway 51 interchange to the west side of the city. There are numerous publicly owned parcels scattered throughout the city for schools, parks, county offices, city hall, library, and other community facilities. Industrial uses are concentrated along the railroad tracks that parallel the Wisconsin River, and the industrial park by the airport on the west side of Merrill. Scattered industrial properties exist among houses throughout the city.

There are about 5,020 acres of land within the city. As of 2005, about 28.2% of land was residential; 19.4% was woodlands, which includes some parks; 12% was governmental, which includes schools; 5.1% outdoor recreation, which also includes some parks; 7.6% was listed as open lands, most of which is in an area on the east side of Merrill that may become industrial and housing.

C. DEMOGRAPHICS

From 2005 to 2010, Merrill and two of three surrounding towns all shrank in population, with the Town of Scott gaining people over that time, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Area Population

Local Government	2005	2010	2005-2010 Change	2005-2010 % Change
City of Merrill	10,148	9,661	-487	-4.8
Town of Merrill	3,099	2,980	-119	-3.8
Town of Pine River	1,965	1,869	-96	-4.9
Town of Scott	1,372	1,432	60	4.4

Source: WI DOA, 2010 U.S. Census, & NCWRPC

In 2000, Merrill's Census population was 10,146. By 2010, the Census reported that Merrill's population decreased by 4.8% to 9,661 residents. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) has not released their projections that use the 2010 Census, so NCWRPC created 5-year projections that decreased the city's population 2.4% every 5 years, as shown in Table 2.

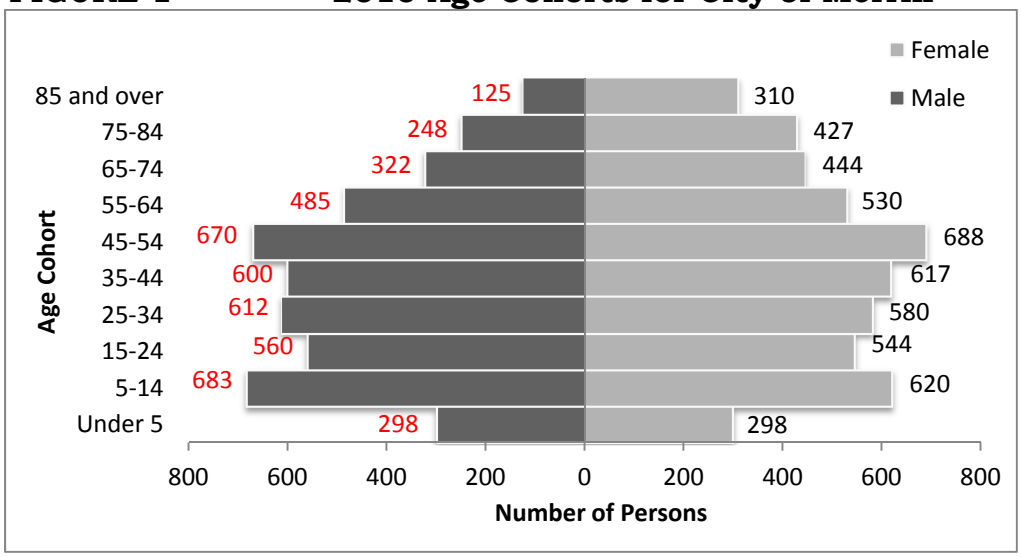
Table 2: Merrill Population Projections

2000 Census	2010 Census	2015 Projections	2020 Projections	2025 Projections	2030 Projections	2035 Projections
10,146	9,661	9,429	9,202	8,982	8,766	8,556

Source: U.S. Census, & NCWRPC

The City of Merrill's population shows a young and middle aged profile. Figure 1 is Merrill's population pyramid that was created with 2010 U.S. Census data. Sixty percent of households in Merrill are families, of which 27.7 percent have children under 18 years old.

FIGURE 1 2010 Age Cohorts for City of Merrill



Source: 2010 U.S. Census SF1

Demographic Trends

Table 3 shows a comparison between Merrill's last two U.S. Census counts. Fewer children under 5 years old, and fewer people over 65 years old live in Merrill. The amount of high school graduates has increased, but the amount of college graduates has declined as a percentage of the total population.

Table 3: Merrill's Quick Demographics

	2000 Census	2010 Census
Population	10,146	9,661
Persons under 5 years	657	596
Persons under 18 years	2,309	2,418
Persons 65 years and over	1,999	1,181
Female persons	52.7%	52.4%
White persons (not Hispanic)	97.8%	97.5%
Black persons	0.2%	1.0%
American Indian persons	0.5%	0.9%
Asian persons	0.4%	0.8%
Hispanic or Latino persons	1.0%	2.0%
High school graduates or higher	78.8%	86.1%
Bachelor's degree or higher	14.2%	13.2%
Housing units	4,397	4,619
Average household size	2.34	1.98
Median household income [ACS]	$33,098	$39,783
Persons below poverty level	9.5%	12.4%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000, 2010, & American Community Survey (ACS) 2006-2010

D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The following strengths and weaknesses relate to attracting and retaining business and industry to Merrill from their 2007 Comprehensive Plan.

Strengths

Economic Resources

- Reasonable Cost of Living; Excellent Health Care Services; Tourism Potential; Lower Wage Rates; Adequate Utilities; Wide range of Prices on Land and Buildings.

Infrastructure

- Available Business and Industrial Space; Capacity of Infrastructure for Growth; Necessary utilities, services, and telecommunications; Proximity to Highway 51.

Human Resources

- Available Labor; Quality Schools / Commitment to Education; Strong Work Ethic of Labor Force; High Level of Interest in Economic Development; Safe

Community; Good Business & Education Partnerships.

Natural Resources

- Abundant area Natural Resources; Four Season Climate; Excellent Recreation Opportunities (e.g. State Park, and MARC); Good Water and Air Quality.

Other

- Overall good Quality of Life; Proximity to Wausau.

Weaknesses

Economic Resources

- Lack of Financing (e.g. venture capital, or angel investors); Need for Better Coordination and Cooperation; Economic Assistance from State is Low (compared to other areas); High Property Taxes; Location to Major Markets; Lack of Promotion for the "North;" Lack of Broad-Based Economic Development; Marketing Programs for the Region; Lack of Community Preparedness; Decline of Manufacturing Sector; Slow Decision making by State and Local Governments.

Infrastructure

- Transportation Limitations Imposed by Interstate System Access; Adequate, but lagging in local telecommunications; City Regulations (e.g. zoning, wellhead & sewer service area).

Human resources

- Lack of Public Education Towards Economic Development; Difficulty retaining young workers; Lack of local training programs; Concerns of skill level of entry-level labor; Limited partnerships between business and education.

Other

- Proximity to Wausau

Chapter 3
EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES

A. PARKS and CONSERVANCY CLASSIFICATIONS

The following descriptions of each park type are from SCORP 2005-2010. Linear Parks are trails that may have various lengths.

Mini Parks: Generally less than 5 acres, these parks are special areas that serve a concentrated or limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens. One prominent feature or recreation facility like a playground may be present as the purpose of this park. The service area for this park generally is a ½ mile radius, and a population of 2,000-3,000 people.

Neighborhood Parks: Centrally located spaces of 5 to 25 acres that serve as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood are good neighborhood parks. Active and passive recreational activities in this park classification include field, court, and ball games; skating; crafts; and picnicking. Facilities may also include a playground, wading pool, ball field, multi-activity field, ball diamond, tennis courts, skatepark, and shelter. Trees, open fields, and undeveloped natural areas are also desirable components of neighborhood parks. The service area for this park generally is a 1 mile radius, and a population of 2,000-5,000 people.

Community Parks: Usually more than 25 acres in size, these parks serve entire communities, and are located adjacent to a collector street to provide community-wide vehicular access. The purposes of this park are to meet the recreational needs of several neighborhoods, as well as to preserve unique landscapes and open spaces. These parks allow for group activities not feasible at the neighborhood level. All of the facilities of a neighborhood park may exist, along with nature trails and scenic areas.

Special Use Areas: These areas are for single purpose recreational activities that often are designed as revenue generating enterprises such as for baseball, golf, nature centers, arboreta, formal gardens, gun ranges, festivals, ski areas, or areas that preserve and maintain cultural or archeological sites.

County Parks: County parks consist of 100 acres or more that are specifically set aside for active and passive recreation uses to accommodate large gatherings, special events, and individual users. These parks have scenic natural features that preserve the character of the region and provide a wide variety of compatible outdoor recreation activities; and may also provide areas for camping, historic preservation, protection of natural areas, and special use areas.

Conservancy Areas: Conservancy areas are managed for the flora & fauna resources that exist at a site. Activities like hiking, wildlife watching, hunting, and fishing may be allowed on these lands that may have labels like state natural areas, forests, or wildlife refuges. Each conservancy area has specific rules of use for public enjoyment.

B. PARK FACILITIES IN MERRILL

The Merrill area park and recreation system consists of approximately 822 total acres within the city and exterritorial boundary (1.5 mile buffer) around the city. This does not include snowmobile trails. The City of Merrill owns and maintains about 281 acres of parkland plus an additional 920 acres of wildlife area about 6 miles outside of Merrill, for a total of 1,201 acres. Public and private school playgrounds consist of 23.5 acres. Merrill High School has 12 acres. County owned outdoor recreation consist of the county fairgrounds. State owned outdoor recreation in the Merrill area consists of the 503 acres of Council Grounds State Park. All parks are shown on Maps 1 & 2.

Outdoor recreation in the City of Merrill includes trails (linear parks); 13 city parks of different classifications; the county fairgrounds; 8 public and private school facilities that serve local recreation needs; and one state park.

Linear Parks

Water Trails – A water trail is a network of access points, resting places, and attractions for users of water craft on lakes and rivers. This website can help with creating a trail: (http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexlakes/publications/watertrails/). Parts of the Wisconsin River and all of the Prairie River are available to canoe on. Portages have been established on the Wisconsin River to get around the Alexander and Merrill dams. All navigable water is available to canoe on. There are 3 public water access points within the Merrill area, and shown on MAP 1.

Snowmobile Trails – Lincoln County has approximately 305 miles of designated snowmobile trails that are part of the State snowmobile aid program, along with approximately 100 miles of club trails. About 196 miles of these snowmobile trails are also winter ATV trails. These trails pass through Merrill on non-permanent easements.

Mini Parks

Each listing with a **bold title** represents a park available to the public. Listings with *italic titles* represent park like facilities at schools that may be available after school hours. See "Mini Parks" definition on page 10.

Polk Street Tennis Court & Skate Park: This one acre park is located along the Prairie River just east of Stange Kitchenette Park. The park contains a lighted tennis court and lighted skate park. This park has seen a heavy increase in usage since the completion of the skate park. Skaters of all ages come to the park at many hours of the day. Some recommendations would include better crosswalks to/from the park, permanent vandal proof tables and garbage receptacles. The skate park has impacted usage of the tennis court that shares it's space, but I would not recommend at this time to expand the skate park or eliminate the tennis court.

The following ***public schools*** have outdoor recreation facilities that are available to the public outside of school hours:

Prairie River Middle School – A 0.5-acre swimming pool exists at this public school, located in the southwest part of Merrill.

Jefferson Elementary School – A 5-acre open space with playground exists at this public school, which is located in the southwest part of Merrill.

Washington Elementary School – A 3-acre open space with playground exists at this public school, which is located on the city's east side.

Kate Goodrich Elementary School – A 5-acre open space with playground exists at this public school, which is located on the city's north side.

The following ***private schools*** have outdoor recreation facilities that may be available to the public outside of school hours:

St. John's Lutheran Elementary School (K-8) – A 0.5-acre play area exists at this private school, which is located in the central city.

St. Francis Xavier Catholic Elementary School (K-8) – A 4-acre playground exists at this private school, which is located in the northeast area of Merrill.

Trinity Lutheran Elementary School (K-8) – A 5-acre open space with playground exists at this private school, which is located on the city's west side.

NTC Christian Academy (K-12) – A 0.5-acre play area exists at this private school, which is located about 2 miles north of downtown at the intersection of Business Hwy 51 and Hillside Drive.

Neighborhood Parks

See "Neighborhood Parks" definition on page 10.

Normal Park: This two acre park is located north of downtown. It contains an outdoor ice skating rink with warming shelter, picnic areas, and a youth baseball/softball field. In 2011 the Bauman Family Memorial Gazebo and walkway were added. In 2010 this park was transferred from county to city ownership.

Ott's Park: This nine acre park is located on the west side of the City along the Wisconsin River. This park has a children's playground, a softball field, boat landing, picnic areas, volleyball courts, tennis courts, horseshoe pits, picnic shelter with electric and water service. This park is used mainly by local softball associations and organizations for league play, along with shelter reservations, the park is also used consistently for its boat landing and water frontage for fishing, and swimming. The ball field is in need of some improvements, including new concession stand and announcers booth. In 2012 new ADA accessible restrooms and new concession stand were constructed.

Riverside Park: This 22 acre park is located in the southeast portion of the City along the Wisconsin River. This park features a boat landing and boarding dock

(redone in 2011-2012), picnic areas, sand volleyball court, horseshoes, a playground (ADA accessible in 2011-2012), restroom facilities (new ADA in 2011-2012), a picnic shelter with water and electric service, and a 9-hole Disc Golf Course. The park is very heavily utilized by "drop in" visitors for disc golfing, using the boat landing, walking/hiking/wildlife observation, fishing, professional photographs, weddings, and family functions at the shelter. This park is one of the most scenic in our system and does need some improvements. The trail system that leads into and out of the park behind the T.B. Scott Mansion is very historic and in great need of repair.

Streeter Square Park: Streeter Square is a two acre park located to the immediate north of downtown. It contains a playground, basketball court, and youth baseball field. This park is used mainly as a quiet spot to eat lunch, play on the playground, and shoot hoops. The ball field has been used more in the past few years by the young age groups for a coach pitch league. The only recommendations that I would have would be to make some improvements on the baseball field but they only need to be minimal.

Lion's Park, Stange Park, and Stange Kitchenette Park all have neighborhood park amenities, but also have community park amenities. Each park is described under community parks, because of a feature in each park that is more of a community attraction. Lion's Park's community features are its 5 little league baseball fields. Stange Park's community features are its 2 pools, which closed permanently after the 2012 season. Stange Kitchenette Park's community feature is the kitchenette.

Community Parks

Each listing with a **bold title** represents a park available to the public. Listings with *italic titles* represent park like facilities at schools that may be available after school hours. See "Community Parks" definition on page 10.

Lion's Park: Lion's Park is a 13 acre park located in the center of town along the Prairie River. The park consists of 5 little league baseball fields that are used very heavily from the first weeks in April through August. The park is used very heavily by the Prairie River Middle School for Physical Education Classes as well as their football team for practices. In the winter months, the park has an outdoor ice rink and the existing building is used as a warming shelter and restrooms. This park is very heavily utilized year round and there is no room for expansion. This park is in need of some upgrades to the ball field playing conditions as well as the amenities. The restroom area is not universally accessible and the fields are in need of improvements.

Stange Park: Stange Park is an 11.6 acre park in the central portion of town along the Prairie River. The park includes an outdoor swimming pool and wading pool (both permanently closed after 2012 season), tennis courts, a basketball court, playground equipment, restrooms, picnic shelter with electric and water service, walking bridges over the lagoons. This park is also used very heavily by the general public for swimming, basketball, tennis, shelter reservations, fishing, walking, and general daytime visits. The park is very popular for "stop in" traffic at lunch or playing on the equipment for the toddlers.

Stange Kitchenette Park: This six acre park is located just south of Stange Park along the Prairie River. It contains a kitchen shelter with electricity and water service, universally accessible restroom facilities, a playground (new in 2011), horseshoe pits, and a sand volleyball court. Kitchenette Park is our most heavily reserved park within our system. The park reserved at least 3-4 times per week for the entire season and could use some improvements.

Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC): This complex covers 96 acres and is located on the west side of the City, north of the Wisconsin River. The MARC as it is referred to, includes four youth softball/baseball fields, an announcer's booth/score booth, two multi-purpose baseball/softball fields, and one baseball field. Concessions and restrooms exist by the varsity soccer fields as of 2008. All of the ball fields have covered dugouts. The park also includes three soccer fields, two sand volleyball courts, 2.5 miles of multi-purpose walking/hiking/biking trails that connect to Council Grounds State Park, outdoor concession stand/restroom, outdoor hockey rink, and the Smith Multi-Purpose Center which houses an indoor ice rink, a multi-purpose community room, a concession stand, locker rooms, weight room. The MARC has evolved over the years to host many different indoor and outdoor events and activities. Some improvements that would help in the future would be, expansion of the walking trails, more tree plantings, lights to at least one youth and one adult ball fields, restroom facilities near the adult baseball fields, in ground irrigation to more of the athletic fields, improved children's play area, basketball courts, and a picnic shelter with water and electrical service for reservation. Connecting the MARC trails with the adjacent Council Grounds State Park is a simple connection to make. Also connecting these trails with the yet to be developed river trail to downtown would open up additional recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Merrill High School has 12 acres of outdoor recreational facilities located in the northeast area of the City. There are 3 soccer fields, one softball field, one baseball field, and a varsity football field and track.

Special Use Areas

See "Special Use Area" definition on page 10.

Cenotaph Park: This is a 0.3 acre memorial park dedicated to veterans.

Athletic Park: This five acre athletic facility contains a baseball field, announcers booth, concession stand, newly constructed universally accessible restroom facilities, lights, in ground irrigation, new dugouts, and a batting cage. This park has seen a considerable amount of improvements within the past 3 years. The park is used solely for baseball games, older youth leagues, through adult league games. The park has been improved to the point where it will begin to host large scale tournaments.

Jack Pines County Park: This 11 acre county owned park is located in the northeast portion of the City across from the Fairgrounds. Development of the County Annex building in 2008 used 9 acres of the original 20 acres of land. The City of Merrill

operates an outdoor ice skating rink and warming shelter on the very southeast corner of the property. Most of this site is undeveloped woodlands.

Lincoln County Fairgrounds: The fairgrounds are a 26 acre facility located in Merrill. Existing facilities include three restrooms (two of them are ADA compliant); a livestock barn with 5 wings for cattle, horses, pigs, and sheep; a poultry and rabbit exhibition building; 3 exhibition structures for displays; a historical school house; and an office building. This facility is maintained by Lincoln County Maintenance Department.

State Park

Council Grounds State Park consists of 503 acres and is located on the west side of Merrill. Facilities include a 55 site campground with restrooms, showers, swimming beach, picnic areas, shelter house, boat access, shelter buildings, and a physical fitness trail. **Krueger Pines State Natural Area** (21 acres) is located in the southeast corner of Council Grounds State Park.

Conservancy Areas

Gebert Park: This 15 acre conservation protection area and wildlife habitat includes nature trails and is located south of the Wisconsin River. This park is very heavily under-utilized and the trail system could use some extensive work. Brush should be cleared back from the trail and it should be resurfaced. This would encourage more walkers/runners/hikers/observers.

Memorial Forest Wildlife Area (Refer to MAP 2): This 920 acre park is located north of the City and includes walking trails, wildlife habitat, and the 80+ acre Don Manthei Wetland Recreation Area. This property is priceless and is used steadily by a select few individuals. Some recommendations for the property should include extensive improvements to the existing trail system, with the addition of more trails. These should be mapped out and provided at a centralized kiosk system to allow for a more interactive experience. The forest should also be more actively managed for forest and wildlife habitat. This would be a perfect site for future cross country fun runs, youth hunting experiences, outdoor education classes, cross country ski courses, and shoe-shoe trails. With its proximity to the Prairie Dells Park future considerations should include connection to this park for a contiguous trail system throughout.

Prairie Trails: Prairie Trails is a newly developed, 99 acre silent recreation park located on the north side of the City along the Prairie River. The park features 2.5 miles of multi-purpose hiking/walking/biking trails, picnic areas, picnic shelter, bridge, 2 – canoe landings, overlook, fishing pier, boardwalk, and interpretive signage. The park has been primarily used for the trail system by walkers and their dogs as well as the Merrill High School for science classes. Future recommendations should include restroom facilities near the shelter and parking lot area to promote longer usage of the park. Areas along the river should be cleared out to allow easier access to fishing. The park is used heavily enough to warrant more extensive trail developments throughout.

Chapter 4
OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

Recreational needs within the city were identified by collecting public input, reviewing past plans, and creating a park Level Of Service assessment.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROJECTS COMPLETED

First we will start with a list of projects from the previous outdoor recreation plan (2008-2013), and note if they were completed or not.

Note: On April 10, 2011, an EF-3 magnitude tornado hit the western part of Merrill. Council Grounds State Park and the MARC were substantially damaged. Reconstruction of existing facilities in the MARC took priority over other facility improvements.

2008 Riverside Restrooms demolition – rebuild to ADA Standards; **Complete**
Basketball Courts at MARC; **Incomplete**
Resurface tennis courts at Ott's Park; **Complete**
Refurbish Stange Park "2-arch" Bridge; **Complete**
Restroom facility by adult baseball fields at MARC; **Incomplete**
Sandblast and repaint Riverside Shelter. **Incomplete**

2009 Ott's Park Restrooms demolition – rebuild to ADA Standards; **will be complete**
Construct restroom facilities at Prairie Trails; **Incomplete**
Begin work on "River Walk" Trail System to follow the Prairie River; **Incomplete**
Lights on 1 adult field and 1 youth field at the MARC; **Incomplete**
Designated bike route through town; **Incomplete**
Riverside Park bridge refurbishment. **Incomplete**

2010 Continue work on "River Walk" Trail System to follow Prairie River; **Incomplete**
Locate and develop site for Dog Park; **will be working on in 2013**
Refurbish Riverside trail system; **Incomplete**
Improvements to Lion's Park Restroom facility – ADA Compliance; **Incomplete but will be working on in 2013**
New Playground equipment at Kitchenette. **Complete**

2011 Construct new swimming pool/aquatic center – in location to be determined **Incomplete**
Continue work on "River Walk" Trail System to follow Prairie River; **Incomplete**
Refurbish Gebert Park Trail System; **Incomplete**
Re-seal/stain Kitchenette Shelter building. **Incomplete**

2012 Improvements/addition to Riverside Park Disc Golf Course (Eric Schalow Disk Golf Course); **Incomplete**
Remove Shingles – steel roof on Kitchenette Shelter Building. **Incomplete will work on in 2013**

2013 Re-stain/seal Kitchenette Restroom building; **Incomplete**
Construct new park maintenance building at location to be determined. **Incomplete**
Upgrade playgrounds citywide for ADA accessibility. **Incomplete**

Investigate creating a new park to relieve use congestion of little league fields at Lion's Park. **Incomplete**

C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Informal Public Input

In the regular course of business, Merrill's Park and Recreation Department staff, members have received public input about the parks. That input and their professional experience with also shape what changes are implemented.

Visioning Sessions

Two visioning sessions were held in the Merrill City Hall to engage the public. More detailed summaries of both sessions are in ATTACHMENT D.

Session #1 – September 5, 2012
Twenty people, including local residents, City of Merrill Parks & Recreation members, the director of the city's Parks & Recreation Department, and a planner from North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning discussed the future of the city's parks and recreation facilities. The conversation was facilitated by Art Lersch, Community Resource Development Educator, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County.

Those items that were discussed the most and by a relatively broad cross section of attendees are in **bold** directly below**.**

- **Build new or upgrade existing bathroom facilities throughout the park system.**
- Improve athletic fields and their amenities such as scoreboards, fencing, etc.
- **Make parks more American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant**.
- Establish a city Public Works Department responsible for handling all park maintenance (e.g. City of Plover).
- **Connect parks with pedestrian and bike trails. Connect these trails to other regional trails (e.g. Bearskin, Hiawatha, Mountain Bay, etc.)**
- **Develop and implement a park marketing plan.**
- Volunteer groups will have adopted sections of parks to maintain/improve, and market. (Volunteers who have ownership, who take pride in the section they are maintaining).
- Create a broader definition of what a park is; includes more varied uses; location in other more non-traditional places such as industrial parks, roughage areas, expanded current playground areas, along rivers, etc.
- All parks should be centers of outdoor educational workshops/events. Facilities should be developed to make this a reality.
- **Improve communication between the city and current/potential volunteer and user groups.** (Note: Many in the audience agree that positive, visionary improvements must begin with this.)
- Parks and Recreation Department will have to be changed; will need more resources, to achieve any of the suggestions.

Session #2 – October 9, 2012

Thirteen people, including local residents, City of Merrill Parks & Recreation members, the director of the city's Parks & Recreation Department, and a planner from North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning attended the second of two visioning sessions. The conversation was facilitated by Art Lersch, Community Resource Development Educator, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County.

Participants prioritized the list of visionary concepts discussed during the first session. They identified the following priorities for the entire park system. The items are in no particular order.

- **Connectivity** (link pedestrian and bike trails.) Trails should become linear parks that will attract people of all ages throughout the year.

- **Build bathroom facilities** that can be used throughout the year. These facilities should be placed near trails/linear parks. Other new facilities should be built at existing parks.

- **Continue to upgrade athletic facilities.** This should always be done with keeping in mind the potential economic impact additional tournaments could have on the city.

- **Improve communication between parks user groups and the city.** Much of the work to develop connections between trails, build bathrooms, etc. cannot take place unless communication amongst stakeholders is improved. Without better communication, the collaborations necessary to make improvements to the entire system will not happen.

- **Increase park and recreation department resources**. Besides taking the lead on creating improvements in the system, additional resources are needed to help the department provide ongoing maintenance to parks that have undergone those improvements.

The group also emphasized that an effective **marketing plan** needs to be developed to attract people to the parks. They also indicated that the **Parks and Recreation Department focus on growing its existing endowment fund**. The department director reminded meeting participants that the fund can and should be used to help finance parks improvements but cannot be utilized for staff salaries/benefits.

The group recognized that these initial discussions form merely a foundation upon which further conversations will take place with the aim of developing a comprehensive parks and recreation plan.

Public Hearing Results

January 2, 2013

The first of two public hearings was held on January 2, 2013. Over 45 people, including local residents, City of Merrill Parks & Recreation Commission members, the director of the City's Parks & Recreation Department, a planner from NCWRPC, the Mayor, the City Administrator, and several City Council Members were present, and a few people provided comments.

The general theme from those public comments was definitely to implement the plan, but to also carefully consider long term and short term costs to the tax payers. Other themes related to specific projects that should become high priorities:

1. Make Merrill bicycle friendly;
2. Implement the River Bend Trail;
3. Continue working on projects from the last 5-year plan;
4. Cooperate with County Forestry to develop 1) trails, and 2) a timber management plan in Merrill Memorial Forest;
5. Assess and upgrade all facilities at the MARC; and
6. Please provide a second public hearing on this plan.

February 6, 2013

Since City leadership was not confident enough in the promotion of the first public hearing, then the Parks Commission established this second public hearing.

As you can see in the picture to the right, over 30 people, including City of Merrill Parks & Recreation Commission members, the director of the City's Parks & Recreation Department, a planner from NCWRPC, the City Administrator, and many local residents were present, and a few people provided comments.

The general theme from those public comments was definitely to implement the plan. Other themes related to specific projects that should become high priorities:

1. **Fully support creation of the River Bend Trail (4 people)**;
2. **City of Merrill survey results (from City Administrator):**
    a. people want trails and there is a lack of access to the Wisconsin River and the Prairie River; and
    b. best parts of Merrill are its parks and the Wisconsin & Prairie Rivers.
3. Make Merrill bicycle friendly;
4. Other comments included: a. working with Lincoln County Fairgrounds; b. do more research on creating a dog park; and c. allow gazebo in Normal Park to be reserved.

City of Merrill Comprehensive Plan Issues
The City of Merrill created a comprehensive plan in 2006. Below are some of the transportation issues that residents identified. Only issues that relate to outdoor recreation were listed.

- Abandoned rail corridors and spurs are not available to adjacent landowners to own. Abandoned rail bridges over the Wisconsin River.
- Snowmobile trails need better access to local businesses. A comprehensive review of the snowmobile network is needed, because it keeps changing every other year, and some corridors may need permanent protection.
- There are some discussions of a riverwalk system in the downtown.
- A recreation trail could connect Prairie River Park to Stange Park.
- Additional issues relate to aging infrastructure and the cost to improve, high-speed areas, congestion areas, overall flow of traffic or network, funding transit system, lack of intra-city bus service, and the need for an integrated pedestrian/bike plan.

Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan Issues
Lincoln County created a comprehensive plan in 1999. A survey was administered and part G (Parks, Recreation, and Natural Resources) relates to outdoor recreation. When asked which of nine different types of parks and recreational facilities were needed (more than one could be selected), the most common responses were "multi-use trails for bicyclists, pedestrians, skiers, and snowmobilers..." (43%) and "natural areas such as nature trails, wildlife viewing areas, [and] interpretive centers..." (40%). These were followed by waterfront parks (31%) and campgrounds (23%). Just under 31% of respondents believed that no additional parks or recreational facilities were needed. Responses from town and city residents were not significantly different.

Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan Goals & Policies
<u>Transportation Element</u>

Goal #2: Trails of various types (e.g. ATV, snowmobile, walking, biking, horse, etc.) will be joined together and linked with other transportation modes such as roads both inside and outside the county to support greater regional economic activity.

Goal #3: County departments will coordinate the development of a plan that effectively promotes Lincoln County trail systems.

Policy:
Install bike and pedestrian lanes wherever feasible to encourage a more sustainable approach to community and economic development. These amenities will also be developed in such a way as to promote quality of life and healthy lifestyle practices. Work with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation to create economical, safe, and efficient designs of bike and pedestrian lanes that also improve the flow of traffic.

Enhance signage to bring people into the cities off of Route 39/51. The route's corridors near both Tomahawk and Merrill are well traveled. Attracting people off of the route to visit both cities is consistent with the City of Merrill 51 Corridor Feasibility Study and Tomahawk Main Street initiatives.

D. NEEDS DRIVEN PARK PLANNING

Since the 1960's, an accepted practice has been to adopt a uniform national land standard, such as 10 acres per 1000 population, for park planning. A standard amount of land for parks and recreation nationwide is no longer recognized as universal for a park. A standard land measure is still used to determine how much land is needed for a specific use like a baseball diamond. Facility standards are used for this purpose. The number of baseball diamonds and other facilities are not the same among similar sized communities nationally; therefore a Level of Service needs to be created locally.

Park and Recreation Designs

Attachment A

The various attributes (e.g. acreage, location, and amenities) of each park classification are described in this attachment. Use these designs as one part of determining if community-wide needs are being met in the parks.

Besides creating a Level of Service for each park classification, other measures such as geographic distribution and universal accessibility, are also used to determine the adequacy of a community's parks.

Universal accessibility is making facilities (e.g.: tables, drinking fountains, and restrooms) accessible to people with limited mobility. Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards are followed when purchasing or modifying facilities for universal accessibility. Each park description starting on page 11 lists specific park facilities. If changes to park facilities are necessary to make them ADA compliant, then they will be listed as recommended improvements in Chapter 6 under "Capital Improvements."

1. Level of Service

A Level Of Service (LOS) approach is used to identifying if enough park land exists for a community's needs. This revised approach is defined by the community's needs rather than an arbitrary acreage-per-1000-people standard. The LOS is generated locally for each park classification (i.e. mini, neighborhood, or community). Public input is collected, and the needs for a particular park, or whole park classification, are determined. If the public is content with the existing parks within a park classification, then the LOS is applied to the whole population. If the public determines that individual parks need more facilities in them, then a particular park needing additional land may become reclassified into the next larger classification. When the community grows in population the LOS is used to calculate how many additional parks are needed.

Park Acreage

The size of a park is determined by three criteria:

1. Physical geography. Does the site have steep hills, woodlands, or wetlands? Such natural features are useful for exploration, conservation, aesthetic buffers, and unprogrammed lands.
2. Park facilities. What activities are allowed or will be allowed? How much land is needed for each use? This is determined by applying the park Level of Service (LOS)

to lands where the village is growing. If a community is not growing in population, then the LOS does not change, but different uses may become desired over time, so facilities will need replacement.

3. Unprogrammed buffers. How much land within the park is needed to separate different uses or future expansion? Designating future parks on the *Official Map* [developed under Sec 62.23(6)(b) Wis. Stats.] and on the *Future Land Use Map* in the *Merrill Comprehensive Plan* will guide future parkland purchases.

Park acreage in TABLE 4 shows how Merrill's park system compares with state standards for the size of each park as grouped by classification. The average park sizes for Merrill follow in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) recommendations for each classification.

Some parks in each classification are smaller than SCORP recommendations. Taken together; Lion's, Stange, Stange Kitchenette, and Polk St Tennis & Skate parks form one 36.6 acre community park in the heart of Merrill.

Table 4 **Park Sizes, 2012**

Classification	SCORP Recommendation	Merrill average park size
Mini	0.5 – 5* acres	2.7 acres
Neighborhood	5 – 25 acres	8.8 acres
Community	25+ acres	31.7 acres
Special Use	Various based upon facility	Various based upon facility

Source: WDNR, & NCWRPC
**SCORP states that a mini park is 0.5-1.5 acres, but a gap from 1.5-5 acres exists, so that gap was added to the mini park size.*

Parks are listed by classification starting on page 10 of this plan. No schools were used to create the Level Of Service. Merrill's 2005 WDOA estimated population was 10,148, and decreased to 9,661 in 2010 per Census 2010. Jack Pine Park was partially developed in 2008 for the County Office Annex building, therefore 9 acres was removed from the Special Use classification acreage. There are fewer people living in Merrill from 2005 to 2010, therefore the Level Of Service appears higher in the *neighborhood* and *community* classifications.

$$\text{LOS by classification} = \frac{\text{Park acres per classification}}{(\text{City Population} \div 1{,}000 \text{ population served})}$$

Table 5 **Level Of Service**

Park Classification	2005 Total Acres	2005 Acres per 1,000 people	2010 Total Acres	2010 Acres per 1,000 people
Mini	1	0.1	1	0.1
Neighborhood	35	3.5	35	3.6
Community	126.6	12.5	126.6	13.1
Special Use	51.3	5.1	42.3	4.4
Total	213.9	**21.2**	204.9	**21.2**

Source: NCWRPC

Merrill had a citywide 19.9 Level Of Service in 2005, is almost identical to the 2010 LOS of 20. Even though the City's population declined, it also lost a small amount of county owned parkland that was developed into the County Annex, therefore the LOS virtually remained the same.

The LOS calculated in TABLE 5 is only adequate if public comment proves that more park land is not needed. Public comment may state that different uses are desired, but that may not affect LOS if the land area for those new uses replaces the old uses, or if unused land within existing parks is used. Chapter 6 will show what projects are planned to improve the parks.

2. Park Service Areas

Parks must be close to where residents live for people to consider a park useful. Map 3 illustrates how well the City of Merrill's parks serve the various areas of the city. The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) provides the following guidelines for park placement:

- Mini park service area: ½-mile radius, or a population of 2,000-3,000;
- Neighborhood park service area: 1 mile radius, or a population of 2,000-5,000;
- Community park service area: 2-5 mile radius, in a city or outside of city limits (shown with a neighborhood service area on Map 3, but they also serve the whole community);
- Special Use park service area is a whole community, and is determined by the type of recreation program, special event, or general activities desired at the park (not on Map 3, because none exist in the community).
- School parks are not classified in this plan.

Map 3 shows the service areas for all neighborhood and community parks. All community classified parks are also neighborhood parks. Map 3 shows a 1-mile radius service area for each neighborhood or community park. Special use parks, community parks, and conservancies serve all of Merrill; therefore no specific service areas are shown for these parks on Map 3.

Results

Several residential areas are not within ½ mile walking distance of a park. See Map 3.

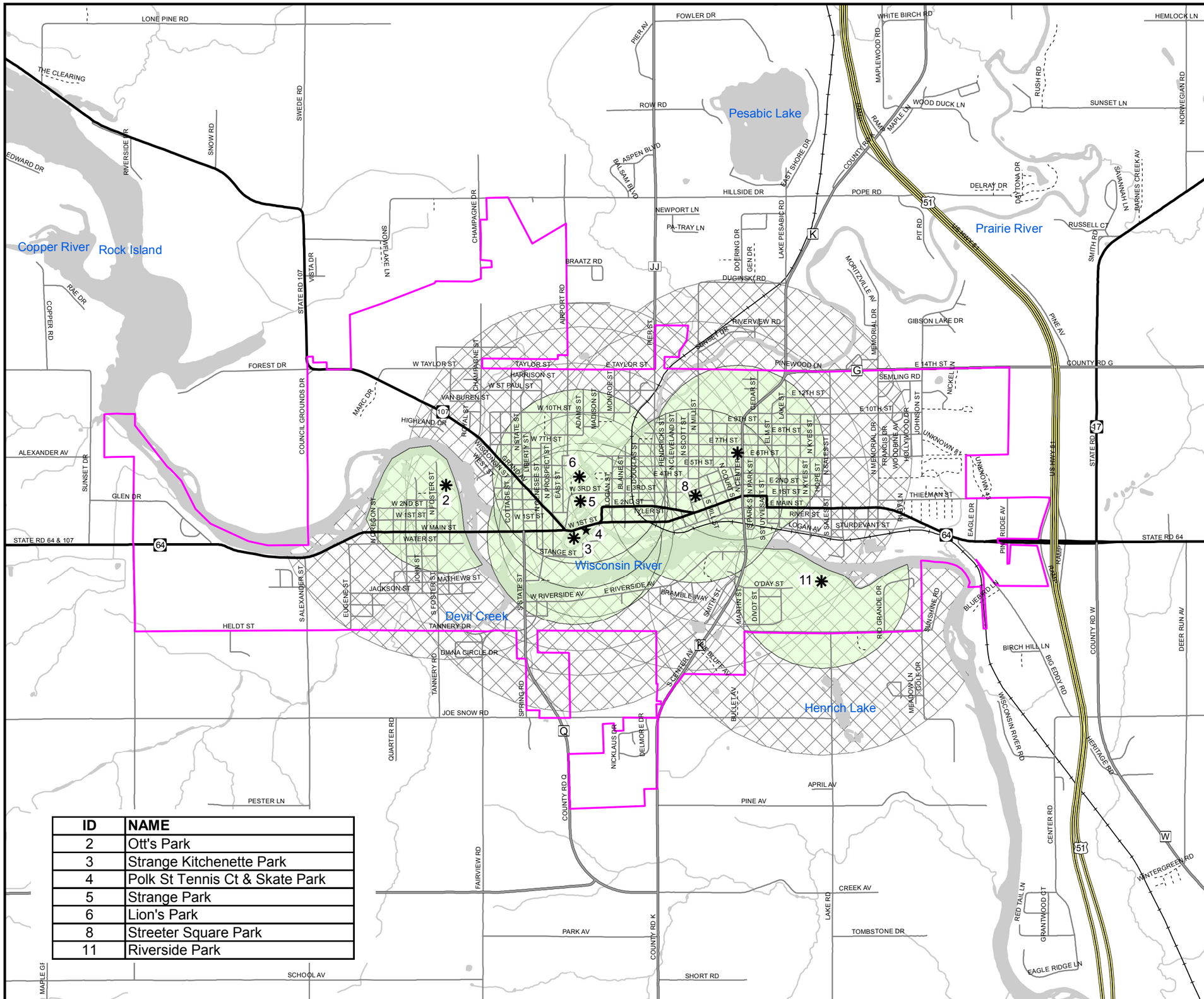
Areas not served by Mini Parks (by themselves or within Neighborhood parks):

- East of Sales Street;
- South of the Wisconsin River by CTH K;
- South of Mathews Street on the west side of Merrill.

Map 3

Park Service Areas

City of Merrill



ID	NAME
2	Ott's Park
3	Strange Kitchenette Park
4	Polk St Tennis Ct & Skate Park
5	Strange Park
6	Lion's Park
8	Streeter Square Park
11	Riverside Park

Minor Civil Divisions

US Highways

State Highways

County Highways

Local Roads

Private / Other

Railroad

Water

Neighborhood Parks
1 mile service area for Neighborhood parks

Mini Parks
0.5 mile service area for Mini parks

0 0.5 1 Miles

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. NCWRPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.

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Chapter 5
OUTDOOR RECREATION VISION, GOALS, & OBJECTIVES

The development of an efficient outdoor recreation plan depends upon establishing specific recreation and open-space goals and objectives from public participation. These goals and objectives will provide general direction to the Forestry, Recreation, and Parks Department for outdoor recreation purposes over the next 5 years.

People who attended two visioning sessions, described on page 17 & 18, came up with the following vision and goals. The Parks Committee created goal 6.

Vision:

"Merrill, City of Parks, is committed to celebrating its heritage through diversified outdoor opportunities along the Wisconsin and Prairie Rivers which enhances quality of life for all generations."

Goals are not listed in priority order:

1. Trail Connectivity
Link neighborhoods throughout the city with multi use trails. Make sure there are opportunities for unorganized recreation along the trails themselves, so the trails become linear parks that will attract people of all ages throughout the year.

2. Build bathroom facilities that can be used throughout the year. These facilities should be placed near trails/linear parks. Other new facilities should be built at existing parks.

3. Continue to upgrade athletic facilities. This should always be done with keeping in mind the potential economic impact additional tournaments could have on the city.

4. Improve communication between park user groups and the city. Much of the work to develop connections between trails, build bathrooms, etc. cannot take place unless communication among stakeholders is improved. Without better communication, the collaborations necessary to make improvements to the entire system will not happen.

5. Increase park and recreation department resources. Besides taking the lead on creating improvements in the system, additional resources are needed to help the department provide ongoing maintenance to parks that have undergone those improvements.

6. Gradually Bring Parks Into ADA Compliance.
All new facilities already must be ADA compliant (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 [ADA]), but existing facilities have had a long grace period to come into compliance. Short term and permanent fixes will be part of each park's capital improvements list in this plan.

7. Create new outdoor pool. The outdoor pool is an aging facility (about 40 years old) in great need of repair, as well as needing to comply with the new ADA pool regulations of 2010.

Chapter 6
RECOMMENDATIONS & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

Recommendations and Capital Improvements are strategies for satisfying issues identified. Although it is unlikely that all recommendations presented in this plan will be undertaken in the next five years, they should be recognized as causes for action if the opportunity or need arises.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS

River Bend Trail

Merrill's outdoor recreation vision statement recognizes the livability that the Wisconsin River adds to the city. The River District Development Foundation of Merrill is pursuing plans for a trail from downtown to Council Grounds State Park along the Wisconsin River – *River Bend Trail*.

- Complete parts of the trail as the opportunities arise, and attempt to finish segments when they are mostly complete (e.g. a segment is defined as the corridor between two roads). See the map in Attachment F.

Connect Parks with Bike and Pedestrian Trails

Merrill has parks interspersed along the Wisconsin River and Prairie River within densely developed housing. Connections between parks will focus on using the existing street network.

- Analyze how to make sure the roads and sidewalks are friendly to wheelchairs and bicyclists, and make sure connections exist from each park to each neighborhood.

Develop Volunteerism Mechanism

Merrill residents would like to help build the improvements they want, because they have time, and understand that most people don't want their taxes going up. A combination of grants, city taxes, club fundraisers, and club & public volunteer efforts could be used to improve some types of park facilities (see Fig. 2).

Some possible projects include:

- Painting murals on buildings.
- Upgrade athletic facilities.

Grow the Park Endowment Fund

The Merrill Park Endowment Fund is a joint effort between the Merrill Parks & Recreation Department and the Merrill Area Community Foundation. The Endowment Fund will allow the Department to invest in park improvements, recreation programs, playgrounds, and special events that have not been possible due to budget shortfalls.

- Actively promote the fund's existence among the general public and specialty groups of all age groups.
- Possibly create a memorial program where people can provide a specific donation and receive a brick paver engraved with their name and placed next to an existing tree, bench, or other object, and with new objects costing more.

Concessions in Park

A possible way to raise money for park maintenance and increase isolated park area usage could be coordinating a local restaurant to operate a unique concession stand.

Keys to possible success:

- Provide a unique experience. Selling concessions in a park is just a convenience. If it is to make revenue to support the park, then it must be unique. High end foods that are not commonly available within Merrill would be part of the unique experience. Another part of a unique experience would be a convenient location or a destination use that residents would consider a hidden gem. Maybe this spot would become a hangout for musicians to jam at, which would provide free entertainment to patrons who would linger and buy concessions.
- Request a local food and beverage establishment to operate such a facility. Additional park staff would be needed if a restaurant does not choose to participate. Part of the contract would state that the City would receive 20% of beverage sales and 10% of food sales.

ADA Improvements

Cooperate with Streets Department to reline parking lots to add accessible marked parking spots in each park, and also to fix any paths in disrepair. Each park has a variety of ADA improvements listed in the Capital Improvements section on page 32.

Develop Trails in Memorial Wildlife Area

Merrill Memorial Wildlife Area, described on page 15 & Map 2, is a vast area that was never developed since its donation to the City. No management of the land exists now. Actively managing the forest for wildlife and developing trails on the property would open up this resource for more people to use. Increased usage of this property from trail development would bring a need for restrooms, map kiosks, and trailhead parking. With its proximity to the Prairie Dells Park and Lincoln County Forest, future considerations should include connecting this wildlife area with the county lands for developing a contiguous trail system throughout.

The Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Department is considering upgrading the restroom at Haymeadow County Park. Haymeadow County Park is a former DOT wayside with a small picnic area and restrooms. This park may see increased usage due to planned development at Prairie Dells Scenic Viewing Area.

- Cooperate with County Forestry to determine how any improvements within the Merrill Memorial Wildlife Area will compliment Haymeadow County Park and Prairie Dells Scenic Area.
- Consider creating a property management plan to determine which areas would be developed for what uses.

Snowmobile Trail

The Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan lists a need to review snowmobile trails in Merrill to determine if permanent easements are needed to maintain access to destinations within Merrill like gas stations, hotels, and restaurants.

- Review snowmobile routes connecting Merrill with surrounding areas to determine if multiple use trail right-of-ways (easement) that snowmobiles could use are needed.

Market the Park Amenities

A variety of residents commented on advertising what is currently available and especially after the following amenities are added:

- Refurbished ball fields;
  - Advertising could occur in conjunction with the Chamber.
- New RV amenities possibly at Riverside Park;
  - An ad could be taken out wherever RV clientele would see it;
  - Possibly contacting a reporter could get this new facility mentioned locally in Merrill, and regionally in neighboring counties;
- A tot lot within an existing park
  - A note in local mass media could promote this new use in a park.

One mass media marketing possibility for the whole city is to use existing newsletter money once a year to create a full glossy "insiders guide." Additional money for such a project would come from selling advertising space in the guide.

Creative Park Programming

Anyone would be able to host events in the parks for the benefit of the community. Possibly create a formal approval process through the Parks Department to allow professionals and interested individuals to share their craft in 90-minute time blocks in a park. The Parks Department would also coordinate a common print or other mass media theme to advertise each 90-minute event, and the instructor's sponsor (acquired by the instructor) would pay for advertising the event.

For example, a local for-profit instructor may wish to teach a Tai Chi session in a park. No cost would be charged by the Parks Department for use of the park and no charge would be levied to those who showed up, but an advertising fee would be charged for the instructor's sponsor to pay. Instructors would also have the option of renting a space for their class to show up and use too. The 90-minute blocks of time would be enough to whet someone's appetite for the activity, without the hassle of registering in advance.

Create Broader Park Definition

Residents in the visioning sessions recognized that different areas may provide unique outdoor recreational opportunities. These spaces may keep young people interested in their city's history, and provide different experiences than traditional green spaces.

Examples in Merrill:

- Historical properties along the Wisconsin River, south of the railroad tracks and east of Center Avenue may be developed into for-profit businesses that may generate many bicycle and walking trips to this scenic area. The *Eastside Waterfront Initiative, Riverfront revitalization Plan*, 2010, documents a variety of ways to develop this area of Merrill. For example, the water tower could become a landmark where people meet for a bike ride, a walk, or some "creative park programing" listed earlier. A building nearby could become the second "Smith Center" that would be free of interior ice usage as requested by visioning session residents.

- An island park could become an outdoor concert facility (see Fig. 3).
- **Parkour** (does not currently exist in Merrill) – Individuals may use public spaces to become physically active.

Parkour is a training discipline that developed out of military obstacle course training. Practitioners (traceurs) aim to move from one place to another, negotiating the obstacles in between.

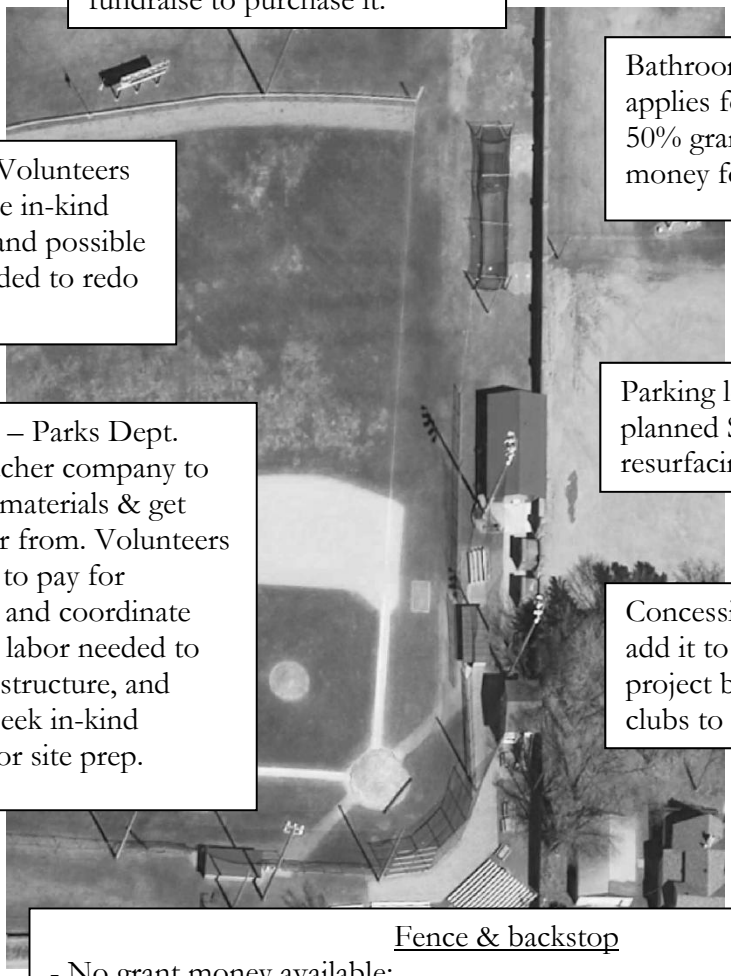
Parkour is not widely practiced in dedicated public facilities such as skate parks. Although efforts are being made to create places for it, some traceurs do not like the idea as it is contradictory to the philosophy of freedom. Traceurs practice parkour in urban areas such as gyms, parks, playgrounds, offices, and abandoned structures.

Concerns have been raised regarding trespassing, damage of property, and the practice in inappropriate places. However, most traceurs will take care of their training spots and will remove themselves quickly and quietly from a public place if asked. One of parkour's values is to respect people and places as well as helping others. One of the first campaigns to preserve this sort of philosophy is the 'Leave No Trace' project, stressing the importance of training safe, respecting the environment and the people around you.

Figure 2	Volunteerism – Ball Diamond Example

Here is a scenario of how to capture volunteerism in Merrill to improve some park system facilities.

1. All tasks for a park would be pre-approved through the Parks Committee.
2. Volunteers would coordinate and implement their tasks through a service group or outdoor recreation group upon approval to start from the Parks Committee.



Scoreboard – Volunteers fundraise to purchase it.

Bathroom – Parks Dept. applies for DNR Stewardship 50% grant, and use room tax money for other 50%.

Infield – Volunteers coordinate in-kind services, and possible labor needed to redo field.

Parking lot – Possibly add it to a planned Streets Dept. road resurfacing bid.

Bleachers – Parks Dept. finds bleacher company to purchase materials & get supervisor from. Volunteers fundraise to pay for structure, and coordinate volunteer labor needed to assemble structure, and possibly seek in-kind services for site prep.

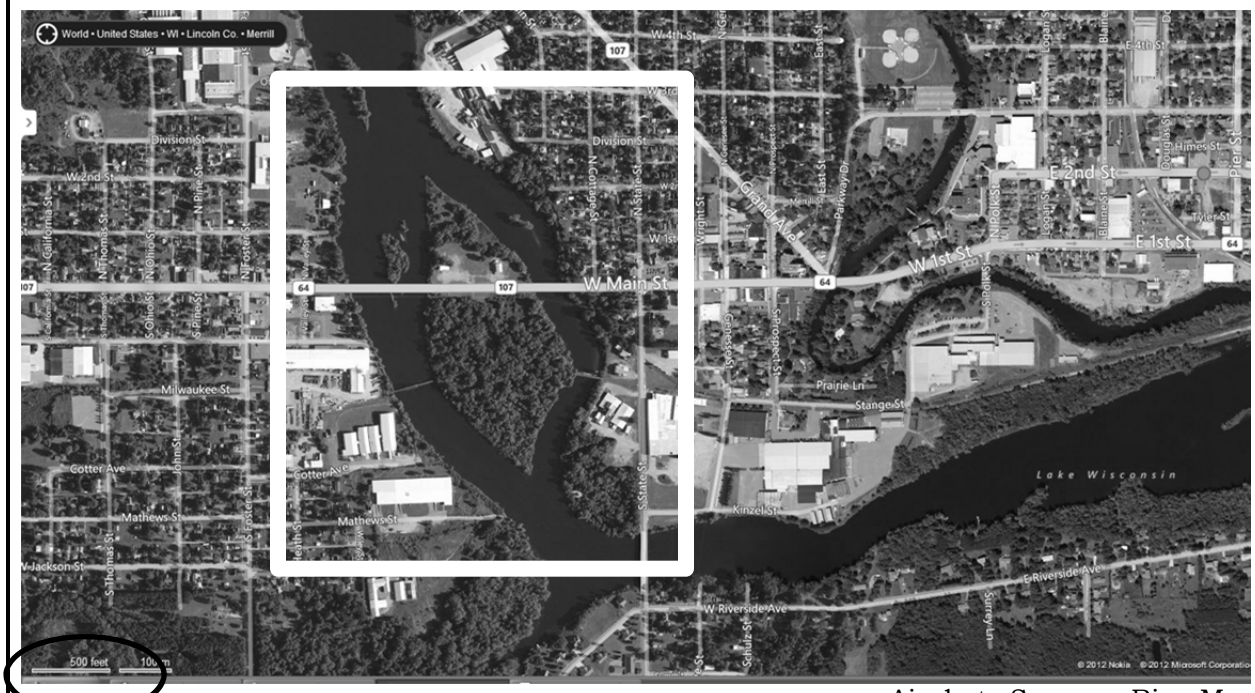
Concession Stand – Possibly add it to the bathroom building project bid, but ask service clubs to fundraise for it.

<u>Fence & backstop</u>

- No grant money available;
- Parks Dept. request prices for materials & supervisors to oversee volunteer workers;
- Local service group provides structured volunteer drive, and serves lunch on-site for all workers.

Figure 3	Possible Island Park

Potential island park, Merrill



Airphoto Sources: Bing Maps

Isle of Ferns Park, Wausau

B. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS 2013-2018

Capital improvements to parks are the addition of labor and materials that improve the overall value and usefulness of that park. Routine maintenance is considered the normal cycle of repair and upkeep for existing facilities and is traditionally funded through the Park and Recreation Department's operations budget. For example, upgrading an outdoor restroom facility for universal access would qualify as a capital improvement, while repainting an outdoor restroom is considered routine maintenance.

Projects listed below are subject to receiving budgetary approval in the years they are planned. All listed projects may not be completed. Short term and permanent fixes to make each park ADA accessible are identified among other improvements listed below:

2013 Construct Dog Park
Lions Park Restroom ADA Remodel
Begin planning for new aquatic center
Create implementation plan for developing and maintaining River Bend Trail
Begin citywide bicycle & pedestrian plan creation
Riverside Park Trail improvements
Gebert Park Trail improvements
Develop master plan for Normal Park
New infield at Athletic Park

2014 Continue work on Aquatic Center Development
Sandblast & Repaint Riverside Park Shelter
Construct restroom facility at Normal Park
Begin implementation of master plan for Normal Park
Construct restroom facility at Prairie Trails Park
Install lights on varsity softball field at MARC
Continue River Bend trail development
Irrigation to Athletic Fields at MARC
Begin implementing bicycle & pedestrian plan
Emergency exit route established at MARC

2015 Lights on Varsity soccer field at MARC
Explore curling capabilities at Smith Center
Improvements/addition to Riverside Park Disc Golf Course
Restroom facility by MARC adult ball fields
New lights at Athletic Park
Finish and open new Aquatic Center
Finish River Bend Trail from Center Ave to Council Grounds
Continue implementing bicycle & pedestrian plan
Continue implementation of Normal Park Master Plan
Construct Basketball Courts at MARC

2016 Begin working establishment of River Bend Trail as State Trail
Begin working on connectivity of Bearskin/Hiawatha State Trails to Mountain Bay State Trail via our newly constructed River Bend Trail
New field lights at Ott's Park
Continue implementing bicycle & pedestrian plan

Continue implementation of Normal Park Master Plan

2017 Repave parking lot at Stange Park
Lagoon Bridge replacements at Stange Park
Construct meeting/banquet "4-season" room above community room in Smith Center
Continue implementing bicycle & pedestrian plan
Continue implementation of Normal Park Master Plan
Trail expansion at Prairie Trails

2018 Install lights at Lions Park baseball complex
City Forest road and trail improvements
Construct trail head at City Forest
Build new shelter with Council Grounds and WDNR along joint trail on south end of MARC
Continue implementing bicycle & pedestrian plan

Chapter 7
IMPLMENTATION STRATEGIES

There are a variety of strategies available for implementing this plan. These strategies include using land use tools and government programs to realize attainment of this plan's goals and objectives.

Shoreland Zoning

Wisconsin's Shoreland Management Program established statewide minimum standards for shoreland development. Counties are required to adopt and administer shoreland zoning ordinances that meet or exceed these minimum requirements. The statewide minimum standards for county shoreland zoning ordinances are found in Chapter NR 115, Wis. Admin. Code. The City of Merrill administers the zoning within Merrill.

Public Access to Waterways

State regulations for subdivisions require dedication of public access when the land along waterways is platted.

LAKE AND STREAM SHORE PLATS [236.16(3) WISCONSIN STATUTES]

(a) All subdivisions abutting on a navigable lake or stream shall provide public access at least 60 feet wide providing access to the low watermark so that there will be public access, which is connected to existing public roads, at not more than one-half mile intervals as measured along the lake or stream shore except where greater intervals and wider access is agreed upon by the department of natural resources and the department, and excluding shore areas where public parks or open-space streets or roads on either side of a stream are provided.

NR 1.93 Access in platted subdivisions. Under s.236.16 (3), Wis. Stats., the DNR has authority to recommend wider access at less frequent intervals than are prescribed in the statutes. The DNR shall consider waiver of the 60−foot access requirement only where the DNR determines:

(1) It will be advantageous to public interests in navigable water;
(2) Adequate space for access users and adequate buffering for private property is assured by access wider than 60 feet where possible; and
(3) The access that would result provides an equal or greater opportunity for public access than would be provided by dedication at statutorily prescribed intervals and the 60−foot width.

Park Dedication

Subdivision regulations can be used to require residential land subdividers to dedicate a portion of subdivided land for permanent park and open space use. Neighborhood parks may be acquired in this manner in newly developing residential areas. Local landowners should also be encouraged to dedicate land to their communities for recreational uses. Numerous small town memorial parks have been acquired through the generosity of local citizens. If citizens are made aware of community needs, this

form of private action may continue to enrich the public resources of some communities.

Conservation Subdivisions

Conservation subdivisions are characterized by common open space and clustered compact lots. A variety of housing types or the same type of housing may be allowed. The purpose of a conservation subdivision is to protect farmland or natural resource open spaces while allowing for the maximum number of residences under current community zoning and subdivision regulations. In some cases a greater density (density bonus) may be offered in the local ordinance to encourage this approach. Generally, this tool is used for parcels 40 acres and larger, or where the community maps natural resource corridors or natural features that they want to preserve. A conservation subdivision maintains the same level of overall density as a conventional subdivision, but individual lot sizes are smaller, and the community receives open space.

Use of Easements

Open space and public recreation use of private land may be acquired by easement. With an easement, certain rights are granted to the public for a specific period of time and the private owner is compensated for that public use. In purchasing an easement, the public body acquires a right either to use the land in a specific manner or to restrict the use to which an owner may put their land. For example, the rights to establish public hiking or fishing access to a waterway may be purchased through an easement.

Leases

Leases may be used as measures to use or protect land until more permanent measures may be found. By leasing parcels of land, the land remains on the community's tax rolls and can be renegotiated or non-renewed by the property owner if the monetary prospects for another use proves overpowering.

Another leasing method involves outright purchase of land by the community. The community then leases the land to a private party or organization with use restrictions placed on the land. Under this method, the community receives some monetary return on its investment and retains control over the use of the land.

Program Costs

A community should carefully watch operations and maintenance costs when setting up a parks program. A too ambitious acquisition and/or development program can easily lead to annual costs larger than the community can afford to meet. Recreation facilities like golf courses and swimming pools, for example, require large annual maintenance investments to continue.

Capital Improvements

Community officials should develop five year capital improvements programs for recreation that reflect implementation of proposals made in their plans and the priorities they place on them. To be functional, the program must be flexible and be subjected to annual review.

In developing a recreation program, care should be taken that the annual cost of maintenance does not exceed an amount the community can afford to pay. Too often, an ambitious program can lose community support as a result of prohibitive maintenance costs.

Monetary Aid Programs

State and federal financial and technical aid programs are designed to assist communities with meeting recreational needs. A list of these programs exists in Attachment D.

The Stewardship Fund is a state provided comprehensive aid program for the promotion of resource conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities. It consists of several state and federal aid programs such as Local Park Aids and LAWCON, combined with new programs, such as the Urban Rivers Program. Attachment E gives an explanation of the Stewardship Program. For additional information go online to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

A requirement for application to the Stewardship Fund is for the local community to have a DNR approved comprehensive outdoor recreation plan. The City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan is designed to meet that requirement. For additional information contact:

Community Services Specialist
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
107 Sutliff Ave
Rhinelander, WI 54501

Besides state and federal aid programs, there are other sources of funding such as private foundations, trust funds, and civic and recreation organizations.

Lifetime Activities

Community and school officials responsible for recreation should place greater emphasis on land areas and facilities that can support "lifetime" recreational activities. Falling into this category are activities like golf, tennis, all target sports, horseshoes, cross country skiing, skating, running, volleyball, handball, badminton, back packing, and canoeing. Many schools have programs aimed at teaching recreational activities that people can participate in for a lifetime.

Winter Activities

All communities should provide winter outdoor recreation facilities. Skating and sliding sports (sledding, tobogganing, and skiing) can generally be provided without large investments. Skating, for example, can be as involved as providing rinks for ice hockey or as simple as flooding a small area of a school playground. Likewise, merely blocking off a lightly traveled street with a suitable slope can frequently provide a sliding area.

Specialized Facilities
Encourage development of specialized facilities by the private sector. Specialized facilities such as golf clubs, intensive use ATV areas, and ski resorts can be an important adjunct to public recreational facilities. Quality and availability for public use should be emphasized.

Municipal and School District Cooperation
Promote cooperation between municipalities and school districts in meeting recreational needs. With good planning, cooperation may take the form of joint land acquisition and/or facilities development cost sharing. Increased municipal use of existing school facilities during non-school hours should also be encouraged.

Senior Citizen Involvement
Involve senior citizens in community park development and beautification, and provide recreational facilities for their use. Although senior citizens often compose a significant proportion of the total community's population, they are often neglected in recreational planning. Benches placed near neighborhood parks and play areas and non-intensive sports facilities such as horseshoe pits located in community parks help to provide a place for the senior citizens. Small, passive use parks and gardens located near nursing and retirement homes should also be encouraged. In addition, senior citizens can provide invaluable assistance in beautifying parks and open spaces and can thereby become more involved in community group life.

Service Group Involvement
Involve organized service groups in park and recreation development, including development of competitive sports areas and neighborhood parks. Traditionally, service groups and recreation organizations, such as Lions Club, V.F.W., softball leagues, and snowmobile clubs have played an active role in the development of such facilities. Continued volunteerism of this type should be encouraged. In addition, service groups could help to meet the need for neighborhood facilities by supplementing municipal financial resources by providing organization and volunteer labor.

Community Beautification
All communities should recognize that community appearance is an important component of a recreation program. Maintained streets and sidewalks, attractive trees and shrubs, well cared for homes and commercial buildings, and neatly landscaped home lawns, public open space, and parks are principal contributors to community beautification. Such a program is most rewarding to persons engaged in passive recreation.

Adopt-A-Park Program
A program which encourages local groups to adopt-a-park or segment of trial or stream could be organized similar to the very successful *Adopt a Highway* program. The groups could volunteer their time to maintain and beautify the county's recreational system, allowing more county funds to provide major improvements.

ATTACHMENT A

Park Design and Location Criteria

From:
Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2011-2016

Park and Recreation Designs

This section is presented in the interest of assisting park and recreation agencies in the development of a system of parks and recreation areas. A recreation system is composed of many different components, the combination of which provide facilities and landscapes for outdoor recreation. Many entities are involved in the development and management of recreational areas and facilities for a community or region. Facilities provided by these entities should be complementary and serve a particular geographic area or recreational need. For this plan, parks and recreation areas have been classified on the basis of their service areas. They are described as the following:

▪ Mini Park	▪ School Park
▪ Neighborhood Park	▪ County Park
▪ Community Park	▪ State Park
▪ Special Use Park	▪ State Forest

Mini Park

1. **Definition Summary:**
   A play lot or playground provides space for parental supervised recreation of toddlers and young children within a neighborhood, or as part of a larger neighborhood or community park and urban center, including retail shopping areas.

2. **Size Objectives**:
   0.5 to 1.5 acres.

3. **Service Area Objectives:**
   Generally within a neighborhood of a half mile radius or population of 2,000-3,000. Mini parks may be included in parks that serve a larger population or service area.

4. **Location Objectives:**
   Located in protected areas with separation from street traffic and high visibility; serving local neighborhoods and adjoining schools, libraries, or police and fire facilities.
   - Population Ratio to Acreage: 0.25 to 0.5 acre per 1,000 population to achieve a park unit size that serves 2,000 to 3,000 people.

5. **Space, Design, and Service Area:**
   The size of a play lot or playground may range from as small as 2,500 sq. ft. to 1.5 acres.* Amenities offered by these facilities generally include sand play areas, play apparatus, play equipment, and other special child-oriented features. The service radius for these parks in terms of distance from population served is limited to less than a quarter mile, or within a super block space, unless the playground is incorporated into a larger park. (*Stand-alone play lots require more land area than play lots incorporated into larger parks.)

6. **Orientation:**
   Small geographic areas, sub-neighborhoods, or neighborhoods, when combined with a larger park unit, serves youth ranging in age from toddler to 12 years, with adult supervision. Playgrounds also serve important needs in city business districts and inner city areas where a mix of commercial and recreation activity is desired.

7. **Function:**
   Provides outdoor play experiences for youth under parental supervision. Generates neighborhood communication and provides diversion from work and domestic chores. Promotes neighborhood solidarity.

Neighborhood Park

1. **Definition Summary:**
   A neighborhood park, by size, program, and location, provides space and recreation activities for the immediate neighborhood in which it is located. It is considered an extension of neighborhood residents' "out-of-yard" and outdoor use area.

2. **Size Objectives:**
   5 to 25 acres.

3. **Service Area Objectives:**
Generally a one mile radius, but actually defined by collector street patterns which form the limits of a neighborhood or recreation service area. Population served may range from 2,000 up to 5,000.

4. **Location Objectives:**
Centrally located for equitable pedestrian access within a definable neighborhood service area. Adjoining or adjacent to an elementary school, middle school, high school, fire station, or library, if possible.

5. **Program Objectives:**
Compatible with the neighborhood setting and park site constraints. Generally includes the following facilities, which are determined with public input as to use and activities:
   a. Parking for 10 to 20 vehicles.
      1) On-street parking is acceptable if negative impact to residential units can be mitigated. On-site parking is preferable as a planning objective.
      2) Bike racks with Class II trail connections where possible.
   b. Restrooms
      1) Men's restroom with 2 water closets, 2 urinals, 2 lavatories.
      2) Women's restroom with 3 water closets and 2 lavatories.
      3) Utility and minimum park janitorial storage space.
   c. Tot lot/children's play area
   d. Family event/group picnic facility
   e. Informal family picnic area with benches and tables
   f. Unstructured turf grass play area/play or practice field for children, young adults, and families.
   g. Sport facilities—compatible with neighborhood setting and park site constraints.
      1) Basketball—half court, full court, or tri-court configuration
      2) Volleyball area
      3) Softball field/soccer practice or game overlay
      4) Other features as needs or site conditions allow

6. **Orientation:**
Serves all age groups, with an emphasis on youth and families in neighborhood settings.

7. **Function:**
To provide a combination of active recreation and passive activities, both outdoor and indoor facilities and special features as required or needed.

8. **Space, Design and Service Area:**
A minimum size of 5 to 25 acres with amenities including sports facilities, picnic areas, swim facilities, cultural activities, arts, crafts, and individual passive activities. The park should primarily serve a defined neighborhood area population of 2,000-5,000. Distance from this neighborhood will vary depending on urban development pattern, zoning, and densities in the respective neighborhoods being served. Efforts should be made to allow easy pedestrian access to the park.

Community Park

1. **Definition Summary:**
A community park, by size, program, and location, provides space and recreation activities for a defined service area, the entire city, or significant geographic segment of the city's population.

2. **Size Objectives:**
Usually more than 25 acres.

3. **Service Area Objectives:**
Generally a 2 to 5 mile radius within the city and adjacent neighborhoods outside of city limits.

4. **Location Objectives:**
Centrally located if planned to serve a particular geographic segment of the city. Located adjoining or immediately adjacent to a collector street providing community-wide vehicular access, thereby reducing neighborhood traffic impacts. Connected with Class II on-street and/or off-street community trail and bike lane system. Adjoining or adjacent to an elementary, middle, or high school if possible.

5. **Program Objectives**
   Elements that fulfill the service area, park facilities and recreation program demands. The following facilities may be compatible with community setting and park site constraints:
   a. Off-street parking calculated to satisfy demand of park and recreation activities provided. Includes bike racks and a public transit station at the site as well as both on-site and street parking.
   b. Restrooms designed to accommodate the level of park and recreation activities provided and the number of people served. Restrooms should be located within a reasonable walking distance from children's play equipment and other high-use areas.
   c. Community recreation center
   d. Park maintenance and equipment storage building
   e. Tot lot/children's play area
   f. Group picnic shelters
   g. Family picnic facilities
   h. Sport/recreation facility fulfilling the overall city demand
      Appropriate program elements include:
      1) Community pool/water feature
      2) Soccer fields
      3) Softball, little league baseball, junior pony league baseball
      4) Football
      5) Roller hockey/skateboard area
      6) Tennis courts
      7) Basketball courts
      8) Amphitheater/performing arts center
      9) Volleyball (indoor and outdoor)
      10) Jogging trails
      11) Other facilities as desired and as permitted under park site plan
      12) Concessions (food and beverage)

6. **Orientation:**
   Multi-purpose service area or community-wide recreation resource serving most or all of the population.

7. **Function:**
   Provides opportunities for a diverse mix of indoor and outdoor recreation, including walking and bicycling, outdoor performances, various programmed and non-programmed field sports, swimming, and special events.

8) **Space, Design, and Service Area:**
   The minimum space for a community park is 15 acres. Facilities typically provide for some sports activities, through emphasis is on passive cultural and community centers with recreational programming and organized activities. The community park may serve populations within a 2 to 5 mile radius, a scope that would allow residents of other communities to use the park as well.

Special Use Park

1. **Definition Summary:**
   A special use park is often designed as a revenue-generating enterprise created to satisfy demand for a particular sport, recreational activity, or special event. A special use park may also be a sports park combined with enterprise activities and administered as a community recreation resource.

2. **Size Objective:**
   The actual size of a special use park is determined by land availability and facility/market demand for special uses or recreation programs.

3. **Service Area Objectives:**
   Community or area-wide and determined by the type of recreation program, special events or use activities.

4. **Location Objectives:**
   Determined by the property opportunity, service area and size objectives.

5. **Program Objectives:**
   Special use parks require facility programming that is user- or market-driven and based on community needs or economic and service principles for public and private partnerships. The magnitude and type of special use facilities may include:
   a. Water play park
   b. Amphitheater
   c. Festival/swap meet/farmers market
   d. League/individual sports complex
   e. Fitness/entertainment center
   f. Skateboard/in-line hockey park

g. Recreation programs and classes

6. Orientation:
Provides recreation programming, sports and special event attractions and activities for all age groups.

7. Function:
Special events, fairs, festivals, expositions, symposiums, sports, community gatherings, ethnic/cultural celebrations, plays and numerous other recreational programs and activities.

8. Space, Design, and Service Area:
The minimum size for special parks varies depending on intended use and programming.

School Park

1. Definition Summary:
By combining the resources of two public agencies, the school park classification allows for expanding the recreational, social, and educational opportunities available to the community in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Depending on the circumstances, school park sites often complement other community recreation or open lands. As an example, an elementary/middle school site could also serve as a neighborhood park. Likewise, middle or high school sports facilities could do double duty as a community park or as youth athletic fields. Depending on its size, one school park site may serve in a number of capacities, such as a neighborhood park, youth athletic fields, and a location for recreation classes. Given the inherent variability of type, size and location, determining how a school park site is integrated into a larger park system will depend on case-by-case circumstances. The important outcome in the joint-use relationship is that both the school district and park system benefit from shared use of facilities and land area.

2. Size Objective
The optimum size of a school park site depends on its intended use. The size criteria established for neighborhood park and community park classifications may apply.

3. Service Area Objectives:
Neighborhood park and community park classifications criteria should be used to determine school park functions and area served. For planning purposes, the degree to which school lands, including building or facilities, meet community needs depends on the specific inter-local agreements formed.

4. Location Objectives:
The location of a school park site will be determined by the school district based on district policy. Coordinated city and school district planning allows for siting, acquisition, and facility development to be responsive to community needs. Service areas for school park sites will depend on the type of use and facilities provided.

5. Program Objectives:
The criteria established for neighborhood parks and community parks should be used to determine how a school park site is developed and programmed. If athletic fields are developed at a school park site, they should, where feasible, be oriented toward youth rather than adult programs. Establishing a clearly defined joint-use agreement between involved agencies is critical to making school park relationships workable. This is particularly important with respect to acquisition, development, maintenance, liability, use, and programming of facility issues.

The orientation of school park projects is typically for neighborhood and community recreation services. The functions may include sports, recreation classes, passive recreation activities, and other recreation programs suitable to an elementary or secondary education school.

County Park

1. Definition Summary:
A county park provides sufficient park and recreation area to meet the needs of county residents. County parks consist of land that is specifically set aside for active and passive

recreation uses, and that accommodates large gatherings, special events, and individual users. County parks offer a wide variety of compatible outdoor recreation activities, and may provide areas that do not primarily serve a recreational purpose such as protected natural areas, historic areas, and special use areas.

2. **Size Objectives:**
The size of recreation parks varies greatly from park to park, but with the exception of those parks that serve a special use or are trail corridors, a recreation park should consist of a minimum of 100 acres of land. Each park should be of sufficient size to accommodate the estimated use and to allow for the operation and maintenance of planned recreational facilities.

3. **Service Area Objectives:**
County parks provide for a regional user group and serve primarily county residents. Special facilities like camping and trails are also used by tourists and visitors to the county.

4. **Location Objectives:**
The land should have high recreational potential and be able to withstand intensive and extensive recreational activities. Land should have potential to accommodate large groups of people. Land for corridors should be located so as to connect to communities, parks, and open spaces. The potential for future land acquisition should be taken into account.

5. **Program Objectives:**
Development should be appropriate for intended use and should accommodate moderate to high use. Development and planning should consider the physical condition and characteristics of the land and recognize potential environmental or structural limitations that might require intensive maintenance. County parks may include the following facilities:
    a. Camping/group camping
    b. Picnic areas
    c. Recreational trails (hiking, bicycling, mountain biking, equestrian, cross-country ski, snowmobile, etc.)
    d. Play areas
    e. Swimming beaches
    f. Water access
    g. Fishing access
    h. Shelters
    i. Restrooms
    j. Shower facilities
    k. Sport fields (basketball, volleyball, softball, etc.)
    l. Pet exercise area

6. **Orientation:**
Multi-purpose service area and regional recreation resource serving a significant portion of a county or multi-county population.

7. **Function:**
To provide sufficient parks and recreation areas to meet the needs of the people of the county.

8. **Space, Design, and Service Area:**
The size of a county park should be a minimum of 100 acres. Facilities vary by park. Some parks offer active recreation (camping, recreational trails, etc.), while others provide passive recreation (scenic lookouts, picnic areas, beaches, etc.). Most parks provide both active and passive recreation. County parks provide for a regional user group and serve primarily county residents, through special facilities also serve tourists and visitors to the county.

State Forest

1. **Definition Summary:**
A state forest consists of well blocked areas of state owned lands that are managed to benefit present and future generations of residents, recognizing that forests contribute to local and statewide economics and to a healthy natural environment. State forests practice sustainable forestry. The management of state forests is consistent with the ecological capability of state forest land and with the long-term goal of maintaining sustainable forest communities and ecosystems. Benefits of maintaining these ecosystems include soil protection, public hunting, protection of water quality, production of recurring forest products, outdoor recreation, native biological

diversity, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, and aesthetic value. The range of benefits provided in each state forest reflect its unique character and position in the regional landscape.

2. **Size Objectives:**
Typically between 1,000 and 250,000 acres, but can be larger or smaller.

3.` **Service Area Objectives:**
Generally a 100 mile radius. State forests typically provide close-to-home recreational area. Day users typically travel approximately 50 miles one-way to reach state forests, while overnight users tend to travel further, approximately 100-150 miles one-way. Travel to state forests can, however, exceed 160 miles for longer vacation stays and travel to "destination areas."

4. **Location Objectives:**
Areas with large blocks of land.

5. **Program Objectives:**
State forests must meet ecological, economic, social, and cultural needs. Elements are compatible with the natural resource setting and park site constraints. Facilities may include the following:

Current Level of Supply:

Hiking trails	1,256 acres per linear mile of trail
Cross-country ski trails	2,551 acres per linear mile of trail
Snowmobile trails	639 acres per linear mile of trail
Equestrian trails	559 acres per linear mile of trail
ATV trails	1,795 acres per linear mile of trail
Camping sites	1 campsite per 265 acres

6. **Orientation:**
Multi-purpose service area and regional recreation resource serving a significant portion of a state or regional population.

7. **Function:**
To provide for nature conservation, provide income to forest owners, supply raw materials to the wood processing industry, and provide public recreation.

8. **Space, Design, and Service Area:**
The size of a state forest is determined by the extent of the area's natural resources and recreation capabilities. There is no minimum or maximum size for a state forest. Facilities are not universal and vary by forest. The geographic location of the forest and the natural resources present dictate recreation available at the site. State forests serve large geographic areas of a state or region.

State Park

1. **Definition Summary:**
A state park, by size, program, and location, provides space for outdoor recreation and education about nature and conservation. These parks serve a significant geographic segment of a state or regional population. State parks aim to preserve, protect, interpret and enhance the scenic and cultural resources of the state.

2. **Size Objectives:**
Parks must be large enough to accommodate a reasonable mix of outdoor recreational activities. Typically, parks are between 500 and 3000 acres, but can be smaller (<20 acres) or larger (>10,000 acres).

3. **Service Area Objectives:**
Generally a 100-mile radius. State parks typically provide close-to-home recreational areas. Day users generally travel approximately 50 miles one-way to reach state parks, while overnight users tend to travel further, approximately 100-150 miles one-way. Travel distances to state parks can often exceed 160 miles for longer vacation stays and trips to "destination areas."

4. **Location Objectives:**
Siting of Wisconsin State Parks is typically based on five criteria developed by John Nolen. These criteria are: 1) large size to serve a large number of citizens, 2) accessibility to major population areas, 3) a healthful, natural setting, 4) reasonable cost for land acquisition, 5) land possessing "decidedly uncommon charm and beauty." All, or a combination of these criteria are used to determine where to site a state park.

5. **Program Objectives:**
Elements that fulfill the service area, park facilities and recreation program demands.

Elements are compatible with the natural resource setting and park site constraints. Developments may include the following facilities:

Current Level of Supply:

Hiking trails	196 acres per linear mile of trail
Surfaced bicycle trails	860 acres per linear mile of trail
Mountain bike trails	549 acres per linear mile of trail
Nature trails	1,871 acres per liner mile of trail
Cross-country ski trails	430 acres per linear mile of trail
Snowmobile trails	426 acres per linear mile of trail
Equestrian trails	400 acres per linear mile of trail
Picnic sites	0.05 acres per picnic table
Camping sites	1 campsite per 29 acres
Parking stalls	Year-Round = 1 stall for every three visitors
Swimming beaches	17 linear feet per 1,000 users

5. **Orientation:**
   Multi-purpose service area and regional recreation resource serving a significant portion of a state or regional population.

6. **Function:**
   To provide for public recreation and education of conservation and nature study. To preserve, protect, interpret and enhance the scenic and cultural resources of the state.

7. **Space, Design, and Service Area:**
   The size of a state park is determined by the extent of the area's natural resources and recreation capabilities. There is no minimum or maximum size for a state park. Facilities are not universal and vary by park. Some parks offer active recreation (camping, boating, mountain biking trails, hunting etc.), while others offer passive recreation (scenic lookouts, picnic areas, beaches, etc.). Most provide both active and passive recreation. The geographic area and the natural resources present dictate recreation uses and facilities present in the park. State parks serve large geographic areas of a state or region.

ATTACHMENT B

Facility Design Standards

From:
National Recreation and Park Association

SUGGESTED OUTDOOR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS				
Activity Format	**Recommended Size and Dimensions**	**Recommended Space Requirements**	**Recommended Orientation**	**Service Radius and Location Notes**
Badminton	Singles--17' x 44' Doubles-20' x 44' with 5' unobstructed area on both sides	1622 sq. ft.	Long axis north - south	¼ - ½ mile. Usually in school recreation center or church facility. Safe walking or biking or biking access.
Basketball **1. Youth** **2. High School** **3. Collegiate**	46' - 50' x 84' 50' x 84' 50' x 94' with 5' unobstructed space all sides.	2400-3036 sq. ft. 5040-7280 sq. ft. 5600-7980 sq. ft.	Long axis north - south	¼ - ½ mile. Same as badminton. Outdoor courts in neighborhood/community parks, plus active recreation areas in other park settings.
Handball **(3-4 wall)**	20' x 40' with a minimum of 10' to rear of 3-wall court. Minimum 20' overhead clearance.	800 sq. ft. for 4-wall, 1000 sq. ft. for 3-wall.	Long axis is north - south. Front wall at north end.	15 - 30 min. travel time, 4-wall usually indoor as part of multi-purpose building. 3-2 all usually in park or school setting.
Ice Hockey	Rink 85' x 200' (Min. 85' x 185') Additional 5000 22,000 sq. ft. including support area.	22,000 sq. ft. including support area.	Long axis is north - south if outdoors.	½ - 1 hour travel time. Climate important consideration affecting no. of units. Best as part of multipurpose facility.
Tennis	36' x 78'. 12 ft. clearance on both ends.	Min. of 7,200 sq. ft. single court area (2 acres per complex)	Long axis north - south	¼ - ½ mile. Best in batteries of 2 - 4. Located in neighborhood/community park or near school site.
Volleyball	30' x 60'. Minimum of 6' clearance on all sides.	Minimum 4,000 sq. ft.	Long axis north - south	½ - 1 mile.
Baseball **1. Official** **2. Little League**	Baselines - 90' Pitching distance-60.5' Foul lines - min. 320' Center field - 400'+ Baselines - 60' Pitching distance - 46' Foul lines - 200' Center field - 200' - 250'	3.0 - 3.85 A min. 1.2 A min.	Locate home plate so pitcher is not throwing across sun, and batter not facing it. Line from home plate through pitchers mound to run east-northeast.	¼ - ½ mile. Part of neighborhood complex. Lighted fields part of community complex.
Field Hockey	180' x 300' with a minimum of 10' clearance on all sides.	Minimum 1.5 A	Fall season - Long axis northwest or southeast. For longer periods, north/south	15 - 30 minute travel time. Usually part of baseball, football, soccer complex in community park or adjacent to high school.
Football	160' x 360' with a minimum of 6' clearance on all sides.	Minimum 1.5 A	Same as field hockey.	15 - 30 min. travel time. Same as field hockey.
Soccer	195' to 225' x 330' to 360' with 10' minimum clearance on all sides.	1.7 - 2.1 A	Same as field hockey.	1 - 2 miles. Number of units depends on popularity. Youth popularity. Youth soccer on smaller fields adjacent to fields or neighborhood parks.
Golf - **Driving Range**	900' x 690' wide. Add 12' width each additional tee.	13.5 A for min. of 25 tees.	Long axis is southwest - northeast with golfer driving northeast.	30 minute travel time. Park of golf course complex. As separate unit may be privately operated.

Source: National Recreation and Park Association

SUGGESTED OUTDOOR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS (continued)				
Activity Format	**Recommended Size and Dimensions**	**Recommended Space Requirements**	**Recommended Orientation**	**Service Radius and Location Notes**
¼ mile running track	Over-all width - 276' length - 600'. Track width for 8 - 4 lanes is 32'.	4.3 A	Long axis in sector from north to south to northwest - southeast, with finish line at north end.	15 - 30 minute travel time. Usually part of a high school or community park complex in combination with football, soccer, etc.
Softball	Baselines - 60' pitching distance - 45' men. 40' women Fast pitch field radius from plate - 225' Slow pitch - 275' (men) 250' (women)	1.5 - 2.0 A	Same as baseball. indimensions for 16".	¼ - ½ mile. Slight difference. May also be used for youth baseball.
Multiple use court (basketball, tennis, etc.)	120' x 80'	9,840 sq. ft.	Long axis of court with primary use north and south.	1 - 2 miles, in neighborhood or community parks.
Archery range	300' length x minimum 10' between targets. Roped, clear area on side of range minimum 30', clear space behind targets minimum of 90' x 45' with bunker.	Minimum 0.65 A	Archer facing north + or - 45 degrees.	30 minutes travel time. Part of a regional/metro complex.
Golf **1. Par 3 (18 hole)** **2. 9-hole standard** **3. 18-hole standard**	 Average length varies -600 - 2700 yards. Average length 2250 yards Average length 6500 yards.	 50 - 60 A Minimum of 50 A Minimum 110 yards	 Majority of holes on north/south axis	 ½ - 1 hour travel time 9-hole course can accommodate 350 people/day 500 - 550 people/day. Course may be located in community, district or regional/metro park.
Swimming pools	Teaching - min. 25 yards x 45' even depth of 3-4 ft. Competitive - min. 25 m x 16 m. Min. of 25 sq. ft. water surface per swimmer. Ration of 2 to 1 deck to water.	Varies on size of pool and amenities. Usually 1 - 2 A sites.	None, but care must be taken in siting life stations in relation to afternoon sun.	15 to 30 minutes travel time. Pools for general community use should be planned for teaching competitive and recreational purposes with enough to accommodate 1m and 3m diving boards. Located in community park or school site.
Beach areas	Beach area should have 50 sq. ft. of land and 50 sa. ft . of water per user. Turnover rate is 3. There should be a 3-4 A supporting area per A of beach.	N/A	N/A	½ to 1 hour travel time. Should have a sand bottom with a maximum slope of 5%. Boating areas completely segregated from swimming areas. In regional/metro parks.

Source: National Recreation and Park Association

ATTACHMENT C

Both Visioning Session Summaries

September 5, 2012
October 3, 2012

City of Merrill Parks & Recreation Visioning Session

Sept. 5, 2012

Process facilitated and report completed by

Art Lersch

University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County

Note: Highlighted items were changed per comments at the Oct 3rd Session.

Twenty people, including local residents, City of Merrill Parks & Recreation members, the director of the city's Parks & Recreation Department, and a planner from North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning attended the first of two visioning sessions on September 5, 2012 related to the Merrill parks system. The conversation was facilitated by Art Lersch, Community Resource Development Educator, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County.

I. Primary Discussion Themes

The following ideas were identified as potentially promoting long-term positive change for the entire park system. Many but not all were discussed thoroughly during the evening. Many of these ideas could serve the purpose if implemented of conveying a collective image of how the park system should enhance residents' quality of life and attract more visitors to the City of Merrill. Those items that were discussed the most and by a relatively broad cross section of attendees are in **bold** directly below**.**

- **Build new or upgrade existing bathroom facilities throughout the park system.**
- Improve athletic fields and their amenities such as scoreboards, fencing, etc.
- **Make parks more American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant**.
- Establish a city Public Works Department responsible for handling all park maintenance (e.g. City of Plover).
- **Connect parks with pedestrian and bike trails. Connect these trails to other regional trails (e.g. Bearskin, Hiawatha, Mountain Bay, etc.)**
- **Develop and implement a park marketing plan.**
- Volunteer groups will have adopted sections of parks to maintain/improve, and market. (Volunteers who have ownership, who take pride in the section they are maintaining).
- Create a broader definition of what a park is; includes more varied uses; location in other more non-traditional places such as industrial parks, roughage areas, expanded current playground areas, along rivers, etc.
- All parks should be centers of outdoor educational workshops/events. Facilities should be developed to make this a reality.
- **Improve communication between the city and current/potential volunteer and user groups. (**Note: Many in the audience agree that positive, visionary improvements must begin with this.)
- Parks and Recreation Department will have to be changed; will need more resources, to achieve any of the suggestions.

II. Broad Parks & Recreation Vision

In order to get attendees thinking about what the City of Merrill park system should look like in the not so distant future, they were presented with the following scenario.

YOU ARE ASLEEP FOR 15 YEARS. WHEN YOU WAKE UP YOU FIND THAT MIRACLES HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN ALL OF THE MERRILL PARKS. ***WHAT HAS HAPPENED THAT MADE MERRILL PARKS THE MOST PLEASANT TO VISIT IN WISCONSIN?***

Attendees were also asked to consider the following criteria when discussing this scenario and later on in the session when attempting to identify improvements that can/should be made in specific parks.

A. *DEGREE TO WHICH IMPLEMENTED MEASURE HAS THE POTENTIAL OF GENERATING CONSISTENT PARKS AND RECREATION REVENUE OVER A LONG PERIOD OF TIME (MANY YEARS).*

B. *HIGH NUMBER OF POTENTIAL DESIRABLE AND MEASURABLE COMMUNITY IMPACTS (OTHER THAN REVENUE GENERATION).*

C. *HIGH IMPORTANCE. (WILL THERE BE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES IF THE MEASURE IS NOT IMPLEMENTED SOON?)*

D. *CAPACITY OF PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT TO TAKE THE LEAD IN IMPLEMENTING THE MEASURE.*

E. *POTENTIAL NUMBER OF PARTNER AGENCIES/INDIVIDUALS (IN ADDITION TO PARKS & RECREATION) INTERESTED IN WORKING TOGETHER AND HAVING THE COLLECTIVE CAPACITY TO IMPLEMENT THE MEASURE.*

F. *ABILITY OF PARKS & RECREATION AND/OR OTHER PARTNERS TO PROVIDE MAINTENANCE AND UPKEEP RELATED TO THE NEWLY IMPLEMENTED MEASURE*.

Those in attendance mentioned the following ideas.

- <u>Indoor aquatic center</u> with warm water therapy area. A zero/barrier free entrance should also be included. Perhaps this facility can be located at the MARC.

- <u>Toddler Park</u> – a space with toddler sized play structure in an existing park (tot lot). Maybe have a few of these around town.

- Permanent bathroom facilities (no port-a-potties).
  - ✓ At the MARC softball and baseball fields
  - ✓ Area from parking lot to ball fields - make it handicap accessible
  - ✓ Make a better experience by adding automatic score boards and other amenities
  - ✓ Not enough ADA parking spots throughout MARC/other park parking lots

- Develop an <u>open space area in the downtown</u> where the old bakery was torn down.

- Promote the arts in the downtown area, including the painting of murals along outside walls.

- Upgrade athletic facilities at all parks. The primary aim of doing this should be to attract for tournaments (WIAA) to the city. More tournaments generate more revenue for the entire city (hotels, restaurants, other businesses).

- Create areas of serenity in the parks, primarily for folks who want to use the facility and stay away from crowds attending or engaged in athletic activities.

- Develop more handicap accessible parking spaces throughout the park system, particularly at the MARC.

- Develop even stronger connections with the Merrill School System (partner in creating park based athletic and educational events).

- Establish a city Public Works Department responsible for handling all park maintenance (e.g. City of Plover).

- Connect parks with pedestrian and bike trails. Connect these trails to other regional trails (e.g. Bearskin, Hiawatha, Mountain Bay, etc.). Incorporate entertainment, educational opportunities, water access points, etc. along these trails and in parks.

- Develop and implement a park marketing plan.

    - Market the parks to residents and to potential external audiences (we must compete with other towns for patrons).
    - Establish park fundraising goals.
    - Grow and make better known the existing parks system endowment

- Develop RV/travel campground in appropriate parks, such as Riverside. (Capture local tourists who need to stay in area for an event such as the Tomahawk MDA/Harley Ride).

- Create a park east of Center Avenue (none currently exist).

- Create a park in the Johnson Street area (south of the Arena) & another park south of Joe Snow Rd. Both this area (Johnson St) and east of Center Avenue were designated several years ago as possible places to locate new parks.

- Volunteer groups will have adopted sections of parks to maintain/improve, and market. (Volunteers who have ownership, who take pride in the section they are maintaining. Marshfield is a good model).

    - More organized collaboration is needed to successfully manage volunteer groups.
    - Central project volunteer manager could be helpful.

    - Volunteers could take the lead in fundraising for park sections that they are maintaining.

- City should relax rules that make it difficult for or prevents park development.
- Improve communication between the city and current/potential volunteer and user groups.
- Create a broader definition of what a park is; includes more varied uses; location in other more non-traditional places such as industrial parks, roughage areas, expanded current playground areas, along rivers, etc.
- Develop park Emergency Action Plan.
- Connect parks with local Native American reservations; hold educational events in parks teaching non-natives what that culture is about and vice versa.
- All parks should be centers of outdoor educational workshops/events. Facilities should be developed to make this a reality.
- More uses for older children and younger adults.
- Develop access points from parks and connecting trails to rivers.
- Create more opportunities for indoor/outdoor recreation (more disk golf, etc.).
- Parks and Recreation Department will have to be changed; will need more resources, to achieve any of the suggestions made during this meeting.
- Develop Crime Prevention through Environmental Design plan. We need to plan ahead for this purpose.
- More winter utilization for all parks.
- Amphitheater, farmers market near the riverfront.
- Parks dept. does an outstanding job with the limited resources they have.
- 911 access analysis of each park - can you find a 911 caller in a park?
- Collaborate with whole community to satisfy a 1,000 kid event.
- Identify and expand entertainment & cultural opportunities within each park.

- Need a strong positive attitude, so that different ideas can be presented and people not mentally beat up.

- Need a year-round MARC building that does not have ice in it (hockey/ice skating) so others can use it in winter.

III. Ideas for Specific Parks

- Lion's Park bathroom facilities need upgrading.
- Level ground of the park near the library (prevent high water).
- Park and Recreation kids; there should be better organization of their group so they do not dominate the park, discouraging others from using it.
- MARC; there should be a bathroom facility closer to the ball diamonds.
- A grandstand should be built at Athletic Park.
- Complete the development of Normal Park. It should be developed into and entertainment park. This is perfect because the park is easy to find. Build off of the fact that this is the home of the Merrill City Band. Restrooms and landscaping work should be part of the development.
- Improve existing skateboard park primarily by developing some sound proofing.
- Make Gerbert Park more accessible, much easier to locate (primarily using directional signage).
- Cenotaph "Memorial" Park - needs extensive restoration, it is overgrown now.

IV. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place Wednesday, October 3, 2012, 6:00 p.m. (Likely to be held in Council Chambers.) The purposes of the meeting are to prioritize the primary suggestions that were made during the first session and to develop an overarching vision statement for the City of Merrill Parks & Recreation system.

City of Merrill Parks & Recreation Visioning Session

October 9, 2012
Process facilitated and report completed by
Art Lersch
University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County

Thirteen people, including local residents, City of Merrill Parks & Recreation members, the director of the city's Parks & Recreation Department, and a planner from North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning attended the second of two visioning sessions on October 3, 2012 related to the Merrill parks system. The conversation was facilitated by Art Lersch, Community Resource Development Educator, University of Wisconsin-Extension, Lincoln County.

I. Prioritizing Concepts

Participants prioritized the list of visionary concepts discussed during the first session. They identified the following priorities for the entire park system. The items are in no particular order.

- **Connectivity** (link pedestrian and bike trails.) Trails should become linear parks that will attract people of all ages throughout the year.

- **Build bathroom facilities** that can be used throughout the year. These facilities should be placed near trails/linear parks. Other new facilities should be built at existing parks.

- **Continue to upgrade athletic facilities.** This should always be done with keeping in mind the potential economic impact additional tournaments could have on the city.

- **Improve communication between parks user groups and the city.** Much of the work to develop connections between trails, build bathrooms, etc. cannot take place unless communication amongst stakeholders is improved. Without better communication, the collaborations necessary to make improvements to the entire system will not happen.

- **Increase park and recreation department resources**. Besides taking the lead on creating improvements in the system, additional resources are needed to help the department provide ongoing maintenance to parks that have undergone those improvements.

The group also emphasized that an effective **marketing plan** needs to be developed to attract people to the parks. They also indicated that the **Parks and Recreation Department focus on growing its existing endowment fund**. The department director reminded meeting participants that the fund can and should be used to help finance parks improvements but cannot be utilized for staff salaries/benefits.

There was some additional discussion about getting a better sense of who is using the parks based on age.

II. Other Concepts

The following list is a reminder of the issues not mentioned as priorities but should, the group indicated, be addressed further into the implementation of the new Outdoor Recreation Plan.

- Establish a city Public Works Department responsible for handling all park maintenance (e.g. City of Plover).
- Volunteer groups will have adopted sections of parks to maintain/improve, and market. (Volunteers who have ownership, who take pride in the section they are maintaining).
- Create a broader definition of what a park is; includes more varied uses; location in other more non-traditional places such as industrial parks, roughage areas, expanded current playground areas, along rivers, etc.
- All parks should be centers of outdoor educational workshops/events. Facilities should be developed to make this a reality.

Meeting participants noted that part of the "**broader definition of what a park is"** is embedded in the desire to develop linear parks throughout the city (trails) that are connected.

III. Vision Statement Development

After reviewing the concepts discussed during the last meeting under the appreciative inquiry scenario and the differences between a vision and a mission statement, the facilitator split the larger group into two work units. Each unit developed a draft vision statement.

During discussion about and wordsmithing of the two draft statements, the large group developed the following vision statement for the City of Merrill Parks System.

> *"MERRILL CITY OF PARKS IS COMMITTED TO CELEBRATING ITS HERITAGE THROUGH DIVERSIFIED OUTDOOR OPPORTUNITIES ALONG THE WISCONSIN AND PRAIRIE RIVERS WHICH ENHANCES QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL GENERATIONS."*

(Note: The group vacillated over the phrase "outdoor passions" versus "outdoor opportunities." Although "passions" was chosen, the word does not sound right in the context of the sentence. It will be up to the city Parks and Recreation Commission to change the wording back to "outdoor passions" if it wishes.)

ATTACHMENT D

Federal & State Outdoor Recreation Funding Programs

Wisconsin DNR Administered Programs

Community Service Specialist
Rhinelander Service Center
107 Sutliff Ave
Rhinelander WI 54501

Acquisition Of Development Rights Grants (ADR)

Helps to buy development rights (easements) for the protection of natural, agricultural, or forestry values, that would enhance nature-based outdoor recreation. Applicants compete for funds on a statewide basis.

Aids For The Acquisition And Development Of Local Parks (ADLP)

Helps to buy land or easements and develop or renovate local park and recreation area facilities for nature-based outdoor recreation purposes (e.g., trails, fishing access, and park support facilities). Applicants compete for funds on a regional basis.

All Terrain Vehicles (ATV)

Funds are available to provide funds to accommodate all-terrain vehicles through the acquiring, insuring, developing and maintaining of all-terrain vehicle trails and areas, including routes as per s. 23.33, Wis. Stats. Counties, towns, cities and villages are eligible to apply by April 15 on forms provided by the Department. Up to 100% of costs up to $125 pre mile if ATV trail is available for spring, summer and fall riding. Up to 100% of costs up to $60 per mile if the trail is available for winter riding opportunity. Up to 50% of the approved eligible costs for maintaining an all-terrain vehicle area. Up to 100% of the approved eligible costs to develop ATV trails and areas. Assistance is provided for the following, in priority order: 1) maintenance of existing approved trails and areas, including routes; 2) purchase of liability insurance; 3) acquisition of easements; 4) major rehabilitation of bridge structures or trails; and 5) acquisition of land in fee and development of new trails and areas.

All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Enforcement Patrol

Funds are available as per s.23.22(9), Wis. Stats. and NR 64.15, Wis. Adm. Code. A county must file a Notice of Intent to Patrol form with the Department on or before July 1 of each year. Claim forms shall be filed with the Department on or before September 1 of the year following the 12-month period for which the claim is made. Notice of Intent to Patrol and Claim forms are provided by the Department Bureau of Law Enforcement. Counties may receive up to 100% of their net costs for the enforcement of ch. 23.33, Wis. Adm. Code, at a rate no more than the regular straight-time rate. Fringe benefits cannot exceed 29% of the gross salary. Salaries of officers engaged in the enforcement of Chapter NR 23.33, Wis. Adm. Code, at a rate no more than the regular straight-time rate. Fringe benefits cannot exceed 29% of the gross salary. Travel, materials and supplies are reimbursable. Depreciation is calculated at a rate of 12% annually on all equipment over $100 except ATV's, which is figured at the rate of 20% annually.

Brownfields Green Space and Public Facilities Grant Program

Funds are available per s.292.79, Wis. Stats. to promote the cleanup of brownfields where the end-use has a long-term public benefit, including preservation of green space, development of recreational areas or use by a local government.

Lake Protection Grant

Funds are available to protect and improve the water quality of lakes and their ecosystems as per s. 281.69, Wis. Stats. Grants are available for purchasing land or easements, restoration of wetlands, development of local regulations to protect water quality, lake improvement activities called for in a Department approved plan, and countywide lake classification. Counties, towns, cities, villages, public authorities and qualified lake associations as defined in s. 30.92(1)(br), Wis. Stats., public inland lake districts, non-profit groups, and other local governmental units established for lake management are eligible to apply on forms provided by the Department. The state cost shares up to 75% of project costs not to exceed $200,000. Applications are due in the Regional offices by May 1 of each year.

Priorities are set on a statewide basis (see ch. NR 191.08, Wis. Adm. Code) and consider the following factors: 1) lakes which have not previously received a lake protection grant; 2) the degree to which the project provides for the protection or improvement of water quality; 3) the degree to which the project provides for protection or improvement of other aspects of the natural ecosystem such as fish, wildlife or natural beauty; 4) the availability of public access to, and public use of the lakes; 5) the degree to which the proposed project complements other lake and watershed management efforts; 6) the level of support for the project from other affected management units; and 7) the level of financial support provided by the sponsor.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

Money is available to encourage nationwide creation and interpretation of high quality outdoor recreational opportunities. The program funds both state and local outdoor recreation projects per Public Law 88-578, ch. NR 50.06, Wis. Adm. Code. Counties, cities, villages, towns, school districts, and Indian tribes are eligible for funding with an approved Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans. Up to 50% matching grants from the fund are available to state and local units of government. Priorities include acquisition of land where a scarcity of outdoor recreational land exists. Also, projects that provide access for the greatest number of potential users and provide the greatest opportunities for outdoor recreation are also desirable.

Eligible projects include acquisition of land for public outdoor recreational areas and preservation of water frontage and open space. Development of public outdoor park and recreational areas and their support facilities. Applications are available from the DNR regional Community Service Specialist. Completed applications are due to the appropriate DNR regional office by May 1 of each year.

Recreational Boating Facilities

Funds are available for the construction of capital improvements to provide safe recreational boating facilities and for feasibility studies related to the development of safe recreational facilities as per s. 30.92, Wis. Statutes. Counties, towns, cities, villages, sanitary districts, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts, and qualified lake associations are eligible to apply. Cost sharing is provided up to 50% for feasibility studies, construction costs, and certain types of acquisition costs. An additional 10% may be available if a municipality conducts a boating safety enforcement and education program approved by the Department.

Eligible projects include: 1) Facilities such as ramps and service docks required to gain access to the water; 2) structures such as bulkheads and breakwaters necessary to provide safe water conditions for boaters; 3) activities such as dredging to provide safe water depths for recreational boating. (Dredging is an eligible project only when it is associated with project development at the project site; maintenance dredging is not eligible.); 4) support facilities limited to parking lots, sanitary facilities and security lighting; 5) acquisition of equipment to cut and remove aquatic plants; 6) acquisition of equipment to collect and remove floating trash and debris from a waterway; 7) dredging of channels in waterways for recreational boating purposes (not more than once in ten years)(inland waters); and 8) acquisition of aids to navigation and regulatory markers. These factors are considered in establishing priorities - distance of proposed project from other recreational boating facilities, demand for safe boating facilities, existing facilities, projects underway, commitment of funds, location of proposed project within the region identified in s. 25.29(7), Wis. Stats.

River Management Grants

River Protection Management grants provide state cost sharing assistance to eligible sponsors for implementing a specific activity or set of activities, other than planning activities, to protect or improve a river ecosystem as per s. 181.70 Wis. Stats. Counties, towns, cities, villages, non-profit groups and qualified river management organizations, and other local governmental units as defined in s. 66.0131, Wis. Stats., are eligible to apply on forms provided by the Department. The state cost shares up to 75% of project costs not to exceed $50,000. Activities eligible for funding include: 1) purchase of land or of an easement subject to certain requirements, 2) development of local ordinances, and 3) restoration of in-stream or shoreland habitat. Applications are due in the Regional offices by May 1 of each year.

Recreational Trails Act (RTA)

The Recreational Trails Act (RTA) provides funds to local units of government through the transfer of federal gas excise taxes paid on fuel used in off-highway vehicles. These funds are used to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for motorized (30% of RTA funds), non-motorized (30% of RTA funds), and both (40% of RTA funds) types of recreational trail uses. This federal program was reauthorized in 2005 under SAFETEA-LU.

Eligible projects in order of priority are: maintenance and restoration of existing trails, development and rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and trail linkages, construction of new trails with certain restrictions on federal lands, and acquisition of easement or property for trails.

Snowmobile Club Signs

Funds are available to provide free cardboard trail signs and reflective material to snowmobile clubs agreeing to open their trails to public use as per s. 23.09(26) and Chapter 350, Wis. Stats. Funds are limited to no more than $15,000 per year for the purchase of signs and reflective material. Applications are due in the Region offices by April 15 of each year for the following season.

Snowmobile Route Signs

Funds are available to provide costs for initial signing of snowmobile routes and trail crossing warning signs as per s. 23.09(26) and Chapter 350, Wis. Stats. Towns, cities, and villages are eligible to apply on forms provided by the Department. No local match is required, but state

funding is limited to no more than $30,000 per year for the route sign program. Applications are due in the Region offices by April 15 of each year for the following season.

Snowmobile Enforcement Patrols

Funds are available to encourage county snowmobile patrols to function as a law enforcement unit for the enforcement of State Statute 350 as per s. 350.12(4)(a)(4), Wis. Stats. and NR 50.12, 20.370(4)(ft), Wis. Adm. Code. Counties are eligible to apply on forms provided by the Bureau of Law Enforcement. A county must file a Notice of Intent to Patrol form with the Department on or before July 1 of each year. Claim forms shall be filed with the Department on or before June 1 of the year following the 12-month period for which the claim is made. Salaries of officers engaged in the enforcement of ch. 350, Wis. Stats., at a rate no more than the regular straight-time rate are eligible. Fringe benefits cannot exceed 29% of the gross salary. Travel, materials and supplies are reimbursable. Depreciation is calculated at a rate of 20% annually on all equipment over $1,000.

Snowmobile Trail Aids

Funds are available to provide a statewide system of well-signed and well-groomed snowmobile trails for public use and enjoyment as per s. 23.09(26), and Chapter 350, Wis. Stats. Counties are eligible to apply on forms provided by the Department. 100% cost sharing is provided with limits on maintenance costs of $250, and development costs of $500 per mile. Applications are due in the appropriate Region Office by April 15 of each year. Eligible projects include maintenance of trails, which includes signing, brushing, and grooming of snowmobile trails, purchase of liability insurance and acquisition of short term easements, development of trails which may include general trail construction, bridges, gates and signs, major rehabilitation of existing snowmobile bridges and rehabilitation of existing trail segments

Stewardship Grants for Nonprofit Conservation Organizations

Funds are available for the acquisition of land or easements for conservation purposes, and restoration of wildlife habitat as per s. 23.096, 23.092, 23.094, 23.17, 23.175, and 23.27, Wis. Stats. and NR 51, Wis. Adm. Code. Nonprofit conservation organizations are eligible to apply on forms provided by the Department. There is a 50% local match required. Priorities include acquisition of wildlife habitat, acquisition of lands with special scientific or ecological value, rare and endangered habitats and species, acquisition of stream corridors, acquisition of land for state trails including the Ice Age Trail and North Country Trail and restoration of wetlands and grasslands. Eligible types of projects include fee simple and easement acquisitions and habitat restoration projects.

Urban Green Space

Funds are available to provide open natural space in proximity to urban development, to protect from development land with scenic, ecological or natural values in urban areas, and to provide land for noncommercial gardening in urban areas as per s. 23.09(19) Wis. Stats. Counties, Towns, Cities, Villages, lake districts, Indian tribes and nonprofit conservation organizations under s. 23.096 Wis. Stats. are eligible to apply on forms provided by the Department. There is a 50% local match required. Applications are due in the appropriate Region office by May 1 of each year.

Urban Rivers Grant

Funds are available to improve outdoor recreation opportunities by increasing access to urban rivers for a variety of public uses, economic revitalization through the improvement of the environmental quality in urban river corridors, and preserving and revitalizing historical, cultural, or natural areas as per s. 30.277, Wis. Stats. Counties, Towns, Cities, Villages, and Tribal units of government are eligible to apply on forms provided by the Department. There is a 50% local match required. Applications are due in the Region office by May 1 of each year. Eligible projects include acquisition of urban riverfront land that is part of an outdoor recreation plan adopted by the local unit of government. Land that is specifically identified in a river corridor plan for economic revitalization and outdoor recreation.

Wisconsin DOT Administered Programs

WisDOT District Bike & Ped Coordinator
510 Hanson Lake Road
Rhinelander, WI 54501-0777

Local Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program

Objective: To promote activities which enhance the surface transportation system. Program funds are intended to accomplish something "above and beyond" what is normally done on highway projects. Eligible federal categories include bicycle and pedestrain facilities, historic transportation structures and landscaping/streetscaping projects.

Surface Transportation Program – Discretionary (STP-D)

Objective: To encourage projects that foster alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips, such as facilities for pedestrians and bicycles, development of bicycle/pedestrian plans, purchase of replacement vehicles for transit systems, and other transportation demand management (TDM) projects. Funding is 80% federal; 20% local.

Transportation Enhancement Program

(Part of the Statewide Multi-modal Improvement Program (SMIP))

Program Description: Transportation enhancements (TE) are transportation-related activities that are designed to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of transportation systems. The transportation enhancements program provides for the implementation of a variety of non-traditional projects, with examples ranging from the restoration of historic transportation facilities, to bike and pedestrian facilities, to landscaping and scenic beautification, and to the mitigation of water pollution from highway runoff. Most of the requests and projects awarded in Wisconsin have been for bicycle facilities. Examples of bicycle projects include multi-use trails (in greenways, former rail trails, etc.), paved shoulders, bike lanes, bicycle route signage, bicycle parking, overpasses/underpasses/bridges, and sidewalks. Transportation enhancement activities must relate to surface transportation. Federal regulations restrict the use of funds on trails that allow motorized users, except snowmobiles. TEA 21 expanded the definition of transportation enhancements eligibility to specifically include the provision of safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists, which had not been clearly eligible under ISTEA.

Other Wisconsin DOT Funding Sources

Hazard Elimination Program - Bicycle and pedestrian projects are now eligible for this program. This program focuses on projects intended for locations that should have a documented history of previous crashes.

Contact WisDOT District coordinators first for more details.

Incidental Improvements - Bicycle and pedestrian projects are broadly eligible for funding from most of the major federal-aid programs. One of the most cost-effective ways of accommodating bicycle and pedestrian accommodations is to incorporate them as part of larger reconstruction, new construction and some repaving projects. Generally, the same source of funding can be used for the bicycle and pedestrian accommodation as is used for the larger highway improvement, if the bike/ped accommodation is "incidental" in scope and cost to the overall project. Overall, most bicycle and pedestrian accommodations within the state are made as incidental improvements.

Federal Assistance Programs

All other federal programs are listed under Wisconsin DNR Administered Programs.

Challenge Cost Share Program (CCSP) – National Park Service

The purpose of the Challenge Cost Share Program (CCSP) is intended to increase participation by qualified partners in the preservation and improvement of National Park Service natural, cultural, and recreational resources; in all authorized Service programs and activities; and on national trails. NPS and partners should work together on projects with mutually beneficial, shared outcomes.

The CCSP is a matching fund program. An equal amount of eligible and matching share (minimum 50%) of cash, goods, or services from non-federal sources is required. The maximum CCSP award is $30,000. Projects selected should generally be able to be completed within one year.

One-third of the CCSP pot is earmarked for National Trails System Projects. Thus supporting work under the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1241-51), such as: National Scenic and Historic trails, National Scenic and Historic Trails in parks, National Recreation Trails, and rail-trail projects.

For additional information about this program and the application process, please contact the CCSP Program Coordinators for Wisconsin:

Tom Gilbert, Superintendent **or** **Pam Schuler, Trail Manager**
tom_gilbert@nps.gov pam_schuler@nps.gov

National Park Service
700 Rayovac Dr., Suite 100
Madison, WI 53711
608-441-5610

ATTACHMENT E

Wisconsin SCORP 2011-2016 Summary

Summarized by NCWRPC

The 2011–2016 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

This SCORP 2011-2016 summary was created by NCWRPC staff as a way of introducing this state plan to all audiences. Most of the text was clipped directly from the SCORP, and table numbers are the same as in the SCORP for easy reference when reading the full SCORP.

Chapter 1 – Wisconsin Natural Amenities, Population Changes, and Recreation Destinations.

The 2011-2016 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) serves as a blueprint for state and local outdoor recreation planning through support of national initiatives, sets the course for recreation within the state by describing current recreation supply and trends, and provides a framework for future recreation development and focus.

Every five years, Wisconsin publishes a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) as a requirement by the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965. At its core, the document is used to help allocate federal funds equitably among local communities, but the document also transcends many levels of outdoor recreation discussion and policy.

For the 2011-2016 Wisconsin SCORP, the State not only met the requirements of the LWCF Act but also reflected on the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative, launched in 2010 by President Obama, for an approach that asks the American people to become partners in preserving and enhancing their conservation and recreation heritage for the 21st-century. This SCORP is presented out of the respect to the state's great outdoor recreation resources and their value to the people of Wisconsin.

This document shows a clear vision of how preserving and improving recreation opportunities in Wisconsin fits within a broader national initiative of conservation and recreation. This SCORP further targets assessments on several key relationships that include:

1. public health and wellness,
2. urban access to outdoor recreation, and
3. public and private partnerships.

America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative calls for greater federal support to grassroots conservation efforts through financial and technical assistance. Direction for the AGO Initiative was taken from the American people through 51 public listening sessions held across the country as well as 105,000 submitted comments. Through this public engagement came the visions and goals listed in Figure 1-1.

Figure 1-1: **Outline of Wisconsin SCORP Alignment with AGO Visions**

Chapter 2 – Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Uses and Trends

As the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative looks to reconnect Americans to the outdoors, Wisconsin must examine its outdoor recreation uses and trends to better understand how Wisconsinites currently connect to the state's outdoor recreation resources. The second theme of the AGO Report, "Enhance Recreational Access and Opportunities," was developed out of the public's desire to remove barriers to recreation and to make recreation a higher priority for land and water management agencies. The survey analyses in this chapter can be used to determine what improvements are needed in regard to access and opportunities in outdoor recreation.

By identifying outdoor recreation demand by demographics and by projecting outdoor recreation activity trends relevant to the immediate future, Chapter 2 of the SCORP gives Wisconsin communities direction in outdoor recreation planning. Under AGO, community-based efforts to increase outdoor recreation access will receive federal government support (AGO Recommendation 2.2). Such support will include technical assistance for local, state, and tribal efforts to enhance recreation (AGO Action Item 2.2a), and backing of community programs that improve safety of open spaces and access routes (AGO Action Item 2.2c).

SCORP

Fifteen Year Recreation Trends

A number of recreation activities have seen exponential growth over the last 15 years. In terms of sheer numbers, soccer has outpaced every other outdoor recreation activity. This growth can be attributed to the number of youth soccer leagues that have been formed over the last decade. Table 2.7 shows the top 10 recreational activities by total numbers.

Another way to show growth is by percentage change. This method shows a different set of recreation activities that have grown in popularity. Interestingly, most participants in these activities are urban residents. Table 2-8 reflects the top 10 recreational activities by total percentage change.

Table 2-7 Top Growth Wisconsin Recreation Activities 1994-2009 (Age 16+)

Activity	1994 Survey*	2009 Survey*	Number of Participants (1,000s)
Soccer outdoors	179.1	1,460.0	+ 1,280.9
View/photograph other wildlife	1,582.9	2,605.8	+ 1,022.9
Golf	888.8	1,882.3	+ 993.5
Handball or racquetball outdoors	96.8	1,058.3	+ 961.5
Walk for pleasure	2,988.0	3,946.9	+ 950.9
Attend outdoor sports events	1,995.2	2,923.5	+ 928.3
Bicycling	1,486.8	2,190.8	+ 704.0
Day hiking	949.0	1,652.8	+ 703.8
Running or jogging	803.8	1,446.8	+ 643.0
View/photograph birds	1,261.4	1,877.5	+ 616.1

*Each survey represents a rolling average of five previous years.
Source: WI SCORP 2011-2016

Table 2-8 Top Growth Wisconsin Recreation Activities by Percent 1994-2009 (Age 16+)

Activity	1994 Survey*	2009 Survey*	Percent Difference
Handball or racquetball outdoors	96.8	1,058.3	+ 993.3%
Soccer outdoors	179.1	1,460.0	+ 715.2%
Kayaking	46.6	328.4	+ 604.7%
Surfing	10.3	44.5	+ 332%
Football	282.5	852.4	+ 201.7%
Horseback riding	139.3	389.9	+ 179.9%
Mountain/rock climbing	53.3	122.9	+ 130.6%
Use personal watercraft	131.9	293.7	+ 122.7%
Golf	888.8	1,882.3	+ 111.8%
Snowboarding	77.7	164.4	+ 111.6%

*Each survey represents a rolling average of five previous years.
Source: WI SCORP 2011-2016

Table 2-9 considers the percentage changes in recreation participation rates, as well as industry forecasts and opinions from recreation professionals, to suggest which activities will be popular in the future. These observations are made for a five year period, and therefore reflect the most pressing demands on recreation in the immediate future.

Table 2-9: **Projected Trends in Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Activities**

Increasing Demand	Adventure racing	Popular as both an individual and a group activity.
	Driving for pleasure	An easy activity for the aging baby boomer generation.
	Developed/RV camping	Baby boomers are a continued driving force for this growth.
	Kayaking	Cheaper entry points have attracted more participants.
	Visit a dog park	Urban residents continue to demand more of these areas.
	Soccer outdoors	Youth growth is still strong in urban areas.
	BMX biking	X Games popularity may be driving this growth.
	Climbing	Indoor climbing walls have led to an outdoor resurgence.
	Stand up paddling/paddleboarding	A fast growing water sport sweeping the country.
	Triathlon (on- and off-road)	Varying distance events have allowed for growth.
	Off-highway vehicle driving	Post recession growth continues.
	Gardening or landscaping for pleasure	The "grow local" concept is taking hold at many levels.
Stable Demand	Walk for pleasure	Market saturation does not allow for large growth.
	Running or jogging	Gen Y is replacing the baby boomers for this activity.
	Water parks	Recession may have caused this growth to slow.
	Motorboating	Still easy access in a water-based state.
	Day hiking	Popular with many generations.
	Golf	Time constraints do not allow for growth.
	Tent camping	Continues to be stable, but growth is illusive.
	Snowboarding	May have peaked after 20 years of growth.
	Trail running	A stable niche activity with Gen Y.
	View/photograph wildlife	An easy activity that spans generations.
	Bicycling (road and non-paved)	Popular with many generations – access is still key.
	Snowshoeing	After large growth, this has stabilized.
Decreasing Demand	Hunting	Continues to struggle with generational loss and private access.
	Inline skating	A large decrease in the last six years, the bottom may be near.
	Skateboarding/skate parks	Gen M is free-skating with longboards.
	Horseback riding on trails	Recession impacts have caused this to decrease with no rebound.
	Softball	Baby boomers continue to leave this sport.
	Downhill skiing	Gen Y does not have the numbers to replace aging baby boomers.

Chapter 3 – Outdoor Recreation and Public Health.

The third goal of the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Report, "Raise Awareness of the Value and Benefits of America's Outdoors," was developed out of the public's concern that youth are lacking exposure to outdoor education. AGO sets out to partner with Let's Move Outside! to instill lasting values of health and wellness, and environmental conservation in youths.

By examining the component of health and wellness that motivates recreation and by comparing the most popular outdoor activities that yield the greatest health benefits, Chapter 3 lays the groundwork for recreation planners seeking to make outdoor recreation relevant to today's youth and Wisconsinites. Wisconsin, too, should raise public awareness of the physical and mental health benefits of the great outdoors (AGO Recommendation 3.1). Communities can look to the federal government for support of campaigns that demonstrate and advertise outdoor recreation for wellness as well as support of parks and outdoor spaces that facilitate physical activity (AGO Action Item 3.1b).

The built environment plays an important role in our ability to affect public health and wellness (Gordon-Larsen et al. 2000; Frumkin et al. 2004). For example, parks, trails, and sports facilities are key local assets that allow for convenient, safe, and attractive places for people to participate in physical activities of all kinds (Sallis et al. 2006). While public health and wellness are affected by a number of social, economic, and environmental determinants, there is increasing evidence that improving access to outdoor locations favorable for physical activity can act to lower obesity levels and improve health outcomes among target populations (Campbell and Cornelssen 2004; Kelly et al. 2007; Lovasi et al. 2009).

Recreation planning and park design have been shown to affect use. Characteristics and specific features found in parks are important in fostering the use of these public spaces for physical activity. Features in trails and parks (playground equipment, sports facilities, etc.) have been shown to enhance that property's use for physical activity (Kaczynski et at. 2008).

Outdoor recreation encompasses a wide variety of activities, each of which has a different level of physical activity. In many cases, health and wellness outcomes can be improved through participation in activities that require higher levels of physical exertion. Table 3-1 shows recreation activity intensities by appropriate facility type. The higher the MET (metabolic intensity) the higher the energy expenditure by a person doing that activity.

Table 3-1 Recreation Intensities by Appropriate Facility Type

Facility	Activity	MET
Water – Lakes, streams, fishery areas, boat launches, marinas, piers, trout streams, waterfalls, whitewater rafting rivers	Canoeing	7
	Rowing	7
	Scuba diving	7
	Ice skating outdoors	7
	Swimming in lakes, streams, etc.	6
	Waterskiing	6
	Rafting	5
	Snorkeling	5
	Kayaking	5
	Fishing, general, warm water	3
	Sailing	3
	Windsurfing	3
	Surfing	3
	Boating, power boat	2.5
	Ice fishing	2
	View/photograph scenery and wildlife	2
	Visit a waterside	2
	Sightseeing	2
	Boat tours or excursions	2
	Family gathering	1.5
	Picnicking	1.5
Beaches, shoreline	Volleyball, outdoors	8
	Walking for pleasure	3.5
	Fishing, general, warm water	3
	Camping	2.5
	View/photograph scenery and wildlife	2
	Visit a waterside	2
	Sightseeing	2
	Family gathering	1.5
	Picnicking	1.5
Forested land (state parks or natural areas, forest reserves, trust lands, wildlife and wilderness areas)	Rock climbing	9.5
	Orienteering	9
	Mountain biking	8.5
	Mountain climbing	8
	Skiing, cross-country	8
	Snowshoeing	8
	Backpacking	7
	Dog sledding	7
	Hiking, general	6
	Walking for pleasure	3.5
	Geocaching	3.3
	Camping	2.5
	View/photograph scenery and wildlife	2
	Visit a wilderness or primitive area	2
	Sightseeing	2
	Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.	2
	Family gathering	1.5
	Picnicking	1.5

Facility	Activity	MET
Ski hills	Snowshoeing	8
	Sledding	7
	Skiing, downhill	6
	Snowboarding	6
Local parks, parkland	Inline skating	12.5
	Running	9
	Handball outdoors	8
	Bicycling	8
	Volleyball, outdoors	8
	Football	8
	Sledding	7
	Tennis	7
	Racquetball	7
	Soccer	7
	Hiking, general	6
	Basketball	6
	Skateboarding	5
	Softball, or Baseball	5
	Walking for pleasure	3.5
	Disc golf	3
	Visit a dog park to walk a pet	3
	Yard games, e.g., horseshoes	2.5
	View/photograph scenery and wildlife	2
	Family gathering	1.5
	Picnicking	1.5
	Attend outdoor concerts, plays, etc.	1.5
	Attend outdoor sports events	1.5
Trails – single- or multi-use	Inline skating	12.5
	Running	9
	Mountain biking	8.5
	Bicycling	8
	Cross-country skiing	8
	Snowshoeing	8
	Backpacking	7
	Dog sledding	7
	Hiking, general	6
	Horseback riding	4
	Walking for pleasure	3.5
	Snowmobiling	3.5
	Off-road motorcycling	2.5
	Off-road driving with an ATV	2.5
	View/photograph scenery and wildlife	2
	Sightseeing	2
Trails – snow	Snowshoeing	8
	Skiing, cross-country	8
	Dog sledding	7
	Snowmobiling	3.5
	Off-road driving with an ATV	2.5

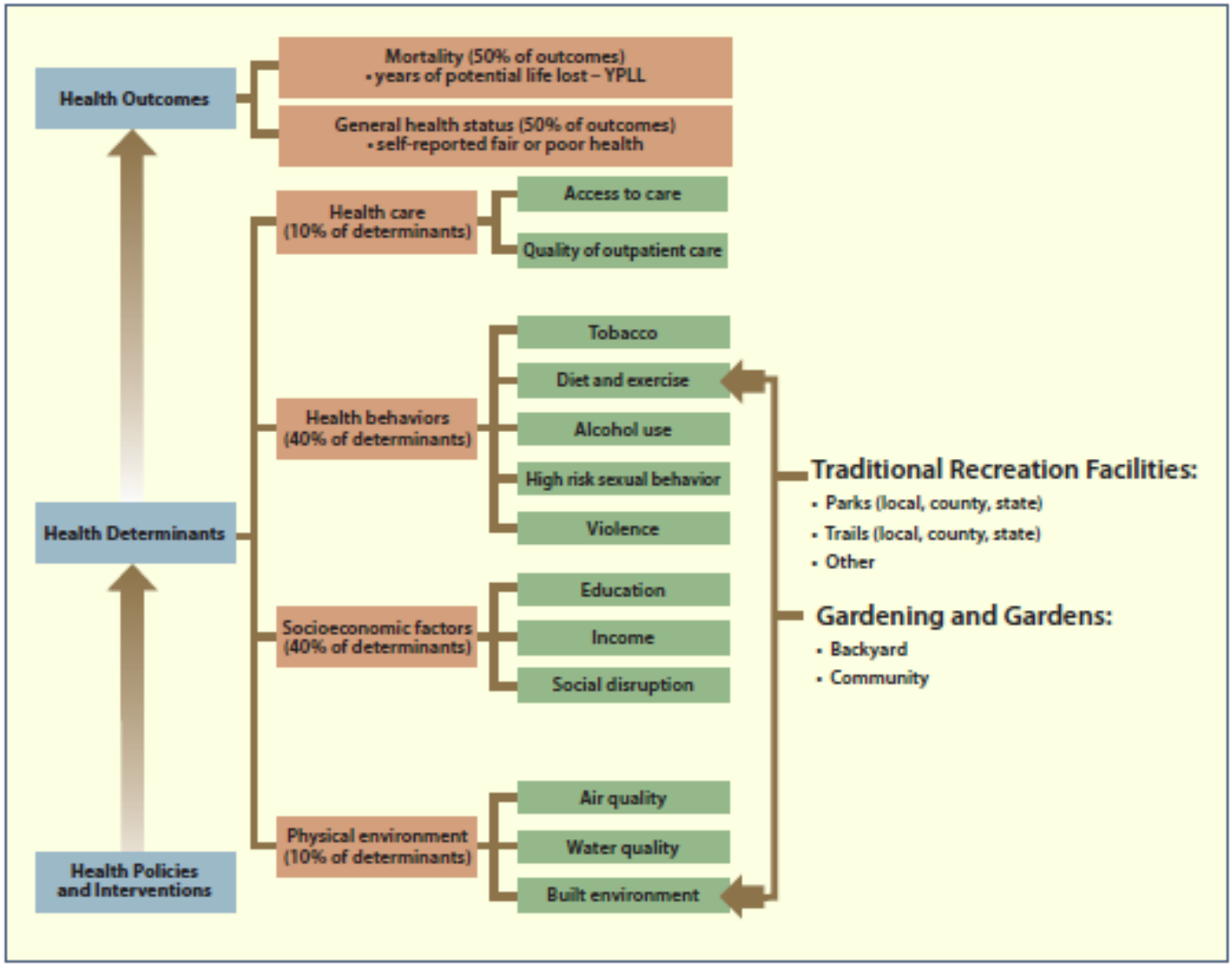
Table 3-1 Recreation Intensities by Appropriate Facility Type (continued)

Facility	Activity	MET
Sports facilities - indoor and outdoor	Football	8
	Volleyball	8
	Handball	7.5
	Soccer	7
	Tennis	7
	Paintball	6
	Basketball	6
	Baseball	5
	Softball	5
	Skateboarding	5
Outdoor ice rinks	Ice hockey outdoors	8
	Ice skating outdoors	7
Public hunting lands	Hunting, big game	6
	Hunting, migratory bird	6
	Hunting, small game	5
Golf courses, driving ranges, resorts, and country clubs	Golf	4.5
Horseback riding stables, facilities, trails	Horseback riding	4
Public outdoor swimming pools	Swimming in an outdoor pool	4
Disc golf courses	Disc golf	3
Dog parks	Visit a dog park to walk a pet	3
ATV parks	Off-road riding with an ATV	2.5
Shooting ranges (archery, guns, etc.)	Target shooting	2.5
Dirt bike/motocross tracks	Off-road motorcycling	2.5
Campgrounds	Camping	2.5
Arboretums	Running	9
	Bicycling	8
	Skiing, cross-country	8
	Snowshoeing	8
	Hiking, general	6
	Geocaching	3.3
	View/photograph scenery and wildlife	2
	Driving for pleasure	2
	Visit nature centers	2
	Sightseeing	2
	Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.	2
	Nature-based educational programs	2
Playgrounds	Basketball	6
	Yard games	2.5
	Picnicking	1.5

Facility	Activity	MET
Lighthouses	View/photograph scenery	2
	Visit historic sites	2
Nature centers	Visit nature centers	2
	Nature-based educational programs	2
Outdoor water/theme parks	Swimming, pool	4
	Visit outdoor theme/water park	2
Zoos	Walking for pleasure	3.5
	View/photograph wildlife	2
	Nature-based educational programs	2
	Visit nature centers	2
Caves	Visiting a cave	2
	View/photograph scenery and wildlife	2
	Visit prehistoric/archeological sites	2

Improving public health outcomes through policy requires an understanding of health determinants (the factors that affect public health and wellness). These determinants include health care, health behaviors, socioeconomic factors, and the physical environment. Health determinants are in turn associated with a variety of behavioral, demographic, and environmental attributes as summarized in Figure 3-2.

Figure 3-2: **Conceptual Relationships Between Local Public Health and Wellness Outcomes**



Source: Adapted from Peppard et al. 2008.

Gardening: The Winning Combination of Outdoor Recreation and Public Health Benefits

Gardening is one of the most popular recreational activities in the United States and provides many benefits, including improved access to fresh produce, increased physical activity, and community-building. A recent recreation participation survey suggests that almost 70% of Wisconsin adults garden or landscape for pleasure. This makes gardening & landscaping the second most popular recreation activity in the state, second only to walking. General gardening results in a MET value of 4.0, categorizing it as a moderate intensity activity.

Gardening activities can be divided into two categories:

1. backyard and
2. community.

Around 90% of gardening takes place in backyard gardens and recent research suggests that 35% of Wisconsin households maintain a backyard garden.

One particularly valuable aspect of gardening as an outdoor activity is its potential to keep an individual engaged frequently over a growing season.

Among other outdoor recreation activities, gardening is relatively unique in its connection to personal nutrition. Only hunting, fishing, and foraging activities have a similarly direct connection to eating habits. More fresh produce means that gardeners are more likely to make home-cooked meals, which are typically lower in salt and sugar, and contain fewer excess calories.

Communities interested in creating a new garden may consider seeking grant money to help start the project. The federal People's Garden Grant Program (PGGP), administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is one possible funding source.

Chapter Summary

In order to encourage greater participation in activities that yield greater health benefits, the following recommendations are offered, sorted by facility type:

Trails – Plans should be created for entire corridors. Multi-tread trails should be constructed to avoid conflict between users. For example, walkers and runners can use gravel trails while bikers ride on adjacent paved trails. Signage should indicate the separation of users. **(NCWRPC Note: Gravel trails could be problematic for maintenance, and people may not want them due to dust and mud concerns. WisDOT recommends at least an 8-foot (10-foot preferred) paved multiuse asphalt path).**

Water – The DNR should fund and support improved access to lakes, streams, and other bodies of water, as well as facilities that cater to these activities (such as piers, boat launches, rental facilities, etc.). Wisconsin is home to countless lakes and streams, and it is important to ensure access to these amenities.

Snow – Non-motorized snow sports were generally ranked as moderate to high intensity and are therefore beneficial to health. Motorized uses, while more popular, have fewer health benefits. Trails should be separated between these two usage types, with certain trails designated for non-motorized uses only. This will make users feel safe and help to increase participation.

Ice Rinks – Outdoor rinks cater to ice skating and hockey, both of which are high-intensity activities. Municipalities should involve neighborhood associations and other groups with shoveling and maintenance tasks. The City of Madison started this initiative in 2011, and the program has been successful with active neighborhood groups.

Sports Facilities – Organized sports (such as basketball, soccer, and football) are high and moderate intensity activities with good participation levels. Government entities should try to partner with private sports facility providers in order to increase participation while efficiently managing public funds. For example, a municipality may give a sports complex incentives through Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or other means if they are open one night a week to the public.

Team Sport Leagues – Some high-intensity team sports are growing in popularity (particularly handball, football, volleyball, and soccer). If open space is available, fields should be created for use by recreation sports leagues.

Safety – Feeling safe can be addressed through increased police presence, increased street lighting, traffic safety, and a decrease in the amount of vacant buildings. These changes will make residents feel safer traveling to and from recreation sites, and using parks and open spaces. More people using recreation sites will help to increase physical activity rates of Wisconsin residents. Safety can also be promoted through using bike paths to connect residential areas to local schools, which would provide students with a safe route to walk or bike to school. This is consistent with Wisconsin's Safe Routes To School (SRTS) program, which works to promote healthy lifestyles in young children by giving them options other than cars to get to school. SRTS is funded through the revised federal transportation act – MAP-21.

> **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)** theories contend that law enforcement officers, architects, city planners, landscape and interior designers, and resident volunteers can create a climate of safety in a community right from the start. CPTED's goal is to prevent crime by designing a physical environment that positively influences human behavior. The theory is based on four principles: natural access control, natural surveillance, territoriality, and maintenance. **(Source: National Crime Prevention Council – NCWRPC added.)**

Chapter 4 – Access to Outdoor Recreation in Urban Wisconsin.

In response to rural-to-urban population growth and expansion in counties bordering out-of-state metropolitan areas, Wisconsin needs to launch a new generation of urban parks and green spaces. One of America's Great Outdoors (AGO) goals, "Establish Great Urban Parks and Community Green Spaces," was developed out of the public's demand for outdoor recreation facilities and associated benefits—improved health, community ties, and economy—closer to their home, work, and school.

For urban parks planning insight, Chapter 4 considers various urban recreation barriers and solutions, and analyzes peer-to-peer statistics for 145 municipalities. As AGO encourages use of the Land and Water Conservation Fund to create and enhance urban parks and community green spaces (AGO Recommendation 6.1), Wisconsin can develop new parks in overlooked urban waters and former industrial sites to suit emerging urban recreation activities (AGO Action Items 6.3c and 6.3b). Satisfying Wisconsin's need to unify park systems, AGO will support local, state, and tribal governments and communities to connect federal parks to urban and neighborhood parks by building community paths and sidewalks (AGO Action Items 6.4b and 6.4a).

Theme Overview

Urban recreation themes developed for this SCORP can also be a useful guide to analyze the benefits and availability of urban parklands and greenway open spaces in Wisconsin. These themes also provide an important framework for future recommendations and should be taken into consideration when planning for urban-based recreation.

THEME: The link between urban parks and public health
Health agencies at every level of government acknowledge that local facilities in urban areas are important for public health. Studies question the magnitude of the causal connection between park provisions and public health, recognizing the complex nature of the topic.

THEME: Standardized Metrics for Quality, Distance, and Size of Recreation Areas
Standard metrics for the quality and distribution of urban parklands and greenway open spaces will need to be developed. (**NCWRPC Note:** The DNR already created size metrics in their "Park & Recreation Designs, and Recreation Supply Levels" classification system.)

THEME: Classification of Facilities and Activities
Just as standardized guidelines for urban recreational facilities will help guide future research and development, so too will a classification scheme for types of facilities and recreational activities. The National Parks and Recreation Association has created a park hierarchy (e.g. mini, neighborhood, community, and special use parks), but other facilities may not fit into these categories (e.g. trails and greenways, water trails, zoos, etc). There is no clear distinction between bicycle and pedestrian facilities that are considered recreational and those that provide transportation and access functions. As new classification systems are developed, it will be important to incorporate new and emerging

recreation activities. Numerous articles allude to new trends in parks. Rooftop gardens and repurposed brownfields are becoming prime locations for outdoor recreational space in cities. For example, Brooklyn's High Line trail was created on an abandoned elevated railroad bed; and a tot park in Wausau was created by razing a factory, but keeping the brick chimney as a focal point. These recent trends of non-traditional facility locations and the rise in popular activities like adventure recreation may require innovative or more nuanced classification schemes.

THEME: Accommodating Various Demographic Groups
Related to the above trends, literature repeatedly identifies the importance of catering to the needs of different demographic groups based on age, gender, race, and ethnicity. The preferences of nearby groups should be considered in the design and maintenance of parks and other facilities. Keeping local demographic makeup and associated recreational use patterns in mind should help determine the type and nature of facilities that are provided in a given area.

THEME: The Importance of Safety
Safety was a noted consideration in a number of reviewed studies. The safety of a facility and the ability to get to and from the facility safely can play a critical role in determining the level of use for some outdoor recreational facilities like trails and parkways.

THEME: Aesthetic Appeal and Placement
Two other factors that can help determine the success of parks and urban recreation facilities are a facility's aesthetic appeal and placement. Level of maintenance and design of a facility both lend to its aesthetic appeal. Aesthetic appeal can either attract participants or turn away potential users. (NCWRPC NOTE: No specifics provided for placement)

THEME: Financing Urban Parks and Greenways
While research recognizes the benefits of parks and supports an increase in community recreation facilities, the fact remains that financing these facilities in a sustainable and equitable way is not easy. Creative approaches like public-private partnerships are being employed in some places. The Great Communities Collaborative (2007) discusses a number of possible financing strategies, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches. Recommendations for improving Wisconsin's urban parks and greenways should be sensitive to the fiscal stress of local governmental units.

Urban Park and Trail Accessibility

Recreation that occurs close to home is an important aspect of outdoor recreation that directly affects residents of communities throughout the state.

Walking is by far the most popular outdoor activity in Wisconsin. While much of recreational walking takes place on neighborhood sidewalks, the presence of parks and trails plays a significant role in activities like walking. Research has linked the presence of parks, trails, enjoyable scenery, and other people exercising to increased physical activity (Rosenberger et al. 2005; 2009). These are all environmental factors that are directly or indirectly provided by parks and trails.

Park and trail accessibility can be measured by the percentage of residents that live within walking

distance, which is defined as within ½ mile. Over 70% of Wisconsin residents do not live within a ½-mile walk of a park or trail. Recent data from the CDC point to the fact that Wisconsin is behind the national average in percentage of youth with parks or playgrounds, community centers, and sidewalks or walking paths available in their neighborhoods (USD-HHS 2011).

Focus Groups and Expert Observations

In 2010, a focus group and expert interviews were held to assess urban recreation barriers. From these interactions, the following themes emerged that highlight barriers, as well as opportunities for addressing these barriers. The primary barriers and opportunities are as follows:

- Lack of real and perceived safety from crime and traffic.
  - Create safe spaces by bringing traffic to the park and altering park design so there are no hidden places.
  - Bring foot traffic by offering programming and versatile spaces.
  - Install traffic calming structures on area streets and crosswalks and reduce speed limits.
- Lack of desired facilities and necessary amenities.
  - Create versatile facilities like multipurpose fields and provide basic amenities including unlocked bathrooms and drinking fountains.
  - Rehabilitate or tear down blighted or unsafe infrastructure.
- Lack of connectivity.
  - Increase park connectivity with surrounding communities and other parks via greenways and bike paths.
- Lack of programming.
  - Create programming including walking clubs, which are very popular in urban areas, using neighborhood partnerships.

  Programming may also be developed through governmental partnerships and funding strategies. A good example of this is the Center for Resilient Cities (CRC) in Milwaukee. The CRC has a development agreement with Milwaukee County that allows the CRC to oversee final park and recreation design. CRC holds all funds in escrow, and they are able to raise more funds than the city or county because they are a 501(c)(3), meaning that donations to the organization are tax-deductible, the organization is tax-exempt, and CRC projects are eligible for a wider range of grants. In discussions with the CRC, the organization noted that people are often more comfortable donating to a non-profit than the City for specific projects because non-profits are seen as more transparent. The CRC is able to leverage its existing neighborhood connections to build community trust, respond to community desires, and help in the operation of park programming. The County provides money for capital expenditures (such as playground structures or berm removal), and the CRC helps fund the programmatic and operational aspects of a park.

Implementation Strategies

The following implementation strategies have been developed in response to the data presented in this chapter. Adjust these strategies to best meet the goals of individual park systems.

Small Parks, Connectivity, and Conservancy Land
Further park acquisition and development should be strategic and focus on physical unification of the park system. By developing trails and conservancy land corridors, park systems will be able to improve access and increase recreation offerings in underserved areas. Improved connectivity efforts can also be complimented with the strategic placement of mini parks.

Programs, Specialized Facilities, and Versatile Facilities
Park programming tailored to meet the needs of local residents can increase park use and improve the image of a park system. It is also important to achieve a balance between providing specialized facilities and increasing park versatility. While specialized facilities are instrumental parts of park systems, individual parks should also strive to improve versatility by, for example, installing multipurpose fields instead of regulation soccer fields.

Partnerships: Public-Public and Public-Private
Government agencies play a primary role in providing high quality, accessible outdoor recreation in urban areas. Potential areas for intergovernmental partnerships include but are not limited to school districts, water utility departments, and metro area park systems (county parks). Public-private partnership opportunities should be considered in order to improve park system offerings and increase park efficiency.

Chapter 5 – Open Space Conservation: Connecting People to Outdoor Recreation Opportunities.

Reflected in America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Report, the goals to "Conserve Rural Working Farms, Ranches, and Forests through Partnerships and Incentives" and to "Protect and Renew Rivers and Other Waters" ensure conservation and recreation enjoyment of beloved lands and waters. Wisconsin shares this view by incentivizing landowners to conserve public recreation opportunities on private lands, and prioritizing safe access to waterways.

Through focus groups discussions, Chapter 5 examines open space conservation roles from public lands and the programs that support them to private lands leveraged financially—deemed necessary by stakeholders—for preservation and public recreation access (AGO Recommendation 7.5). AGO supports expanding federal and state partnerships with private landowners through federal programs (AGO Action Item 7.5a), collaborating with local, state, and tribal governments to conserve and restore large landscapes (AGO Action Item 8.1d), and fostering networking among communities to improve access and enjoyment of waterways (AGO Action Item 9.2b).

Recreation lands and facilities are provided by two major groups in Wisconsin – governments and private landowners. The largest public land category is county parks and forests, accounting for 42.7% of all public lands. For private lands, the largest category is open managed forest lands, accounting for 31.8% or over 1.1 million acres.

Federal recreation providers in Wisconsin include:

- National Park Service (examples: Apostle Islands, and National Ice Age Trail)
- Fish and Wildlife Service (example: Necedah National Wildlife Refuge)
- Bureau of Land Management *(NCWRPC Note: none in Wisconsin)*
- Forest Service (example: Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (example: Blackhawk "campground" Park, Mississippi River)

Recreation provided in these areas are generally nature-based and non-destructive like hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, nature study, canoeing, boating, swimming, and similar activities.

State recreation resources mimic the federal government, but all exist under one entity – the **Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**.

- WDNR fisheries
- Natural Areas
- State Forests
- State Parks
- Wildlife Areas
- Wild Rivers
- Other lands

NCWRPC Note: the ***Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL)*** holds forestland for public education. Nearly all of the School Trust Lands were sold over 100 years ago. The proceeds were used to establish the School Trust Funds, which continue to grow with revenue from unclaimed property, clear proceeds of civil and criminal fees, fines and forfeitures, and timber production on School Trust Lands.

BCPL manages these Funds and the remaining School Trust Lands for the benefit of public school libraries, the University of Wisconsin, and the state's citizens. See (**http://bcpl.wisconsin.gov/**) and the for details.

All school trust lands are open to the public for hunting, fishing, trapping and other forms of public recreation. Some school trust lands, however, are surrounded by private property and we urge visitors to respect private property rights by requesting permission to cross private lands to access them. On the BCPL website, search for "Maps of BCPL Land by County" to view where School Trust Lands exist.

NCWRPC Note: the **Wisconsin Department of Transportation** also owns some land for the purpose of wetland mitigation of highway projects.

County Parks and Forests

All Wisconsin counties have county parks, but not all have county forest land. State legislation requires enrollment of county forest land under the Wisconsin County Forest Law to be open to hunting, camping, hiking, and bird watching. With the exception of a few sensitive areas, there are no lands enrolled under the County Forests Law that are closed to the public. These county forests

provide more than 1,200 campsites and thousand miles of hiking, skiing, and snowmobile trails, as well as public access to hundreds of lakes and streams.

Enrolled county forests represent the state's largest public forest landholding and are extremely important to Wisconsin's forest products industry and economy. Each year they generate from $25 to $30 million in timber revenues for the counties and towns in which they are located. Approximately 16,000 jobs and $4.6 billion in the generation of forest products result from the timber harvested from county forests.

Wisconsin Stewardship Program

Wisconsin has a long and successful history of bipartisan financial support for the conservation of the state's natural resources and the provision of outdoor recreation opportunities (1961 to the present). Stewardship II (FY2011-FY2020) provides $86 million of bonding authority for this 10-year period to provide funds to:

- Improve visitor amenities at state and local parks;
- Restore wetlands and prairies; and
- Acquire land for trails, natural areas, state and county forests, wildlife habitat, urban green space, state and local parks, river and stream corridors, and flowages and wild lakes.

Land and Water Conservation Program

Congress established this program in 1965 to assure accessibility to quality outdoor recreation resources and "to strengthen the health and vitality of the citizens of the United States" (Public Law 88-578). The LWCF Program provides matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities (as well as funding for shared federal land acquisition and conservation strategies). The program is intended to create and maintain a nationwide legacy of high quality recreation areas and facilities and to stimulate non-federal investments in the protection and maintenance of recreation resources across the United States.

School Forests (NCWRPC added.)

Various school districts local governments, and universities own forestland for outdoor educational purposes. Any city, village, town, or school district who owns forested property can register their forest into the School Forest program, which is run by the DNR and UW-Stevens Point. Once registered, the governmental entity is eligible:

- For free trees and seed from the state forest nurseries;
- For technical assistance for DNR foresters for carrying out tree planting and forest management plans;
- To apply for Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) school forest grants; and
- To receive assistance from the Wisconsin School Forest Education Specialist.

Wisconsin school forest statistics (2012)

- 214 public schools - 9 private schools - 7 higher education institutions

Contact each school forest for their specific guidelines to how their land is open for public use.

Private Recreation Providers

Managed Forest Law

The Managed Forest Law (MFL) was enacted in 1985 to replace the Woodland Tax Law and the Forest Crop Law. This is a landowner incentive program to encourage sustainable forestry on private woodland. Enrolled program lands must be managed by the landowner in accordance with the forest management plan written by a certified consulting forester. In exchange for following sound forest management, the landowner pays reduced property taxes.

Lands enrolled under MFL can be designated as open or closed to public recreation. Open designation allows public access to the property for hunting, fishing, hiking, sight-seeing, and cross country skiing without additional permission from landowners. Closed designation gives landowners the right to restrict or permit access to their lands (a higher tax is paid on closed lands).

State and Federal Forest Legacy Program

The Natural Resources Board granted the DNR authority to establish the Forest Legacy Program. The goal of the program is to minimize fragmentation and conversion of significant forested areas to non-forest uses. Under this program the DNR purchases conservation easements to the land, which protects it from non-forest development. Another main goal of the program is to allow public access on these lands where appropriate.

Voluntary Public Access Program

The 2008 Farm Bill established this program that leases qualified property in exchange for opening the land to public uses such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and wildlife observation.

Land Trusts

These organizations permanently protect important resources in their communities from overdevelopment. Most often, the resources under protection have natural, recreational, scenic, historic, or productive value. They are organized as non-profits whose mission is determined by their members and volunteers. Land may be open to the public for specific uses.

NCWRPC Note: A large part of this chapter is not summarized because it was based upon 38 people who attended one of six meetings across the state.

The topics missed include:

- Collaborative Approaches to Support and Improve Outdoor Recreation Landscapes
- Collaborative Approaches to Support Outdoor Recreation
- Coordinated Funding and Grants for Outdoor Recreation
- The Role of Education in Aid of Outdoor Recreation

Chapter 6 – Wisconsin SCORP Outdoor Recreation Goals and Actions.

In the collective, cross-country discussion that took place for the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative, Americans spoke from their minds and their hearts, and out of that came a clear vision: a future where their children are near safe and clean parks where they can "play, dream, discover, and recreate." They see a future where everyone shares responsibility for protecting and caring for our natural and cultural heritage, where rural lands are conserved, and public and private lands essential to supporting wildlife and human needs are unified. They see a future where working together to restore and protect rivers and lakes means healthy lives and a healthy economy.

The State of Wisconsin can live up to this vision. The tenth and final theme of the AGO Report, "Make the Federal Government a More Effective Conservation Partner," was developed out of the public's plea that the federal government eliminate obstacles created by poor policies and processes that keep Americans from the outdoors. For people to reconnect to the great outdoors, the government at all levels—federal, state, local, and tribal—must improve as a conservation partner to the American public. By creating partnerships, aligning resources, and leveraging funding, government can achieve goals set in outdoor recreation planning.

Overall, the State of Wisconsin strives to align its goals with the AGO, while using AGO resources and assistance to conserve and restore unique lands and waters and to connect its population to the great outdoors. The 2011-2016 Wisconsin SCORP provides an extensive framework for merging state and federal visions.

The goals and actions listed in this chapter represent a summation of targeted elements to encourage the citizens of Wisconsin to enjoy more of the state's great outdoors. For the most part, these actions take a broad approach to expanding outdoor recreation, with no one person or agency being able to accomplish all goals. The intent of this chapter is to provide a list of common goals and actions so that individuals and organizations working in outdoor recreation in Wisconsin may work together to improve and expand outdoor recreation opportunities in our state.

Goal 1: Assess, Understand, and Adapt to Growing Recreation Tourism Demands and Preferences

Wisconsin's lands and waters are a natural draw for outdoor recreation for both in-state and out-of state visitors. The Wisconsin outdoor recreation economy contributes over $9.7 billion annually while supporting 129,000 jobs. State initiatives such as Travel Green Wisconsin make connections between tourism, business, and the outdoors as important partners. These partnerships need to be maintained and enhanced to keep Wisconsin a leader in regional tourism.

Actions and Recommendations

1. Understand the recreation and tourism preferences associated with growing market segments.

2. Identify existing and emerging strategies to evaluate appropriate levels and types of service for expanding user groups.
3. Hold an annual forum on outdoor recreation as part of the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism.
4. Continue collaborations between the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Tourism as well as other partners to promote outdoor recreation.
5. Continue to promote and expand the Travel Green Wisconsin program for business connections to the outdoors.
6. Maintain funding for tourism marketing to promote high quality outdoor recreation experiences.
7. Acknowledge the potential issues surrounding climate change adaptation with outdoor recreation and tourism.

Goal 2: Improve Integration of Outdoor Recreation Interests and Needs in Land Use and Other Relevant Planning Efforts

One of the primary objectives of a SCORP is to improve the integration between state and local organizations, partners, and other organizations that provide or influence outdoor recreation. The SCORP presents a set of goals and actions that allow organizations to work together toward a common vision of improved outdoor recreation in the state. As recreation continues to place demands on public lands and waters, these partnerships will become even more important. By integrating outdoor recreation interests, decisions on the management of recreation resources and recreation opportunities become more effective, efficient, fair, reasoned, and defensible

Actions and Recommendations

1. Support outdoor recreation access and opportunities on public lands by establishing a State Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation.
2. Support and align state agency programs and initiatives to promote the creation, expansion, and enhancement of urban parks and community green spaces.
3. Manage state lands and waters within a larger landscape context to conserve and restore ecosystems and watershed health.
4. Encourage regional planning efforts for integrated, cost-effective use of recreation lands and facilities.
5. Provide education and awareness of how recreation uses can impact the natural resources along with actions to reduce those impacts.
6. Promote the collaboration of public and private recreation opportunities though integrated management planning.

Goal 3: Continue to Provide and Enhance Public Access to Wisconsin Recreational Lands and Waters

As recreation continues to place demands on public lands and waters, the lack of public access to these areas has become an increasing concern for many state citizens. In some cases this perception is true; more water/boating access is needed in certain portions of the state. In many cases, however,

public access to recreation resources does exist, but the public is simply not aware of it. Improved and easily accessible maps and signage would aid the public in locating these access points.

Actions and Recommendations

1. Continue to develop a statewide interactive mapping system showing all public lands and water access points within the state.
2. Continue to acquire and develop boating access sites to meet public boating needs.
3. Promote awareness of the location of existing recreation lands, facilities, and opportunities available within a given region.
4. Continue to meet Americans with the Disabilities Act standards for accessibility to outdoor recreation facilities.
5. Support community based efforts to increase access to outdoor recreation.
6. Promote sustainable recreation facility design, construction, and maintenance practices.

Goal 4: Conserve Rural Landscapes and Forests through Partnerships and Incentives

More than 80% of Wisconsin land is held in private ownership. Most of this land is farms and forests, and over 500,000 acres is held in trust by the United States for state Indian tribes. In areas where there is a large component of publicly held land, privately owned lands often provide important wildlife habitat and migration corridors. With so much of the state under private ownership, it is vital that we manage and protect these privately held lands to conserve water resources, ecosystems, wildlife habitat, and natural heritage for generations to come.

Actions and Recommendations

1. Support financial and other incentives that increase access to outdoor recreation activities on or across private lands.
2. Encourage large-scale land conservation partnership projects through economic incentives and technical assistance.
3. Support collaborative landscape conservation through competitive processes, including increases in Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), stewardship funding, and other programs.
4. Continue to support the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative for habitat conservation and protection.

Goal 5: Address Funding Challenges Associated with Managing Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Resources

From its early years of establishing state parks, Wisconsin has had an active program of land acquisition. The latest iteration of these programs is the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson 2010 Stewardship Program. Under this program, the State may issue bonds in a total not to exceed $860 million spread over a 10 year period. The stewardship program targets land acquisition, property development, and local assistance. As Wisconsin recreation has received increasingly less state resources, targeted funding programs have provided vital support to an ever dwindling pool of funds for outdoor park and recreation lands and facilities.

Actions and Recommendations

1. Encourage all local governments to develop park and recreation plans for participation in state and federal cost share programs.
2. Provide more cost share opportunities for local governments to develop and maintain recreational lands and facilities.
3. Provide adequate funding to the Wisconsin State Park System to meet the needs of its 14 million visitors a year.
4. Explore new and innovative funding methods for outdoor park and recreation facilities. These methods may include public/private partnerships or cost sharing among many governmental agencies.
5. Increase revenue generating capabilities for outdoor recreation by continuing to update and improve technologies such as automated fee collection systems.
6. Increase the capacity of public lands friends groups to provide and support recreation facilities.

Goal 6: Promote Outdoor Recreation as a Means of Improving Public Health Among Wisconsinites

The United States as a whole (and Wisconsin is no exception) is in the midst of an overweight and obesity epidemic brought on by increasingly inactive lifestyles coupled with high caloric intakes. This epidemic has created rising health care costs and shortened life expectancies. Outdoor park and recreation areas can provide the type of active recreational opportunities key to reversing this trend. Encouraging Wisconsinites to use available lands and facilities will benefit not only park and recreation areas, but also Wisconsin citizens receiving the health benefits of increased activity.

Actions and Recommendations

1. Develop a "Get Fit with Wisconsin Campaign" for public lands and waters that touts the health benefits of using recreational areas and reaches a wide audience of potential users.
2. Educate the public about the health benefits of moderate and enjoyable physical activities such as walking, biking, nature study, etc.
3. Integrate opportunities and incentives for exercise during the workday—give employees 30 minutes a day for exercise, provide exercise equipment, etc.
4. Start a dialogue between public outdoor recreation providers and health agencies to identify other (non-traditional) funding sources for recreational facilities and development.
5. Continue the "Walk with Walker Program" by encouraging citizens to use state parks, forests, and trails for health and wellness.
6. Promote the mission of the "Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health" on informing, promoting and encouraging citizens of Wisconsin to incorporate healthy eating and physical behaviors for a lifetime.

Goal 7: Establish Great Urban Parks and Community Green Spaces

Frederick Law Olmsted, the central architect of Milwaukee's Grand Necklace of Parks, extolled the virtues of outdoor space, especially for urban communities. Today, urban parks and community green spaces play an even more important role as special public places that promote health, provide economic benefits, and nurture democratic values by inviting casual interaction among citizens. Urban parks and community green spaces are essential for providing places for people to recreate outdoors, to find quiet and solitude, and to generally improve their quality of life.

Actions and Recommendations

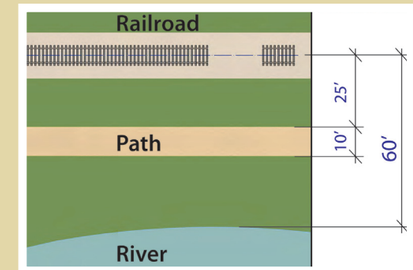
1. Create and enhance a new generation of safe, clean, accessible, and connected great urban parks and community green spaces.
2. Connect people with urban parks, trails, and community green spaces.
3. Target technical assistance support to communities as they create and enhance urban parks and community green spaces.
4. Continue to provide funding to communities through the Stewardship Program to acquire and develop local park and greenway spaces.
5. Leverage private community foundations and public funding to increase park acquisitions.
6. Provide funding to restore, preserve, and protect historic outdoor facilities for future generations.

ATTACHMENT F

River Bend Trail Map

Merrill Area Recreational Complex
Council Grounds State Park
Water Trail
Grand Avenue
Bike Crossing
Wayfinding to Trail
Connection to School
E. 2nd Street
Main Street
Sixth Ward Bridge
Detail "B"
Connection to 6th Ward
Prairie River
Secondary Interpretive Trail
Bench and Interpretive Sign
Mill Street
E. 1st Street
E. Main Street
Detail "C"
No Name Bridge
Dam
Water Trail
Wayfinding to Trail
Cosmo Theater
Existing Canoe Portage/Take-out
Mowed Lawn
Park Street
Connection to Downtown
Center Avenue
Existing Canoe Portage/Put-in
Wayfinding to Downtown
Small Park with Fishing Pier
Native Vegetation
Bench along Secondary Trail
Natural Surface Hiking Trail
Wayfinding to School
Kiosk with Lumber History
Wayfinding to West Side Businesses
Potential Canoe Access
River Access
State Street
County Road K
Scale 1" = 258.9'
N

Detail "A"



Legend

- Wayfinding Sign
- Parking
- Water Access
- Neighborhood Access
- Kiosk
- Connections
- Railroad
- Trail Corridor
- Park Space

Note: Green corridor is for graphic reference only. It does not imply property acquisition.

This project received a technical assistance grant from the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation (RTCA) Assistance Program of the National Park Service.

Detail "B"

Detail "C"

River Bend Trail

of Merrill

River District Development Foundation of Merrill, Inc.