




**Dane
County
Parks**
Always in Season



**Parks and
Open
Space Plan
2018 - 2023**

Dedication to Philip “Phil” Lewis

The 2018-2023 Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan is dedicated in honor of Philip “Phil” Howard Lewis Jr. Phil passed away on July 2, 2017 after a distinguished lifetime of public service.

Phil along with Ian McHarg and Angus Hill are widely credited with the development of the natural resource inventory approach and map overlays as a crucial part of identifying environmental corridors which guide land use planning. Phil’s planning concepts have helped guide park and open space planning at the international, national and local level. Here in Dane County, Phil is recognized as the father of the Nine Springs E-Way Corridor.

This vision began with a Nine Springs E-Way Demonstration Project funded by a National Endowment of the Arts grant in 1970. On July 27, 1971, the Dane County Board of Supervisors adopted the “Environmental Loop Plan” and recognized it as “...an unprecedented educational opportunity for the citizens of the County.”

On September 12, 2013 the Dane County Board of Supervisors dedicated the environmental corridor system to Phil and Elizabeth Lewis, now known as the Lewis Nine Springs E-Way. The title recognizes the work of Phil and his wife, Elizabeth (Libby) who served for 26 years on the Dane County Parks Commission.

The Dane County Park Commission and Department of Land & Water Resources are honored to have had the good fortune of working with Phil and dedicate the 2018-2023 Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan in his honor. Future generations will forever benefit from Phil’s passion and vision for the future of the Dane County Parks.

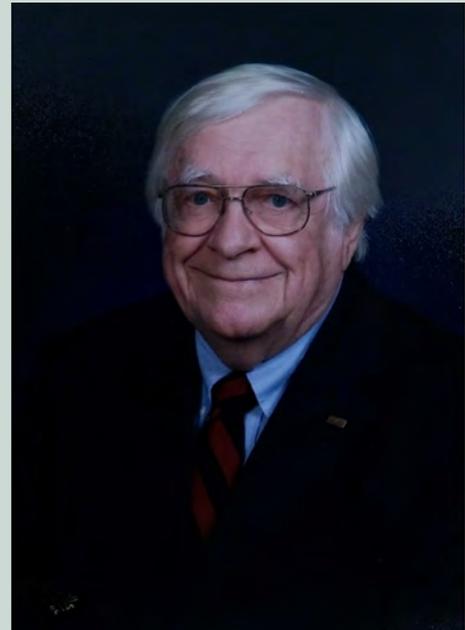


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I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION



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I.1 Acknowledgements

Dane County has some of the finest and most diverse natural resources in Wisconsin. We are blessed with beautiful prairies to the east, extraordinary wetlands, rivers and lakes in the center and spectacular glacially formed hills to the west.

This plan presents opportunities to preserve and enhance those resources amidst a growing population. Crafted from community input, we believe it presents a road map for future recreational opportunities and natural resource conservation in our area.

Over the next five years, we will be challenged to implement this plan by a variety of fiscal and staffing constraints. However, we believe those can be overcome with the assistance of our many partners including our Friends groups, a growing volunteer program, and the other groups and organizations outlined throughout the plan. Together we can make the recommendations of this plan a reality to provide many opportunities for generations of people to connect with and enjoy the fantastic land, water and cultural resources of Dane County.

On behalf of the Dane County Park Commission, I extend our sincere gratitude to all of the local units of government, Dane County residents and especially the many non-profit conservation organizations who truly made this a diverse and visionary plan. I also want to thank our five appointed Park and Open Space Advisory Committee members, Supervisors Patrick Miles and Robin Schmidt, citizen members Topf Wells, Liz Wessel and Mike Slavney for their reliable attendance and valuable input throughout the planning process. Finally, I want to thank the professional County Parks planning staff Chris James, Sara Rigelman and Alex DeSmidt for their work on the plan.

--William G. Lunney, Chair, Dane County Park Commission and Parks and Open Space Advisory Committee

DANE COUNTY PARK COMMISSION and PARKS & OPEN SPACE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

All members listed served on the Parks & Open Space Plan Advisory Committee. Bold print indicates members who also serve on the Park Commission.

William G. Lunney, Chair	Supervisor Patrick Miles
Supervisor Dave Ripp, Vice-Chair	Supervisor Robin Schmidt
Supervisor George Gillis	Topf Wells
Tom Thoresen, Secretary	Mike Slavney
Dan Wisniewski	Liz Wessel

I.2 Authorizing Resolution

2017 RES-455

ADOPTING THE 2018-23 DANE COUNTY PARKS AND OPEN SPACE PLAN

For nearly forty years the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan has provided the foundation for preservation of key cultural, natural and historic resources that enhance the quality of life in Dane County. The Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan Advisory Sub-Committee has completed an update of the County Parks and Open Space Plan for the period of 2018-2023. The plan must be updated every five years in order to be eligible to apply for a variety of grants including land acquisition and park development funding through the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Knowles-Nelson Stewardship grant program.

The planning process included five public informational meetings, a user survey, an interactive website, a Facebook page and outreach to local units of government and non-profit conservation organizations for the purpose of soliciting input on recommendations to be included in the updated plan. The plan is used by the Dane County Park Commission as a guide for making future resource protection and park development decisions over the next five years. Participation by private land owners or local units of government to carry out any of the resource protection initiatives or park and trail development projects outlined in the plan is on a voluntary basis. This plan is not a land use plan or created for the purpose of guiding future zoning decisions.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Dane County Board of Supervisors and the Dane County Executive approves and adopts the 2018-23 Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Dane County Park Commission wishes to dedicate the 2018-23 Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan in memory of Phillip “Phil” Howard Lewis Jr., who is recognized as the father of the Dane County Nine Springs E-Way Corridor.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that the Dane County Board of Supervisors, Dane County Executive, and Dane County Parks Commission thank all of the citizens, local units of government, non profit conservation organizations, staff and other stakeholders who assisted in the preparation of this plan.

Adopted by the Dane County Board of Supervisors on April 12, 2018.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Ver.</i>	<i>Action By</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Result</i>
4/16/2018	1	County Executive	signed	
4/12/2018	1	County Board	adopted	Pass
4/9/2018	1	Personnel & Finance Committee	recommended for approval	Pass
3/22/2018	1	Environment, Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee	recommended for approval	Pass
3/14/2018	1	Park Commission	recommended for approval	Pass
3/2/2018	1	County Board	referred	

I.3 Dane County Park Commission

The Dane County Park Commission provides oversight and guidance to Parks staff of the Department of Land & Water Resources on a variety of topics that require public oversight. The Dane County Park Commission is authorized by Wisconsin Statute Section 27.02(2), which states that in any county with a County Executive, the county park commission shall consist of seven members appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the county board. The Park Commission is an advisory committee to the Environment, Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee, which is a standing committee of the County Board that focuses primarily on oversight of the Land & Water Resources Department.

The Park Commission and the Land & Water Resources Department may exercise certain powers delineated in state statutes, subject to approval of the Environment, Agriculture and Natural Resource Committee and the County Board. The County Board, made up of 37 elected supervisors, directs the Land & Water Resources Department to carry out adopted Park Commission policies and authorizes some Parks Commission actions, such as the acquisition of land, adoption of planning documents, and approval of major park development contracts.



Photo Credit: Sylvia Edlebeck

I.4 Land and Water Resources Department



The 2005 Dane County budget created the Land and Water Resources Department, by merging Dane County Parks, the Land Conservation Department, and the Office of Lakes and Watersheds. The Dane County Land & Water Resources Department ensures the protection and enhancement of Dane County's natural, cultural, and historic resources; provides the County's citizens with a broad array of accessible, high quality resource-based recreational services and facilities; and supports citizens, communities, local governments, and other agencies and organizations in their resource management and protection activities. The Land and Water Resources Department consists of five divisions: Administration, Land Conservation, Office of Lakes and Watersheds, Parks, and Water Resource Engineering.

ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

The Administration Division provides administrative support, including budget management and GIS services to the entire department. The Division serves as the first point of contact for many customers, oversees permit sales and park reservations, maintains the department social media and web based outreach, coordinates watershed management education outreach, oversees seasonal aquatic invasive species activities, and manages real estate/land acquisitions.

LAND CONSERVATION DIVISION

The Land Conservation Division helps landowners plan, design, and implement conservation practices with the goal of protecting water quality and conserving soil in Dane County. The division goal is to provide conservation planning assistance and technical service in the area of soil and water conservation to landowners, land users, and decision-makers of Dane County, Wisconsin.

OFFICE OF LAKES AND WATERSHEDS

The Office of Lakes and Watersheds strives to protect and improve the water resources of Dane County by coordinating with other department and agency staff, water-related citizen groups, the Dane County Lakes and Watershed Commission, and a variety of other partner organizations.

PARKS DIVISION

The Parks Division is responsible for stewardship of over 12,000 acres of recreation parks, natural resource areas, trail corridors, historical/cultural sites, wildlife areas, and forests for Dane County's citizens. The Division provides daily visitor services, enforcement of park rules, operations and maintenance, land management, facility development, a volunteer program, lock and dam operations, and the Lussier Family Heritage Center.

WATER RESOURCE ENGINEERING DIVISION

The Water Resource Engineering Division implements and enforces the County's Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Programs, manages the county lakes, and provides technical assistance to County departments regarding water resources.

I.5 Definitions

The following terms are found throughout this plan and are generally defined as follows:

Accessibility- The quality of being easy to approach, reach, enter, speak with or use.

Accessible Design- Accessible design is a design process in which the needs of people with disabilities are specifically considered. Any new construction or alterations must comply with the American Disabilities Act of 1999 (ADA) Standards for Accessible Design.

Active Recreation- For the purposes of this planning report, active recreation is defined as recreation that requires some type of developed facility or manipulated landscape to participate and requires ongoing maintenance. Examples include soccer, mountain biking and disc golf.

Equity- The state, quality, or ideal of being just, impartial, and fair. The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice. It is helpful to think of equity as not simply a desired state of affairs or a lofty value. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.

Inclusion- The action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure. More than simply diversity and numeral representation, inclusion involves authentic and empowered participation and a true sense of belonging.

Nature-Based Outdoor Recreation- Activities where the primary focus is the appreciation or enjoyment of nature.



Mountain biking, an example of active recreation.



Passive Recreation- For the purposes of this planning report, passive recreation is defined as outdoor activities that do not require a developed setting or facilities to participate. Examples include bird watching, foraging, and hunting.

Policy- Policies are more specific statements that provide guidance for future park planning, development, management, and land acquisition decision making processes. The policies of the 2018-2023 Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan were updated by staff to reflect current park operation, planning, and land acquisition procedure and practices.

Priority- Priorities generally identify acquisition, planning, or preservation efforts that should always be a part of ongoing work programs throughout the course of a year. However, it should be noted that park acquisition, development, and management decisions are often based on funding opportunities, partnerships, and willing sellers rather than priority.

Silent Sports- For the purposes of this planning report, silent sports are generally defined as human-powered recreation activities that have little to no impact on the surrounding environment. Examples include snowshoeing, hiking, kayaking.

Universal Design- Universal design is a broader concept that is defined as the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. Sidewalks with curb cuts and doors that automatically open when a person moves near them are examples of universally designed products. They benefit people with disabilities, parents with baby strollers, delivery workers, and others. Human characteristics considered in universal designs may include age, gender, stature, race/ethnicity, culture, native language, and learning preference.

I.6 Accomplishments

The 2012-2017 Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan outlined the following recreation needs; trails, wildlife viewing opportunities, water access facilities, camping, picnicking and shelters, disc golf, dog exercise areas, and hunting and archery. While some new facilities and lands have been added to meet these projected needs, many of the existing Parks and Open Space Plan recommendations will carry forward into this five year plan. The following is a summary of major projects that have been achieved since the last update to this plan:

Trails & Bridges

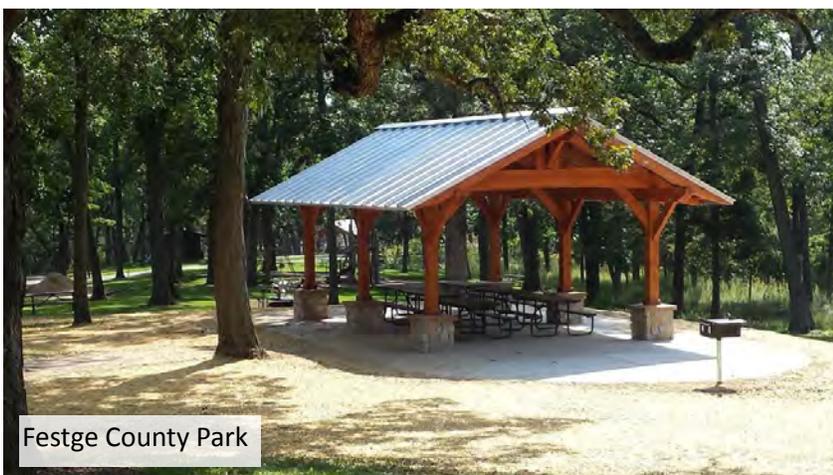
- Lower Yahara River Trail - Completed 1.75 miles of paved trail and 1 mile of boardwalk
- Completed Dane County Bicycle Wayfinding Plan
- Lower Yahara River Trail - Installed Wayfinding Signage
- Brigham Trail - Completed 1.5 miles of paved trail
- Lewis Nine Springs Eway - 3 Hiking/Cross Country Ski Trail Bridges
- Falk Wells - 2 Hiking Bridges
- Donald County Park - Hiking Bridge
- Wolf Conservancy Waunakee - Hiking Bridge
- Walking Iron County Park - Hiking/Snowmobile Bridge
- Halfway Prairie Creek - Snowmobile Bridge
- Sugar River Paoli - Snowmobile Bridge
- Roxbury Creek - Snowmobile Bridge
- CamRock County Park - Implemented Winter Fat Tire Bike Program

Parks & Recreation

- Goodland County Park - Beach Restoration
- Mendota County Park - Beach Restoration
- Stewart County Park - New Playground
- Festge County Park - New Playground
- Riley-Deppe County Park - New Playground
- Indian Lake County Park - New Playground

Timber Frame Shelters & Restrooms

- Brigham County Park - Timber Frame Shelter
- Stewart County Park - Timber Frame Shelter
- Festge County Park - 2 Timber Frame Shelters
- Indian Lake County Park - Timber Frame Shelter and Restroom



Festge County Park

Scenic Overlooks

- Festge County Park - Overlook Restoration
- Lake Farm County Park - Overlook Restoration

Land Acquisition

- Acquired approximately 1,500 acres of recreation park and natural resource area lands.

Community Garden

- Added Community Garden to Badger Prairie Park including well, parking and storage shed.

Water Access/Fishing

- CamRock County Park - Canoe/Kayak Landing
- Silverwood County Park - Sweet Lake Water Access
- Capital Springs Recreation Area - Upper Mud Lake Walk-In Access
- Falk Wells Wildlife Area - 2 Sugar River Canoe/Kayak Accesses
- Stewart Lake - Accessible Fishing Pier and Fish/Lake Restoration
- Salmo Pond - 2 Accessible Fishing Piers
- Black Earth Creek - 2 Accessible Fishing Pads
- Lower Yahara River Trail - Accessible Fishing Pier
- Indian Lake - Accessible Fishing Pier and Fish/Lake Restoration
- Added 8 miles of public streambank easements
- Sugar River Wildlife Area Basco Unit - Trout Habitat Improvement

Wildlife Areas/Hunting

- Added 10 new Wildlife Areas with over 1,400 acres lands open to public hunting.
- Added over one thousand acres to the Limited Archery Program for a total of 5,148 acres.
- Crystal Lake Wildlife Area - Added Parking Lot/Informational Kiosk
- Falk Wells Wildlife Area - Added 3 Parking Lots/Informational Kiosks/Cleared Walking Trails
- Blue Mounds Wildlife Area - Added Parking Lot/Informational Kiosk
- Cherokee Marsh Wildlife Area - Added Parking Lot/Informational Kiosk
- Door Creek Wildlife Area - Wetland Restoration Project
- Halfway Creek Wildlife Area - Added Parking Lot/Informational Kiosk
- North Mendota Hyer Road Unit Wildlife Area - Added Parking Lot/Wetland Restoration
- Walking Iron Wildlife Area - Habitat Restoration Projects
- Waubesa Wetlands Wildlife Area - Added Parking Lot/Informational Kiosk
- Cherokee Marsh Wildlife Area - Added Parking Lot/Informational Kiosk

Volunteer Program

- Volunteers contributed over 65,000 hours per year of park work and planted over 5,000 trees.

Interpretive Signage

- Capital Springs Recreation Area - Lewis Nine Springs E-way Interpretive Signage
- Capital Springs Recreation Area - Gilman Mounds Native American Interpretive Signage
- Lakeview Hill Park - Dormitory Historical Signage
- Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area - Matz Farmstead Historical Panel

Park Planning

- Silverwood County Park - Completed Master Plan
- Fish Lake Natural Resource Area/Lussier County Park - Completed Master Plan
- McCarthy County Park - Completed Master Plan
- Mendota County Park - Completed Master Plan

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The 2018-2023 Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan seeks to identify significant cultural, historical, and natural resources that should be considered for possible protection, preservation, or restoration over the next five years. The plan also seeks to identify county-wide recreation needs and Dane County's role in providing facilities to meet anticipated demands. This plan is not a land use plan or created for the purpose of guiding future zoning decisions. The Parks & Open Space Plan must be updated and adopted by the County Board every five years in order to maintain Dane County's eligibility for a variety of state and federal grant funding programs for park and trail land acquisition and development.

This update to the Parks & Open Space Plan has the following vision statement and six primary goals.

VISION STATEMENT: Connect people to the land, water, and cultural resources of Dane County.

GOALS:

1. Provide sufficient park land and recreation facilities to meet the demand of Dane County residents without adversely affecting existing natural and cultural resources.
2. Preserve for posterity the characteristics and diversity of the natural, cultural, and historical resources of Dane County.
3. Preserve large tracts of natural and agricultural rural landscapes at urban fringe areas that will provide regional resource protection and recreation benefits.
4. Provide volunteer opportunities and stewardship education to all county residents.
5. Protect lakes, rivers and streams, including shorelines, wetlands, high infiltration areas and associated vegetative buffers to maintain high water quality, manage water quantity, and sustain water-related recreation throughout Dane County.
6. Provide an inclusive parks system for all Dane County residents, regardless of age, race, gender or gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, place of residence, veteran status, physical ability, cognitive capacity, or family, marital, or economic status.

PLANNING PROCESS

The update to the Parks & Open Space Plan began in March of 2017 and included a comprehensive public input process consisting of five public informational meetings that provided the public, stakeholders, and local units of government opportunities to provide input on recommendations found within this plan. In addition, a Facebook page and an interactive web page with feedback form posted on the Dane County Land and Water Resources Department website were made available. Invitations to participate in the planning process for the update to the plan were e-mailed to all local units of government in March of 2017, and again in January of 2018 to provide feedback on the draft plan. As an added outreach effort, Dane County Parks prepared a survey to further explore the overall public awareness of the park system and any improvements that could be made to promote a larger and more diverse group of users. In an effort to reach a more diverse population, surveys were distributed and/or promoted by the following organizations:

- Dane County Office for Equity and Inclusion
- Community Centers in Dane County
- UW-Extension
- Catholic Multicultural Center
- Bayview Apartments
- La Comunidad
- Central Hispano
- Latino Earth Partnership
- Outdoor Latino
- Community Groundworks
- Simpson Street Press

The survey was partially or completely filled out and submitted by 1,178 respondents, with the majority being residents of Dane County. A professionally administered survey is recommended for future follow up to further expand distribution and gain a better understanding of the needs of the park system.

ECONOMIC AND HEALTH BENEFITS OF PARKS

Dane County park lands have inherent recreation, conservation, and scenic values, yet it's important to recognize the potential economic value they provide to Dane County. Dane County Parks has over 2.5 million estimated annual visitors. The Dane County Parks system draws visitors and supports events that directly benefit the local economy. For example, Reddan Soccer Park at Badger Prairie County Park draws over 225,000 visitors to the park annually. The Greater Madison Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates that the seven soccer tournaments held at Reddan alone generate more than \$3 million annually in direct spending in the local economy.

Parks and outdoor recreation have significant physical and mental health benefits, which is increasingly being recognized by the health care industry, especially as obesity and its associated health care costs are on the rise. There is strong evidence that people are more physically active if there are parks or trails nearby that can be easily accessed for exercising. Studies also show that the number and size of parks in a community are positively related to physical activity levels.

EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

Dane County Parks is dedicated to providing an inclusive parks system for all Dane County residents, regardless of age, race, gender or gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, place of residence, veteran status, physical ability, cognitive capacity, or family, marital, or economic status. This plan identifies some initial strategies for meeting this goal.

PARK HISTORY AND CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Dane County Parks was created in 1935 when the county acquired what was once Lake Park in Mt. Horeb; the park was renamed Stewart County Park. Eleven additional parks were added over the next 30 years, Babcock, LaFollette, Goodland, Mendota, Brigham, Fish Lake, Riley-Deppe, Festge, Half-Way Prairie, Token Creek, and Lake View Woods. In 2000, the Park Commission adopted a park classification system that divided county park lands into four categories: Recreation Parks, Natural Resource Areas, Forests and Historical/Cultural Sites. In 2007, a new land classification category called "Wildlife Areas" was adopted by the County Board. This update to the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan recommends the addition of a "Trails" category to the park classification system.

EXISTING LAND AND FACILITY INVENTORY

The Dane County Parks currently provides 12,608 acres of land in the following categories:

Recreation Parks (26)	5,567
Wildlife Areas (16)	3,318
Natural Resource Areas (27)	2,976
Ice Age Trail Corridor	401
Forests (2)	187
Historical/Cultural Sites (6)	159
Total	12,608 Acres

In addition, Dane County Parks currently provides 2,775 acres of Conservation Easements and 24 miles of Streambank Easements.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Ten planning considerations were considered for the update to the plan, including the Dane County Parks Survey, Demographics, Related Planning Efforts, Recreation Needs Analysis, Future Land Needs Analysis, Public Input, Parks Staff Input, Land Management Considerations, Partnership Opportunities, and the Park and Open Space Advisory Committee Input. Primary considerations included population information, such as the population of 65 years and older residents in Dane County is increasing the most of any age group and by 2040 will account for approximately 20% of the population in Dane County. The continued projected growth of the 65 years and older County population supports the ongoing priority to develop more trail and passive recreation activities. Dane County has one of the highest and most diverse ethnic populations in south central Wisconsin. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing ethnic group in Dane County, bilingual signage and website information should be considered.

Another primary consideration was data from the 2017 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report and the 2016 Wisconsin DNR State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). A summary of these two planning reports compared with Dane County Parks use data suggest the following five year recreation needs:

- Walking, hiking and running continue to have highest recreation participation rates both locally and nationally. This is consistent with an overall aging population dynamic and complements Dane County's continuing commitment to prioritize trail development.
- Demand for mountain biking and disc golf continues to rise.
- Biking, dog parks, disc golf, paddling, picnicking, fishing, and driving for pleasure continue to show strong participation rates in Dane County.

PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Priorities, policies, acquisition, and development recommendations were updated for each park land classification category. In addition, a planning and development shared-use trail priority list is included that outlines roles and responsibilities for major trail projects anticipated to occur over the next five years.

Recommendations are also included for the following Parks Division program and staff responsibility areas: Operations and Maintenance, Planning and Development, the Lussier Family Heritage Center, Natural Areas, Volunteers, Real Estate and Grants, Stream Corridors, Agriculture, Invasive Species Control, Sustainable Forestry, and Property Stabilization.

A new recommendation for Wetland Mitigation Banking is included in Regional Resource Protection Initiatives. Two new recommendations are included in Partner Projects and Programs including a Bike Park and Law Park. A bike park is a regional scale park that offers numerous off-road bike activity areas such as mountain biking, pump tracks and bicycle motocross. Dane County's role would be to potentially provide partial grant funding to a local unit of government or non-profit group for acquisition or development of a regional bike park. Law Park is a regionally significant park along the shore of Lake Monona with connections to Downtown, Capital Springs Recreation Area and the Capital City Trail. County review to determine if partnership opportunities exist is needed as future planning of this park progresses.

Recommendations within Adapting for the Future address changing population needs, public expectations and changing environmental conditions and their impacts on park lands. Planning and adapting for change will ensure that Dane County can sustain and maintain the park system into the future. Many examples of strategies to address these challenges are found throughout this plan; climate change is a new consideration included in this update to the plan. The lands and recreation opportunities offered by Dane County Parks will certainly be impacted by climate change, such as extreme weather events and decreasing snow cover. With varying habitat, access to major universities, and dedicated volunteers, the Dane County Parks system can encourage and expand research and partnerships for regular scientific monitoring of wildlife and plant life, and water quality around the issue of climate change.

CONCLUSION

The steady trend of increasing acreage expansion of the Dane County Parks system over the past two decades appears to be moderating for several reasons. As economic conditions continue to improve, private developers and landowners feel less necessity to liquidate land assets. The focus of funding for the WDNR Stewardship acquisition program has been shifting to larger tracts in the northern regions of the state. These reductions in resources and opportunities will make prioritization of county park land acquisition increasingly important. The survey completed for this update to the plan continues to demonstrate that Dane County residents support land acquisition efforts for the park system.

Clearly the ongoing planning and development of the regional off road shared-use trail system will continue to be a priority over the next five years. These trails provide more transportation, health, and recreation benefits to the most diverse population of Dane County residents than any other facilities the park system offers. The strong demand for shared-use trail development must be guided by the planning and development roles and responsibilities outlined within this plan.

After several decades of park land and program area expansion, a new priority of understanding park patron demographics, barriers, and needs must be realized to sustain Dane County Parks into the future.

III. INTRODUCTION AND PLAN PURPOSE



The Dane County Parks system has continued to increase by both acreage and use since the 2012 update to the Parks and Open Space Plan. For the first time, this plan update included a staff-led unofficial survey with the goal of gauging park user level of satisfaction, preferred types and frequency of recreation use, barriers to use, and areas where improvement is needed. Overall, the survey results and public input continue to demonstrate support and a keen appreciation from Dane County residents for the variety and diversity of recreation opportunities and vast public landscapes that have materialized through nearly five decades of park and open space planning. As the population of Dane County continues to grow ever more diverse, the ability to provide a park system that is easily comprehensible, appreciated, and accessible to all people becomes paramount. The Dane County Park Commission continually strives to balance public use with proper stewardship and land management practices.

The 2018-2023 Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan seeks to identify significant cultural, historical, and natural resources that should be considered for possible protection, preservation, or restoration over the next five years. The plan also seeks to identify countywide recreation needs and Dane County’s role in providing accessible, equitable, and inclusive facilities to meet anticipated demands. Both resource and recreation needs were identified through a comprehensive public input process. This Park and Open Space Plan must be updated and adopted by the County Board every five years in order to be eligible to participate in a variety of state and federal funding programs for park land acquisition and development, including trails.



Blue Mounds Natural Resource Area

IV. VISION STATEMENT AND GOALS



VISION STATEMENT: Connect people to the land, water, and cultural resources of Dane County.

GOALS:

Goals in this plan are intended to be broad, visionary statements that are not time specific which serve to guide the policies and direction of Dane County Parks. This update to the County Parks and Open Space Plan has six primary goals:

1. Provide sufficient park land and recreation facilities to meet the demand of Dane County residents without adversely affecting existing natural and cultural resources.
2. Preserve for posterity the characteristics and diversity of the natural, cultural, and historical resources of Dane County.
3. Preserve large tracts of natural and agricultural rural landscapes at urban fringe areas that will provide regional resource protection and recreation benefits.
4. Provide volunteer opportunities and stewardship education to all county residents.
5. Protect lakes, rivers and streams, including shorelines, wetlands, high infiltration areas and associated vegetative buffers to maintain high water quality, manage water quantity, and sustain water-related recreation throughout Dane County.
6. Provide an inclusive parks system for all Dane County residents, regardless of age, race, gender or gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, place of residence, veteran status, physical ability, cognitive capacity, or family, marital, or economic status.

V. ECONOMIC AND HEALTH BENEFITS OF PARKS



Dane County park lands have inherent recreation, conservation, and scenic values, yet it's important to recognize the potential economic value they provide to Dane County. Dane County Parks has over 2.5 million estimated annual visitors. Park and recreation facilities are primary drivers of Dane County's billion dollar tourism industry. Parks host a variety of regional events, and fill motel rooms and restaurants with people from all over the state. Gas stations and other service orientated businesses benefit from the influx of people attending these events. The health benefits of parks and recreation facilities are becoming increasing more important to our community as more and more research indicates a positive relationship between parks, the economy, and healthy people.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Dane County has been host to a number of national scale sporting events including the Iron Man Competition, CrossFit Games, ESPN Great Outdoor Games, and the World Cyclocross Championship. All of these events certainly have an overall positive impact on the local economy, and nearly always are supported heavily by Dane County Parks.

Information provided by the Wisconsin Bicycle Federation indicates bicycling contributes \$1.5 billion annually and 13,200 jobs to the Wisconsin economy. Tourists from outside the state are estimated to spend \$535 million annually on bicycling in Wisconsin. Wisconsin and Dane County are consistently ranked as some of the best bicycling destinations in the country. Dane County is also home to some of the largest bicycling industries in the nation.

Parks have shown to increase property values and improve economies by attracting businesses and local residents. According to the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, outdoor recreation contributes over \$9.7 billion annually to the Wisconsin economy by supporting 129,000 jobs and providing nearly 4% of the gross state product. Employment in recreation and tourism industries has increased over the years. In 2008, these industries employed 8.4% of workers in Dane County.

The Dane County Parks system draws visitors and supports events that directly benefit the local economy. For example, Reddan Soccer Park at Badger Prairie County Park draws over 225,000 visitors to the park annually. The Greater Madison Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates that the seven soccer tournaments held at Reddan alone generate more than \$3 million annually in direct spending in the local economy. Trout anglers visiting Dane County park lands and streambank easements also contribute to the local economy. A study published by Trout Unlimited indicated that the total economic impact of fishing in the Driftless Area in 2015 was estimated to be over one-half billion dollars at \$703,676,674.50, supporting 6,597 jobs in the region. Special events held at Dane County park facilities, such as the Sugar Maple Music Festival, cyclocross and mountain bike races, various runs/walks, disc golf and fishing tournaments, also draw thousands of visitors each year that result in direct spending in the local economy. Additionally, Dane County issues over 3,000 lake access permits annually, with a third of them being non-resident, suggesting a significant economic impact from boaters recreating on our lakes. Dane County Parks amenities and services are a central reason why people visit, live, and work in Dane County, providing substantial benefits to the local economy.



HEALTH BENEFITS

Parks and outdoor recreation have significant physical and mental health benefits, which is increasingly being recognized by the health care industry, especially as obesity and its associated health care costs are on the rise. There is strong evidence that people are more physically active if there are parks or trails nearby that can be easily accessed for exercising. Studies also show that the number and size of parks in a community are positively related to physical activity levels. It's important to consider opportunities for maximizing health benefits as Dane County Parks properties are planned and developed. For example, providing park facilities that are close to populated areas which are accessible and designed for a diverse population. In the summer of 2016, the Friends of Dane County Parks hosted a Healthy Parks Tour to promote the health benefits that Dane County Parks provide by engaging the community and getting people out walking, hiking, and exercising in the parks. Events like this and other activities should continue to be encouraged to promote the health benefits of parks.

The Dane County Parks system natural areas offer many opportunities to escape urban environments, which is increasingly being recognized in the field of medicine as providing measurable health benefits. Japan was the first country to recognize these benefits which became part of their national public health program in 1982. Spending unstructured time in wooded natural environments has been proven to lower heart rate and blood pressure, reduce stress hormone production, boost the immune system, and improve overall feelings of well-being. A similar concept in the United States called "ecotherapy" was coined by Howard Clinebell, who wrote a book in 1996 identifying healing and growth benefits realized by time spent engaged in natural outdoor environments. Similar to the findings of the Japanese studies, Clinebell cites health benefits such as reduced incidences of depression, lower blood pressure, enhanced self-esteem, encouraging new social behaviors in dementia patients, help with impulse control in youth, and decreased post-operative recovery time. Recognizing the benefits of the outdoors, doctors are starting to prescribe passive outdoor activities for physical and mental health conditions.

VI. EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY



Dane County Parks is dedicated to providing an inclusive parks system for all Dane County residents, regardless of age, race, gender or gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, place of residence, veteran status, physical ability, cognitive capacity, or family, marital, or economic status.

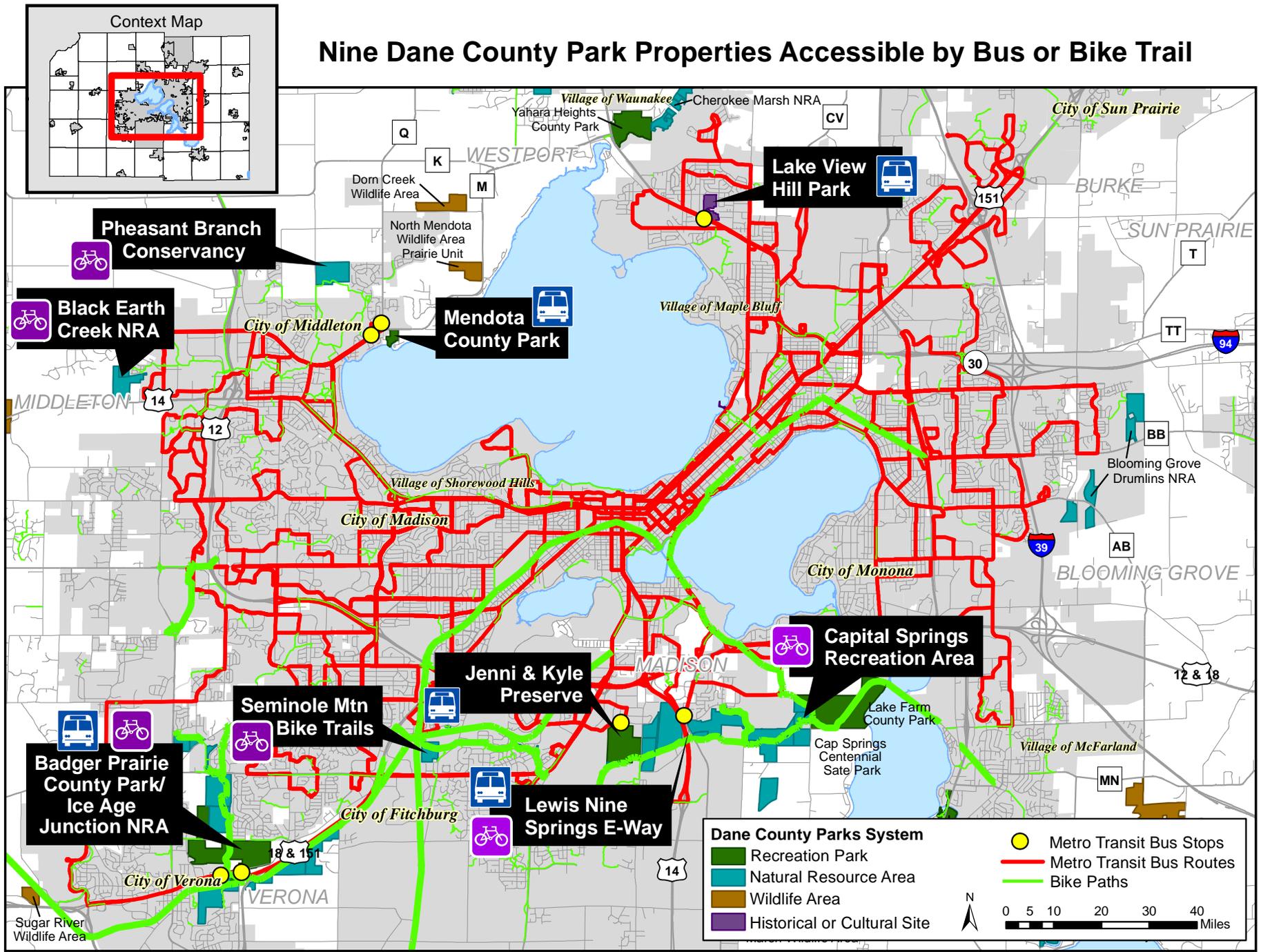
There are several initiatives that could be considered for maintaining and achieving an equitable, inclusive, and accessible parks system as outlined below.

- 1) Through a professionally administered survey, identify how Dane County Parks facilities are being used by under served or disadvantaged communities and what barriers may exist for developing strategies to ensure an inclusive park system. This effort should include establishing better relationships with different communities and getting their direct input on the subject. Below are some first steps that could be considered.

Barrier	Strategies to Overcome Barrier
Information and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with Friends groups and outside organizations to host “Know your Dane County Parks” events for reaching and informing a more diverse representation of Dane County’s population such as communities of color and low income, youth/ groups, schools, aging/elderly population, and people with disabilities.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a new Dane County Parks website that highlights public transportation options for parks facilities. Explore working with Madison Metro Transit to increase bus service to Dane County Park facilities. Explore partnerships and funding opportunities for providing bus transportation to Dane County Park facilities.
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate park permit fee structure and make adjustments or offer special services as appropriate for providing equitable access to park facilities.
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a plan for creating bilingual information, web resources and signage for the park system.

- 2) Continue to develop park facilities for all ages and abilities by striving to provide universal and inclusive experiences.
 - Develop a new Dane County Parks website that highlights accessible park facilities such as accessible fishing piers.
 - Identify a park for developing a universally accessible and inclusive playground for people with cognitive or physical disabilities.
 - Continue to comply with and exceed ADA and Universal Accessibility Standards for all new development projects.
- 3) Develop and implement equity and inclusion recommendations as part of the forthcoming Dane County Land and Water Resources Department Equity and Inclusion Plan that will include specific recommendations for the Parks Division.
- 4) Coordinate with Madison Parks and other municipal departments as appropriate to further evaluate this topic and consider their respective jurisdictions, the facilities and programs they offer, and the populations served.

Nine Dane County Park Properties Accessible by Bus or Bike Trail



VII. PARK HISTORY AND CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM



Dane County Parks was created in 1935 when the county acquired what was at the time Lake Park in Mt. Horeb. The site was renamed Stewart Park and had a rich recreational history and also served as regional community gathering location. Early use of the park included a lake that provided for fishing, swimming, and skating and supplied the area residents with their annual storage of ice. It was also home to a very popular Nordic ski jump. Upon the county's purchase, the park became one of two Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps that were located in Dane County in 1934 and 1935. The CCC rebuilt the dam and created a 7-acre lake with an access road and a new beach.

Eleven additional parks would be added over the next 30 years, Babcock, LaFollette, Goodland, Mendota, Brigham, Fish Lake, Riley-Deppe, Festge, Half-Way Prairie, Token Creek, and Lake View Woods.

The first county Parks and Open Space Plan was adopted in 1970, enabling the department to apply for a number of state and federal park acquisition and development grant funds. Beginning around 1990, the county began to focus on acquiring larger tracts of land for the purpose of protecting key natural resources, water, and wetlands. The Dane County Parks system would grow from around 700 acres to more than 3,600 acres over these 20 years. The Parks Department also began exploring diverse recreation opportunities including off-leash dog exercise areas, the Ice Age National Scenic Trail, and disc golf.



Nordic Ski Jump at Stewart Park

The acquisition and recreation diversity from the 1990s continued to evolve, and by 2000 the system had nearly doubled in size to over 6,600 acres. Park system properties became much larger and contained a diverse mixture of land cover types including wetlands, agriculture, prairies, forests, historical buildings, and developed park lands. It became apparent with the expanding diversity of lands and recreation uses occurring that a system was needed to provide the public with a uniform understanding of how lands were being managed.

In 2000, the Park Commission adopted a park classification system that divided county park lands into four categories: Recreation Parks, Natural Resource Areas, Forests and Historical/Cultural Sites. The classification system identified management practices for each category and also provided the public a clear expectation of what types of recreation uses would occur on these properties. Between 2000 and 2010, the lands managed under the Park Commission nearly doubled again to almost 12,000 acres. Increasingly large tracts of land within the Natural Resource Area classification were being purchased that had little or no development of recreation facilities on them. Several properties were added to the system that were adjacent to very large tracts of WDNR wildlife areas. In 2007, a new land classification category called "Wildlife Areas" was adopted by the County Board with the intent of maintaining hunting on lands purchased that historically had this use, allowing seamless management practices on lands adjacent to WDNR wildlife areas and mitigating crop losses on lands historically prone to wildlife damage.

This update to the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan recommends the addition of a "Trails" category to the park classification system. This recommendation was heard from a variety of sources during the public input process and validated by the strong support demonstrated by Dane County residents for continued expansion of the county-wide trail network. Trail mileages are anticipated to continue to grow over the next five years, increasing the importance of a transparent understanding by local units of government, non-profit conservation organizations and the public of Dane County's role in planning, developing, operating, and maintaining a multi-jurisdictional regional trail network.

VIII. EXISTING LAND AND FACILITY INVENTORY



[VIII.1 Recreation Parks](#)

[VIII.2 Natural Resource Areas](#)

[VIII.3 Forests](#)

[VIII.4 Historical/Cultural Sites](#)

[VIII.5 Wildlife Areas](#)

[VIII.6 Trails](#)

VIII.1 Recreation Parks

DEFINITION

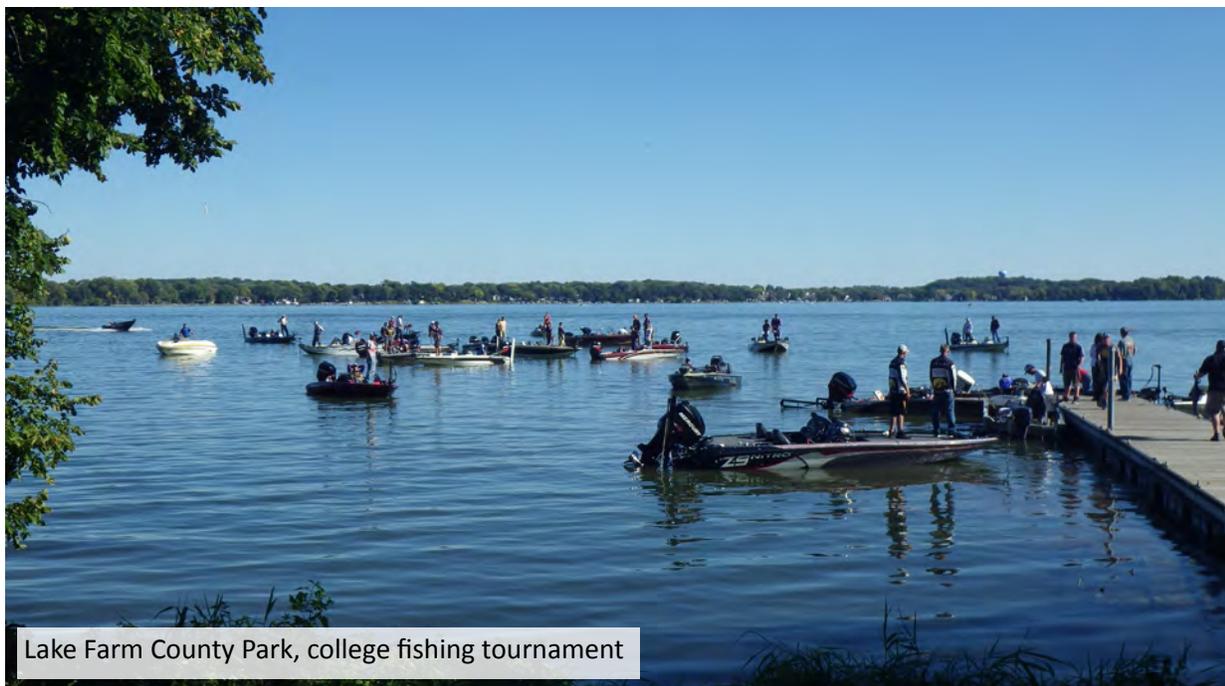
A Recreation Park consists of land that is specifically set aside for active and passive recreation uses. Active recreation generally refers to activities that can only occur on developed park lands or facilities such as soccer, disc golf, dog parks, and RV camping. Passive recreation refers to activities that occur in natural areas with little or no development of facilities required, i.e. kayaking, hiking, foraging, wildlife observation, and snowshoeing. Recreation park use is often extensive and intensive. A Recreation Park primarily serves users who are attracted to outdoor recreation with an expectation of using some type of developed access or facilities. It may provide facilities that offer a wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities, cater to only one predominant activity (special use), or include lands under a trail corridor classification that offer connections to other park and trail systems. Recreation Parks may also be found within the boundaries of lands which fall under a different category.

OVERVIEW

Dane County Parks has 26 Recreation Parks, which account for about 5,570 acres of all the lands in the system. The county's role is to provide large, regional-scale parks that attract users from numerous communities. Recreation Parks are usually several hundred acres in size and provide a mix of natural and developed park land areas. Recreational use of Dane County park land is extremely diverse and includes, but is not limited to, hiking, biking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, camping, picnicking, mountain biking, soccer, aeromodelling, lake access, dog walking, disc golf, bow-hunting, foraging, and fishing.

INVENTORY

The table on page 26 and map on page 27 present an inventory of all Dane County Recreation Parks.

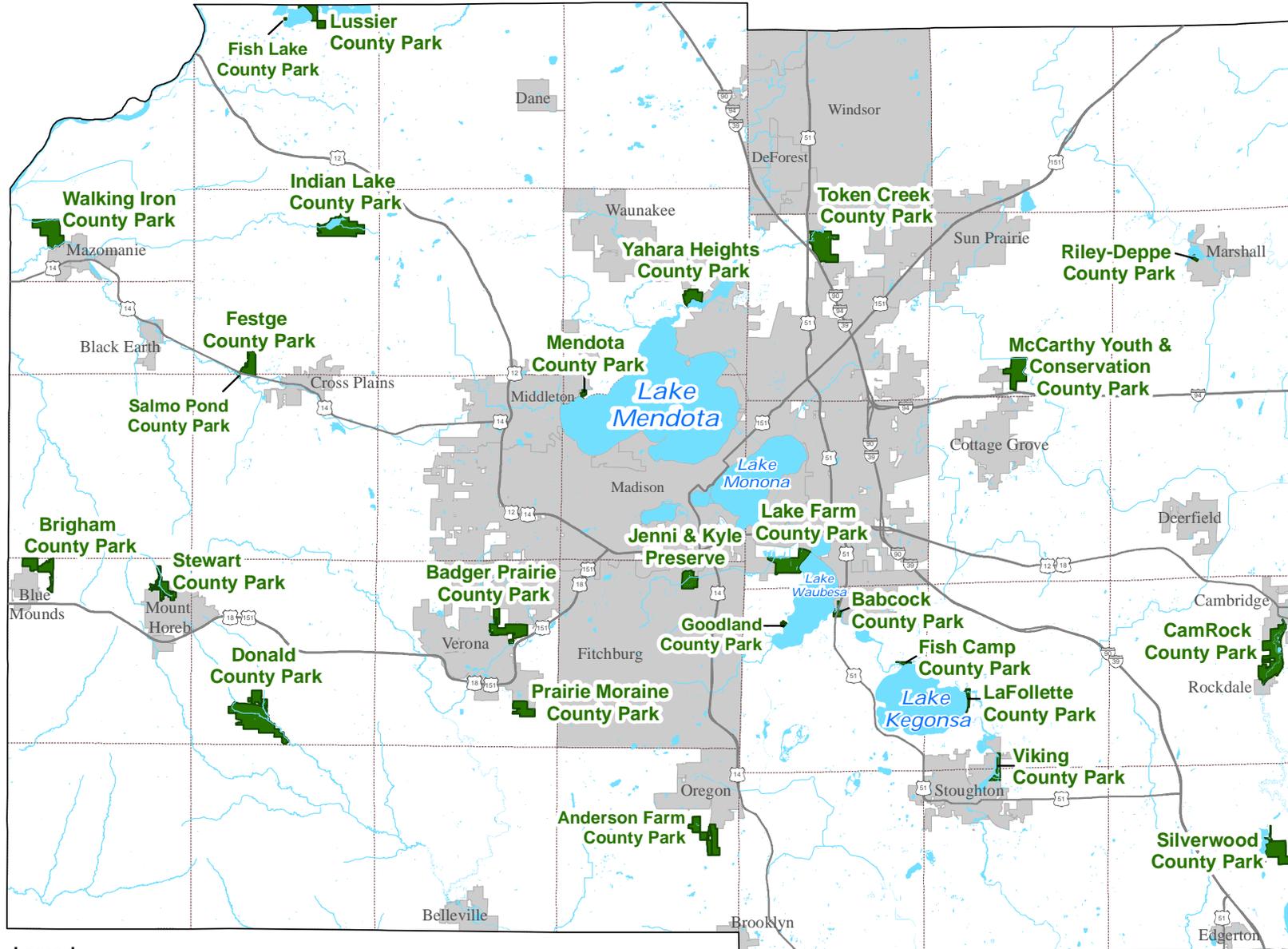


Lake Farm County Park, college fishing tournament

Park: Date Represents Year Established in County POSP	Total Acres	Car Parking and Public Access	Number of Camp Sites	Electric Campsites	Camping with Showers	Group Camping	Restrooms	Reservable Shelters	Non-Reservable Shelters	Picnic Area	Historical/Cultural Feature	Playground Equipment	Improved Boat Launch (Trailer Parking Spaces)	Small Watercraft Launch	Canoe Launch	Swimming	Accessible Fishing Pier	Shared-use Trail (Miles)	Hiking - Hard Surface Trail (Miles)	Hiking - Natural Surface Trail (Miles)	Boardwalk Trail (Miles)	Mountain Biking (Miles)	Equestrian Trail (Miles)	Cross-Country Skiing (Miles)	Snowshoeing Trail (Miles)	Snowmobile Trail (Miles)	Softball Field	Basketball Courts	Volleyball Courts	Tennis Courts	Dog Park (Acres)	Dog Park Trails (Miles)	Disc Golf Course (Holes)	Permitted Archery Hunting	Other Amenities		
1 Anderson Farm (2014)	309.5	●																	1.1						1.4								●				
2 Babcock (1936)	36.4	●	25	●	●		●		1	1	●	●	78				1		0.5						0.1												
3 Badger Prairie (1976)	320.6	●					●	1		1	●	●						0.3		3.4		3.4			3.4	●	●		8	0.7					Aeromodelling Field		
4 Brigham (1952)	232.3	●	25			●	●	2		1	●	●						1.4		3.1				3.1			●							●			
5 Cam-Rock (1970)	574.5	●					●	3		3	●	●			●		1	2.4		3.7		9		5.7		●								●			
6 Donald (1993)	774.9	●					●	1		2	●	●								12.3			8.4		12.3	1.2									●		
7 Festge (1963)	155.6	●					●	2		1	●	●								2.8					2.8		●								●		
8 Fish Camp (1976)	15.6	●					●			2	●		21		●		2		0.1	0.3															●		
9 Fish Lake (2000)	2.9	●							1	1				●																							
10 Goodland (1937)	13.9	●					●	2		1		●	19			●			0.1							●	●	●	●								
11 Indian Lake (1975)	480.3	●				●	●	1		1	●			●					0	5.8				5.1		1.1				24	1.1			●			
12 Jenni & Kyle (1989)	160.3	●					●	1		1	●	●					3		0.2*	0.1															●		
13 La Follette (1936)	28.6	●					●	1		1	●	●			●																					●	
14 Lake Farm (1973)	345.8	●	54	●	●	●	●	3		3	●	●	54				2	2.9		5.5	1.2**			3.8		●	●								●		
15 Lussier (2000)	142.6	●								1			13		●					1.1																●	
16 McCarthy (1974)	288.5	●				●	●			1										4.2			4.2	4.2		0.2										●	
17 Mendota (1951)	19	●	30	●	●		●	2	1	2	●	●		●		●	1		0.1	0.4							●	●	●							5 Unit Boat Campground	
18 Prairie Moraine (1993)	165.7	●																		2.4***					2.4					51	3.5						
19 Riley-Deppe (1962)	12.9	●					●	1		1	●		●																								
20 Salmo Pond (1980)	7.5	●					●			1									0.4																		
21 Silverwood (2000)	308.3	●					●													6.2			5.6														
22 Stewart (1935)	177.1	●					●	1	2	3		●			●	●	2			3.4				3.4											●		
23 Token Creek (1966)	418	●	42	●	●	●	●	5	6	6	●	●					1			4.6	0.3		2.5	4.6	1.4			●		46	1.2	27	●				
24 Viking (1972)	77.9	●					●	1		1				●						1						0.5				14	1				●		
25 Walking Iron (1972)	357.8	●					●			1										5.8			5.8		5.8	1.1									●		
26 Yahara Heights (2000)	140.5	●												●						1.7										20	1.2				●		
Totals	5567.0		176					27	5	36			185				16	7	65.4			26.5	26.8		5.6				163	8.7							

* Jenni & Kyle Trails are ADA Accessible
 ** Includes boardwalk for Lower Yahara River Trail
 *** Prairie Moraine Hiking Natural Surface Trails are designated segments of Ice Age National Scenic Trail.

Dane County Recreation Parks



- Legend**
- Recreation Park
 - Township Boundary
 - City/Village



VIII.2 Natural Resource Areas

DEFINITION

A Natural Resource Area consists of land that is specifically set aside for the protection of valuable natural environments and/or greenbelt corridors that were identified through a public process. This can include habitat protection and open space preservation. Recreation at Natural Resource Areas is a secondary objective, and users are encouraged to enjoy the resource as is. Passive recreation activities dominate the site use and active recreation, if any, only takes place on the fringes or in small pockets (areas) of a natural resource area. Natural Resource Areas may include lands belonging to another category, such as trails, recreation parks or wildlife areas.

OVERVIEW

Dane County Parks has 27 Natural Resource Areas, which account for about 3,000 acres of all the lands in the system. Typically lands protected within these project areas should be large, contiguous blocks that may include a mixture of agricultural working lands, water, wetlands, steep topography, prairie, and forests. Some of these lands may be protected through fee title purchase, however, much of the protection of larger landscapes and buffer zones can be achieved through purchase of agriculture/conservation easements and continue to remain under private ownership. Land or easements are only purchased from willing sellers. Natural Resource Area boundaries have no bearing on any zoning or land use decisions and participation by private landowners or local units of government to carry out any outlined resource protection initiatives is on a voluntary basis.

Creation of larger areas will provide enough space to incorporate some limited recreation use without impacting the resource and also allow native vegetation management practices, such as prescribed burns, to take place. Lands protected within Natural Resource Areas are often owned by multiple public agencies, therefore, it is critical that the county work jointly with these other agencies to ensure cohesive resource and recreation management.

INVENTORY

The table on page 29 and map on page 30 present an inventory of all Dane County Natural Resource Areas.



		Project Area Boundary (acres)****	Total Acres under County Ownership*****	Off-street Parking	Restrooms	Canoe Launch	Shared-use Trail (Miles)	Hiking - Natural Surface Trail (Miles)	Mountain Biking (Miles)	Groomed Cross-Country Skiing (Miles)	Snowshoeing Trail (Miles)	Snowmobile Trail (Miles)	Softball Field	Dog Park Area (Acres)	Historical/Cultural Feature	Permitted Archery Hunting	Other Amenities	
Natural Resource Areas: Date Represents Year Established in County POSP																		
1	Badfish Creek (2012)	15975.9	0.0															
2	Badger Mill Creek (1995)	623.1	0.0															
3	Black Earth Creek (2001)	11718.5	94.0															
4	Blooming Grove Drumlins (2000)	1645.8	174.7															
5	Blue Mounds (2012)	2976.3	0.0															
6	Cherokee Marsh (1970)	4608.2	207.7	●				3.6			3.6				●	●		
7	Door Creek Wetlands (2000)	3961.5	0.0															
8	Fish Lake (1996)	683.3	81.5															
9	Holtzman (1973)	63.2	63.2															
10	Ice Age Trail Junction (1993)	1949.6	544.8	●			●	1.5*			1.5*	0.3					●	
11	Koshkonong Creek	3519.4	0.0															
12	Leopold-Riley Game Cooperative (2001)	1820.0	0.0															
13	Lewis Nine Springs E-Way (1976)**	3889.0	675.9	●	●	●	●	1.5	●	1.6				28	●	●		Seminole Mtn Bike Trails, Capital Springs Disc Golf Course (18-hole) and Dog Park
14	Lower Mud Lake (1995)	2226.0	344.9	●								0.3					●	
15	Mauneha River (2012)	6035.1	139.7															
16	North Mendota (2006)***	4602.1	172.4												●	●		
17	Patrick Marsh (2001)	990.0	0.0	●				●										
18	Pheasant Branch Conservancy (1995)	501.7	99.9	●			0.8	1.5							●			
19	Phil's Woods (1974)	36.0	36.1	●				●									●	
20	South Waubesa Marsh (1990)	2069.1	0.0															
21	Springfield Hill (2001)	701.0	198.1	●				1.6*			1.6*						●	
22	Starkweather Creek (2006)	2372.8	0.0															
23	Sugar River (1983)	7644.4	0.0															
24	Token Creek (1970)	890.3	143.1														●	
25	Upper Yahara River (2001)	496.0	0.0															
26	Walking Iron (2012)	2688.1	0.0															
27	Yahara Headwaters (2012)	1141.6	0.0															
	Totals	85828.0	2976.0															

* Trail is a segment of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail

** Includes Capital Springs Recreation amenities such as the disc golf course and dog park.

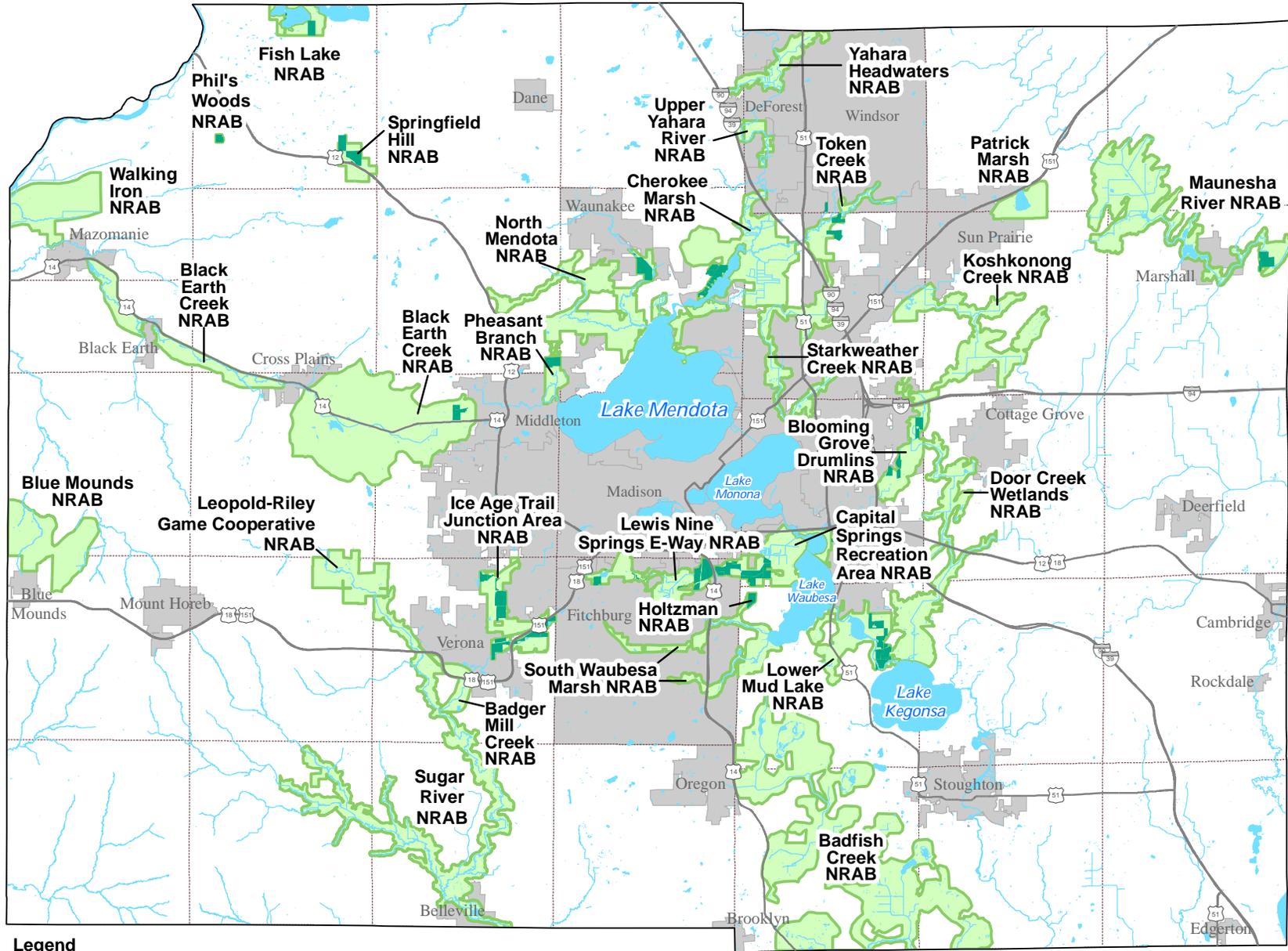
*** Boundary established per North Mendota Parkway Study.

**** Not all lands within Natural Resource Area Project boundaries are in public ownership. Please respect private landowner rights.

***** Does not include recreation park lands or wildlife areas.

Note: This facility inventory includes only those found on County-owned property. Natural Resource Area lands are generally open to the public year-round for hiking, fishing, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, wildlife observation, and foraging. However, there are not typically any designated trails or developed facilities for these activities.

Dane County Natural Resource Areas



Legend

- Natural Resource Area Boundary
- Natural Resource Area Property
- Township Boundary
- City/Village



VIII.3 Forests

DEFINITION

A Forest in the Dane County Parks system consists of lands where timber is managed using sustainable methods and where some passive recreation such as hiking, cross-country skiing, foraging, wildlife observation, hunting, and snowshoeing may occur. Dane County Forests are different from northern county forests in Wisconsin, where more active and motorized uses may occur. Dane County Forests have the potential to become excellent outdoor classrooms for people of all ages to learn about forest ecology, vegetation management practices, and the wildlife that use these areas. These lands also offer great demonstration areas for land management practices, such as prescribed burns, invasive species removal, and selective cutting of trees that contribute to the overall health and sustainability of forest ecosystems. Oftentimes harvested trees can be repurposed for building materials throughout the park system. Dane County Forests may include lands under a trail corridor classification that offer connections to other park and trail systems, and may be found within the boundaries of lands of another category.

OVERVIEW

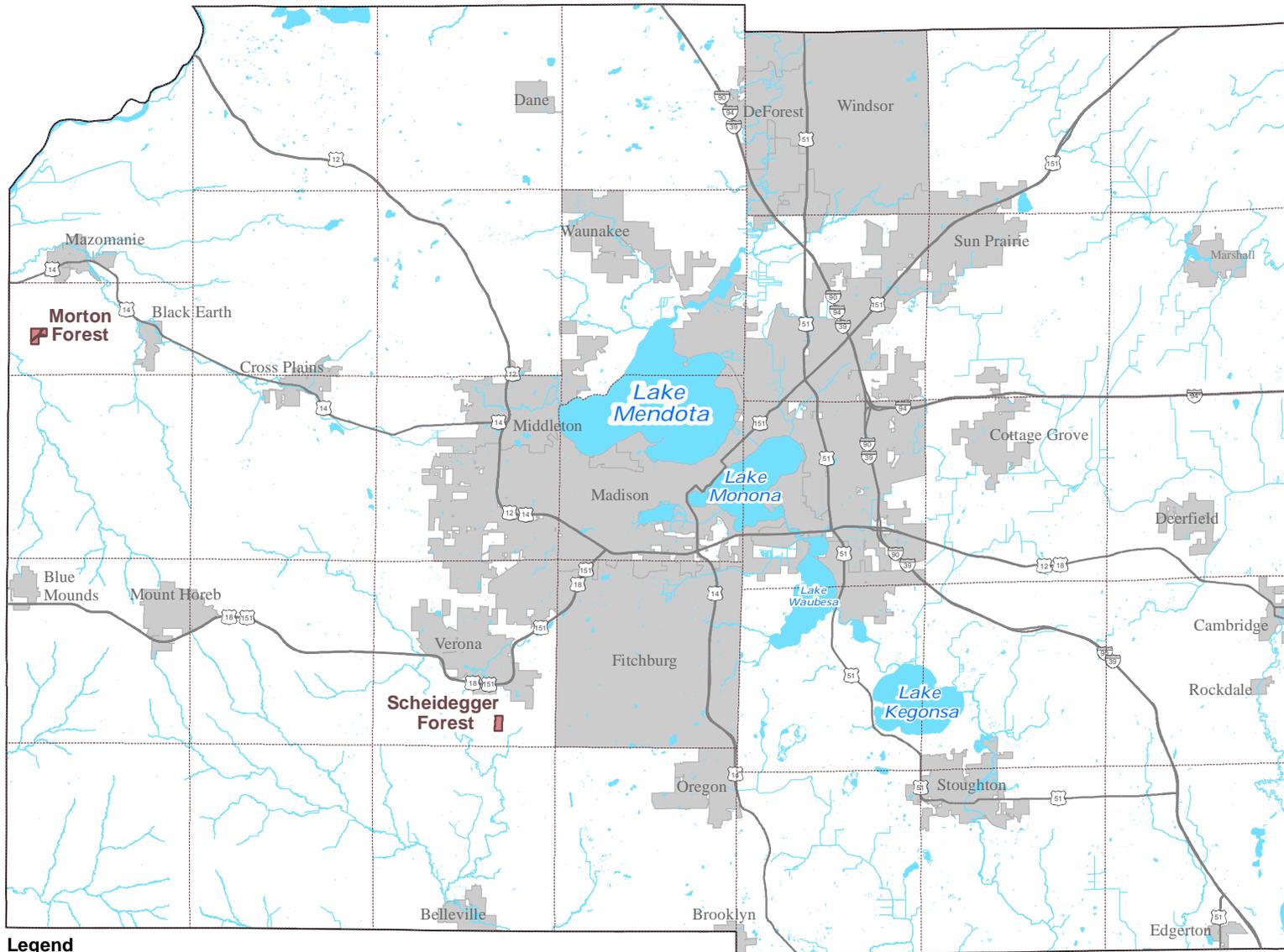
Lands managed under this category will allow the county to receive income from timber management as well as from a variety of grant programs. Lands may be enrolled in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources “School and Community Forest” program that allows the County to receive income from timber management as well as provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate sustainable forestry practices and teach about land stewardship. As acreage increases in the future, hunting will continue to be utilized for both recreation and wildlife management purposes compatible with forest use and ecology. The county may also consider enrolling some lands in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources “County Forest” program that would make them eligible for a greater variety of funding programs as this program area increases in the future.

INVENTORY

The table below and map on page 32 present an inventory of all Dane County Forests.

Forests: Date Represents Year Established in County POSP	Total Acres	Car Parking and Public Access	Group Camping	Restrooms	Reservable Shelters	Non-Reservable Shelters	Picnic Area	Hiking Natural Surface Trail (Miles)	Permitted Archery Hunting	Other Amenities
1 Morton Forest (1999)	113.9	●						2	●	Scenic Overlooks and Reservable Nature Center
2 Scheidegger Forest (2002)	73.4	●	●	●	●		●	1	●	
Total	187.3									

Dane County Forests



- Legend**
- Dane County Forest
 - Township Boundary
 - City/Village



VIII.4 Historical/Cultural Sites

DEFINITION

A Historical/Cultural Site consists of land that is specifically set aside for the preservation, restoration, or reconstruction of features significant to the history or cultural heritage of an area. This can include historic buildings, reconstructions of historic buildings, and archaeological sites. Activities at a Historical/Cultural Site may be limited to sightseeing and the study of the historic or cultural features. Recreation use at these properties is primarily passive, such as hiking, interpretive study, and picnicking. Historical/Cultural Sites may be surrounded by lands belonging to another category, such as recreation parks or natural resource areas (e.g. Lake Farm Archaeological District).

OVERVIEW

The Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan includes six Historical/Cultural sites that range in size, ownership, and scope of programming. Each site is unique to the system and highlights different aspects of the region’s history and culture. Management of each property is also unique to the specific characteristics of the site and all have dedicated volunteers that are instrumental in providing access, management, restoration, and programming.

Note: Individual historical/cultural features on county-owned property such as Native American mound sites, cabin remnants, historical markers etc. are not listed due to very limited size and remote locations.

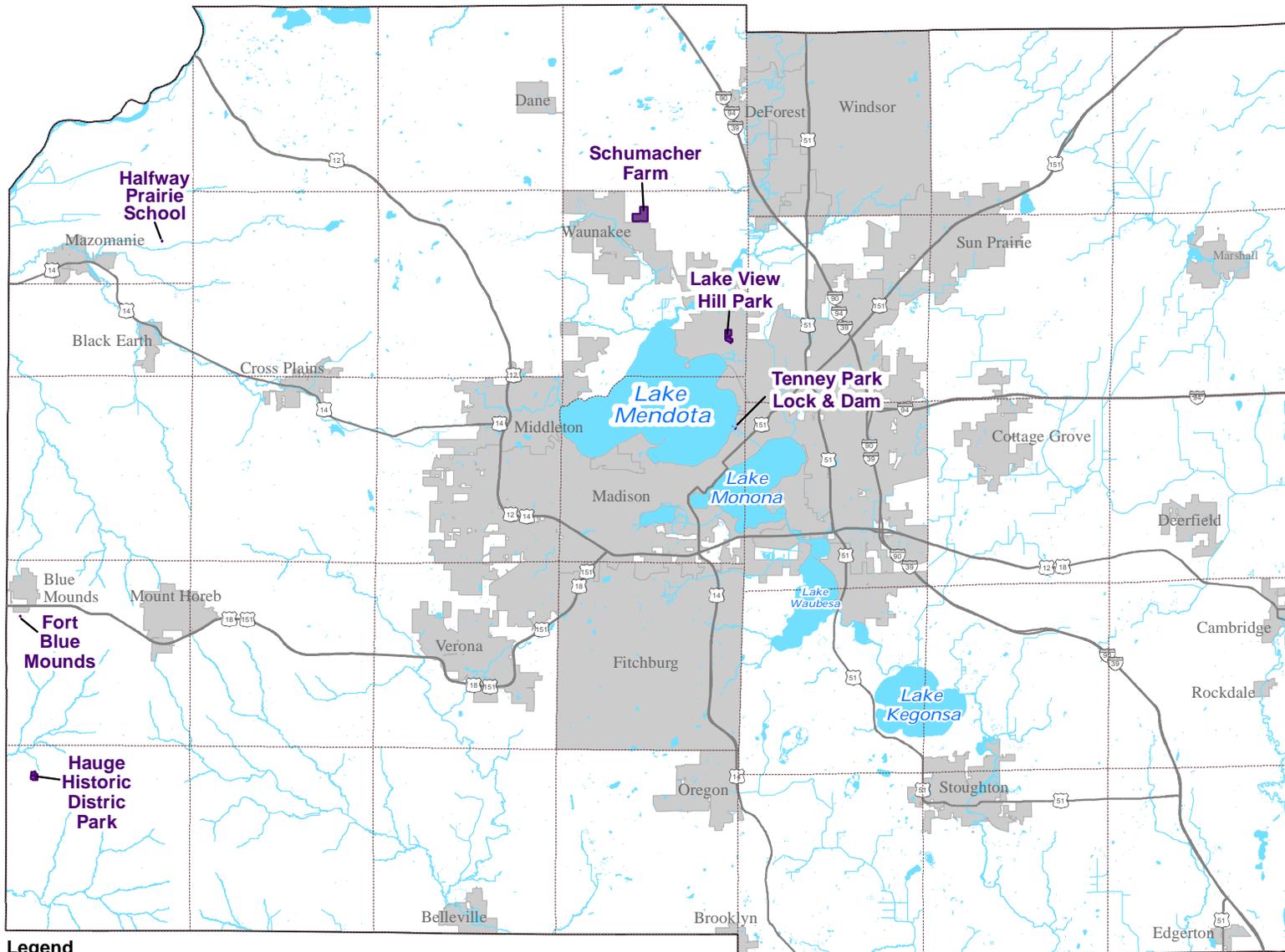
INVENTORY

The table below and map on page 34 present an inventory of all Dane County Historical/Cultural Sites.

Historical/Cultural Sites: Date Represents Year Established in County POSP	Total Acres	Car Parking and Public Access	Restrooms	Reservable Shelters	Non-Reservable Shelters	Picnic Area	Playground Equipment	Shared-use Trail (Miles)	Hiking Natural Surface Trail (Miles)	Hiking Hard Surface Trail	Mountain Biking (Miles)	Equestrian Trail (Miles)	Cross-Country Skiing (Miles)	Snowshoeing Trail (Miles)	Historical/Cultural Feature	Other Amenities
1 Fort Blue Mounds (1910)	0.2														●	
2 Halfway Prairie (1964)	0.6	●				●	●								●	
3 Hauge Historic District Park (2001)	27.8	●				●		●				●	●	●		
4 Lake View Hill Park (1967)	41.3	●						●							●	
5 Schumacher Farm (1978)	115.5	●						●					●	●		
6 Tenney Park Lock & Dam (2018)	1.5	●				●				●					●	Breakwall/pier
Total	186.9															

Note: The Lake Farm Archaeological District is an area of Historic/Cultural features designated as a National Register of Historic Places site within the Lake Farm County Park, which is classified as a Recreation Park.

Dane County Historical/Cultural Sites



Legend

-  Dane County Historical/Cultural Site
-  Township Boundary
-  City/Village



VIII.5 Wildlife Areas

DEFINITION

A Wildlife Area consists of land that is primarily undeveloped with the exception of limited parking opportunities along the outer fringes. The lands function similar to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource Wildlife Areas and are open to nature-based outdoor activities that play an important role in meeting landscape scale conservation and recreation needs of the county. County and state wildlife area project area boundaries often are adjacent or overlap one another, providing some of the largest public natural areas in the county. Non-profit conservation organizations and other conservation partners play a critical role in expanding acquisition and restoration efforts within these project areas. Management practices focus on providing wildlife habitat and undeveloped recreation uses such as hunting, trapping, hiking, foraging, snowshoeing, fishing, and cross country skiing. Land covers usually consist of forest, wetlands, grasslands, and working farmlands. All Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources fishing, hunting and trapping regulations apply to Dane County Wildlife Areas unless otherwise posted. Each property may have specific restrictions for use based on proximity to residential or developed areas, endangered resources, and other issues that have been identified in a public planning process. Similar to a Natural Resource Area, users are encouraged to enjoy the area as-is and trail access of any type is extremely limited. Wildlife Areas may be found within the boundaries of lands that are of a different classification. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resource Conservation Wardens assist with the enforcement of hunting and fishing laws on County Wildlife Areas.

OVERVIEW

In 1994, the County Board amended the park ordinance to permit hunting within the county parks. The county recognized that as park land acres increased, there would be additional opportunities to provide for hunting, especially on lands adjacent to state and federal wildlife and fishery areas and/or lands that historically provided for passive recreational uses such as hunting. In response to strong support heard for provision of more hunting opportunities on county-owned lands during the 2006-2011 Parks and Open Space Plan update and changing Stewardship requirements, the Dane County Park Commission worked through a public process to create Wildlife Areas. In 2007, the County Board approved updates to park ordinances allowing the Park Commission to designate Wildlife Areas. The first Dane County Wildlife Area was established in October 2007, and there are now almost 3,300 acres offered at 16 different Wildlife Area properties. Often, but not always, a Dane County Wildlife Area will be located adjacent to state wildlife areas, creating larger tracts of public recreational land with similar uses and rules regardless of ownership. There are designated public parking areas at each property along with an information board that includes a map and any special rules.

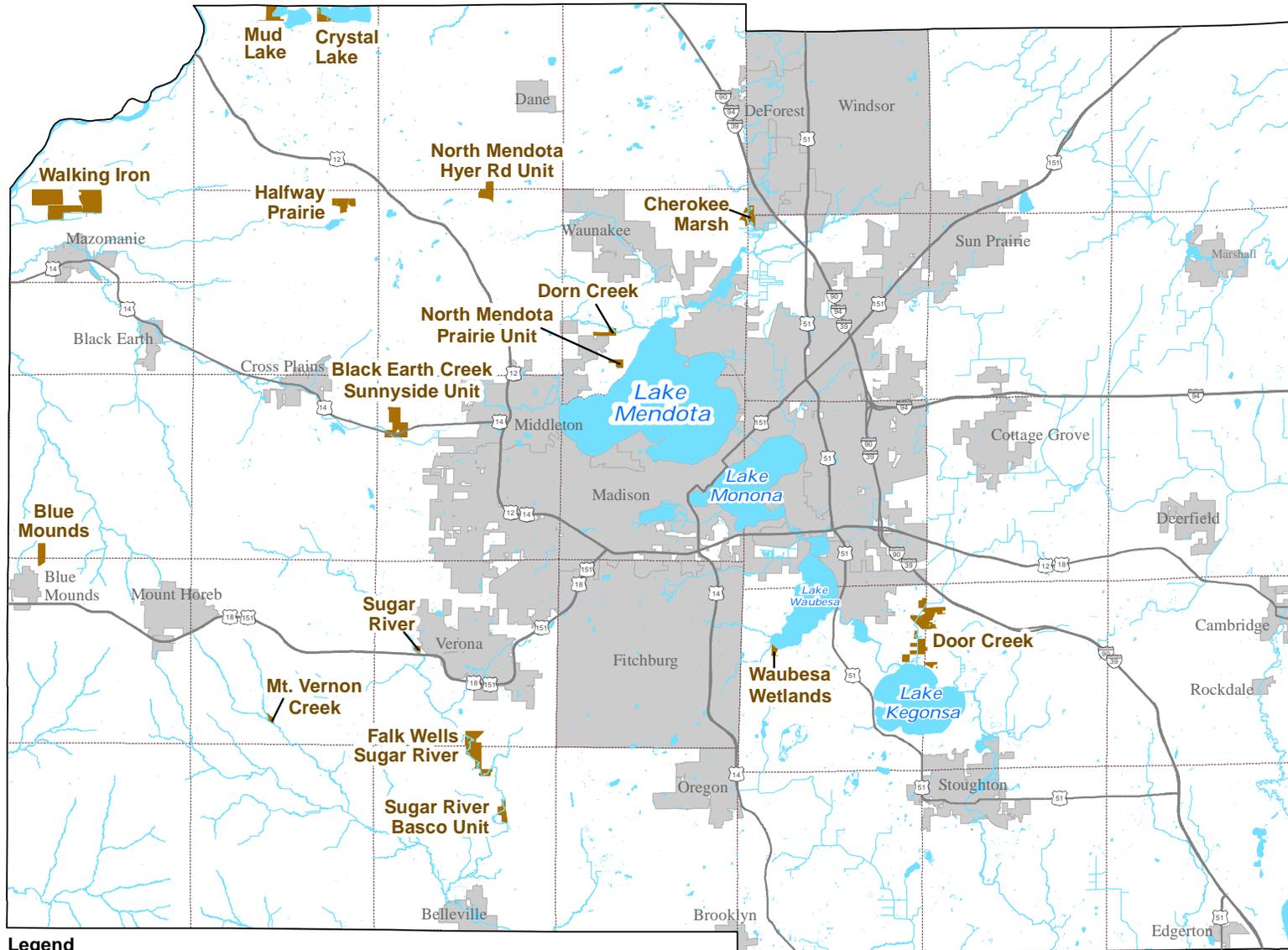
INVENTORY

The table on page 36 and map on page 37 present an inventory of all Dane County Wildlife Areas.

Wildlife Areas: Date Represents Year Established in County POSP		Total Acres under County Ownership	Off-street Parking	Fishing	Hiking	Snowshoeing	Cross Country Skiing	Hunting	Trapping	Foraging	Streams/Ditches	Upland Forest	Wetlands	Grasslands
1	Black Earth Creek Sunnyside Unit (2012)	291.8	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	
2	Blue Mounds (2015)	107.0	●		●	●	●	●	●	●		●		
3	Cherokee Marsh (2016)	126.5	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
4	Crystal Lake (2015)	205.3	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●		●
5	Door Creek (2012)	552.6	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
6	Dorn Creek (2012)	79.6	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
7	Falk Wells Sugar River (2014)	378.8	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
8	Halfway Prairie (2014)	148.4	●		●	●	●	●	●	●		●		●
9	Mount Vernon Creek (2012)	29.6	●	●	●	●	●	●		●			●	●
10	Mud Lake (2017)	117.4	●	●	●	●	●	●		●		●		●
11	North Mendota Hyer Rd Unit (2015)	137.2	●		●	●	●	●		●			●	●
12	North Mendota Prairie Unit (2015)	62.7	●		●	●	●	●	●	●				●
13	Sugar River (2013)	34.0		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●
14	Sugar River Basco Unit (2016)	97.7	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
15	Walking Iron (2012)	911.3	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
16	Waubesa Wetlands (2014)	37.7	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●
Total		3317.6												

Note: Developed and maintained facilities are not typically available for recreation uses such as hiking, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing at Wildlife Areas.

Dane County Wildlife Areas



Legend

- Dane County Wildlife Area
- Township Boundary
- City/Village



VIII.6 Trails

DEFINITION

Trails are managed for the primary purpose of providing interconnectivity between parks and other trails that are considered regionally significant due to their inclusion within an adopted county plan or Madison Area Transportation Planning Board Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Shared-use trails are typically paved, compacted crushed limestone, and/or boardwalk that are a minimum of 10 feet in width. Dane County shared-use trails provide for hiking, biking, roller blading, and roller skiing. Trail use on the Ice Age National Scenic Trail (NST) is limited to hiking, backpacking and snowshoeing. The Ice Age NST is typically a native surfaced (dirt) footpath that is about 3 feet wide. Motorized recreation use is not allowed on the Ice Age NST or Dane County shared-use trails.

Trails are usually surrounded by lands belonging to another category, such as Recreation Parks or Natural Resource Areas. Other recreation uses that may occur within the Ice Age National Scenic Trail corridor lands include hunting, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, foraging, and some limited primitive camping opportunities. Hunting may not take place within 100' of a designated trail corridor on Dane County Park Lands. Management practices primarily focus on operation, repair, maintenance, and buffer lands necessary to provide uninterrupted public use. Management of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail and surrounding corridor lands also includes extensive vegetation management with the goal of providing users with a pre-settlement landscape experience dating back to the glacial era some 15,000 years ago.

OVERVIEW

Several requests were heard during the 2018-2023 Parks and Open Space Plan public input process for consideration of adding a Trails category to the park classification system. Since the opening of the Capital City Trail in 2000, shared-use trails managed by Dane County have more than doubled to over 20 miles. These trails often provide connections to other state and local unit of government trail systems offering more than 100 miles of shared use trails throughout the county. In an effort to improve trail user navigation throughout the overall trail network, Dane County funded a Bicycle Wayfinding Plan that was completed in 2017. The goal of the plan is to provide a seamless template for trail signage development throughout the county that would improve user awareness of location, destinations and trail management responsibilities.

Operation, maintenance, and management of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail is carried out by the National Park Service and Ice Age Trail Alliance. The nearly 1,200 mile long corridor follows the edge of the last continental glacier in Wisconsin and was designated in 1980. It is one of eleven designated national scenic trails in the United States.

INVENTORY

The table on page 39 and map on page 40 present an inventory of Dane County Shared-use Trails and the Ice Age National Scenic Trail.

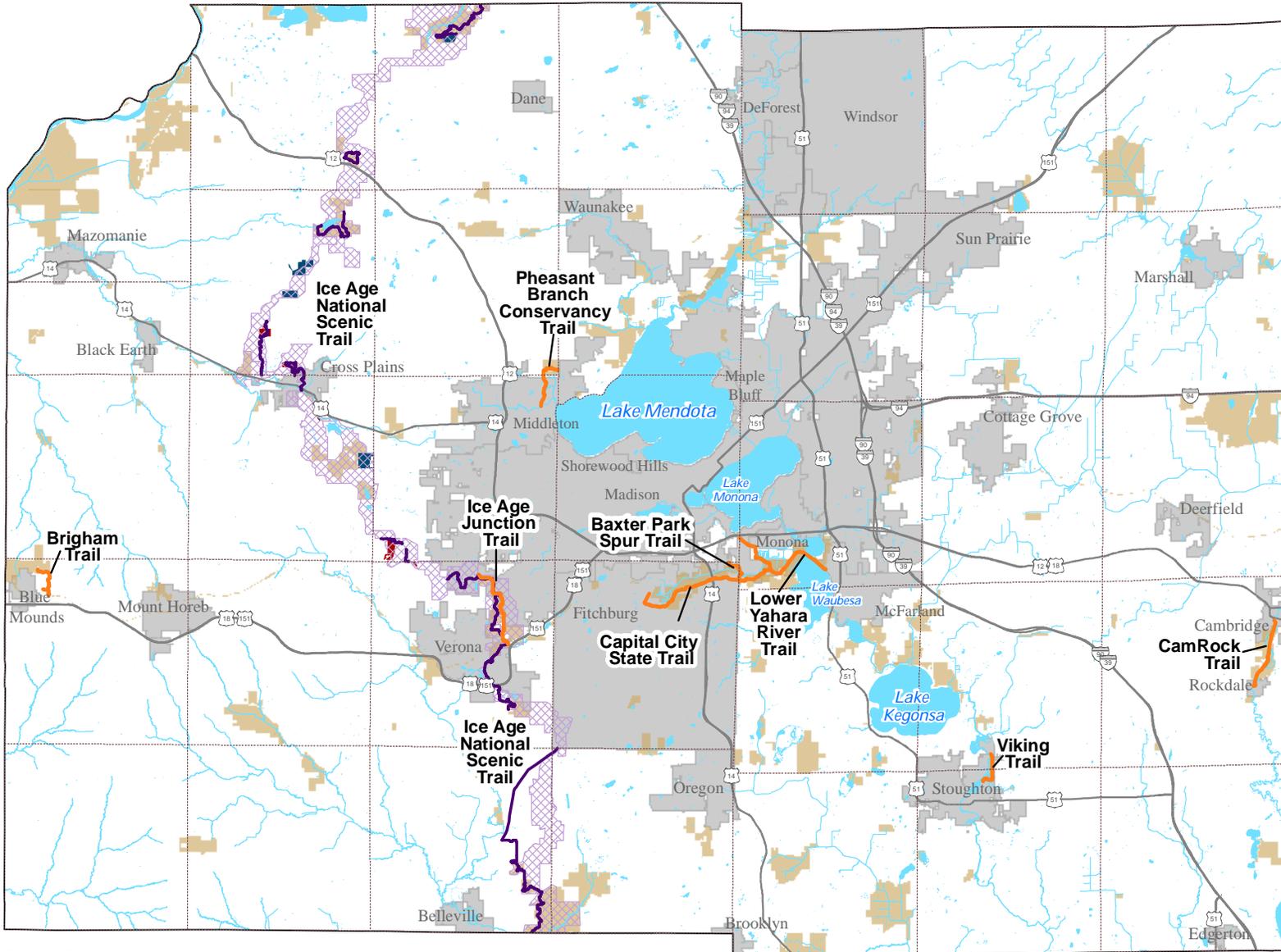
Trails: Date Represents Year Established in County POSP	Trail Project Area Boundary (Acres)	Total Acres under County Ownership	Trail Miles	Trail Surface	Car Parking and Public Access	Hiking	Biking	Rollerblading	Roller Skiing	Snowshoeing	Backpacking Campsites	Restrooms	Reservable Shelters	Non-Reservable Shelters	Picnic Area	Other Amenities
1 Ice Age National Scenic Trail (1980)	18111.7	401.7	31.8*	Mowed Grass or Dirt Footpath**	●	●				●	●					
2 Baxter Park Spur Trail (2011)	NA	NA	1	Paved		●	●	●	●							
3 Brigham County Park Spur Trail (2015)	NA	NA	1.5	Paved	●	●	●	●	●			●	●		●	Brigham County Park Amenities
4 CamRock Trail (2010)	NA	NA	2.5	Crushed Limestone	●	●	●	●	●			●	●		●	CamRock County Park Amenities
5 Capital City Trail (2000)	NA	NA	9.6	Paved	●	●	●	●	●			●	●	●		Lake Farm County Park Amenities
6 Ice Age Junction Trail (2010)	NA	NA	3.2	Paved	●	●	●	●	●			●	●		●	Badger Prairie Park Amenities
7 Lower Yahara River Trail (2017)	NA	NA	2.4	Paved	●	●	●	●	●			●	●			Accessible Fishing Pier and Boardwalk
8 Pheasant Branch Conservancy Trail (2003)	NA	NA	1.8***	Crushed Limestone	●	●	●									Scenic Overlook
9 Viking Trail (2010)	NA	NA	1.3	Crushed Limestone	●	●	●					●	●		●	Viking County Park Amenities

* Includes all IAT segments maintained by Ice Age Trail Alliance on all public lands
 ** Some sections of IAT are temporarily routed on hard surface shared-use trails
 *** Includes shared-use trail segments on all public lands



Lower Yahara River Trail

Dane County Trails



Legend

- Shared-use Trail (Managed and Maintained by Dane County)
- Ice Age National Scenic Trail
- Ice Age National Scenic Trail Corridor
- Ice Age Trail Property (Owned by Dane County)
- Ice Age Trail Property (Owned by IAT Alliance)
- Township Boundary
- City/Village
- County/State/Federal Public Lands



IX. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS



The Dane County Park Commission is responsible for combining variety of planning criteria when considering recommended updates to this plan, with an end goal of balancing use of the parks by the public with proper land stewardship. Planning considerations that were used to formulate recommendations for the update to this plan included:

[IX.1 Dane County Survey](#)

[IX.2 Demographics](#)

[IX.3 Related Planning Efforts](#)

[IX.4 Recreation Needs Analysis](#)

[IX.5 Future Land Needs Analysis](#)

[IX.6 Public & Non-Profit Conservation Organization Input](#)

[IX.7 Dane County Parks Staff Input](#)

[IX.8 Land Management Considerations](#)

[IX.9 Partnership Opportunities](#)

[IX.10 Committee Input](#)

IX.1 Dane County Survey

SURVEY BACKGROUND AND DISTRIBUTION

An online 23-question user survey was developed for seeking input on the Dane County Parks system. The goal of the survey was to gauge user satisfaction, recreation trends, barriers, and areas to improve. It served as one of several planning considerations to determine park system needs which could be compared against other related surveys to identify planning themes. Survey responses were also compared against other input and planning information gathered during the planning process.

The survey was distributed with a goal of reaching an expanded and more diverse set of users. A Spanish version of the survey was also developed and both surveys were distributed widely and heavily publicized.

The survey was distributed via email to park permit holders, Friends groups, endowment fund contacts, non-profit and partner organizations, the Dane County Board of Supervisors, and all cities, villages, and townships in Dane County. It was also publicized via public information meetings, television and radio interviews, the Dane County Parks website, Facebook, flyers at parks, and newsletters. Additionally, it was distributed and/or promoted by the following organizations:

- Dane County Office for Equity and Inclusion
- Community Centers in Dane County
- UW-Extension
- Catholic Multicultural Center
- Bayview Apartments
- Central Hispano
- Latino Earth Partnership
- Outdoor Latino
- Outdoor Afro
- Community Groundworks
- Simpson Street Press*
- La Comunidad*



**The Dane County Office for Equity and Inclusion provided funding for three interns from Simpson Street Press who worked at the Land and Water Resources Department. The interns wrote an article on the Parks and Open Space Survey and had it published in the Simpson Street Free Press and La Comunidad News.*

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey was partially or completely filled out and submitted by 1,178 respondents, with the majority being residents of Dane County. Overall, respondents indicated that they are very satisfied with and value the Dane County Parks system and appreciate the diversity of lands and recreation opportunities it offers. The survey results also suggested some overall improvements that could be made, including building an identity for Dane County Parks and promoting the park system and the recreation opportunities it offers. Numerous questions on the survey were designed to assess which Dane County Parks program areas or recreation facilities people would like added. In summary, survey respondents were most interested in seeing more of the following:

- Land acquisition and natural resource management
- Hiking trails, bicycle/pedestrian trails, mountain bike trails, disc golf, and dog parks
- Connectivity of land, trails, and facilities
- Winter disc golf and winter access for hiking/trail running
- Places to hike with dogs off-leash
- Restrooms and shelters
- Facilities for elderly or those using wheelchairs (i.e. benches, no trip hazards, easy/paved trails, etc.)
- Activities to attract youth and connect them to nature
- Walk-in or rustic campsites
- Better park maps, trail mileage, information, etc. at parks

Although the Spanish version of the survey was distributed widely, it was only completed and submitted by 17 respondents. Furthermore, there was little diversity among the respondents that filled out the English version of the survey. A professionally administered survey should be considered in the future to better understand how Dane County Parks facilities are being used by underserved or disadvantaged communities and what barriers may exist that prevent these communities from using them. This effort should include establishing better relationships with different communities and getting their direct input on the subject.

Additional information about the survey and results is available online at:

https://parks-lwr.dane.com/documents/pdf-Planning/POSP_Survey_Results.pdf

IX.2 Demographics

Demographics are the statistical characteristics of a population related to age, race, income level, education, employment status, etc. Unless otherwise noted, demographic information was compiled by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Applied Population Laboratory (APL) for the Wisconsin Department of Administration Demographic Services Center.

POPULATION GROWTH

It is important to understand where growth has occurred and is anticipated to occur for the purpose of locating future recreation parks, prioritizing acquisition of lands targeted for resource protection, and prioritizing future trail development projects.

Dane County is the second most populous county in Wisconsin and continues to be one of the fastest growing counties in the State. In 2017, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated Dane County's population to be 524,787, or 9% of Wisconsin's total estimated 5,783,278 people. Dane County is projected to be the top numeric gainer in population by 2040, with the addition of 119,000 more people expected.

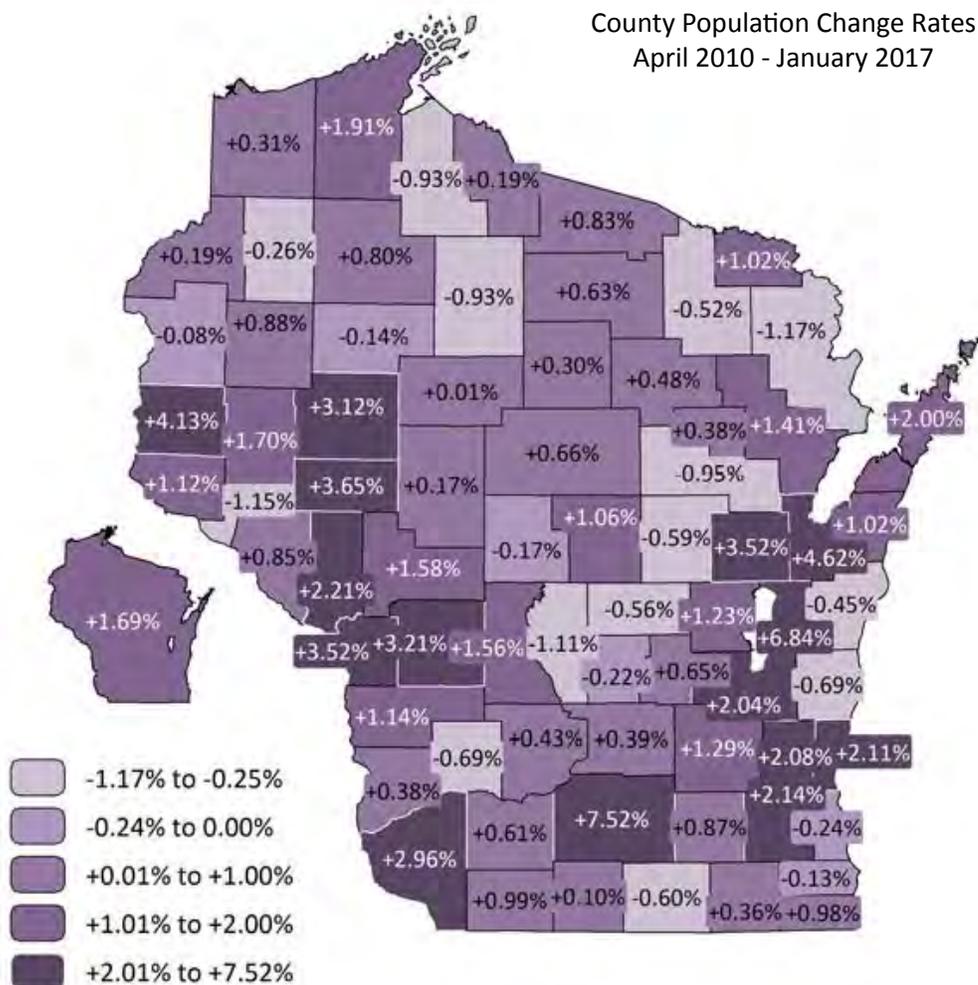


Image from Wisconsin Demographic Services Center 2017 Population Estimates.

From 2010-2017, the population in Dane County increased by 36,714 people (+7.52%), which was more than any other county in the state. The City of Madison was estimated to have the fastest proportional change (+7.23%) and the largest numeric change (+16,864 people) in population from 2010-2017 among large cities in Wisconsin.

Most Populous Counties (more than 150,000 residents)				
County Name	Final Estimate Jan 2017	Census Apr 2010	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Milwaukee	945,416	947,735	- 2,319	- 0.24%
Dane	524,787	488,073	36,714	7.52%
Waukesha	398,236	389,891	8,345	2.14%
Brown	259,460	248,007	11,453	4.62%
Racine	195,146	195,408	- 262	- 0.13%
Outagamie	182,921	176,695	6,226	3.52%
Winnebago	169,053	166,994	2,059	1.23%
Kenosha	168,065	166,426	1,639	0.98%
Rock	159,372	160,331	- 959	- 0.60%

Wisconsin Demographic Services Center 2017 Population Estimates.

By 2040, the Wisconsin Demographic Service Center projects the population of Dane County to be 606,620*; an increase of approximately 24.3% , one of the highest expected growth rates in the state. Comparatively, Wisconsin’s overall growth rate projection is 14.1%.

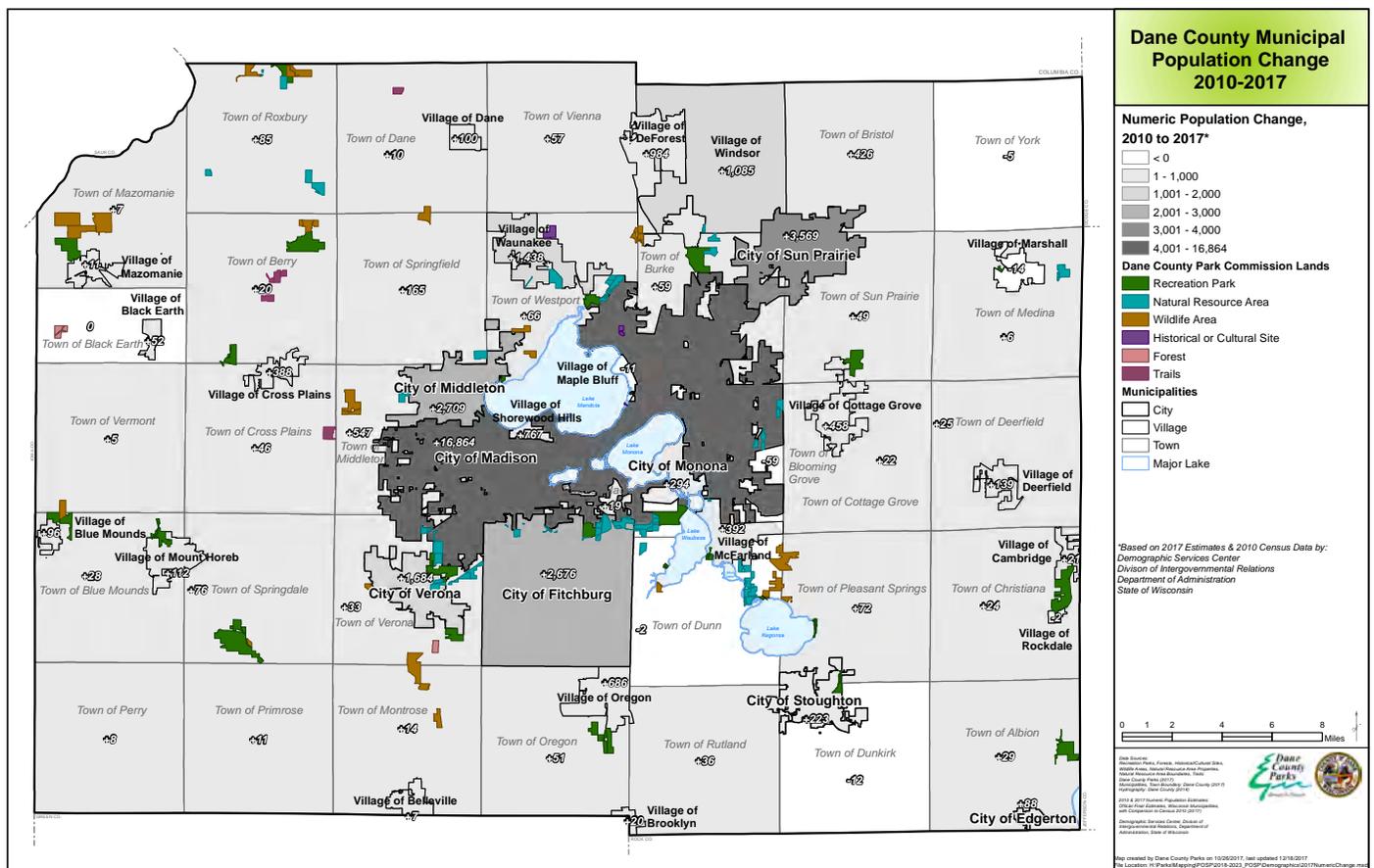
Largest Counties (by Size at 2040), 2010-2040						
County Name	Census 2010	Projected 2040	Numeric Change	Percent Change	Size Rank, 2010	Size Rank, 2040
Milwaukee	947,735	1,016,250	68,515	7.2%	1	1
Dane	488,073	606,620	118,547	24.3%	2	2
Waukesha	389,891	455,720	65,829	16.9%	3	3
Brown	248,007	312,320	64,313	25.9%	4	4
Outagamie	176,695	215,290	38,595	21.8%	6	5
Racine	195,408	213,760	18,352	9.4%	5	6
Kenosha	166,426	209,670	43,244	26.0%	8	7
Winnebago	166,994	193,130	26,136	15.7%	7	8
Rock	160,331	182,860	22,529	14.1%	9	9
Washington	131,887	163,890	32,003	24.3%	11	10

Wisconsin’s Future Population Report, 2013, Page 19 & 20

**Local planning consultants estimate the 2040 population may likely exceed 700,000.*

From 2010-2017, the top ten largest numeric population gains in Dane County were:

1. The City of Madison 16,864
2. The City of Sun Prairie 3,569
3. The City of Middleton 2,709
4. The City of Fitchburg 2,676
5. The City of Verona 1,684
6. The Village of Waunakee 1,438
7. The Village of Windsor 1,085
8. The Village of Deforest 984
9. The Village of Shorewood Hills 767
10. The Village of Oregon 686

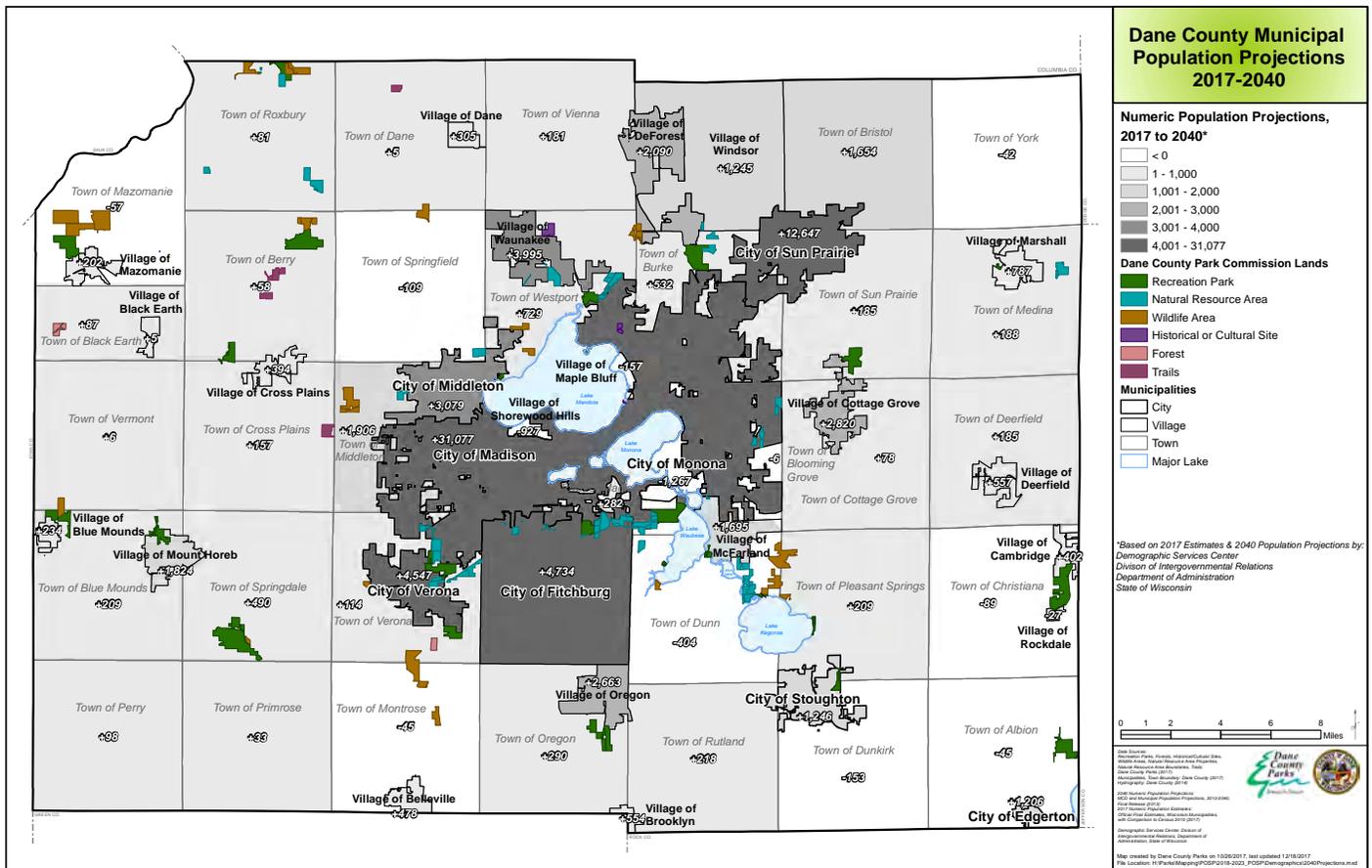


Map of Numeric Population Growth in Dane Co. 2010-2017

Developed by Dane County Parks Staff from the Wisconsin Demographic Services Center’s Official Estimates, 1/1/2017, Wisconsin Municipalities, with Comparison to Census 2010.

Most of the population growth in Dane County is expected in the central portion and the north east quadrant by 2040, with the top ten largest numeric population gains anticipated in:

1. The City of Madison +31,077
2. The City of Sun Prairie +12,647
3. The City of Fitchburg +4,734
4. The City of Verona +4,547
5. The Village of Waunakee +3,995
6. City of Middleton +3,079
7. Village of Cottage Grove +2,820
8. Village of Oregon +2,663
9. Village of DeForest +2,090
10. Town of Middleton +1,906



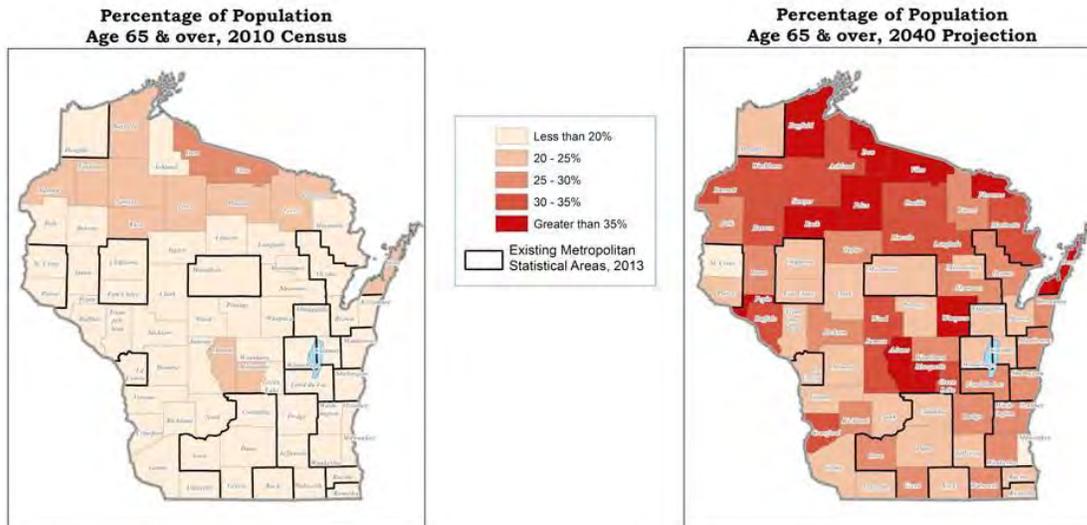
Map of Numeric Population Projections in Dane Co. 2040

Developed by Dane County Parks Staff from the Wisconsin Demographic Services Center's Official Estimates, 1/1/2017, Wisconsin Municipalities, with Comparison to Census 2010.

AGE

It is important to understand the population age structure within Dane County to determine if the types of outdoor recreation facilities being provided are appropriate for local residents now and into the future.

The two maps below illustrate the substantial change in the 65-and-over population of each county across a 30-year projection period. By 2040, 2-2.5 out of every 10 residents in Dane County are projected to be over the age of 65.

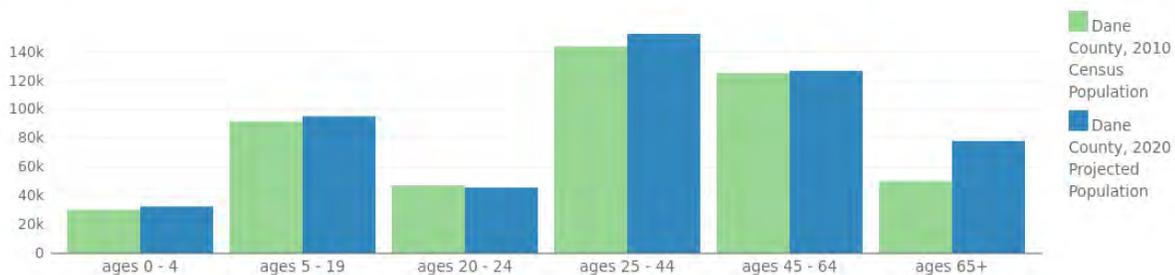


Wisconsin's Future Population, 2013- FinalProjs2040_Publication.pdf

The chart below compares population age groups between 2010 and 2020. The majority of Dane County residents are between the ages of 25-44, but the largest increases are expected to be in residents over the age of 65. This is a continuing trend from the previous POSP 2011-2016.

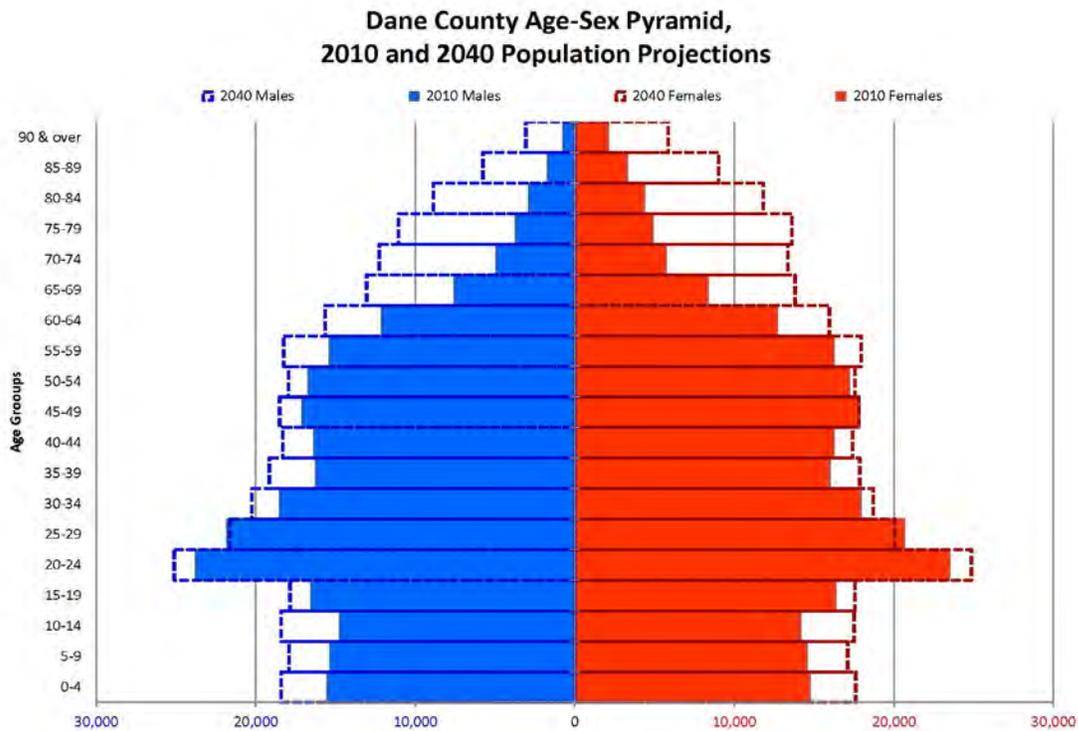
Population and Projected Population by Age Group

2010 and 2020



Data source: Wisconsin Population and Housing Estimates - Age Groups and 2000 Census Summary File 1 - Age Groups and Sex: 2010 Census Summary File 1
 Image produced by GetFacts.wisc.edu, a product of the Applied Population Lab

In 2010, census data identified that the Median Age of Dane County residents was between 31.4-37.9. Current data identifies Dane County’s median age in 2017 around 35. The median age of Dane County is expected to increase, as the graph below depicts, with the largest population growth projection gains in the 65 and older age group.



*State of Wisconsin Department of Administration, Department of Intergovernmental Relations
County Age-Sex Population Projections, 2010 - 2040, Final Release, Vintage 2013*

Dane County will have approximately 78,020 people over the age of 65 in 2020 and 121,470 by 2040, according to the Department of Health Services, Division of Long Term Care 2015 data. Comparatively, Dane County will have approximately 127,700 youth between the ages of 0-19 in 2020 and 142,300 by 2040, according to Wisconsin Department of Administration projections. The population gains in these age categories shows that the elderly demographic is growing at a rate 3 times as rapidly as youth groups.

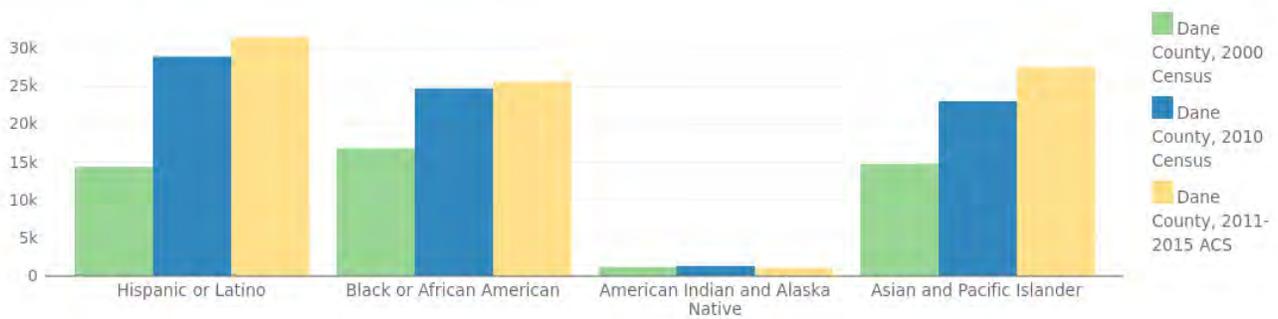
RACE/ETHNICITY

It is important to understand race and ethnicity demographics within Dane County to effectively plan and develop parks and open spaces that are equitable and inclusive to all residents.

Dane County has one of the highest and most diverse ethnic populations in south central Wisconsin. Dane County’s population in 2010 identified as 81.9% white, 5.1% as Black or African and 4.7% as Asian and Pacific Islander. In 2010, 5.9% of Dane County’s population identified as Latino, and in 2015 the percentage of Latino grew to 6.2%. The 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-year estimates show the Hispanic or Latino population has nearly doubled in Dane County within the last 15 years.

Population by Selected Race/Ethnicity Groups

2000, 2010, and 2011-2015 ACS



Data source: Census 2000 Summary File 1 (SF 1) 100-Percent Data - 2010 Census Summary File 1 - 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Image produced by GetFacts.wisc.edu, a product of the Applied Population Lab

Population by Race and Ethnicity

2011-2015 5-Year Estimate



Dane County Population

- 80.8% White alone (not Hispanic or Latino)
- 6.2% Hispanic or Latino (of any race)
- 5.4% Asian alone (not Hispanic or Latino)
- 5% Black or African American alone (not Hispanic or Latino)
- 2.3% Two or more races (not Hispanic or Latino)
- 0.2% American Indian and Alaska Native alone (not Hispanic or Latino)
- 0.0% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone (not Hispanic or Latino)
- 0.0% Some other race alone (not Hispanic or Latino)

Data source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates - DP05
Image produced by GetFacts.wisc.edu, a product of the Applied Population Lab

DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Dane County's population is expected to continue its rapid growth over the next 20+ years. The population continues to trend upwards in age structure, as seniors over the age of 65 are expected to increase significantly and make up a larger proportion of the population. The population is also becoming more diverse, with the largest growth occurring in the Hispanic or Latino population followed by Asian and Pacific Islander and Black or African American-identifying populations. The youth population, under the age of 20, still account for a large portion (larger than the over 65 age group) and will continue to increase, but at a rate 3 times slower than the over 65 population. The over 65 age group will not surpass the youth age group in percentage of the overall population.

The aging population data continues to support 2006-2011 and 2012-2017 Dane County Park and Open Space Plan recommendations for continuing the provision of non age specific recreational activities such as trails, picnic facilities, hiking, and wildlife viewing. The upward trending age structure also indicates that developing and maintaining inclusive and accessible facilities should be a priority. Provisions for youth should be a priority throughout Dane County Parks as the youth age groups are showing projections to increase by 2040. The increasing diversity and significant growth of the Hispanic/Latino and other ethnicities necessitates provisions for increasing equality and inclusion throughout the park system.

In addition to recreation considerations, youth and retirement age groups are of particular interest for sustaining the Dane County Parks system volunteer efforts and strong conservation ethic. The majority of regular volunteers who carry out a variety of projects in the park system are retirement age residents. This same age group also plays a key role in coordinating and fostering school and youth group park activities. Encouraging youth to take an early and active interest in parks and conservation is critical to the long term success of the Dane County Parks system.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- The population of 65 and older residents is increasing the most of any age group and by 2040 will account for approximately 20% of the population in Dane County. In 2010, this age group accounted for only 10% of the population in Dane County.
- The continued projected growth of the 65 and older county population supports the ongoing priority to develop more trail and passive recreation activities and maintain current rural landowner relationships on priority acquisition projects.
- Retirement age population projections are of particular interest to Dane County Parks as they provide the majority of volunteer help and oftentimes lead school and youth activities. Engaging youth to take an early interest in parks and conservation is critical to the long term success of the park system.
- Youth oriented facilities should continue to be a priority for Dane County Parks as projections show increases in youth age groups by 2040.
- Dane County has one of the highest and most diverse ethnic populations in south central Wisconsin. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing ethnic group in Dane County, bilingual signage and website information should be considered.



Lake Farm County Park, volunteers working in a prairie

IX.3 Related Planning Efforts

The following is a list of other planning efforts that were considered in the preparation of the 2018-2023 County Park and Open Space Plan. Several of the recommendations that are found within this plan are supported and/or included within these related planning projects.

DANE COUNTY PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLANS 1970-2017

Dane County has completed eight Park and Open Space Plans over the last 47 years. The first plan was created in 1970 and was completed by the Dane County Regional Planning Commission. All subsequent planning efforts have continued to build upon this original plan with additional recommendations for park planning and facility development, land management, and acquisition of new lands, as well as ongoing recreation and trail needs analysis.

2017-2022 WISCONSIN STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN (SCORP)

The SCORP plan is done every 5 years by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to identify essential issues that affect the future of outdoor recreation and includes appropriate recommendations. All supply, demand, and recreational data is compiled on a regional level and included eight SCORP planning regions throughout the state. The plan includes a recreational participation survey, demand and needs assessment of recreational resource requirements and demographic data for the Dane County region that was considered in preparing this plan.

BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION PLAN-MADISON AREA TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD

The Bicycle Transportation Plan for the Madison Metropolitan Area (MPO) and Dane County is a comprehensive bicycle plan to serve as a blueprint for continuing to improve bicycling conditions and increase bicycling levels throughout Dane County. The planning horizon is 2050. It provides a framework for cooperation between state agencies, Dane County, and local governments in planning for and developing bicycle facilities and programs. It is intended to educate citizens and policy makers on bicycle transportation issues and the needs of bicyclists as well as present resources for planning, designing, and maintaining bicycle facilities. The plan is a component of the MPO's regional transportation plan.

IX.4 Recreation Needs Analysis

As additional lands continue to be acquired and added to the park system, it is important to have a thorough understanding of what types of recreation facilities and opportunities should be provided on them. Keeping current with recreation trends and demand is critical to meeting the recreation needs of Dane County residents.

Recreation needs analysis planning is unique for Dane County in that the population structure and demand for recreation use is very diverse. For example, high numbers of college students and faculty from all over the world reside in Dane County, highlighting the importance of also analyzing national outdoor recreation participation rates. In addition, the majority of the population is urban and concentrated throughout the Madison metropolitan area, most likely accounting for the high demand to provide dog exercise areas that is not typical in other regions of the state. Overall, mountain biking and disc golf are two recreation activities that continue to demonstrate significant increasing demand in Dane County. Demand for off road shared use trails continues to be extremely high, for both transportation and recreation purposes.

The following recreation trend and demand information was considered in determining recreation needs for Dane County over the next 5 years.

2017 OUTDOOR RECREATION PARTICIPATION REPORT

The Outdoor Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to nurturing and inspiring future generations of outdoor enthusiasts, particularly youth and young adults. In 2017 they published the Outdoor Recreation Participation Report to identify nationwide trends in outdoor recreation participation across the country. Information gathered for this report resulted from online surveys of more than 24,000 individuals throughout the country ages 6 and older.

In 2016, the most popular outdoor activities, based on participation rate, for all Americans over the age of 6 were running, jogging, and trail running (18%); freshwater, saltwater and fly fishing (16%); road biking, mountain biking and BMX (15%); hiking (14%); car, backyard, backpacking & RV camping (14%).

Over the last three years stand up paddling was the top outdoor activity for growth of participants with an average increase of 18% followed by cross country skiing and BMX bicycling (13%). Other notable average increases over the last three years were adventure racing (11%), kayak fishing (10%), windsurfing (10%), trail running (8%), and hiking (7%).

Another notable finding of the report identified that the most frequently cited motivation for getting outdoors was exercise, and that about half of the survey participants said they pursue outdoor recreation to be close to nature. The report also concluded that adults who were introduced to the outdoors as children were more likely to participate in outdoor activities during adulthood than those who were not exposed to the outdoors as children. Survey results showed that 37 percent of adults who were introduced to the outdoors during childhood grew up to enjoy outdoor activities as adults; only 16 percent of adults who do not currently participate in any outdoor activities had outdoor experiences as children.

2016 STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN (SCORP) SURVEY

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources prepares a 5 year outdoor recreation plan that includes significant planning information that is pertinent to the county plan. This plan also includes valuable survey data pertaining to the amount and trends of outdoor recreation activities occurring across the state and south central region.

The 2016 SCORP survey identified the top three outdoor activities in Wisconsin were **walking/running** on sidewalks/roads (81% participation of survey respondents), **picnicking**/tailgating/cookout (74%) and **driving for pleasure** (73%). Other top ten activities that had a natural resource and/or cultural education connection were: hiking/walking/running on trails (68%), visit a beach/beach walking (65%), bird/wildlife watching at home (55%), swimming in lakes/ponds/rivers (54%), visit historic site (57%).

According to the survey, approximately half of state residents (52%) visited a nature center at least once in the previous year. Forty-five percent (45%) of residents annually go boating while forty percent (40%) go fishing from a lake shore or pier. Hunting participation in Wisconsin in 2016 was twenty-seven percent (27%). The lists below compares the top 20 outdoor recreation activities participated in Statewide and within the Southern Gateways Region of Wisconsin. Dane County is located in the Southern Gateways Region.

2016 Top 20 outdoor recreation activities in Wisconsin
- Participation Rates (%)

1. **Walking/Running** on sidewalks/roads – 81%
2. **Picnicking/Tailgating/Cookout** – 74%
3. **Driving for Pleasure** – 73%
4. **Attend outdoor festival** or music event – 69%
5. **Hiking/Walking/Running** on Trails – 68%
6. Visit a beach/beach walking – 65%
7. Attend an outdoor sporting event – 64%
8. Visit a historic site – 57%
9. Bird/wildlife watching at home – 55%
10. Swimming in lakes/ponds/rivers – 54%
11. Visit a nature center – 52%
12. Bicycling on roads – 48%
13. Take kids to playground – 47%
14. Motor boating - 45%
15. Lake fishing from shore/pier - 40%
16. Bird/wildlife watching away from home – 39%
17. Lake fishing from boat/canoe/kayak – 37%
18. Swimming in outdoor community pools – 36%
19. Bicycling on rail trails/developed trails – 34%
20. Canoeing or kayaking – 34%

2016 Top 20 outdoor recreation activities in WI Southern Gateways Region* - Participation Rates (%)

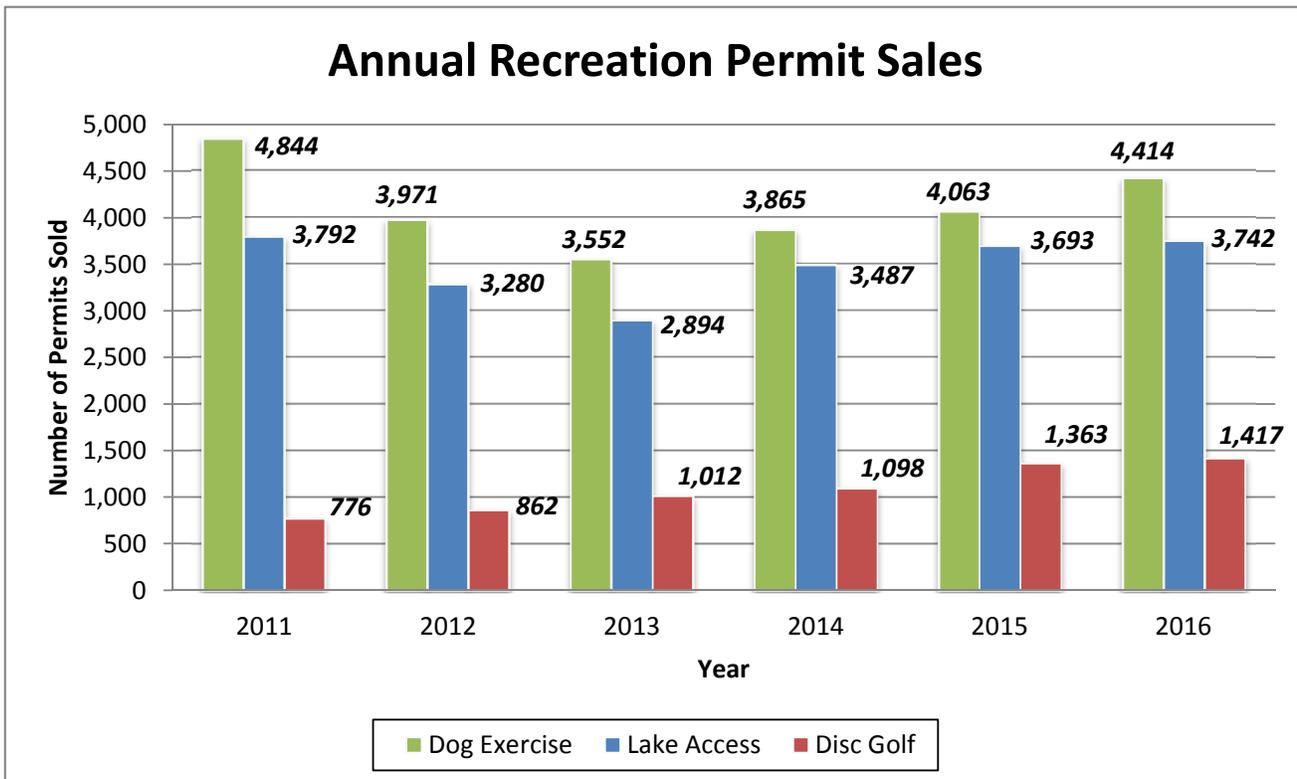
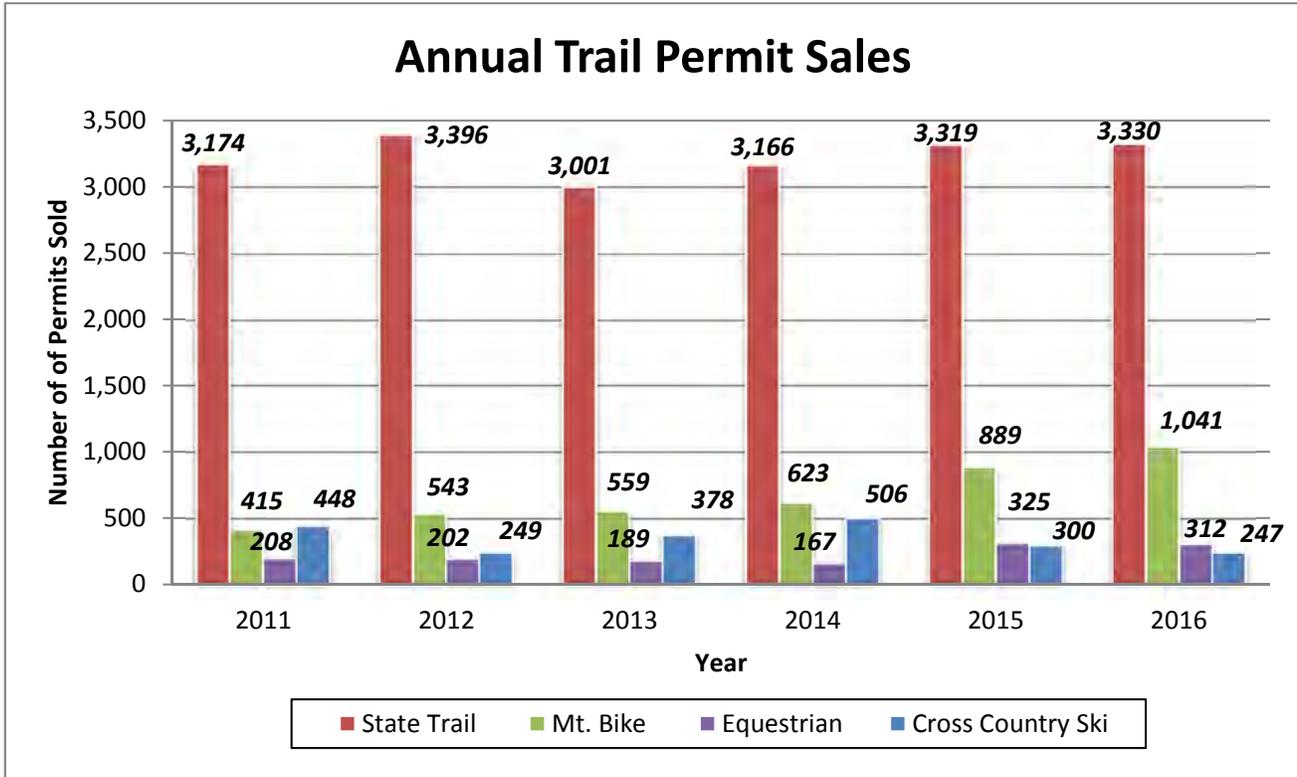
1. **Walking/Running** on sidewalks/roads – 84%
2. **Attend outdoor festival** or music event – 71%
3. **Driving for Pleasure** – 70%
4. **Attend an outdoor sporting event** – 62%
5. **Visit a nature center** – 52%
6. Bird/wildlife watching at home – 49%
7. Bicycling on roads – 47%
8. Take kids to playground – 43%
9. Motor boating - 40%
10. Swimming in outdoor community pools – 38%
11. Bird/wildlife watching away from home -35%
12. Lake fishing from shore/pier - 35%
13. Canoeing or kayaking – 32%
14. Lake fishing from boat/canoe/kayak – 32%
15. Visiting a Dog Park – 29%
16. Gathering berries, mushrooms, etc. – 24%
17. Target firearms shooting outdoors – 22%
18. Basketball Outdoors – 18%
19. Ice Fishing – 18%
20. RV/Pop-up Camping – 17%

** Dane County is located in the Southern Gateways (SCORP) Region of Wisconsin.*

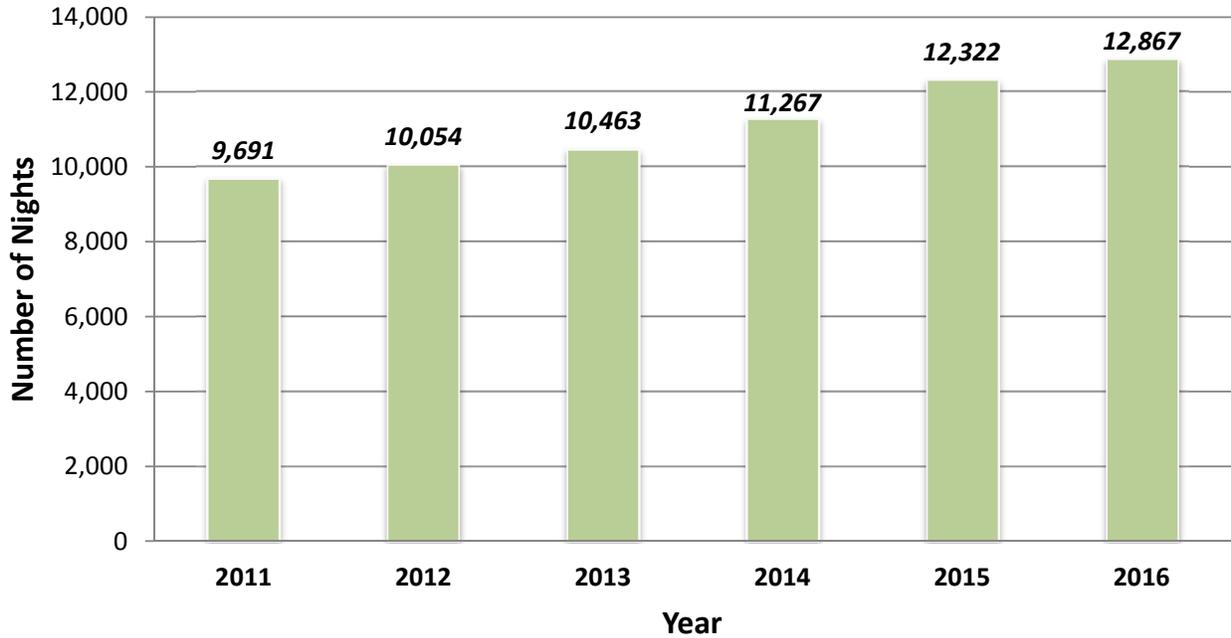
The WDNR and the Outdoor Foundation surveys and reports identify similar trends in outdoor recreation activity participation at the State and National level. Overall **walking, running, hiking, biking, paddling, and fishing** continue to be identified as the most popular activities.

DANE COUNTY PARKS PARTICIPATION RATES

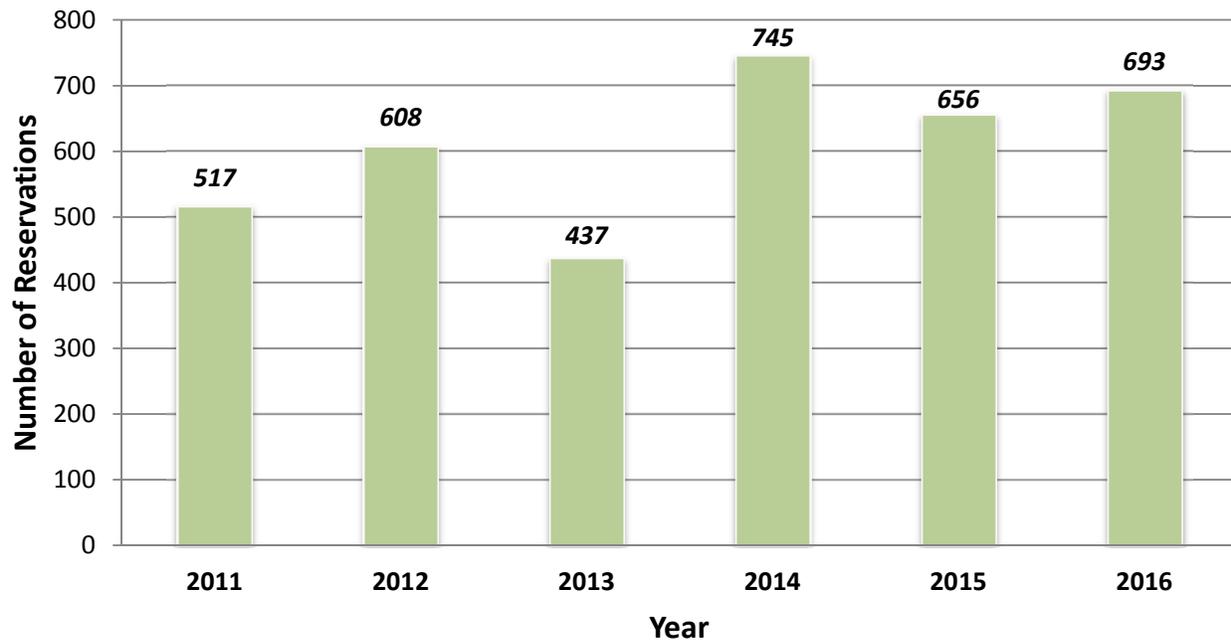
Dane County Parks staff monitor recreation user numbers by tracking annual sales of permits sold, and through electronic counting devices in the park. This information can be helpful in determining public demand for recreation opportunities offered. The following tables represent the past five year trends for major recreation programs provided by Dane County Parks.



Annual Number of Nights Camping



Annual Shelter Reservations



In general, nearly all of the recreation uses remained relatively unchanged except **mountain biking and disc golf**. Both of these activities nearly doubled in annual permit sales over the past five years. This can in part be attributed to efforts of the volunteer groups who donate time and resources to assist with maintenance and regional scale competition events. Consistent with both statewide and regional SCORP findings, Dane County and the Madison region continue to draw an increasing number of large-scale special and sporting events that attract participants and spectators from all over the world. Related, this continues to create additional demand on campgrounds and open utility spaces that can accommodate temporary high volumes of people and parking.

OTHER RECREATION PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Food, exercise, education, and diversity are historically not major planning considerations in traditional outdoor recreation plans, especially in combination with one another. However, they demonstrate another example of the unique planning environment in Dane County.

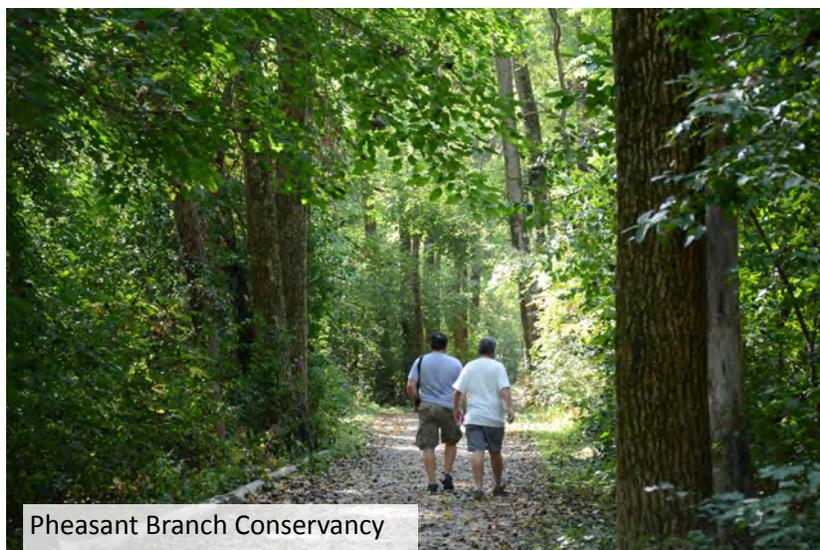
Gardening, fishing and hunting are all very popular outdoor activities in Dane County. Community garden demand often exceeds space available, and the Parks Division continues to seek opportunities to expand this program. The Madison chain of lakes and Dane County miles of streambank easements offer high quality shore fishing opportunities. The Dane County Limited Archery Program and Wisconsin DNR hunting data indicate steady hunting numbers for the past five years, and considerable increase of deer hunting on public land in Dane County. Of particular interest is the large number of minority populations who are observed participating in these activities on county park lands. Additional data on minority participation rates for these three activities would be helpful to better understand any barriers that may be limiting use by these populations.

As noted in the 2017 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report, the most frequently cited motivation for getting outdoors was exercise and that about half of the survey participants said they pursue outdoor recreation to be close to nature. This is consistent with the large volume of people who are observed using shared use trails for exercise/fitness, and the growing consensus that exposure to the outdoors has a number of physical and mental health benefits.

Of interest as well was that half of the SCORP survey respondents visited a nature center at both a state and regional level, perhaps demonstrating interest in outdoor education. The importance of providing cultural and natural outdoor learning opportunities cannot be underestimated. The diverse natural landscapes, Native American cultural landscapes, and glacial history of Dane County can provide endless material for world class outdoor educational opportunities.

SUMMARY

- Walking, hiking and running continue to have highest recreation participation rates both locally and nationally. This is consistent with an overall aging population dynamic and complements Dane County's continuing commitment to prioritize trail development.
- Demand for mountain biking and disc golf continues to rise.
- Biking, dog parks, disc golf, paddling, picnicking, fishing, and driving for pleasure continue to show strong participation rates in Dane County.
- Regional scale special events and sporting events continue to add extra demands on campgrounds and open utility spaces.
- Food, exercise, and education should be included in outdoor recreation planning considerations for new facilities and programs over the next five years, especially for minority populations.



Pheasant Branch Conservancy

IX.5 Future Land Needs Analysis

Future land needs recommended in the Parks and Open Space Plan are identified primarily through stakeholder and local unit of government input during the planning process. Some of the considerations to recommend new project areas include restoration potential, strong public support, existing public ownership, partnership potentials, high probability of an active friends group forming, and opportunity to provide a variety of public use. This method has been successful in generating a greater sense of ownership by plan stakeholders and broadening partnership opportunities with other government agencies and non-profit conservation groups.

IX.6 Public & Non-Profit Conservation Organization Input

The five year update to the County Parks and Open Space Plan provides an excellent forum for local units of government, non-profit conservation organizations, and the public to communicate new ideas and provide feedback on proposed updates to the plan.

In March of 2017, notification of the upcoming planning process and kick-off meetings was sent to all local units of government in Dane County. Kick-off meetings were held on the east and west side of the county, on March 30th, 2017 and April 5th, 2017, to introduce the planning process and provide instructions for how input could be provided on the plan update. A third kick-off meeting intended for people who may not have private means of transportation was held on June 20th, 2017 at the Madison Central Public Library. All meetings were well attended by a mix of staff from local units of government, non-profit conservation organizations, recreation user groups, and the general public.

A webpage for the Parks and Open Space planning process with an electronic feedback form was posted on the county website in March of 2017 and a Facebook page was created to provide notifications of upcoming meetings and developments in the planning process.

All public information meetings were posted on the Dane County Parks Facebook page, the Dane County Clerk's Office web page, the Dane County Parks web page, posted under Legal Notices of the Madison Newspapers, emailed to over 10,000 recipients through the software Constant Contact, and sent out as county press releases.

Comments on the draft plan were received through December 31st, 2017. In general, the majority of comments continue to support additional trail development and the expansion of existing public lands for improved corridor connectivity and buffers to adjacent development. Continuing investigation of improving equity and inclusion throughout the parks, engaging youth, and awareness of climate change impacts were also frequently heard comments.

IX.7 Dane County Parks Staff Input

Dane County Parks operations and ranger staff provide critical in the field observations on how the park system is being used by the public and priority facility needs. Park management staff were also consulted throughout the planning process to gain insights on program area needs. Staff input was used for identifying some of the Dane County Parks system and program area recommendations found in the update to this plan.

IX.8 Land Management Considerations

The Dane County Parks system now consists of over 12,000 acres of land with land management practices varying according to property classification. Land management practices strive to balance proper stewardship of resources with an appropriate amount of compatible public uses. Recommendations pertaining to land management within this plan must be consistent with a variety of conservation guidelines including Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Best Management Practices, Dane County Chapter 14 storm water management requirements, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service restoration standards, Park Commission Integrated Pest Management Plan, and Agriculture Conservation Plans that are reviewed and approved by the Dane County Land Conservation Department.

IX.9 Partnership Opportunities

The potential to partner with Friends and other non-profit conservation organizations is a strong consideration for deciding if a new initiative is included in this plan. Many new programs and project areas would not be possible without outside assistance in areas such as land acquisition, property stewardship and program development.

IX.10 Committee Input

The 2018-2023 Dane County Park and Open Space Advisory Committee consisted of 7 Dane County Park Commission members and 5 appointed members. The Advisory Committee provides input on draft plan recommendations prior to final approval by resolution. The Environmental, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Committee (EANR) is the policy oversight committee for the Dane County Park Commission and also provides input for the plan prior to adoption consideration by the County Board.

On December 6th, 2017, draft recommendations of this plan were presented at a joint environmental committee meeting hosted by the Dane County Park Commission with representation from Environment, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Committee, Lakes & Watershed Commission, and the Environmental Council.

X. DANE COUNTY PARKS SYSTEM PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS



[X.1 Recreation Parks](#)

[X.2 Natural Resource Areas](#)

[X.3 Forests](#)

[X.4 Historical/Cultural Sites](#)

[X.5 Wildlife Areas](#)

[X.6 Trails](#)

[i. Shared-Use Trails](#)

[ii. Ice Age National Scenic Trail](#)

[iii. E-Trails](#)

[iv. Snowmobile Trails](#)

[v. Equestrian Trails](#)

[vi. Water Trails](#)

X.1 Recreation Parks

PRIORITIES

1. Maintain and expand existing park boundaries where needed to provide future park facilities and adequate buffers from adjacent urban and transportation land uses.
2. Consider potential expansion of disc golf, dog exercise, mountain biking, trails, and camping facilities throughout existing and new park lands where need is demonstrated.
3. Consider including revenue generating program areas where appropriate to offset maintenance costs in all future recreation park projects.
4. Mitigate loss of park land for any purpose to the greatest extent possible.

POLICIES

1. Provide park and recreation resources that have regional significance and provide multiple uses for all county residents.
2. Locate new recreation parks close to, but isolated from, large population centers on lands that provide for year-round multiple recreation uses with diverse natural resources. Ideally, natural features such as rugged topography, water or wetlands will help provide separation from urban areas.
3. Partner with schools and recreation groups, including private, non-profit organizations, that have a regional user base.
4. Charge fees in balance with other available resources for use of park facilities in order to offset costs for operations, maintenance and development of the park system.
5. Consider development of new regional recreation uses on existing or future park land if the demand is quantifiable, designated lands are suitable for the intended use, and there are sufficient resources available to plan, develop and manage the proposed use.
6. Incorporate a minimum of twenty-five acres of level, utility open space available for parking and special events into recreation parks where possible.
7. Develop higher intensity park program areas such as camping, disc golf, dog exercise, mountain bike areas, and other uses that require daily management at staff occupied park work unit locations unless alternative volunteer/partnership management options exist.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of the infrastructure in Dane County's recreation parks is more than 30 years old and will need ongoing repair and replacement. Also, much of the signage throughout the entire park system is extremely outdated and needs to be redesigned and replaced. A system wide plan is needed that would provide comprehensive recommendations for all types of signage found throughout the park system. Future park improvements should be designed to have the least amount of visual impact on the natural landscape as possible and have a uniform, natural appearance. Maintaining a consistent design style of all park infrastructure throughout the park system will continue to brand the Dane County Parks system and improve public recognition.

Dane County Parks should continue working with local units of government to connect bicycle-pedestrian trails from urban areas to County recreation parks and trails. This will enhance access to a variety of recreation facilities for County residents of all age and income levels. As the bicycle/pedestrian network continues to expand, additional consideration should be given to development of park and recreation facilities that are primarily accessed by bike or foot.

There was considerable interest throughout the public input process for additional development of mountain bike trails (particularly single track) in western Dane County and at CamRock County Park. Dane County staff will continue to investigate suitable locations.

Interest in the disc golf program continues to be strong. Currently, all facilities are located in the Madison metro area or in the eastern half of the county. This plan recommends continuing to investigate development of a new course on the western side of the county.

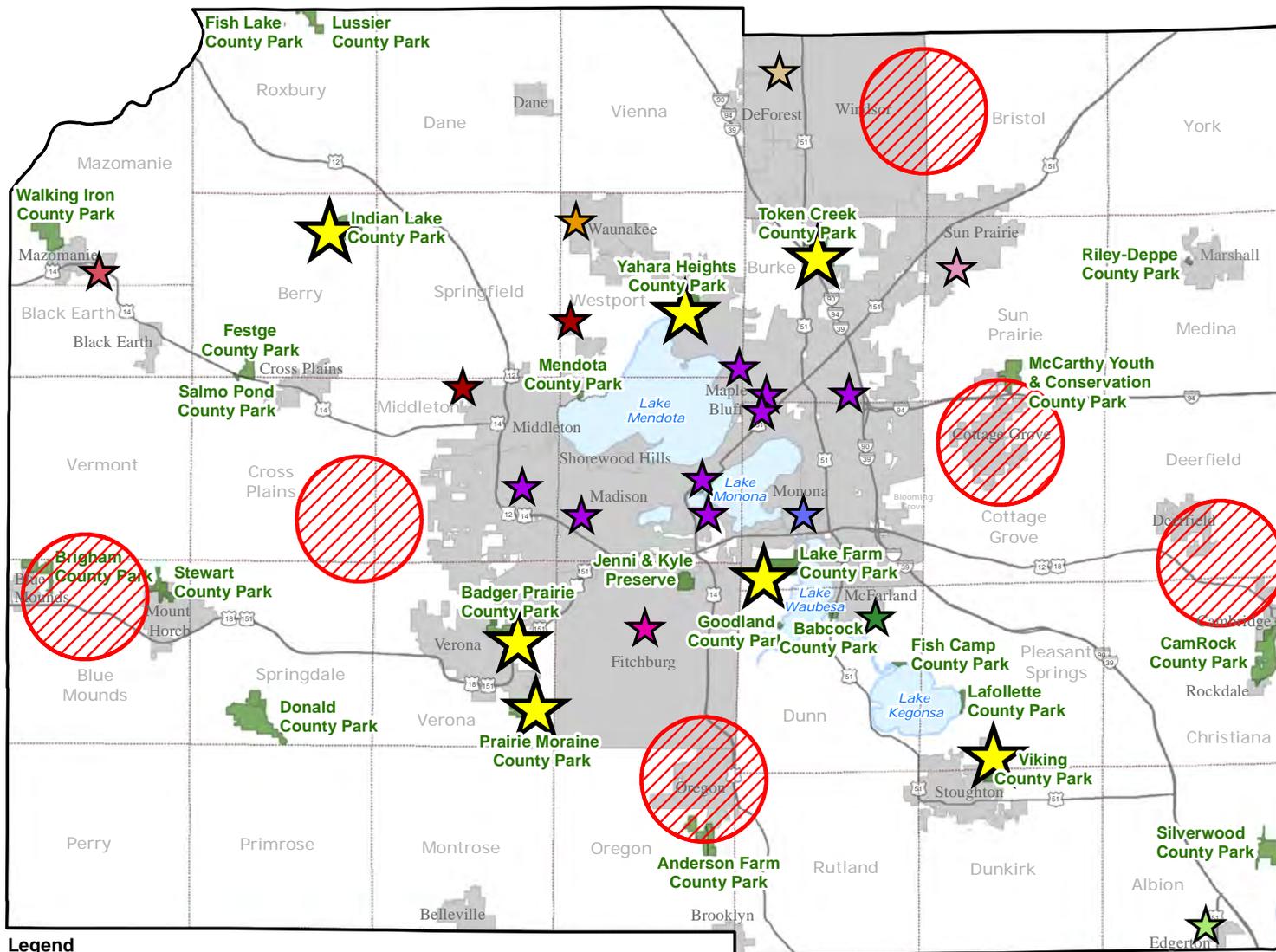
Dane County campgrounds often cannot meet demand expectations during the many regional special events that occur each year. Several parks have existing master plans in place that recommend campground expansions and improvements. Dane County Parks should continue pursuing these camping program enhancements as staff and budgets allow, in order to better serve this need in the future.

Dane County Parks often receives requests for assistance to develop new dog parks from local units of government throughout the county. Dane County's role will continue to be providing dog parks that serve regional populations. An inventory of existing and proposed dog parks is presented on the following page. The existing recommendation to provide a new dog park on the western side of the county will remain, particularly in the Town of Middleton and Mt. Horeb regions. This update to the plan continues to recommend consideration of a new dog parks in the Cottage Grove and Deerfield/Cambridge regions. The northeast Dane County region should also be considered in conjunction with the recommendation for a new recreation park.

FUTURE COUNTY PARK LOCATIONS

One new recreation park is proposed in this plan that was included as a recommendation in the 2012-2017 Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan. The park should be generally located in the northeast quadrant of the County. This region of the County continues to be forecasted to experience a large amount of residential growth according to local land use plans and other demographic analysis and currently is lacking a Dane County regional recreation park.

Existing and Proposed Off-Leash Dog Parks



Legend

-  Dane County Parks (7)
-  City of Edgerton (1)
-  City of Madison (8)
-  City of Monona (1)
-  Village of DeForest (1)
-  Village of McFarland (1)
-  Proposed Dog Parks (6)
-  City of Fitchburg (1)
-  City of Middleton (2)
-  City of Sun Prairie (1)
-  Village of Mazomanie (1)
-  Village of Waunakee (1)



EXISTING RECREATION PARKS

ANDERSON FARM County Park (Town of Oregon, 309.5)

Anderson Farm County Park was established in 2014 and is named after the Lyman F. Anderson Family farmstead that was founded at the site in 1886. Lyman F. Anderson, who passed away in 2005, was a former County Board Supervisor and also served in the Wisconsin State Legislature. There is a modest network of woodland trails on the north end of the Park, including a 1-mile hiking trail through the Arthur Sholts Memorial Woods.

Recommendations:

- Continue to work with Friends on implementation of the park master plan.
- Explore partnerships with small scale farm demonstration and education program areas.
- Begin planning for a dog park as identified in the park master plan.
- Redevelop farmstead area to accommodate future agricultural demonstration and programming

BABCOCK County Park (Village of McFarland/Town of Dunn, 36.4 acres)

Babcock County Park is located on the eastern shore of Lake Waubesa where the Yahara River flows under USH 51. The park is named after Stephen Moulton Babcock, who came to the University of Wisconsin as a faculty member in 1887 and remained until his passing in 1931. He is best known for the perfection of the butterfat test which bears his name and his work in the field of animal nutrition. The park has a very popular boat launch facility, shore fishing area, and campground that are used extensively during the summer months.

Recommendations:

- Construct shore fishing pier at shoreline on north side of lock.
- Maintain shore fishing access at lock and dam structure.
- Resurface pavement areas at lock, shower building and campground and incorporate stormwater infiltration areas.
- Reconfigure bicycle/pedestrian path between shower building and lock.
- Continue discussions with WDOT on mitigation activities required for the proposed USH 51 roadway expansion project.
- Update/replace permanent piers at boat landing, add accessibility improvements to piers.



Babcock County Park, fisherman

BADGER PRAIRIE County Park (Town of Verona/City of Verona, 320.6 acres)

Badger Prairie County Park is located at the eastern edge of the City of Verona at the intersection of CTH MV and USH 151. The City of Verona constructed a library off Enterprise Drive which could provide a western parking lot entrance for the park. A variety of recreation uses take place at the park including aeromodelling, a dog exercise area, soccer, cyclocross, and mountain biking. A master plan was completed for the park in 2009.

Recommendations:

- Continue to implement recommendations of the adopted master plan.
- Investigate outdoor education and archery program partnerships with Verona Schools.
- Partner with City of Verona on a bicycle/pedestrian connector trail from Military Ridge Neighborhood to Military Ridge Park and Ride.
- Improve signage throughout the park.

BRIGHAM County Park (Town of Blue Mounds, 232.3 acres)

Brigham County Park is located on CTH F just northeast of the Village of Blue Mounds and is named after Ebenezer Brigham, one of the first homesteaders in the area. The park offers camping, picnic shelters, a playground, hiking trails, a shared use trail, and outstanding panoramic views of the surrounding countryside.

Recommendations:

- Improve signage throughout the park.
- Work with Capitol Off Road Pathfinders (CORP) and Wisconsin DNR on planning and development of mountain bike trail system with connections to Blue Mound State Park.
- Investigate provision of snowshoe trails.
- Consider expanding park boundaries, including a continuous corridor south and east to Military Ridge State Trail and west to Blue Mound State Park.
- Work with the Village/DNR to plan and develop a shared use trail connector from the park to Blue Mound State Park.



Brigham County Park Photo Credit: Samantha Haas

CAMROCK County Park (Town of Christiana, 574.5 acres)

CamRock County Park is located along the Koshkonong Creek between the Villages of Cambridge and Rockdale. The original park property acquisition was made possible through efforts of the Cambridge Foundation and Dane County Park Commission. Mountain biking, snowshoeing, kayaking, and cross country skiing are popular recreation uses.

Recommendations:

- Continue to implement recommendations of the 2006 Master Plan.
- Update the 2006 Master Plan to include expansion of trail network and future dog park.

DONALD County Park (Town of Springdale, 774.9 acres)

Located along USH 92 south of Mount Horeb, Donald County Park was made possible by a donation of 105 acres from the Donald/Woodburn family in 1993. The park has become a premier equestrian destination with an extensive trail system and also offers outstanding hiking, snowshoeing, foraging, trout fishing, and picnicking opportunities.

Recommendations:

- Continue implementing recommendations of the park’s 2005 Master Plan.
- Continue planning for future park access site at Hitchcock residence.

FESTGE County Park (Town of Berry, 155.6 acres)

Festge County Park is located along USH 14 between the Villages of Cross Plains and Black Earth. Festge County Park has an overlook area that provides panoramic views of the Black Earth Creek valleys.

Recommendations:

- Continue to acquire lands/easements to protect views from the overlook area.
- Renovate/restore overlook area to expand use potential.
- Expand boundary to include connection to Swamplovers parcel.



FISH CAMP County Park (Town of Dunn, 15.6 acres)

Located at the end of Fish Camp Road off CTH B, this park’s primary use is the boat landing for water access to the Lower Yahara River and Lake Kegonsa. In 1934, the Wisconsin Conservation Department hired netting crews and established rough-fish removal camps. Fish Camp Launch was one of several rough-fish removal facilities. Carp were captured in nets and then held in pens until they were shipped live by truck to stock ponds in other states, or packed in ice and sent by rail to fresh fish markets in Chicago and New York. An interpretive display, installed in 2009, that tells the story of the carp harvesting operation.

Recommendations:

- Begin planning bridge and boardwalk facilities required for implementation of the Lower Yahara River Trail.
- Renovate/restore fish net buildings.
- Replace boat landing floating piers with elevated permanent piers.
- Consider creation of a future Lower Yahara River Trail bicycle rest stop at the historical carp fishing building site.

FISH LAKE County Park (Town of Roxbury, 2.9 acres)

Fish Lake County Park is located on the northwest shore of Fish Lake and is primarily used for access to the lake and adjacent Fish Lake wildlife area. Only electric boat motors are allowed on the lake. Fish Lake is 252 acres in size and has a maximum depth of 62 feet.

Recommendations:

- Continue to implement recommendations of the 2014 Master Plan.

GOODLAND County Park (Town of Dunn, 13.9 acres)

Goodland County Park is located on the western shore of Lake Waubesa and provides a variety of recreation facilities including picnic areas, an unsupervised swimming beach, and boat launch facility.

Recommendations:

- Replace and relocate permit kiosk to central area of boat landing ramp turn-around.
- Replace/upgrade playground equipment.
- Replace/renovate shelters.
- Add accessibility improvements to piers.
- Install interpretive signage related to Native American mounds.



Goodland County Park, spring ephemerals

INDIAN LAKE County Park (Town of Berry, 480.3 acres)

Indian Lake County Park is located along STH 19 approximately 2 miles west of USH 12. The park includes a historic chapel building atop a wooded hill. The nearby overlook provides outstanding views of the park and surrounding hillsides. This park is one of the systems most popular and used extensively for cross country skiing during the winter. Only electric boat motors are allowed on the lake. In 2015, Dane County Parks partnered with the Wisconsin DNR on a major lake restoration project that involved removal of carp and efforts to reestablish native vegetation. The process is ongoing with the eventual goals of improving water quality, establishing a sustainable game fish population and eliminating invasive species.

Recommendations:

- Increase park acreage. Acquisition areas include buffers on the northerly lakeshore, as well as the lake head-waters north and east of the park and associated wetlands and springs.
- Replace permit board with three sided informational kiosk that would be centrally located in the parking area.
- Relocate historical marker to more accessible and visible location.
- Evaluate lake drainage areas for potential pollutant/sediment reduction strategies. Investigate dredging potential with partnering agencies to promote sustainable and diverse fish and aquatic plant populations.
- Expand central parking lot and replace vault toilet.

JENNI AND KYLE Preserve (City of Fitchburg, 160.3 acres)

The Jenni and Kyle Preserve began in 1989 with a generous donation from Patricia and Harvey Wilmeth as a memorial to their two grandchildren, Jenni and Kyle, who both died at the age of 4 of a degenerative neurological disease. This park was designed and developed with the intent of providing children and persons with disabilities a place to enjoy outdoor activities and learn about natural environments.

Recommendations:

- Complete an accessible path and waterfowl observation area surrounding the wetland complex south of the ponds.
- Repair/restore paved paths surrounding ponds.

LAFOLLETTE County Park (Town of Pleasant Springs, 28.6 acres)

LaFollette County Park is located on the eastern shore of Lake Kegonsa on Williams Drive. The park is very linear in nature and includes a small picnic shelter, restroom, and play equipment. The park is popular for shore fishing at both the lock and Lake Kegonsa shoreline.

Recommendations:

- Consider transfer of park to the Department of Natural Resources as a potential addition to Lake Kegonsa State Park.
- Provide for shore fishing and canoe/kayak landing opportunities at the lock on the Yahara River.
- Begin working on establishing Lower Yahara River Trail corridor through the park.



LaFollette County Park

LAKE FARM County Park (City of Madison/Town of Blooming Grove, 345.8 acres)

This park originated from the historic Lake Farms property and is included within the Capital Springs Recreation Area. It is located along the Capital City Trail at Lake Farm Road and Libby Road west of Lake Waubesa and forms the eastern end of the Lewis Nine Springs E-Way. A master plan for the Capital Springs Recreation Area was adopted in 2010 that includes recommendations for this park.

Recommendations:

- Continue to implement recommendations of the Capital Springs Recreation Area Master Plan.
- Add accessibility improvements to piers.

LUSSIER County Park (Town of Roxbury, 142.6 acres)

Lussier County Park is located on the eastern shore of Fish Lake and was made possible by a significant donation from John H. Lussier. The property includes approximately 3,000 feet of shoreline, a parking area, hiking trails, and boat landing. Some prairie restoration and vegetative management have taken place, and an active eagle nest is present on the shoreline.

Recommendations:

- Continue to implement recommendations of the 2014 Master Plan.
- Continue to work with snowmobile group on invasive species removal and property management.



Lussier County Park, hiking trail

MCCARTHY Youth and Conservation Park (Town of Sun Prairie, 288.5 acres)

This park is located approximately six miles east of Madison on CTH TT. The original park lands were donated by Russell and Ella McCarthy with the objective of providing “a place where kids from the city could learn about nature.” The park serves as a combined recreational and conservancy place for young people to participate in group camping, prairie restoration efforts, and horseback riding on equestrian trails. The purpose of the park is to involve young people in conservation and outdoor activities. An active Friends group has been established which works primarily on vegetation management activities and leading large outdoor recreation and education events for youth and area residents, including a Youth Volunteer Day and winter festival. The Ho-Chunk Nation have been developing a system of educational nodes pertaining to pre-settlement Native American culture and lifestyles.

Recommendations:

- Continue to implement recommendations of the Master Plan.
- Install bridge to connect the western-most addition of the park to existing park lands.
- Continue exploring partnerships to provide cross-country skiing.

MENDOTA County Park (Town of Westport, 19.0 acres)

Mendota County Park is located along CTH M at the eastern edge of the City of Middleton along the north shore of Lake Mendota. The park is used primarily as a neighborhood park; however, it does still provide regional benefit as it provides the only campground and boat camping available on Lake Mendota.

Recommendations:

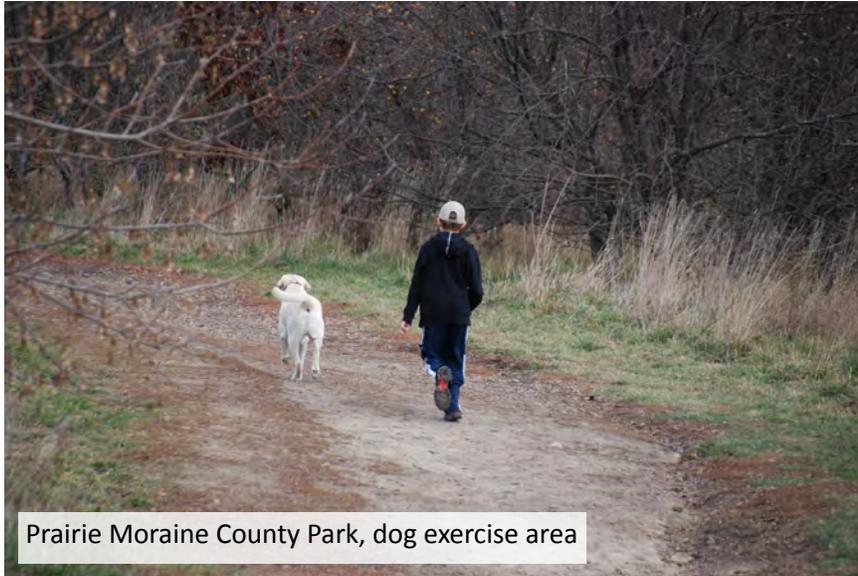
- Continue to implement recommendations of the Master Plan.

PRAIRIE MORaine County Park (Town of Verona, 165.7 acres)

Prairie Moraine County Park is located on CTH PB approximately 1 mile south of Badger Prairie County Park. The primary uses of the park are the Ice Age Trail corridor which is along one of the best examples of a terminal moraine in southern Wisconsin, and an extremely popular dog exercise area.

Recommendations:

- Continue working with the Ice Age Park and Trail Foundation to develop interpretive signage along existing trails and at the overlook area.
- Expand park boundaries north, east, and south to protect the terminal moraine and other glacial features, upland oak woodlands, and scenic views as well as to provide an adequate buffer for these features.
- Construct a new small dog exercise area.



Prairie Moraine County Park, dog exercise area

RILEY-DEPPE County Park (Town of Medina, 12.9 acres)

This park is located on STH 19 just west of the Village of Marshall on a millpond impoundment of the Maunasha River. Facilities include a shelter, picnic area, play equipment, and small boat launch which are primarily used on a local level. The park is within the Maunasha River Natural Resource Area and is also within the WDNR Glacial Heritage Area project boundary. The boat launch area could serve as a regional water trailhead for the Maunasha River water trail.

Recommendations:

- Continue discussions of transfer of ownership/management scenarios with the Village of Marshall and Town of Medina.

SALMO Pond (Town of Berry, 7.5 acres)

This park is located on USH 14 immediately south of Festge County Park. The property is owned by the WDNR, however, Dane County has a 99-year management lease that allows it to operate and maintain the property as a county park. Dane County recently completed a shoreline restoration project that enhances bank fishing opportunities. The DNR is in the process of completing vegetation management practices along Black Earth Creek.

Recommendations:

- Reduce paved footprint of parking area and add bioretention basins to capture runoff.
- Replace/relocate vault toilet.

SILVERWOOD County Park (Town of Albion, 308.3 acres)

Silverwood County Park is located in the Town of Albion on the far southeastern edge of Dane County. The property, named after the Silverwood Family, was donated to Dane County in 2001 by Irene Silverwood after it had been in the Silverwood family since 1870. Silverwood Park educates the public on the broad and diverse aspects of Wisconsin agriculture – past, present and future. The park celebrates the rich cultural history of agriculture in Dane County as well as demonstrating innovative agricultural practices and land stewardship that will sustain the land for future generations. The park offers carry-in access to Sweet and Rice Lakes, hiking, and equestrian trails.

Recommendations:

- Continue to implement recommendations of the Master Plan.
- Explore partnership with the Friends of Silverwood regarding management and use of buildings and agricultural demonstration and education areas.

STEWART County Park (Town of Blue Mounds, 177.1 acres)

Stewart County Park is located on CTH JG immediately north of the Village of Mount Horeb. This park was created in 1935 and was Dane County’s first park. Between 2009-2010, the county completed an extensive water quality improvement project to reduce the amount of sediment being washed into the lake. County staff and partners completed lake dredging, aquatic habitat improvements, beach construction and fish stocking. A Friends group has been evolving that works on a variety of education and restoration efforts.

Recommendations:

- Construct accessible beach access and a beach changing room area.
- Acquire buffer lands east of the park and lands to the west to provide connection to STH 78. Consider acquisition of conservation easements on adjacent lands to maintain rural viewsheds of surrounding hillsides from within the park.
- Explore creation of additional parking across CTH JG if needed.

TOKEN CREEK County Park (Town of Burke, 418 acres)

Token Creek County Park is located near the intersection of Interstate 90-94 and USH 51. The park is perhaps best known for its very popular disc golf course. Token Creek is the only stream in northeastern Dane County with the potential to support a cold-water fishery. Dane County Parks and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources are continuing to work on a stream restoration project within the park to stabilize banks and improve habitat.

Recommendations:

- Continue to implement recommendations of the Master Plan.



Token Creek County Park, disc golf course

VIKING County Park (Towns of Dunkirk and Pleasant Springs, 77.9 acres)

Viking County Park is located on the Yahara River north of Stoughton on CTH N. A bicycle-pedestrian path and bridge was completed that connects the park to the City of Stoughton. Upgrades have also been done to the parking lot and dog exercise area.

Recommendations:

- Consider replacing small open shelter near lagoon.
- Work with WDNR on shoreline restoration and habitat improvement projects throughout the park.
- Consider storm water and boat launch improvements to prevent wash outs and treat runoff.
- Investigate potential expansion of park to the north with the City of Stoughton to provide continuous public ownership to existing DNR lands.
- Continue discussions with WDOT on mitigation activities required for the proposed USH 51 roadway expansion project.



WALKING IRON County Park (Town of Mazomanie, 357.8 acres)

Walking Iron County Park is located in northwestern Dane County adjacent to the Village of Mazomanie. The park contains native sand prairies and a segment of Black Earth Creek. Access to the park is primarily through the Lions Park in the Village of Mazomanie. Extensive restoration efforts are being undertaken to restore prairie and woodland forests.

Recommendations:

- Prepare a master plan to further investigate how recreation and stewardship activities at this park can be improved and enhanced.
- Explore expansion of equestrian trails into newly acquired lands as available and consider possible connection to Blackhawk state riding area.
- Continue to work with Friends and Wisconsin DNR on concept of trail connections to the Lower Wisconsin Riverway.

YAHARA HEIGHTS County Park (Town of Westport, 140.5 acres)

This park is located at the intersections of CTH M and STH 113 along the Yahara River. The primary use is as an off-leash dog park; there is also hiking trails and a canoe landing area along the river.

Recommendations:

- Prepare a site development plan for the planned relocated entrance that includes considerations for water access, trail access into the Cherokee Marsh Natural Resource Area, and dog park access.
- Apply for funding/budget to relocate entry road access and parking area from Catfish Court to River Road.
- Explore partnerships for community agricultural/gardening use.

X.2 Natural Resource Areas

PRIORITIES

1. Preserve lands adjacent to urban areas that improve water and wetland quality and quantity.
2. Through partners acquire or fund natural resource area acreage that increases overall size and connectivity of existing natural resource areas.
3. Focus on projects that involve and foster multiple partnerships.
4. Continue to expand existing and create new natural resource areas that provide a variety of regional functions, including nature-based recreation uses, water quality improvement and other environmental services, trail connectivity, and habitat improvement.
5. Continue and increase restoration efforts to the extent possible on woodlands, wetlands, prairie and savanna ecosystems.
6. Utilize volunteers and non-profit conservation organizations to oversee ecological asset assessments and species inventories in partnership with educational and research institutions.

POLICIES

1. Communicate project area resource protection priorities to partnering agencies and non-profit groups to provide a common vision and work plan.
2. Work with partnering agencies and groups toward creation of larger landscape-scale natural resource areas.
3. Plan and implement greenway connections that enhance non-motorized public access from population centers to existing public lands and regional trails.
4. Plan, implement, and partner on projects that provide environmentally sensitive access to Dane County lakes, streams and rivers, including water-based trails and shore fishing.
5. Acquire lands to buffer Dane County water and wetland areas to reduce flooding and enhance water quality.
6. Allow low-impact, nature-based recreation development and use of natural resource areas, such as that overlook areas for natural and scenic views.
7. Where advantageous, undertake alternative land lease, rental, or sustainable resource management practices that could generate revenues for future operation, maintenance, and development of natural resource areas.
8. Stabilize streambanks, shorelines, and other areas of erosion through coordinated planning efforts on county-owned parklands and work jointly with adjacent property owners as necessary to ensure permanent stabilization.
9. Consider both working and non-working farm lands as a complementary component of natural resource areas.

EXISTING NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS

BADFISH CREEK Natural Resource Area (Towns of Rutland, Dunkirk, Dunn)

The project area spans from the Badfish Creek headwaters in the Town of Dunn and follows the creek and associated wetlands south to the county line in the Towns of Rutland and Dunkirk. The US Fish and Wildlife, Wisconsin DNR, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD), Friends of Badfish Creek, Groundswell Conservancy, and Rock River Coalition are all potential future conservation partners in this region. The project area lies between two large population centers, Stoughton and Oregon, and is anticipated to provide quasi-wilderness experiences for the region. Existing recreation uses that may be enhanced include canoeing and kayaking, hunting, fishing, and wildlife observation. There is also high potential for a variety of wetland restoration projects in lowland and hydric soil areas that could expand and connect existing publicly-owned lands.

Recommendations:

- Continue to investigate acquisition and stewardship opportunities with conservation partners.

BADGER MILL CREEK Natural Resource Area (City and Town of Verona)

This project area includes wetlands and adjacent upland buffer lands along the lower stretch of Badger Mill Creek. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reclassified Badger Mill Creek as a “cool water fishery,” indicating it does have the potential to sustain some trout populations.

Recommendations:

- Continue discussions with the City of Verona on future land use plans for this corridor.

BLACK EARTH CREEK Natural Resource Area (Towns of Black Earth, Berry, Mazomanie, Cross Plains, Middleton, 94 acres)

Black Earth Creek is nationally known for its excellent trout fishing. Some of the lands along the creek are owned by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources as public fishing and wildlife habitat areas. Future land acquisitions would seek to fill in the gaps between existing publicly-owned lands and to protect the scenic quality of the stream corridor. The Dane County Regional Planning Commission completed a project plan for Black Earth Creek in 2003 that was adopted by the Dane County Board. A master plan for the Sunnyside property was completed in 2010. The City of Middleton is working with a variety of partners on the creation of an Olympic winter sports training facility west of the Pleasant View golf course.

Recommendations:

- Acquire “Old Mud Lake” north of USH 14 and additional headwater lands immediately south of USH 14 with the help of multiple partners for future wetland restoration projects.
- Expand Sunnyside Seed Farms property west and south along the creek, and north to expand future park, access and recreation potential.
- Continue working with Groundswell Conservancy on its identified priority areas within the project boundary, including acquisition of conservation easements from ridge top to ridge top between Cross Plains and Mazomanie.
- Investigate allowing hunting on county lands adjacent to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources public hunting grounds where compatible with other park uses.
- Begin implementation of the Sunnyside master plan.
- Continue discussions with the Town of Middleton, American Transmission Company (ATC) and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation on future road and transmission line improvements that impact the Black Earth Creek Sunnyside Unit Wildlife Area property.
- Continue to foster planning of the future Black Earth Creek Trail.



BLOOMING GROVE DRUMLINS Natural Resource Area (Towns of Blooming Grove and Cottage Grove, 174.7 acres)
This project area seeks to protect the glacial drumlin features found throughout this region, as well as the associated wetlands that surround them. Drumlins are low, smoothly rounded, elongated hills of compact glacial till (sand, gravel, and rock) deposited under the sheet of ice and shaped by its flow; with the longer axis parallel to the direction of ice movement. They have a blunt nose that points in the direction from which the ice approached, and a gentler slope tapering in the opposite direction.

Recommendations:

- Partner with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Cottage Grove on the implementation of a connector trail between the Capital City Trail and the Glacial Drumlin State Trail.
- Partner with City of Madison to expand hiking/cross country ski trails into Door Creek Park.
- Consider a future joint planning effort by local units of government to identify unified resource and recreation management strategies for the entire project area.

BLUE MOUNDS Natural Resource Area (Towns of Vermont and Blue Mounds)

This project area landscape consists of steep wooded hills and valleys, which afford spectacular views, streams, oak savanna, and prairie remnants. Dane County has made several significant land purchases to provide connections from Brigham Park to Blue Mound State Park and the Military Ridge State Trail. The Prairie Enthusiasts have also been actively working to preserve lands in this project area. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Groundswell Conservancy, and Capital Off Road Pathfinders are all potential future conservation and recreation partners in this region. Portions of this project area could be managed as Forest lands.

Recommendations:

- Continue to investigate mountain bike and shared-use trail connections to Blue Mound State Park.
- Expand boundary north of Blue Mound State Park along Dane/Iowa county line to northern extent of existing project area boundary.

CHEROKEE MARSH Natural Resource Area (City of Madison, Towns of Burke, Windsor, and Westport, 207.7 acres)

The Cherokee Marsh project area is generally bound by Interstate 90-94 on the east and STH 113 to the west. Public ownership is a mixture of City of Madison, Dane County, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources owned lands. The City of Madison has been conducting extensive vegetation and wetland management efforts on the south side of the river. Dane County volunteers have been working on removal of invasive species and prairie restoration on the north side of the river.

Recommendations:

- Explore creation of a land-based trail that provides connections to Token Creek Park and the Upper Yahara River Natural Resource Area.
- Continue vegetation management practices and prairie restoration.
- Continue working with the Friends of Cherokee Marsh, the City of Madison, Groundswell Conservancy, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on acquiring lands within the project area boundary.
- Continue to work with volunteers on identifying and providing educational information for Native American mound sites.
- Expand project area boundary to include Westport Drumlin Area and consider future trail connections.

DOOR CREEK WETLANDS Natural Resource Area (Village of McFarland, Towns of Dunn and Pleasant Springs)

This project area includes the wetlands and surrounding upland buffer areas of Door Creek on the north shore of Lake Kegonsa. A project plan completed by the Dane County Regional Planning Commission, adopted by the County Board in 2000, provides management recommendations that include the protection of wetlands and associated buffers, provision of northern pike spawning areas, and enhancement of Door Creek water quality.

Recommendations:

- Work with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on creating unified resource and recreation management strategies for the entire project area.
- Begin planning for the Lower Yahara River Trail.
- This boundary should be revised in the future as local units of government complete more detailed neighborhood plans for developing areas.
- Consider acquiring Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources land or transferring ownership to Dane County for properties necessary to construct the Lower Yahara River Trail.

FISH LAKE Natural Resource Area (Town of Roxbury, 81.5 acres)

This project area is located on lands surrounding Fish Lake and along the western shore of Crystal Lake in the far northwestern corner of the county. There have been perennially high lake levels on both lakes for several years. A lake district was formed, and under a Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources permit, pumping of the lake began in an effort to decrease water levels. Dane County has purchased some properties within the project area boundary.

Recommendations:

- Continue to expand county-owned lands, with priority given to acquiring shoreline and shoreline buffer areas.
- Continue to implement recommendations of the 2014 Fish Lake Natural Resource Area/Lussier County Park Master Plan.
- Work with the Wisconsin DNR to explore the possibility of creating a boat landing on the west shore of Crystal Lake.



HOLTZMAN Natural Resource Area (Town of Dunn, 63.2 acres)

This property is located just south of the Capital Springs Recreation Area and is currently included in operation and maintenance agreements with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for the Capital Springs Recreation Area. The property was donated to Dane County with the intent that it be considered a nature preserve. Because the property is not located along a roadway, access can only be obtained by permission from one of the surrounding landowners.

Recommendations:

- Consider acquiring property that would provide public access if the opportunity becomes available.

ICE AGE TRAIL JUNCTION Natural Resource Area (Town of Verona, 544.8 acres)

This project area includes Ice Age Trail corridor lands north and south of Badger Prairie County Park and the park itself. It also includes the habitat and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation wetland mitigation area known as Goose Lake. The Ice Age Trail Junction Area was the result of a 1991 proposal that called for a wider Ice Age Trail corridor in the Verona-Madison area to encompass key resource and scenic features associated with the trail. In 1992, the Dane County Park Commission established an intergovernmental advisory committee composed of the Town of Verona, City of Verona, Dane County Board, Dane County Executive, and the Park Commission to create a project plan for the area that was adopted by the County Board in 1993.

Recommendations:

- Solicit outside funds to provide bicycle trail connections from the Ice Age Junction Trail to the Reddan Soccer Park.
- Investigate acquisition partnerships with the City of Verona and MAYSA on lands surrounding the Reddan Soccer Park.
- Consider development of snowshoe trails.

KOSHKONONG CREEK Natural Resource Area (Town of Sun Prairie)

This project area spans from the City of Sun Prairie south to Interstate 94 and the northern tip of the Blooming Grove Drumlin Natural Resource Area. It also includes environmental corridor lands northeast of McCarthy County Park that drain into the Koshkonong Creek. The vision for this project area is that it would become a greenbelt corridor between the Cities of Sun Prairie, Madison and the Village of Cottage Grove while also providing a rural transition into the Town of Sun Prairie. This corridor could provide a diversity of benefits including flood mitigation, wetland restoration potential, and future recreation opportunities such as shore fishing and trails. Protection of these lands is also expected to include working farms that exist throughout the drainage district areas.

Recommendations:

- Investigate acquisition opportunities along the CTH N corridor west and north of McCarthy County Park.
- Consider a future joint planning effort by local units of government to identify unified resource and recreation management strategies for the entire project area.

LEOPOLD-RILEY Game Cooperative (Towns of Springdale, Verona, and Cross Plains)

In 1931, Aldo Leopold formed a cooperative for the purpose of providing its members a place to hunt. Historically, it was the site of the Riley Game Cooperative. Aldo Leopold created, participated in, and analyzed this cooperative effort between the area's farmers and sportsmen/conservationists from Madison. They worked together to create better wildlife habitat and hunting opportunities, especially for pheasants and bobwhite quail. The area encompassed all or part of 11 farms, or about 1800 acres, mostly in the Town of Springdale, but also extending into the Towns of Verona and Cross Plains. Within the reserve boundary were croplands, pastures, an oak savanna, woods, a cattail marsh, a sedge meadow, springs and spring ponds, and the Sugar River. Historically, the Chicago and Northwestern railroad track ran through Riley on the way between Madison and Mount Horeb. The railroad right-of-way is now the Military Ridge State bike trail. This area contains important wildlife habitat and is the headwaters of the Sugar River system.

Recommendations:

- Accelerate landowner contact efforts for purposes of acquiring land or easements.
- Work with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Dane County Conservation League on exploring the possibility of providing public hunting opportunities in the future as additional lands are acquired or leased.
- Work with U.W. Madison and volunteer groups to prepare a management plan for the project area.

LEWIS NINE SPRINGS E-WAY (Cities of Madison & Fitchburg, Town of Dunn, 675.9 acres)

In 1969, the National Endowment for the Arts provided funds for the development of an environmental study model to illustrate how a community can identify and capitalize on existing natural and human made resources in an effort to elevate environmental, ecological, and esthetic planning decisions to a higher priority within the community development decision making process. This resulted in an "E-Way" concept developed through the efforts of Professor Emeritus Philip Lewis of the University of Wisconsin Environmental Awareness Center, with the "E" representing educational, environmental, esthetic, and ecological. The Lewis Nine Springs E-Way project area extends from Dunn's Marsh at Seminole Highway east to Lake Waubesa and includes more than 1,300 acres of land under county ownership.

Recommendations:

- Implement recommendations of the Capital Springs Recreation Area master plan within the E-Way boundary.
- Develop a series of educational kiosks along the Capital City Trail.
- Work with City of Fitchburg/WDNR on feasibility of adding bike lanes to Syene Road.

LOWER MUD LAKE Natural Resource Area (Town of Dunn, Village of McFarland, 344.9 acres)

This extensive natural resource area stretches between Lake Waubesa and Lake Kegonsa along the Yahara River. The land is a mix of county, town, village and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources ownership and supports a variety of recreation uses including public hunting, canoeing, cross country track and field races, and fishing. The Village of McFarland has a master plan for a proposed community park along the northern boundary off of Elvehjem Road, and developed a new dog exercise area in 2010. The County Board adopted a project plan for this area in 1994.

Recommendations:

- Begin planning for the Lower Yahara River Trail.
- Work with the WDNR on creating unified resource and recreation management strategies for the entire project area.
- Plan and implement Native American educational trails and nodes.

MAUNESHA RIVER Natural Resource Area (Towns of York, Sun Prairie, Medina, Bristol, Village of Marshall, 139.7 acres)

This project area extends from the WDNR Deansville Marsh Wildlife Area southeast along the Mauneshia River through the Village of Marshall to the county line. Riley-Deppe County Park and the 131-acre Socha parcel that was donated to the County in 2008 are included in this project area boundary. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Village of Marshall, Capitol Water Trails Ltd., Groundswell Conservancy, and Capital Off Road Pathfinders mountain bike advocates are all potential future conservation and recreation partners in this region. This region is part of the southeastern Wisconsin glacial plains landscape that provides extensive wetland and grassland habitats. Existing recreation uses that may be enhanced include canoeing and kayaking, hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, and mountain biking.

Recommendations:

- Further discussions with former landowner of Socha parcel regarding future plans for this property.

NORTH MENDOTA Natural Resource Area (Town of Westport, 172.4 acres)

In 2008, Dane County Parks worked through a public consensus building process with the Towns of Westport and Springfield, Village of Waunakee, City of Middleton, Wisconsin Department of Transportation and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and stakeholders to identify a North Mendota Natural Resource Area project boundary. The planning effort was a component of the Wisconsin Department of Transportation North Mendota Parkway study led by the consulting firm Strand Associates. The boundary included in this plan represents the results of this planning process. The project area begins at STH 113 and the Yahara River to the east and follows the north shore of Lake Mendota, including Six Mile and Dorn Creeks and their associated wetlands. Dorn and Six Mile Creeks contain some state fishery lands and public hunting areas. Properties within this project area are anticipated to enhance water quality of the Yahara chain of lakes and provide fish and wildlife habitat.

Recommendations:

- Continue to work with partners on implementation of the North Mendota Trail.
- Investigate connecting this Natural Resource Area with the Pheasant Branch Conservancy.
- Work with WDNR to create unified resource and recreation management strategies for entire project area.



North Mendota NRA Photo Credit Robert Farrell

PATRICK MARSH Natural Resource Area (Towns of Sun Prairie, Bristol, City of Sun Prairie)

Patrick Marsh is located on the eastern edge of the City of Sun Prairie just south of USH 151. The property was the first Wisconsin Department of Transportation wetland mitigation bank site in the state. The public land around the marsh is a combination of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Dane County, and Groundswell Conservancy and includes prairie restoration efforts. The shallow marsh area is home to many varieties of waterfowl and grassland nesting birds. Rising water levels have resulted in the marsh becoming more of a lake, and therefore long-term goals should involve lowering water levels to restore vegetative diversity of a shallow marsh. Dane County Parks worked with local units of government, the Patrick Marsh Middle School, and several area stakeholders to prepare a project plan that was adopted by the County Board in 2003.

Recommendations:

- Continue to provide peripheral planning support to stakeholder groups to identify future recreation and management objectives for Patrick Marsh.
- Continue to assist with acquisition of lands designated within the Patrick Marsh project plan.

PHEASANT BRANCH Conservancy (City of Middleton, Town of Springfield, 99.9 acres)

This project area is located on the northern boundary of the City of Middleton and is jointly owned by Dane County, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and the City of Middleton. An active Friends group has been assisting the county Naturalist with ongoing wetland, savanna, and prairie restoration efforts throughout the Conservancy. The Friends mission is “to restore, protect, and promote the Pheasant Branch Conservancy and its watershed for today and tomorrow.” In 2005, the City and the County worked jointly on the installation of a crushed limestone bicycle-hiking trail with interpretive kiosks. The trail extends from Orchid Heights Park in Middleton west to an existing trailhead along Pheasant Branch Road. The property also contains an overlook for a large spring that contributes 2.6 million gallons of fresh water to Lake Mendota each day.

Recommendations:

- Acquire lands adjacent to the Conservancy within the Fredrick Springs Recharge Area for water protection purposes and for future establishment of regional bicycle trail connector to Governor Nelson State Park.
- Prepare an updated master plan to establish a common vision for future facility development, stewardship and management of Pheasant Branch Conservancy.
- Continue to work with the Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy and the City of Middleton on improving access opportunities to expanded user groups, particularly people with dementia or Alzheimer’s disease, and restoration projects.



Pheasant Branch Conservancy, sunrise view

PHIL’S WOODS Natural Resource Area (Town of Roxbury, 36.1 acres)

Phil’s Woods is located in the Town of Roxbury west of USH 12 along North Dunlap Hollow Road, and is named for Philip LaFollette, three-time governor of Wisconsin. The site consists of woods and open meadows with hilltop views of the Wisconsin River valley and Baraboo Range.

Recommendations:

- Construct small gravel parking lot and trailhead off North Dunlap Hollow Road.
- Consider reclassifying as a “Forest” to enable the property to come under a forest management plan.

SOUTH WAUBESA MARSH Natural Resource Area (Town of Dunn)

South Waubesa Marsh is located on the southwest end of Lake Waubesa and includes segments of Swan and Murphys Creek. The marsh includes deep peat deposits and major springs and seepages that provide water to Lake Waubesa. A Friends of Lake Waubesa group has been working on some wetland restoration and enhancement projects within the project area. The Nature Conservancy and WDNR are the primary public landowners.

Recommendations:

- Upon completion of the hydrologic study of this region and review of the study by Dane County (or appropriate agency), local units of government or eligible non-profit conservation organizations would be able to apply for matching funds through the Conservation Fund grant program for protection of additional lands critical to maintaining the existing hydrologic function outside of the project area boundary.



SPRINGFIELD HILL Natural Resource Area (Town of Roxbury, 198.1 acres)

This project area is located along the USH 12 corridor and provides outstanding views from atop Springfield Hill, one of the highest points in the area. The landscape includes steep wooded valleys, glacial kettle ponds, and open meadow areas. Inclusion of this project area is closely linked to future development of the Ice Age Trail.

Recommendations:

- Continue to work with the Ice Age Alliance on acquisition of lands necessary for trail development and to maintain the scenic, rural quality.

STARKWEATHER CREEK Natural Resource Area (City of Madison, Town of Burke)

This project area extends north and east from the confluence of Starkweather Creek at Lake Monona, including both branches of Starkweather Creek. The boundary includes an environmental corridor identified in the 1983 Water Quality Plan for Starkweather Creek plus additional area as recommended by the City of Madison Parks Department that extends to adjacent watersheds of Cherokee Marsh, Token Creek, Door Creek, and Koshkonong Creek. The Dane County Airport is the largest property owner in the watershed. Lands protected within this natural resource area are primarily envisioned to provide lake and water quality protection, water and land based trails, upland vegetation buffers, and wildlife habitat. The project boundary included in this plan is based on information in the City of Madison's Comprehensive Plan. This boundary should be revised in the future as local units of government complete more detailed neighborhood plans for developing areas.

Recommendations:

- Continue working with the City of Madison Planning Department on concept of trail connection to Token Creek County Park.

SUGAR RIVER Natural Resource Area (Town of Verona)

The Sugar River Natural Resource Area lies just west of the City of Verona and includes a segment of the Military Ridge State Trail. It is one of the largest continuous wetland complexes along the boundary of the driftless area in western Dane County. The WDNR and WDOT are the primary public land owners in this project area.

Recommendations:

- Continue working with the Village of Belleville on regional park, trail, and restoration initiatives being undertaken as part of the Lake Belle View project.
- Work with volunteers to provide increased canoe/kayak access.
- Prepare a master plan to identify unified resource and recreation management strategies for the entire project area.

TOKEN CREEK Natural Resource Area (Towns of Windsor, Burke, 143.1 acres)

The boundary is generally defined as Interstate 90-94 on the western edge and extending along the creek to CTH C. The dam was removed from the mill pond in 2004, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources has been actively working on restoration efforts to enhance habitat and water quality of the stream. Token Creek is the only cold water fishery in the northeast quadrant of Dane County. A master plan was completed for this project area in 2011.

Recommendations:

- Continue working with WDNR and other non-profit conservation organizations on streambank restoration and fish habitat improvement projects.
- Dane County would work toward acquiring lands north and east of Token Creek County Park to STH 19. Local units of government and/or non-profit conservation organizations would work on protection of lands from STH 19 east to the mill pond either through dedication or acquisition. These agencies would be eligible to apply for partial funding through the Dane County Conservation Fund grant program.
- Begin implementation of the 2011 master plan.

UPPER YAHARA RIVER Natural Resource Area (Village of DeForest, Town of Vienna)

This project area lies along the Upper Yahara River and on the western boundary of the Village of DeForest. It contains large areas of wetlands, floodplain forest, a heron rookery, and calcareous fens. As discussed within the demographic needs analysis, this region continues to be one of the fastest growing areas in Dane County.

Recommendations:

- Work with the Village on development of a regional off-road shared-use bicycle trail along the river that would provide connections to Token Creek County Park and Cherokee Marsh.
- Continue acquisition efforts through the Dane County Land and Water Legacy program and increase land acquisition efforts through the Dane County Conservation fund as opportunities become available.

WALKING IRON Natural Resource Area (Town of Mazomanie)

In 2008 Dane County acquired over 1,000 acres of property known previously as 7A Farms in the Town of Mazomanie. This project area is a combination of Walking Iron County Park and the Walking Iron Wildlife Area. The property hosts Wisconsin River backwater and shoreland communities as well as large tracts of working farm lands. Flocks of sandhill cranes use the property as a staging site for fall migration, and each fall several thousand cranes gather here. An area north of Walking Iron County Park hosts a scrub oak forest which could be considered an oak-barren ecological type, and has the potential to support ornate box turtles, an endangered species. An old glacial lake of some 200 acres, now drained, may easily be restored to a productive wetland. In addition, a half-mile of Marsh Creek meanders through a wide riparian corridor. Interior ditches throughout the project area and seasonally flooded crop fields provide outstanding waterfowl habitat. The Department of Natural Resources, Groundswell Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Pheasants Forever are all potential future conservation partners in this river region.

Recommendations:

- Continue to work with volunteers and partners on trail-connectivity between Walking Iron Park and the Lower Wisconsin Riverway.
- Continue ongoing vegetation restoration and habitat improvement projects throughout the project area.



Sandhill Crane in Natural Resource Area

YAHARA HEADWATERS Natural Resource Area (Village of DeForest, Town of Windsor)

The project area aims to provide water quality and wildlife habitat buffers for the upper reaches of the Yahara River. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Village of DeForest, Groundswell Conservancy, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are potential future conservation partners in this pothole region. There is high potential for grassland habitat restoration work along the river corridor and associated floodplain areas that extend just north of the Village of DeForest to the county line. This project area is ecologically connected to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Land Legacy Arlington Prairie property which features deep soil prairie and prairie pothole remnants that once covered most of north central Dane County and south central Columbia County.

Recommendations:

- Consider a future joint planning effort by local units of government to identify unified resource and recreation management strategies for the entire project area.

X.3 Forests

PRIORITIES

1. Consider using Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources staff expertise and resources to create Forest Management Plans (including sustainable timber harvests) for county forests and woodlots that are compatible with other forest use objectives.
2. Educate county park users about sustainable forest management practices, including sustainable timber harvest, when compatible with other forest use objectives.
3. Increase county-owned acreage of forests and woodlots and consider future transition into an expanded “Dane County Forest” program as forest lands increase.
4. Utilize proceeds of sustainable and environmentally compatible timber harvests for future forest management and facility development.

POLICIES

1. Consider multiple low-impact recreation uses of county forests and woodlots, which are compatible with forest objectives including hiking, cross country skiing, picnicking, foraging ,and hunting.
2. Investigate revenue-generating sustainable timber management practices and collection of firewood.
3. Maximize volunteer efforts to control invasive vegetative species.
4. Work toward establishing partnerships with schools, Friends and non-profit conservation organizations to assist with management, maintenance, and monitoring of forest lands.

EXISTING FORESTS

MORTON Forest (Town of Mazomanie, 113.9 acres)

Morton Forest, named after its benefactor Steve Morton, is approximately 114 acres and offers passive recreational use in a quiet and tranquil setting. The Forest is located about 2.5 miles south of the Village of Mazomanie within the driftless area of southwest Wisconsin, known for its steep hills and lush valleys. The park offers year-round hiking trails and two outstanding vistas looking over the countryside. A portable toilet is located at the parking lot. Steve Morton donated the property to the county in 1999.

Recommendations:

- Pave existing gravel parking lot, add permanent vault toilet.
- Continue vegetation management improvements.

SCHEIDEGGER Forest (Town of Verona, 73.4 acres)

This forest property was made possible through a generous donation from Walter R. Scheidegger in 2001. The land was formerly the Abraham's Shooting Range for the Dane County Sheriff's Department. In 2005, Dane County Parks requested assistance from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to complete a Forest Stewardship Management Plan for Scheidegger Forest and enrolled the property in the State Community Forest program. The plan was completed in December 2005 and takes into consideration the property objectives outlined in the Dane County Park and Open Space Plan. A master plan was completed for this property in 2006, and a shelter, kiosk, trails, and parking area completed in 2010.

Recommendations:

- Continue to solicit interest in an organized Friends group.



Morton Forest, overlook

X.4 Historical/Cultural Sites

PRIORITIES

1. Implement historical and cultural educational exhibits and outreach programs at the Lussier Family Heritage Center.
2. Design and install additional Native American interpretive signage throughout the county where appropriate.
3. Increase emphasis and awareness of unique historical/cultural resources on all county park lands.
4. Investigate systems of connected landscapes and trails that highlight significant historical and cultural resources of Dane County, and integrate with future cultural planning processes.
5. As staff time and resources allow, continue to develop interpretive and educational signage to increase public interest and appreciation of historical and cultural sites.
6. Preserve existing cultural/archaeological resources in place permanently through prairie restoration to the extent possible.

POLICIES

1. Friends, non-profit, and special interest groups partner to varying levels on all costs and fundraising efforts related to construction of new structures or restoration of existing historic buildings and structures.
2. Dane County Parks is responsible for approving location and design of all new or restored historic buildings, structures or site improvements.
3. Dane County Public Works is responsible for review and approval of construction and bid documents for all new buildings or building restoration projects.
4. Dane County Parks is responsible for review and approval of any agreements with Friends groups necessary to construct new or remodel existing facilities.
5. Explore historical/cultural project implementation partnerships with other agencies, such as the Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission.

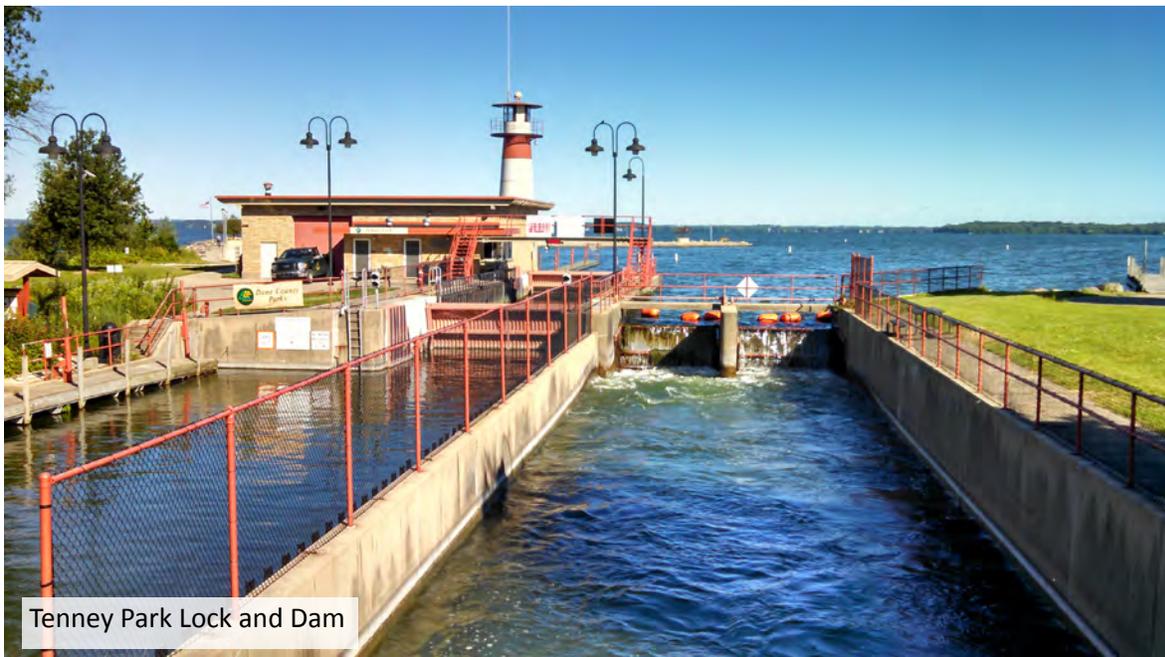
NEW HISTORICAL/CULTURAL SITES

TENNEY PARK LOCK AND DAM Historical/Cultural Site (City of Madison, 1.5 acres)

The Tenney Park Lock and Dam is located on the eastern shore of Lake Mendota along Sherman Avenue between the City of Madison's Filene Park and Tenney Beach. The site consists of a breakwall, boathouse and dam/spillway structure. The first dam was built of earth just south of the current location in 1847 as an early mill and brewery, but was destroyed in a thunderstorm in 1866. The City of Madison purchased the current site in 1896 and constructed the first lock and reconstructed the dam to allow for shallow drafting boats to move between lakes Mendota and Monona through a dredged channel of the river. Prior to this time, the river was a shallow meandering river flowing through wetlands leading to Lake Monona. In 1958, the lock and dam were reconstructed to provide improved navigational access and water control through the river. The Tenney Lock and Dam/Spillway has been maintained and operated by Dane County since 1981, with approximately 10,000 boats passing through annually. The facility was updated in 2006 and 2017. During normal flows the water level in Lake Mendota is maintained at an average height of five feet above the water level of Lake Monona. A Dane County Historical Society Marker has been on site since 1967.

Recommendations:

- Investigate improvements to breakwall to enhance public use.



HAUGE HISTORIC DISTRICT PARK Historical/Cultural Site (Town of Perry, 27.8 acres)

This park is Wisconsin's first Town Historic District Park and Dane County's first Historic Overlay District. It surrounds the Hauge Log Church National Historic Site. The park was created to preserve its unobstructed scenic views and preserve the peace and serenity of the area surrounding the historic site. The unique park boasts a spectacular scenic view of the Blue Mounds, stunning vistas of the Wisconsin Driftless Area glacial landscape, and 1.5 miles of trails for walking, hiking, kite flying, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and picnicking. The property is currently owned by the Town of Perry.

Recommendations:

- Ownership of the property by Dane County Parks may be considered if a sustainable volunteer group is established that would be responsible for park maintenance and public use.

EXISTING HISTORICAL/CULTURAL SITES

FORT BLUE MOUNDS Historical/Cultural Site (Town of Blue Mounds, 0.2 acres)

The Fort Blue Mounds historical site and surrounding lands are located on county highway F just south of the 18-151 expressway near the village of Blue Mounds. Fort Blue Mounds was constructed in the spring of 1832 to provide protection to area mining families from anticipated Native American attacks. An incredibly rich and colorful history of this site was prepared by retired State Archeologist Bob Birmingham and is available on line at: http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/wmh/pdf/summer03_birmingham.pdf.

The original plaque dedicated on the site in 1910 was the first historic marker erected by the State Historical Society. The Mount Horeb Historical Society has restored the historic marker and are trying to develop a vision for what the fort site could become. There are several other potential partners for this project area including The Blue Mounds Area Historical Society, The Nature Conservancy, Prairie Enthusiasts, and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Southwest Grasslands program. The Blue Mounds Area Historical Society is interested in working together to possibly restore the prairie grasslands around the fort site, establish public access, and develop interpretive displays.

Recommendations:

- Partner with non-profit organizations on acquisition of additional lands surrounding the site that would enhance access and connectivity to adjacent existing grassland restoration projects.

HALFWAY PRAIRIE SCHOOL Historical/Cultural Site (Town of Mazomanie, 0.6 acres)

This site is located at the junction of CTH F and STH 19 two and a half miles north of the Village of Black Earth and contains the oldest elementary school in Dane County. The one-room school was operated from 1844 until it closed as a result of consolidation in 1961. Visitors may view the inside of the school in its original restored condition on holidays and Sunday afternoons, from 1-5 p.m., Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Recommendations:

There are no new recommendations for this site.

LAKE FARM ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISTRICT (Town of Dunn)

Native Americans have lived in Wisconsin for about 12,000 years. Evidence of Native American inhabitation in Dane County dates back to the Paleo-Indian Tradition, or 10,000-5,000 B.C. It is still unclear as to the name of the people who first inhabited the park area or if they were related to the historic tribes met by the first European settlers. By far the greatest concentration of archaeological resources found within the Capital Springs Recreation Area are located within the Lake Farm County Park region. Between September and November of 1976, Philip H. Salkin and Thomas E. Emerson conducted an environmental impact survey of the proposed E-Way that identified 10 prehistoric sites at Lake Farm Park and artifacts dating back to the Early Archaic and Late Woodland periods. Salkin and a team of University of Wisconsin students conducted a more intensive study in 1977 and identified 32 prehistoric sites at Lake Farm Park. A Lake Farm Archaeological District was designated and placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Archaeological survey work completed for the Lower Yahara River Trail in 2015 consolidated all of the individual sites on the east half of the park into one continuous site, and added another site in McDaniel Park on the north shore of Lake Waubesa. The geography of this area may have been what made it so attractive as a settlement area. The park is on a peninsula that had a vast wetland marsh complex to the north and west, Lake Waubesa to the east, and oak woodlands on the upland areas to the south. These areas were rich in a variety of fish, shellfish, wild game, nuts and berries. Additional information about the archeological resources of the Lake Farm Archaeological District can be found in Phil Salkin's report, "An Intensive Archaeological Survey in the Lake Farms Archaeological District of Madison, Wisconsin," June, 1979. The Dane County Park Commission publishes a pamphlet entitled "Prehistoric Native Americans in Lake Farm Park" that provides an overview of early settlement of the park by these people.

Recommendations:

- Plan and develop a comprehensive exhibit area at the Lussier Family Heritage Center to educate park users about the extensive Native American history of this area and other people that first settled in the region.

LAKE VIEW HILL PARK Historical/Cultural Site (City of Madison, 41.3 acres)

Located on Northport Drive on the north side of the City of Madison, the property aims to conserve both historical and natural resources, while also offering recreation uses such as walking trails, nature observation, historical/cultural education, and an area to picnic and watch fireworks. The site was reclassified from a Recreation Park to a Historical/Cultural Site per the master plan that was adopted by the County Board in 2009. The buildings on the site, currently used as office space for Dane County Health and Human Services, are on the National Register of Historic Places and originally functioned as a County tuberculosis sanatorium from 1930 to 1966. There are also remnant landscape features visible on the site that help illustrate the history of the site. For example, a series of cement-lined waterfall pools and stream channel leading to a pond are still visible on the property that were historically enjoyed by the patients, their visitors, and medical staff. An evaluation was completed in 2011 by Quinn Evans Architects that assessed the sites historical landscape and provided treatment recommendations for key features. The Friends of Lake View Hill Park have been working actively on overall stewardship of the property and more recently have begun to focus on increasing awareness of its historical significance.

Recommendations:

- Implement recommendations of the adopted master plan.
- Continue to consult the historical evaluation as appropriate for future management or development of the site.
- Continue vegetation restoration efforts per Applied Ecological Services management plan.



Lake View Hill, aerial view

SCHUMACHER FARM Historical/Cultural Site (Town of Westport, 115.5 acres)

Schumacher Farm was donated by Marcella Pendall Schumacher to Dane County Parks in 1978. It is located just east of the Village of Waunakee on the north side of STH 19-113. The purpose of Schumacher Farm Park is to provide a period appropriate restoration and re-creation of an early 20th century farmstead, as well as a nature conservancy that offers a representation of Dane County’s rural heritage through preservation, restoration, and education. The farmstead consists of a restored house complete with period furnishings, a barn, granary, chicken coop, outhouse, and corn crib all restored and maintained to their 1920-30’s state. A prairie remnant has been expanded to encompass 45 acres of restored prairies with hiking trails. There is also a young maple sugarbush that will provide an additional period experience. Educational programs are in place for school groups exploring Wisconsin history. Special events such as the popular Harvest Fest in September feature rural lifestyles of the period. A master plan was adopted in 2005 and is being executed by the active Friends of Schumacher Farm Park group.

Recommendations:

- Implement recommendations of the adopted master plan.
- Schumacher Farm should be considered as a place where historic buildings could be relocated that are consistent with the historic integrity of the property. Relocation of additional buildings to the site beyond those shown on the adopted master plan would be reviewed by the Dane County Park Commission on a case-by-case basis.
- Implement permanent interpretative signage to assist the public in learning about historic features, both for the grounds and buildings, as well as building contents.
- Increase passive recreation of the prairie including snowshoeing, cross country skiing, walking, and nature observation.
- Increase educational use by families and school groups.
- Complete newly-constructed barn as a gathering area for school groups and special events, office area for Friends of Schumacher Farm Park staff and Park Headquarters, and a trailhead for Dane County Trail System.
- Explore expanded educational and passive recreational uses with the Village of Waunakee Parks and Recreation Department and area schools.



Schumacher Farm

X.5 Wildlife Areas

PRIORITIES

1. Maintain and restore large, contiguous natural areas to improve water quality, natural environments and critical habitats.
2. Provide seamless management to the extent possible in situations where the county owns lands adjacent to existing WDNR Wildlife Areas.
3. Seek cooperative management opportunity partnerships for access, restoration, vegetation management, enforcement and maintenance activities.

POLICIES

1. Designate Wildlife Area lands through a public planning process.
2. Provide property boundary signage, information board and property maps.
3. Provide park website information on properties throughout the county.
4. Provide limited off road parking facilities.
5. Allow for seasonal snowmobile trails authorized and approved by the county.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Wildlife areas have minimal facility development and public access is often limited to on-road or small off-road gravel parking lots. Wildlife areas are open to hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, cross country skiing, foraging and snowshoeing. Recommendations for all wildlife areas include completion of boundary signing, improving off road parking as needed and vegetation management practices including invasive species removal and habitat restorations.

EXISTING WILDLIFE AREAS

BLACK EARTH CREEK SUNNYSIDE UNIT Wildlife Area (Town of Middleton, 291.8 acres)

The property is located just west of the Twin Valley Road and USH 14 intersection. A small gravel parking area was constructed on the north side of USH 14 in 2011 that provides walk-in access. Wetlands along Black Earth Creek and crop fields are the primary land cover south of the highway, steep wooded hills and crop lands lie to the north. This area offers the potential for excellent deer and turkey hunting.

BLUE MOUNDS Wildlife Area (Town of Vermont, 107.0 acres)

The property is located immediately north of Brigham County Park. A small parking lot and information board is located on the north side of CTH F for access. The southern third of the property is prairie restoration and the northern portion is hardwood forest that features steep terrain. Turkey and deer are the primary hunting opportunities.

CHEROKEE MARSH Wildlife Area (Village of Windsor, Town of Burke, 126.5 acres)

Dane County acquired this land from the Bollig family in 2015. Upper reaches of the Yahara River wind through and adjacent to the northwest property boundary; Wisconsin Department of Transportation is working on a potential canoe/kayak access on the south side of STH 19. Several grassland and stream bank restoration projects are planned and underway. Deer, turkey, and waterfowl are the primary hunting opportunities.

CRYSTAL LAKE Wildlife Area (Town of Roxbury, 205.3 acres)

The property is bordered by Mussen Road and Crystal Lake on the eastern boundary, and Lussier County Park on the west. The majority of the land cover is steep, wooded hillsides that offer primarily deer and turkey hunting opportunities. Existing small abandoned quarry ponds offer limited waterfowl hunting opportunities. Excellent shore fishing and berry picking are other available recreation activities. A new boat launch is being planned in the open field near the Crystal Lake pumphouse.

DOOR CREEK Wildlife Area (Towns of Dunn, Pleasant Springs, 552.6 acres)

Primarily a large wetland complex extending north of Lake Kegonsa with some crop and uplands surrounding the north/northeast perimeters. Parking access points are available off CTH MN, Elvehjem Road, Fish Camp County Park and Longview Drive. There are also Wisconsin DNR public hunting grounds within the southern half of the boundary. Deer, turkey, pheasant and waterfowl are the primary hunting opportunities. Firearms are restricted to shotgun and muzzleloaders on county property.

DORN CREEK Wildlife Area (Town of Westport, 79.6 acres)

This property is located north of Oncken Road between CTH M and Q and contains a mix of upland grasslands and the creek and associated wetlands. A small gravel parking lot on the north side of Oncken Road provides seasonal walk-in access. Deer, pheasant and waterfowl are the primary hunting opportunities. Adjacent Wisconsin DNR wildlife area lands are found to the north and east of the county wildlife area.

FALK WELLS SUGAR RIVER Wildlife Area (Towns of Verona, Montrose, 378.8 acres)

The property is named after two long-time conservation champions, former Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk and Dane County Chief of Staff Topf Wells. More than 3 miles of continuous public Sugar River frontage meanders through the property, with excellent trout fishing opportunities. Parking lots and carry in canoe/kayak access landings are located on STH 69 and Paoli Road. Other recreation opportunities include hunting, foraging, snowshoeing and wildlife observation. Trout Unlimited and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continue to work on stream and habitat restoration projects.

HALFWAY PRAIRIE Wildlife Area (Town of Berry, 148.4 acres)

Located immediately north of Indian Lake County Park, off road access is from a parking lot on STH 19. Matz Road bisects the northern third of the property. Land cover is a mix of crop fields and steep wooded hillsides. Deer and turkey hunting, foraging, hiking, snowshoeing and photography of the original Matz homestead stone foundation ruins are the primary recreation opportunities.



Halfway Prairie Wildlife Area, Matz Homestead Ruins (Photo Credit: Samantha Haas)

MOUNT VERNON CREEK Wildlife Area (Town of Springdale, 29.6 acres)

Located on STH 92 just to the west of Mt. Vernon on the northern edge of Donald County Park, this property is a combination of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and county-owned lands. Wetlands and crop field are the two primary land covers. Parking access is available at a WDNR gravel lot on the south side of STH 92. Firearms and bows must be in a case for hunters accessing the wildlife area from Donald County Park south of the creek.

MUD LAKE Wildlife Area (Town of Roxbury, 117.4 acres)

This property surrounds the western half of Mud Lake and is primarily grassland and crop fields, with a small isolated woodlot in the north central portion. See the Dane County website or signage posted at access points for special hunting regulations that pertain to this property. Parking is available at Fish Lake County Park or from the west off of Haas Road.

NORTH MENDOTA HYER ROAD Wildlife Area (Town of Westport, 137.2 acres)

A small natural surface parking lot is located off of Hyer Road. Property is primarily ditched crop fields that offer limited waterfowl and deer hunting opportunities.

NORTH MENDOTA PRAIRIE UNIT Wildlife Area (Town of Westport, 62.7 acres)

Expansive prairie restoration offer excellent hiking, snowshoeing or cross country skiing opportunities. Limited pheasant and waterfowl hunting may occur. A future segment of the North Mendota shared-use trail is planned to be developed adjacent to the CTH M corridor. A small natural surface parking lot is available on CTH M on the east side of the property. Established prairie restorations offer great hiking/snowshoeing opportunities.

SUGAR RIVER Wildlife Area (Town of Verona, 34.0 acres)

The Sugar River winds through the southern third of this property located between USH 151 and the Military Ridge State Trail. Parking access is along Bobcat Lane on the south or off a small WDNR gravel parking on the north side of the property off Country View Road. Nearly all of this property is lowland/wetland and offers primarily waterfowl hunting opportunities. Carry in canoe/kayak access is possible off Bobcat Lane, and the Sugar River offers limited trout fishing opportunities.

SUGAR RIVER BASCO UNIT Wildlife Area (Town of Montrose, 97.7 acres)

Extensive streambank restoration, habitat improvement and oak savanna restoration projects have been undertaken along the Sugar River by Dane County, WDNR and Trout Unlimited. Excellent trout fishing and foraging opportunities are the primary recreation opportunities. A small parking lot is available off STH 69 near the intersection of Henry Road.



Sugar River Basco Unit, streambank restoration crew

WALKING IRON Wildlife Area (Town of Mazomanie, 911.3 acres)

Located north of Walking Iron County Park and the Village of Mazomanie, this property can be accessed off a gravel parking lot at the intersection of CTH Y and Amenda Road, and from two additional gravel parking lots on Amenda Road. The Dane County Conservation League provided a substantial donation that allowed parking lots and boundary signage to be installed. Lands east of CTH Y are primarily grassland restoration and crop fields. Lands north of Amenda Road contain a small woodlot, crop fields and drainage ditches that can offer fantastic waterfowl hunting and observation. Lands south of Amenda Road are being restored to oak savanna and offer excellent deer and turkey hunting.

WAUBESA WETLANDS Wildlife Area (Town of Dunn, 37.7 acres)

Walk in access is available from a small parking lot off Stace Road. The property borders the northeast corner of the Waubesa Wetlands State Natural Area and includes approximately 1500' of Lake Waubesa shoreline. Wetlands are the primary land cover on the northern half of the property transitioning to a wooded hillside oak savanna to the south. Limited waterfowl, deer and turkey hunting are the primary recreation opportunities.

X.6 Trails

PRIORITIES

1. Plan and develop shared-use trails that offer the highest potential to reduce automobile trips and serve commuting purposes.
2. Provide connectivity between existing park facilities and other regional trails.
3. Plan and develop shared-use trails that enhance youth and low income resident access to park facilities.
4. Implement the Ice Age Trail, the only National Scenic Trail in Dane County.
5. Plan and develop shared-use trails closest to major population centers or through areas targeted for development adjacent to urban areas.

POLICIES

1. Dane County is responsible for planning and developing shared-use trails on county-owned lands within project areas identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan.
2. For proposed shared-use trails that are not on county-owned property or extend beyond project areas identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan, the county's primary role is to provide eligibility for local units of government to apply for trail acquisition and/or development grants.
3. The county may consider partnerships with local units of government on planning and development of shared-use trails that provide direct connections to existing or proposed county shared-use trails.
4. All shared-use trails the county plans, develops or provides funding assistance for must be identified within the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan, the Madison Area Transportation Planning Board Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), or State Trail Plan.
5. All shared-use trails the county develops or provides funding assistance for require planning, design and engineering be completed by licensed professionals with bicycle pedestrian facility planning experience.

i. SHARED USE TRAILS

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Strong support continues to be demonstrated for development of additional shared-use trails throughout the county. These trails provide significant economic, recreation, transportation, and health benefits to Dane County residents and are used by an extremely diverse population, particularly people with disabilities, youth, and the elderly. With rising costs of motorized transportation, an aging population, and increasing interest in healthy lifestyles, continued development of shared-use trails should continue to be a priority of the Dane County Parks Division.

The Dane County Executive's office has been facilitating an annual BikeDane meeting since 2010. The meetings are intended to provide updates on current bike trail projects and as an opportunity to hear from bicycle advocacy groups about their hopes and concerns for the Dane County bicycle facility network.

- Continue to work with the Dane County Highway Department on coordinating on-road bicycle facilities with the shared-use trail network.
- Continue to implement recommendations of the Dane County Bicycle Wayfinding Signage Plan.
- Investigate the creation of Dane County bicycle Friends groups to assist with operation, maintenance and advocacy of the shared-use trail network.
- Continue to host annual BikeDane meetings.
- Bicycle Commuter Lots. Continued interest is demonstrated for provision of more parking facilities that would better allow residents the ability to park automobiles and ride bicycles for the purposes of commuting to work. Continue to investigate development of a series of bicycle commuter lots on county-owned lands.
- Work with the Town of Dunn toward establishment of bicycle lanes on Lake Farm Road that will provide connections to the Capital City Trail and Lower Yahara River Trail.

5-YEAR SHARED USE TRAIL INITIATIVES

Black Earth Creek Trail - Middleton to Mazomanie - 13.4 miles

(City/Town of Middleton, Village/Town of Cross Plains, Village/Town of Black Earth, Village of Mazomanie)

Preliminary planning work was completed by a Good Neighbor Trail work group in 2012 that involved local units of government and recreation user groups. The Wolf Run Association completed the first phase of trail development in 2014 from Crescent Street in Mazomanie to Wisconsin Heights High School. Dane County's role will be to assist with grant funding as budgets allow for acquisition of land and development of the trail.

Recommendations:

- Work with Gateway to the Driftless and ad hoc planning group to review existing plan and identify update opportunities.
- Update trail vision and standards based on input from stakeholders and local units of government.
- Consider rename of entire trail to Black Earth Creek Trail to foster seamless identity and renewed planning environment.
- Prepare a phased implementation plan that includes land acquisition recommendations.

Capital City State Trail - 10.5 miles
(Town of Blooming Grove, Cities of Madison and Fitchburg)

The Capital City State Trail segment between Verona Road and Nob Hill Road was completed by Dane County Parks in 2000. It continues to be one of the most used and popular shared-use trails in Dane County. As the trail approaches twenty years old, upgrades and restoration projects will be necessary.

Recommendations:

- Complete phased pavement restoration as needed for trail segment between Nob Hill and Verona Road.
- Implement signage recommendations found within the Dane County Bicycle Wayfinding Plan.
- Partner with Cities of Madison, Fitchburg and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources on stormwater improvements at the bicycle roundabout near Dawley Park.



Capital City State Trail

Glacial Drumlin State Trail to CamRock Trail - 3.1 miles
(Village of Cambridge, Towns of Christiana and Deerfield)

Dane County has completed the CamRock Trail from Rockdale to the Water Street bridge in the Village of Cambridge. The Village is leading a planning effort to extend the trail to the Glacial Drumlin State Trail. Dane County's role will be to assist with grant funding as budgets allow for acquisition of land and development of the trail.

Recommendations:

- Continue to provide technical planning assistance to the Village if needed.

Glacial Drumlin State Trail to Capital City Connector Trail - 3.5 miles
(Village/Town of Cottage Grove, Town of Blooming Grove, City of Madison)

This segment of shared-use trail is the last remaining gap in a continuous off road trail that extends between Milwaukee and Dodgeville. It is anticipated to be used extensively by commuting cyclists from the east side of Dane County into the Madison metro area. The trail will generally parallel the railroad grade from the Glacial Drumlin State Trail trailhead on CTH N in the Village of Cottage Grove to the Interstate.

Recommendations:

- Dane County is responsible for trail planning and development between the Interstate and Vilas Road.
- The Village of Cottage Grove is responsible for trail planning and development between CTH N and Vilas Road.
- Develop Trail Memorandum of Understanding with involved stakeholders to outline future management responsibilities.

Great Sauk Trail CTH Y to Mazomanie - 7.7 miles
(Town of Mazomanie)

This trail would connect from Walking Iron County Park through the Lower Wisconsin Riverway State Natural Area to CTH Y. Additional coordination with Wisconsin DNR will be necessary to ensure trail development is consistent with the recently completed Lower Wisconsin Riverway Master Plan for this region. Dane County would be responsible for planning and development of the trail from Lions Park in the Village of Mazomanie through the Walking Iron Wildlife Area.

Recommendations:

- Continue trail planning discussions with DNR after CTH Y beach public access project has been completed.

Great Sauk Trail Sauk City to CTH Y - 1.4 miles
(Town of Mazomanie)

The Great Sauk Trail is primarily a Sauk County initiative and extends between Sauk City and Devils Lake State Park. The first phase between Sauk City and the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area was completed in 2017. A trail connection from Sauk County into Dane County is envisioned at the site of the former railroad trestle across the Wisconsin River that forms the boundary between the two counties.

Recommendations:

- Investigate a joint funded feasibility study with Sauk County for a new recreation trail bridge over the Wisconsin River main channel that includes opinions of probable cost.
- Request an existing condition report from Wisconsin River Rail Transit Commission for additional bridge structures from the main channel of the Wisconsin River to CTH Y prior to pursuing rail/trail conversion process.

Highway 12 Trail Middleton to Sauk City - 17.3 miles
(Towns of Springfield, Dane and Roxbury)

Approximately 11 miles of shared-use trail is existing in the USH 12 corridor between Middleton and Sauk City. The trail is not in place for a six mile gap between Rauls and Sleepy Hollow Road. A planning project is needed to determine the feasibility of constructing the remaining segment of trail. This trail is within Wisconsin Department of Transportation right of way.

Recommendations:

- Wisconsin DOT and Dane County should discuss future planning and development scenarios for this trail.

Lower Yahara River Trail McFarland to Stoughton - 7.5 miles
(Village of McFarland, Town of Pleasant Springs, Town of Dunn)

Phase 1 of the Lower Yahara River Trail was completed in 2017 from the Capital City Trail to McDaniel Park in the Village of McFarland. This section of trail includes a nearly 1 mile long bridge and boardwalk along the north shore of Lake Waubesa, the longest in Wisconsin. The Village of McFarland has nearly completed the trail from McDaniel Park to Elvehjem Road.

Recommendations:

- Dane County is responsible for the next phase of trail planning and development from Urso Park in the Village of McFarland to Lake Kegonsa State Park.



North Mendota Trail - 3.8 miles
(Town of Westport, City of Middleton, Village of Waunakee)

The Town of Westport, Village of Waunakee, and Dane County are partnering on a shared-use trail that will extend from Woodland Drive in the Town of Westport to Mendota County Park in the City of Middleton. Preliminary plans have been completed by Waunakee/Westport for the trail segment from Woodland Drive to Governor Nelson State Park.

Recommendations:

- Westport/Waunakee are responsible for trail development from Woodland Drive to Governor Nelson State Park.
- Private developers are responsible for trail development from Governor Nelson to the North Mendota Prairie Unit Wildlife Area.
- Dane County is responsible for trail planning and development from the North Mendota Prairie Unit Wildlife Area to Fox Bluff Road.
- Town of Westport is responsible for trail planning and development from Fox Bluff Road to Signature Drive.
- City of Middleton is responsible for trail planning and development from Signature Drive to Mendota County Park.
- Develop Trail Memorandum of Understanding with involved stakeholders to outline future management responsibilities.

ii. ICE AGE NATIONAL SCENIC TRAIL

The Ice Age Trail corridor traverses north - south through western Dane County and follows the end moraines that mark the furthest extent of the glacial advancement. The Ice Age Trail is a footpath through diverse landscapes that provides a superlative outdoor recreation experience and commemorates world renowned geological features. The trail provides a natural corridor, serves as an educational resource, promotes the health and vigor of users of all ages, and links the history of diverse human cultures. The trail was designated a National Scenic Trail by Congress in 1980 and the State's only scenic trail in 1987. More information about the Ice Age Trail can be found at www.iceagetrail.org.

Recommendations:

- Continue working with the Ice Age Trail Alliance, DNR and National Park Service on land protection for and development of the trail and infrastructure.
- Continue prioritizing County acquisition of lands for the Ice Age Trail, particularly where they overlap with other project boundaries and where partnership support is available.

iii. E-TRAILS

Electronic web-based trails or "E-Trails" were introduced in the 2012-2017 Park and Open Space Plan as a recommendation from Earth/Art® Resources to explore the feasibility of a Earth Day Heritage public lands and land/water trail to celebrate and highlight the unique cultural legacy of Dane County and beyond. Dane County's initial role with the trails portion of this proposal would include investigation of educational/interpretative information for significant historical/cultural places located on trails identified in this plan. Initial development would begin with a web-based "E Trail".

The Dane County Parks system encompasses a varied landscape of rivers, lakes, marshes, oak savanna, prairies and forests in both glaciated and driftless (unglaciated) areas. Many of these places have unique cultural connections to Native Americans and/or European American settlers which are of public interest for understanding the natural environment and providing context to the overall heritage of the area.

Dane County aims to interpret and present this information where appropriate. Dane County would model its first E-Trails after the E-Way concept of linking the Educational, Environmental, Esthetic, and Ecological resources within a shared corridor, first developed and championed by Phil Lewis, UW Professor Emeritus of Landscape Architecture.

Dane County has identified several E-Trails that will provide visitors with a virtual opportunity to tour the natural, cultural, and historical sites using interactive maps via the internet. The proposed E-Trails correspond to existing shared-use trails for bicyclists and pedestrians, water trails for paddlers, or long-term proposed regional corridors where a constructed recreational trail does not yet exist. The development of E-Trails complements priorities identified for Historical/Cultural Sites.

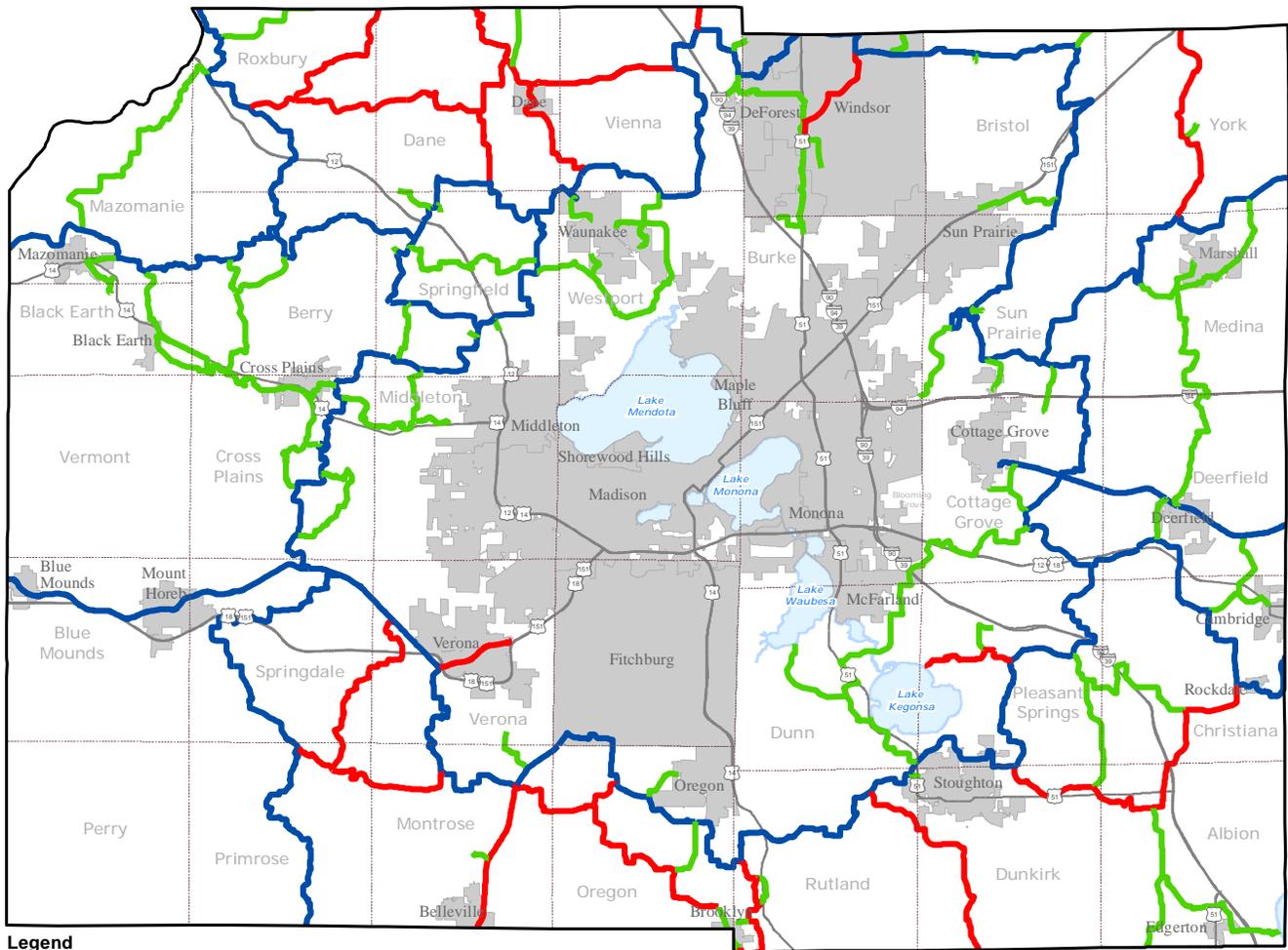
Recommendations:

- Develop the following E-trails:
 - Lewis Nine Springs E-way Trail
 - Yahara Waterways Heritage Trail (Yahara Waterways)
 - Lake Farm Lower Yahara River Trail
 - Ho-Chunk Cultural Trail
 - Georgia O'Keeffe Trail
 - Earth Day Heritage Trail

iv. SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

Dane County has a long snowmobiling history. Several of the oldest snowmobile clubs within Wisconsin originate from Dane County. Dane County Parks manages over three hundred fifty miles of state-funded snowmobile trails and assists with the coordination of another 150 miles of club trails. The Parks Director is the Snowmobile Trail Coordinator for the program and works closely with the Dane County Council of Snowmobile Clubs. Administration of the funded trails is handled through the parks office; staff inspect the funded seasonal trails once a year for proper signing, layout, and safety.

Snowmobile Trails



Legend

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| — Club Trail | Major Road |
| — County Funded Trail | Township Boundary |
| — State Corridor Trail | City/Village |



v. EQUESTRIAN TRAILS

Dane County Parks has been working with equestrian riders to develop an “outside the park” regional trail system. These trails are made possible by volunteers securing formal access agreements to construct equestrian trails on lands adjacent to and beyond county park lands. Donald County Park, has developed such a trail and additional loops have been added. The equestrian community hopes to further this concept from other public riding areas in the county with the eventual goal of forming a continuous loop through rural areas around the entire metropolitan area.

Recommendations:

- Dane County equestrian clubs should form a committee that would carry out landowner negotiations, development and maintenance of a regional trail system.



vi. WATER TRAILS

Dane County has a number of lakes, streams and rivers that provide outstanding water trail opportunities. Capitol Water Trails Ltd. has been spearheading most of the water trail development efforts in Dane County. Several access improvements have recently been completed for the Dane County water trail network on Black Earth Creek at Mazomanie and Black Earth, along the Sugar River at the Falk Wells Wildlife Area and at CamRock Park in Cambridge and Rockdale. Some of the waters that provide water trail opportunities include Token Creek, the Yahara chain of lakes, Badfish Creek, Maunasha River, Black Earth Creek, Dunlap Creek, Halfway Prairie Creek, Sugar River, and Koshkonong Creek. A bicycle pedestrian ferry from Middleton and Governor Nelson State Park to downtown Madison that was first proposed in 2001 remains a component of this plan.

Extent of trail development, public access points, and more detailed trail maps can be found on the Capitol Water Trails website at: www.capitolwatertrails.org or by calling 608-223-0995. Another outstanding resource is the Yahara Waterways Water Trail Guide. A project led by the Dane County Environmental Council and many partners, the trail highlights historical, cultural and environmental features. The trail guide is available online at: <https://olw-lwr.dane.gov/yahara-waterways-trail-guide>

Recommendations:

- The county's role will be to continue acquiring future lands that provide public access for parking and canoe/kayak launching to navigable waterways. Dane County Parks may also construct small gravel parking lots and trailhead facilities as staff and budgets allow. Development, signing and maintenance of these water trails will be carried out by volunteer organizations.
- Establish a water trail on Sugar River from the Sugar River Wildlife Area north of STH 18-151 south to Paoli.
- Partner with WisDOT on development of a water trail access on STH 19 at the Cherokee Marsh Wildlife Area.
- The Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area have cleared a water trail on Nine Springs Creek from CTH MM to the Yahara River. Improve parking and signage at Anderberg Drive in partnership with the City of Fitchburg.
- Investigate development of canoe campsites with the Village of Belleville along the Sugar River.
- Investigate measures necessary to improve water trail access under railroad trestles on Lewis Nine Springs Creek.

Rock River Trail Initiative

The mission of the Rock River Trail Initiative is to establish and interpret a Rock River Water Trail along the 300-mile river course from the headwaters in Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin, to the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois, and a separate Rock River route on roads within the river corridor to provide access for all to the natural resources, recreational opportunities, scenic beauty, and historic and cultural assets of the Rock River Valley. The Yahara River could provide Dane County residents with future water trail access to the Rock River Trail Initiative. Inclusion in this plan is intended to further awareness and grant eligibility for local units of government, volunteers and non-profit groups who are working to implement this initiative.



Kayaking on Lake Monona

XI. DANE COUNTY PARKS PROGRAM AREA RECOMMENDATIONS



XI.1 Park Division Programs

- i. Volunteer Program
- ii. Natural Areas Program
- iii. Lussier Family Heritage Center
- iv. Park Planning and Development
- v. Operations and Maintenance
- vi. Real Estate and Grants

XI.2 Land and Water Management

- i. Land Management
- ii. Stream Corridors

XI.3 Other Initiatives

- i. Agriculture, Gardening, and Foraging
- ii. Art in Parks
- iii. Scenic Transportation Corridors

XI.1 Park Division Programs

i. VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

The Dane County Volunteer Program (formerly Adult Conservation Team) was created in 1992 to establish a link between Dane County Parks and the community. It is also intended to educate the public about natural resources and departmental goals, improve quality of life, and raise level of service delivery. The Volunteer Program extends and enriches the work done by park staff and is also a source of advocacy and financial support of Dane County Parks. The program serves as a bridge to the public to better understand concerns and issues at a grass roots level.

The Volunteer Program has accelerated the development of parks and natural areas, increased wildlife habitats, and increased recreational opportunities. Volunteers also carry out some of the day-to-day maintenance tasks that are beyond the capacity of parks division staff and help create special touches throughout the system. Supervision of volunteers by Parks staff varies considerably, depending on the volunteer and activity.

In 2016, the Volunteer Program had over thirty one hundred individuals who donated over sixty five thousand hours of service. The amount of volunteers and hours has more than doubled since 2010. Additionally, there are many volunteer hours that have not been recorded but are occurring routinely in the park system. Some examples of volunteer projects include blue bird trail development, invasive vegetative species removal, prescribed burn assistance, prairie seed collecting, cleaning, and planting, park research, fund raising, trail clearing and stewardship, and tree planting.

FRIENDS GROUPS

The challenges of managing a park system can be more effectively managed with the enhancement of the volunteers and Friends groups.

A major component of the Volunteer Program are Parks Friends groups. Currently Dane County Parks has sixteen Friends groups associated directly with a park. Also, the county has several affiliated groups organized around a particular park activity and partnerships with numerous other groups supporting the parks mission.

In addition, the Friends of Dane County Parks, a non-profit philanthropic organization has raised funds for a permanent self-sustaining, nongovernmental entity to provide support through grants and other means for Friends groups and the volunteer program.

Friends groups have grown into a significant component of the park system and are anticipated to take on increased roles in the future. Under the direction of Parks staff, Friends groups assist in land management, water quality monitoring, trail building, clearing and maintenance, invasive species management, educational and recreational community programming, water quality monitoring, species inventory, fund raising, and advocacy.

The level of organization among the groups varies considerably. Greater cohesion between the county and these groups is needed through regular meetings, capacity building and training sessions, newsletter communication, signed agreements, and other activities. Moreover, a robust program of recognition and coordinated support will help to enhance the scope and engagement level of volunteer groups. Managing volunteers is critical task and requires a continued investment in oversight by professional staff.

Signed agreements with Dane County, periodically reviewed, can be the organizational cornerstone of the relationship. Typically they would outline the mission of the group and its relationship with Dane County Parks.

COMMUNITY AND INDIVIDUAL PARTNERS

Another aspect of the Volunteer Program are the many organizations, community groups, and individual volunteers that make contributions of time throughout the year. Similar to Friends groups, these volunteer activities are supported by the Volunteer Coordinator and other staff. Many organizations bring dozens or more volunteers together to support Dane County Parks on various projects. Some events are initiated by the county while other events are requested by a community group looking for a service project. There are also many dedicated individual volunteers that put in substantial time and often financial contributions towards projects.

VOLUNTEER SPECIES INVENTORY ASSISTANCE

With over 12,000 acres of land, varying habitat, access to major universities, and groups of dedicated volunteers, the Dane County Parks system needs to support and seek out partners for regular species inventory programs. An example is the “Bio Blitz” which is planned for Capital Springs Recreation Area in June of 2018 with partners including the Milwaukee Public Museum, Friends of Capital Springs, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

CAMPGROUND HOSTS

The Volunteer Program also solicits annual campground hosts for each of the five campgrounds (Babcock County Park, Lake Farm County Park, Token Creek County Park, Mendota County Park and Brigham County Park). These volunteers reside at the campground, generally for several weeks or the entire summer, assist with daily campground operations, and serve as liaisons between campers and park staff. In addition to helping manage reservations, maintain the campground, etc., they also serve as friendly faces who can answer questions and provide information about the park and surrounding area.



Recommendations:

- Continue to investigate grants, donations, and other alternative sources of income to fund increased volunteer efforts that provide outreach and education.
- Improve assistance and support to Friends Groups, which in turn will increase efficiency and scope of volunteer efforts.
- Improve ability to respond to community groups that want to contribute but require higher levels of supervision.
- Identify and train “lead volunteers” that are willing to manage projects and other volunteers.
- Expand training opportunities, such as chain-saw safety, that empower volunteers and expand contributions.
- Integrate fun and interesting educational components into some volunteer activities, so new volunteers are inspired to remain engaged and better understand the contribution they are making.
- Continue expanding activities that engage volunteers of all ages.
- Establish a forum or other mechanism through which Friends Groups could share ideas, expertise, human and materials resources (interns, equipment, materials, etc.)
- Investigate ways to enhance volunteer recognition efforts to increase and retain members.
- Explore providing certificates or other means of substantial acknowledgement of volunteer achievements and hours.

ii. NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM

The Natural Areas program is currently focused primarily on native habitat restoration and management. The majority of public outreach, education and volunteer efforts have centered on native seed collection, processing and planting, prescribed burning, and invasive species removal. Large scale restoration of county park lands can only continue with significant contributions from volunteers. The Natural Areas and Volunteer Programs are intertwined in this regard and the Volunteer Program must continue supporting volunteer opportunities that provide direct assistance to the Natural Areas program. Support was again heard during the planning process regarding the importance of the Natural Areas program to continue stewarding existing restoration efforts. The Dane County Naturalist position plays a key role in providing leadership and direction to volunteers and established Friends groups. Expanding the responsibility and leadership roles of qualified individual volunteers to carry out Naturalist program initiatives could tremendously increase the capacity of this program.

Increasing environmental education outreach programs could create new volunteer Naturalist opportunities and expand awareness and appreciation of the system. The Dane County Volunteer Coordinator receives frequent inquiries regarding educational opportunities that are available through Dane County Parks. Participating in Naturalist-led tours, visiting interpretive exhibits, or volunteering for conservation activities provides entertainment for park users. Furthermore, a diverse education and outreach program instills a greater sense of conservation and environmental awareness in park users. These programs can inspire people to make wiser conservation decisions at home and to get more involved in volunteer opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Create vegetation management plans for each property outlining broad goals and objectives.
- Develop specific and clearly defined annual work plans with Friends Groups and lead volunteers and work in a coordinated effort to meet annual goals.
- Further develop and lead land steward volunteer program to implement natural areas management recommendations.
- Provide more volunteer training opportunities to further empower Friends Groups and lead volunteers with the knowledge and skills to conduct restoration and management activities in the parks.
- Investigate grants, donations, endowment funds and other alternative sources of income to fund expanded Naturalist programming that provides outreach and education.



Collecting seed for prairie restoration efforts

iii. LUSSIER FAMILY HERITAGE CENTER

Situated at the heart of the Dane County environmental corridor (E-Way) and the Capital Springs Recreational Area, the Lussier Family Heritage Center is part of the Lewis Nine Springs E-Way vision of UW Madison Professor emeritus Phil Lewis. The Center is proposed to provide County residents with an experiential facility to learn about the cultural and environmental heritage of Dane County. The center was built almost entirely through private funds including a very substantial donation from John H. Lussier. It is currently supported by user fees generated from rental of the facility for special events. Planning for the Center began in the early 1990s and its doors were opened in 2001.

The main level of the Lussier Family Heritage Center includes a 2,100 square foot multi-purpose room, the Heritage Room, and reception area with a stone fireplace. This space is currently being used for retreats, conferences, meetings, weddings, receptions and other special events. The long-term plan is to construct a west wing addition that would serve these rental purposes and thereby allow the main room to provide the original intended purpose as a permanent and traveling educational exhibit area. The main level also includes the Lunney-Pfeifer Donor Recognition Wall that recognizes people and organizations that have provided significant contributions to the Dane County Parks system. The wall also includes space for recognition of exceptional volunteer efforts. The Groundswell Conservancy Wall describes land conservation activities in Dane County and recognizes those special people and organizations that have worked to preserve the county's Natural Heritage. County offices and restrooms are located in the south half of the main level. On the lower level, the Ken Lepine Hall is used for retreats, conferences, meetings, receptions and other special events. The lower level also includes a kitchen for food preparation and catered events. Dane County Historical Society offices are also located in the lower level and provide a repository for county records and information.

There is an observation deck outside of the main level room with a spotting scope that provides views of the E-way flora and fauna. An existing barn is used for storage of materials for Dane County's Volunteer Program. The grounds also include a playground, solar panels and extensive native landscaping. A new addition to the grounds is a pollinator garden provided by volunteers with the Madison Area Master Gardener's Association.

The October 2010 adopted Capital Springs State Recreation Area Master Plan recommends that the Lussier Family Heritage Center become the primary educational hub for the E-Way that will provide educational opportunities for outdoor recreation skill development along with study and interpretation of the natural and archeological resources of the area. The plan also recommends that the Lussier Family Heritage Center become the main gateway for E-way visitor interaction and interpretation. The Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area have already begun to implement this vision through a variety of efforts including fund raising, development of interpretive signage and the annual Harvest Moon festival that has become a major fall event.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Work with volunteers to provide additional and expanded park video materials for the entry informational monitor.
- Develop and implement educational kiosk nodes throughout the Lussier Family Heritage Center grounds.
- Continue to develop an action plan for creation of education and interpretive exhibit areas within the main and lower levels of the existing building.
- Continue to investigate fundraising options for the proposed west wing expansion area.
- Conduct feasibility study for future implementation of designated educational programming.



Lussier Family Heritage Center

iv. PARK PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Parks Division is responsible for preparing the following park planning and development documents:

- County Parks and Open Space Plan
- Master Plans
- Concept Site Development Plans
- Concept Grading Plans
- Construction Documents for Non-Structural Park Improvement Projects
- Regulatory Permits

The Parks Division undertakes a comprehensive public input process for preparation of the Parks and Open Space Plan and Park Master Plans. Staff led public input meetings foster grass-roots-level relationships with local units of government, non-profit conservation organizations and private landowners that are critical to long term success of the Parks Division.

Planning staff often work closely and partner with Dane County Public Works staff on a variety of building projects and major development projects that require public bidding and are completed by general contractors. The Land and Water Resources Department Water Resource Engineering Division provides technical assistance to park planning staff on projects that require complex storm water management plans.

PRIORITIES

1. Prepare master plans for project areas that currently have none or are in need of updating due to additional land acquisition, restoration efforts and changing recreation demands.
2. Plan for non-motorized and mass transit access to existing and future park lands and facilities to the greatest extent possible.
3. Implement projects that improve public access to lands and water that currently have none.
4. Implement projects that improve safety and environmental stewardship of a property.
5. Meet with the Madison Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, local units of government and the Bicycle Federation on an annual basis to coordinate implementation of regional shared-use trail objectives identified in this plan.
6. Strive for preservation in place of cultural resources on all park development projects.

POLICIES

1. Utilize salvaged construction materials and employ sustainable building practices to the maximum extent possible when developing park infrastructure.
2. Provide review and peripheral input to local units of government on park, open space and resource protection plans, as staff and resources allow.
3. Develop park lands in a manner that restores and preserves to the greatest extent possible the original character and integrity of existing natural, biotic, cultural and geographic features.
4. Conduct thorough archeological inventories prior to starting any park or trail development projects.
5. Develop new and retrofit existing park facilities to meet or exceed guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
6. Park plans completed by Dane County Parks are not land use plans or created for the purpose of guiding future zoning decisions.
7. All development projects that require plantings should strive toward an emphasis of utilizing native plant materials to the extent possible.
8. Plan and develop park program areas in close proximity to one another as appropriate to maximize future operation and maintenance efficiencies.

v. OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

The Operations and Maintenance program provides a variety of services to several county divisions and departments including Parks, Public Works, Health and Human Services, Sheriff, the Alliant Energy Center and Zoo. Some of the services provided include vegetation and lands management, building demolition, new property stabilization, mowing, snow plowing, special event coordination, invasive species management, enforcement of park rules and county ordinances, snowmobile program coordination, lake lock and navigation support, lake access maintenance, forestry, restoration and habitat projects, park and trail development, Friends support, and public outreach.

Parks provide a critical outlet for people who are seeking a place to escape the everyday stresses of life or noise and congestion of the urban environment. It is well documented that people who engage in regular outdoor activities are generally healthier and happier. Historically it has been the goal of the Dane County Park Commission to provide free access into the parks. User fees have been charged to offset maintenance costs for some park facilities that require higher maintenance such as reserving a shelter, camping, lake access, dog parks, disc golf, cross-country ski trails, mountain biking and the state trail pass for the Capital City Trail. Dane County will need to continue to explore options to offset operating expenses to maintain the current level of services.

PRIORITIES

1. Maintain cleanliness, function and integrity of all county parks and facilities including the Lussier Family Heritage Center.
2. Maintain and enhance the natural resource components of county lands through restoration of native habitat, control and removal of invasive species.
3. Improve and increase access to parks, facilities and natural resource areas as staff and resources allow.
4. Provide for the safe enjoyment of all county park lands and trails including visitor education through public contact, enforcement and information programs.
5. Provide for safe navigational and recreational use of county waterways throughout the boating season with guidance from the WDNR and Dane County Sheriff Recreation and Trail Patrol.

POLICIES

1. Provide courteous and responsive public information and contact.
2. Make facilities available for public use in a timely, safe and cost-efficient manner, as resources allow.
3. Provide facilities and use areas to accommodate a variety of recreation uses and special events.
4. Oversee the Forestry program that provides assistance to other county agencies, emergency response to storm damage clean-up, hazard tree removal, vegetation management and restoration efforts.
5. Oversee the Naturalist Program that provides restoration and long-range vegetation management plans for all county park lands.
6. Oversee the Volunteer Program to coordinate recreational volunteer assistance with education, maintenance and development tasks.

vi. REAL ESTATE AND GRANTS

Lands identified in this plan are generally purchased through the Dane County Conservation Fund, although other county funds, such as Land and Water Legacy, or grant dollars may also be utilized. The Conservation Fund was established in 1990 and expanded in 2000 after 75% of voters county-wide approved an advisory referendum. Funding for the Conservation Fund has remained as of 2018, although appropriations are subject to annual budget deliberations. Rapid growth in Dane County and changes to the Wisconsin Stewardship grant program resulting in more funds allocated to the northern region of the state continue to underscore the importance of this funding program for Dane County park land acquisition. These monies are spent primarily on the acquisition of land or property interests (e.g. conservation easements) identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan, including miscellaneous costs such as appraisals, title insurance, surveys, and site preparation. A significant component of the Conservation Fund is a grant program that provides matching grants to non-profit organizations and local governmental units for the purchase of land or land interests for outdoor recreation or conservation purposes. To be eligible for grants, lands must be identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan, or provide regional resource protection with public access and have been identified within an approved regional planning document or are adjacent to existing public lands of the following types:

- Waterfowl Production Areas
- State Natural Areas
- State Wildlife Areas
- State Parks
- Prairie Remnants, Wildlife Habitat, Waterways & Wetlands Identified for Preservation by the Wisconsin DNR, US Fish and Wildlife Service or a Non Profit Conservation Organization

PARC AND PARC AND RIDE BICYCLE GRANT PROGRAM

The Partners for Recreation & Conservation Grant Program (PARC) was created in 2011 to provide funding assistance for local governments and nonprofit conservation organizations for outdoor recreation and conservation projects that provided significant regional benefits. The PARC & Ride Bicycle Grant Program is built on the success of the original PARC grant program and provides matching grants to Dane County municipalities for expanding bike trail connectivity throughout Dane County. Grants are considered for capital projects that expand bike trail interconnectivity, create destination-oriented regional bike trails and improve bike safety. To be eligible for funding, trail projects must be identified in the Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan or Madison Area Transportation Planning Board Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Funding for each program is established through the annual county budget process and may not be offered every year.

STEWARDSHIP ACCESS

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program (“Stewardship”) was established in 1989 to Preserve Wisconsin’s most significant land and water resources for future generations and provide the land base and recreational facilities needed for quality outdoor experiences. The program is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and funds are made available to local units of government through various grant sub-programs.

Dane County applies for Stewardship grants on an annual basis to support both land acquisition and park development projects. There have been many properties acquired and projects developed throughout the Dane County Parks system that may not have been possible without Stewardship support.

Stewardship grants come with various restrictions, such as the requirement that projects funded through Stewardship may not be converted to non-park uses. Starting in 2007, Stewardship grants for land acquisition also require that lands must allow hunting, fishing (if fishable water is present), trapping, hiking, and cross-country skiing. The only exceptions considered for this requirement are situations where public safety may be compromised or protection of a unique plant or animal community may be in question. Determinations regarding exceptions are made by the DNR as outlined in Chapter NR 52, Wisconsin Administrative Code, and Dane County has limited ability to assert when an exception for public safety or to protect unique plant and animal communities is necessary.

Dane County will continue to apply for Stewardship grants and will review each potential application on a case-by-case basis to decide if all five uses are appropriate for the property in question. Some potential applications may not be submitted if all five uses are not consistent with the applicable policies or master plan for the property. Other times, the county may ask the DNR to consider an exception to protect public safety or to protect unique plant and animal communities if it appears that the project meets the criteria for exceptions as outlined in the administrative code. Finally, the county may ask for a variance from the administrative code in circumstances where the project appears to meet the overall goals of the Stewardship Program but where one or more of the five public uses cannot be offered and where the county can offer the uses on other county-owned properties. However, it is important to note that there is not a process in place for requesting a variance and there are no indicators that such a request would succeed.

PRIORITIES

1. Continue to improve the incorporation of newly-acquired lands into the parks system and identify short and long-term property goals.
2. Plan for the continuation of the Conservation Fund or other funding mechanisms for land acquisition.
3. Initiate contacts with landowners in project areas that have recent master or project plans in place.

POLICIES

1. Cooperate with federal and state agencies, local units of government and community organizations in acquiring land.
2. Identify properties of high interest and proactively contact the owners.
3. Provide real estate assistance to all Dane County departments.
4. Work with willing sellers and treat all landowners fairly when pursuing lands identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan.
5. Participate and assist in the removal, sale or conversion of incompatible buildings located on recently acquired properties.
6. In relinquishing county-owned parkland for purposes other than preservation or recreation, take into account the following factors:
 - The long-term impacts on parks and recreational use throughout Dane County.
 - Dedication of revenue for additional park lands or improvements, or an equitable exchange of land
 - Action being consistent with local and regional plans.
 - Total costs and benefits of land ownership.
 - Possible deed restrictions placed on property being relinquished.
 - Existing deed restrictions that carry mitigation requirements for any parkland that is relinquished.
7. Evaluate donations of land to the Park Commission on the following:
 - Consistency with needs identified in the Parks and Open Space Plan.
 - Maintenance and development costs, including proximity to existing parkland.
 - Special environmental or cultural qualities.

XI.2 Land and Water Management

The additions of natural area acreage and streambank easement miles to the Dane County Parks system will continue to challenge available resources to effectively manage these properties. Corresponding increases of staff and equipment needs necessary for invasive species removal and restoration will be critical to protect these long term investments. Related, expanding partnerships with organizations such as the Federal Fish and Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited, Watershed Associations, Dane County Conservation League, Groundswell Conservancy, Ice Age Trail Alliance and Friends groups will continue to be a necessity. Completing updated management plans that prioritize restoration needs throughout the park system should be a priority to provide common land and water stewardship visions for all partners on all properties.

i. LAND MANAGEMENT

COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT

Dane County Parks owns many properties that are within project areas of nonprofit, state, or federal agencies. As staff and financial resources become increasingly limited, it is critical to form and expand partnerships. The county has and will continue to enter management agreements with, for example, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Ice Age Trail Alliance. Management agreements currently exist on several properties, including Salmo Pond, Capital Springs Recreation Area, the Capital City Trail, Pheasant Branch Conservancy, and segments of the Ice Age Trail.

AGRICULTURE

County parkland is often leased for agriculture as an interim management tool. Row cropping helps prepare the site for restoration and prevents invasive species from spreading into the area. Agricultural leases also provide a revenue stream that offsets operational costs of parkland. Use of parkland for agriculture will continue (and in some cases will expand as outlined in Agriculture, Gardening and Foraging) as an effective management strategy and revenue source.



Agriculture on County land

PROPERTY STABILIZATION

Property stabilization includes the management and basic development of newly acquired County Park properties that provide for safe public access and a clear understanding of property boundaries and allowable uses. There are several items that need to be evaluated and implemented after properties are acquired for transitioning them into the park system in a manner that is consistent with their long-term goals. Examples of property stabilization activities include demolishing or securing buildings, disconnecting utilities, surveying and posting boundaries, developing basic public access (i.e. parking lots and signage), and working with partners, including farmers, on habitat and land management activities.

SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

Dane County Parks has begun sustainable timber harvests on some properties, such as Scheidegger Forest and the Black Earth Creek Sunnyside Unit Wildlife Area. This initiative will continue and will often be done in partnership with foresters from the WDNR. The timber harvests will be conducted to maximize the health of the forest while also serving as a source of building materials for park shelters.

INVASIVE SPECIES CONTROL

Invasive plants and insects are a direct threat to the health and enjoyment of parkland. The Naturalist program oversees control of invasive plants throughout the Park system. Additionally, Dane County Land and Water Resources Department is the lead agency working to control invasive species on county lands and waters. They also provide coordination and access to state and federal cost-share grant programs to local units of government for invasive species control. Current programs include:

- Monitoring of invasive species on county lands and waters.
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Gypsy Moth Suppression Program – Aerial Treatment Program on Gypsy Moth Concentrations
- Countywide Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Preparation Plan and Monitoring
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Clean Boats, Clean Water Program at Lake Access Sites
- Lake Management Invasive Species Harvesting on Area Lakes

One component of the EAB plan is the recommendation to develop wood utilization yards. Wood utilization yards would be strategically located to handle unanticipated large volumes of down or damaged woody vegetation. Wood formerly considered waste, such as that damaged by infestation or storm damage, could be proactively managed with the additional benefit of potential revenue from sale of material for logs and chips. Criteria for both acute (short-term) and chronic (long-term) site development will be evaluated, but the county would only become involved in the development of a facility if it was a large scale initiative involving multiple municipalities.

Currently, there are limited protocols for establishing wood utilization yards. Dane County, working in concert with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, and local municipalities proposes to help formulate guidelines. A report summarizing criteria, existing sites, timelines, and other pertinent information was prepared through an Urban Forestry Grant provided by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Recommendations:

- Continue partnering with nonprofit, state and federal agencies to cooperatively manage land.
- Implement recommendations of the 2009 Dane County Emerald Ash Borer and Wood Utilization Strategic Management Plan, including planning for wood utilization yards.
- Expand educational opportunities for volunteers that focus specifically on land management and will directly assist the Naturalist Program.
- Expand the Naturalist Program to provide both land management and environmental education.



Woody vegetation management

ii. STREAM CORRIDORS

STREAM ELIGIBILITY AND DESIGNATION

Two stream categories were designated for inclusion into this plan, Tier I and Tier II. Streams were categorized using varying sets of criteria based on the designated biological use, current level of protection or enhancement and the likelihood of establishing conservation within the stream corridor.

Tier I Streams have one or more of the following attributes/designations:

- Coldwater-high value from a biological and recreational standpoint. They support cold-water fish communities, and flow is supplied primarily from spring discharge.
- Streams which have been enhanced or protected through an existing conservation program. Restoration or enhancement programs may include but are not limited to: Priority Watershed Projects, Targeted Resource Management, WDNR Habitat Projects, Natural Resource Conservation Service, and other non-profit or conservation organization work. Most if not all have existing easements on them. Priority may be given to those streams/segments where easements have expired or will expire soon.
- Streams which have been identified under the 303(d) designation resulting from non-point source pollution or habitat degradation.
- Streams classified as Outstanding Water Resources (OWR) or Exceptional Water Resources (EWR) by WDNR.
- Streams identified as sensitive in the Dane County Water Body Classification Study
- Streams within the boundary of an approved Dane County Resource Protection Area Plan.
- Streams within special project areas or watersheds where biological data indicates need for further protection.

Tier II Streams have one or more of the following attributes/designations:

- Warm water streams that may exhibit a sensitivity to development or have the ability to be restored or enhanced through management actions.
- Streams which have been identified under the 303(d) designation resulting from non-point source pollution or habitat degradation.
- Streams within the boundary of an approved Dane County Resource Protection Area Plan.
- Streams identified in WDNR Basin Plans with “high” or “medium” designations for habitat improvement.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Priorities for implementation will consider varying factors, including whether streams have protection plans in place, financial commitments from the local municipality or qualified non-profit organization and the recommendation of the Dane County Land and Water Resources Department and respective Divisions. In cases where opportunities arise and there is no protection plan approved, an evaluation will be conducted to determine the resource being protected, ability to adequately manage surrounding uplands to support the water resource, fiscal resources available for both purchase and implementation, and the potential for future protection efforts. Dane County would take more of a leadership role in restoration efforts and landowner contacts on Tier I streams, while non-profits and local units of government would be expected to work on Tier II streams, with Dane County providing financial assistance through the Conservation Grant Fund program. Dane County may work on Tier II streams as part of other Department-wide water quality initiatives.

In addition to biological considerations, the county should continue to increase public fishing access through acquisition of permanent easements on these streams. Dane County should work with local non-profit groups such as Trout Unlimited and the Dane County Conservation League, to identify which streams offer the highest fishing potential and would benefit from increased public access. Furthermore, the county, in cooperation with WDNR and local non-profit groups, should develop guidelines and follow best management practices for land management within publicly owned or leased stream corridors.

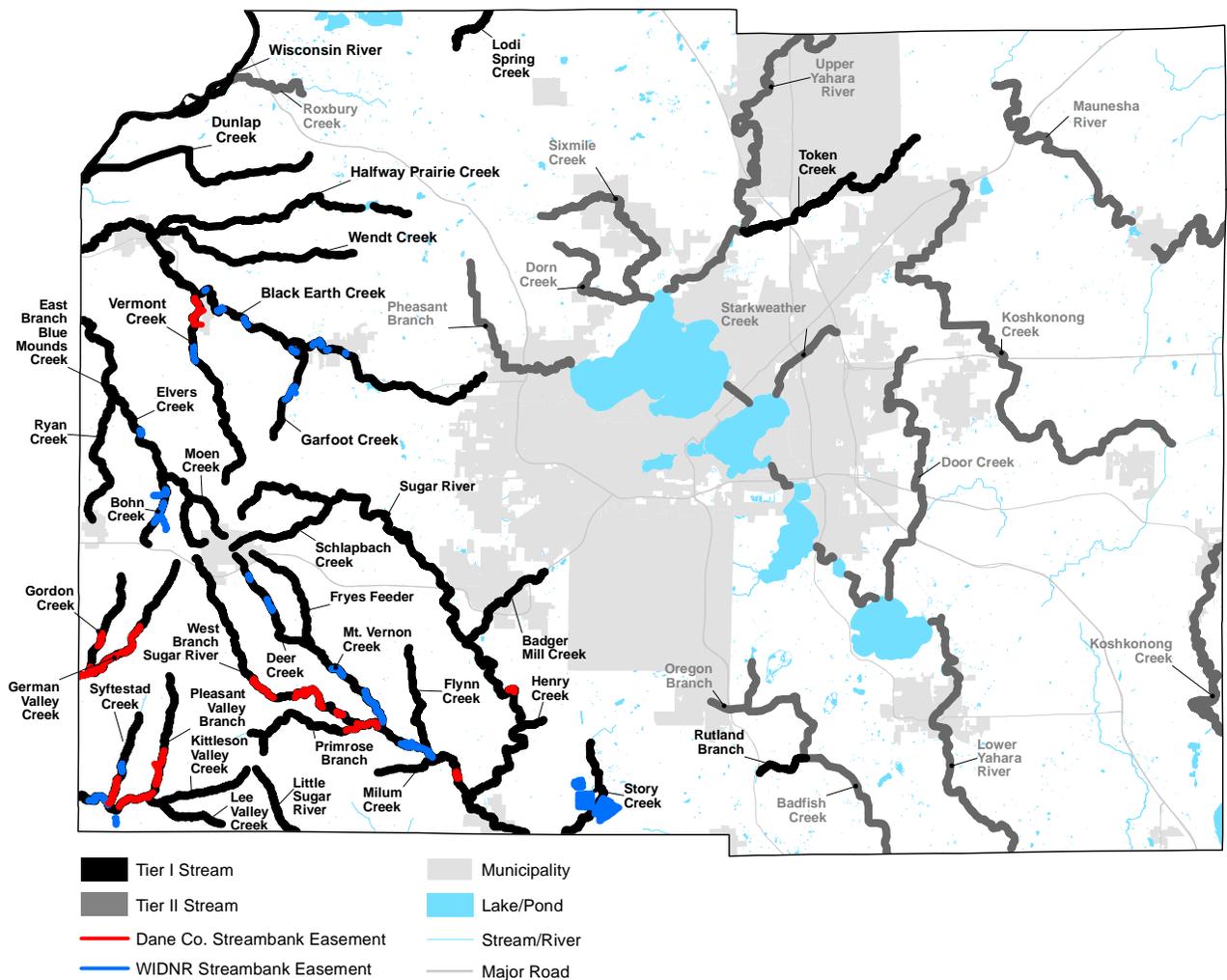
Tier I Streams

- Badger Mill
- Black Earth
- Bohn
- Deer
- Dunlap
- Elvers
- Flynn
- Fries Feeder
- Garfoot
- German Valley
- Gordon
- Halfway Prairie
- Henry
- Kittleson Valley
- Lee Valley
- Little Sugar
- Lodi Spring
- Milum
- Moen
- Mt. Vernon
- Pleasant Valley
- Primrose Branch
- Rutland Branch Badfish
- Ryan
- Schlapbach
- Story
- Sugar
- Syftestad
- Token
- Vermont
- Wendt
- East Branch Blue Mound
- West Branch Sugar
- Wisconsin

Tier II Streams

- Badfish
- Door
- Dorn
- Koshkonong
- Lower Yahara
- Maunsha
- Oregon Branch Badfish
- Pheasant Branch
- Roxbury
- Sixmile
- Starkweather
- Upper Yahara

Tier I and II Stream Project Areas



Streambank Easements

Since 2007, monies have been available in the Dane County budget as part of the Land & Water Legacy Fund to purchase streambank easements along Tier I streams. Priority has been given to streams that have been restored or enhanced through an existing conservation program and to those that offer the highest fishing potential and would benefit from increased permanent public access. The majority of these streams are located within the unglaciated Driftless Area of Dane County that is known for its excellent trout fishing opportunities and beautiful scenery. Streambank easements typically extend 33 feet from the streambank and are open to public fishing, hiking, and wildlife observation. Trout Unlimited, Badger Fly Fishers, Dane County Conservation League, Groundswell, and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources have contributed greatly to the program's success and ability to leverage County dollars.

STREAMBANK EASEMENTS ACQUIRED, 2007 – 2017

Stream	Miles	No. of Easements
<i>German Valley</i>	4.7	9
Gordon	2.3	3
<i>Kittleson Valley</i>	1.9	4
Pleasant Valley	2.0	5
<i>Primrose Branch</i>	0.6	1
Sugar River	0.3	1
<i>Syftestad</i>	3.7	2
Vermont	1.3	2
<i>West Branch Sugar</i>	6.9	12
TOTAL	23.7	39



XI.3 Other Initiatives

i. AGRICULTURE, GARDENING, AND FORAGING

The ability to grow and harvest food locally is an excellent way to get people outdoors and connected to the land. Foraging for edible fruits, nuts and mushrooms is allowed on Dane County park lands and can be a fun way for parents to introduce their children to the outdoors. Blackberries, black raspberries, blueberries, morel mushrooms, black walnuts, hickory nuts and wild apples can all be found throughout the park system.

Agriculture and gardening are vivid components of both the Dane County landscape and cultural identity. The 2012-2017 Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan recommended recognition of agriculture and gardening as well-suited and possibly long-term uses of county parkland. Utilizing parkland for agriculture and gardening is an opportunity to provide local food, support healthy, active lifestyles and attract new users.

Historically, conventional agriculture has been utilized on some park properties as an interim management tool. Row cropping helped prepare sites for restoration and prevented invasive species from spreading into the area. The explosive growth of a local foods movement and new perspectives of integrating natural area management with food production has resulted in sustainable agricultural activities being integrated into the park system.

Recommendations for alternative and advanced agriculture and gardening practices will continue to evolve over time, and are intended to coexist with conventional agricultural practices that may continue to occur. Securing long term tenure for small scale agriculture programs can be challenging, amplifying the importance of acquiring land for this use or designating it within existing County park lands where appropriate.

The framework for agriculture and gardening on county parkland can be found in Sub. 1 to Res. 280, 2009-2010, Establishing a Sustainable Agriculture Agenda for Dane County. This resolution includes recommendations that span across multiple county departments. Those that are most relevant to the Parks & Open Space Plan and the Land and Water Resources Department are to:

- Establish an agricultural incubation and demonstration farm in Dane County.
- Clearly define “urban agriculture” and “community food security” utilization of county-owned lands.
- Ensure that all county-owned lands have a conservation plan created and implemented for all uses of that land.
- Develop a complete inventory of county-owned land that would be strong candidates for longer-term uses that support community agriculture and food security.
- Set aside county-owned land for longer-term uses that support community agriculture and food security and integrate this concept into the County Parks & Open Space Plan as well as current planning for existing properties.
- Give lease preferences to 1) beginning farmers and 2) community gardens and other community-based agriculture ventures on county land parcels of 10 or less tillable acres.

Staff in the Land and Water Resources Department will work to implement the above recommendations, to the extent possible and reasonable, and will also work with community organizations and other units of government to develop agriculture and gardening partnerships. Generally the county will seek partnerships with entities that can provide direct management of agricultural and gardening practices and the county in turn would provide the land and perhaps other needs such as water and parking. Generally speaking the county is not in a position to provide direct oversight of multiple agricultural tenants or gardeners. There are many organizations that may be able to work with the County on agriculture and gardening initiatives, including the following groups that staff consulted with during the development of this Plan: Research, Education, Action and Policy on Food Group, Farley Center, Community Ground Works, Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition, Community Action Coalition, Center for Resilient Cities, Fitchburg Fields, Groundswell Conservancy and Neighborhood Food Solutions. Seasonal foraging opportunities should also be posted on the Dane County Parks web page.

Specific programs, activities, terms of use and costs would be determined on a case-by-case basis. The location of a property will play a significant role in determining suitable uses. For example, properties that are very close to population centers will be more suitable to community gardens. Properties that are located in more rural parts of the county will not be suitable for community gardens but may be suitable for incubator space or organic practices.

Possible uses of parkland for agriculture and gardening, beyond those identified above, may include the following:

- Community gardens
- Incubator gardens, particularly larger plots with no limitations on the sale of produce
- Incubator fields and infrastructure
- Certified organic fields
- Demonstration gardens
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
- School farm
- Access for non-traditional or minority groups



The following sites have been identified by staff as potential sites for agriculture and gardening :

- Anderson Farm County Park
- Badger Prairie County Park
- Black Earth Creek Natural Resource Area – Headwaters Unit
- Blooming Grove Drumlins Natural Resource Area – North Unit
- Donald County Park
- Fish Lake Natural Resource Area
- Land and Water Legacy Site, Town of Westport
- Lewis Nine Springs E-Way
- Lower Mud Lake Natural Resource Area
- McCarthy County Park
- North Mendota Natural Resource Area
- Schumacher Farm County Park
- Silverwood County Park
- Walking Iron County Park and Natural Resource Area
- Yahara Heights County Park

Identifying potential sites is only one step in selecting suitable locations and it does not guarantee that agriculture and gardening activities will occur there. Furthermore, there may be additional sites that could be utilized that have yet to be identified. Finally, the inclusion of agriculture and gardening in this Plan creates the opportunity for nonprofit organizations and local units of government to apply for Conservation Fund grants to protect lands for said use.

ii. ART IN PARKS

Incorporating more public art and cultural activities into the park system continues to be a recommendation of the Parks and Open Space Plan for 2018-2023. The goal of this recommendation is to provide stimulating sights and experiences that capture the imagination and create a greater sense of appreciation for and connection to the outdoor world.

Staff will continue to work with the Park Commission to identify appropriate projects as opportunities arise. Projects could range from ephemeral and permanent installations to cultural programming. Furthermore, a greater awareness of aesthetics, architecture, ecology and sculpture could be used to improve both the form and function of park infrastructure in new and creative ways. In 2011, the Park Commission partnered with the Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission and granted funds to VSA Wisconsin for a mural at the Jenni & Kyle Preserve. The resulting mural is titled “Seasonal Inspirations” and is composed of 15,000 tiles set into the park shelter wall, fashioned by 70 individuals with disabilities from Walbridge School and the Madison Area Rehabilitation Center-South under the direction of VSA Wisconsin teaching artists Marcia Yapp and Megan Cain.

Partnering with the Cultural Affairs Commission is a good example of a way to pursue art and cultural activities within the park system. Partnerships with other local organizations may also be possible. Generally speaking, the Park Commission and staff will consider the following when reviewing potential projects:

- How is the site currently utilized – will the project limit any existing activities?
- Will the project impact the landscape in a way that could enhance the natural sights and sounds for the majority of park users?
- Might the project bring new users into the park system?
- Can the project be maintained over time (if applicable)?
- Will the project attract vandals (if applicable)?
- Will the project create a better sense of understanding, appreciation or connection to the outdoors?
- Can the project evolve over time as the landscape or use of an area changes (if applicable)?



Silverwood County Park

iii. SCENIC TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

Driving for pleasure was listed as the 3rd highest participation rate of recreation activities in the 2016 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. The 2001-2005 Park and Open Space Plan recommended designation of a county scenic roads program, and could potentially link local, county and state park facilities. Safety determinations would have to be made prior to the designation of any road. These roads could be designated on a map and provide pull off areas that offer scenic views of the countryside and interpretive signage. Development of this recreation program is consistent with providing opportunities for the projected aging population and also benefits other transportation means, such as bicycling.

The county's role in any scenic road program would be to work with willing landowners that wanted to permanently protect their lands through conservation easements and to possibly provide signage and interpretive information regarding the landscape. Any scenic transportation corridors identified by the county through this Plan should not be used for any zoning decisions or in any way influence or limit private property rights. The county would seek support from the local towns before designating any scenic transportation corridors.

Recommendations:

- Utilize student interns or university student help to begin investigating designation of this program with Park Commission oversight.
- Investigate possible opportunities with U.W. Extension to create a transportation route that would link Prairie Heritage sites.
- Investigate potential of a transportation route that would highlight cultural sites.



XII. REGIONAL RESOURCE PROTECTION INITIATIVES



[XII.1 Wetland Mitigation Banking](#)

[XII.2 Southwest Grassland](#)

[XII.3 Glacial Heritage Area](#)

[XII.4 Recharge Area for Frederick Springs](#)

[XII.5 Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area](#)

REGIONAL RESOURCE PROTECTION INITIATIVES

As in the last update to the plan, strong support was again evident throughout the public input process for the county to preserve larger tracts of lands dedicated toward resource protection as well as to strengthen and expand partnerships with other conservation organizations. Larger resource protection and recreation initiatives may be a component of conservation projects that extend far beyond Dane County borders.

XII.1 Wetland Mitigation Banking

Wetland mitigation banks are restored, enhanced, or created wetlands whose purpose is to provide credits to offset unavoidable impacts to existing wetlands. Credits can be sold to permittees who are obligated to provide compensation for wetlands that cannot be avoided and are damaged or destroyed by development of a project (e.g. construction of a road). Dane County does not encourage the damage or destruction of wetlands, however there may be benefits to the county owning a wetland bank. Dane County Parks owns properties that may be suitable for a wetland mitigation bank, and additional lands may be able to be restored through this program in the future that would make regional scale wetland restoration projects possible. Additionally, staff within the Land & Water Resources Department would approach a wetland mitigation banking program from an environmental perspective rather than profit being the priority. For these reasons, Dane County may wish to explore the feasibility of owning and managing a wetland mitigation bank.

XII.2 Southwest Grasslands

The goal of the proposed project is to work with a broad group of partners to conserve and enhance functioning grassland, savanna and stream ecosystems in southwest Wisconsin, set within a rural farmland landscape, focusing on the area's biological, cultural, historical, economic, and recreational values. The project includes parts of Dane, Iowa, Green, and Lafayette counties and encompasses approximately 320,000 acres. The project area is composed of agriculture lands, prairies, savannas, grasslands, streams, rare plant and animal species, recreational opportunities, historical and cultural resources. The project will work to conserve the open rural landscape of southwest Wisconsin by utilizing a wide range of conservation tools.

XII.3 Glacial Heritage Area

In October of 2009, the State Natural Resources Board approved the Glacial Heritage Area (GHA) Plan. The Glacial Heritage Area includes lands in Dane, Dodge, Rock and Jefferson counties and proposes to establish a coordinated network of conservation lands and recreation opportunities. CamRock County Park, Riley-Deppe County Park, the Maunasha River Natural Resource Area and Silverwood County Park are all within the boundary of this regional resource initiative. It is not the goal of the GHA plan to change individual management plans for existing properties, but rather incorporate them into a broader network. The project seeks to protect and restore native grasslands, forest and wetland habitats, improve water quality, identify and protect cultural and historical resources, and collaborate with working farms to maintain open, agricultural landscapes. Another goal of the plan that overlaps with several Dane County initiatives is to provide connectivity of park and recreation resources through trails. This project area is expected to provide easily accessible opportunities to connect with the outdoors for one of the state's largest population centers.

Dane County's role would primarily be limited to a potential funding partner through the Conservation Fund grant application program only on lands that are within Dane County. The DNR and other non-profit conservation groups would be responsible for all planning, management, and implementation of conservation tools for these project areas.

Other WDNR Land Legacy projects in Dane County such as the Arlington Prairie and Dunn-Rutland Savanna and Potholes that become adopted project areas by the same process could also be considered in the future.

XII.4 Recharge Area for Frederick Springs

In 2000, R.J. Hunt and J.J. Steuer with the U.S. Geological Survey prepared Water-Resources Investigations Report 00-4172 in cooperation with the City of Middleton and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The report identifies critical groundwater recharge areas for the spring and wetland areas of the Pheasant Branch Conservancy. It is envisioned partners such as the Natural Resource Conservation Service, WDNR, Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, and local conservation organizations would work toward protecting working farm lands and open space within the recharge zone identified in the plan by utilizing a variety of acquisition tools.



Pheasant Branch Creek from Fredericks Hill *Photo Credit: Samantha Haas*

XII.5 Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area

The MRPHA lies in southwestern Dane and southeastern Iowa counties at the headwaters of the Sugar and Pecatonica Rivers. The historic prairie that covered these lands and additional areas to the west was called the Military Ridge Prairie, after Military Ridge Road that was built in 1835. The road served as a highway for immigration of settlers into this region of the county. The Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area organization is made up of eight partnering agencies who signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2003 pledging resources toward protecting and promoting the grasslands and water quality of this project area. The Nature Conservancy has been helping coordinate efforts of this organization with other agencies, private land owners and local units of government. In 2003 the Dane County Board of Supervisors adopted Res. 68 03-04, Adopting Elements Of the Town of Perry Open Space and Recreation Plan as an Amendment to the 2001-05 Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan. The resolution authorizes inclusion of the Hauge Historic District Park within this project area boundary.

Dane County's role in all of these project areas would be limited to potentially providing matching funds to government and non-profit conservation organizations through the Conservation Fund grant application program only on lands that are within Dane County.

XIII. PARTNER PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS



[XIII.1 Capital Springs Recreation Area](#)

[XIII.2 McPike Park](#)

[XIII.3 Madison School Forest](#)

[XIII.4 Prairie and Oak Savanna Sites](#)

[XIII.5 Active Sports Fields](#)

[XIII.6 Target Archery Ranges](#)

[XIII.7 Conservation Club Buffer Zones](#)

[XIII.8 Phosphorus Reduction Zones](#)

[XIII.9 Bike Park](#)

[XIII.10 Law Park on Lake Monona](#)

PARTNER PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

Dane County works with a wide pallet of conservation and recreation partners on a variety of initiatives. These projects have some connection to county-owned park lands, facilities or trails and are expected to provide some regional recreational, cultural, or natural resource protection value. Partnership benefits may include non-profit grant eligibility for a variety of funding programs, staff, park or planning assistance, shared stewardship responsibilities and shared acquisition responsibilities. Projects in this section were brought forward to the Park Commission through the public input process by local units of government or non-profit agencies. Inclusion of projects in this section does not guarantee grant funding, and the Park Commission retains the right to determine cost-share amounts, reversionary rights and any other relevant restrictions or conditions as appropriate, based on the details of the project, including other project partners.

XIII.1 Capital Springs Recreation Area (2,755.4 acres)

The vision for the Capital Springs Recreation Area (CSRA) started in January of 2000, with a successful proposal to the State of Wisconsin from Dane County to establish a centennial park that would serve as a “crown jewel” of the Lewis Nine Springs E-Way project. Dane County has been working on implementing the vision of the Lewis Nine Springs E-Way by acquiring parkland and managing natural areas that facilitate environmental education and awareness for more than 40 years.

In 2002, the State of Wisconsin and Dane County began a joint master planning process for the approximately 2,700 acres of land included within the CSRA boundary. The process included many public informational meetings and planning workshops that were well attended by representatives of local governments, private citizens, other government agencies, and special interest groups. The plan was completed and adopted in 2010. This Master Plan will provide the vision for future acquisition, development, management and operation of the recreation area and will create opportunities to apply to a variety of grant funding programs.

A Friends of Capital Springs Recreation Area has formed that continues to be very active with fund raising and promoting stewardship and educational opportunities of this project area. In particular, this project area offers tremendous potential to educate and promote the important archeological and cultural features of the Lake Farm Park region.

Another recommendation is to develop interpretive nodes/signage and “rest areas” along the Capital City Trail, showcasing the important culture, flora and fauna of the area. In 2015 an interpretive kiosk was installed at the Capital Springs disc golf course to provide educational information about the Gilman mound landscape. In July of 2011 the Friends assisted with a mural dedication at the Jenni and Kyle Preserve that was designed in part with the assistance of youth and disabled Dane County residents.

These efforts to provide cultural elements including visual and performing arts should continue to be expanded throughout the recreation area.

XIII.2 McPike Park (City of Madison, 5.8 acres)

A master plan for this park in the City of Madison was completed in 2011. The park was renamed from Central Park to McPike Park in 2017 in honor of long time Madison East High School principal Milton McPike. This nearly 6-acre park located along the Capital City Trail is host to numerous festivals and events including a weekly farmers’ market April through October. The park features a restroom building (open seasonally) and Madison’s first skatepark, which opened in September 2015, and was partially funded by a Dane County grant.

Fundraising, planning and development efforts for the park are the responsibility of the City of Madison, its inclusion in this plan is intended for the sole purpose of eligibility for the Conservation Fund Grant Program.

XIII.3 Madison School Forest (Towns of Verona, Montrose, 356.2 acres)

The Madison School Forest is located on Spring Rose Road just west of STH 69. Public land owners of the Madison School Forest are the Madison Metropolitan School District, Friends of the Madison School Forest and WDNR. The purpose of including it in the county Park and Open Space Plan is solely to provide eligibility for State Stewardship and County Conservation Fund grant dollars for future acquisition of contiguous parcels from willing sellers as they become available. The Madison School Forest would continue to be the lead agency for all planning, acquisition, management, and maintenance efforts for this project area.

XIII.4 Prairie and Oak Savanna Sites

The amended Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan 1990-1995 recommended that the county support and assist in completing an inventory of prairie and oak savanna sites, notify landowners and local governments of site locations and promote better awareness of these important natural environments. The Prairie Enthusiasts is developing a database of known prairie and savanna remnants. Its goal is to inform the owners of the existence of these remnants and work with them on restoration, management and protection if the owners so choose. Dane County's role in this initiative is to work with non-profit conservation organizations and land trusts, such as the Prairie Enthusiasts and Groundswell Conservancy, as well as with local units of governments and the WDNR, in funding the acquisition of identified sites through the Dane County Conservation Fund. The county should also investigate opportunities to expand these sites through proposed phosphorus reduction projects in the north Mendota watershed.

XIII.5 Active Sports Fields

There continues to be a number of regional scale active sports field projects being considered by several local units of government and other non-profit sports groups expressed similar to Reddan Park. This initiative is intended to allow local units of government to be able to apply for Conservation Grant funds for acquisition of land needed to develop this type of facility. Proposed sports field complexes would need to serve multiple jurisdictions and provide regional recreation benefits. Ideally, they would be planned to allow for non-motorized and mass transit access and be a component of an existing adjacent park or resource protection initiative.

XIII.6 Target Archery Ranges

The popularity of target archery and bow hunting continues to be demonstrated in Dane County. The Wisconsin DNR has a National Archery in the Schools Program initiative that aims to provide increased target archery opportunities for youth across the state. The county will work with the WDNR and interested parties to further explore this proposed program within the park system. Dane County's role would be to provide suitable range sites; schools and/or non-profits groups would need to provide equipment and oversight.

XIII.7 Conservation Club Buffer Zones

Dane County has a number of active conservation clubs that offer a variety of target shooting opportunities. As urban areas continue to expand, the distances between residential areas and these clubs diminishes. Very limited public shooting range opportunities exist in Dane County, so it is important that these clubs are able to continue to exist and provide this recreation use. Dane County's role would be limited to providing eligibility to non-profit conservation organizations to apply for Conservation Fund grants for acquisition of buffering lands around these facilities.

XIII.8 Phosphorus Reduction Areas

Dane County has been investigating phosphorus reduction strategies and partnerships in multiple watersheds including the Yahara River and Door Creek Watersheds. The Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) is also investigating strategies to reduce phosphorus loads in the Yahara Watershed and has been working cooperatively with Dane County in this regard. Possible examples of future joint effort projects that could complement Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan initiatives include wetland restorations, expansion of prairie and oak savanna sites and streambank buffers throughout the Yahara Watershed and the proposed Badfish Creek Natural Resource Area. Dane County and MMSD, along with other partners, should continue to work cooperatively and evaluate opportunities to implement management options that could provide for multiple benefits in other watersheds as well, such as the Sugar River.

XIII.9 Bike Park

Staff from the Madison Area Sports Product Development Committee have worked with several Dane County local units of government to explore the feasibility of developing a bike park. A bike park is regional scale park that offers numerous off road bike activity areas such as mountain biking, pump tracks and bicycle motocross. Dane County's role would be to potentially provide partial grant funding to a local unit of government or non-profit group for acquisition or development of a regionally significant bike park.

XIII.10 Law Park on Lake Monona

Law Park is a regionally significant park owned and maintained by the City of Madison located along the Lake Monona shoreline in Downtown Madison. John Nolen originally proposed a Great Esplanade along Lake Monona as a part of his 1909 "Madison: A Model City" plan. Since Nolen, many others have offered ideas for expanding Law Park and this lakeshore region including Phil Lewis who assisted planning professionals from 2008 to 2010 with design visions for the Nolen concept, a privately developed vision for Law Park. The City of Madison has begun planning for this regionally significant park that is connected to the Capital Springs Recreation Area via the Capital City Trail. The vision is for Law Park to be the connection point between downtown Madison and Lake Monona and become a space that promotes social equity, building civic engagement, various forms of recreation, environmental interpretation, and an opportunity for the connection to one of our natural treasures just steps from the Capitol. This project is still in the very early stages of planning; as the project progresses through a public planning process additional Dane County review will be needed to determine if future partnership opportunities exist.

XIV. ADAPTING FOR THE FUTURE



A major theme of the 2018-23 Parks & Open Space Plan continues to be adapting to changing needs, expectations and environmental changes on county public lands. Planning and adapting for change will ensure that Dane County can sustain and maintain the park system into the future. Many examples of these strategies are found throughout this plan; this section highlights some of the larger initiatives or themes.

PEOPLE

People are the heart of a successful parks system. While there is intrinsic value in the protection of lands for wildlife habitat and ecological functions, the community needs to continue to be an engaged and vested partner in the system for long term success. Dedicated park users, such as a family that visits a dog park on a daily basis or a disc golfer that plays every week, are often passionate about the activities that become an important routine in their everyday lives. These regular park patrons are often the same people who consistently volunteer their time and donate resources to help out on a variety of projects. Maintaining open and current relationships between park staff, user groups and volunteers is a critical ongoing task. It is also extremely important to maintain a social and fun component for volunteer projects. Many volunteers have stated the opportunity to get outdoors and socially network with like-minded people as the primary motivation to continue their regular volunteering.

Related, obtaining a better understanding of the number, type and demographics of park users is also important to be able to continue to meet the future public demands. Information could be collected through a variety of means including professional surveys, counting devices, sales data, and field observations. A review of current data tracking methods should be completed and strategies identified to more accurately obtain park user information.

PRIVATE PHILANTHROPY

Private philanthropy has been an important aspect of the evolution of Dane County Parks system. Over 1,000 acres of land has been donated to form numerous parks including Donald Park, McCarthy Park, Festge Park, Anderson Park, CamRock Park, Schumacher Farm Park, Lussier Park and Silverwood. Moreover, the county has benefited greatly from donors who have given their time, and money to improve and steward our parks. Many large scale park development projects such as the Jenni and Kyle Preserve, Scheidegger Forest, the Ice Age Junction Shared-Use Trail Underpass and Morton Forest were made possible through private donations. Additionally smaller projects like accessible fishing piers, informational kiosks, bicycle repair stations and many other important amenities of the parks have been contributed. Private philanthropy will continue to grow and provide further opportunities to expand and enhance various projects and programs. Continuing into the future, private donations will be necessary for many new initiatives, including the expansion of the Lussier Family Heritage Center into a larger educational center and further development of the volunteer program.

In 2013, The Friends of Dane County Parks Endowment Fund was created with the support of the Parks Commission, County Board and County Executive to provide a permanent perpetual source of revenue and sustaining support to the Dane County Parks Friends groups and volunteers. The endowment fund is a permanent, self-sustaining source of funding that is held and managed by the Madison Community Foundation. Assets are invested with a portion of the value of the fund made available each year to support the park system. Endowment funds are designed to support special projects and programs, educational opportunities, interpretation and volunteerism to a growing and diverse population. The Friends of Dane County Parks Inc. was established as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in 2017 to promote and support the endowment fund. The endowment fund has grown to over \$450,000, with some funds already being dispersed to support volunteer programming and special events.

The endowment has stimulated corporate, foundation and private donations, increased parks awareness through a healthy parks tour and other events, and supported Friends groups capacity building, and volunteer recognition. With oversight by the Park Commission, it will provide greater flexibility and allow deeper and more responsive relationships with donors. Many types of funds could be established, from traditional endowments to capital campaigns. Beyond large scale capital development projects, funds could also be used to support new grants and expansion of education and interpretive programs. An investment of additional staff to work with prospective donors of land and resources would return significant value to the County Parks.

SPONSORSHIPS

Dane County Parks should explore a variety of new ways to offset operational and development costs of parkland. Several alternative funding sources have been discussed earlier in this plan. Another option may be the integration of sponsorships. The Dane County Park staff and Commission would need to identify appropriate opportunities for sponsorships and outline general expectations prior to engaging in any corporate sponsorship program.

YOUTH IN PARKS

Dane County Parks has strong interest in supporting ways to further engage youth through outdoor education, stewardship, and recreation activities. The number of youth participating in outdoor activities is declining, which could lead to less outdoor users or conservation leaders for future generations.

According to the 2017 Outdoor Recreation Participation Report compiled by the Outdoor Foundation, the outdoor recreation participation rate for youth dropped significantly during 2006 to 2009, then continued on a slow decline through 2016.

The report indicated that the top five barriers that prevent youth from getting outside include:

- 1) Outdoor recreation equipment is too expensive
- 2) Too busy with other recreation activities
- 3) Too busy with family responsibilities
- 4) Do not have anyone to participate with
- 5) Places for outdoor recreation cost too much

The Report also concluded that adults who were introduced to the outdoors as children were far more likely to participate in outdoor activities during adulthood than those who were not exposed to the outdoors as children, which reiterates the importance of engaging youth in the Dane County Parks system.

The county partners with numerous organizations and Friends Groups to provide youth programming and family events such as fall seed collecting, youth fishing days, and events like Lake Farm Harvest Moon Festival and Schumacher Halloween at the Park. The Dane County Parks system has incredible amenities that could serve as outdoor classrooms and should continue to be promoted to and used by our partners for connecting children to nature and the outdoors.

During the public input process for this plan, educators and school children spoke about their great experiences in Dane County parks. In addition; teachers, parents and others spoke of the costs of transportation as possibly the greatest barrier to having more school children having access to the parks. Dane County Parks and their volunteers should continue investigating partnerships with other non-profit conservation and community development organizations that may be able to help address this topic.

Below are some ideas for attracting more youth to the Dane County Parks system:

- Incorporate activities associated with new technology such as Smartphone or GPS applications that can key into various park or natural features.
- Use Facebook, Instagram or other social media websites for events, activities, etc.
- Encourage family events that provide an outdoor learning environment for parents and children that fosters a shared conservation ethic and connection to the outdoors.
- Continue to expand and improve Dane County Parks Volunteer and Naturalist Programs to include coordinating and promoting school or youth activities, including making resources available for bus transportation.
- Encourage the use of the park system for outdoor classrooms and curriculum, internships, youth leadership and skills building programs. Examples include Patrick Marsh Middle School curriculum incorporating natural features and biology of Patrick Marsh, the Sierra Club Madison's Inner City Outings program, Wisconsin Youth Conservation Corps, Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy Kids for the Earth program and Youth Programs of the National Trails System.
- Utilize the Friends of Dane County Parks Endowment Fund to support park volunteer programs and events that expand youth outdoor education activities.



Lake Farm County Park

NEW TECHNOLOGY

Incorporating new technology into the parks system is another opportunity to explore to insure park information is reaching the widest and most diverse of users. There are several existing applications that could be utilized to expand interpretive information in parks. For example, smartphone applications can use GPS to track a visitor's location along a trail and can send a signal at points of interest. The visitor can then use the application to learn interesting and relevant information about the various points.

Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, can also be utilized to highlight events and share information. Rather than requiring a user to visit a website, social networking sites deliver information directly to them.

Geocaching is another technology-enabled activity, similar to a treasure hunt, that is already occurring in Dane County Parks. Players explore the outdoors and try to locate hidden containers, called geocaches, using GPS-enabled devices and then share their experiences online.

These new approaches should be viewed as tool for attracting and retaining new users in the parks system. The end goal of any new technology, as it relates to Dane County Parks, is to inspire people to get outside to be active and explore.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Dane County Parks has been working with the University of Wisconsin Madison on the topic of climate change and potential effects on parks since 2015. In 2017, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi created the Dane County Office of Energy and Climate Change, a new Council on Climate Change to coordinate the community's work to adapt to the impact of our changing climate, reduce carbon emissions, and accelerate the county's conversion of fossil fuel burning vehicles to cleaner burning renewable compressed natural gas. This office is charged with developing a Climate Change Action Plan for Dane County, which is expected to be complete in 2018.

The lands and recreation opportunities offered by Dane County Parks will certainly be impacted by climate change, such as extreme weather events and decreasing snow cover. With varying habitat, access to major universities, and dedicated volunteers, the County Park system can encourage and expand research and partnerships for regular scientific monitoring of wildlife and plant life, and water quality around the issue of climate change. The Dane County Parks system also provides ecosystem benefits that play an important role in mitigating climate change. Dane County Parks should coordinate with the Office of Energy and Climate Change to further investigate these items as part of the forthcoming Climate Change Action Plan.

XV. CONCLUSION



The steady trend of increasing acreage and streambank easement expansions of the Dane County Parks system over the past two decades will continue to challenge land and water management resources. Assistance from Friends groups and partnering conservation organizations will be critical to effectively steward these properties into the future. As economic conditions continue to improve, private developers and landowners feel less necessity to liquidate land assets. The focus of funding for the WDNR Stewardship acquisition program has been shifting to larger tracts in the northern regions of the state. These reductions in resources and opportunities will make prioritization of county park land acquisition increasingly important. Related, the survey completed for this update to the plan continues to demonstrate that Dane County residents support land acquisition efforts for the park system.

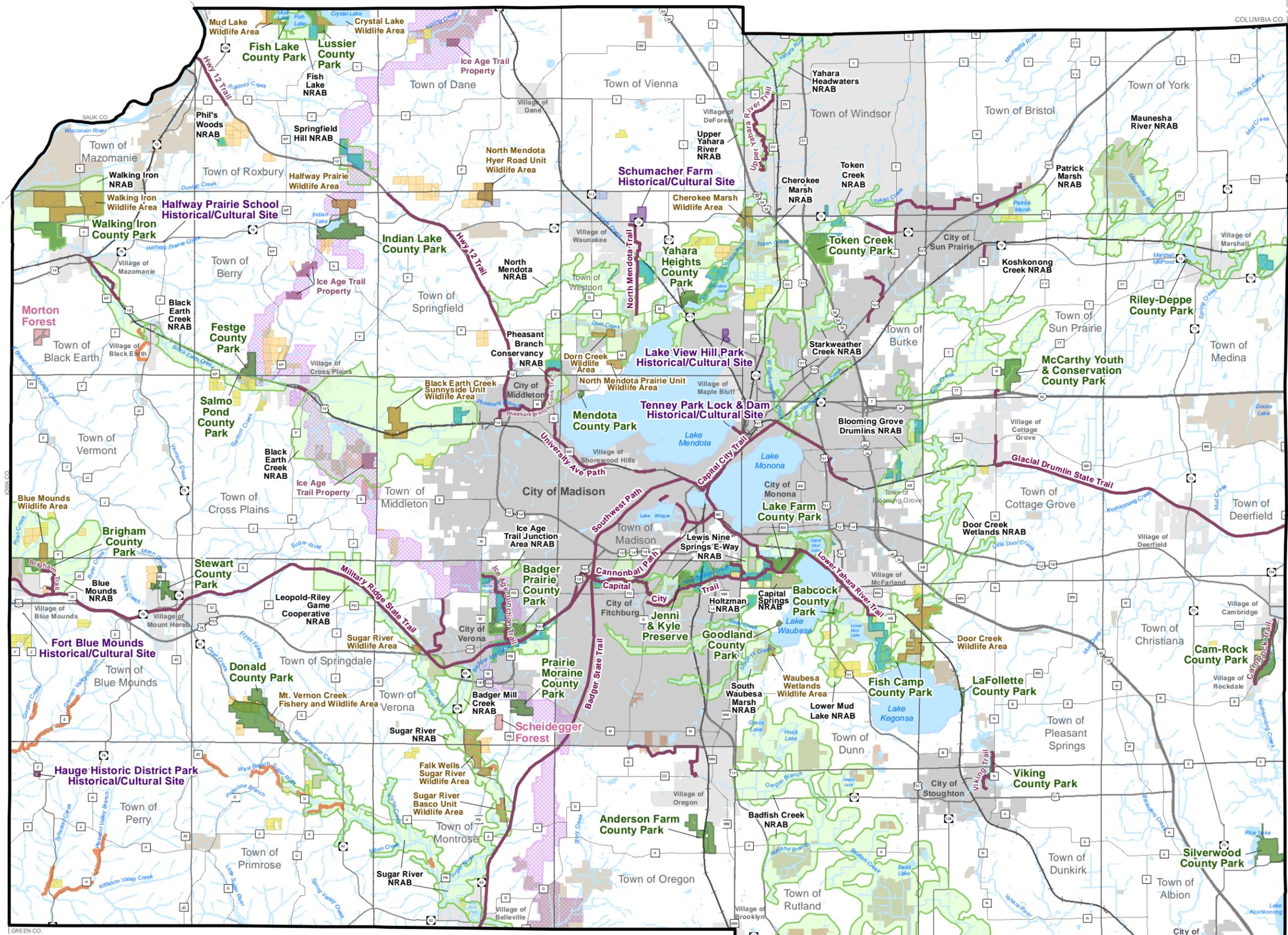
Clearly the ongoing planning and development of the regional off-road shared-use trail system will continue to be a priority over the next five years. These trails provide more transportation, health and recreation benefits to the most diverse population of Dane County residents than any other facilities the park system offers. The strong demand for shared-use trail development must be guided by the planning and development roles and responsibilities outlined within this plan.

Addressing the needs of several other recreation and program areas will be critical to the success of the Dane County Parks Division over the next five years. Mountain biking, dog parks and disc golf continue to quietly and consistently demonstrate increasing participation rates and justifiable demand for new facilities. Paddling activities, fishing, cross country races and skiing continue to attract some of the largest numbers of people to the park system. The attractiveness of Dane County as a regional destination for mega scale outdoor venues will continue to challenge the capacity limits of Dane County Parks camping facilities unless additional upgrades are made in the future.

Several new planning considerations have emerged in the 2018-2023 Dane County Parks and Open Space Plan that have never been considered before. Climate change considerations continue to present a number of unforeseen challenges that must be addressed. Higher intensity and more frequent extreme rainfall events, lack of winter snow cover and overall warming temperatures have definite impacts on recreation and management decisions for the park system. Equity, inclusion and accessibility for all persons using park facilities is paramount to providing seamless public spaces within the ever diversifying Dane County population.

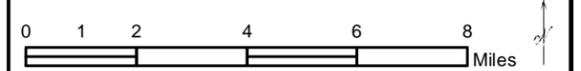
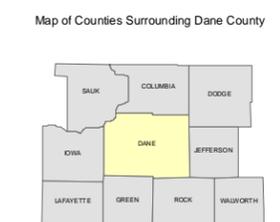
Understanding who the people are who use Dane County Parks, and what may be preventing others from using the parks should be a priority over the next five years. Creating a seamless park system that is accessible to the widest diversity of people must be achieved to sustain public support for Dane County Parks into the future.

Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan 2018 - 2023



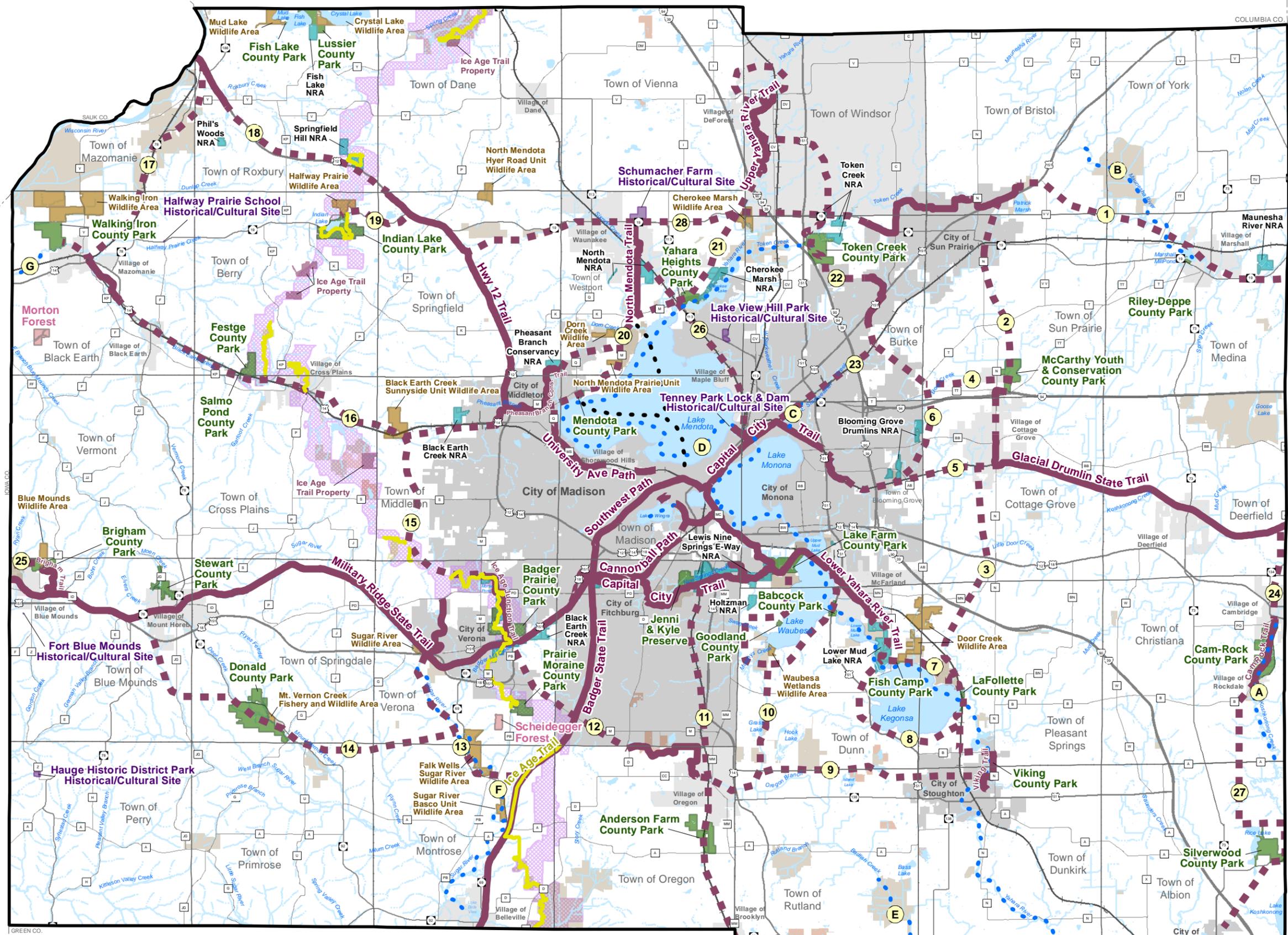
- ### Dane County Parks System
- Recreation Park
 - Natural Resource Area
 - Wildlife Area
 - Historical or Cultural Site
 - Forest
 - Trails
 - Land & Water Legacy Wetland Sites
 - Streambank Easements
 - Conservation Easements
 - Conservation Fund Grant Properties*
- ### Dane County Natural Resource Area Project Areas
- Natural Resource Area Boundary (NRAB)
 - Ice Age National Scenic Trail Corridor
- ### Reference Layers
- Existing Regional Shared-Use Trails
 - Railroad
 - Lake/Pond
 - River/Stream
 - US Fish and Wildlife Lands
 - National Park Service Lands
 - DNR Public Lands
 - Municipalities

*Conservation Fund Grant Properties are lands on easements acquired by local units of government or non-profits with assistance from the Dane County Conservation Fund Grant Program.



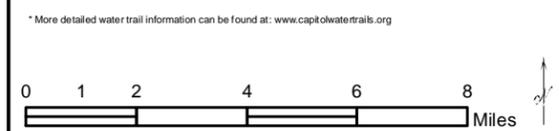
Data Sources:
 Recreation Parks, Forests, Historical/Cultural Sites, Wildlife Areas, Natural Resource Area Properties, Natural Resource Area Boundaries, Trails, Conservation Easements, Streambank Easements, Land & Water Legacy Wetlands, Conservation Fund Grant Properties: Dane County Parks (2017), Municipalities, Town Boundary: Dane County (2017), Hydrography: Dane County (2014), Railroad: Dane County (2014), Ice Age National Scenic Trail, Corridor and Properties: Ice Age Trail Alliance (2017), Existing Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails: Madison Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (2017), State/Federal Lands: Dane County (2017)

Dane County Parks & Open Space Plan Regional Trail Map 2018 - 2023



- Existing and Proposed Regional Trails**
- Existing Shared-Use Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail
 - Proposed Shared-Use Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail
 - Proposed Bicycle/Pedestrian Ferry
 - Existing Water Trail
 - Existing Ice Age National Scenic Trail
 - Ice Age National Scenic Trail Corridor
- Dane County Parks System**
- Recreation Park
 - Natural Resource Area
 - Wildlife Area
 - Historical or Cultural Site
 - Forest
 - Trails

- Proposed Shared-Use Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails**
1. Token Creek Co. Park to Riley Deppe Co. Park
 2. Georgia O'Keeffe Trail
 3. McCarthy Co. Park to Lake Kegonsa State Park
 4. McCarthy Co. Park Connector
 5. Capital City Trail to Glacial Drumlin Trail
 6. Blooming Grove Drumlin to Door Creek Park
 7. Lower Yahara River Trail
 8. Kegonsa Lake Loop (includes on-road segments)
 9. Stoughton to Oregon
 10. Oregon to Waubesa Lake Loop
 11. Fitchburg to Oregon Rail Trail
 12. Oregon to Badger State Trail to Military Ridge State Trail
 13. Sugar River Trail
 14. Sugar River to Mount Horeb
 15. Black Earth Creek to Pope Farm Park to Badger Prairie Co. Park
 16. Black Earth Creek (Good Neighbor) Trail
 17. Mazomanie to Sauk City Rail Trail
 18. Highway 12 Trail Connector
 19. Indian Lake Co. Park Spur Trail
 20. North Mendota Trail
 21. Upper Yahara River Trail
 22. DeForest to Sun Prairie
 23. Starkweather Creek Trail
 24. Glacial Drumlin Trail to CamRock
 25. Blue Mounds Loop
 26. Sherman Flyer Trail
 27. CamRock Co. Park to Silverwood Co. Park to City of Edgerton
 28. Highway 19 Trail
- Water Trails***
- A. Koshkonong Creek
 - B. Mauneha River
 - C. Starkweather Creek
 - D. Yahara Chain
 - E. Badfish Creek
 - F. Sugar River
 - G. Black Earth Creek



Data Sources:
 Recreation Parks, Forests, Historical/Cultural Sites, Wildlife Areas, Natural Resource Area Properties, Natural Resource Area Boundaries, Trails, Proposed Regional Shared-Use Trails and Ferry, Water Trails:
 Dane County Parks (2017), Municipalities, Hydrography, Town Boundary: Dane County (2017), Railroads: Dane County (2014), Ice Age National Scenic Trail, Corridor and Properties: Ice Age Trail Alliance (2017), Existing Bicycle/Pedestrian Trails: Madison Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (2017).