

## 11.0 PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

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Recommendations contained in this plan are intended to maintain and upgrade the recreation system in Dodge County by providing and distributing a diversity of recreational facilities equitably throughout the County.

The Plan recommendations are divided into General Recommendations, Specific Site Recommendations and New Acquisition and Development Recommendations. General Recommendations primarily reflect administrative functions in carrying out the policies established in this plan or new facility development that should occur in some or all the parks. Specific Site Recommendations and New Acquisition and Development Recommendations address both administrative and facility development functions in order to upgrade or enhance existing facilities and develop new facilities according to the Goals and Objectives of the plan.

### General Recommendations

1. Parks and trails facilities should be available to all people, regardless of their personal disabilities. Special attention should be given to the needs of senior citizens and the handicapped in the development of park facilities.
2. An ADA assessment of all parks and facilities must be undertaken along with a transition plan to identify the manner and timetable for correcting accessibility deficiencies.
3. There should be close cooperation among Cities, Villages, schools, the County, the State, and private business officials in providing recreation facilities in order to prevent duplication of facilities and maximize recreational opportunities for both residents, and visitors.
4. Priorities should be established for acquisition, development and maintenance. A five-year capital improvements program for parks and recreation that generally reflects the proposals made in the plan should be developed and reviewed annually.
5. Civic and service organizations should be approached for help in defraying costs and assisting with development and maintenance of facilities.
6. Municipalities within Dodge County should be sensitive to potential acquisition of recreation land inside and outside its present boundaries. This is particularly important where a recreational resource can be preserved for future use, or developmental pressures indicate that a site will eventually serve a neighborhood.
7. Municipalities and school officials should review the surfacing of all playgrounds and parks and make modifications where safety and handicap accessibility may be deficient.
8. Sensitive floodplain and wetland areas should be acquired for public protection where and when it is feasible.
9. In order to be of value in expanding the tourism industry, tourists must be attracted to the parks and be able to find them easily. This requires good informational and directional signs, therefore a signage system is recommended.
10. Encouragement and incentives should be provided for those municipalities with inadequate recreational land and facilities to at least meet minimum standards.

11. Coordinate efforts with local All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) clubs to acquire, develop and operate an ATV riding area of at least 100 acres.
12. Dodge County should remain aware of emerging forms of recreation and be responsive to providing new facilities or opportunities to accommodate.
13. Consideration should be given to the value of any existing or future abandoned railroad beds for multi-purpose recreation trails.
14. Recreation trails should be designed for multiple use whenever possible to enable the largest number of people to use the trail and encourage year-round use.
15. An extensive plan modeled after the Rock River Trail Water Plan should be established for the Crawfish River and Beaver Dam River delineating canoe routes, access points, as well as a maintenance plan for the routes.
16. The Dodge County Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan should be updated and used as a decision making tool when considering future recreational developments.
17. Establish an advertising program to sell advertising rights on, in or near the bathroom buildings for an additional source of revenue. Care must be taken to not detract from the natural value and aesthetics of the park when establishing the program.
18. Interpretive and educational signage should be developed and installed along all significant trails.
19. Tree, native vegetation and wildflower plantings should be expanded to help reduce mowing areas and costs, improve aesthetics and create buffer areas, especially along property lines, use areas and between campsites to provide better separation.
20. Shoreline stabilization should be implemented with landscaping and native vegetation for improved and safer access to the waterfronts, better aesthetics, goose control, and shoreline erosion protection
21. Establish a night security patrol position to oversee late night activity in the parks and prevent middle of the night problems and unauthorized park entry
22. Review the potential for the establishment of a County Forest property to provide revenue and recreation
23. Coordinate efforts with dog owner groups and volunteers to establish an off-leash dog exercise area either within an existing park facility or new park locations
24. Annual or on-going funding should be allocated for acquisition of high priority open space areas.
25. Expand opportunities for cross country skiing by providing groomed trails within all parks where appropriate
26. Widen and pave two-way roads to a minimum 20' width and one-way roads to a 12' minimum width

## Specific Site Recommendations - County Park System

### ***Harnischfeger County Park - Recommendations***

#### Proposed Improvements

- Create areas along the river for shoreline fishing, development of fishing areas may include the construction of fishing platforms, shoreline stabilization, and removal of brush
- Expand the boardwalk along the river to create areas open to fishing and wildlife viewing; areas could include fishing platforms with benches and wildlife signage
- Add more interior loop trails and connector trails to bypass seasonally wet trail sections
- Consider expansion of horse trails developed on adjacent private lands via easements
- Expand the north trails parking area to better accommodate horse trailers
- Develop and install new entrance sign for the north trails / North Barn parking area
- Increase the mini-golf course to 18 holes with at least 9 holes wheelchair accessible. Develop sponsor signage program to help fund course expansion and improvements
- Establish a community garden program in the north end of the park
- Evaluate the house structure for potential reuse and develop cost estimates for restoration. Develop a restoration plan if restoration is deemed feasible
- Design and install interpretive signs for the antique equipment displays at the north barn
- Finish the north barn rehabilitation and restoration project with accessible pathways, silo repairs, flooring and stair work
- Consider installation of permanent outdoor game tables, such as ping pong, chess, etc.
- Future campsite additions should be considered as the need arises and areas become available. Camping areas should be kept in the same general area as the current camping area to avoid the difficulty of operating and monitoring separated facilities.
- Update and replace disc golf hole layout and sponsor signs
- Consider options to expand the disc golf course to 12, 15 or 18 holes toward the north-central area of the park to utilize the wide open spaces and varied topography
- Develop a 2<sup>nd</sup> and/or 3<sup>rd</sup> sand volleyball court adjacent to the existing north pavilion volleyball court – consider dual use as an ice skating rink
- Construct a wetland scrape pond in the old rifle range field with a boardwalk or path alongside to connect into the trail system
- Work with Friends of Dodge County Parks and area dog owners / dog clubs to establish an off-leash dog area in the north end of the park. Establishment of a dog owners group to help fund and maintain such a facility is a critical component to creation of an off-leash area
- Enlarge the clubhouse by about 900sf to improve accessibility and better accommodate group rentals and fundraising events
- Finish accessibility upgrades in the clubhouse bathrooms and other areas.
- Remodel the interior and exterior of the clubhouse to create a more rural/rustic feel.
- Improve mechanical room in the clubhouse and restrict public access to it
- Expand paved parking areas for the clubhouse
- Install a drinking fountain on the outside clubhouse wall adjacent to the lower bathroom
- Replace the North Pavilion with a larger building and install power awnings that can be closed as needed for special events and activities
- Pave the north pavilion parking lot and develop a paved path to the north pavilion and clubhouse
- Continue to support and assist the Friends of Dodge County Parks, Inc. in their efforts to organize and run park events

- Rehab the concession stand walls and windows
- Enlarge the campsite parking pads and install electric pedestals on all sites
- Reconstruct the basketball court and consider multi-use of the court (tennis, badminton, pickleball) (CIP: 2016)
- Create a gazebo/shelter below the clubhouse for wedding ceremonies, interpretive programs, events and other activities (CIP: 2017)
- Develop a trail / boardwalk along the river from the canoe launch/camping area to the Green Loop hiking trail (CIP: 2017)

Proposed Acquisition:

- Acquire adjacent vacant land out to Highview Road and along the river as it becomes available
- Acquire land or easements on the east side of the river opposite of the park to preserve park views and provide remote facilities for river paddlers

## ***Nitschke Mounds County Park - Recommendations***

Proposed Improvements

- Develop a master plan to guide future development of the park.
- Finalize all provisions of the MOA
- Construct a parking area adjacent to the Wild Goose Trail for better trail use access
- Consider development of primitive bike-in campsites adjacent to the Wild Goose Trail
- Continue development and installation of interpretive signage
- Identify or restore the destroyed mounds – especially Turtle Mound #1 along the road
- Construct replicas of native American structures (village/huts) for educational purposes
- Repair eroded shoreline of pond
- Construct a boardwalk across the pond to connect trails on either side
- Develop displays and educational information that can be posted in the shelter
- Develop compatible recreational facilities in the western portion of the park such as off-leash dog exercise area, disc golf course and trails.
- Improve path from Wild Goose Trail to mound trails and shelter
- Add electric to the shelter for programming opportunities
- Promote development of a Friends group committee for funding and operational assistance
- Consider replacing some existing trails with boardwalk trails for accessible and sustainable viewing trails
- Develop an elevated platform to enhance mound viewing
- Realign existing trails with a minimum 10' buffer from mound borders where able
- Complete and implement a Vegetation Management Plan
- Develop an interpretive plan to enhance educational use of the park for area schools
- Promote professional archeological investigations of the area under the pond
- Continue promotion of professional archeological investigations of the property, especially as part of public events or opportunities

Proposed Acquisition:

- Acquire land to the north of the property and along the Wild Goose Trail as property may become available. Although surfaced damaged, dozens of mounds are suspected to exist in the field north of the mounds precinct. Remaining subsurface mounds should be protected from further destruction.

# ***Astico County Park - Recommendations***

## Proposed Improvements

- Develop a new trail leading from Shelter 1 / vault toilet area to the river and historic bridge that better follows contours and provides a safer and more desirable route.
- Reconfigure the Point area by eliminating camping areas and redevelop it for day use activities with an open picnic shelter and small playground with parking areas
- Develop and install entrance sign for the Historic Bridge and east side trails access
- Improve landscaping, plantings and signage at entrance
- Improve the accessible parking stall near Shelter 3 with a paved path connecting to the shelter and bathroom building
- Review playground surfacing for improved accessibility
- Install concrete entrance pads to vault toilet buildings with paved pathways to parking areas to improve accessibility
- Install educational and interpretive signs along trails and key use areas
- Develop a natural amphitheater area for naturalist programs and group meetings
- Remove the vacant staff residence and replace with a pad for staff or camp host camping unit. Some mechanicals that exist in the residence need to be moved into an above ground shed for continued operations.
- Install handicap accessible fishing docks at the Point and Danville area by the southern artesian well
- Rehabilitate the Danville area playground with updated equipment and safety surfacing
- Improve the Pfeuhler Memorial Hickory Grove area with additional benches, interpretive and identification signage, plantings and trail access.
- Add an accessible kayak platform to the canoe/kayak launch pier
- Install kiosk / signage near the historic bridges for interpretive and park information
- Improve landscape buffering between campsites, shelters and other use areas
- Finalize the trail system identified in the Master Plan by completing the trail gaps
- Identify and improve a portage route around the Danville Mill in coordination with mill owner
- Expand invasive species management to better control the explosion of garlic mustard, box elder growth and other invasive and nuisance vegetation
- Redevelop the Danville camping area by moving campsites and electrical facilities out of the flood zone and convert the area around the south artesian well to a public access area for water, fishing, canoe put-in/take-out. Develop a small parking area. (CIP 2015-2016)
- Pave 41-53 Camping Loop (CIP 2016)
- Pave upper road & parking area from Shelter 1 to the Point (reconfigure road and parking at vault toilet to improve traffic flow and better accommodate access to the trail leading to the river and historic bridge). Develop small turnout parking areas for picnic sites and trail access (CIP 2017)
- Develop shoreline trails and primitive walk-in or canoe-in campsites to the east of the river with a bathroom facility, hand pump or solar powered well and picnic tables on the east side of the river (CIP 2018)

## Proposed Acquisition:

- Acquire the 10 acre property west of the cemetery and bounded by the park and develop the site according to the Master Plan

## ***Derge County Park - Recommendations***

### Proposed Improvements

- Develop horse shoe pits, and a volleyball court near the shelter
- Expand shoreline path to north portion of property and install fishing platform
- Develop a small loop trail through northern part of park connected to existing paths
- Replace the old Quonset picnic shelter
- Develop an additional parking area on the west side of park adjacent to Quonset shelter
- Construct a detention pond with adjacent picnic shelter, play area and bridge to parking lot
- Expand boat launch parking area (CIP 2019)
- Purchase and install an information / display board

### Proposed Acquisition:

- Acquire a 50' minimum buffer strip between campsites and adjacent farm field and acquire approximately 3 acres to square off the park in the northwest portion.
- If camping and other recreational opportunities need to be expanded, as much as 75 acres of open space could be acquired surrounding the park. Transferring the property ownership/operation to the Town of Westford could also be considered.

## ***Glacial River Trail - Recommendations***

### Proposed Improvements

- Install signage to identify Glacial River Trail and connections to Watertown and Wild Goose Trail
- Identify public parking access points for the trail
- Seek opportunities for off road trail connections to replace the needed road routes where able. The railroad corridor from Clyman Junction to Watertown may hold some opportunities in some sections.
- Encourage the installation of 5' paved shoulders along Hwy CJ to connect the path to the Village of Clyman
- Encourage the widening of Junction Road as able from the village of Clyman to the Wild Goose Trail at Hwy 60
- Encourage bike friendly facilities (signage, pavement markings, etc.) along the road route connections

### Proposed Acquisition:

- Acquire lands that may become available and suitable for development of an off-road path development to close the gap between the Wild Goose Trail and the City of Watertown. The railroad corridor from Clyman Junction to Watertown could hold opportunities for trail development upon abandonment or upon consideration of a trail alongside the active line in some areas.

## ***Ledge County Park - Recommendations***

### Proposed Improvements

- Sparingly clear trees and brush to improve views of the Horicon Marsh
- Continue to improve the park's trail system by closing off unwanted user-created trails, constructing new trail sections along the ledge and installing interpretive signs
- Develop the northeast portion of the park for additional campsites if additional land can be acquired
- Develop a forest management plan to ensure variety of tree types and sizes and provide revenue from periodic timber harvesting
- Develop hard-surfaced pathways between the main facilities and features of the park where needed to improve accessibility for handicapped visitors.
- Protect any identified significant endangered ecosystems and vegetation within the park
- Reconstruct and pave the non-electric campsite road loop
- Develop an access road from County Highway "TW" to the lower portion of the park if the required property can be acquired
- Develop a water management plan to improve the quality and aesthetics of the spring and pond
- Develop a more efficient, less congested registration area
- Expand areas for multi-purpose turf play areas if adjacent lands can be acquired
- Improve overlook picnic area and construct an observation tower to improve accessibility and enhance the experience of the ledge area (CIP 2016)
- Develop hard surfaced parking areas with widened roadways for Shelter #1 and the playground area (CIP 2018)
- Complete a boardwalk/dock over and across the lower pond
- Develop and install an interpretive sign about the significance of the Niagara Escarpment
- Improve the path from the electric campsites to the shower building

### Proposed Acquisition:

- Acquire the 14 acre Roll-Hahn property adjoining the park both above and below the ledge
- Seek to acquire the open area to the east of the playground and the adjoining wooded areas along the upper portion of the park

## ***Monroe Road Wetland - Recommendations***

### Proposed Improvements

- Install signage to identify public property for canoe rest stop
- Consider rustic opportunities to provide bench / seating areas as a canoe rest stop

### Proposed Acquisition:

- Acquire adjacent lands as may be available to provide road access to the property

## ***Wild Goose State Trail – Recommendations***

### Proposed Improvements

- Develop hard surfaced parking areas on existing trail property in Burnett and East Waupun area
- Install bike route signs from the Hwy 60 parking area and the City of Watertown to the paved Glacial River Trail along Hwy 26.
- Promote trail development from the Wild Goose Trail to the Cities of Beaver Dam, Horicon, and Mayville (Gold Star Memorial Trail) and to the City of Waupun.
- Establish a written agreement with the City of Juneau regarding the rights and responsibilities of both the County and the City in regards to the portions of trail owned by the City of Juneau.
- Develop permanent vault toilet buildings at various trail locations
- Asphalt pave the trail within the City of Juneau
- Maintain an annual resurfacing schedule and rotation to reduce overall maintenance costs and keep trail surface safe and in good condition
- Install interpretive signage for historical and environmental information along the trail
- Continue efforts to develop and maintain good drainage along the trail to reduce trail degradation
- Continue efforts to reduce or eliminate box elder trees and replant with more desirable trees to reduce future storm damage along the trail
- Work to identify and control invasive vegetation
- Expand efforts utilizing staff, volunteers, inmate crews and others to eliminate excess brush and debris encroaching the main trail and the horse trail
- Consider the use of controlled burn crews to clean up and control the brush and debris along the trail
- Update the Trail Master Plan
- Install fitness stations along the trail in Juneau cooperatively with the County Employees Fitness Committee, Clearview and City of Juneau organizations and groups
- Complete the final trail segment in Juneau from Oak Street to Center Street
- Replace the Burnett footbridge and install railings
- Encourage Friends group or other organization to develop an interpretive guidebook for the history, natural resources and unique features along the trail
- Consider installation of water stations for trail users
- Improve identification of parking areas suitable for trailer access and parking
- Review existing signage and update as necessary
- Install picnic table and horse hitching post at Minnesota Junction parking / picnic area
- Install a horse hitching post at Hwy 60 and Hwy 33/26 parking areas

### Proposed Acquisition:

- Work DNR to acquire clear title to remaining reversionary property in East Waupun area and complete development of that segment



## **New Acquisition and Development Recommendations**

Additional park and recreation facilities should be considered for acquisition and development when the opportunity presents itself and where it is appropriate to serve the needs of Dodge County residents. In particular emphasis should be placed on acquiring important lands adjacent to existing parks to protect them from incompatible or potentially conflicting developments. The goal for each County Park should be to acquire enough land for the total park acreage to exceed 100 acres minimum.

Special consideration is necessary when new subdivisions are proposed, as they substantially increase residential densities of a particular area. Future new parkland acquisitions should generally be at least 100 acres in size unless the property contains a unique natural or recreational feature or has the likely potential for expansion to 100 acres. In particular sites that are State Land Legacy Places should receive the highest priority for acquisition as should sites that provide access to a recreational surface water, especially along the Rock River. Emphasis in development should be placed on passive, nature-based recreation. Park facilities should include a system of paved roads as well as adequate parking areas, camping areas, hiking and cross-country skiing trails, picnic areas with shelters, restroom facilities, and additional facilities to address identified deficiencies or needs. For sites with water frontage, boat/canoe launch facilities and fishing opportunities should be accommodated. Large and expensive park developments should be completed in phases when possible in order to spread costs over a reasonable period of time.

## **Open Space Recommendations**

Dodge County contains an excellent supply of natural, cultural and historical resources and unique features, which enhance the environmental and rural character of the County and are especially attractive to visitors who contribute to the economic vitality of the County. These resources and features should be preserved to the extent possible. Resources that should be protected include surface water, wetlands, floodplains, wood lots, shorelines, steep slopes and archaeological sites. Protection of these natural areas through conservation easements, fee simple acquisition, zoning restrictions or other means is recommended. These areas are generally unsuitable for development and should only be used for open space purposes. Rezoning and/or development of natural areas should be highly discouraged. Long range cooperative land acquisition and development plans by all public bodies should be encouraged. Public support for parkland acquisition is strongest particularly for scenic or natural sites, cultural or historic sites and expansion of existing park properties.

## New Trail Development Recommendations

### Gold Star Memorial Trail - *Connecting Communities and Remembering*



The proposed Gold Star Memorial Trail (GSMT) is a recent initiative generating a lot of interest in the central Dodge County communities. The proposed trail will provide an important recreational trail facility for the citizens of Dodge County and its visitors and serve as a memorial to fallen service members of Dodge County. The proposed trail will stretch from the City of Beaver Dam to the City of Mayville, traversing approximately 15 miles. The trail will be for non-motorized use, primarily biking and hiking, and will provide opportunities for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the winter months. The trail connection between the cities of Beaver Dam and Mayville would provide important non-motorized trail links to the Horicon Marsh State Wildlife Area and its world class Education and Visitor Center (opening in 2015), the City of Horicon, the Wild Goose State Trail and Nitschke Mounds County Park. Most of the trail is projected to be 10' wide, asphalt paved and located within highway right of ways separated from vehicle travel lanes.

Local grass roots efforts started in 2013 to support this project and jump start this long proposed trail development plan. Citizens, business leaders and Gold Star Families from Mayville to Beaver Dam and surrounding areas have formed a project committee and partnered with Dodge County and the Friends of Dodge County Parks, Inc. to lay the foundation for and carry out the funding, planning, development and future maintenance of the proposed trail.

The trail project is generally broken into 5 phases or segments. These phases can be accomplished in any order or concurrently with one another as funding is available and alignments are finalized. Each phase is locally important on their own. However, when combined, they create a significant regional connection between communities and connect them to other communities through the Wild Goose State Trail.

#### **PHASE 1: Mayville to Horicon Marsh Visitor & Education Center (2.1 miles)**

This section is proposed to begin at Theiler Park in Mayville along Hwy TW and consist of an asphalt paved path within the right of way of County Road TW and State Road 28 extending to the parking area at the DNR owned Horicon Marsh Visitor and Education Center facility. Design and construction estimates are roughly \$640,000.

#### **PHASE 2: City of Horicon to Wild Goose State Trail (3.5 miles)**

This section is proposed to connect the City of Horicon to the Wild Goose State Trail via an asphalt paved path utilizing an alignment to be determined. The right of way of County Road E appears to hold the best potential for development of an asphalt paved path separated from vehicle traffic. The active railroad corridors extending from Horicon may also hold potential for trail development. Feasibility study, design and construction estimates are roughly \$700,000.

#### **PHASE 3: City of Beaver Dam to Wild Goose State Trail (6 miles)**

This section is proposed to connect the City of Beaver Dam to the Wild Goose State Trail via an asphalt paved path utilizing an alignment to be determined. The right of way of County Road E appears to hold the best potential for development of an asphalt paved path separated from vehicle traffic. The active railroad corridor extending from Beaver Dam may also hold potential for trail development. Feasibility study, design and construction estimates are roughly \$1,200,000.

#### **PHASE 4: City of Horicon Route (2 miles)**

This section is expected to follow existing roads within the City of Horicon to connect from the east side of Horicon to the west side. The actual east side starting location will depend upon the final

route alignment from Phase 5: Horicon Marsh Visitor & Education Center to Horicon. Little in the way of improvements are required, however signage and pavement markings to better identify the biking route are recommended. Additionally there may be some opportunities to provide off street paths through existing park areas or other public lands. Biking Improvements including signage and route marking should not exceed \$10,000.

#### **PHASE 5: Horicon Marsh Visitor & Education Center to City of Horicon (1.5 miles)**

This section would provide a biking route from the City of Horicon to the Horicon Marsh Visitor and Education Center and the Phase 1 section. The final route alignment needs to be determined. Currently a 1.5 mile gravel hiking trail exists, however DNR policies prohibit biking on the trail. As the DNR updates its Master Plan in the coming year, evaluation of this bike prohibition should be undertaken. Trail developments in this section can vary from improved signage to some trail surfacing improvements to requiring the construction of new trail segments or boardwalks to make the connection. A least desirable alternative would be to utilize a bike route along the town roads of Old Highway 28 Road and Raasch Hill Road. Costs for this segment could be as little as \$1,000 or as much as \$450,000 or more pending DNR requirements and approvals.

#### **Benefits:**

- About 40-50% of Dodge County residents and potentially hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Horicon Marsh area would have easy access to the trail.
- Improved and safer biking and hiking transportation connectivity between Dodge County communities - reducing automobile trips
- Improved access to healthy lifestyle activities and recreational pursuits for current and future generations
- Enhanced economic development as a regional tourism resource
- Opportunity for partnerships, collaborations and cooperation across local, County, State and Federal governments and agencies, organizations, foundations, businesses, individuals, etc.
- Remembering and honoring those local heroes that made the ultimate sacrifice – since 1991, Dodge County has lost 6 service members from the communities which are to be linked by this trail.

**Cost:** The total estimated cost of the 15 mile trail from Mayville to Beaver Dam is expected to be roughly \$2.5 - \$3 million. No property tax levy dollars are being sought for this project, rather private donations and grants are expected and needed to fund this facility. Sales tax funding of a portion of the project is also a logical funding mechanism as it would assist a multi-community facility that is expected to enhance tourism spending and more sales tax funds.

**Timeline:** Design work could start on Phase 1 as early as Fall 2015 with construction in 2016, if funding is secured by August 2015. The goal for completion of the entire trail is 2020, however the trail could be completed sooner or later depending on how quickly the necessary funding is obtained.