



VI. Recreation Needs Assessment

This plan was designed specifically for Wood County and the municipalities within its jurisdiction. Every community is unique in its own way. For this reason, a needs assessment has been prepared and is presented in this section. The needs assessment is critical in establishing the rationale for future recreation system improvements and determining gaps between existing and desired conditions. This assessment analyzes: public input; recreation trends, standards and benefits; facility usage and demand; and other relevant planning documents.



Powers Bluff County Park

Public Participation

Public participation is one of the most important elements to consider when planning for the future. A public participation strategy was identified early in the planning process to foster public involvement at all stages of the plan update. Public participation helps to ensure that the plan truly reflects the needs and desires of the community. Furthermore, it is essential to the overall success of the plan. It is through public input that the goals and objectives of this plan were updated and all future decisions will be based.

Community Survey

A community survey was one means of collecting public opinion. The purpose of the community survey was to gather resident and visitor input for the Wood County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Plan - 2018. Specifically, the survey gathered information on county park usage, preferred outdoor recreation amenities/activities, community values, and attitudes towards future recreational development in Wood County.

The survey was available to Wood County residents and visitors from January 26th to March 1st, 2018. The survey was available online or by hard copy upon request. Survey notice platforms included: email, Facebook, radio, local newspapers, Wood County website, and others. Additionally, 500 postcards were sent out randomly to residents located in all of Wood County's local communities (city, village, and town).

A total of 591 surveys were completed.

The Wood County Community Survey Summary is presented in (Appendix B). This report summarizes the needs, desires and attitudes of the general public in regard to the Wood County recreation system. The report presents numeric tabulation and graphic representation of the questions and answers in the community survey. In addition to numeric data, respondent's additional comments are provided. The input collected through this survey will be incorporated into the 2018 plan update. Results of this survey will provide guidance for recreational decisions over the next (5) five years.



Informal Input

The Wood County Parks and Forestry Department has taken advantage of informal opportunities to acquire public input on the recreation system as they arise. Parks and Forestry staff is available on request to speak at schools and with any interested groups about what the county has to offer for recreation opportunities. In these forums staff answers questions and collects comments from the public through informal surveys, displays, and one-on-one discussions. The department also relies heavily on staff at each park facility to listen to concerns, questions and comments of park patrons. This process proves to be one of the least expensive to implement and the most genuine in quality of response.

Public Meetings & Workshops

The Wood County Parks and Forestry Department in coordination with Wood County Planning and Zoning Department held (2) two public meetings/workshops. The general purposes of the meetings were to present the results from the outdoor recreation community survey and provide a formal public input session. The meetings were held at (2) two locations, Powers Bluff Park on May 16, 2018 and Nepco Park on May 23, 2018. The meetings were well publicized. The main focus of the meetings was to identify issues and opportunities for parks, recreation, and open spaces in the county. County Planning Department staff presented the community survey results and talked about the process that would be used to update the plan. Parks and Forestry staff talked about the County Park System in general, and highlighted some of the recent improvements, as well as planned projects. The meeting attendees were encouraged to participate by sharing their thoughts on issues and opportunities with parks and recreation.



Public Input Session

Recreation Standards

Identifying outdoor recreation standards is another method for assessing a community's recreation needs. A good standards system also helps assess what facilities are available for current use and what types of facilities will be needed to serve the community in the future. The most effective park system to develop and manage is one made up of a variety of different types of parks, open space areas, and recreational venues, each designed to provide a specific type of recreation experience or opportunity.

Development Standards

Development standards have been designed for park and recreation facilities. Although this plan has been developed for Wood County, the following standards include facilities that are normally provided by cities, towns and villages. (Appendix F) lists standards provided as a service to the local units of government in Wood County in an effort to promote a uniform set of standards for all communities to follow.

Space Standards

Wood County has used, and will continue to use the space standards as published in the *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*, edited by Roger A. Lancaster for the National Recreation and Park Association.

Other Referenced Recreation Plans

Other applicable plans that address recreation in Wood County and its municipalities are summarized below.

Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2011 – 2016)

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources publishes a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). This plan serves as a blueprint for state and local outdoor recreation planning in WI. It is intended to be used in conjunction with other local, state and regional recreation plans. The SCORP is not a recreation plan but rather a resource that suggests issues to consider when developing programs, policies and actions that affect outdoor recreation in the state. It identifies recreation trends and demands, and can be used by recreation providers to align recreation resources and funding with current and future recreation needs. The 2011 – 2016 SCORP can be found on the WDNR's website at the following link: www.dnr.wi.gov, and search for "SCORP". The WDNR is currently working on the 2017 – 2022 SCORP. Once published, this updated plan shall also be referenced in conjunction with this plan.

When recreation providers plan for the future, it is important to consider recreation trends so that they can meet the ever changing recreation needs. By reviewing changes in participation

rates, and examining industry forecasts and opinions of recreation professionals, projections on recreation demands can be developed.

(Table 15) contains lists of recreation activities in the categories of increasing demand, stable demand, and decreasing demand for the years 2011 to 2016. Ideally, this plan should consider what the trends for 2017 to 2022 are, however they were not available at the time this plan was updated.

Table 15 PROJECTED TRENDS IN OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES (2011-2016 SCORP)		
Increasing Demand 	Adventure racing	Popular as both an individual and a group activity
	Driving for pleasure	An easy activity for the aging baby boomer generation
	Developed/RV camping	Baby boomers are a continued driving force for this growth
	Kayaking	Cheaper entry points have attracted more participants.
	Visit a dog park	Urban residents continue to demand more of these areas
	Soccer outdoors	Youth growth is still strong in urban areas
	BMX biking	X Games popularity may be driving this growth
	Climbing	Indoor climbing walls have led to an outdoor resurgence
	Stand up paddling/paddleboarding	A fast growing water sport sweeping the country
	Triathlon (on- and off-road)	Varying distance events have allowed for growth
	Off-highway vehicle driving	Post-recession growth continues
	Gardening or landscaping for pleasure	The “grow local” concept is taking hold at many levels
Stable Demand 	Walk for pleasure	Market saturation does not allow for large growth.
	Running or jogging	Gen Y is replacing the baby boomers for this activity.
	Water parks	Recession may have caused this growth to slow.
	Motorboating	Still easy access in a water-based state.
	Day hiking	Popular with many generations.
	Golf	Time constraints do not allow for growth.
	Tent camping	Continues to be stable, but growth is illusive.
	Snowboarding	May have peaked after 20 years of growth.
	Trail running	A stable niche activity with Gen Y.
	View/photograph wildlife	An easy activity that spans generations.
	Bicycling (road and non-paved)	Popular with many generations – access is still key
	Snowshoeing	After large growth, this has stabilized.
Decreasing Demand 	Hunting	Continues to struggle with generational loss and private access.
	Inline skating	A large decrease in the last six years, the bottom may be near.
	Skateboarding/skate parks	Gen M is free-skating with longboards.
	Horseback riding on trails	Recession impacts have caused this to decrease with no rebound.
	Softball	Baby boomers continue to leave this sport.
	Downhill skiing	Gen Y does not have the numbers to replace aging baby boomers.

Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2011 – 2016)

Wisconsin Land Legacy Report – 2006

The purpose of this report is to identify the places considered most important to meet Wisconsin’s conservation and recreation needs over 50 years. Additionally, the report is intended to serve as an education resource that provides common context from which local governments can use if they are confronted with decisions about land protection, use, and management. Several areas in Wood County are identified in this plan including: Cranmoor Wetlands and Powers Bluff.

Wood County Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan – 2005

This plan is intended to guide the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, services, and policies in Wood County. Within urban and suburban areas, the plan recommends bicycle and pedestrian corridors that will connect people to destinations such as employment centers, schools, residential districts, recreation areas and commercial retail areas.

Wood County Comprehensive Plan – 2009

This twenty-year plan is intended to guide physical, social, and economic development in Wood County.

Wisconsin Trails Network Plan – 2003

This plan identifies a series of potential trail corridors across Wisconsin that would link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. It describes a vision of a statewide network of interconnected rail trails into which smaller state, partnership, county, municipal, and private trails feed.

Powers Bluff County Park Long Range Master Plan – 2005

This plan was developed by Schreiber/Anderson Associates, Inc. at the request of the Wood County Parks and Forestry Department. The purpose of the plan is to guide the management, development and preservation of Powers Bluff over the next 10 to 15 years.

Powers Bluff County Park Trails Concept Plan – 2018

This plan was prepared by the International Mountain Bicycling Association for Wood County. The plan provides guidance and recommendations for developing a comprehensive trail network at Powers Bluff County Park. The planned trail network is intended to serve the needs of all recreation users by adding upon the existing Powers Bluff trails with new multi-use trails and the creation of bike optimized trails for all ages and ability levels.

Wood County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan – 2006 to 2020

This fifteen-year plan establishes policies and guidance for the management of the County Forest. The plan was developed through the input of The State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Wood County, local townships, various user groups, other stakeholders, and general public comment.

Benefits of Outdoor Recreation

Access to outdoor recreation opportunities has many benefits. Wood County has placed a high priority on promoting the link between parks and recreation resources and improved mental, physical and societal health. The benefits of outdoor recreation are endless.

Individual Benefits

- Reduces stress, anxiety and depression
- Fun and entertainment
- Learning and education
- Physical activity
- Better health and improves quality of life

Economic Benefits

- Increase property values
- Attracts and retains residents, visitors, businesses, and employment
- Create/Increase spending on food, lodging and other services in the community

Social Benefits

- Provides places to socialize and connect with residents in the community
- Increases pride, volunteerism and stewardship in the community
- Unites families and assists in overall youth development
- Reduces crime

Environmental Benefits

- Creates an awareness and appreciation for the natural environment and its resources
- Absorb and filter storm water runoff and floodwaters
- Promotes and sustains protection of environmentally sensitive areas



Nekoosa Boat Landing

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