



Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan

2017-2021

Also covering the municipalities within Lincoln County



Prepared by: North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

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September 2016

This plan was prepared under the direction of the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, & Parks Committee by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission.

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: LINCOLN COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN
2017-2021 Effective January 1, 2017 to December 31, 2021

SUBJECT: This report assesses the existing recreation system in Lincoln County; identifies recreation needs based upon public input, recreation standards, and the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP); sets forth goals and objectives to be used as guidelines in formulating recreation plans; and establishes recommendations for improving the recreation system over the next five years.

Submission of this adopted ORP to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources establishes eligibility for the county and local units of government to apply for a variety of Federal and State Aids. This requirement can be found in Chapter NR 50, Wisconsin administrative code for the following programs; Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program (LWCF), Aids for the Acquisition and Development of Local Parks (ADLP), Urban Green Space Program (UGS) and Urban Rivers Grant Program (URGP).

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

DATE: September 2016

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ATTACHMENTS

- A. Lincoln County Wisconsin Bicycle Map
- B. Outdoor Recreation Online Survey Results
- C. Park Design and Location Criteria
- D. State and Federal Financial Assistance Programs

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this recreation plan is to provide continued direction toward meeting the current and future recreation needs of the county. This is accomplished through an inventory and analysis of outdoor recreational facilities, and the establishment of recommendations to meet identified needs.

Adoption of this plan by the Lincoln County Board and subsequent acceptance by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR), will continue eligibility of the county and its local units of government for Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program (LWCF), Aids for a the Acquisition and Development of Local Parks (ADLP), Urban Green Space Program (UGS) and Urban Rivers Grant Program (URGP). Adoption by all municipalities is not necessary if they wish to cooperate with Lincoln County to use this plan for grant applications. Local government grant applications have a better chance of approval if Lincoln County applies on their behalf.

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

STATUTORY BASE

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

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

PLAN COMPONENTS

This plan addresses the outdoor recreation needs for county facilities and all 16 towns. The Cities of Merrill and Tomahawk developed their own recreational plans and are included for reference.

Background information on Lincoln County was compiled to develop an understanding of the environmental and social characteristics of the county and their meaning for outdoor recreation. An inventory of existing recreational facilities exists in Chapter 3 of this plan.

The existing recreation system was analyzed to determine current and potential future deficiencies. A combination of public survey compilation, standards analysis, and the Wisconsin Statewide

Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plans (SCORP) were utilized to define recreational and open space needs. Goals and objectives were created to guide the direction of recreational planning efforts within Lincoln County.

The recommendations are general strategies and five-year action programs for recreation facility development. A series of possible tools to aid implementation of these recommendations are set forth. This plan concludes with a note on updating to insure that it remains relevant to the needs of the county over the entire five-year span.

PAST PLANS

This plan was written to continue the parks and recreation program established in the Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plans since 1971 when a *Recreation Plan for Lincoln County* was developed by the UW-Extension.

Summaries of plans that affect outdoor recreation:

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2011-2016

NOTE: This plan is being updated in 2016/2017.

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

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

North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle Facilities Network Plan

NOTE: This plan is being updated in 2016.

This 2004 document is intended to guide the development of an interconnected bikeway system for the North Central Wisconsin Region. Potential trails are identified, and an improvement description was created for each county, which identifies how to create the specific trail segments in each county. New regional and county bike plans are scheduled to begin in 2012.

There are two main Lincoln County trails within this regional plan. The on-road scenic bike and auto tour loop includes STH 107 along the Wisconsin River, STH 17 to the east, and CTH B to D in the north. The Hiawatha Trail is a former railroad right-of-way running north-south. These trails are shown on Map 1.

Lincoln County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan

This 2006–2020 document contains the Lincoln County Forest Access Plan. A summary of this plan's conclusions was inserted into the public participation part of Chapter 4 – Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment.

State Trails Network Plan

This 2003 document clarifies the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) role and strategy in the provision of all types of trails. The plan identifies a series of potential trail corridors that would link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. This statewide network of interconnected trails would be owned and maintained by municipalities, private entities, and partnerships of the two. Preserving transportation corridors, such as old rail lines, is specifically discussed as a very important strategy in the creation of recreational and alternative transportation corridors. These trails are shown on Map 1.

Segment 13 – Dresser to Michigan

This 250-mile-long east-west corridor consists of rail line, the Cattail Trail, which is owned by the DNR and operated by Polk and Barron counties, and an optional highway right-of-way. In Lincoln County this is a potential trail that follows a rail line parallel to USH 8.

Segment 69 – Tomahawk to Crandon

This abandoned corridor would link these two communities via an off-road connector. This corridor intersects the Langlade County to Michigan corridor at Pelican Lake and links the Argonne to Shawano corridor in the east with the Tomahawk to Wausau corridor in the west. This short linking corridor provides opportunity to access the very popular Hiawatha-Bearskin Trail from other corridors to the east.

Segment 18 – Tomahawk to Wausau (Northern Region)

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

City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2013-2018

This plan assesses the existing recreation system in the City of Merrill; identifies recreation needs based upon public input and recreation standards; sets forth goals and objectives to be used as guidelines in formulating outdoor recreation improvements; and provides recommendations for improving the recreation system over the next five years.

The plan's goals include:

1. Trail Connectivity.
2. Build bathroom facilities.
3. Continue to upgrade athletic facilities.
4. Improve communication between park user groups and the city.
5. Increase park and recreation department resources.
6. Gradually bring parks into ADA compliance.
7. Create new outdoor pool.

A variety of recommendations in the plan are based on the above goals. Also in the plan are lists of capital improvements for each park for the next 5-years.

City of Tomahawk Outdoor Recreation Plan, 2010-2015

This plan assesses the existing recreation system in the City of Tomahawk; identifies recreation needs based upon public input and recreation standards; sets forth goals and objectives to be used as guidelines in formulating outdoor recreation improvements; and provides recommendations for improving the recreation system over the next five years.

The plan's goals include:

1. Provide ongoing maintenance of what exists.
2. Generate revenue where possible while also enhancing natural beauty within the parks.
3. Establish "creature comforts" at most parks.
4. Link all trails throughout the park system and the city.

A variety of recommendations in the plan are based on the above goals. Also in the plan are lists of capital improvements for each park for the next 5-years.

Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan 2012-2021

This plan is a combination of nine chapters. Within the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Chapter is Goal 2, which relates to outdoor recreation:

Goal 2: Resource Management

Objectives:

- A. The land needed for supporting the sustainable development of the county's agricultural forestry, recreation, and wildlife resources will be carefully conserved and preserved where appropriate.
- B. The County's water resources will be protected so residents and tourists can be ensured a high quality of life and enjoy the environmental benefits.
- C. Maintain the balance between wildlife preservation, for maintaining the ecosystem and providing recreational opportunities, and the controls needed to reduce their negative impacts on agricultural and forest crops.
- D. More decisions that impact our local resources will be made at the county level.

Map 1 – Potential trails and Legacy Areas

Wisconsin Land Legacy Report 2006-2056

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

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

Each Lincoln County Legacy Area is summarized below. 5 stars represents the highest level:

SO Somo River

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

UW Upper Wisconsin River

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

HH Harrison Hills

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

MW Middle Wisconsin River

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

PR Prairie River

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

Another Area of Interest includes:

- Big Pine Creek

Chapter 2 DESCRIPTION OF LINCOLN COUNTY

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

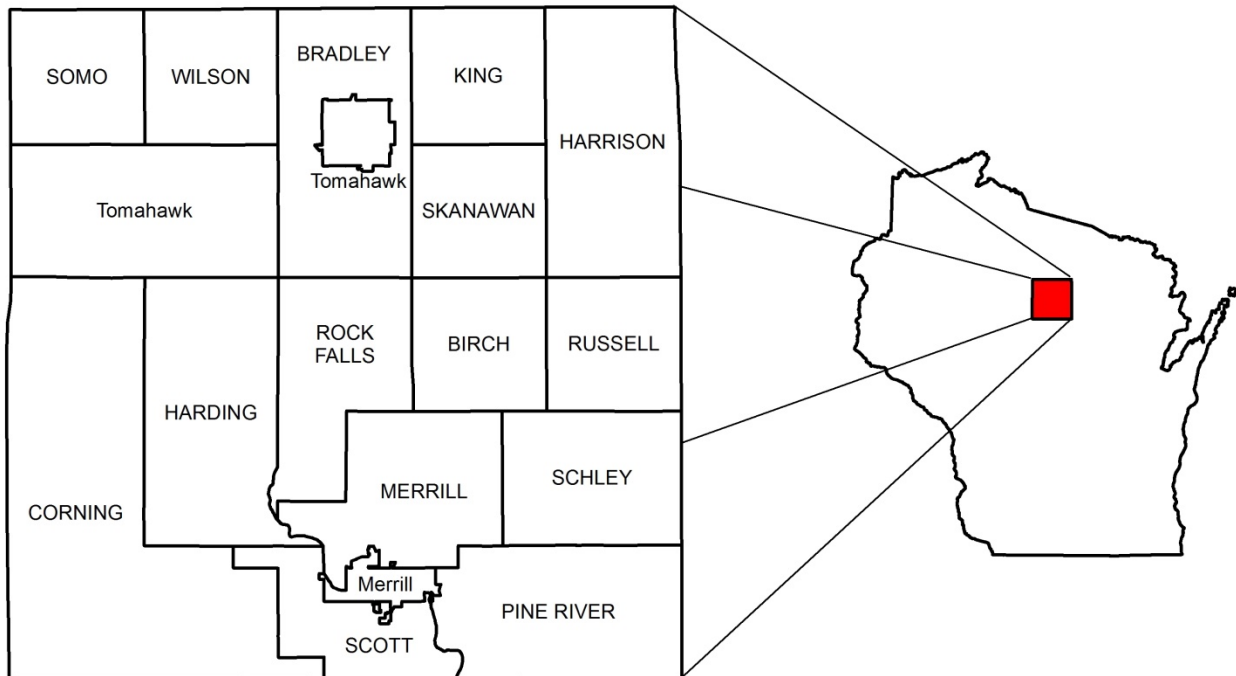
Introduction

This section describes the physical features that make up Lincoln County. This information is essential in determining the potential as well as the limitations of an area for recreation development. Recreation planners use this kind of data to determine which resources to develop and which resources to protect or preserve.

Geography

Lincoln County is located in north central Wisconsin and has a total surface area of 584,960 acres, of which approximately 15,000 acres is water (see Figure 1). The county is bounded on the north by Oneida County, on the west by Taylor and Price Counties, on the south by Marathon County and on the east by Langlade County. Lincoln County is divided into 16 townships and 2 cities – Tomahawk in the north and Merrill in the south.

Figure 1 Location



Climate

Lincoln County is classified in the continental climate type. Summers here have warm but not excessively hot days and cool nights. Winters are long, cold, and snowy. Mean annual precipitation is 32 inches. Snow cover on the ground and ice cover on the lakes lasts from December to April. The growing season generally extends from May 22 to September 23, for an average frost-free growing season of 124 days. Prevailing winds come out of the northwest from late fall through spring, and from the south during the remainder of the year. The wind speed generally ranges from 4 to 15 miles per hour.

Winter in Lincoln County is very conducive to snowmobiling and skiing due to its long duration and frequent occurrences of fresh snow. Summer encourages camping, fishing, and other activities through the not excessively hot days and cool, comfortable nights.

Topography

All of Lincoln County was covered by glacial ice. Lincoln County's landscape is primarily gently rolling, heavily wooded countryside, with the main exception being the Harrison Hills area in the northeast part of the county and agricultural lands in the south. Altitudes range from 1,257 feet at Merrill, and 1,450 feet in Tomahawk, to over 1,800 feet in the Harrison Hills area.

The Harrison Hills and the Underdown Hills are typical morainic hills and ridges interspersed with many bogs, swamps, ponds, and lakes in kettles that resulted from the melting of buried ice blocks. Most of the kettles have no outlet.

Nine Mile, Irma, and Chase Hills, are distinct ridges or hills of bedrock that are covered by glacial drift. These bedrock areas commonly do not have wet depressions.

Surface Water

Lincoln County contains approximately 14,792 acres of surface water. This area is divided into 726 lakes that cover 12,172 acres, and 246 streams covering 2,620 acres. Artificial impoundments comprise about 58% of total lake area, with the largest, Lake Mohawksin at 1,909 acres. Eighty-six percent of the lakes are less than 10 acres, while only 3% are over 100 acres. The county contains 668 miles of stream, of which about 318 miles are classified as trout streams and 120 as sport fishing river.

All drainage flows to the Wisconsin River, with the Somo, Spirit, New Wood, Copper, Pine, and Prairie Rivers being its major tributaries. Surface waters flow in a southerly direction, with the Wisconsin River draining south through the center of the county, and its tributaries entering from the northeast and northwest.

This extensive water resource provides a great deal of recreational opportunity from boating to sailing, skiing, fishing, swimming, canoeing and ice fishing. Lincoln County's water is also known for its high scenic value. The tranquil ice block lakes of Harrison Hills, the Posey and Bill Cross Rapids on the Wisconsin River, and the magnificent falls at the Prairie Dells are just a few examples of the county's varied scenic potential.

Groundwater

The major aquifer in Lincoln County is the surficial glacial drift and alluvial sand and gravel, which generally furnish an abundant supply to depths of 20 to 50 feet.

In areas where underlying Precambrian bedrock is near the surface, it must be relied upon to provide local supplies. Water in the crystalline rock is only located within fractured zones, and the more the rock is fractured, the larger the water supply obtainable.

Groundwater is generally considered to be of good quality in Lincoln County, though quality varies somewhat by aquifer. Groundwater in the sand and gravel aquifer is higher in iron and more easily polluted than groundwater in the bedrock aquifer. Water hardness varies from mostly soft to moderately hard in both the sand and gravel and bedrock aquifers.

Soils

The soils of Lincoln County are principally the result of weathering of glacial deposits. Considerable variation occurs in soil types within short distances, and is partly due to the variety of materials carried by the ice during the last glacial period. In general, the northeastern part of the county has well drained sandy soils, some of which are quite droughty. Moving southwest, the soils phase into sand and silt loams, ending with poorly drained silty soils. Most agricultural lands are located in the southeastern and southern part of the county.

Soils in the northeast tend to be quite infertile and acidic, as is reflected in the clear, unproductive surface waters, especially in the Harrison Hills. In the western and southern part of the county, where the soils are poorly drained sand and silty loams, waters tend to be darker colored, somewhat more fertile and quite acid. In the better drained soils in the southeast, surface water is more fertile and less acid. Soil types directly influence water quality, i.e., fertile waters are generally associated with fertile soil drainage areas.

Soil properties are important considerations when planning and developing recreation facilities. To help evaluate soils, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service publishes a Soil Survey Report. The Lincoln County Survey Report was made available in December 1996. Updated soil suitability tables for outdoor recreation and other uses are available on the Internet.

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

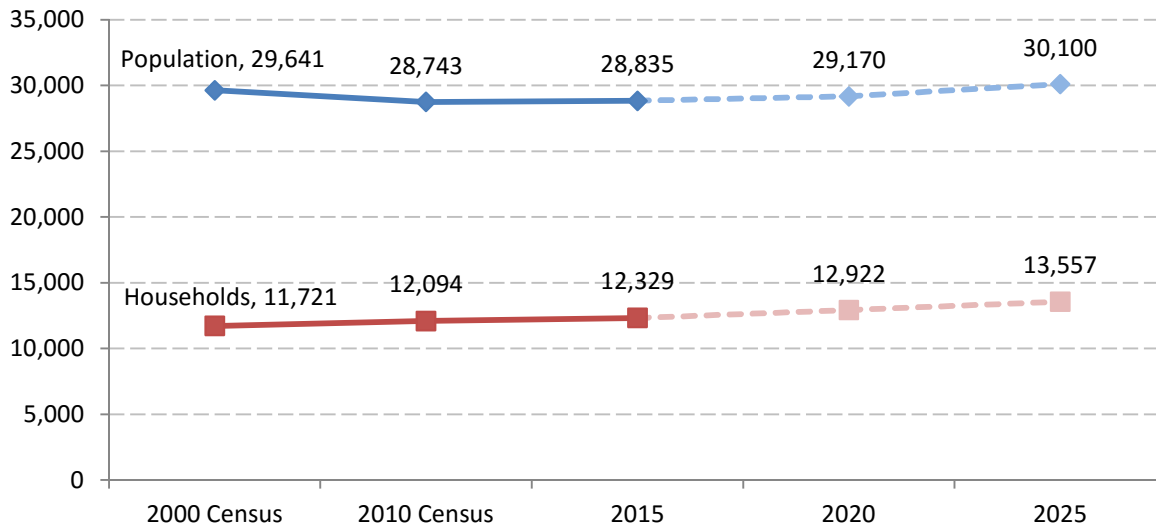
Introduction

This section describes social and economic demographic information that influences Lincoln County. Overall recreation demand within Wisconsin is described in SCORP, under Past Plans in Chapter 1. The social characteristics and growth projections from this section combined with recreation demands as shown in SCORP's Chapter 2 can help determine the appropriate recreation investments in the county.

Population and Households

The 2015 population estimate for Lincoln County is 28,835 people. This estimate shows an increase of approximately 90 people since the 2010 Census. Growth between 2000 and 2010 was 1,040 people, or 3.5 percent. See Figure 2. Growth was 2.3 percentage points less than the state and 4.5 percentage points lower than the nation. The population of Lincoln County is expected to continue to grow through 2030, and then begin a gradual decline in population.

Figure 2: Lincoln County Population and Household Change



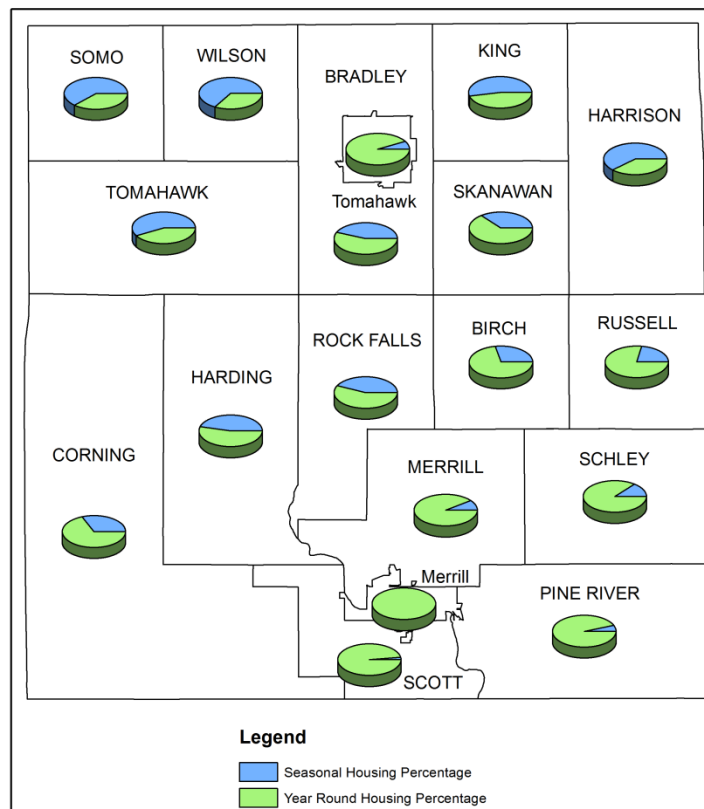
Source: U.S. Census, Wisconsin Department of Administration 2015 Estimate, Wisconsin DOA 2013 projections

Changes in population are made up of two components. More births than deaths produces a natural increase, and more people moving into an area than moving out produces a migration increase. The combination of these two factors makes up increases or decreases in population. Lincoln County's natural increase was a modest 0.1 percent while migration was a much higher 3.4 percent. Lincoln County's natural increase is much lower than either the state or nation, but the net migration is 1.1 percentage points higher than the state's rate of 2.3 percent, and is 0.7 percentage points higher than the nation's 2.7 percent. The diminished natural increase may be a reflection of the older population in the county.

Household sizes have been shrinking over time in Lincoln County, following national and state trends. Lincoln County had 12,094 households as of the 2010 Census, and an average household size of 2.33 people. In 2000 the average household size was 2.46. Households continued to grow between 2000 and 2010, despite a slight decline in population over the same time period. See Figure 2. Household sizes are expected to continue declining, reaching 2.14 persons per household by 2030. Household growth is also expected to continue until 2030, when households are expected to decline, although slower than population. Over 27 percent of households have someone under 18 years old, and 30 percent of households have someone 65 or older. Over 67 percent of households are families, and just over 25 percent have their own children under 18 years old.

Lincoln County has a larger proportion of vacant housing than Wisconsin or the United States, much of which is seasonal, recreational, and occasional use housing. The 2010 Census shows that approximately 22.3 percent of the housing in Lincoln County is vacant for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use, compared to approximately 7.4 percent in Wisconsin and 3.1 percent in the United States. There is much variation in seasonal housing within Lincoln County, with high proportions in many of the towns in the northern two-thirds of the County. The Towns of Somo and Wilson have more than 60 percent seasonal, recreational, or occasional use housing. Eight of the 16 towns have more than 40% of housing that is seasonally occupied. Towns near the southern border with Marathon County have low proportion of seasonally occupied housing, along with the Cities of Tomahawk and Merrill. The towns with high proportions of seasonal housing will have greater fluctuations in population throughout the year, and these seasonal residents must be included when determining the demand for recreation facilities.

Figure 3: Year Round and Seasonal Housing, 2014

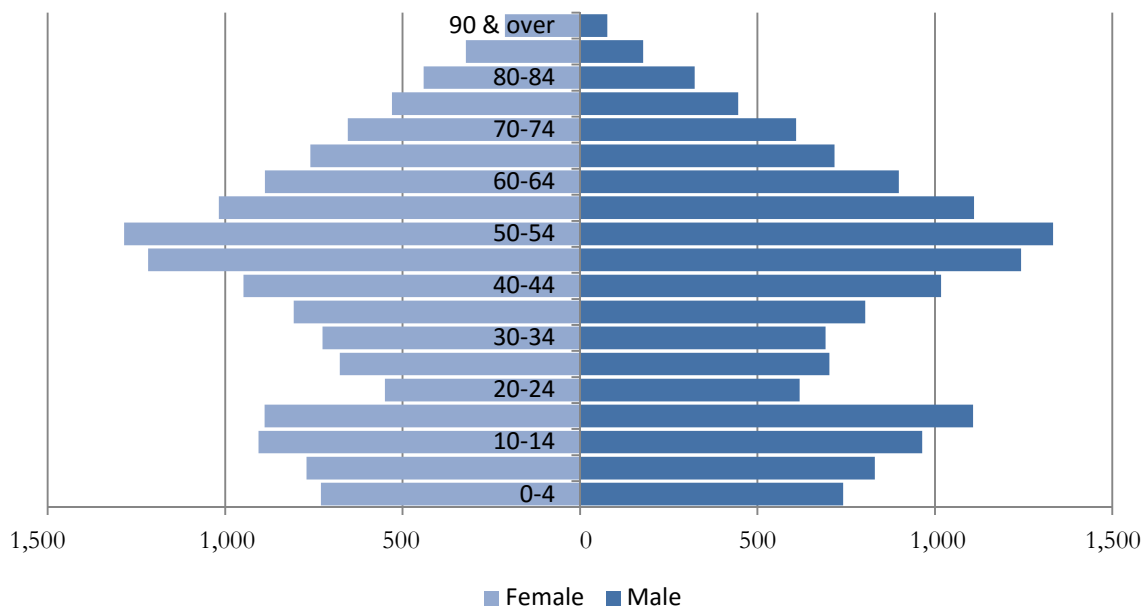


Age

The median age of Lincoln County is 44.7 years old, while Wisconsin is 38.5. The median age has increased in both Lincoln County and Wisconsin between 2000 and 2010, from 38.9 and 36 years old, respectively. It is evident that the median age in Lincoln has grown faster than the state. Figure 3 shows the distribution of age groups in Lincoln County. The age distribution in Lincoln County is concentrated in the middle-aged 40-60 year old groups and the 10-20 year old groups. The most heavily concentrated age groups are very near to the typical retirement age, which will likely have a great effect on the parks and recreation needs of the County. Females outnumber males in the age groups above 65.

Research has demonstrated that recently retired people tend to be very active and are attracted to places with recreational amenities. As retirees age they tend to become less active, with many eventually moving to more urban areas where services such as health care are in closer proximity and more accessible. It is apparent from the period that Lincoln has very few 20-24 year olds. People in this age group are more likely to leave the County for education and employment opportunities.

Figure 3: Lincoln County 2010 Age Pyramid



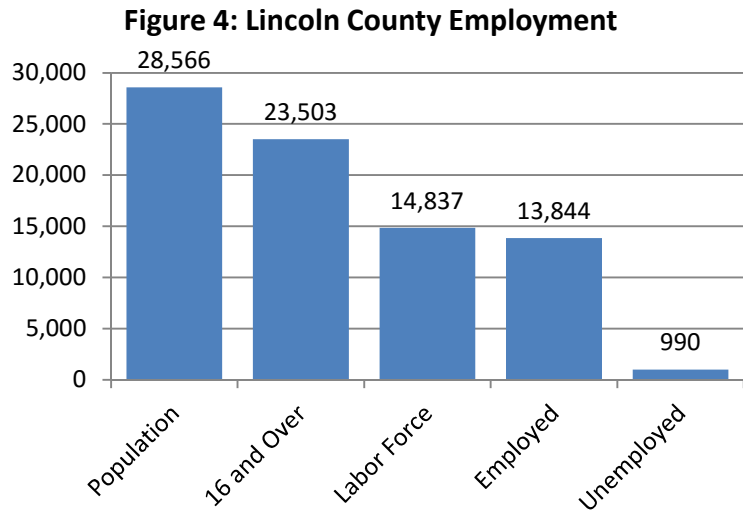
Source: Wisconsin DOA

Ethnic Background

The people of Lincoln County mostly identify as white, at approximately 97 percent of people. Almost one percent identify as Black or African American and the same identity as Native American or Alaska Native. Just over half of a percent identify as Asian, 0.1 percent as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 0.7 as some other race. Approximately one percent identify as Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.

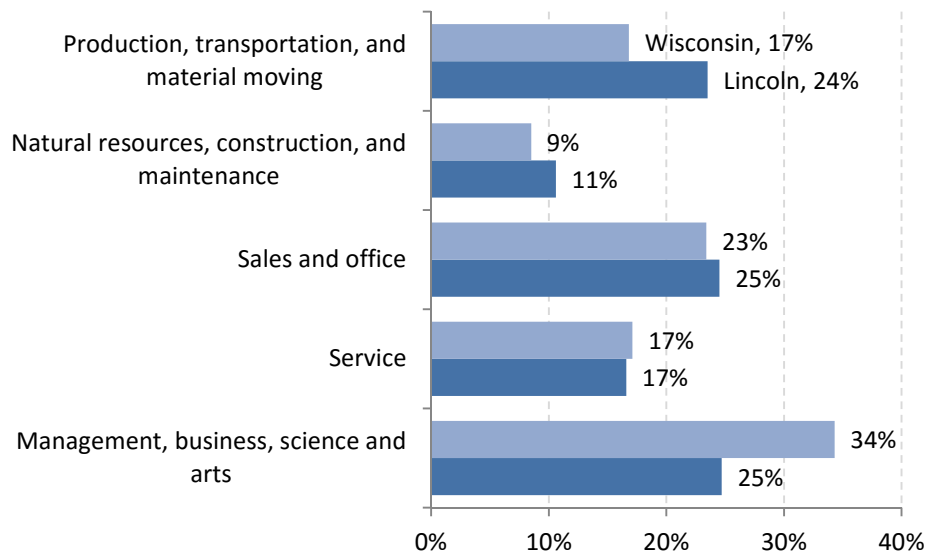
Employment and Economy

Lincoln County has 23,503 people age 16 and over, 63.1 percent of who are in the labor force, i.e. actively working or seeking work. The labor force participation rate for Wisconsin as a whole is 67.4 percent, slightly higher than Lincoln County. According to the 2010-2014 ACS, the unemployment rate in Lincoln County was 6.7 percent, compared to 7.2 percent in the state and 9.2 percent in the United States.



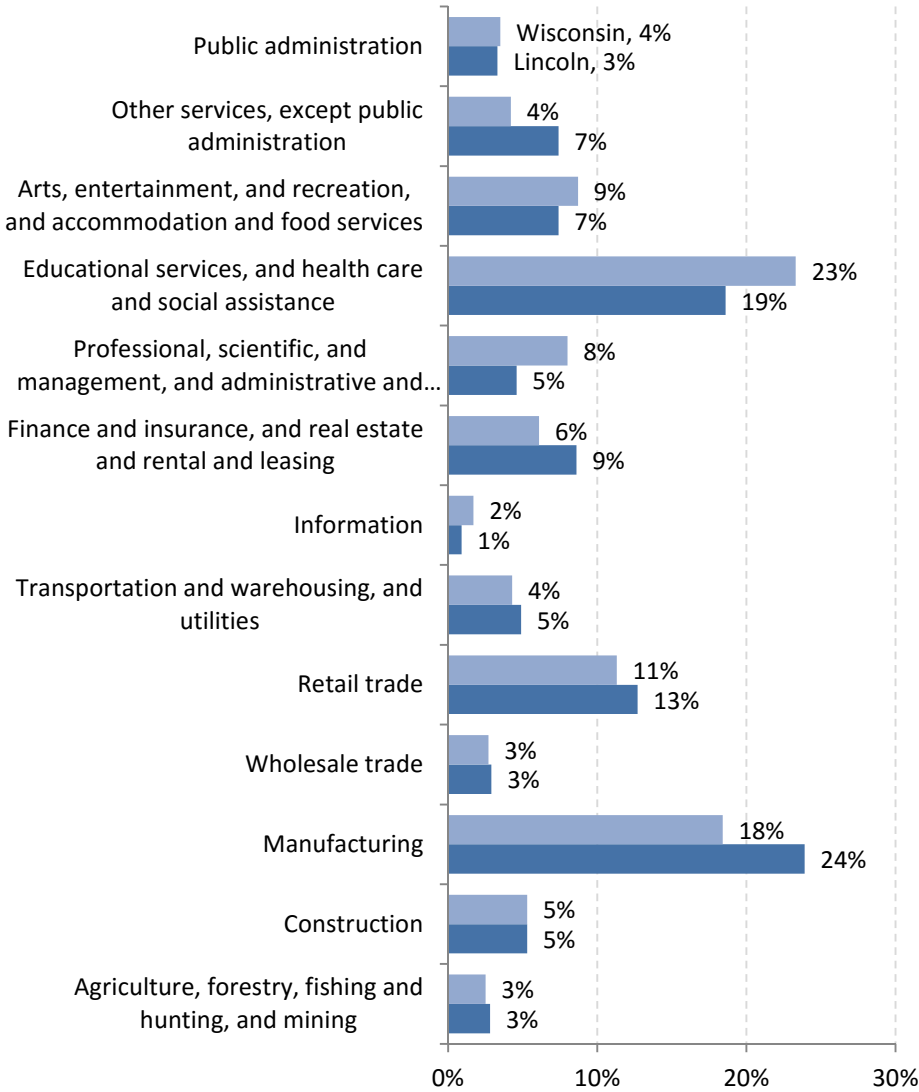
Most residents of Lincoln County are employed in Management, business, science and arts occupations at 24.7 percent; Sales and office occupations at 24.5 percent; or Production, transportation, and material moving occupations at 23.5 percent. The most common industry for Lincoln County residents is Manufacturing, at 23.9 percent; and the second is Education services, health care and social assistance at 18.6 percent. Lincoln County has a higher proportion of residents in the Production, transportation, and material moving occupations and the Manufacturing industry than the state.

Figure 5: Lincoln County Resident Occupation



Source: US Census, ACS 2010-2014

Figure 6: Lincoln County Resident Industry



Source: US Census, ACS 2010-2014

Table 1 shows industry employment in Lincoln County. The highest levels of employment are in the manufacturing and trade, transportation and utilities industries. The one year change shows declines in natural resources, information and other services. Location quotient is a method of measuring the relative concentration of that industry in Lincoln County compared to the nation, with a value of 1 meaning the concentration is identical. Lincoln County has a higher concentration of manufacturing, crop and animal production, finance and insurance, transportation and warehousing, and retail trade.

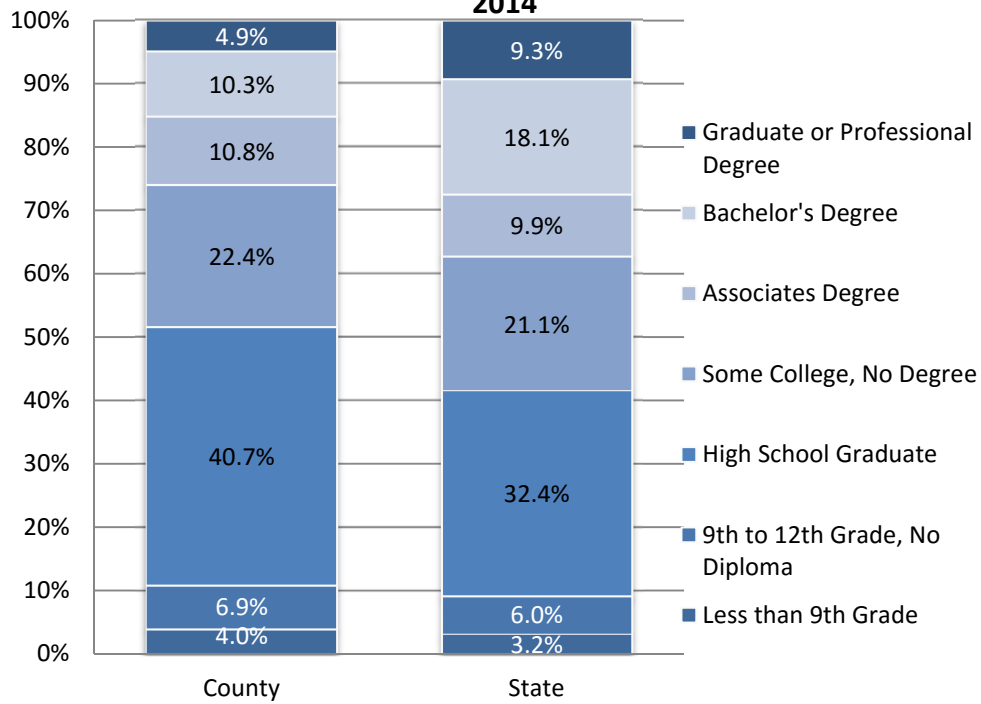
Industry	Employment	
	Annual Avg.	1-Year Change
Natural Resources	176	-30
Construction	407	9
Manufacturing	2,608	99
Trade, Transportation, Utilities	2,156	66
Information	93	-6
Financial Activities	997	41
Professional & Business Services	432	26
Education & Health	1,659	15
Leisure & Hospitality	904	58
Other services	241	-13
Public Administration	1,056	64
Total	10,727	329

Source: WI DWD, Bureau of Workforce Training, QCEW, June 2015

As of the 2010-2014 American Community Survey, median household income in Lincoln County was \$49,189, and per capita income was \$25,371. This is slightly lower than the state and nation, which can be explained by the lower proportion of people working in Lincoln County. The distribution of household incomes in Forest are fairly similar to the state, but with fewer households making \$100,000 or more, or less than \$10,000, and more households making between \$10,000 and \$34,999 annually and \$75,000 to \$99,999.

Educational Attainment in Lincoln County is generally lower than the State of Wisconsin (see Figure 1). 89.1 percent of Lincoln County residents have graduated high school, while 90.8 percent of Wisconsin residents have graduated high school. 15.2 percent of Lincoln County have a bachelor's degree or higher, while 27.4 percent of Wisconsin residents have a bachelor's degree or higher. While the proportion of high school graduates in Lincoln County is very close to the state proportion, there is a significant gap in higher education achievement levels. The proportion of people with some college, but no degree and those with an associate's degree are both slightly higher in Lincoln County than the state.

Figure 7: Educational Attainment, Age 25 and Older, 2010-2014



Source: 2010-2014 American Community Survey

Chapter 3

EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

This section is an inventory of the existing outdoor recreational facilities in Lincoln County, which will focus primarily upon public facilities. Some private facilities will be listed for reference purposes. The private sector provides many recreational opportunities but this plan's purpose is to identify public facility improvements that may qualify for state and federal money.

LINEAR FACILITIES

Rustic Roads: Lincoln County has 1 rustic road. Rustic Road 78 is 4 miles of Tesch Road that connects to CTH E at both ends.

Water Trails: A water trail is a network of access points, resting places, and attractions for users of water craft on lakes and rivers. This website can help with creating a trail: (<http://www.uwsp.edu/cnr/uwexplakes/publications/watertrails/>). There are over 1,100 miles of streams and rivers in Lincoln County. Portages have been established on the Wisconsin River to get around the dams. All navigable water is available to canoe on. The New Wood River has a canoe access with parking area off Whiskey Bill Road in the Town of Harding. Both the Wisconsin and Prairie Rivers have multiple access points.

Trout Streams: Parts or all of over 110 streams are classified as trout streams in Lincoln County.

Ice Age Trail – Grandfather Falls segment – This section is 4.8 miles in length. It is courtesy of Wisconsin Public Service, Lincoln County Forest, Merrill School Forest, and several private landowners. This segment can be accessed at Camp New Wood County Park and near the Grandfather Dam north of Tug Lake Road on STH 107. Parking is available at these locations. The Grandfather Falls segment of the Ice Age Trail is strictly for hiking, skiing, or snowshoeing.

Ice Age Trail – Harrison Hills segment – Harrison Hills features the highest point on the Ice Age Trail at 1,920 feet. This section stretches 15 miles from the Langlade County segment to CTH J. Roadside parking is available at trail and road junctions and a parking lot exists on CTH B about 1 ¼ miles west of STH 17. The Harrison Hills segment of the Ice Age Trail is strictly for hiking, skiing, or snowshoeing. Camping is available along this portion of the trail on county forest lands.

Ice Age Trail – Underdown Segment – This section stretches 7 miles from the Copper Lake Road to Horn Lake Road, and is linked to the Underdown Recreation Area. Parking is available at the trailhead, along with roadside parking at trail and road junctions. Some sections of the trail are used for mountain biking and horseback riding; however most of it is used for foot traffic only. Primitive camping is available on county forest lands.

Ice Age Trail – New Wood segment – This segment provides 9 miles of hiking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing trails from Conservation Road to Burma Road. Parking is available at the junction of Conservation Road and the trail, along with roadside parking along CTH E.

Ice Age Trail - Turtle Rock Segment – The Turtle Rock segment provides approximately 4 miles of hiking, snowshoeing, and cross country skiing through public land from CTH E hooking up with the New Wood segment.

Harrison Hills ATV Trails – This is a two-way trail primarily on old logging roads linked with the Langlade County ATV trail system and the Oneida County ATV trail system. The trail system also provides access to the communities of Gleason, Harrison, Parrish, and Pine Lake in Lincoln County. In addition, a recent connection was also made from the trail system to the City of Tomahawk via open town and county highways. Access and parking are located at three locations: 3/4 mile north of CTH J on Turtle Lake Road, 1-1/4 miles northwest of STH 17 on CTH B, and 1-1/2 miles south of Harrison on CTH B. The Harrison Hills ATV Trail is 47.8 miles long. The summer ATV trails are closed from December 1st to May 1st of each year. Lincoln County participated in the previous LUV and UTV pilot program. These programs were designed to study the effects that side by side machines have on ATV trails and routes to evaluate whether it is feasible and appropriate to expand their use and develop a permanent program. The ATV trail system is also open to road licensed vehicles, mountain bikers, hikers, and other recreationists.

The **Bearskin-Hiawatha State Trail** uses a former railroad right-of-way as the trail. The Bearskin Trail starts in Minocqua and travels south 18.3 miles to CTH K. The Hiawatha State Trail starts in Tomahawk and travels about 6.6 miles north, crossing USH 8 to a non-improved segment. The missing section of trail lies between USH 51 (Bearskin Trail) and the Oneida County line (Hiawatha Trail). Work has been done in recent years to complete this connection. It may be in the best interest of the trail to turn maintenance of the Hiawatha over to the State at the time of connection in order to provide uniform procedures over the entire length of the trail.

Snowmobile Trails – Lincoln County has approximately 313 miles of designated snowmobile trails that are part of the State snowmobile aid program, along with approximately 100 miles of club trails. About 202 miles of these snowmobile trails are also winter ATV trails.

PUBLIC ACCESS POINTS TO WATER BODIES

Public Access sites on Lincoln County's lakes and streams have been extensively inventoried and catalogued by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in the *Lincoln County Public Access Study of 1988*. A study of lakes on the county forest was also completed by Lincoln County Forestry and Land Conservation staff in 2004. An updated map of public access areas is available from the Lincoln County Forestry Department. Lincoln County owns and maintains 112 access points in all – 60 developed, and 52 undeveloped. Public access to waterbodies will be ensured when development occurs by state statute and county zoning ordinances. See the Implementation Strategies chapter under [Park Dedication](#) and [Use of Easements](#) for more details.

POINTS OF INTEREST

Lincoln County contains both historic and contemporary points of interest of cultural, aesthetic, recreational, and scientific importance.

A) Historic Buildings and Sites

Six sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places in Lincoln County:

1. Lincoln County Courthouse, City of Merrill
2. First Street Bridge, City of Merrill
3. T.B. Scott Free Library, City of Merrill
4. Merrill City Hall, City of Merrill
5. Center Avenue Historic District, City of Merrill
6. Merrill Post Office, City of Merrill

Wisconsin's Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) lists 1,050 properties on it within Lincoln County.

- City of Merrill – 887 sites
- City of Tomahawk – 84 sites
- Town of Bradley – 20 sites
- Town of Rock Falls – 13 sites
- Town of Scott – 13 sites
- Town of King – 6 sites
- Town of Pine River – 6 sites
- Town of Harrison – 5 sites
- Town of Skanawan – 5 sites
- Town of Somo – 3 sites
- Town of Corning – 2 sites
- Town of Schley – 2 sites
- Town of Wilson – 2 sites
- Town of Birch – 1 sites

B) Geologic Sites

Lincoln County's topography is described in Chapter 2 – Description of Lincoln County. Several land features are named below:

Harrison Hills, Towns of Russell and Harrison, publicly and privately owned.

Lookout Mountain, Town of Harrison, publicly owned.

Porcupine Mountain, Town of Skanawan, privately owned.

C) Dams

The following hydroelectric dams provide cold season nesting grounds for bald eagles by maintaining an open area of water: Rice, Jersey, Kings, Tomahawk, Spirit River Reservoir, Grandmother Falls, Upper Grandfather Falls, and Alexander Dams.

D) Historical Markers

A state historical marker titled: **Merrill City Hall** is located at 715 E 2nd St in Merrill.

A state historical marker titled: **Three Arch Stone Bridge** representing STH 64 over the Prairie River is located at 200 W First St, Merrill.

Map 2 – Outdoor Recreation

Map 3 – City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation

Map 4 – City of Tomahawk Outdoor Recreation

COUNTY RECREATION FACILITIES

Camp New Wood County Park is a 15.7 acre facility located 10 miles northwest of Merrill. This area has seven campsites, a hiking trail, an ADA accessible picnic area with tables and grills, playground equipment (meeting CPSC standards), a well, and an ADA compliant restroom. Two covered shelters, a boat landing, and fishing area also exists at this vicinity.

Haymeadow County Park is a 6 acre park located in the Town of Schley. This area is primarily open space having picnic tables and an ADA compliant restroom.

Jack Pines County Park is a 7 acre natural area located in the northeast portion of the City of Merrill. This site is used in winter mainly for sledding, and walking during the other seasons.

Otter Lake Recreation Area is a 20 acre facility located in the Towns of Harrison and Skanawan. This area has a camping section with 25 campsites, two wells, and ADA compliant restrooms. There is also a picnic area with tables, grills, and a beach. The picnic area has a changing house and ADA compliant restrooms. A hunting, nature, and snowmobile trail also exist at this recreation area, as well as an area for fishing.

Tug Lake Recreation Area is a 25 acre facility located 10 miles north of Merrill. This area has a shelter, an ADA compliant restroom and changing house, a picnic area with tables and grills, playground equipment (meeting CPSC standards), swimming beach, fishing area, and parking for approximately 100 vehicles.

Roothouse Lake Special Use Area is a 320 acre facility located in the Town of Harrison. Existing facilities at this site include a parking area, and a trail that leads to the lake. Primitive camping is allowed, however, there are no sanitary facilities or wells available. Hunting and trapping are not allowed in the northern 160 acres. No motorized uses are allowed.

Larson Lake County Park is a 7 acre park located about one mile south of the junction of CTHs K and H. It provides a picnic area, well, fishing area, an ADA compliant restroom, and parking.

Prairie River Dells Scenic Area is a 30 acre facility located about 8 miles northeast of Merrill. Primarily this area is open space for trout fishing and nature viewing. A parking area is provided, along with 2 platforms for scenic viewing, one of which is ADA compliant.

Spirit Falls Scenic Area is a 30 acre site located in the Town of Tomahawk. Primarily this area is open space and provides access to the Spirit River.

Underdown Recreation Forest and Multi-purpose Recreation Area is a recreation area with more than 7,000 acres located in the Towns of Birch, Schley, and Merrill. Trails exist for hiking, cross-country skiing, fat biking, snowshoeing, horse riding, snowmobiling, winter ATV and mountain biking. The Underdown Horse Club and Lincoln County Forestry Department provide horse trail markers and maps for guidance on 22 miles of equestrian trails. The Lincoln County Forestry Department signs and maintains the three loops of ski trails that cover 20 miles. The mountain biking trails cover 30 miles, including 10 miles of single track. The Northcentral Chapter of Wisconsin Off-Road Bicycling Association (WORBA) and Lincoln County have produced maps

for these trails. All trails allow hiking, and are open to hunting and fishing during the open seasons. The trail head area is 6 acres and has a primitive camping area with 11 sites, a well and ADA sanitary facilities. Parking is available for over 100 vehicles.

Table 2 lists existing county parks and their facilities and Map 2 identifies their location in the county.

Facilities	New Wood	Haymeadow	Jack Pines	Otter Lake	Tug Lake Recreation Area	Roothouse	Larson Lake	Underdown Trail Head
# of Camping Sites	7	-	-	25	-	-	-	11
Acres	15.7	6	7	20	25	320	7	6
Town	Rock Falls	Schley	City of Merrill	Harrison, Skanawan	Rock Falls	Harrison	Birch	Birch
Restroom	X	X		X	X		X	X
Picnic Area with grills	X	X		X	X		X	
Fishing	X			X	X	X	X	
Boating	X			X	X	X	X	
Boating Ramp	Good Condition			Good Condition	Good Condition			
Swimming Beach				X	X			
Trails	X		X	X		X		X
Usage Pressure	Heavy	Moderate	Moderate	Heavy	Heavy	Moderate	Heavy	Heavy
Playground	X				X			
Shelter	2				X			

Normal Park's ownership was transferred from Lincoln County to the City of Merrill in 2009.

Lincoln County Fairgrounds' ownership was transferred from Lincoln County to the City of Merrill in 2015, and renamed: Merrill Festival Grounds.

US Hwy 8 Wayside

The Lincoln County Highway Dept. accepted jurisdictional transfer of the 1 acre former State DOT wayside at the intersection of CTH A and USH 8. They receive assistance from the City of Tomahawk to maintain this facility.

COUNTY FOREST

The Lincoln County Forestry Department manages 100,843 acres of county forest. This land is managed for multiple uses, and is open to public access. Some of the county forest is closed to motorized vehicles. Examples of permitted recreational activities are hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling, ATVing, camping, bough cutting (permit required), firewood collection (permit required), and wildlife observation. Refer to Map 5 for Lincoln County Forest Blocks.

The Lincoln County Forest Access Plan was created in 2004 to provide direction to the present and future Forestry Committees and resource managers working on the County Forest. The Access Plan provides balanced access to a wide variety of groups while still protecting the natural resource. The responsibility to protect those natural resources is a shared duty between Lincoln County and the public who use this forest. The Access Plan was developed over a 2 ½ year process by a 10 member Citizen Advisory Group and a Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Committee member. The representatives of all groups were elected by their peers. This group was assisted, for technical information, by a support team comprised of DNR and County staff.

Camping on County Forest Land

Overnight camping, including tents, trailers, cars and trucks may be permitted in the County Forest without charge for a period of no more than 14 days. Any camper who violates the rules of good conduct, including cutting or defacing timber, carelessness with fire, violation of game and fishing laws of the State, or improper disposal of garbage and litter shall be subject to ejection from the County Forest and subject to the penalties provided by County and State laws.

When camping near lakes on the County Forest, blocking roads, parking areas, or lake access is not permitted. Due to the small size of the landings, camping is **not** allowed at the following lakes: High Lake, Fox Lake, Moraine Lake, Henson Lake, and Kordick Lake.

FORESTED LANDS – NOT STATE or COUNTY OWNED

Forested lands that may be open to the public but are not part of the county forest are privately held lands by individuals and corporations that are enrolled in either the Forest Crop Law or the Managed Forest Law. Currently, lands can only be newly enrolled in Managed Forest Law.

Under the Forest Crop Law (FCL), as of February 25, 2016, there were 18,046 acres that are open to the public to hunt and fish. In 2016, there were also 57,498 acres enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program that are open for foot travel by the public for hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, sightseeing, and hiking (make sure the land is enrolled as open), and 86,791 acres that are closed to public access. All MFL program participants can restrict access without penalty to the landowner to areas that are within 300 feet of any building or harvesting operation.

Snowmobiles, ATVs, bicycles, and other motorized and non-motorized vehicles are prohibited on enrolled lands that are open to the public.

Access is allowed by foot travel only without landowner permission.

Contact the WDNR to find what land is available to the public for the recreational purposes of hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing, and sightseeing.

SCHOOL DISTRICT FACILITIES

The Merrill and Tomahawk area school districts provide additional local recreation opportunities. School yards often have playgrounds with play equipment, ball diamonds, and basketball hoops. These neighborhood parks range in size from 1 to 15 acres. The Tomahawk district has 3 such facilities, while the Merrill district contains 8 sites. Both school districts have school forests. These forests are open to the public for a variety of recreational and educational uses.

The Evjue Memorial Forest is owned and operated by the Merrill Area Public School District. The forest includes 764 acres located off of Hwy 107 across from New Wood County Park. Most of the land and most of the funds to build the present lodge were provided by William Evjue, an 1899 Merrill graduate. Nels P. Evjue, his father was a lumber scaler in Merrill. There are over 10 miles of maintained logging trails which double as hiking and cross country ski trails. The trails may be used by the public and are used every school day by students. There is a woodland pond, many bridges, the Ice Age Trail, a Cordwood Shelter and many signs and sightings of wildlife. Trail maps are available. No hunting is allowed. The forests are logged with the assistance of a DNR forester. Contact the Merrill school district (www.maps.k12.wi.us or 715-536-4581) for rules of use on school forest lands and renting the facilities.

The Tomahawk School Forest is 440 acres located off from Wilson School Drive in sections 29 and 32 of T35N R5E. The forests are logged with the assistance of a DNR forester. Contact the Tomahawk school district (715-453-5555) for rules of use on school forest lands.

The Merrill School District maintains the following outdoor facilities:

- 5 elementary school playgrounds and 1 Head Start/Early Childhood Facility
- 1 Middle School Facility
- 1 High School Facility
- Varsity football field & track
- 1 softball field
- 1 baseball field
- 3 soccer fields

The Tomahawk School District maintains the following outdoor facilities:

- 1 elementary school playground
- 1 Middle School Facility
- 1 High School Facility
- Varsity football field & track
- 3 softball fields
- 1 baseball field
- An open play/practice area the size of about 1 football field

Treehaven is a residential natural resources education and conference facility that is owned and operated by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, College of Natural Resources (CNR). The Treehaven certified Tree Farm is a 1,400 acre working forest, with on-going research projects, education activities, and forest management demonstration areas. CNR Students majoring in natural

resources either attend a field station not in Lincoln County, or attend one of two six-week summer field experiences at the UWSP-Treehaven Campus. Treehaven has two newly remodeled dormitory style lodging facilities, and two upscale cottages that can comfortably sleep a total of 120 participants. The Young Lodge provides on-site food service, a recreation lounge, and study library. The classroom center contains offices, 8 classroom/meeting rooms, and a computer lab. The Vallier Auditorium can accommodate up to 150 people and is complete with the latest in audio/visual equipment. Over 10 miles of trails traverse the property and are open to the public for hiking and cross country skiing for a nominal fee. Treehaven is open to the public for a variety of recreational and educational uses. Contact Treehaven for availability, and rules of use on their property (phone: 715-453-4106) or via the web at www.uwsp.edu/cnr/treehaven.

CITY and TOWN FACILITIES

City of Merrill Park System

The City of Merrill maintains the following parks, forest, and fairgrounds. The City maintains their own outdoor recreation plan where recommendations are listed.

Memorial Forest Wildlife Area (Refer to Map 4) – This 920 acre facility is located about 6 miles northeast of the City along the Prairie River, and partially adjoins the Underdown block of county forest. This area provides for hunting and nature site seeing and has gated access the majority of the time. In addition, a snowmobile trail passes through the property.

Normal Park – Ownership of this park transferred from Lincoln County to the City of Merrill in 2009. This 2 acre facility is located in the City of Merrill and contains a gazebo, an outdoor ice skating rink with warming shelter, disabled accessible picnic area, and a youth baseball/softball field.

Gerbert Park – This facility is 15 acres and is located south of the Wisconsin River. It is a conservation park and has nature trails available.

Athletic Park – Athletic Park is a 5 acre, community-wide special park located on the corner of Sixth and Logan Streets. Athletic Park has a lighted baseball field, restrooms and a concession stand with an announcer's booth.

Cenotaph Park – This is a 0.25 acre memorial dedicated to veterans. It is located on the corner of Prospect Street and Highway 64.

Polk Street Tennis Court & Skate Park – This one acre park is located along the Prairie River just east of Stange Kitchenette Park. The park contains a lighted tennis court and lighted skate park.

Otts Park – This 9 acre park is located on the west side of the City along the Wisconsin River. This park has playground equipment, a softball field, boat landing, picnic areas, volleyball courts, horseshoe pits, sheltered picnic area with water and electricity, and tennis courts. Restroom facilities are available.

Riverside Park – This 22 acre park is located in the southeast portion of the City along the south shore of the Wisconsin River. This park has a boat landing, picnic areas, volleyball court, horseshoe pit, disc golf, playground, and picnic shelter with water and electricity. Restroom facilities are available.

Stange Kitchenette Park – This 6 acre park is located just south of Stange Park along the Prairie River. This park has a kitchen shelter (meeting ADA standards) with water and electricity that people can rent out, restroom facilities, parking, playground equipment, volleyball court, and horseshoe pit.

Streeter Square Park – This 2 acre park is located just north of downtown. A playground, basketball court, and youth baseball field are available at this park.

Lions Park – This 13.8-acre park is located in the central portion of the City. It has an outdoor ice skating rink, and warming shelter. In addition, there is a hill for sledding during the winter months. In the summer, there are five little league baseball diamonds. Restroom facilities and a parking lot with handicap reserve spots are also available.

Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC) – This facility covers 96 acres and is located on the west side of the City north of the Wisconsin River. The Smith Center in the MARC houses the ice rink, community room, a convention area during non-ice months, and a concession kitchen. The MARC also includes four softball fields for youth, 2 multi-purpose baseball/softball fields, one baseball field, two sand volleyball courts; three soccer fields, playground equipment, a picnic shelter, and a 2.5 mile trail (walking, biking, skiing) that connects to the adjacent Council Grounds State Park.

Stange Park – This 11.6-acre park is located in the central portion of the City along the Prairie River. This park has an outdoor swimming pool and wading pool, tennis courts, basketball court, playground, a picnic shelter with water and electricity, cooking grills, walking bridge over the lagoons, and restrooms.

The **Merrill Festival Grounds (formerly the: Lincoln County Fairgrounds)** is approximately a 26 acre facility located in Merrill. In June 2015, the City agreed to take over ownership and maintenance of these grounds, so this is now a City park. Existing facilities include a grandstand (grandstand was destroyed by Nature, and is planned for re-construction); three restrooms (two of them are ADA compliant); a livestock barn with 5 wings for cattle, horses, pigs, and sheep; a poultry and rabbit exhibition building; 3 exhibition structures for displays; a historical school house; and an office building. The Lincoln County Humane Society opened their new facility on the northeast corner of the grounds in 2015.

City of Tomahawk Park System

City of Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan Issues related to outdoor recreation are listed in Chapter 4 – Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment. Parks described here are maintained by the City, which also has a separate Outdoor Recreation Plan where recommendations are also listed. Refer to Map 5.

Kwahomot Water Ski Park – This 2 acre facility has boat access, restrooms, bleachers for viewing the ski shows, concession stand, and a swimming beach.

Memorial Park – This 4 acre park has fishing areas, informal play area, picnic area, restrooms, playground, shelter, and volleyball courts.

Frenchtown Park – This 3 acre park has informal play area, playground, picnic area, softball field, and tennis court.

Sunset Boulevard (Squaw Point) – This 6 acre park along Kings Drive by the school complex is undeveloped land.

Jersey City Park – This 5 acre park has a fishing area, informal play area, picnic area, and a swimming beach.

Water Utility Park – This 7 acre park has a picnic area.

Frenchtown Beach – This 2 acre park has a basketball court, fishing area, picnic area, and swimming beach.

Washington Square – This 2 acre park has basketball court, informal play area, picnic area, playground, shelter, and restroom facility.

Bradley Park – This 110 acre park is located in the southwest corner of the City on Lake Mohawksin. It has a number of amenities for winter and summer activities: biking trails, boat access, fishing areas, hiking trails, informal play area, nature trails, picnic area, playground, restrooms, a picnic shelter and an enclosed shelter, and a swimming beach.

Pride Park – This 7 acre park has an outdoor hockey rink, ice rink, informal play area, picnic area, playground, restrooms, skateboarding facility, and Tyler Kahle Field (a fee-use facility).

SARA Park – This 26 acre park is located on Lake Mohawksin. It has biking trails, boat access, fishing area, indoor ice rink, playground, picnic area, restrooms, softball field, swimming beach, dog park, volleyball courts, and 10 open air camping pads. Banquet and exhibition activity building is also present.

Town Parks

Many of the towns maintain public access points to water bodies. Most public access points are shown on Map 3.

Echo Lake Park – T. Russell – This wayside park has a picnic area, boat landing, and a swimming beach.

Gleason Community Park – T. Russell – This 20 acre park includes an informal play area, picnic area, restrooms, three softball fields, volleyball courts, and race track, and concession stand. There is also a building with indoor restroom, kitchen, and bar facilities.

Harrison Park – T. Harrison – This park has a picnic area, restrooms, and softball fields.

Pine Lake Park – T. Harrison – This wayside park’s amenities include a boat access, picnic area, privy facility, and swimming beach.

Pine River Park – T. Pine River – This park’s amenities includes a boat access, picnic area, and snowmobile trails.

Crystal Beach – T. Bradley – This 7.7 acre park, located in the extreme north central portion of the Town has a boat access, restrooms, shelter, picnic area, and swimming beach.

Kahle Park – T. Bradley – This 7.9 acre park, located south of the intersections of STH 107 and CTH S, in the southeastern portion of the Town, has an informal play area, picnic area, playground, restrooms, shelter, softball fields, and tennis courts.

Thiesen Park – T. Bradley – This 17 acre park, located in the north central portion of the Town, has an informal play area, picnic area, playground, restrooms, shelter, and softball fields.

STATE FACILITIES

The State of Wisconsin, primarily through the Department of Natural Resources, holds several tracts of land within Lincoln County as shown on Map 3. This land is open to the public for a variety of uses. Boundary signs posted near parking lots and along borders explain the uses on that parcel.

State Park

Council Grounds State Park consists of 508 acres and is located near the City of Merrill. Facilities include a 52 site family campground, group campground, showers, restroom, swimming beach, picnic areas, shelter house, boat landing, hiking and cross country ski trails and a playground.

State Wayside

There is a 1 acre State DOT wayside at the intersection of CTH A and USH 8.

State Fishery Areas

State fishery areas have been purchased to help preserve and manage headwaters and springs that often form the biological base for stream fisheries. These lands protect and improve spawning grounds for lake fisheries and prevent private blocking of important waterways, game lands, and lakes. Boundary signs posted near parking lots and along borders explain the uses on that parcel.

Alta Springs Fishery Area – Size: 138 acres located in the Town of Birch among the Prairie River Fishery Area.

Big Rib River Fishery Area – Size: 93,747 acres located in the Town of Corning.

Spring Lake & Prairie River Fishery Area – Size: 1,840 acres. These are parcels scattered along the Prairie River available to the public for hunting, fishing, and hiking. Also provided are parking lots at different locations.

State Wildlife Areas

State wildlife areas were acquired by the state to protect and manage important habitat for wildlife and to preserve unique wild land features for hikers, wildlife watchers, hunters, trappers, and all people interested in the out-of-doors. Wildlife areas have only minor facility development like a very small gravel parking lot.

New Wood Wildlife Area – Size: 4,635 acres. The Ice Age Trail coincides with this property, along with approximately 25 miles of hunter/hiking trails. Hiking and bird watching are available recreation at this site. Deer, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare, and timber wolves inhabit the area.

Bill Cross Wildlife Area – Size: 1,522 acres. This area is 5 miles northwest of Merrill off of STH 107. Hiking, berry picking, snowmobiling, winter ATV'ing and fishing are available recreation at this site. Deer, ruffed grouse, woodcock, snowshoe hare, waterfowl, bald eagles, and furbearers inhabit the area.

State Natural Area (SNA)

State natural areas were acquired to protect the state's natural diversity, provide sites for research and environmental education, and serve as benchmarks for assessing and guiding use of other lands in the state. Natural areas are defined as tracts of land or water, which have native biotic communities, unique natural features, or significant geological or archeological sites. These sites do not have much facility development, though there may be a designated trail on the site.

The restrictions and guidelines that follow are applicable to most SNAs, though sites owned by agencies and organizations other than the DNR may have additional rules.

- Most SNAs are open to the public year around unless otherwise noted in the SNA site descriptions or posted at the site. SNAs within State Parks are generally open between 6:00 A.M. and 11:00 P.M.
- Please recognize and respect the property of private landowners adjacent to SNAs by not trespassing. Seek the landowner's permission before crossing private lands.

- Do not collect plants (including fruits, nuts, or edible plant parts), animals, fungi, rocks, minerals, fossils, archaeological artifacts, soil, downed wood, or any other natural material, alive or dead. Collecting for scientific research requires a permit issued by the DNR.
- Vehicles, including bicycles, ATVs, aircraft, and snowmobiles, are prohibited except on trails and roadways designated for their use. Access is only by foot, skis, snowshoes, and watercraft. Some trails are wheelchair accessible.
- Pets are allowed on most DNR-owned SNAs, but must be kept on a leash no longer than 8', unless they are dogs being used for hunting purposes. Pets are prohibited on sites owned by The Nature Conservancy and most other private conservation organizations. Horseback riding is not allowed.
- Camping and fires are generally prohibited.
- Rock climbing and rappelling are prohibited, except on SNAs #98 and #164.
- Fishing, trapping, and hunting are allowed on most DNR-owned properties in accordance with state regulations.

The Department of Natural Resources listed the following SNAs within Lincoln County:

Krueger Pines SNA (No. 20) is 21 acres located in the southeast corner of Council Grounds State Park.

Lily Lake SNA (No. 555) is 80 acres located in the Town of King (T35N R7E, Sec.17).

Other State Land

Menard Island Resource Area – Size: 2,354 acres. This corridor is preserved by the DNR along the Wisconsin River in northern Lincoln County above Lake Alice. This area protects about 5.6 miles of river frontage plus an additional 7.8 miles of frontage in easements. It is open for day use only providing public hunting, trapping, fishing, canoeing, picnicking, and nature observation. Motorized vehicles are restricted to the road network.

PRIVATE OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

Several private individuals have land holdings that are open to the public for recreational purposes. The Wisconsin Public Service Corporation owns sections of varying sizes throughout the county. The Grandfather Falls Dam site is the most significant from a recreational stand point. Public Service has established the Grandfather Falls Recreation Area with ample parking, boat/canoe access, snowmobile trails, nature trails, and the Ice Age Scenic Trail.

The Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company operates recreational facilities and owns land on two reservoirs - the Rice and the Spirit. On the Rice, WVIC operates 3 access sites between Oneida and Lincoln Counties. The Rice Dam access offers fishing access, a canoe portage and parking; The Nokomis Drive Landing provides a boat launch, ADA fishing platform, picnic tables, an ADA accessible porta-potty and parking; and the Klade Road site offers walk or carry in access and parking. On the Spirit, there is a developed boat landing with parking, two ADA gravel fishing platforms and an ADA accessible porta-potty south of Highway 86 along with another site north of

Highway O providing an ADA fishing platform along with walk in fishing access, a canoe portage and parking. WVIC published: Recreation Plan for Project Lands and Reservoirs in 2009.

Packaging Corporation of America also has two sites on the Spirit Reservoir. One site off Highway E offers a boat landing, picnic area, swimming beach and parking, while the Pride Pond access area includes a boat landing, restroom, hiking trails and parking. Tenneco Packaging also developed an outdoor recreational area in the summer of 1997 encompassing approximately 50-70 acres, which includes a duck pond, nature trails, and observation locations.

Many private corporations or citizens hold forested land under the State's Forest Crop Law. Large companies such as Spirit Falls Timber, LLC, Minocqua Timber, LLC, and Wausau-Mosinee Paper Timberland hold extensive tracts scattered over the County. This land is used primarily for logging, however, lands under the Forest Crop Law are required to be open to the public for hunting, fishing.

There are 4 private golf courses – Merrill, Inshalla, Edgewater, and Club X to C.

Private Campgrounds

There are approximately 7 private campgrounds totaling 307 campsites in Lincoln County. All of these campgrounds are available for a fee to the public.

Chapter 4

OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter starts with a list of projects that were completed over the last five years to recognize what has occurred within the county.

Recreational needs within the county were identified primarily by: 1) gathering public input; and 2) through Lincoln County Forestry staff & NCWRPC staff assessments.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROJECTS COMPLETED FROM 2012-2016

Lincoln County

- Hired and maintained the services of a County Recreational Officer.
- Underdown trails have received extensive signage upgrades and have received trail improvements.
- Gates have replaced many berms on the Underdown horse trails to accommodate horse drawn wagon rides and for emergency access.
- Numerous lake access improvements were made on the county forest and countywide.
- Assistance was provided to improve Town lake access sites.
- Developed and improved trail maps using GPS data to identify trail systems and describe acceptable uses on each system.
- An open sided shelter was constructed at Jackknife Lake on the ATV/Snowmobile Trail.
- Camp Ave., Armstrong Creek Road and Horn Lake Road were opened to ATV use.
- Constructed Adirondack-type shelter at Dog Lake on the Ice Age Trail.
- An open sided shelter was constructed at the Underdown trailhead.
- A storage building was constructed at the Underdown trailhead to be utilized for trail maintenance equipment used by volunteer organizations.
- Several segments of the Harrison Hills ATV trail were rehabilitated and widened to improve trail and prepare them for UTV (side by side) traffic.
- Purchased a new X-C ski trail groomer with donated funds.
- Contracted with ATV clubs to assist with maintenance of ATV trails.
- Completed rehabilitation work on Krueger Firelane using grant dollars.
- Renovated shelterhouse roofs at Tug Lake and Newwood County Park.
- Replaced surface material in playground area at Tug Lake County Park.
- An emergency signing system that is compatible with the County's 911 system was developed and implemented on the Harrison Hills ATV Trail.
- Assisted with Regional ATV route connections on northern portion of county.
- Developed 3.4 miles of additional summer ATV trail on the northern portion of the county.
- The Ice Age Trail continues to be developed as lands become available within the corridor.

- Improvements were made to the Grandfather Falls segment of the Ice Age Trail by the mobile skills trail crew and county forestry personnel.
- Hiawatha Trail maintenance is coordinated by the Lincoln County Forestry Department.
- Developed, signed and maintained fat bike and snowshoe trails in the Underdown with volunteer assistance.
- Replaced stoplogs and made improvements to the Harrison Dam.
- Re-routed single track bike trails away from the horse trails and campground in the Underdown.
- Controlled garlic mustard, expanded and renovated parking lot, improved campsites and well at Underdown trailhead.
- Turned over county maintained snowmobile trails to snowmobile clubs.

The **Cities of Merrill and Tomahawk** both have outdoor recreation plans where their accomplishments are listed in the previous 5-years.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Informal Public Input

In the regular course of business, Lincoln County Forestry, Land, & Parks Department staff receives public input about its parks and forests.

Summary of Survey Responses

Lincoln County Forestry, Land, & Parks Department advertised the survey once in the Tomahawk Leader and once in the Merrill Courier, and had an article written in the Merrill Foto News. NCWRPC mailed survey notices & posters to each town, both cities, both libraries, and emailed or mailed survey notices & posters to a whole list of outdoor recreation groups provided by the Forestry, Land, & Parks Department.

We received 125 responses to the survey. Respondents were allowed to skip questions, so several questions had slightly smaller response groups.

About 2/3s of respondents live or have a summer home in Lincoln County, with the remaining respondents probably members of one of the contacted clubs.

Through an IP address analysis of who took the survey, it appears that only a few people took the survey twice (could be husband and wife). Nobody appears to have “stuffed the ballot box.”

Three men took the survey for every woman who took the survey, and they were from a variety of age groups.

Key Findings of the ORP Survey:

- The top recreational activities, in order, from respondents are:
 1. Walking/hiking 68%
 2. ATV / UTV Riding 65%
 3. Boating, Canoeing, Kayaking 60%
 4. Fishing 56%
 5. Hunting 51%
- Respondents were mostly satisfied with the condition of Lincoln County managed facilities. Comments said that they would like campground restrooms to be cleaner, and possibly other amenities to be available, which were specific to each campground.
- A big theme to the comments was to increase trails and amenities for ATVs and UTVs. Off-road motorcycles should also be included as part of this group.
- Bicycling improvements was the other major, but less than ATVs, theme among comments.
- Many people commented about having difficulty finding what is available for outdoor recreation. NCWRPC noticed that a countywide tourism bureau does not exist, and that neither Chamber of Commerce links to the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, & Parks website. The Merrill Chamber did not even link to the City's own recreation website.

See Attachment B for the full results from this online survey.

PAST PLAN SUMMARIES OF PUBLIC COMMENT

The Cities of Merrill and of Tomahawk both have their own outdoor recreation plans.

Lincoln County Forest Access Plan Focus Group Results

Lincoln County created this 2006-2020 plan with extensive public input over the course of 2 ½ years. Map 6 identifies each county forest block described below.

Harrison Block:

Construct multi-use shelter building in Hwy B south parking area with restroom.
Develop nature/hiking trails on Roothouse Lake property.
Reclaim Otter Run Ski Trail if/when appropriate.

Hwy 8 Block:

Work with local ATV Club to explore possibility of ATV trail in this block. ATV trail would connect to Oneida County trails.

Hwy T Block:

Work with local ATV Club to explore possibility of ATV trail in this block. ATV trail would connect Tripoli and Spirit Falls to Price County.
Continue to explore development of Spirit River property in Spirit Falls.
Monitor and plan for Spirit River property in Tripoli.

Mail Route Block:

Improve grouse habitat and hunter/walking trail system.
Maintain and make necessary improvements to Harrison Flowage habitat, dam and boat landing.

New Wood Block:

Development and maintenance of hunter/walking trails in the ruffed grouse management area.
Monitor use for possible future development at the Lincoln County Forest New Wood River access.

Pine Tree Lane Block:

Potential exists for future development on County Forest adjacent to Somo River.

Underdown Block:

Consider construction of a shelter in this block.
Monitor campground use to help plan for future needs.
Reroute trails off from roads where possible.
Continue development of single track bike trails.

Wildwood Block:

Maintain and improve where necessary snowmobile and ATV trails and routes.

OTHER PLAN REFERENCES

Map 1 summarizes the location of DNR Land Legacy areas, potential DNR State Trails, and potential trails from the NCWRPC Regional Bike Plan.

NEEDS DRIVEN PARK PLANNING

Since the 1960's, an accepted practice has been to adopt a uniform national land standard, such as 10 acres per 1000 population, for park planning. A standard amount of land for parks and recreation cannot be universal for a park. A standard land measure is only useful for specific facilities like determining how much land is needed for a specific use such as a baseball diamond. The number of baseball diamonds and other facilities are not the same among similar sized communities nationally.

The basis of this revised approach to park and recreation standards is to create a level of service as defined by the customers' needs rather than an arbitrary standard. The level of service is generated locally for each type of park, trail, or public access to a water body. Public input is collected in multiple ways and the needs for a particular park, trail, or public access to a water body are determined. When specific facilities are needed, then facility standards are used to design the facility and budget for the necessary land, materials, and labor to satisfy that need.

A needs driven and facilities based park planning approach presents the current demand for park and recreation opportunities. The size of a park site is determined by the number of facilities needed to satisfy the active recreation demand within the service area of each park, and the unprogrammed recreation land that buffers different uses within a park and which buffers the park from other non-park uses such as residential housing. Determining the space needs for unprogrammed land is subjective and objective based on first-hand knowledge of the area and how community residents and tourists use the parks. Determining how much unprogrammed land to use for buffering parks is subjective based upon how aesthetically pleasing an area should be, and what the surrounding land uses are.

The size of a park is determined by three criteria:

1. Physical geography. Does the site have steep hills, woodlands, or wetlands? Such natural features are useful for exploration, conservation, aesthetic buffers, and unprogrammed lands.
2. Park facilities. What activities are allowed or will be allowed? How much land is needed for each use?
3. Unprogrammed buffers. How much land within the park is needed to separate different uses? How much land is needed for future expansion? Maybe a park will not expand within 2-years, but within 10-20 years expansion may be imminent. When the opportunity to buy land exists, then reaction must be swift to seize the opportunity. A park growth boundary should be created for this reason.

Map 5 – Lincoln County Forest Blocks

Chapter 5

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The development of an efficient outdoor recreation plan depends upon establishing specific recreation and open-space goals and objectives from public participation. These goals and objectives are meant to guide county and local officials as they work towards providing a recreation system to meet the needs of Lincoln County's residents and visitors to the area.

Goal 1

Protect, restore, and enhance Lincoln County's natural resources for outdoor recreation.

Objectives

1. Follow Best Management Practices for water quality and for invasive species control in development of trails and recreation facilities.
2. Purchase land within county forest blocking.
3. Continue Recreational Officer position.
4. Provide for a balance of legitimate recreational opportunities to a wide variety of diverse groups and reduce user conflict by keeping incompatible uses separate from one another while still protecting the natural resources of the county in a sustainable manner.
5. Protect and preserve the environmental integrity of the natural resources in Lincoln County so future generations will have use and enjoyment of our public lands.

Goal 2

Create a one stop location for tourism and outdoor recreation information.

Objectives

1. County should investigate the creation of a countywide tourism bureau.
2. Encourage both the Merrill Chamber and the Tomahawk Chamber to create significant website links to the Forestry, Land, & Parks website for outdoor recreation information.

Goal 3

Continue to improve and develop Lincoln County's outdoor recreation facilities.

Objectives

1. Develop new facilities as outlined in 5-year Capital Improvement tables and as opportunities and funding sources become available and the ability to maintain these facilities is established.
2. Maintain and improve existing recreational facilities as outlined in 5-year capital improvement tables and as opportunities and funding sources become available.
3. Work with user groups to meet specific needs and desires for recreation on the Lincoln County Forest.
4. Continue to develop and improve all types of recreational trails.

5. Cooperate with various governmental agencies to improve all outdoor recreation facilities within Lincoln County.
6. Improve and protect access to water resources.
7. Continue to qualify Lincoln County and local governmental units for eligibility of state and federal financial aid programs which require outdoor recreational planning.
8. Continue planning and developing recreational facilities to accommodate the elderly and handicapped.

Chapter 6

RECOMMENDATIONS & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The recommendations and capital improvements are based on the goals and objectives, and the public comment documented in Chapter 4-Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment. Although it is unlikely that all recommendations presented in this plan will be undertaken in the next five years, they should be recognized as causes for action if the opportunity or need arises.

COUNTYWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

ATV / UTV Trail Development and Enhancement

ATV & UTV trail use and the need for additional places for users to ride continues to increase. Regional development of routes and trails can connect communities to each other and provide a potential economic boost to our area. Other public entities should be encouraged to help meet the needs of expanding ATV & UTV trail use by developing riding opportunities on the property that they manage. Lincoln County will continue to look at ways to enhance its current ATV trail system and will consider developing new ATV trails that will achieve community goals and not displace other recreational users. Expanding available opportunities to new uses such as dual-sport motorcycles may also be examined.

Improve Access to Water Resources

Providing for access to water has been a goal of the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Department for many years. Access to water resources for recreational opportunities will continue to be a high priority project. Full consideration to the degree of access that is capable of being provided will be given to each individual site in order to protect these resources for current and future generations. Signage should be improved to direct users to public access sites. Wisconsin Statutes [236.16(3)] requires dedication of public access in subdivisions along waterways unless there is a public access within ½ mile of the subdivision.

Remodeling existing boat ramps is as important as creating new ramps. Boat ramps throughout the County may be in need of repair per survey comments. Consider coordinating County efforts to improve boat launches with other local governments that also have boat launches in need of repair.

Create Countywide Tourism Bureau

Many survey respondents commented about having difficulty finding what is available for outdoor recreation. A countywide tourism bureau does not exist, and neither the Merrill Chamber, nor the Tomahawk Chamber websites link to the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, & Parks website. The Merrill Chamber website does not have any link to Merrill's parks either.

This recommendation is for an entity in the County to create a countywide tourism bureau to collectively promote what recreation exists and to update users on changing conditions (example: extensive tree damage in this park, closed till further notice).

Handicapped and Elderly Access

With Wisconsin's aging population, access and recreational opportunities for the handicapped and elderly will become a vital part of how recreation is managed in the state. As the population ages, the demand for more passive outdoor recreational activities and facilities may become more prevalent. Upgrades and new construction will take into consideration meeting ADA standards and fulfilling the needs of the elderly and handicapped.

Scenic Automobile/Bicycle Route

The North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle Facilities Network Plan 2004 (2004 Regional Bike Plan) describes the possibility of creating a scenic auto and bicycle route loop through the county. This tour route includes STH 107, STH 17, highways through both Merrill and Tomahawk, and a few county highways.

This recommendation suggests installing signs along the roadways shown on Map 1, and possibly creating a map outlining the route, scenic sites, and visitor amenities. The Lincoln County Wisconsin Bicycle Map in Attachment A shows which highways are most suitable for bicycling.

Bicycle Route Expansion

Creating bicycling improvements was one of the major themes of survey comments. In addition to creating the Scenic Automobile/Bicycle Route described above, Merrill has a recently completed bicycle and pedestrian plan; and some of the routes extend out of Merrill. Various governmental entities will be needed to implement bicycle accommodations on roads and highways outside of the Merrill City limits.

Ice Age Trail Development

There are still gaps in the Ice Age Trail in Lincoln County as shown on Map 1. The local chapter remains active and is encouraged to continue working with the county and private landowners to complete the trail. Since the Ice Age Trail and an ATV trail in the Harrison Hills area cross at several points, then it is recommended that the Lincoln County Forestry, Lands, and Parks Department verify that both trails are clearly marked for the continued enjoyment of both user groups.

CITY OF MERRILL RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Merrill has its own Outdoor Recreation Plan (2013-2018) and passed a resolution to have that plan added to the current county outdoor recreation plan. Most recommendations from that plan exist solely within the city limits and are not listed in this plan. Refer to Map 3 (City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation).

- General concern about snowmobile trail routes exists. A comprehensive review of snowmobile trails within the City may show a need to develop permanent trail corridors.

CITY OF TOMAHAWK RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Tomahawk has its own Outdoor Recreation Plan (2010-2015) and may have passed a resolution to have that plan added to the current county outdoor recreation plan. Most recommendations from that plan exist solely within the city limits—refer to Map 4 (City of Tomahawk Outdoor Recreation).

TOWN RECOMMENDATIONS

Towns of King

- 5 boat launches all need upgrading.

Town of Merrill

- Improve drainage and access road, develop parking area, and improve boat launch to Lokemoen Landing.

COUNTY FACILITY CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS 2017–2021

Capital improvements to parks are the addition of labor and materials that improve the overall value and usefulness of that park. Capital improvements are designed and funded individually through segregated municipal funds. Routine maintenance is considered the normal cycle of repair and upkeep for existing facilities. Routine maintenance does not increase the value or usefulness of the park, and is traditionally funded through the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Department's operations budget. Non-routine maintenance of park facilities, however, is usually considered a capital improvement item. For example, upgrading an outdoor restroom facility for universal access would qualify as a capital improvement, while repainting an outdoor restroom would be considered routine maintenance.

What is projected to occur from 2017-2021?

The following tables are Capital Improvement Plans proposed for the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Department managed recreational system. The projects are not listed in a priority and are subject to change. The Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Department created each capital improvement plan. All upgrades and new construction will take into consideration meeting ADA standards. As funds become available, the following projects will be completed.

Haymeadow County Park is a former DOT wayside with a small picnic area and restrooms. This park may see increased usage due to development at Prairie Dells Scenic Viewing Area.

Table 3 Haymeadow County Park Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2017	Estimated Cost
<i>1st Year</i>	
Replace restrooms if warranted – use may increase as a result of the Prairie Dells Scenic Viewing Area construction and signage.	\$40,000
<i>3rd Year</i>	
Upgrade or add to amenities and facilities depending on use numbers.	\$10,000
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$50,000

The Otter lake Recreational Area contains a park with a beach, restrooms, changing house and well along with a highly-used campground that allows access to the Harrison Hills ATV trail from its campsites. The lake has a boat landing site and nature trail that travels around its perimeter.

Table 4 Otter Lake Recreational Area Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2017	Estimated Cost
<i>1st Year</i>	
Improve Road through Otter Lake Campground.	\$15,000
<i>3rd Year</i>	
Improve Otter Lake boat landing and expand parking area.	\$10,000
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$25,000

Larson Lake County Park is a former DOT wayside with a picnic area and restrooms. The lake is a popular shore fishing spot.

Table 5 Larson Lake County Park Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2017	Estimated Cost
<i>1st Year</i>	
Improve access road.	\$25,000
<i>3rd Year</i>	
Replace restroom facilities in park.	\$40,000
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$65,000

NewWood County Park is located on the Ice Age Trail system, and is a well-used access point on the Wisconsin River.

Table 6 New Wood County Park Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2017	Estimated Cost
<i>1st Year</i>	
Replace surface material in playground area.	\$5,000
<i>3rd Year</i>	
Replace restroom facilities in campground area.	\$40,000
<i>5th Year</i>	
Complete renovation work on both shelterhouses.	\$10,000
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$55,000

Roothouse Lake special use area was acquired from a private party. Stipulations were placed on the management of the property by the previous owners.

Table 7		Roothouse Lake Special Use Area Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2017		Estimated Cost	
<i>5th Year</i>			
Develop nature trail on property.		\$15,000	
Develop and expand parking areas if needed.		\$15,000	
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan		\$30,000	

Plans for development at Spirit Falls have been delayed in recent years due to county budget constraints and project interest.

Table 8		Spirit Falls Scenic Area Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2017		Estimated Cost	
<i>1st Year</i>			
Construct shelter and picnic area.		\$70,000	
<i>3rd Year</i>			
Depending on use, possibly construct support facilities with water and rest rooms.		\$40,000	
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan		\$110,000	

Tug Lake Park is a popular beach destination for many Lincoln County residents.

Table 9		Tug Lake County Park Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2017		Estimated Cost	
<i>3rd Year</i>			
Replace playground equipment.		\$25,000	
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan		\$25,000	

Underdown Recreation Area continues to see increased usage for year round non-motorized activities. Trailhead and campsite improvements were completed in 2011.

Table 10 Underdown Recreation Area Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2017	Estimated Cost
<i>1st Year</i>	
Control Garlic Mustard at Trailhead.	\$10,000
Complete shelterhouse construction and landscaping.	\$20,000
<i>2nd Year</i>	
Possible second restroom by shelterhouse.	\$40,000
<i>3rd Year</i>	
Possible expansion of camping area to accommodate tent sites.	\$15,000
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$85,000

Lincoln County's 45 mile ATV trail system connects with Langlade and Oneida County ATV trails and provides access to Gleason, Parrish, Pine Lake, and Harrison.

Table 11 Lincoln County ATV Trail System Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2017	Estimated Cost
<i>1st Year</i>	
Review where county forest roads could be opened to make connections.	\$1,000
Continue to explore trail development in the towns of Wilson and Somo, specifically trail from Tripoli to Phalzgraff Road.	unknown
<i>3rd Year</i>	
Explore development of ATV trail loops off of county forest roads. (Trail development would be funded with ORV dollars).	unknown
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$1,000 + unknown

The Prairie Dells Scenic Area offers visitors sightseeing opportunities to view natural granite formations and river rapids, in addition to providing access to a Class 1 trout fishery. There are two platforms for viewing the dells area along the Prairie River at this location, one of which is ADA accessible.

Table 12		Prairie Dells Scenic Area	
		Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2017		Estimated Cost	
<i>2nd Year</i>			
Development of rustic picnic area on recently donated property.		\$20,000	
<i>3rd Year</i>			
Possible development of nature trail on donated property that connects with Hay Meadow County Park along the Prairie River.		\$20,000	
<i>5th Year</i>			
Expansion of parking area as use dictates.		\$10,000	
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan		\$50,000	

The Hiawatha Trail is a 6.6 mile hiking, biking and snowmobile trail. It travels on an abandoned railroad right-of-way from Sara Park in Tomahawk to the Lincoln/Oneida County Line where it connects to the Bearskin State Trail.

Table 13		Hiawatha Trail	
		Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2017		Estimated Cost	
<i>1st Year</i>			
Resurface trail.		\$80,000	
<i>4th Year</i>			
Replace decking on railroad trestle bridge and repair bridge as needed.		\$unknown	
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan		\$80,000 + unknown	

Chapter 7

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

There are a number of different strategies available for the implementation of this plan. This includes securing funds to carry out the five year planning program and adopting techniques to carry out the general recommendations and to move towards attainment of the goals and objectives set forth in this plan.

Attachment D provides a list of state and federal government financial assistance programs.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Shoreland Zoning

Wisconsin's Shoreland Management Program established statewide minimum standards for shoreland development. Counties are required to adopt and administer shoreland zoning ordinances that meet or exceed these minimum requirements. The statewide minimum standards for county shoreland zoning ordinances are found in Chapter NR 115, Wis. Admin. Code. Be sure to check with Lincoln County to find out about their development standards.

Public Access to Waterways

Lincoln County Subdivision Ordinance and State regulations require dedication of public access in subdivisions along waterways.

Park Dedication

Subdivision regulations can be used by counties to require residential subdividers to dedicate a portion of subdivided land for permanent park and open space use in areas which are experiencing significant residential growth. Neighborhood parks may be acquired in this manner in newly developing residential areas. Local landowners should also be encouraged to dedicate land to their communities for recreational uses. Numerous small town memorial parks have been acquired through the generosity of local citizens. If citizens are made aware of community needs, this form of private action may continue to enrich the public resources of small communities. Lincoln County will focus efforts to provide connectivity between developments/subdivisions and recreation areas through trail development. The County will support development of other recreation areas within developments/subdivisions where feasible.

Use of Easements

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

Leases

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

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

Historic Sites

Historical sites can be rewarding additions to any community's recreation program. This is especially true in areas oriented to serving a significant tourist trade. Nearly all communities in North Central Wisconsin are in this category and they should all identify their historic sites. A study of potential areas is encouraged. Assistance and guidance for the study can be obtained from the Wisconsin Council for local History, an organization affiliated with the State Historical Society and the local County Historical Society.

Program Costs

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

Capital Improvements

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

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

Monetary Aid Programs

Take advantage of state and federal financial and technical aid programs, which are designed to assist communities in meeting recreational needs and maintain community eligibility for such programs.

The Stewardship Fund is a comprehensive aid program for the promotion of resource conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities. It consists of several older aid programs such as LAWCON and Local Park Aids, combined with new programs, such as the Urban Rivers Program.

Requirements for application to the Stewardship Fund include the requirement that the applicant submits an approved comprehensive recreation plan. This plan is designed to meet that requirement. For the remaining program requirements, or additional information contact:

Community Services Specialist
Rhineland Service Center
107 Sutliff Ave
Rhineland, WI 54501

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

Lifetime Activities

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

Winter Activities

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

Snowmobile/ATV Routes

Since snowmobiles and ATVs can be considered a noise nuisance and a hazard for non-users, municipalities may wish to designate specific routes through the municipality for snowmobile/ATV use instead of designating all roads open to snowmobiles and ATVs.

Specialized Facilities

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

Municipal and School District Cooperation

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

Senior Citizen Involvement

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

Youth Programs

Few recreational opportunities have been planned for the communities' high school age youth. School activities provide most recreational outlets during winter months, but in summer there is a distinct void. This plan recommends a study to determine what recreation activities would be best received by this age and what opportunity there is to provide for them at public parks.

Service Group Involvement

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

Community Beautification

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

Adopt-A-Park Program

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

Chapter 8

PROVISIONS FOR UPDATING

Essential characteristics of any planning process includes an inventory of what exists, determining what has occurred since the last plan was created, and what is desired locally for the future. Periodic updating of the plan is necessary for continued refinement and course correction to keep the plan current.

Some of the planning recommendations will not be accomplished within this five year plan period, and additional recommendations may be added as new recreational activities are requested or the status of existing facilities changes.

Annual review of the plan recommendations and capital improvement tables by the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, & Parks Committee will keep this plan current. This review may also occur after a large turn over in elected officials after a County Board election.

Process:

1. Lincoln County Forestry, Land, & Parks Committee reviews plan and takes a vote on what changes to make.
2. Those changes and a copy of the meeting minutes are forwarded to the DNR's Community Financial Assistance staff in Rhinelander. Submission of the minutes and changes automatically constitutes DNR grant eligibility for those changes.

Establishing a **full plan update every five years** will assure that the plan reflects changes in the recreational needs of the county, and will maintain the county's eligibility for grant programs.

The review process includes surveying the local units of government, outdoor recreation groups, and the general public about what their needs are regarding outdoor recreation such as:

1. What improvements are needed to existing facilities?
2. What new facilities are necessary to satisfy demand?
3. Which potential projects fulfill this demand?

The Lincoln County Forestry, Land, & Parks Committee will review information collected from surveys, and evaluate the need for proposed projects based on standards and Goals & Objectives as outlined in this plan.

Submission of 1) the revised plan, and 2) the County Board resolution approving the plan, to the DNR is the final step to extending the ORP for another 5 years. DNR approval of the ORP will come if the correct process was followed.

ATTACHMENT A

Lincoln County Wisconsin Bicycle Map

From: Wisconsin Department of Transportation

ATTACHMENT B

Outdoor Recreation Online Survey Results

Compiled by: NCWRPC

ATTACHMENT C

Park Design and Location Criteria

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

ATTACHMENT D

Federal and State Outdoor Recreation Funding Programs

Compiled by: NCWRPC