



Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan

2007-2011

Effective January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2011

Also covering the cities and towns within Lincoln County



Prepared by: North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

Lincoln County Board of Supervisors

Curtis Powell, Chairperson
Daniel M. Caylor, Vice Chairperson

James Alber	R. Wayne Plant
Richard Berndt	Graham Rankin
David Fox	Greta Rusch
Jeff Kahle	Frank Saal, Jr.
Ronald Krueger	Gail Schneider
Robert Lee	Carl Short
Michael Loka	E. Richard Simon
Robert Lussow	Robert Weaver
Arlene Meyer	Patricia (Patsy) Woller
Ronald Mittelsteadt	William Zeitz

Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Committee

Graham Rankin - Chair
Frank Saal Jr. – Vice Chair
Richard Berndt – Secretary
James Alber
Carl Short

Technical Assistance

Jane Severt, Administrator
Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Department

Mark Dochnahl, Director
City of Tomahawk Public Works

Dan Wendorf, Director
City of Merrill Parks Department

North Central WI Regional Planning Commission Staff:

Fred Heider, Planner
Andy Faust, GISP
Matt Guptail, GIS Technician
Bernie Lewis, Office Coordinator

ABSTRACT

- TITLE:** LINCOLN COUNTY OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN
2007-2011 Effective January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2011
- 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 report to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources establishes eligibility for the County and local units of government for a variety of Federal and State Aids to purchase land and to add facilities to existing outdoor recreation lands. The Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan is required to apply for Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), and Wisconsin Stewardship Grant funding.
- 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:** December 2006
- AGENCY:** Lincoln County Forestry, Land, & Parks Department
Land Resource Center
1106 East 8th Street
Merrill WI 54452
- CONTACT:** Jane Severt, Administrator
Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Department
715-536-0327
- DISCLAIMER:** This plan was prepared by the staff of the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission under agreement with the above contact.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTERS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
- Purpose.....	1
- Statutory Base	1
- Plan Components.....	1
- Past Plans	2
2. DESCRIPTION OF LINCOLN COUNTY.....	6
- Physical Characteristics	6
- Social Characteristics	12
3. EXISTING RECREATION SYSTEM.....	16
- Introduction.....	16
- Linear Facilities.....	16
- Public Access Points to Water Bodies.....	17
- Points of Interest.....	21
- County Recreation Facilities.....	21
- County Forest.....	23
- School District Facilities	24
- Forested Lands – Not State Owned.....	24
- City, and Town Facilities.....	26
- State Facilities	29
- Private Outdoor Recreation Facilities.....	31
4. OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT	32
- Introduction.....	32
- Recommendations and Projects Completed 2002-2006	32
- Public Participation.....	33
- General County Facility Assessment.....	41
- Past Plan Summaries of Public Comment.....	42
- Other Plan References	47
- Needs Driven Park Planning.....	47
5. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.....	48
6. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	49
- Introduction.....	49
- Priority Criteria	49
- Countywide Recommendations	49
- City of Tomahawk Recommendations	51
- City of Merrill Recommendations	52
- Town Recommendations.....	52
- School District Recommendations.....	52
- Capital Improvements 2007-2011	53

7. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES	57
- Introduction.....	57
- Implementation Strategies	57
8. PROVISIONS FOR UPDATING.....	61

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Outdoor Recreation Surveys
- B. NCWRPC Summary of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2005-2010
- C. Facility Development Standards
- D. State and Federal Grant Programs

MAPS

Map 1	Potential Trails and Legacy Areas	4
Map 2	General Location	7
Map 3	Soil Suitability for Off-Road Motorized Trails.....	10
Map 4	Hazard of Off-Road or Off-Trail Erosion	11
Map 5	Outdoor Recreation	18
Map 6	City of Merrill Parks.....	19
Map 7	City of Tomahawk Parks.....	20
Map 8	Lincoln County Forest Blocks.....	45

TABLES and FIGURE

Table 1 Permanent and Seasonal Population by Lincoln County Municipality..... 13

Table 2 Population Projections by Lincoln County Municipality..... 14

Table 3 Lincoln County Civilian Labor Force Data 15

Table 4 Lincoln County Recreation Facilities..... 23

Table 5 Haymeadow County Park 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan..... 53

Table 6 Harrison Hills Forest Block 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan 54

Table 7 Larson Lake County Park 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan 54

Table 8 New Wood County Park 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan 54

Table 9 Roothouse Lake Special Use Area 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan..... 55

Table 10 Spirit Falls Scenic Area 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan..... 55

Table 11 Tug Lake County Park 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan 55

Table 12 Underdown Recreation Area 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan..... 56

Table 13 Lincoln County ATV Trail System 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan..... 56

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 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), and Stewardship Funds. 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 was prepared pursuant to Wisconsin Statute §23.30 Outdoor Recreation Program. This section serves to “promote, encourage, coordinate, and implement a comprehensive 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...”

PLAN COMPONENTS

This plan addresses the outdoor recreation needs for the entire county, including the City of Tomahawk, and the County’s 16 towns. The City of Merrill is 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 through the year 2011. A combination of public survey compilation, standards analysis, and the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (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.

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2005-2010

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

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

North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle Facilities Network Plan

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 describes how to create the specific trail segments in each county.

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 – 2021 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 2001 document clarifies the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) role and strategy in the provision of all types of trails. The plan identifies a series of potential trail corridors that would link existing trails, public lands, natural features, and communities. This statewide network of interconnected trails would be owned and maintained by municipalities, private entities, and partnerships of the two. Preserving transportation corridors, such as old rail lines, is specifically discussed as a very important strategy in the creation of recreational and alternative transportation corridors. 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 Comprehensive Plan 2006-2026

A summary of this plan's issues relating to outdoor recreation were inserted into the public participation part of Chapter 4 – Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment.

City of Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan 2006-2026

A summary of this plan's issues relating to outdoor recreation were inserted into the public participation part of Chapter 4 – Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment.

Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan 2000-2020

A summary of this plan's issues relating to outdoor recreation were inserted into the public participation part of Chapter 4 – Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment.

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.

Recreation prioritization of Land Legacy Areas is described in SCORP Chapter 3 in Attachment B. Each Lincoln County Legacy Area is summarized below with 5 stars representing the highest level for that category:

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

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. 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. Refer to Map 2 for Lincoln County's regional geography.

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.

Insert Map 2 – General Location

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 under 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.

Two soil suitability maps were generated from U.S. Soil Conservation Service data downloaded from the Internet.

Map 3 – Soil Suitability for Off-Road Motorized Trails – shows in light gray (Good) where soils with the best stability characteristics are located to develop motorized trails. Trails in Good areas require little or no site preparation. They are not covered with surfacing material or vegetation. Considerable compaction of the soil is likely. The ratings are based on the soil properties that influence erodibility, trafficability, dustiness, and the ease of revegetation. These properties are stoniness, slope, depth to a water table, ponding, flooding, and texture of the surface layer. Notice that pockets of black (Bad) exist within the Good area of the Harrison Hills. Bad shows that these soils are unfavorable for motorized trail development without overcoming the specific soil limiting characteristic at a specific site. Bad identified soils generally will need major soil reclamation, special trail design, and/or expensive installation procedures for trail development.

Map 4 – Hazard of Off-Road or Off-Trail Erosion – shows in light gray (Good) where soils with the least chance for erosion exist and are located on gradual slopes. The soil loss is caused by sheet or rill erosion in off-road or off-trail areas where the vegetative cover has been removed. Good indicates that erosion is unlikely under ordinary climatic conditions. Medium gray (Ok) indicates that some erosion is likely and that erosion control measures may be needed. Black (Bad) indicates that significant erosion is expected, off-site damage is likely, and erosion control measures are costly and generally impractical. Ordinary climatic conditions do not include very heavy rains like 100-year floods. Climate change is described briefly in the SCORP summary located in Attachment B. The Harrison Hills area is shown mostly as Ok because of topography.

See the Recommendations chapter of this plan for more description to create motorized trails in the Harrison Hills area based upon these two maps.

Map 3 – Soil Suitability for Off-Road Motorized Trails

Map 4 – Hazard of Off-Road or Off-Trail Erosion

SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Introduction

This section describes the social and economic factors that shape Lincoln County. This type of information can give a general feeling of how trends in recreational needs might be changing, because the residents are changing. Developing an understanding of these characteristics and their changes will help direct future planning efforts in the appropriate directions.

Overall recreation demand within Wisconsin is described under SCORP in Attachment B of this plan. Matching social characteristics from this section with different recreation demands as shown in SCORP Chapter 2, will start to reinforce what recreational facilities to provide.

Population

Current population, seasonal population estimates, population projections, and public participation results are all important criteria to use when considering the supply of recreational facilities. This section lists and describes the current, seasonal, and projected population levels for county and neighborhood park facility demands.

The relationship between population demographics, and supply & demand of recreational facilities is only a bare minimum guide for developing outdoor recreational facilities in Lincoln County. Understanding how each park is used, and if specific activities are in demand are better factors to use when determining future recreational facility needs. Combining population demographics from this section with public participation feedback (results are shown in the Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment chapter) will provide a complete understanding of outdoor recreational facility needs.

Both permanent and seasonal residents must be counted when considering outdoor recreation facilities. Seasonal residents pay the same amount of property taxes as residents, but the only services they pay for and do not use are the school districts.

Often a rural county's natural population change (births minus deaths) will be smaller than its net migration (people moving in minus people moving out). This trend is particularly pronounced in Lincoln County because it experienced fewer births than deaths (a negative rate of natural change). Wisconsin demographers expect the number of births to be less than the number of deaths in Lincoln County through 2030 and expect net migration to slow considerably from a projected 540 between 2005 and 2010 to a projected 395 between 2010 and 2015 (Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Bureau of Workforce Info.).

Table 1 **Permanent and Seasonal Population by Lincoln County Municipality**

Community	1990 Seasonal + Permanent = Total Pop.	2000 Seasonal + Permanent = Total Pop.	# and % Change
Lincoln County	6,555 + 26,993 = 33,548	4,795 + 29,641 = 34,436	888 / 2.65%
Merrill, City	30 + 9,860 = 9,890	44 + 10,146 = 10,190	301 / 3.04%
Tomahawk, City	168 + 3,328 = 3,496	99 + 3,770 = 3,869	373 / 10.66%
Birch, Town	132 + 675 = 807	151 + 801 = 952	145 / 17.96%
Bradley, Town	1,945 + 2,231 = 4,176	1,220 + 2,573 = 3,793	-383 / -9.17%
Corning, Town	227 + 795 = 1,022	224 + 826 = 1,050	28 / 2.69%
Harding, Town	272 + 283 = 555	238 + 334 = 572	18 / 3.17%
Harrison, Town	1,141 + 660 = 1,801	734 + 793 = 1,527	-275 / -15.25%
King, Town	743 + 675 = 1,418	151 + 842 = 993	-425 / -29.96%
Merrill, Town	168 + 2,716 = 2,884	127 + 2,979 = 3,106	222 / 7.70%
Pine River, Town	75 + 1,552 = 1,627	73 + 1,877 = 1,950	323 / 19.84%
Rock Falls, Town	236 + 463 = 699	409 + 598 = 1,007	309 / 44.19%
Russell, Town	82 + 671 = 753	102 + 693 = 795	42 / 5.62%
Schley, Town	61 + 838 = 899	71 + 909 = 980	82 / 9.07%
Scott, Town	42 + 1,210 = 1,252	25 + 1,287 = 1,312	60 / 4.78
Skawanaw, Town	223 + 312 = 535	168 + 354 = 522	-13 / -2.41%
Somo, Town	123 + 116 = 239	59 + 121 = 180	-59 / -24.61%
Tomahawk, Town	420 + 370 = 790	421 + 439 = 860	70 / 8.88%
Wilson, Town	434 + 238 = 672	451 + 299 = 750	77 / 11.51%

Source: U.S. Census and NCWRPC

Table 1 shows historical permanent and estimated seasonal populations for Lincoln County municipalities. Seasonal populations were calculated from decennial U.S. Census data. The number of seasonal housing units was multiplied by the average household size of the permanently occupied housing units in that municipality.

Between 1990 and 2000 Table 1 shows that the City of Tomahawk gained over 300 residents, while the towns of Bradley, Harrison, and King (all near Tomahawk) lost about 300 or more residents. The City of Merrill and the Town of Pine River both gained over 300 people. The Town of Merrill gained over 200 people, and the Town of Rock Falls gained over 300 people. All other towns either gained or lost less than 100 people. Lincoln County gained more than 800 people.

Table 2 **Population Projections**
by Lincoln County Municipality

Community	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	# and % Change
Lincoln County	30,018	30,511	30,885	31,232	31,627	1,609 / 5.4%
Merrill, City	10,015	9,933	9,817	9,703	9,611	-404 / -4.0%
Tomahawk, City	3,778	3,802	3,813	3,821	3,837	59 / 1.6%
Birch, Town	791	784	775	765	758	-33 / -4.2%
Bradley, Town	2,648	2,733	2,805	2,873	2,945	297 / 11.2%
Corning, Town	829	836	840	843	848	19 / 2.3%
Harding, Town	346	359	370	381	392	46 / 13.3%
Harrison, Town	840	889	934	977	1,020	180 / 1.4%
King, Town	886	931	972	1,012	1,052	166 / 18.7%
Merrill, Town	3,013	3,059	3,094	3,125	3,162	149 / 4.9%
Pine River, Town	1,980	2,088	2,185	2,278	2,373	393 / 19.8%
Rock Falls, Town	646	696	741	785	828	182 / 28.2%
Russell, Town	703	715	725	734	744	41 / 5.8%
Schley, Town	917	929	937	945	954	37 / 4.0%
Scott, Town	1,349	1,414	1,473	1,529	1,585	236 / 17.5%
Skawanaw, Town	373	393	411	428	445	72 / 19.3%
Somo, Town	132	142	152	162	171	39 / 29.5%
Tomahawk, Town	456	474	490	505	520	64 / 14.0%
Wilson, Town	316	334	351	366	382	66 / 20.9%

Source: Wisconsin Department of Administration, 2003

Table 2 shows Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) population projections for Lincoln County municipalities. This outdoor recreation plan only covers 5 years between 2006 and 2011, but knowing possible future needs allows a facility to be designed for expansion if a projected demand exists.

Over the 20 year period shown in Table 2 the City of Merrill is projected to lose about 400 people, while the Town of Pine River (next to Merrill) is projected to gain about 400 people. Just south of Merrill is the Town of Scott, which is projected to gain about 200 people. Just to the north of Merrill is the Town of Merrill, which is projected to gain about 150 people. The towns of Harrison, King, and Rock Falls are all projected to gain about 150 people. The Town of Bradley, which surrounds the City of Tomahawk, is projected to gain about 300 people. All other communities are mostly projected to gain less than 100 people each. Lincoln County is projected to gain over 1,500 people.

Employment

All labor force estimates published from 1996 to 2004 have been revised. The annual averages in Table 3 hide seasonal fluctuations. In 2004 Lincoln County's unemployment rate peaked at 7.9 percent in March and dipped to 4.0 percent in September. The labor force estimate peaked at nearly 16,500 in July and bottomed out at just over 15,900 in September of 2004. After the recession of the early 1990s, unemployment rates fell. Rates from the first half of the current decade reaffirm that unemployment rates are a lagging indicator of economic recovery. By the time cyclical unemployment rates peak, other economic indicators have been in more encouraging territory for a while. Lincoln County's lag time seems roughly in line with other Wisconsin counties, but the labor force estimate has not been growing as quickly during this recovery as it did during the last recession recovery (DWD, Bureau of Workforce Info.).

	1995	2000	2005	% Change 1995-2005
Labor Force	15,508	16,124	15,637	0.8%
Employed	14,043	15,125	14,548	3.6%
Unemployed	1,465	999	1,089	-25.7%
Unemployment Rate	9.4%	6.2%	7.0%	

Source: DWD, Bureau of Workforce Information, Local Area Unemployment Statistics, March of year; and NCWRPC

Transportation

Lincoln County is bisected by expressway USH 51 that runs north and south in the center of the county. State highway 64 runs east/west through the County at the City of Merrill. U.S. Highway 8 runs east/west through the County just north of the City of Tomahawk. State highways 107 and 17 along with CTH A form a circular auto tour. There is one Wisconsin River bridge (CTH E) between Merrill and Tomahawk, which bisects the county from north to south for about 17 miles. Few through roads of any kind exist in the west central part of Lincoln County. The agricultural southern third of Lincoln County has the most complete network of through roads and highways.

Both cities in Lincoln County have utility airports for 6 person or less airplanes that have a maximum takeoff weight of 12,500 pounds or less, which are used for crop dusting, recreation, and business. The closest passenger service airports to Lincoln County are the Rhinelander/Oneida County Airport (RHI) in Rhinelander, and the Central Wisconsin Airport (CWA) in Mosinee.

Several large dams in Lincoln County create lakes used for water recreation. Many boat landings exist throughout the county on these reservoirs and other waterbodies.

Land-Use

The dominant land-use in the northern two thirds of Lincoln County is forestry, with the southern third in agriculture. Lincoln County is approximately 72% forested, 22% agricultural lands, 3% surface water, with the remaining 3% mainly in urban land uses. Only a small fraction of land is governmental (besides the county forest lands), industrial, or commercial land uses, which mainly reside in Tomahawk and Merrill.

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.

Existing recreation facilities are grouped under the following headings: Linear Facilities; Public Access Points to Water Bodies; Points Of Interest; County Recreation Areas; Forested Lands – Not State or County Owned; School District Facilities; City, and Town Facilities; State Facilities; Federal Facilities; and Private Outdoor Recreation Facilities.

LINEAR FACILITIES

Rustic Roads: Lincoln County has 1 rustic road. Rustic Road 78 is 2 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. A tower on Lookout Mountain offers tremendous views. 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 county 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. 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. Harrison Hills ATV Trail is 45 miles long. The summer ATV trails are closed from December 1st to May 1st of each year. 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 5.7 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).

Snowmobile Trails – Lincoln County has approximately 305 miles of designated snowmobile trails that are part of the State snowmobile aid program, along with approximately 100 miles of club trails. About 196 miles of these snowmobile trails are also winter ATV trails.

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*. 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.

Map 5 – Outdoor Recreation

Map 6 City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation

Map 7 City of Tomahawk Outdoor Recreation

POINTS OF INTEREST

Lincoln County contains both historic and contemporary points of interest of cultural, aesthetic, recreational, and scientific importance. A number of private sites are open to the public, while others in private ownership are closed.

A) Historic Buildings

The City of Merrill Intensive Survey Report Architectural and Historical Survey Project, 1992 identifies buildings, sites, or structures within Merrill's city limits that are potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as part of a historic district. About 125 structures of historic significance were identified. The majority of these are located in 5 proposed historic districts.

Tomahawk still has many buildings that date from the time around the turn of the twentieth century when the city enjoyed its most rapid growth. There are 80 structures listed on the Architecture & History Inventory (AHI). Particularly in the Wisconsin Avenue business district there is a significant concentration of older and historic buildings that represent a remnant of the city's heyday early in the 20th century. These buildings are an expression of the city's origins in the lumbering era and are an intrinsic part of its character.

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.

COUNTY RECREATION FACILITIES

Camp Newood 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 20 acre park located in the northeast portion of the City of Merrill. This park is used in winter mainly for sledding, and walking during the other seasons.

Normal County Park is a 2 acre facility located in the City of Merrill. This park contains an outdoor ice skating rink and a disabled accessible picnic area.

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 25 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, horse riding, snowmobiling, 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. Primitive camping areas exist with a well and ADA sanitary facilities. Parking is available for 100 vehicles.

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

Table 4 lists existing county parks and their facilities and Map 5 identifies their location in the county.

Table 4 Lincoln County Recreation Facilities

Facilities	Camp Newwood	Haymeadow	Jack Pines	Normal	Otter Lake	Tug Lake Recreation Area	Roothouse	Larson Lake
# of Camping Sites								
Acres								
Town	Rock Falls	Schley	City of Merrill	City of Merrill	Harrison, Skanawan	Rock Falls	Harrison	Birch
Restroom	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	
Usage Pressure	Heavy	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Heavy	Heavy	Moderate	Heavy
Playground	X					X		
Shelter	2					X		
Dump Station								

COUNTY FOREST

The Lincoln County Forestry Department manages 100,805 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 Maps 5 and 8 for Lincoln County Forest Land.

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 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. 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 enrolled in Managed Forest Law.

Under the Forest Crop Law (FCL) 39,951 acres are open to the public to hunt and fish in 2006. There are 43,545 acres enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program that are open to the public for hunting, fishing, cross-country skiing, sightseeing, and hiking (make sure the land is enrolled as open), and 62,291 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.

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 Merrill 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 NewWood 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 who's 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 forests are logged with the assistance of a DNR forester. The money earned helps purchase skis, snowshoes, and other major purchases. In 2000-2001 over 5015 students, 400 parents, 220 teachers and 150 guests visited the school forest. Many classes stay overnight with their teacher. Contact the Merrill school district for rules of use on school forest lands.

The Tomahawk School Forest is 440 acres located off from Wilson School Drive in sections 29 and 32 of T35N R5E. Contact the Tomahawk school district for rules of use on school forest lands.

The Merrill School District maintains the following outdoor facilities:

- 8 elementary school playgrounds
- Varsity football field & track
- 1 softball field
- 1 baseball field
- 3 soccer fields

The Tomahawk School District maintains the following outdoor facilities:

- 3 elementary school playgrounds
- Varsity football field & track
- 3 softball field
- 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). Treehaven rests on a glacial ridge overlooking 1,400 acres of forest and wetlands. CNR Students majoring in natural resources attend one of two six-week summer sessions at Treehaven. The Young Lodge provides food service, a lounge, and library. The classroom center contains offices and up to 8 classroom-meeting rooms and a computer lab. The assembly hall can accommodate up to 150 people. Eight miles of maintained trails traverse the property and are open to the public for hiking and cross country skiing for a nominal fee when students are not present. Treehaven is open to the public for a variety of recreational and educational uses. Contact Treehaven for rules of use on their property.

CITY and TOWN FACILITIES

City of Merrill Park System

City of Merrill 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.

Memorial Forest Wildlife Area (Refer to Map 5) – 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.

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 announcers 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 Skate Park – This 0.8 acre park is located on the corner of Polk Street and Highway 64. It has lighted skate park facilities, picnic area, informal play area, shelter, and sanitary facilities.

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, 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, playground, and picnic shelter with water and electricity. Restroom facilities are available.

Stanges Kitchenette Park – This 6 acre park is located just south of Strange’s 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 east of downtown. A playground and softball fields are available at this park.

Lion's 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 T-ball diamonds. Restroom facilities and a parking lot with handicap reserve spots are also available.

Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC) – This facility covers 97 acres and is located on the west side of the City north of the Wisconsin River. The Park has the Smith Center which houses the ice rink, community room, a 22,500 foot convention area during non-ice months, and a concession kitchen. The Park also includes four softball fields for youth, 3 adult softball fields, four sand volleyball courts; four soccer fields, playground equipment, a picnic shelter, and a 1.2 mile trail (walking, biking, skiing) that connects to the adjacent Council Grounds State Park.

Stanges Park – This 11.6-acre park is located in the central portion of the City along the Prairie River. This park has a swimming pool, two tennis courts, basketball court, playground, three bike racks, parking lot (with handicap spaces), a shelter with electricity and picnic tables, cooking grills, and restrooms.

City of Tomahawk Park System

City of Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan Issues related to outdoor recreation are listed in Chapter 4 – Outdoor Recreation Needs Assessment.

Kwahomot Water Ski Park – This 2 acre facility has boat access, restrooms, bleachers for viewing the ski shows, 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 courts.

Squaw Point Park – This 6 acre park has a picnic area.

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 area park has basketball court, informal play area, picnic area, playground, shelter and restroom facility.

Bradley Park – This 110 area 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, snowmobile trails, cross country ski trails, and a swimming beach.

Pride Park – This 7 acre park has basketball courts, ice rink, informal play area, picnic area, playground, restrooms, softball fields, tennis courts, and skating/rollerblade facility.

SARA Park – This 26 acre park is located on Lake Mohawksin. It has biking trails, boat access, fishing area, indoor and outdoor ice rinks, playground, picnic area, restrooms, softball field, swimming beach, volleyball courts, and 10 open air camping pads. Banquet/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 5.

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 5. 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 503 acres and is located near the City of Merrill. Facilities include a 55 site campground with restrooms, showers, swimming beach, picnic areas, shelter house, boat access, shelter buildings, and a physical fitness trail.

State Wayside

There is a 1 acre 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.

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

Spring Lake & Prairie River Fishery Area – Size: 34,124 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: 1,600 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: 1,485 acres. This area is 5 miles northwest of Merrill off of STH 107. Hiking, berry picking, snowmobiling, 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 one area within Lincoln County:

Krueger Pines SNA is located in the southeast corner of Council Grounds State Park.

Other State Land

Menard Island Resource Area – Size: 2,094 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 DNR has a cooperative agreement with the Wisconsin Public Service to manage a 700 acre tract of Public Service land west of the Council Grounds State park. This area will also be open to the public for hunting.

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. On the Spirit, there is a developed boat landing with parking, along with another site north of Highway O providing fishing access and parking. WVIC published: Recreation Plan For Project Lands and Reservoirs in July 1998.

Packaging Corporation of America also has two sites on the Spirit Reservoir. One offers a boat landing, swimming beach, picnic area, and parking, while the other is an unimproved site providing fishing access 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 Tomahawk Highlands, Tomahawk Timber Lands, and Wausau-Mosinee Paper Mills 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, skiing, nature observation, etc.

There are 4 private golf courses – Merrill, Inshala, 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.

OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

First, a listing of recommendations and projects accomplished in the last five years exists to understand what has happened since the last outdoor recreation plan was created. Then collecting public input, creating a county facility assessment, and reviewing past plans – including the Wisconsin SCORP 2005-2010, identified recreational needs within the county.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROJECTS COMPLETED FROM 2002-2006

Lincoln County

- Constructed 2 viewing platforms, nature trail, and signage at the Prairie River Dells Scenic Area.
- 30 miles of ATV trail were created.
- Lake access improvements were made countywide. Town lake accesses were also improved.
- Extensive trail signage has occurred to keep motorized and non-motorized areas separate.
- Developed maps to identify trail systems, and described acceptable uses on each trail system.
- Created a County Forest Access Plan.
- Work has been ongoing on the USH 51 corridor snowmobile trail – funding has been secured for the final segment from North Star Rd (CTH C) to Irma.
- Underdown Recreation Area road improvements were made for better lake access.
- Tug Lake restroom/changing facility will be renovated. Funding was secured for completion in 2007.
- NewWood Forest Block access was constructed with parking on New Wood River for canoe launch and shore fishing.
- NewWood Park boat landing and parking area were renovated.
- The Recreation Officer position was created by the County Board approved 2007 Budget.
- Trails have received extensive signage to identify each trail and the appropriate uses.
- A new Forest Administrator has been hired with outdoor recreation and forestry backgrounds, so a second position titled County Parks and Recreation Specialist will not exist.
- The Ice Age Trail continues to be developed as lands become available within the corridor.
- Hiawatha Trail maintenance is coordinated by the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Department.
- Two scenic viewing platforms (1 is ADA compliant) were constructed at the Prairie River Dells Scenic Area.

City of Tomahawk

- Constructed 10 open air camping pads in SARA Park.
- Washington Square play equipment was replaced.
- Kwahamot Water Ski Area received a new concession stand in 2005.
- Frenchtown Park play equipment was replaced.
- Bleachers and dugouts were installed for the ball fields in SARA Park.
- Pride Park play equipment was replaced.
- Bradley Park restrooms were made ADA compliant.

City of Merrill

The City of Merrill has its own outdoor recreation plan. Completed recommendations and projects in Merrill are listed in their most current outdoor recreation plan.

Town of Bradley

- Constructed new shelter at Theisen Park.

Town of Skanawan

- Installed no littering signs at boat landing.

Town of Harrison

- Built new restrooms at Harrison Ball Park.
- Repaired beach houses at Pine Lake
- Improved boat ramps on lakes.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Informal Public Input

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

Summary of User Group Survey Responses

<u>Top 3 Outdoor Recreational Issues Facing Lincoln County</u>	<u>Priority</u>		
	1	2	3
Need for a Recreation Officer	xxx	xx	
Protection & Maintenance of Publicly Owned Resources	x		
Preserve and Protect Lake Shore & River Front property For Public Access & Use			x
Blocked Access to fishing areas	x		
Law Enforcement Dysfunction		x	
Public Hunting Areas Closing		x	
Need More Miles of ATV Trails	x		
No Need for Recreation Officer		x	
Too Much Land Claimed as Non - Motorized		x	
Damage to Environmentally Sensitive Areas	x		
Create or Maintain Large, Contiguous Blocks of Public Lands Designated for Non - Motorized Use		x	
Continuation and Upkeep of Silent Sport Areas: Bikes, hiking, horses, skiing		x	
Fragmentation of Wildlife Habitat through Expansion of Motorized Access Trails/Roads		x	
Loss of Quiet Areas Due to the Expansion of Motorized Use		x	

How to Address the Top 3 Issues Facing Lincoln County

Restore access to lakes and streams – provide reasonable vehicular access to fishing waters – small boat access that has been available for generations needs to remain or be restored.

Restore accountability in law enforcement/judicial system – terminate anyone in the system that does not do the job expected/required – impeach any elected official bypassing the good of the community – no more amnesty for habitual criminals regardless of their cooperation – higher fees for littering & blocking access.

More trails throughout the county for ATV use.

County has better use for its money than having a recreation officer – use ATV trail patrol.

Open all roads in the forests for motorized use – take down all gates and berms.

Recreation Officer and better timber sale monitoring.

Improve public access/roads to perimeter and berm/close other logging roads to restrict traffic in non-motorized areas.

Recreation Officer would help control vandalism, damage & timber theft – All user groups should help pay – sliding fee according to use – trail passes and camp fees.

Need to support each other in trail upkeep – can't afford animosity between user groups – need to keep motorized areas separate from non-motorized for public safety

Establish position of Lincoln County Recreation Officer.

Keep blocks of non-motorized areas as non-motorized.

Connect wildlife habitat with secure corridors.

Keep motorized uses a secure distance from non-motorized areas.

Improvements Needed on Parks and Forest

Recreation Officer.

Underdown area should be open for motorized use, trucks & ATVs – Ament Lake quiet area should be returned to motorized use – NewWood area should be opened up as it was in the past

Create reservable designated group campsite – Expand camping facilities at the Underdown for “public camping” near the main parking lot.

Establish campground at Larson Lake to accommodate future expansion of Ice Age Trail.

NewWood & Otter Lake should remain as is, too much development would ruin them.

Restore Prairie Dells to the top county park it was.

Horseman's park needs to be listed as open for all.

Law enforcement needs to provide un-biased coverage of all county parks & lands.

Open shelter at Underdown campground.

More usable pump at Underdown.

Corrals & hitching posts at Underdown (modeled after Wildcat Mountain & Smith Rapids horse camps).

More campsites & electricity in Underdown.

Parking areas & trails developed in Harrison Hills & NewWood for horses.

Add another 5 to 6 miles on the Underdown trail at the south end.

Trail Improvements

Upgrade trail grooming equipment on X-C trails.

Windbreak shelters on X-C trail.

Restore Otter Lake X-C trail for hiking & skiing.

Very good ski trail system – needs to be protected from motor vehicles in summer.

Four sided ATV shelter.

Keep Ice Age Trail hikable during logging & assist in the marking of IAT before & after logging.

Develop spur trails from lakes to IAT.

Develop spur trails from communities to IAT.

Save the clover seeded trails that are still evident in the Underdown.

Most people are very satisfied with horse trail, most important is having a safe place to ride with children away from motorized traffic.

Would like to have permission for accessing lakes to water horses.

Keeping trail signs intact is a problem.

Help in keeping trails clear of fallen trees, obstacles, etc.

Public Access to Water Bodies

No more development on river/lake shore – do not allow WPS to sell off anymore riverfront property for building sights.

Too many lakes that have been cut off to motorized vehicles.

All blocked accesses need to be restored.

Over development to allow RVs, landscaping, or making it open for walking is wrong and will destroy the fishing and natural aspects.

Reasonable small boat access must remain open.

Want access to lakes for watering horses.

What happened to the water bodies evaluation completed by Lincoln County Land Conservation and former administrator?

FUTURE – New Development

More nature trails – nature and wildlife viewing are expanding in popularity in other areas of the state as well as nationally and result in economic boosts to the local economy. According to a recent public television broadcast, the Crux Meadows area enjoyed a \$5,000,000.00 boost to its local economy in 2004 due to bird watching tourism. Lincoln County should be expanding and not limiting this type of land use. If however, motorized use areas continue to expand as they have, then quiet uses of those areas will be limited and lost to the general public. What we do today sets the stage for what will happen in the next 20 years.

What happened to the proposal that the county establish an annual user pass? An annual pass would guarantee monetary income while still allowing affordable access to frequent users. The annual pass could be a two or multi-tier permit. One level would admit unlimited day use, while another could also allow camping.

Lincoln County needs to determine a saturation point – when is enough recreation & development enough – suggestion, use Clark Count as an example of failure.

ATV shelter.

Something provided for ATVs.

More public hunting acquired – fishing should be top priority.

No over development for the sake of aesthetics.

Develop a campground with RV capabilities.

Use a reward program to help with bringing county land/water abusers to justice.

Keep ATV patrol, and encourage taxpayers/visitors to help with this.

If system is not fixed so that people are prosecuted justly, we may as well sell everything off.

More areas designated for silent sports.

Outhouse and water at south end of horse trail system.

In general, Lincoln County has ample opportunities for a diversity of activities; swimming, picnicking, hiking, skiing, horse riding, biking, ATV trails, snowmobile trail, fishing, hunting, and more – no one should feel left out or feel that their group is not given consideration. I'm not sure the county can provide more areas, just improve and keep up what we have.

Other Suggestions

Develop Lincoln County recreational website that contains; planned activities (rides, hikes, races), trail conditions, cautions (logging, hunting), location for information.

Hold quarterly recreational user group meetings to resolve differences and build relationships.

The lack of concrete arrest & prosecution in this county is its main detriment – we need high fines for violations, higher fines for littering & unbiased law enforcement.

Non-contributory users need to contribute – hunting, fishing, trapping, ATVs and snowmobiles pay for their sport, most others have fluctuating non-specific donations that can not be considered dependable.

Trail fees and camping fees could be a refundable deposit for county residents.

Burning permits for camping – any tire/furniture burning should come with a hazmat charge of at least \$1,000.00.

Blocking of lands & lakes due to lack of authorities doing the job they were hired or elected to do should be considered fraud against any good taxpayer.

Beware of plans to develop fishing areas by groups like Trout Unlimited – the Prairie River in Merrill has been ruined for aesthetics – water heating rocks have been added & wrecked the stream – over development for aesthetics is the worst thing for a fishery.

Horse club feels they have accomplished a lot in developing a horse trail and campground and they will continue to play an active role as long as the club exists – there is more and more interest in the trail.

Horse club agrees they need help with trail and sign upkeep – need manpower and financial help.

Realize that to have a recreation officer, shelter, corrals that some sort of trail fee and camping fee need to be collected and administered by forestry department.

We understand that since certain reinforced berms and gates have been in place, fewer trespasses and erosion problems have occurred in those areas.

Summary of County Supervisor Survey Responses

<u>Top 3 Outdoor Recreational Issues Facing Lincoln County</u>	<u>Priority</u>		
	1	2	3
Growing Pressures & Conflicts Between Various User Groups - Harmony & Cooperation Between User Groups	xx		
Budgetary Constraints to Provide Maintenance and Additional Services - Money		x	x
Environmental Protection While Servicing Ever Larger Groups of Recreational Land Users			x
Selfishness		x	

How to Address the Top 3 Issues Facing Lincoln County

Through dialogue, user input, political response and ethical action.

Those that break the rules should be ticketed with forest & trail loss of privileges for a period of time and fines.

Education.

Look for more grant money and more user fees from clubs.

Improvements Needed on Parks and Forest

It is very difficult to speak for a district as there are disparate opinions or none until a hot button issue is raised. I think users want clean, safe, comfortable parks, camping spaces with conveniences and access to water. I think that they have come to expect the use of the forest sans fees. I don't believe conflicts with other user groups leads to an enjoyable experience. I also think in my district they are not willing to pay more in taxes to enhance other's experience. Although this is general, I feel it applies to most management decisions, although there are always exceptions.

Trail Improvements

I sense the majority of the people in my district care about the environment, but they are also cost sensitive. I don't see them funding extrusive trails with expensive upkeep, but feel they would support the use of trails to help protect the general health of the forest.

Public Access to Water Bodies

Better mapping & signage, public education as to their responsibility regarding keeping these access points open, limited boat access improvement, long range plan of developing shortest route possible to access re: road maintenance costs

FUTURE – New Development

- I think a well developed campground on the waterfront would be an asset.
- There may be future motorized recreational vehicles requesting a place to go.
- Roothouse Lake area begs for a long range plan.
- The northwestern & western periphery of the county may request additional facilities in the next decade.

Other Suggestions

I will bring some to the Forestry Administrator.

Summary of Town Board Survey Responses

Rock Falls – No improvements done - Town will most likely be getting Irma Lions Ball Park to take care of in conjunction with the Town of Birch. They will be charged with annual maintenance and possibly bleacher replacement.

Schley – No improvements done - Town wants to see improvements at Prairie Dells Park; playground, picnic tables and other enhancements. They want more trails (snowmobile and ATV) and money for them and more facilities to attract people to the area.

Bradley – Town has a new shelter at Theisen Park – rest of survey is blank

King – Purchased one acre of land adjacent to town hall for future use. They plan to improve piers at public boat landings. They want to see the county keep some lands free of ATVs and snowmobiles, enforce the rules at Otter Lake, and regulate ATVs on public lands and ROWs. The town wants funding for improvements to boat landings and wants town or county regulation of ATVs.

Skawanaw – Put up no littering signs at boat landing and they want to have additional area for parking. They would like to see funds set aside to assist local clubs. They would like to see county improvement on monitoring and patrolling of Otter Lake.

Harrison – New restrooms at Harrison Ball Park, repaired/fixed up beach houses at Pine Lake, improved boat ramps on lakes. They would like to see the county use volunteer clubs and campground hosts to address their areas of concern. It would be nice if we could teach respect. Otter Lake is messy.

They are attempting to keep up maintenance on boat landings

Plan to improve fencing at baseball park
(three surveys were received from Harrison)

Top 3 Issues facing Lincoln County

	<u>Priority</u>		
	1	2	3
Water (clean water, swimming, boating, fishing)	xx		
Trails (all trails motorized and non)		x	
Land (camping/hiking)			x
ATV Trails	xx	x	
Prairie Dells Park		x	
ATV Regulation	x		
Usage of County Lands		x	
Problems at Otter Lake Park			x
Snowmobile Trails			x
Upkeep	x		
Policing		x	
Vandalism			x
Access to County Land for all people, especially elderly	x		
Extend and improve ATV system		x	
Direct access from lodging to recreation possibilities		x	
Improve ATV trails by doing some maintenance workx			

Top 3 Issues Facing Local Communities

	<u>Priority</u>		
	1	2	3
Water(clean water, swimming , boating, landings)	xxx		
Hunting/camping		x	
Ball Park in Irma			x
ATV Trails	x	x	
Snowmobile Trails		x	x
Problems with ATVs on Town Roads	x		
Park area			x
Liability	x		
Upkeep		x	
Vandalism			x
Access to County Land for all people, especially elderly	x		
Extend and improve ATV system		x	
Direct access from lodging to recreation possibilities		x	

What existing county facilities need improvement?

- 1) Monitor and patrol Otter Lake.
- 2) 65% of our town is county forest, want more access for all – Just because an area is designated for one group doesn't mean all cannot take advantage of the outdoor experience – many lakes remain unfished and that can lead to other problems.
- 3) Otter Lake Campground.

	Yes	No
Should the county purchase additional lands?	xxxx	xxx

Yes

- Pay for them out of timber sales
- Annual stickers like state parks
- Raise sales tax
- They should be managed to recover purchase price and be self sufficient

No

Maintain and manage existing forest

Open House Public Input

Two open house meetings were held. Local newspapers ran stories advertising both open houses. Area residents were able to view a draft of the proposed plan at the Merrill and Tomahawk libraries, the Forestry, Land, and Parks Department office, and on the Internet.

Comments from Tomahawk Open House meeting held between 6:00-8:00 p.m. on September 19, 2006:

- Keep Ice Age Trail in next plan.
- Add trail in Tomahawk to connect library with Hiawatha trail.
- Add ATV trail to connect Tomahawk with Harrison Hills ATV trails.

No public attendance at the Merrill Open House meeting held between 6:00-8:00 p.m. on September 21, 2006.

GENERAL COUNTY FACILITY ASSESSMENT

Staff from the Lincoln County Forestry Department projected what needs face Lincoln County. Specific park assessments exist by the capital improvement tables that start on page 48.

- Dispersed County Forest camping is creating problems at some locations, specifically close to lakes.
- Future ATV trail development needs to promote trail and route connectivity to communities, other trail systems, and facilities
- Level of trail use in the Underdown block should be monitored to help make future expansion or improvement projects more feasible and justified.
- User fees for ski, bike, and horse trails are being implemented. Monies will be used for trail maintenance and improvements or additions to these trail systems.

PAST PLAN SUMMARIES OF PUBLIC COMMENT

City of Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan Issues

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

- Creation of a walking and biking trail between the library and SARA Park.
- Establishing a second road into the hospital from the west.
- Truck traffic through intersections not designed for trucks, and traffic signals needed at:
 - Somo & North 4th St.
 - Mohawk Dr. & North 4th St.
- Groom cross-country ski trails at Bradley Park & the Tomahawk School Forest area.

Chapter 4 in the City of Tomahawk Comprehensive Plan also includes the following statement under "Comprehensive Trail Plan:"

"As part of the Comprehensive Plan process the Committee considered a trail plan that would link together parks along the Lake Mohawksin waterfront, and connect to surrounding recreational trails. This trail Plan was presented to the Parks & Recreation Committee of the City Council as well as to representatives of DNR. Approval of the Plan, including adoption as the official Tomahawk Trail Plan, was received and the Plan is included here as official City policy."

The City has a policy that permits snowmobiles and ATVs to use some city streets and certain designated trails within the city when the temperature is below 28 degrees. These routes are shown on Map 7. Not all routes noted on Map 7 as snowmobile and ATVs actually allow both.

City of Merrill Comprehensive Plan Issues

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

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

Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan Issues

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

A Public Land Users Focus Group was also created during the comprehensive planning process and their key recommendations are described below:

- Acquire gaps of available private forest land to add to the County forest system, particularly before larger private tracts are further broken up and developed.
- Provide clear guidelines that specify where exactly recreational opportunities within the County forest exist, and where different recreational uses (e.g., motorized verses non-motorized) will be allowed.
- Form a citizens advisory subcommittee comprised of public land users to advise the County Forestry Lands and Parks Committee on an ongoing basis (e.g. to identify potential use conflicts).
- Participants in this focus group represented a wide range of interests including forestry, logging, environmental, active recreation (e.g. snowmobilers), and "quiet sport" recreation (e.g. hikers). Participants began by describing what they thought to be the most important natural resources in Lincoln County, which included:
 - Lakes and rivers
 - Groundwater
 - Wetlands
 - Forests (for environmental and economic benefits)
 - Unique glaciated lands in the County (e.g. the Harrison Hills and the Ice Age Trail)

Participants had numerous comments and recommendations on the size, uses, and management of the County forest.

Regarding the size of the County forest, participants agreed that the County should be active in acquiring available private forest lands before they are broken up for other uses. The group suggested that the County should focus on acquiring gaps of privately owned forest land in between larger sections of the existing County forest system. Participants expressed concerns over the future use of private forest lands currently owned by industry, but which are now starting to be sold off and developed residentially. They identified substantial tracts of forest land that could be acquired very soon in the towns of Wilson and Bradley.

Participants believed that County purchase of more forest lands is and will be justified for these reasons:

- Anticipated growth in local population and tourism activity will place additional pressure on both private and public forest lands for development and recreational use.

- Increasing popularity of recreational activities such as snowmobiling, ATVs, and hunting will increase the amount of recreational demand.
- Anticipated removal of some private forest lands from production and/or recreational use will create greater pressure on the County forest for logging and recreation if the County forest is not expanded.

Participants believed that the County needs to be proactive in specifying where motorized versus non-motorized recreational uses should be allowed within the County forest. For example, often bicyclists want asphalt trails but snowmobile riders need natural trails – in some cases, these types of uses may need to be separated. The County should then actively enforce these decisions. The County could also better educate the public as to the availability of various recreational opportunities in the County forest. Signage indicating where public access is located and what types of recreational uses are allowed in each area would be helpful. Greater organization, coordination, and communication among the different recreational user groups are also advisable. Participants were concerned about ATV use in the County forest. Many believed that ATVs have a greater impact on the land than snowmobiles. Some indicated that ATV users have yet to be organized in the same way as snowmobile users; encouraging such organization may lessen the impact of ATVs.

Participants generally agreed that modern logging practices are consistent with long-term conservation and multiple use of the County forests. However, some felt that certain logging practices could interfere with recreational use – for example, where logging in the past has actually blocked trails. The consensus was that the County Forestry Lands and Parks Committee should better recognize and prioritize recreational use. Participants suggested the formation of a citizens' standing advisory subcommittee to the County Forestry Lands and Parks Committee that would work with their Committee and inform it of any real or potential use conflicts. Many conflicts could be resolved at the subcommittee level. Membership could be very similar to that of the Public Land Users Focus Group (e.g., different recreationalists, loggers, environmentalists).

With regard to water resource issues, participants indicated that committing resources for better enforcement of existing regulations could best mitigate impacts of shoreland development. Public education was also seen as an important tool to protect shoreland areas and adjacent waterways. Participants believed that clear guidelines for the protection of shorelands and wetlands within municipalities were also needed.

Preservation of the rural character of Lincoln County was an important goal of group members, with expansion of County forest lands being viewed as an important way to achieve that goal. Other ideas included providing rural schools in the towns encouraging consumption of local agriculture products within the region, and making cities attractive centers to encourage development there instead of rural areas.

Map 8 – Lincoln County Forest Blocks

Lincoln County Forest Access Plan Focus Group Results

Lincoln County created this plan with extensive public input over the course of 2 years. Map 8 identifies each county forest block described below.

Harrison Block:

Construct multi-use shelter building in Hwy B south parking area (funding approved July 2006).
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

NCWRPC staff created the SCORP 2005-2010 summary that exists in Attachment B.

Map 1 summarizes the location of DNR Land Legacy areas, potential DNR State Trails, and potential trails from the NCWRPC Regional Bike Plan that are all summarized in Chapter 1 – Introduction – of this Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation 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 eminent. 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.

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. A goal is a general statement of a desirable end or ultimate purpose toward which planning efforts should be directed. Goals are broad and may apply over a long time frame. An objective is a specific short-range statement of a desired end. The completion of objectives shows progress toward goal achievement.

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. These goals were designed to be consistent with the priorities as set forth in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation plan (SCORP) in order to promote better cooperation between local, county, and state efforts.

Goal 1

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

Objectives

1. Create Recreation Officer position.
2. Continue development of the Ice Age Trail.
3. Follow Best Management Practices for Water Quality in development of trails and recreation facilities.
4. Monitor development of Best Management Practices for invasive species control in Wisconsin – recreation provides many opportunities for the spread of invasive species.

Goal 2

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.
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. Research possible location for development of a campground with utilities.
5. License campground at Underdown trailhead.

These goals and objectives generally address what direction Lincoln County will take with outdoor recreation facilities over the next 5 years. Specific actions to satisfy these goals and objectives exist in the next chapter of this plan titled Planned Capital Improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The following recommendations are aimed at satisfying needs identified to build Lincoln County's status as a prime recreation and natural resource area and to provide recreation facilities for all Lincoln County residents and visitors.

The recommendations 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.

PRIORITY CRITERIA

Local officials will determine which projects will have the highest priority for funding and implementation.

COUNTYWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

Park Road Signs

Pursue installation of road signs on state and county highways to direct traffic to county parks with facilities. The two signs below show that a basic park exists with picnic tables. There are no other facilities at this wayside.

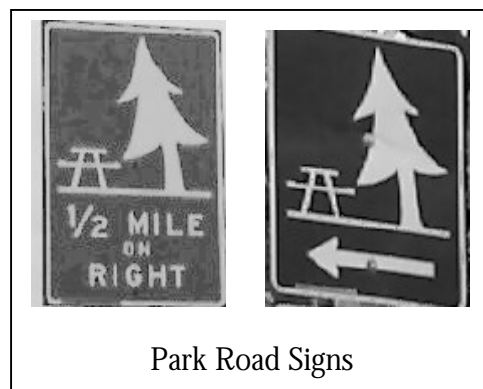
Ice Age Trail Development

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.

Scenic Automobile/Bicycle Route

The 2002-2006 Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan (2002-2006 ORP), and the North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle Facilities Network Plan 2004 (2004 Bike Plan) both stated that a scenic auto and bicycle route loop through the county.

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.



Park Road Signs

ATV Trail Development

A lot of public comment as documented earlier in this plan is in favor of existing and expanding the ATV network. Public comment also emphasizes that motorized sports and quiet sports need their separate areas in Lincoln County. The Lincoln County Forests are certified as sustainably maintained and harvested. A higher price is received by Lincoln County for timber harvests, since all the forests are certified as sustainable. This higher price paid for timber keeps taxes lower for operating county government. All types of recreation are possible in certified forests as long as trails are developed in a manner that does not erode the forest soils.

SCORP states in Chapter 4 that there are more news articles written in Wisconsin about outdoor recreation conflict than in the states of Illinois, Michigan, and Minnesota combined. Tables 19 and 20, shown in Attachment B, summarize what outdoor recreation experts think about how compatible some main recreation activities are with each other. SCORP Figure 4-3 in Attachment B, shown next to Tables 19 and 20, summarize outdoor recreation user perceptions of activity compatibility for some sports.

Both antagonistic and non-antagonistic recreation interactions will best be addressed through proper recreation planning, and through careful selection of non-antagonistic recreation activities for a specific forest area or park to mitigate unintentional antagonism between different uses. This means that motorized and non-motorized uses should not exist on the same trails in the same seasons of the year. SCORP Chapter 4 states that recreation activity pairs in Table 19 that fall below "4" are likely incompatible. The most appropriate management action for these activities will generally involve segregating uses and managing interactions with other activities through regulation, interpretation, and voluntary restrictions (SCORP p.4-9).

Map 3 and 4, as shown and described earlier in this plan, show the soil limitations for motorized trail development. The Harrison Hills show up as both good and bad because of topography and soil type. Generally, when users stay on appropriately designed trails, then the forest can maintain sustainability certification because the forest remains healthy.

Careful trail development in appropriate forest areas, outdoor recreation user respect for others and respect for the forest, and clear separation of motorized and not-motorized trails will maintain Lincoln County forest certification and create an excellent experience for each outdoor recreation user.

Rustic Reservable Lake Camping

Pursue creation of reservable rustic camping sites on lakes. Littering, non-buried defecation, and multi-person intrusion on same campsite problems have occurred in certain parts of the county forest.

Primitive un-reservable camping will continue to be allowed throughout the Lincoln County Forest. The creation of rustic camping sites will allow targeted information distribution about rustic camping, provide a better camping experience by providing basic facilities, and collect a nominal fee for use of each site. Roothouse Lake Special Use Area may be one of many good locations for this type of camping.

Rustic reservable lake camping is modeled after camping available in the Northern Highland – American Legion State Forest.

Fairgrounds

The *1999 Lincoln County Fairground Utilization Study* contains many recommendations; one of which is to rebuild the grandstands – this remains an unfinished need. Other recommendations may have been satisfied when the Smith Center was constructed at the Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC).

Krull Island on Lake Alice

Pursue purchasing this island in the Town of King to maintain the natural lake aesthetic.

CITY OF TOMAHAWK RECOMMENDATIONS

- Install road signs to identify location of Bradley Park from STH 86.
- Connect trail from library to Memorial Park between the Dairy Queen Restaurant and Lake Mohawksin with the 4th Street bridge reconstruction.
- Connect trail from library to Hiawatha trail.
- Continue to develop walking and bicycling facilities with road reconstruction.
- Connect all parks with walk/bicycle paths as shown on Map 7.
- Make parts of Trail Corridor shown on Map 7 as a bike & walk trail.

Map 7 shows all of the existing and proposed parks and trails in the City of Tomahawk. On Map 7, Trail Corridor was identified without any one use associated with it, because it is a snowmobile route in the winter, and is recommended to become a bike & walk trail in summer.

The City Park and Recreation Committee has approved the following recommendations.

Squaw Point Park

- Due to a lack of park land in the eastern portion of the City, this park should be maintained and enhanced to continue to serve residents in this area.
- Squaw Point is an excellent scenic overlook. Developing a staircase or switchback path leading down to the river would create better water access.

SARA Park

- Construct open-sided shelter for picnicking for the boat landing and the beach.
- Create more campsites, and retrofit existing camping pads with electric hookups. Provide drinking water in camping areas.
- Construct a sanitary dump station for RV camping.
- Create boat docks.

Pride Park

- Install lighting for ball diamond.
- Install drinking fountain near picnic area (Scheduled for 2007).
- Expand skatepark.
- Replace tennis court.

Frenchtown Park

- Site may need restrooms.

Bradley Park

- Sledding/tobogganing area developed to expand winter use.
- Ski trail needs improved maintenance and grooming.

CITY OF MERRILL RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Merrill has its own Outdoor Recreation Plan. Most recommendations from that plan exist solely within the city limits and are not listed in this plan.

- 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.

TOWN RECOMMENDATIONS

Town of Rock Falls

- Coordinate possible bleacher replacement at Irma Lions Ball Park in cooperation with the Town of Birch.

Town of Schley

- Fully supportive of improvements at Prairie River Dells Scenic Area County Park – like a playground, picnic tables, and other possible enhancements.

Town of King

- Improve piers at public boat landings.

Town of Harrison

- Continue improving boat ramps as funds become available.

SCHOOL DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

Pursue installing signs on STH 107 to direct traffic to the Evjue Memorial Forest.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS 2007 – 2011

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 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.

The capital improvement framework for each facility is a combination of several types of projects. These projects are ranked according to their importance and priority in the overall development of the facility. Capital improvements are ranked as follows:

1. Improvements to existing facilities:
 - a) To correct health and safety hazards;
 - b) To update deficient facilities; and
 - c) To modernize adequate but outdated facilities.
2. Installation of facilities as deemed necessary through citizen participation.
3. Development of new facilities as found necessary through comparison to park and recreation standards, and public comment.

The following Capital Improvement Plans are proposed for the Lincoln County recreational system. The projects are 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 5	
Haymeadow County Park	
Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2011	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.	\$50,000
<i>2nd Year</i>	
Upgrade of add to amenities and facilities depending on use numbers.	\$5,000
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$55,000

Harrison Hills Forest Block is approximately 26,00 acres in size. This block contains the Lincoln County ATV trail system, Ament Lake quiet area, Roothouse Lake special use area, several miles of Ice Age Trail and Otter lake Park & Campground.

Table 6 Harrison Hills Forest Block Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2007	Estimated Cost
<i>1st Year</i>	
Highway B Shelter building construction from awarded ATV/ORV grant dollars.	\$26,000
<i>3^d Year</i>	
Possible construction of support facilities if use warrants the addition of water and restrooms. Funding source may be ATV/ORV grant dollars.	\$30,000
<i>4th or 5th Year</i>	
Possible heating system for shelter building. Funding source may be ATV/ORV grant dollars.	\$20,000
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$76,000

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

Table 7 Larson Lake County Park Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2011	Estimated Cost
<i>1st Year</i>	
Possibly construct campsites if IAT system makes the connection to the lake.	\$30,000
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$30,000

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

Table 8 New Wood County Park Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2009	Estimated Cost
<i>1st Year</i>	
Replace restroom facilities in campground area.	\$40,000
<i>3^d Year</i>	
Replace surface material in playground area.	\$5,000
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$45,000

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 9		Roothouse Lake Special Use Area Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2007		Estimated Cost	
<i>1st Year</i>			
Raze and remove old cabin and associated trash on Ghost Lake.		\$15,000	
<i>3rd Year</i>			
Develop nature trail on property.		\$10,000	
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan		\$25,000	

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

Table 10		Spirit Falls Scenic Area Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2008		Estimated Cost	
<i>1st Year</i>			
Construct shelter and picnic area; it may be incorporated with ATV trail development.		\$70,000	
<i>3rd Year</i>			
Depending on use, possibly construct support facilities with water and rest rooms.		\$20,000	
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan		\$90,000	

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

Table 11		Tug Lake County Park Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2007		Estimated Cost	
<i>1st Year</i>			
New restroom and changing houses, new roof of shelter, and new gravel parking area.		\$54,000	
<i>3rd Year</i>			
Replace surface material in playground area.		\$5,000	
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan		\$59,000	

Underdown Recreation Area continues to see increased usage for year round non-motorized activities. Lake access improvements were completed in 2006.

Table 12 Underdown Recreation Area Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2008	Estimated Cost
<i>1st Year</i>	
Update cross country ski trail grooming equipment.	\$30,000
<i>2nd Year</i>	
Possible shelter construction.	\$30,000
<i>3rd Year</i>	
Possible expansion of camping area and parking lot.	\$15,000
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$75,000

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 13 Lincoln County ATV Trail System Five Year Capital Improvement Plan	
Start Year of Plan 2007	Estimated Cost
<i>1st Year</i>	
Develop trail from Town Hall Rd into Gleason – ORV/ATV funding secured	\$4,500
Upgrade trail from 1 st Ave. into Gleason – ORV/ATV funding secured	\$1,000
<i>2nd Year</i>	
Continue to explore trail development in the towns of Wilson, Somo and Harrison (Trail development would be funded with ORV/ATV dollars)	unknown
Total Estimated Cost for Five Year Plan	\$5,500 + unknown

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

INTRODUCTION

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.

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. Appendix D gives an explanation of the Stewardship Fund. For additional information obtain the most current booklet titled Open Project Selection Process from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

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:

Pat Zatopa, Community Services Specialist
Rhineland Service Center
107 Sutliff Ave
Rhineland, WI 54501 (715) 365-8928

Besides state and federal aid programs, there are other sources of funding such as private foundations, trust funds, and civic and recreation organizations. For information on private foundations and trusts see Foundations in Wisconsin: A Directory, compiled by Susan A. Hopewood.

Future Planning

At a minimum, all communities should reassess their recreational needs near the end of the five year period covered by this plan. More frequent appraisal of needs may be called for under certain conditions such as extreme variations in funding capability, rapid population changes, actions of other units of government and private enterprise, and the recognition of new legislation, laws, and public programs.

Priorities

The need for community officials to establish priorities within their recreation program is emphasized by the scope of the previous recommendations. Although it is unlikely that all of these recommendations will be undertaken within the time period of this plan, there is an outstanding opportunity for inroads to be made. Recognition of increasing demands for recreation, space and facilities should prompt immediate action.

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.

PROVISIONS FOR UPDATING

An essential characteristic of any planning program is that it be on-going and flexible. Periodic updating of the plan is necessary for continued refinement and course correction in the planning program.

It is recognized that 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 come into demand or the status of existing facilities change.

The plan recommendations and action program should be reviewed by the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Committee on an annual basis or more often if deemed necessary. At the time of this review process the town boards, city and village councils, school districts, and other interested parties should be notified to request input. The following information should be obtained for consideration in updating the plan:

1. Improvements needed to existing facilities.
2. Demand for new facilities.
3. Potential projects to fulfill this demand, and project sponsor.

Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Committee analysis of this annual update information may determine the need for proposed projects based on standards and priorities as outlined in this plan.

The entire plan should be updated no less than every five years, to assure that the plan reflects changes in the recreational needs of the county, and to maintain the county's eligibility for grant programs.

ATTACHMENT A
OUTDOOR RECREATION SURVEYS

FIRST SURVEY – TOWNS

SECOND SURVEY – OUTDOOR RECREATION GROUPS

THIRD SURVEY – COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS

THE TABULATED RESULTS FOR ALL SURVEYS EXISTS IN:
CHAPTER 4 – OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

ATTACHMENT B

NCWRPC GENERATED SCORP 2005-2010 SUMMARY

ATTACHMENT C
FACILITY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

ATTACHMENT D
STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS