



City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan

2008-2013

Effective January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2012



Prepared by: North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

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ABSTRACT

- TITLE:** CITY OF MERRILL OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN
2008-2012 Effective January 1, 2008 to December 31, 2012
- SUBJECT:** This report assesses the existing recreation system in the City of Merrill; identifies recreation needs based upon public input, past plans, recreation standards, and the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP); 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 City of Merrill for a variety of Federal and State Aids to purchase land and to add facilities to existing outdoor recreation lands. The City of Merrill 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.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTERS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
- Purpose.....	1
- Statutory Base	1
- Plan Components.....	1
- Past Plans	2
2. BACKGROUND OF MERRILL.....	4
- Introduction.....	4
- Natural Environment	4
- Demographics.....	5
3. EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES.....	6
- Introduction.....	6
- Points of Interest.....	6
- Parks and Conservancy Areas	9
- City of Merrill Park System and Assessment	10
- Private Outdoor Recreation Facilities.....	14
4. OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT	15
- Introduction.....	15
- Recommendations and Projects Completed 2002-2006	15
- Public Participation.....	16
- Past Plan Summaries of Public Comment.....	16
- Other Plan References	17
- Needs Driven Park Planning.....	18
5. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	23
- Introduction.....	23
- Merrill Recommendations	23
- Capital Improvements 2008-2013	24

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Outdoor Recreation Survey Returned
- B. Park Design and Location Criteria from SCORP 2005-2010

MAPS

Map 1	Existing Parks.....	7
Map 2	Merrill Memorial Wildlife Area.....	8
Map 3	Park Service Areas.....	22

TABLES and FIGURE

Table 1	Population.....	5
Table 2	Merrill Population Projections.....	5
Table 3	Park Acreage, 2007.....	19
Table 4	2002 To 2006 Level of Service.....	19
Table 5	Merrill Park And School Park Levels of Service, 2007.....	20

1.

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this recreation plan is to provide continued direction toward meeting the current and future recreation needs of the City of Merrill. 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 City of Merrill Common Council and subsequent acceptance by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), will continue eligibility of the City for Land and Water Conservation Fund (LAWCON), and Stewardship Fund money. Adoption of this plan by the Lincoln County Board as an amendment to the Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan will improve the chance of receiving funding from the WDNR.

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 long-range plan to acquire, maintain, and develop for public use, those areas of the state best adapted to the development of a comprehensive system of state and local outdoor recreation facilities and services...”

PLAN COMPONENTS

This plan addresses the outdoor recreation needs for the entire city.

Background information on the City of Merrill was compiled to develop an understanding of the environmental and social characteristics of the city 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 participation, past plans, 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 the City of Merrill.

The recommendations are general strategies and five-year capital improvement tables for recreation facility development.

PAST PLANS

Merrill is "The City of Parks," and has been involved with recreation planning since 1974 when a park plan was compiled and written by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. In 1997 the City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan was prepared by Vandewalle and Associates. The North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) has prepared the *Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan* since 2002.

Each plan listed below affects outdoor recreation in the City of Merrill. Any recommendations from the below plans are described below.

City of Merrill Comprehensive Plan 2006-2026

This document covers the City with all nine required elements under Wisconsin planning law. All maps show a sample of the land surrounding Merrill. A summary of this plan's issues relating to outdoor recreation were inserted into the public participation part of Chapter 4.

Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan 2000-2020

The county plan was the first county plan adopted under the new 1999 Comprehensive Planning Law. This document covers all of the towns in the county and covers all nine of the required elements. The plan is made up of two basic sections: Inventory and Analysis and Plan Recommendations. Each town also has their own Town Land Use Plan. A summary of this plan's issues relating to outdoor recreation were inserted into the public participation part of Chapter 4.

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. Segment 18 affects the City of Merrill.

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, where it could link up to Mountain Bay Trail from there by road corridors.

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 at the county level. Potential trails are identified and an improvement description was created for each county that trails exist in to facilitate implementation.

The routes for Merrill are part of a countywide loop that passes through Merrill from the west on STH 107, then continues east through the city on STH 64, and leaves Merrill on the east by traveling north on CTH G.

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.

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. These Land Legacy Areas are shown on MAP 1.

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 of this Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan. Each Legacy Area near Merrill is summarized below with 5 stars representing the highest level for that category:

PR Prairie River

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

UW Upper Wisconsin River

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

MW Middle Wisconsin River

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

2.

BACKGROUND OF MERRILL

Introduction

This section describes the natural environment and the demographics that make up the City of Merrill. 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.

The City of Merrill is located in southern Lincoln County. Merrill is the county seat and has a population of almost 10,200, which is about 34 percent of the total county population. There is only one other city in the county and that is the City of Tomahawk, which is located 20 miles North on USH 51. Located about 15 miles to the south is the City of Wausau, Marathon County. All three cities are located along the U.S. Highway 51 corridor. See the locational reference map.

Natural Environment

The city is located at the confluence of the Wisconsin and Prairie Rivers. The Wisconsin River dominates the surface water hydrology of the area with numerous streams flowing into it. Wetlands lie to the north of the city and a variety of terrains are found throughout the area, from steep slopes to flat plains.

The two rivers divide the city into three distinct areas, one is south of the Wisconsin River, while the other two areas are north of the Wisconsin River, and are east or west of the Prairie River. The city encompasses about 5,000 acres.

The city is classified in the continental climate type. The summers have warm but not excessively hot days and cool nights. Winters are long, cold, and snowy. Mean annual precipitation is almost 30 inches. Snow cover on the ground and ice cover on the lakes lasts from December to April. The growing season generally extends from late May to early September, for an average frost-free growing season of 135 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.

The natural environment features are described and mapped in Chapter 2 of the Merrill Comprehensive Plan 2007 (not part of this plan).

Demographics

Nearly all of the increase from 1990 to 2000 in Lincoln County was from net-migration (more individuals moving into the county than leaving it) and that trend continued through 2005. What has changed is that the county is no longer adding residents from natural increase. From 2000 to 2005 the county population increased by 779 residents from net-migration but there were 18 more deaths than births.

The municipalities with the greatest increases in population countywide are the towns of Merrill, Bradley, Pine River, and Scott. All the towns except Bradley, border the City of Merrill. With over half the increase in county population in just these four towns, and a median age in the last three of less than 38 years, signs point to in-migration of younger to middle-aged individuals.

Minor Civil Division	1990	2000	1990-2000 % Change	1990-2000 Net Change
City of Merrill	9,860	10,146	2.9%	286
Town of Merrill	2,716	2,979	9.7%	263
Town of Pine River	1,552	1,877	20.9%	325
Town of Scott	1,210	1,287	6.4%	77
Lincoln County	26,993	29,641	9.8%	2,648

Source: U.S. Census

The county's two largest municipalities, the cities of Merrill and Tomahawk, are home to 46 percent of the county's residents. The City of Merrill in 2000 had a median age of 37.3 years. These two cities are somewhat representative of the location of the county's younger and older populations – younger residing in southern towns and the City of Merrill, and older residents living in the north.

Merrill covers about 7.0 square miles, and had about 1,450 residents per square mile in 2000, which is a density near average for a city.

In 2004, the Wisconsin Department of Administration, Demographic Services Center, prepared population projections for each county and community in the state. DOA projections estimate that the city will decline in population by about 500 persons by 2025. This seems to contradict the growth trend since 1980.

The NCWRPC prepared projections based on the 1980 to 2000 trend. The result is an increase of 775 persons by 2025. A summary of the projections are displayed below:

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	Change
DOA	10,146	10,015	9,933	9,817	9,703	9,611	(535)
NCWRPC	10,146	10,296	10,449	10,604	10,761	10,921	775

Source: U.S. Census, WI DOA, & NCWRPC

3. EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES

INTRODUCTION

This section is an inventory of the existing outdoor recreational facilities in Merrill, 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: Points Of Interest; Parks and Conservancy Areas; and Private Outdoor Recreation Facilities.

POINTS OF INTEREST

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.

B) Dams

The Alexander hydroelectric dam provides cold season nesting grounds for Bald Eagles by maintaining an open area of water.

Map 1 Existing Parks City of Merrill

- Minor Civil Divisions
- US & State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private / Other
- Railroad
- Water
- Private Schools
- Public Schools
- Airport
- Boat Launch
- Parks
- State & County Parks


Wisconsin Land Legacy Areas

- Upper Wisconsin River
- Middle Wisconsin River
- Prairie River

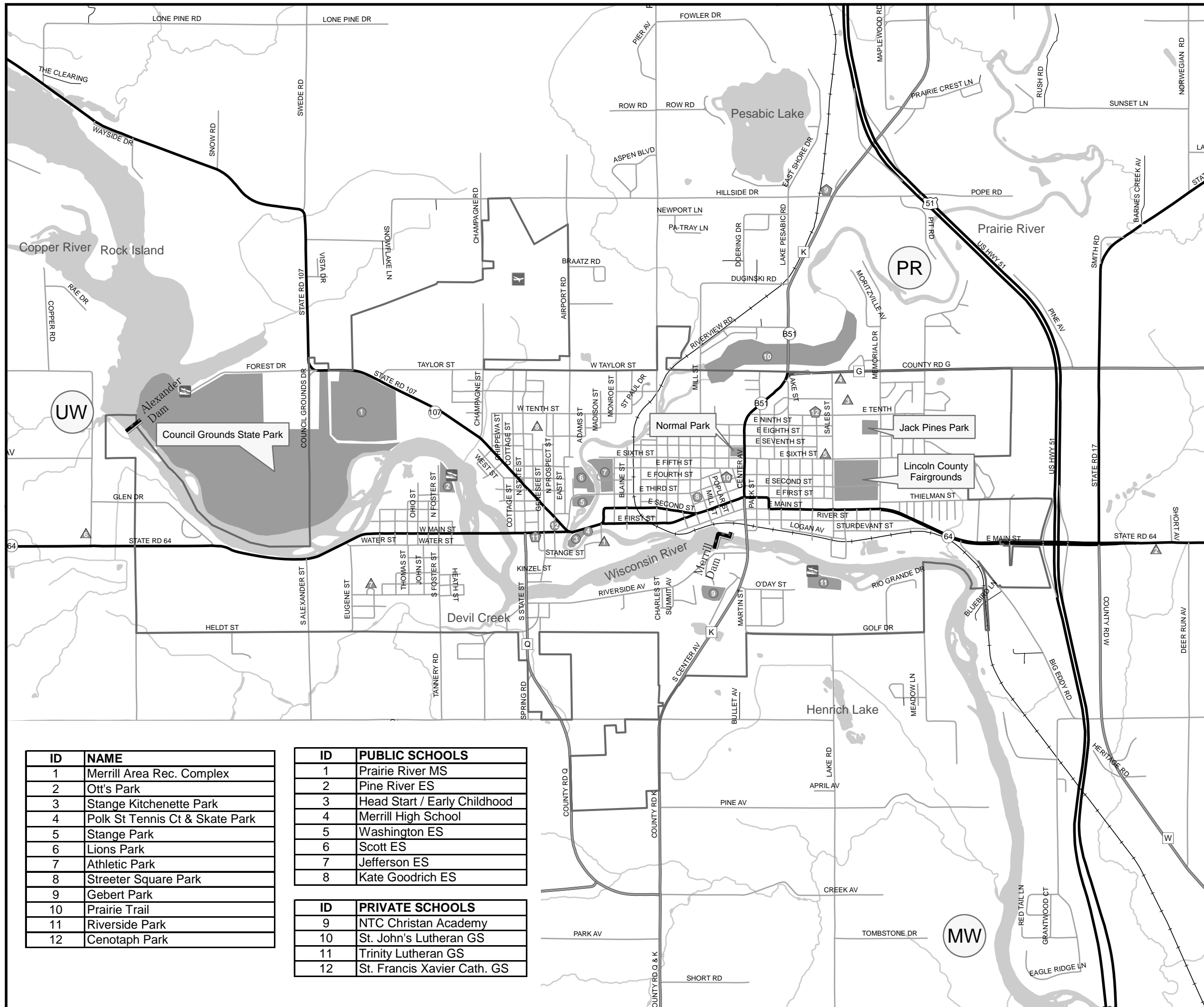


0 0.5 1 Miles

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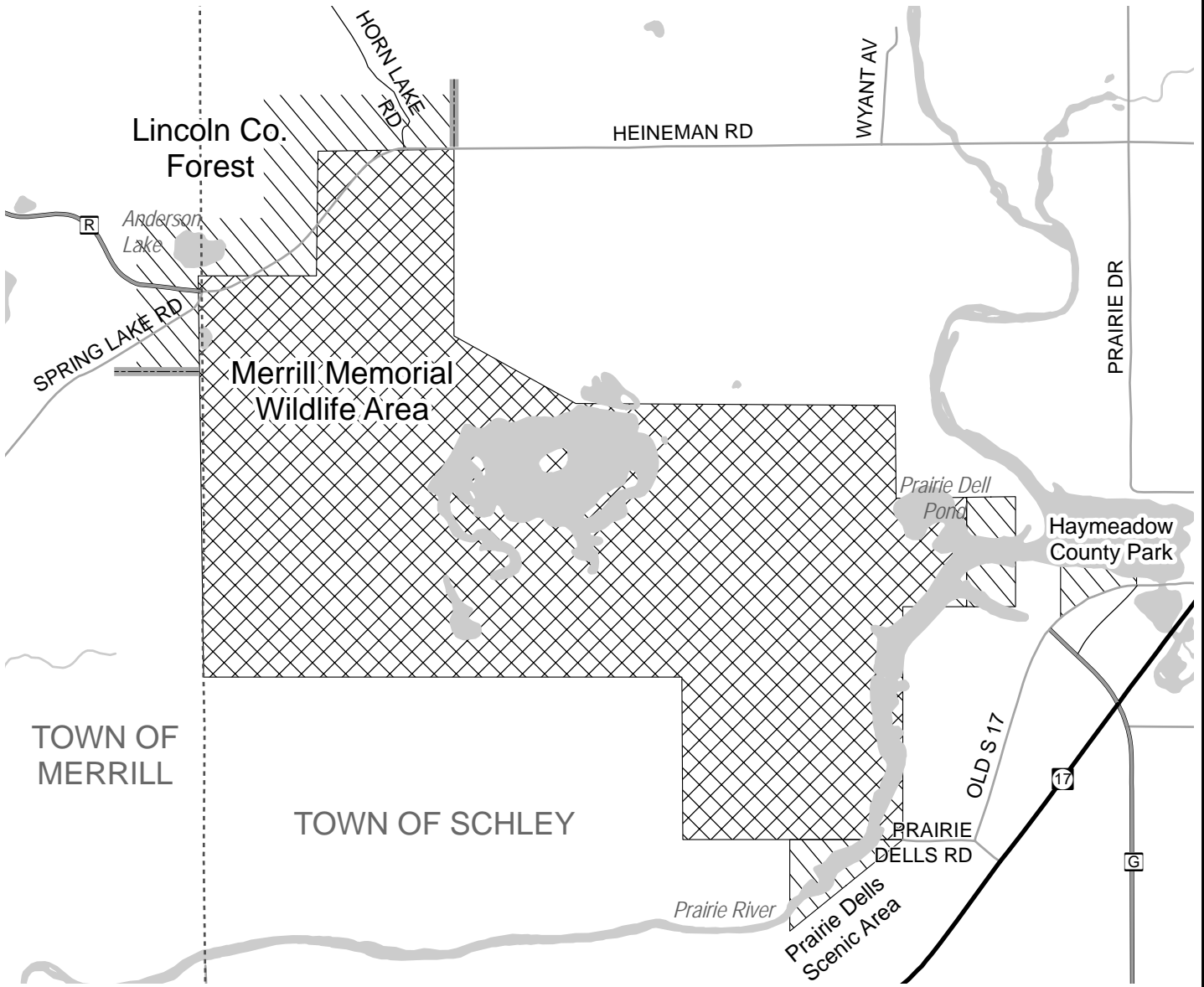
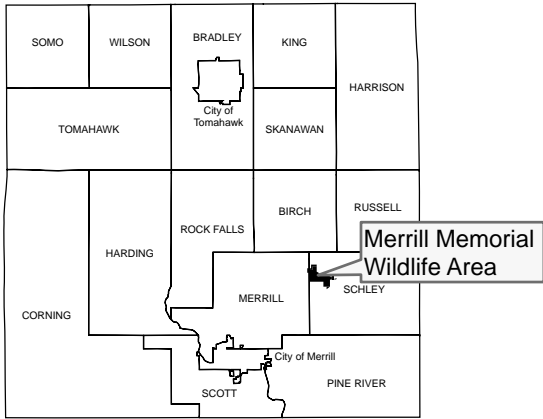


ID	NAME
1	Merrill Area Rec. Complex
2	Ott's Park
3	Stange Kitchenette Park
4	Polk St Tennis Ct & Skate Park
5	Stange Park
6	Lions Park
7	Athletic Park
8	Streeter Square Park
9	Gebert Park
10	Prairie Trail
11	Riverside Park
12	Cenotaph Park

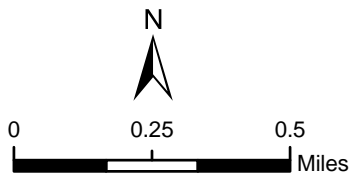
ID	PUBLIC SCHOOLS
1	Prairie River MS
2	Pine River ES
3	Head Start / Early Childhood
4	Merrill High School
5	Washington ES
6	Scott ES
7	Jefferson ES
8	Kate Goodrich ES

ID	PRIVATE SCHOOLS
9	NTC Christian Academy
10	St. John's Lutheran GS
11	Trinity Lutheran GS
12	St. Francis Xavier Cath. GS

Map 2 Merrill Memorial Wildlife Area



- Minor Civil Divisions
- US & State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private / Other
- Water
- ▨ Merrill Memorial Wildlife Area
- ▨ County Land



Source: WI DNR, Lincoln Co & NCWRPC

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PARKS and CONSERVANCY AREAS

A summary of all the local and county parks, school grounds, state parks, and conservation areas with the amenities at each are located in the following tables and maps. The following brief descriptions of each park type are from SCORP 2005-2010. Elementary school playgrounds may be categorized as mini parks if only a playground exists. High schools grounds that contain several types of recreation fields would be listed under community parks. School forests are listed as community parks. **Linear Parks** are trails that may have various lengths.

Mini Parks—Generally less than 5 acres, these parks are special areas that serve a concentrated or limited population or specific group such as tots or senior citizens. One prominent feature or recreation facility like a playground may be present as the purpose of this park. The service area for this park generally is a ½ mile radius, and a population of 2,000-3,000 people.

Neighborhood Parks—An area of 5 to 25 acres that serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Active and passive recreational activities in this park include field, court, and ball games; skating; crafts; and picnicking. Facilities may also include a playground, wading pool, ball field, multi-activity field, ball diamond, tennis courts, skatepark, and shelter. Trees, open fields, and undeveloped natural areas are also desirable components of neighborhood parks. The service area for this park generally is a 1 mile radius, and a population of 2,000-5,000 people.

Community Parks—Usually more than 25 acres in size, these parks serve entire communities, and are located adjacent to a collector street to provide community-wide vehicular access. The purposes of this park are to meet the recreational needs of several neighborhoods, as well as to preserve unique landscapes and open spaces. These parks allow for group activities not feasible at the neighborhood level. All of the facilities of a neighborhood park may exist, along with nature trails and scenic areas.

Special Use Areas—These areas are for single purpose recreational activities that often are designed as revenue generating enterprises such as for baseball, golf, nature centers, arboreta, formal gardens, gun ranges, festivals, ski areas, or areas that preserve and maintain cultural or archeological sites.

County Parks—County parks consist of 100 acres or more that are specifically set aside for active and passive recreation uses to accommodate large gatherings, special events, and individual users. These parks have scenic natural features that preserve the character of the region and provide a wide variety of compatible outdoor recreation activities; and may also provide areas for camping, historic preservation, protection of natural areas, and special use areas.

State Parks—State parks are similar to county parks, with two differences: they consist of several hundred acres and preserve natural areas of statewide importance.

Conservancy Areas—Conservancy areas are managed for the flora & fauna resources that exist at a site. Activities like hiking, wildlife watching, hunting, and fishing may be allowed on these lands that may have labels like state natural areas, forests, or wildlife refuges. Each conservancy area has specific rules of use for public enjoyment.

City of Merrill Park System and Assessment

The Merrill area park and recreation system consists of approximately 854 total acres within the city and exterritorial boundary (1.5 mile buffer) around the city. This does not include snowmobile trails. The City of Merrill owns and maintains 280 acres plus an additional 920 acres of wildlife area about 6 miles outside of Merrill, for a total of 1,200 acres. Public and private school playgrounds consist of 23.5 acres, Merrill High School has 12 acres, County owned parks consist of 35 acres (including the county fair grounds), and 503 acres of the Merrill area park and recreation system are managed by the WDNR as Council Grounds State Park. All parks are shown on MAP 1 & 2.

The Merrill area park and recreation system includes trails (linear parks); 12 city parks of different classifications; two county owned parks that are the size of neighborhood parks, and the county fairgrounds; 8 public and private school facilities that serve local recreation needs, and one state park.

Linear Parks

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/>). Parts of the Wisconsin River and all of the Prairie River are available to canoe on. Portages have been established on the Wisconsin River to get around the Alexander and Merrill dams. All navigable water is available to canoe on. There are 3 public water access points within the Merrill area, and shown on MAP 1.

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. These trails pass through Merrill on non-permanent easements.

Mini Parks

Each listing with a **bold title** represents a park available to the public. Listings with *italic titles* represent park like facilities at schools that may be available after school hours.

Polk Street Tennis Court & Skate Park: This one acre park is located along the Prairie River just east of Stange Kitchenette Park. The park contains a lighted tennis court and lighted skate park. This park has seen a heavy increase in usage since the completion of the skate park. Skaters of all ages come to the park at many hours of the day. Some recommendations would include better crosswalks to/from the park, permanent vandal proof tables and garbage receptacles. The skate park has impacted usage of the tennis court that shares it's space, but I would not recommend at this time to expand the skate park or eliminate the tennis court.

The following **public schools** have outdoor recreation facilities that are available to the public outside of school hours:

Prairie River Middle School – A 0.5-acre swimming pool exists at this public school, located in the southwest part of Merrill.

Jefferson Elementary School – A 5-acre open space with playground exists at this public school, which is located in the southwest part of Merrill.

Washington Elementary School – A 3-acre open space with playground exists at this public school, which is located on the city's east side.

Kate Goodrich Elementary School – A 5-acre open space with playground exists at this public school, which is located on the city's north side.

The following **private schools** have outdoor recreation facilities that may be available to the public outside of school hours:

St. John's Lutheran Elementary School (K-8) – A 0.5-acre play area exists at this private school, which is located in the central city.

St. Francis Xavier Catholic Elementary School (K-8) – A 4-acre playground exists at this private school, which is located in the northeast area of Merrill.

Trinity Lutheran Elementary School (K-8) – A 5-acre open space with playground exists at this private school, which is located on the city's west side.

NTC Christian Academy (K-12) – A 0.5-acre play area exists at this private school, which is located about 2 miles north of downtown at the intersection of Business Hwy 51 and Hillside Drive.

Neighborhood Parks

Normal Park: This two acre county-owned park is located north of downtown. It contains an outdoor ice skating rink with warming shelter, picnic areas, and a youth baseball/softball field.

Ott's Park: This nine acre park is located on the west side of the City along the Wisconsin River. This park has a children's playground, a softball field, boat landing, picnic areas, volleyball courts, tennis courts, horseshoe pits, picnic shelter with electric and water service. This park is used mainly by local softball associations and organizations for league play, along with shelter reservations, the park is also used consistently for its boat landing and water frontage for fishing, and swimming. The ball field is in need of some improvements, including new concession stand and announcers booth.

Riverside Park: This 22 acre park is located in the southeast portion of the City along the Wisconsin River. This park features a boat landing, picnic areas, sand volleyball court, horseshoes, a playground, restroom facilities, a picnic shelter with water and electric service, and a 9-hole Disc Golf Course. The park is very heavily utilized by "drop in" visitors for disc golfing, using the boat landing, walking/hiking/wildlife observation, fishing, professional photographs, weddings, and family functions at the shelter. This park is one of the most scenic in our system and does need some improvements. The restroom facilities are very old and in need of replacement with universal accessibility and more stalls to handle the larger crowds. The playground is also old and in need of complete replacement. The trail system that leads into and out of the park behind the T.B. Scott Mansion is very historic and in great need of repair.

Streeter Square Park: Streeter Square is a two acre park located to the immediate north of downtown. It contains a playground, basketball court, and youth baseball field. This park is used mainly as a quiet spot to eat lunch, play on the playground, and shoot hoops. The ball field has been used more in the past few years by the young age groups for a coach pitch league. The only recommendations that I would have would be to make some improvements on the baseball field but they only need to be minimal.

Lion's Park, Stange Park, and Stange Kitchenette Park all have neighborhood park amenities, but also have community park amenities. Each park is described under community parks, because of a feature in each park that is more of a community attraction. Lion's Park's community features are its 5 little league baseball fields. Stange Park's community features are its 2 pools. Stange Kitchenette Park's community feature is the kitchenette.

Community Parks

Each listing with a **bold title** represents a park available to the public. Listings with *italic titles* represent park like facilities at schools that may be available after school hours.

Lion's Park: Lion's Park is a 13 acre park located in the center of town along the Prairie River. The park consists of 5 little league baseball fields that are used very heavily from the first weeks in April through August. The park is used very heavily by the Prairie River Middle School for Physical Education Classes as well as their football team for practices. In the winter months, the park has an outdoor ice rink and the existing building is used as a warming shelter and restrooms. This park is very heavily utilized year round and there is no room for expansion. This park is in need of some upgrades to the ball field playing conditions as well as the amenities. The restroom area is not universally accessible and the fields are in need of improvements.

Stange Park: Stange Park is an 11.6 acre park in the central portion of town along the Prairie River. The park includes an outdoor swimming pool and wading pool, tennis courts, a basketball court, playground equipment, restrooms, picnic shelter with electric and water service, walking bridges over the lagoons. This park is also used very heavily by the general public for swimming, basketball, tennis, shelter reservations, fishing, walking, and general daytime visits. The park is very popular for “stop in” traffic at lunch or playing on the equipment for the toddlers. The “2-arch” bridge that leads to the library is in great need of repair. The swimming pool is in great need of repair, but continues to see large volumes of people each summer.

Stange Kitchenette Park: This six acre park is located just south of Stange Park along the Prairie River. It contains a kitchen shelter with electricity and water service, new universally accessible restroom facilities, a playground, horseshoe pits, and a sand volleyball court. Kitchenette Park is our most heavily reserved park within our system. The park reserved at least 3-4 times per week for the entire season and could use some improvements. The playground area is old and not very functional it should be replaced in the near future. A new playground area would provide a better experience for those renting the shelter area and increase our reservations even more.

Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC): This complex covers 96 acres and is located on the west side of the City, north of the Wisconsin River. The MARC as it is referred to, includes four youth softball/baseball fields, an announcer's booth/score booth, two multi-purpose baseball/softball fields, and one baseball field. All of the ball fields have covered dugouts. The park

also includes three soccer fields, two sand volleyball courts, 2.5 miles of multi-purpose walking/hiking/biking trails that connect to Council Grounds State Park, outdoor concession stand/restroom, outdoor hockey rink, and the Smith Multi-Purpose Center which houses an indoor ice rink, a multi-purpose community room, a concession stand, locker rooms, weight room. The MARC has evolved over the years to host many different indoor and outdoor events and activities. Some improvements that would help in the future would be, expansion of the walking trails, more tree plantings, lights to at least one youth and one adult ball fields, restroom facilities near the adult baseball fields, and restrooms near the varsity soccer field, in ground irrigation to more of the athletic fields, improved children's play area, basketball courts, and a picnic shelter with water and electrical service for reservation.

Merrill High School has 12 acres of outdoor recreational facilities located in the northeast area of the City. There are 3 soccer fields, one softball field, one baseball field, and a varsity football field and track.

Special Use Areas

Cenotaph Park: This is a 0.3 acre memorial park dedicated to veterans.

Athletic Park: This five acre athletic facility contains a baseball field, announcers booth, concession stand, newly constructed universally accessible restroom facilities, lights, in ground irrigation, new dugouts, and a batting cage. This park has seen a considerable amount of improvements within the past 3 years. The park is used solely for baseball games, older youth leagues, through adult league games. The park has been improved to the point where it will begin to host large scale tournaments.

Jack Pines County Park: This seven acre county owned park is located in the northeast portion of the City across from the Fairgrounds. The City of Merrill operates an outdoor ice skating rink and warming shelter on the very southeast corner of the property. This park is undergoing some major changes with the removal of forested land to make room for a new administrative building for the county.

Lincoln County Fairgrounds: The fairgrounds are 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.

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. **Krueger Pines State Natural Area** is located in the southeast corner of Council Grounds State Park.

Conservancy Areas

Gebert Park: This 15 acre conservation protection area and wildlife habitat includes nature trails and is located south of the Wisconsin River. This park is very heavily under-utilized and the trail system could use some extensive work. Brush should be cleared back from the trail and it should be resurfaced. This would encourage more walkers/runners/hikers/observers.

Memorial Forest Wildlife Area (Refer to MAP 2): This 920 acre park is located north of the City and includes walking trails, wildlife habitat, and the 80+ acre Don Manthei Wetland Recreation Area. This property is priceless and is used steadily by a select few individuals. Some recommendations for the property should include extensive improvements to the existing trail system, with the addition of more trails. These should be mapped out and provided at a centralized kiosk system to allow for a more interactive experience. The forest should also be more actively managed for forest and wildlife habitat. This would be a perfect site for future cross country fun runs, youth hunting experiences, outdoor education classes, cross country ski courses, and shoe-shoe trails. With its proximity to the Prairie Dells Park future considerations should include connection to this park for a contiguous trail system throughout.

Prairie Trails: Prairie Trails is a newly developed, 99 acre silent recreation park located on the north side of the City along the Prairie River. The park features 2.5 miles of multi-purpose hiking/walking/biking trails, picnic areas, picnic shelter, bridge, 2 – canoe landings, overlook, fishing pier, boardwalk, and interpretive signage. The park has been primarily used for the trail system by walkers and their dogs as well as the Merrill High School for science classes. Future recommendations should include restroom facilities near the shelter and parking lot area to promote longer usage of the park. Areas along the river should be cleared out to allow easier access to fishing. The park is used heavily enough to warrant more extensive trail developments throughout.

PRIVATE OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

Several private individuals have land holdings that are open to the public for recreational purposes

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.

Merrill Golf Club is an 18-hole private golf course that is open to the public for greens fees, and is located on the south side of Merrill.

4. OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

INTRODUCTION

Recreational needs within the city were identified by collecting public input, reviewing past plans, creating a county facility assessment, and summarizing the Wisconsin SCORP 2005-2010 for active use.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROJECTS COMPLETED FROM 2002-2006

- 2002 – Riverside Park Restrooms – Bad septic system – rebuild or use portable toilets – **Incomplete**
- 2002 – Plant Wild Flowers at the MARC and begin trail system – **Complete**
- 2002 – Boat landing at Riverside Park – **Complete**
- 2002 – Skateboard Park Development – complete site plan for skateboard park – **Complete**
- 2002 – Dugouts on three adult fields at MARC – **Complete**

- 2003 – Athletic Park Restroom Demolition and Replacement – **Complete**
- 2003 – Kitchenette Park Shelter House – restore – **Complete**
- 2003 – Resurface tennis courts at Ott's Park and Stange Park
– **Ott's is Incomplete/Stanges Complete**
- 2003 – Continue to develop walking trails at the MARC – **Complete**
- 2003 – Continue development of Prairie Trails – **Complete**

- 2004 – Kitchenette Park restroom remodel to meet ADA – **Complete**
- 2004 – Riverside Park Shelter sand blasted and repainted – **Incomplete**
- 2004 – Re-shingle Ott's Park restroom and garage – **Incomplete**
- 2004 – Continue Prairie Trails Development – **Complete**
- 2004 – Basketball Courts at MARC – **Incomplete**

- 2005 – Remodel Ott's Park restroom to meet ADA – **Incomplete**
- 2005 – Storage building for sports equipment at MARC – **Complete**

- 2006 – Build park maintenance building at MARC – **Incomplete**

- 2007 – Construct new swimming pool/aquatic center - **Incomplete**
- 2007 – Complete ADA compliance for all City Parks - **Incomplete**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Informal Public Input

In the regular course of business, Merrill Parks and Recreation Department staff have received public input about its parks.

Open House Public Input

One open house meeting was held. Area residents were able to view a draft of the proposed plan in the Council Chambers of the Merrill City Hall. Surveys were mailed to several user groups, and the open house meeting was advertised on the survey too.

Comments from Open House meeting held between 6:00-7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, September 26, 2007:

Finance Director Kathy Unertl commented about adding sidewalks to Riverside Avenue.

Dewey Pfister commented about adding a mini-park for small children on the east end of town to serve the growing population. He also discussed how public safety may need better access to the Wisconsin River, which also would benefit outdoor recreation. Mr. Pfister commended the Park and Recreation Commission on including Riverside Park, specifically the old trail, into the plan for improvements. Possibly better trail access could be constructed from Gebert Park too.

The Knights of Columbus was the only group to return a survey, which was received after this open house. A copy of the survey is in Attachment A.

PAST PLAN SUMMARIES OF PUBLIC COMMENT

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.

Youth Vision Forums were also organized during the comprehensive planning process. A survey and two focus group discussions with high school students sought to capture input. The survey and focus group discussions involved 131 students ages 14 to 18 from the Merrill and Tomahawk high schools during the spring of 2000. The high school results were not separated.

The features that give Lincoln County the character that youth cherish include its vast natural resources, the wilderness, forests, wildlife, rivers, lakes and streams. It is these outdoor recreation resources and the activities that those natural resources provide are what the youth are most proud of. Things such as fishing, snowmobiling, hunting, hiking, boating, water-skiing, snow skiing, camping, and swimming in the county and state parks, in the natural areas and on the trails systems are very important to the youth. The schools and school related activities also appeared on their list of things that they are proud of. The youth also value their history by ranking historic places and traditional activities high on their list of things that they'd like to preserve.

But Lincoln County isn't perfect and the youth noted several things they'd like to change to make the county a better place to live, work and shop. They would like to see an increase in job opportunities in the future in areas such as industry, agriculture and tourism. Some of their most important concerns are a lack of safe, enjoyable places for youth to visit and recreate as well as a lack of shopping opportunities. They would also like to see renovations in the downtown areas and some of the run-down homes, a reduction in the number of bars and gas stations, and the removal of garbage from yards and roadways throughout the county. In general, the youth of Lincoln County like the community that they've been raised in and they wish to preserve many of the very same things that their parents and grandparents have said are important to them as well.

OTHER PLAN REFERENCES

MAP 1 illustrates the location of DNR Land Legacy areas. Potential DNR State Trails, and potential trails from the NCWRPC Regional Bike Plan are summarized in Chapter 1 of this City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan under Past Plans.

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 nationwide is no longer recognized as universal for a park. A standard land measure is still used to determine how much land is needed for a specific use like a baseball diamond; facility standards are used for this purpose. The number of baseball diamonds and other facilities are not the same among similar sized communities nationally; therefore a Level of Service needs to be created locally.

Besides creating a Level of Service for each park classification, other measures such as geographic distribution and universal accessibility, are also used to determine the adequacy of a community's parks.

Universal accessibility is making facilities (i.e. tables, drinking fountains, and restrooms) accessible to people with limited mobility. Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards are followed when purchasing or modifying facilities for universal accessibility. Each park description starting on page 9 lists if specific park facilities need modification to become accessible. If changes are necessary, then they will show up as capital improvement items that are listed in Chapter 5 under CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS 2008–2013.

Level of Service

The basis of this revised approach to park and recreation standards is to create a Level of Service (LOS) as defined by the customer's needs rather than an arbitrary standard. The LOS is generated locally for each park classification (i.e. mini, neighborhood, or community). Public input is collected, and the needs for a particular park, or whole park classification, are determined. If the public is content with the existing parks within a park classification, then the LOS is applied to the whole population. When the community grows in population, then the LOS is used to calculate if more parkland and facilities within a park are needed.

Park Acreage

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? This is determined by applying the park Level of Service (LOS) to lands where the city is growing. If a community is not growing in population, then the LOS does not change, but different uses may become desired over time, so facilities will need replacement.
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. Designating future parks on the Official Merrill Map will guide future parkland purchases.

Park acreage in TABLE 3 shows how Merrill's park system compares with state standards for the size of each park as grouped by classification. The median park sizes for Merrill fall within the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) recommendations for each classification except in the Community classification. TABLE 3 shows that there could be a deficiency in Community park acreage according to state standards. Median park size shows that most of Merrill's

Community parks are not the SCORP recommended size. Space consuming facilities like soccer, softball, and baseball fields are not present in sufficient numbers in many of the Community parks, therefore small parks are the result. Most soccer, softball and baseball fields are located in the 96 acre Merrill Area Recreation Complex (MARC). Park design criteria located in ATTACHMENT B show that a Community park service area covers a 2-5 mile radius from the park. The MARC is within 5 miles of all Merrill residents.

Classification	SCORP Recommendation	Merrill median park size
Mini	0.5 – 1.5 acres	0.8 acres
Neighborhood	5 – 25 acres	6 acres
Community	25 + acres	13
Special Use	Various based upon facility	Various based upon facility

Source: WDNR & NCWRPC

Parks are listed by classification starting on page 9 of this plan. The total acres for each park classification in TABLE 4 came from totaling all public parks, but not schools. The City of Merrill population was 10,146 in 2000 (U.S. Census); 10,151 in 2002 (WDOA); and 10,190 in 2006 (WDOA).

Formula used in TABLE 4 to create the acres per 1,000 people, which is the Level of Service:

$$\text{LOS by classification} = \frac{\text{Park acres per classification}}{\text{(City Population} \div \text{1,000 population served)}}$$

Park Classification	2002		2006	
	Total Acres	Acres per 1,000 people	Total Acres	Acres per 1,000 people
Mini	1	0.1	1	0.1
Neighborhood	35	3.5	35	3.4
Community	126.6	12.5	126.6	12.4
Special Use	38.3	3.8	38.3	3.8
Total	200.9	19.9	200.9	19.7

Source: NCWRPC

TABLE 4 shows that the LOS decreased slightly from 19.9 in 2002 to 19.7 in 2006. This decrease is the result of only a slight population increase of 39 people, and because no parks were added in these classifications.

School parks are listed separately when calculating Level of Service, because they are not available to the public during the school day. See TABLE 5 for the specific Level of Service created by using school facilities as parks. Both county parks—Normal and Jack Pine—are included in the TABLE 4 calculations for LOS, because both parks are available at the same times that city parks are open, only ownership and management are different.

Level of Service is not applied to conservancy areas. In 2002 there were 935 acres of conservancy in 3 parks, and in 2007 there were 1,034 acres of conservancy in 4 parks. The conservancy classification of parks added 99 acres of parkland from the Prairie Trails land reclaimed from removing the Prairie River Dam.

Table 5 Merrill Park And School Park Levels of Service, 2007

Park Classification	Merrill Park Facilities		School Park Facilities		Total Acres per 1,000 people (B+D=sum)
	A	B	C	D	
	Acres	Acres per 1,000 people	Acres	Acres per 1,000 people	
Mini	1	0.1	23.5	2.3	2.4
Neighborhood	35	3.4	---	---	3.4
Community	126.6	12.4	12	1.2	13.6
Special Use	38.3	3.8	---	---	3.8
Total	200.9	19.7	35.5	3.5	23.2

Source: NCWRPC

Now TABLE 5 recreates LOS by showing how much park acreage is added from school playgrounds and recreational fields within the City of Merrill. The total LOS that includes City of Merrill parks, county parks (not the fair grounds), grade school parkland, and high school parkland is 23.2 acres of parkland per 1,000 City of Merrill residents.

The LOS calculated in TABLES 4 & 5 is only adequate if public comment proves that more facilities are not needed. Public comment may state that different uses are desired, but that may not affect LOS if the land area for those new uses replaces the old uses. Chapter 5 will show how the City will use public comment and the LOS to improve the City of Parks.

Park Service Areas

Parks must be close to where City residents live for people to consider a park useful. MAP 3 illustrates how well the City of Merrill's parks serve the various areas of the City. The State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) provides the following guidelines for park placement:

- Mini park service area: 0.5 mile radius, or a population of 2,000-3,000;
- Neighborhood park service area: 1 mile radius, or a population of 2,000-5,000;
- Community park service area: 2-5 mile radius, in a city or outside of city limits (not on MAP 3 unless the park also functions as a neighborhood park);

Special Use park service area is a whole community, and is determined by the type of recreation program, special event, or general activities desired at the park.

School parks are classified in this plan as either neighborhood or community parks.

MAP 3 shows the combined service areas for 2 types of park classifications—mini, and neighborhood. Community parks serve all of Merrill; therefore no community park service areas are shown on MAP 3. A Community park service area covers a 2-5 mile radius from the park. All Merrill residents, and potential residential areas through year 2020 are covered by a combination of








all of Merrill's Community classified parks. MAP 3 shows that there is a shortage of Mini and Neighborhood parks. Recommended new park locations are described in Chapter 5.



Park design criteria are described in ATTACHMENT B. Each park classification contains the following:

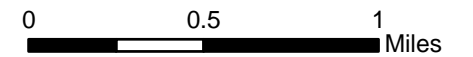
- Definition,
- Size Objectives;
- Service Area Objectives;
- Location Objectives;
- Space, Design, and Service Ares;
- Orientation; and
- Function.

Recommendations for future park locations are described in Chapter 5.

Map 3 Park Service Areas City of Merrill

-  Minor Civil Divisions
-  US & State Highways
-  County Highways
-  Local Roads
-  Private / Other
-  Railroad
-  Water

-  Neighborhood Parks
1 mile service area
for Neighborhood parks
-  Mini Parks
0.5 mile service area
for Mini parks



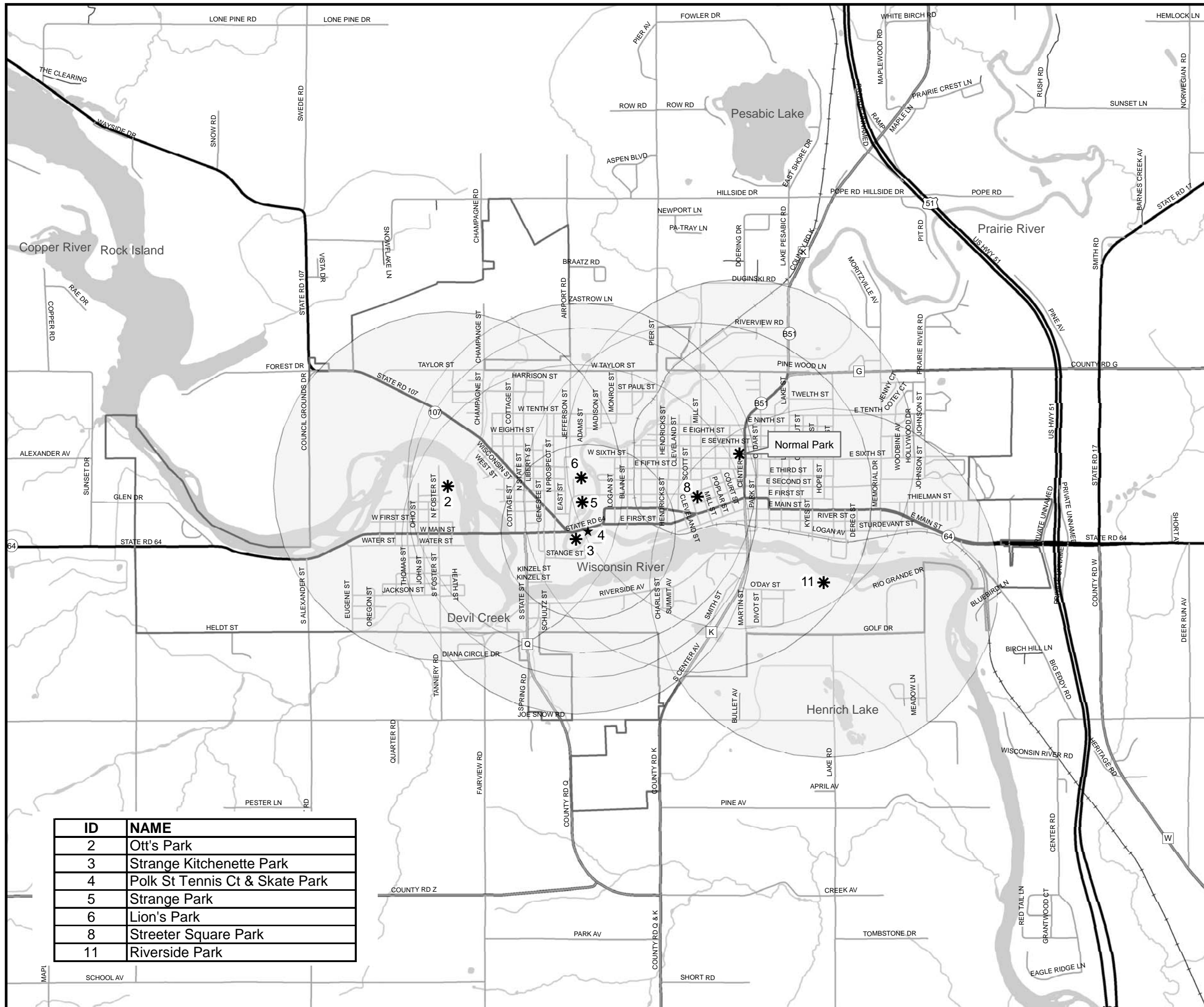
This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey and is not intended to be used as one. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. NCWRPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.



**North Central
Wisconsin Regional
Planning Commission**

210 McClellan St., Suite 210, Wausau, WI 54403
715-849-5510 - staff@ncwrpc.org - www.ncwrpc.org

ID	NAME
2	Ott's Park
3	Strange Kitchenette Park
4	Polk St Tennis Ct & Skate Park
5	Strange Park
6	Lion's Park
8	Streeter Square Park
11	Riverside Park



5.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The following recommendations are aimed at satisfying needs identified to continue Merrill's tradition as the "City of Parks," by providing outdoor recreation facilities for all Merrill residents and visitors to enjoy.

The recommendations are based on the goals and objectives, and the public comment documented in Chapter 4. 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.

MERRILL RECOMMENDATIONS

All potential DNR State Trails, and potential trails from the NCWRPC Regional Bike Plan are summarized in Chapter 1 of this City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan. Develop these mapped trails as they fit into the recommendations listed below.

River Walk

Create a trail system that follows the rivers within Merrill. Phase one of a city/countywide comprehensive trail system will start with a trail that follows the Prairie River from Prairie Trails through Stange Park.

Bike Friendly Community

Pursue certification of the City of Merrill as a bicycle friendly community. Review the following website to help with creating a bike friendly community:

<http://www.walkablestreets.com/bicycle.htm>

Top 5 Recommendations for Creating a Bicycle-Friendly Community:

1. Parking Cash-out.
2. Centralization and Residential Density.
3. Traffic Calming and Road Diets.
4. Off-Street Path System.
5. In-Street Bicycle Lanes.

Two New North Parks

Scattered residential development is projected to grow north, in an area bound from CTH G & Taylor St. north between the airport and USH 51 to Pesabic Lake. MAP 3 shows that this area is not covered by a neighborhood park service area. Placing a neighborhood park in the center of this area would serve most of this area. The Prairie River blocks pedestrian and automobile traffic in half the potential residential growth north of CTH G, between Business 51 and USH 51. Adding a playground and other mini park features to either Merrill High School, or to the Head Start/Early Childhood property would cover the remainder of this residential area.

New South Park

Dense city lot residential development is projected to grow south, in an area bound from Joe Snow Rd south between CTHs K and Q. MAP 3 shows that this area is not covered by a neighborhood park service area. Placing a neighborhood park in the area adjacent to Joe Snow Rd would provide good pedestrian and vehicular access to this growing area of new residential subdivisions. No schools or parklands of any kind exist in this area.

New East Park

Comments from the September 26, 2007, open house meeting showed a need for a new park to serve the residential areas on the east side of Merrill. MAP 3 shows that this area is covered by a neighborhood park service area, but the park is south of the Wisconsin River, which makes it impossible to travel to within 1 mile of this area. Placing a neighborhood park somewhere along Memorial Drive, south of CTH G and north of Main Street would provide good pedestrian and vehicular access to this area of residential development.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS 2008–2013

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 Park and Recreation 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 the Merrill Park Level of Service, national and state recreation standards, and public comment.

The following Capital Improvement Plans are proposed for the City of Merrill recreation system. The projects are listed in priority order, and are subject to change. The Merrill Park and Recreation Department created each capital improvement listing. All upgrades and new construction will take into consideration meeting ADA standards. As funds become available, the following projects will be completed.

- 2008 Riverside Restrooms demolition – rebuild to ADA Standards;
Basketball Courts at MARC;
Resurface tennis courts at Ott’s Park;
Refurbish Stange Park “2-arch” Bridge;
Restroom facility by adult baseball fields at MARC;
Sandblast and repaint Riverside Shelter.
- 2009 Ott’s Park Restrooms demolition – rebuild to ADA Standards;
Construct restroom facilities at Prairie Trails;
Begin work on “River Walk” Trail System to follow the Prairie River;
Lights on 1 adult field and 1 youth field at the MARC;
Designated bike route through town;
Riverside Park bridge refurbishment.
- 2010 Continue work on “River Walk” Trail System to follow Prairie River;
Locate and develop site for Dog Park;
Refurbish Riverside trail system;
Improvements to Lion's Park Restroom facility – ADA Compliance;
New Playground equipment at Kitchenette.
- 2011 Construct new swimming pool/aquatic center – in location to be determined;
Continue work on “River Walk” Trail System to follow Prairie River;
Refurbish Gebert Park Trail System;
Re-seal/stain Kitchenette Shelter building.
- 2012 Improvements/addition to Riverside Park Disc Golf Course (Eric Schalow Disk Golf Course);
Remove Shingles – steel roof on Kitchenette Shelter Building.
- 2013 Re-stain/seal Kitchenette Restroom building;
Construct new park maintenance building at location to be determined.
Upgrade playgrounds citywide for ADA accessibility.
Investigate creating a new park to relieve use congestion of little league fields at Lion's Park.

ATTACHMENT A

OUTDOOR RECREATION SURVEY RETURNED

CITY OF MERRILL
OUTDOOR RECREATION SURVEY

RECEIVED

SEP 27 2007

The City of Merrill is updating its Outdoor Recreation Plan for 2007-2011 and we would like your input. The new five-year outdoor recreation plan will be used to identify new projects for development as well as which parks need to add additional recreation facilities (like trails, buildings, or playgrounds). The plan enables the City of Merrill to be eligible for competitive federal and state outdoor recreation grant money.

Please feel free to make comments on a separate sheet of paper and mail that sheet with this completed survey to be **postmarked by September 22, 2006**,

To: Fred Heider, NCWRPC Planner
210 McClellan St, STE 210
Wausau, WI, 54403

Or bring it to the Open House meeting on September 26, 2007, at 6:00 pm in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Please complete this survey with other members of your group.

1. Please list the contact person's name and group represented:

RON KAUTZ - SANDRA NOLAN - KNIGHTS of Columbus Soccer

2. What are the top three outdoor recreational issues facing the City of Merrill?

1. BATHROOM FACILITIES AT GAME FIELDS

2. CONCESSION BUILDINGS SO ORGANIZATIONS ARE ABLE TO HOST TOURNAMENTS ETC.

3. STORAGE AREAS FOR GROUNDS EQUIP, ETC.

3. How shall the recreational issues described above in Question 2 be satisfied?

ATTEMPT TO RAISE FUNDS SO THAT THESE FACILITIES, AREAS, ETC CAN BE IMPROVED ON.

4. Do you feel that there should be new outdoor recreational facilities developed?

If so, where and what type of facilities? Yes

Especially at the MARC AREA so that the city and/or organizations can host outside groups, fund raising, grow within themselves, etc

5. Please list any other suggestions or comments:

We are always trying to improve things with our sport, & willing to help others as well

Thank You For Your Participation!

ATTACHMENT B
PARK DESIGN AND LOCATION CRITERIA
FROM
STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN (SCORP) 2005-2010

Park and Recreation Designs

This section is presented in the interest of assisting park and recreation agencies in the development of a system of parks and recreation areas. A recreation system is composed of many different components, the combination of which provide facilities and landscapes for outdoor recreation. Many entities are involved in the development and management of recreational areas and facilities for a community or region. Facilities provided by these entities should be complementary and serve a particular geographic area or recreational need. For this plan, parks and recreation areas have been classified on the basis of their service areas. They are described as the following:

▪ Mini Park	▪ School Park
▪ Neighborhood Park	▪ County Park
▪ Community Park	▪ State Park
▪ Special Use Park	▪ State Forest

Mini Park

1. Definition Summary:

A play lot or playground provides space for parental supervised recreation of toddlers and young children within a neighborhood, or as part of a larger neighborhood or community park and urban center, including retail shopping areas.

2. Size Objectives:

0.5 to 1.5 acres.

3. Service Area Objectives:

Generally within a neighborhood of a half mile radius or population of 2,000-3,000. Mini parks may be included in parks that serve a larger population or service area.

4. Location Objectives:

Located in protected areas with separation from street traffic and high visibility; serving local neighborhoods and adjoining schools, libraries, or police and fire facilities.

- Population Ratio to Acreage: 0.25 to 0.5 acre per 1,000 population to achieve a park unit size that serves 2,000 to 3,000 people.

5. Space, Design, and Service Area:

The size of a play lot or playground may range from as small as 2,500 sq. ft. to 1.5 acres.* Amenities offered by these facilities generally include sand play areas, play apparatus, play equipment, and other special child-oriented features. The service radius for these parks in

terms of distance from population served is limited to less than a quarter mile, or within a super block space, unless the playground is incorporated into a larger park. (*Stand-alone play lots require more land area than play lots incorporated into larger parks.)

6. Orientation:

Small geographic areas, sub-neighborhoods, or neighborhoods, when combined with a larger park unit, serves youth ranging in age from toddler to 12 years, with adult supervision. Playgrounds also serve important needs in city business districts and inner city areas where a mix of commercial and recreation activity is desired.

7. Function:

Provides outdoor play experiences for youth under parental supervision. Generates neighborhood communication and provides diversion from work and domestic chores. Promotes neighborhood solidarity.

Neighborhood Park

1. Definition Summary:

A neighborhood park, by size, program, and location, provides space and recreation activities for the immediate neighborhood in which it is located. It is considered an extension of neighborhood residents' "out-of-yard" and outdoor use area.

2. Size Objectives:

5 to 25 acres.

3. Service Area Objectives:

Generally a one mile radius, but actually defined by collector street patterns which form the limits of a neighborhood or recreation service area. Population served may range from 2,000 up to 5,000.

4. Location Objectives:

Centrally located for equitable pedestrian access within a definable neighborhood service area. Adjoining or adjacent to an elementary school, middle school, high school, fire station, or library, if possible.

5. Program Objectives:

Compatible with the neighborhood setting and park site constraints. Generally includes the following facilities, which are determined with public input as to use and activities:

- a. Parking for 10 to 20 vehicles.
 - 1) On-street parking is acceptable if negative impact to residential units can be mitigated. On-site parking is preferable as a planning objective.
 - 2) Bike racks with Class II trail connections where possible.
- b. Restrooms
 - 1) Men's restroom with 2 water closets, 2 urinals, 2 lavatories.
 - 2) Women's restroom with 3 water closets and 2 lavatories.
 - 3) Utility and minimum park janitorial storage space.
- c. Tot lot/children's play area
- d. Family event/group picnic facility
- e. Informal family picnic area with benches and tables
- f. Unstructured turf grass play area/play or practice field for children, young adults, and families.
- g. Sport facilities—compatible with neighborhood setting and park site constraints.
 - 1) Basketball—half court, full court, or tri-court configuration
 - 2) Volleyball area
 - 3) Softball field/soccer practice or game overlay
 - 4) Other features as needs or site conditions allow

6. Orientation:

Serves all age groups, with an emphasis on youth and families in neighborhood settings.

7. Function:

To provide a combination of active recreation and passive activities, both outdoor and indoor facilities and special features as required or needed.

8. Space, Design and Service Area:

A minimum size of 5 to 25 acres with amenities including sports facilities, picnic areas, swim facilities, cultural activities, arts, crafts, and individual passive activities. The park should primarily serve a defined neighborhood area population of 2,000-5,000. Distance from this neighborhood will vary depending on urban development pattern, zoning, and densities in the respective neighborhoods being served. Efforts should be made to allow easy pedestrian access to the park.

Community Park

1. Definition Summary:

A community park, by size, program, and location, provides space and recreation activities for a defined service area, the entire city, or significant geographic segment of the city's population.

2. Size Objectives:

Usually more than 25 acres.

3. Service Area Objectives:

Generally a 2 to 5 mile radius within the city and adjacent neighborhoods outside of city limits.

4. Location Objectives:

Centrally located if planned to serve a particular geographic segment of the city. Located adjoining or immediately adjacent to a collector street providing community-wide vehicular access, thereby reducing neighborhood traffic impacts. Connected with Class II on-street and/or off-street community trail and bike lane system. Adjoining or adjacent to an elementary, middle, or high school if possible.

5. Program Objectives

Elements that fulfill the service area, park facilities and recreation program demands. The following facilities may be compatible with community setting and park site constraints:

- a. Off-street parking calculated to satisfy demand of park and recreation activities provided. Includes bike racks and a public transit station at the site as well as both on-site and street parking.
- b. Restrooms designed to accommodate the level of park and recreation activities provided and the number of people served. Restrooms should be located within a reasonable walking distance from children's play equipment and other high-use areas.
- c. Community recreation center
- d. Park maintenance and equipment storage building
- e. Tot lot/children's play area
- f. Group picnic shelters
- g. Family picnic facilities
- h. Sport/recreation facility fulfilling the overall city demand

Appropriate program elements include:

- 1) Community pool/water feature
- 2) Soccer fields
- 3) Softball, little league baseball, junior pony league baseball
- 4) Football
- 5) Roller hockey/skateboard area
- 6) Tennis courts
- 7) Basketball courts
- 8) Amphitheater/performing arts center
- 9) Volleyball (indoor and outdoor)
- 10) Jogging trails
- 11) Other facilities as desired and as permitted under park site plan
- 12) Concessions (food and beverage)

6. Orientation:

Multi-purpose service area or community-wide recreation resource serving most or all of the population.

7. Function:

Provides opportunities for a diverse mix of indoor and outdoor recreation, including walking and bicycling, outdoor performances, various programmed and non-programmed field sports, swimming, and special events.

8) Space, Design, and Service Area:

The minimum space for a community park is 15 acres. Facilities typically provide for some sports activities, through emphasis is on passive cultural and community centers with recreational programming and organized activities. The community park may serve populations within a 2 to 5 mile radius, a scope that would allow residents of other communities to use the park as well.

Special Use Park

1. Definition Summary:

A special use park is often designed as a revenue-generating enterprise created to satisfy demand for a particular sport, recreational activity, or special event. A special use park may also be a sports park combined with enterprise activities and administered as a community recreation resource.

2. Size Objective:

The actual size of a special use park is determined by land availability and facility/market demand for special uses or recreation programs.

3. Service Area Objectives:

Community or area-wide and determined by the type of recreation program, special events or use activities.

4. Location Objectives:

Determined by the property opportunity, service area and size objectives.

5. Program Objectives:

Special use parks require facility programming that is user- or market-driven and based on community needs or economic and service principles for public and private partnerships. The magnitude and type of special use facilities may include:

- a. Water play park
- b. Amphitheater
- c. Festival/swap meet/farmers market
- d. League/individual sports complex
- e. Fitness/entertainment center
- f. Skateboard/in-line hockey park
- g. Recreation programs and classes

6. Orientation:

Provides recreation programming, sports and special event attractions and activities for all age groups.

7. Function:

Special events, fairs, festivals, expositions, symposiums, sports, community gatherings, ethnic/cultural celebrations, plays and numerous other recreational programs and activities.

8. Space, Design, and Service Area:

The minimum size for special parks varies depending on intended use and programming.

School Park

1. Definition Summary:

By combining the resources of two public agencies, the school park classification allows for expanding the recreational, social, and educational opportunities available to the community in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Depending on the circumstances, school park sites often complement other community recreation or open lands. As an example, an elementary/middle school site could also serve as a neighborhood park. Likewise, middle or high school sports facilities could do double duty as a community park or as youth athletic fields. Depending on its size, one school park site may serve in a number of capacities, such as a neighborhood park, youth athletic fields, and a location for recreation classes. Given the inherent variability of type, size and location, determining how a school park site is integrated into a larger park system will depend on case-by-case circumstances. The important outcome in the joint-use relationship is that both the school district and park system benefit from shared use of facilities and land area.

2. Size Objective

The optimum size of a school park site depends on its intended use. The size criteria established for neighborhood park and community park classifications may apply.

3. Service Area Objectives:

Neighborhood park and community park classifications criteria should be used to determine school park functions and area served. For planning purposes, the degree to which school lands, including building or facilities, meet community needs depends on the specific inter-local agreements formed.

4. Location Objectives:

The location of a school park site will be determined by the school district based on district policy. Coordinated city and school district planning allows for siting, acquisition, and facility development to be responsive to community needs. Service areas for school park sites will depend on the type of use and facilities provided.

5. Program Objectives:

The criteria established for neighborhood parks and community parks should be used to determine how a school park site is developed and programmed. If athletic fields are developed at a school park site, they should, where feasible, be oriented toward youth rather than adult programs. Establishing a clearly defined joint-use agreement between involved agencies is critical to making school park relationships workable. This is particularly important with respect to acquisition, development, maintenance, liability, use, and programming of facility issues.

The orientation of school park projects is typically for neighborhood and community recreation services. The functions may include sports, recreation classes, passive recreation activities, and other recreation programs suitable to an elementary or secondary education school.

County Park

1. Definition Summary:

A county park provides sufficient park and recreation area to meet the needs of county residents. County parks consist of land that is specifically set aside for active and passive recreation uses, and that accommodates large gatherings, special events, and individual users. County parks offer a wide variety of compatible outdoor recreation activities, and

may provide areas that do not primarily serve a recreational purpose such as protected natural areas, historic areas, and special use areas.

2. Size Objectives:

The size of recreation parks varies greatly from park to park, but with the exception of those parks that serve a special use or are trail corridors, a recreation park should consist of a minimum of 100 acres of land. Each park should be of sufficient size to accommodate the estimated use and to allow for the operation and maintenance of planned recreational facilities.

3. Service Area Objectives:

County parks provide for a regional user group and serve primarily county residents. Special facilities like camping and trails are also used by tourists and visitors to the county.

4. Location Objectives:

The land should have high recreational potential and be able to withstand intensive and extensive recreational activities. Land should have potential to accommodate large groups of people. Land for corridors should be located so as to connect to communities, parks, and open spaces. The potential for future land acquisition should be taken into account.

5. Program Objectives:

Development should be appropriate for intended use and should accommodate moderate to high use. Development and planning should consider the physical condition and characteristics of the land and recognize potential environmental or structural limitations that might require intensive maintenance. County parks may include the following facilities:

- a. Camping/group camping
- b. Picnic areas
- c. Recreational trails (hiking, bicycling, mountain biking, equestrian, cross-country ski, snowmobile, etc.)
- d. Play areas
- e. Swimming beaches
- f. Water access
- g. Fishing access
- h. Shelters

- i. Restrooms
- j. Shower facilities
- k. Sport fields (basketball, volleyball, softball, etc.)
- l. Pet exercise area

6. Orientation:

Multi-purpose service area and regional recreation resource serving a significant portion of a county or multi-county population.

7. Function:

To provide sufficient parks and recreation areas to meet the needs of the people of the county.

8. Space, Design, and Service Area:

The size of a county park should be a minimum of 100 acres. Facilities vary by park. Some parks offer active recreation (camping, recreational trails, etc.), while others provide passive recreation (scenic lookouts, picnic areas, beaches, etc.). Most parks provide both active and passive recreation. County parks provide for a regional user group and serve primarily county residents, through special facilities also serve tourists and visitors to the county.

State Forest

1. Definition Summary:

A state forest consists of well blocked areas of state owned lands that are managed to benefit present and future generations of residents, recognizing that forests contribute to local and statewide economics and to a healthy natural environment. State forests practice sustainable forestry. The management of state forests is consistent with the ecological capability of state forest land and with the long-term goal of maintaining sustainable forest communities and ecosystems. Benefits of maintaining these ecosystems include soil protection, public hunting, protection of water quality, production of recurring forest products, outdoor recreation, native biological diversity, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, and aesthetic value. The range of benefits provided in each state forest reflect its unique

character and position in the regional landscape.

2. Size Objectives:

Typically between 1,000 and 250,000 acres, but can be larger or smaller.

3. Service Area Objectives:

Generally a 100 mile radius. State forests typically provide close-to-home recreational area. Day users typically travel approximately 50 miles one-way to reach state forests, while overnight users tend to travel further, approximately 100-150 miles one-way. Travel to state forests can, however, exceed 160 miles for longer vacation stays and travel to "destination areas."

4. Location Objectives:

Areas with large blocks of land.

5. Program Objectives:

State forests must meet ecological, economic, social, and cultural needs. Elements are compatible with the natural resource setting and park site constraints. Facilities may include the following:

Current Level of Supply:

Hiking trails	1,256 acres per linear mile of trail
Cross-country ski trails	2,551 acres per linear mile of trail
Snowmobile trails	639 acres per linear mile of trail
Equestrian trails	559 acres per linear mile of trail
ATV trails	1,795 acres per linear mile of trail
Camping sites	1 campsite per 265 acres

6. Orientation:

Multi-purpose service area and regional recreation resource serving a significant portion of a state or regional population.

7. Function:

To provide for nature conservation, provide income to forest owners, supply raw materials to the wood processing industry, and provide public recreation.

8. Space, Design, and Service Area:

The size of a state forest is determined by the extent of the area's natural resources and recreation capabilities. There is no minimum or maximum size for a state forest. Facilities are not universal and vary by forest. The geographic location of the forest and the

natural resources present dictate recreation available at the site. State forests serve large geographic areas of a state or region.

State Park

1. Definition Summary:

A state park, by size, program, and location, provides space for outdoor recreation and education about nature and conservation. These parks serve a significant geographic segment of a state or regional population. State parks aim to preserve, protect, interpret and enhance the scenic and cultural resources of the state.

2. Size Objectives:

Parks must be large enough to accommodate a reasonable mix of outdoor recreational activities. Typically, parks are between 500 and 3000 acres, but can be smaller (<20 acres) or larger (>10,000 acres).

3. Service Area Objectives:

Generally a 100-mile radius. State parks typically provide close-to-home recreational areas. Day users generally travel approximately 50 miles one-way to reach state parks, while overnight users tend to travel further, approximately 100-150 miles one-way. Travel distances to state parks can often exceed 160 miles for longer vacation stays and trips to "destination areas."

4. Location Objectives:

Siting of Wisconsin State Parks is typically based on five criteria developed by John Nolen. These criteria are: 1) large size to serve a large number of citizens, 2) accessibility to major population areas, 3) a healthful, natural setting, 4) reasonable cost for land acquisition, 5) land possessing "decidedly uncommon charm and beauty." All, or a combination of these criteria are used to determine where to site a state park.

5. Program Objectives:

Elements that fulfill the service area, park facilities and recreation program demands. Elements are compatible with the natural resource setting and park site constraints. Developments may include the following facilities:

Current Level of Supply:

Hiking trails	196 acres per linear mile of trail
Surfaced bicycle trails	860 acres per linear mile of trail
Mountain bike trails	549 acres per linear mile of trail
Nature trails	1,871 acres per linear mile of trail
Cross-country ski trails	430 acres per linear mile of trail
Snowmobile trails	426 acres per linear mile of trail
Equestrian trails	400 acres per linear mile of trail
Picnic sites	0.05 acres per picnic table
Camping sites	1 campsite per 29 acres
Parking stalls	Year-Round = 1 stall for every three visitors
Swimming beaches	17 linear feet per 1,000 users

5. Orientation:

Multi-purpose service area and regional recreation resource serving a significant portion of a state or regional population.

6. Function:

To provide for public recreation and education of conservation and nature study.
To preserve, protect, interpret and enhance the scenic and cultural resources of the state.

7. Space, Design, and Service Area:

The size of a state park is determined by the extent of the area's natural resources and recreation capabilities. There is no minimum or maximum size for a state park. Facilities are not universal and vary by park. Some parks offer active recreation (camping, boating, mountain biking trails, hunting etc.), while others offer passive recreation (scenic lookouts, picnic areas, beaches, etc.). Most provide both active and passive recreation. The geographic area and the natural resources present dictate recreation uses and facilities present in the park. State parks serve large geographic areas of a state or region.