Places near population centers

Because of the inverse distribution of our population and public lands as well as the limited amount of time people have to participate, there is a very large need to provide more places for people to participate in outdoor recreation near where they live. In particular is the need to provide opportunities for residents to visit places after work or for a couple of hours on a weekend. Places that provide opportunities for hiking, all types of bicycle riding, dog walking, picnicking, and different water-related activities such as fishing, canoeing and kayaking are likely to be heavily used.

Trails

By nearly every measure, the largest need throughout the state is for more trails that enable people to experience natural settings, visit the vibrant downtowns of our cities and villages, commute to work, and access favorite sites. All types of trails are in demand – hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, snowmobiling, ATV/UTV and motorcycle riding, and 4WD vehicle trails.

Water access – shoreline and boat launches

Lakes, streams and rivers are a defining feature of Wisconsin. From the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River, from the thousands of inland lakes and the tens of thousands of miles of flowing water, residents and visitors have been drawn to the water’s edge to fish, hunt, launch any manner of watercraft, bird watch and beach walk. Access to water remains a universal need throughout the state.

Camping opportunities

With a large cohort of retirees travelling in RVs combined with an adventurous younger generation, demand for camping has grown in recent years and is likely to remain popular for years to come. Given the divergence in desired experiences – some campers wanting access to hot showers and WiFi while others wanting neither – recreation providers will need to collaborate and coordinate on providing the camping experiences best suited to different public lands.

GAPS AND NEEDS IN OUR EXISTING RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

In developing the following statewide needs and gaps in our recreation opportunities, the department incorporated information from:

- The SCORP recreation participation survey question regarding needed recreation opportunities in residents’ home county (Appendix 6).
- Recreation Opportunities Analysis, which identified recreation needs for each of the eight regions of the state (Appendix 8).
- The SCORP survey of county park directors, which asked about needs at the county level (Appendix 4).
- The SCORP Advisory Team and department staff.
Statewide Recreation Needs: (cont.)

Dog parks and exercise areas
Taking care of a dog has many benefits, not the least of which is the exercise people get in walking their pets. With the steady rise in dog ownership (75% of people in their thirties own a dog) and an urbanizing population has come an increasing demand for places to walk, play with, socialize and train our canine friends. Many municipal and county dog parks are among their most visited properties.

Target shooting ranges
Many hunters and shooting sports participants live in rural areas or belong to gun clubs and practice their craft on their or the club’s property. However, as our population continues to urbanize there is a growing need for places where people can practice gun and archery marksmanship and safety. By their nature, firearm ranges generate considerable sounds and siting new ranges has been a challenge in more populated areas of the state.

Statewide Policy Needs:

Better understand place-based recreation and associated outcomes
The survey conducted for this SCORP on recreation participation generated considerable data on which outdoor activities residents pursue and how often (see Appendix 6). What is not well known is where these “participation days” actually take place – that is, where, when, and why they occur at different places. Questions for which more detailed, property-specific, place-based data are needed include:

▪ How many people visit the place or property?
▪ When and what are the patterns of visitation?
▪ What recreation activities do they pursue?
▪ How far do visitors travel to reach the property and why did they visit the particular property (as opposed to other options)?
▪ What would improve their satisfaction?
▪ What are the economic, health, and social benefits associated with their visit?

With a more complete understanding of property use and the features and attributes that draw people, agencies can make more informed decisions about what types of recreation facilities to build and maintain at different places. And the public can better understand their “return on investment.”

Better understand the nature-based recreation preferences of our diversifying population
Data are needed on the recreation preferences of our changing population. For a range of reasons, people of varying ages, residential settings, incomes, and social, racial, ethnic and cultural identities participate in different types of outdoor activities in different places. More information is needed on the types of activities and settings sought by the diversity of Wisconsin residents. In addition, data on how and where to most effectively provide quality experiences for people with varying backgrounds and cultures are needed.

Enhance and stabilize funding for outdoor recreation
Funding for conservation and recreation is derived from many sources and the overall total has fluctuated considerably from year to year. This has complicated efforts to plan, develop, and maintain recreation facilities. Some states have implemented funding sources that provide a more stable source of money for conservation and recreation projects. In addition to more consistent funding, there is a need to broaden the network of people and sources that help pay for the management of public lands in the state.

Expand collaborations among recreation providers
Each recreation provider has unique capabilities and their lands offer different types of experiences, features, facilities, and opportunities. There would be substantial benefit in continuing and expanding collaborations among federal, county and local governments. Focus should be placed on identifying ways to coordinate recreation experiences in each region of the state, minimizing duplicative efforts, and maximizing the benefits of recreation investments.

Together, providing well-planned, safe and enjoyable recreation opportunities that visitor’s value will increase support for local communities and businesses, strengthen tourism, respond to evolving demographic and visitor needs, reduce user conflicts and improve natural settings.
Regional Recreation Needs (high needs identified in the Recreation Opportunities Analysis – see Appendix 8)

**Great Northwest Region**
- ATV/UTV riding
- Bicycling – bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
- Bird or wildlife watching
- Camping – developed and primitive
- Canoeing or kayaking
- Fishing
- Four-wheel vehicle driving
- Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
- Hunting - big game
- Motor boating (inc. waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)
- Off-highway motorcycle riding
- Swimming in lakes and rivers

**Northwoods Region**
- ATV/UTV riding
- Bicycling – bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
- Camping – developed and primitive
- Canoeing or kayaking
- Fishing
- Four-wheel vehicle driving
- Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
- Hunting – big game
- Off-highway motorcycle riding
- Participating in nature-based education programs
- Snowmobiling

**Western Sands Region**
- Bicycling – bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
- Bird or wildlife watching
- Camping – developed and primitive
- Canoeing or kayaking
- Cross country skiing
- Dog walking
- Fishing
- Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
- Horseback riding
- Hunting - big game
- Picnicking
- Snowshoeing
- Swimming in lakes and rivers

**Mississippi River Corridor Region**
- Bicycling – bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
- Bird or wildlife watching
- Camping – developed and primitive
- Canoeing or kayaking
- Cross country skiing
- Dog walking
- Fishing
- Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.
- Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
- Hunting - big game
- Nature photography
- Participating in nature-based education programs
- Picnicking
- Snowshoeing
- Visiting a beach, beach walking

**Southern Gateways Region**
- ATV/UTV riding
- Bicycling – bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
- Bird or wildlife watching
- Camping – developed and primitive
- Canoeing or kayaking
- Fishing
- Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.
- Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
- Motor boating (inc. waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)
- Picnicking
- Snowshoeing
- Swimming in lakes and rivers

**Upper Lake Michigan Coastal Region**
- Bicycling – bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
- Bird or wildlife watching
- Camping – developed and primitive
- Canoeing or kayaking
- Fishing – all types
- Hiking, walking, trail running or backpacking
- Horseback riding
- Motor boating (inc. waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)
- Participating in nature-based education programs
- Visiting a beach, beach walking

**Lake Winnebago Waters Region**
- Bicycling – bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
- Bird or wildlife watching
- Camping – developed and primitive
- Canoeing or kayaking
- Cross country skiing
- Dog walking
- Fishing
- Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
- Hunting – big game
- Motor boating (inc. waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)
- Nature photography
- Participating in nature-based education programs
- Picnicking
- Swimming in lakes and rivers
- Visiting a beach, beach walking

**Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region**
- Bicycling – bicycle touring/road riding and mountain biking/off-road biking
- Bird or wildlife watching
- Camping - primitive
- Canoeing or kayaking
- Cross country skiing
- Fishing
- Gather mushrooms, berries, etc.
- Hiking, walking, trail running, backpacking
- Motor boating (inc. waterski/tubing, personal watercraft)
- Nature photography
- Picnicking
- Snowshoeing
- Swimming in lakes and rivers