Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plan

Also covering the municipalities within Lincoln County

DRAFT – November 2026

2027-2031

Effective January 1, 2027 to December 31, 2031

Prepared by: North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

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DRAFT – November 2026

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

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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION 1
    - 1.1 Purpose 1
    - 1.2 Provisions for Updating Plan 2
    - 1.3 Planning Process 2
    - 1.4 Reference Plans 3

Map 1 Outdoor Recreation 8

Map 2 County Forest Blocks 9

Map 3 Legacy Places and Potential Trails 10

Map 4 City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation 11

Map 5 City of Tomahawk Outdoor Recreation 12

2. BACKGROUND OF LINCOLN COUNTY
    - 2.1 Physical Characteristics 13
    - 2.2 Social Characteristics 17

3. OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES
    - 3.1 Introduction 24
    - 3.2 County Maintained Recreation Facilities 24
    - 3.3 Linear Facilities 24
    - 3.4 Points of Interest 27
    - 3.5 Public Access Points to Water Bodies 28
    - 3.6 School District Facilities 28
    - 3.7 Local Government Facilities & Capital Improvement Lists 30
    - 3.8 State Facilities 34
    - 3.9 Forested Lands – Not State or County Owned 36

4. COUNTY MAINTAINED RECREATION FACILITES
    - 4.1 Introduction 37
    - 4.2 County Parks & Recreation Areas 37
    - 4.3 County Forest 41

5. OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT
5.1 Introduction 42
5.2 Public Participation 42
5.3 Park Standards Analysis 53
5.4 Statewide Outdoor Recreation Trends 54

6. GOALS & OBJECTIVES 56

7. RECOMMENDATIONS & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS
7.1 Local Government Recommendations 58
7.2 County Recommendations 58
7.3 County Facility Capital Improvements, 2027-2031 61

8. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES 70

Attachments

A. Park Design and Location Criteria
B. Facility Development Standards
C. Federal and State Outdoor Recreation Funding Programs
D. Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Online Survey Results
E. Forest Legacy Areas, 2026, Lincoln County

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The primary purpose of this outdoor recreation plan is to provide continued direction toward meeting the current and future recreation needs of Lincoln County. This is accomplished through an inventory and analysis of outdoor recreational facilities, asking the public what they are looking for, and the establishment of recommendations to meet identified needs.

Adoption of this plan by the Lincoln County Board will continue eligibility of the County and local governments for the following grant programs:

- Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program (Stewardship)
- Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)
- Federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP)



Non-profit conservation organizations (NCOs) are eligible to participate in some Knowles–Nelson Stewardship programs. NCOs may adopt a local government's comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (CORP) in which the NCO project is located or use the NCO's land management plans that are required for participation in the Stewardship programs.

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

Submission of this adopted CORP to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources at the time of grant application is necessary to be eligible for a variety of Federal and State Aids for outdoor recreation (Chapter NR 50.06(4), Wisconsin administrative code).

1.2 Provisions for Updating Plan

Plan amendments are common and should be considered part of the planning process. They frequently represent good implementation or plan usage and should be acceptable for consideration by local decision makers.

Annual review of the plan recommendations and capital improvement list by the Forestry, Land, & Parks Committee will keep this plan current. This review may also occur after a large turnover in elected officials after an election.

Annual Review Process:

1. The Forestry, Land, & Parks Committee reviews plan and takes a vote to approve what changes to make.
2. County Board adopts plan with changes by resolution.
3. Those changes are now part of the original plan. Make sure those changes, the original plan, and the approval resolution are available to submit to DNR's Community Financial Assistance staff when applying for any state or federal financial assistance.

Full plan update every 5-years

Updating the plan every five years will ensure it aligns with the evolving recreational needs of the County and maintain the County's eligibility for grant programs for an additional five years.

1.3 Planning Process

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

Lincoln County Planning Timeline

Winter 2025-2026 – Staff park analysis, plans reviewed, & demographic data analysis.

February 9, 2026 – Forestry, Land, & Parks Committee meeting – Overview of planning process, discussed questions for countywide survey and how to distribute the survey.

February 2026 – Survey available for 9-weeks. 385 responses. See survey details in Chapter 5.

Spring 2026 – Goals & Objectives developed.

Spring 2026 – All local governments contacted to update their parks and list any possible capital improvements.

June 8, 2026 – Forestry, Land, & Parks Committee meeting – Reviewed survey results, and discussed initial goals & objectives.

Summer 2026 – Draft Plan ready for review.

Fall 2026 – Forestry, Land, & Parks Committee meeting – Draft Plan presented for initial review.

Fall 2026 – Plan ready for approval by Forestry, Land, & Parks Committee and adoption by County Board.

1.4 Reference Plans

This plan was written to continue the parks and recreation program established in the Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plans since 1971 when a Recreation Plan for Lincoln County was developed by the UW-Extension. Lincoln County directed North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (NCWRPC) to develop consecutive 5-year outdoor recreation plans starting in 1978. This 2027–2031 Plan was written to continue the parks and recreation program established in the Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Plans since 1971.

Plan summaries that affect outdoor recreation in Lincoln County are referenced below, and **Map 3** shows any referenced routes:

Lincoln County Comprehensive Plan 2022-2031

This plan is a combination of nine chapters. Here are the goals, objectives, and policies that affect outdoor recreation:

Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources

Goal 2: Resource Management

Objectives:

A. The land needed for supporting the sustainable development of the county's agricultural forestry, recreation, and wildlife resources will be carefully conserved and preserved where appropriate.

B. The County's water resources will be protected so residents and tourists can be ensured a high quality of life and enjoy the environmental benefits.

C. Maintain the balance between wildlife preservation, for maintaining the ecosystem and providing recreational opportunities, and the controls needed to reduce their negative impacts on agricultural and forest crops.

D. More decisions that impact our local resources will be made at the county level.

Transportation

Goal 2: Trails of various types (e.g. ATV, snowmobile, walking, biking, horse, etc.) will be joined together and linked with other transportation modes such as roads both inside and outside the county to support greater regional economic activity.

Objectives:

A. Explore and take advantage of, when feasible, revenue programs and grants that will improve different modes of transportation and our ability to link them.

B. Plan and promote multiple modes of transportation as part of road repair and construction.

C. Create snowmobile connectivity east to west and north to south in Merrill so snowmobilers don't have to cross the Wisconsin River (create similar connectivity in Tomahawk).

Goal 3: County departments will coordinate the development of a plan that effectively promote Lincoln County trail systems.

Objectives:

A. Explore and take advantage of, when feasible, revenue programs and grants that improve and connect different modes of transportation.
B. Develop an inventory of existing trail systems to determine what trails are most important and easily marketed.
C. Organize and begin discussing with stakeholders how to market tourism on a countywide level.
D. Establish a Lincoln County welcome or visitors' center near county entrance.

Lincoln County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, 2021–2035

This plan is a management guide for the Lincoln County Forest and is updated every fifteen years. The mission of the plan is to manage and protect natural resources within the county forest on a sustainable basis for the ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future residents throughout the county. The report includes a number of recommendations for timber management, wildlife habitat and game management, land acquisition and forest boundary management, biodiversity management, watershed management and tourism.

A framework for how various trail systems will be maintained and expanded is in Chapter 900.

Merrill Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2015

The Merrill Park & Recreation Commission prepared the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in 2015. The plan developed strategies for improving bicycle and pedestrian transportation throughout Merrill. Potential policies and infrastructure changes are identified along with a potential improvement time frame and who will initiate the change for each project.

Merrill has one bike route that is outside of the city limits; the proposed Merrill Memorial Forest Bike Route is shown on **Map 3**.

Tomahawk Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, 2022

The Tomahawk Park and Recreation Committee prepared the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan in 2021. The plan developed strategies for improving bicycle and pedestrian transportation throughout Tomahawk. Potential policies and infrastructure changes are identified along with a potential improvement time frame and who will initiate the change for each project.

North Central Wisconsin Regional Bicycle Facilities Network Plan, 2018

North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission created this document to guide the development of an interconnected bikeway system for the North Central Wisconsin Region at the 10-county level. Potential trail corridors are identified and improvement descriptions were created for each trail that exists to facilitate implementation.

This NCW Regional Bicycle Facilities Network Plan has connectivity and recommendation maps for each county. The Hiawatha Trail is the primary off-road bike path in the county, which connects Tomahawk with Oneida County due north. Merrill's primary off-road bike and pedestrian path is the River Bend Trail. Other routes for Lincoln County are part of an on-road countywide loop that passes through Merrill and Tomahawk via State Highway 107.

Additional routes are shown on a map in Appendix 1 (not in Lincoln County ORP) titled: Existing & Recommended Network for Lincoln County.
Note: *Local review of recommended routes should occur before installing signs.*

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) 2025-2030

Every five years, the Wisconsin DNR publishes a SCORP as required by the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965. At its core, this SCORP is used to help allocate federal funds equitably among local communities, but the document also transcends many levels of outdoor recreation discussion and policy.

This SCORP lays out three overarching goals for outdoor recreation:

1. Ensure that all Wisconsinites have opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation.
2. Maintain and expand sustainable outdoor recreational opportunities.
3. Grow the collaborative approach across non-profit organizations, businesses, and federal, state, regional and local agencies.

- Park Design and Location Criteria from SCORP 2019-2024 are described in **Attachment A.**
- SCORP summary is at the end of Chapter 5, pages 54 & 55.

Forest Legacy Program

The purpose of the U.S. Forest Service's Forest Legacy Program is to identify and protect environmentally important private forestlands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses, such as subdivision for residential or commercial development. The Wisconsin DNR administers this federal program in Wisconsin.

Wisconsin's Forest Legacy Program aims to keep forests as forests by protecting large unfragmented blocks of forest lands that provide the highest conservation value and public benefit, and minimize conversion of forests to non-forest uses through the purchase of conservation easements. Conservation easements convey a "purchased" set of negotiated property rights, while allowing landowners to continue to own and manage their land, including the right to sell.

Landowner participation is entirely voluntary. A project can be:

- a fee transaction (the landowner sells the land to the state); or
- a conservation easement that restricts development and uses that impact the conservation values present on the property while ensuring sustainable forest management.

With a conservation easement, the land remains in private ownership and keeps forests as forests.

Project applications go through a competitive process at both the state and national level. It is important to note that projects may take several years to complete.

Land must be:

- located within one of Wisconsin's five Forest Legacy Areas (see map in **Attachment E**);
- 75% forested or have additional trees planted to meet the forest cover requirement; and
- owned by someone who is willing to sell or donate the interest in perpetuity.

Landowners must also practice sustainable forestry according to a management plan prepared by a natural resource professional.

State Trails Network Plan

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

<u>Segment 13 – Dresser to Michigan</u>

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

<u>Segment 18 – Tomahawk to Wausau (Northern Region)</u>

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

<u>Segment 69 – Tomahawk to Crandon</u>

This abandoned corridor would link these two communities via an off-road connector.
(NCWRPC Note: Trail "dead ends" at US Highway 51. There is no underpass.)

Wisconsin Land Legacy Report 2006-2056

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

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

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

SO Somo River

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

HH Harrison Hills

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

PR Prairie River

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

UW Upper Wisconsin River

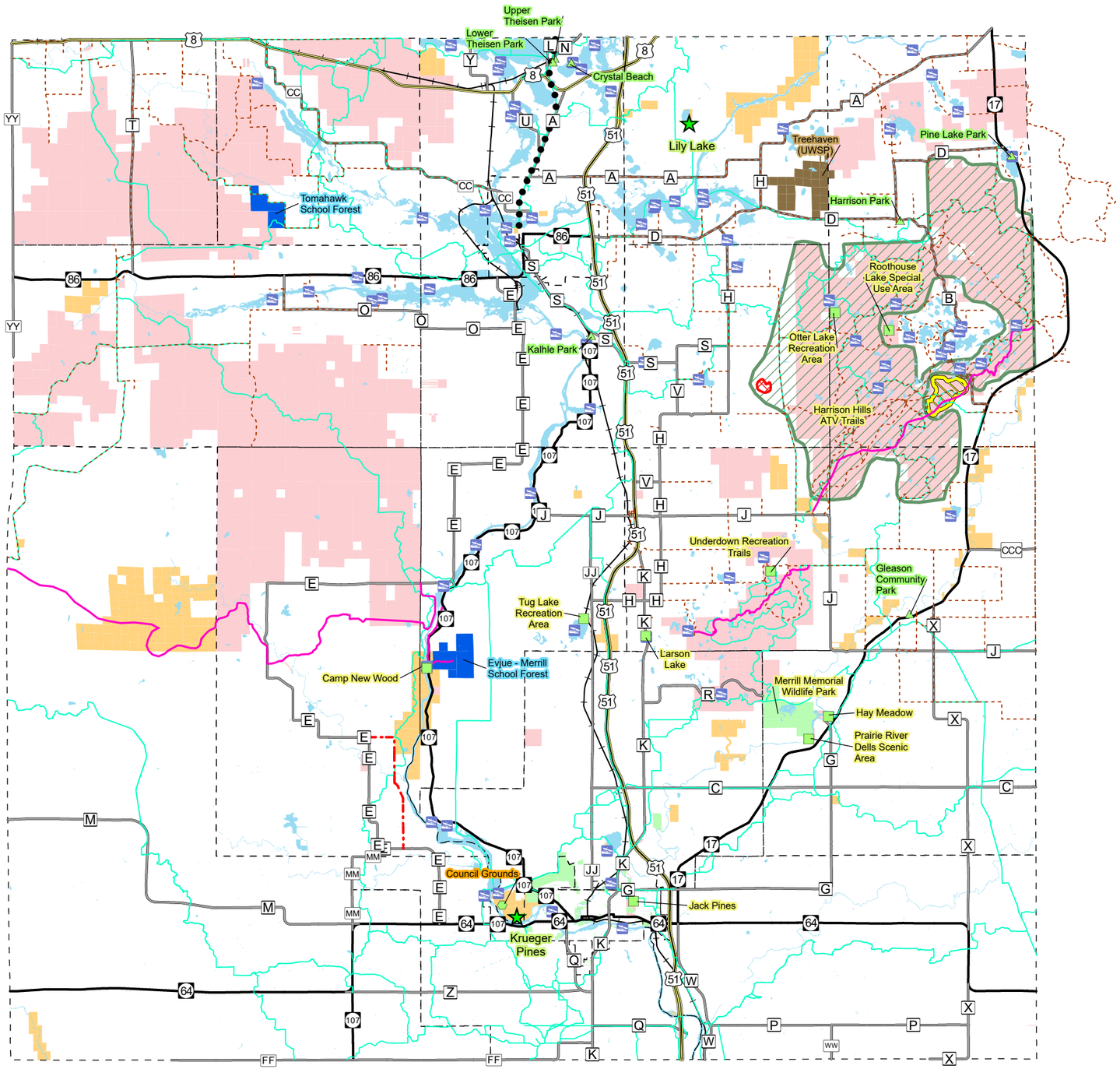
Size	Large
Protection Initiated	Moderate
Protection Remaining	Moderate
Conservation Significance	☆☆☆
Recreation Potential	☆☆☆

MW Middle Wisconsin River

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

Another Area of Interest includes:

- Big Pine Creek



Legend

- Minor Civil Divisions
- US Highway
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Railroad
- Water
- Rustic Roads
- County
- State
- Town
- State Natural Areas
- Boat Launch

Trails

- Hiawatha County Trail
- Ice Age Trail
- ATV Trails / Routes
- Snowmobile Trails

Geological Sites

- Harrison Hills
- Lookout Mountain
- Porcupine Mountain

Public Lands

- Lincoln County
- School Forest
- Treehaven (UWSP)
- WI DNR
- City of Merrill

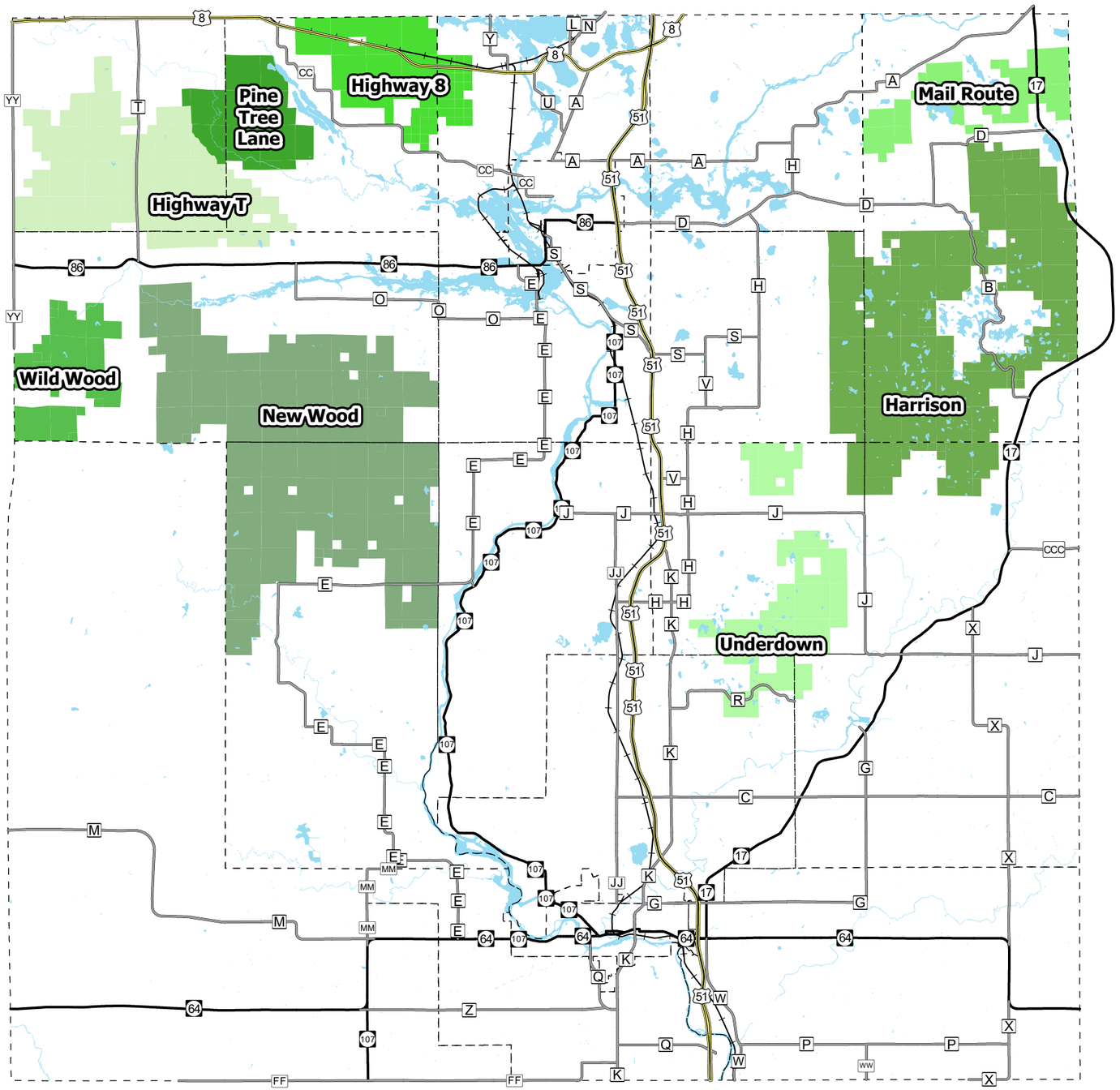
N W E S

0 1 2 4 6 Miles

Source: Wis DNR, Lincoln County, NCWRPC

This map is neither a legally recorded map nor a survey of the actual boundary of any property depicted. This drawing is a compilation of records, information and data used for reference purposes only. NCWRPC is not responsible for any inaccuracies herein contained.

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Legend

- Minor Civil Divisions
- US Highway
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Railroad
- Water

Forest Block Name

N W E S

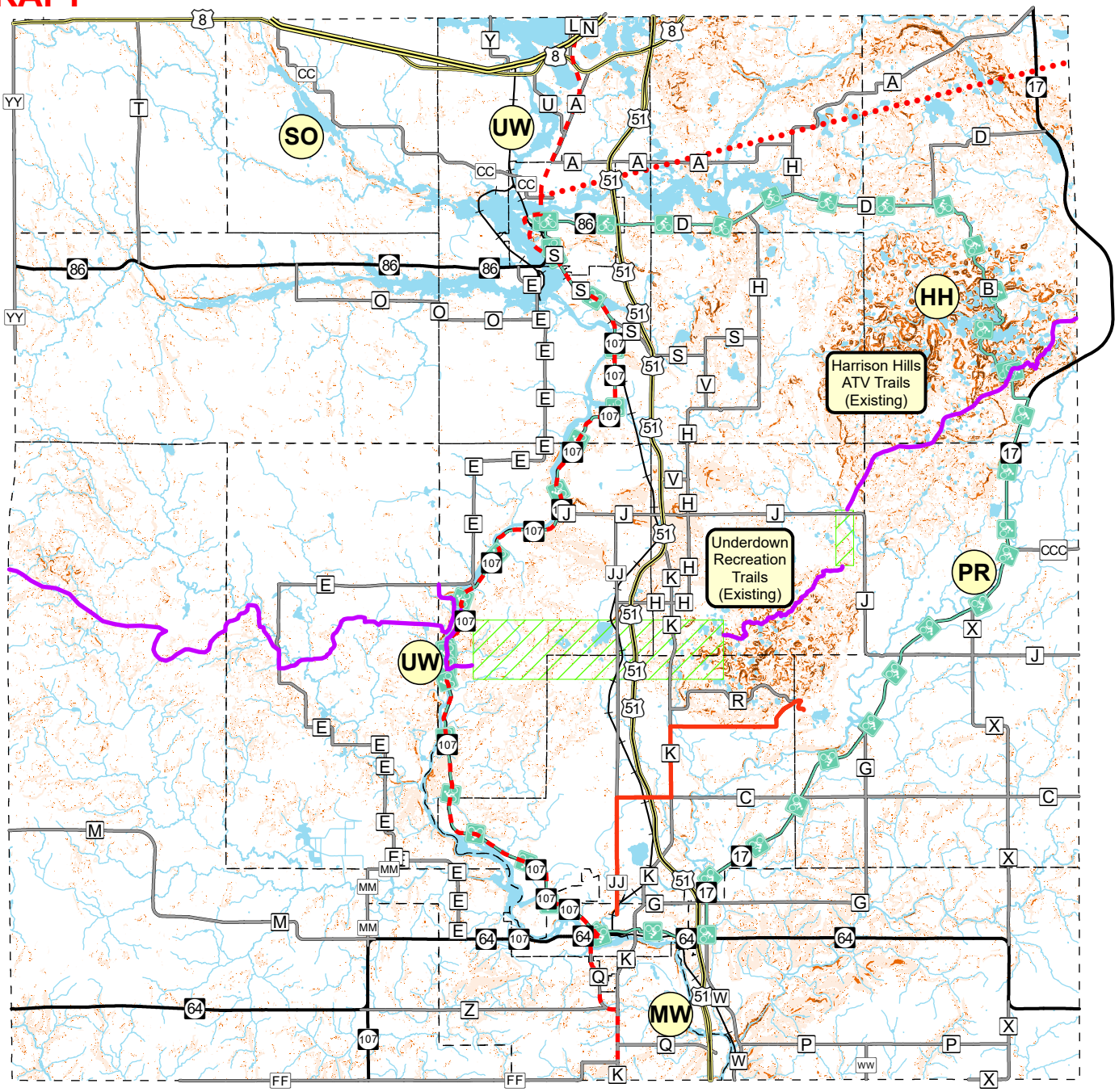
0 1 2 4 6 Miles

Source: Wis DNR, Lincoln County, NCWRPC

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Legend

- Minor Civil Divisions
- US Highway
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Railroad
- Water
- Ice Age Trail (Existing)
- Scenic Car and Bike Tour
- DNR Segment 13
- DNR Seg 18
- DNR Segment 69
- Merrill Memorial Forest Bike Route
- Wisconsin Land Legacy Areas
- Ice Age Trail Corridor
- Slopes (6-12%)
- Moderate Slopes (12-20%)
- Steep Slopes (>20%)

N W E S

0 1.25 2.5 5 7.5 Miles

Source: Wis DNR,Lincoln County, NCWRPC

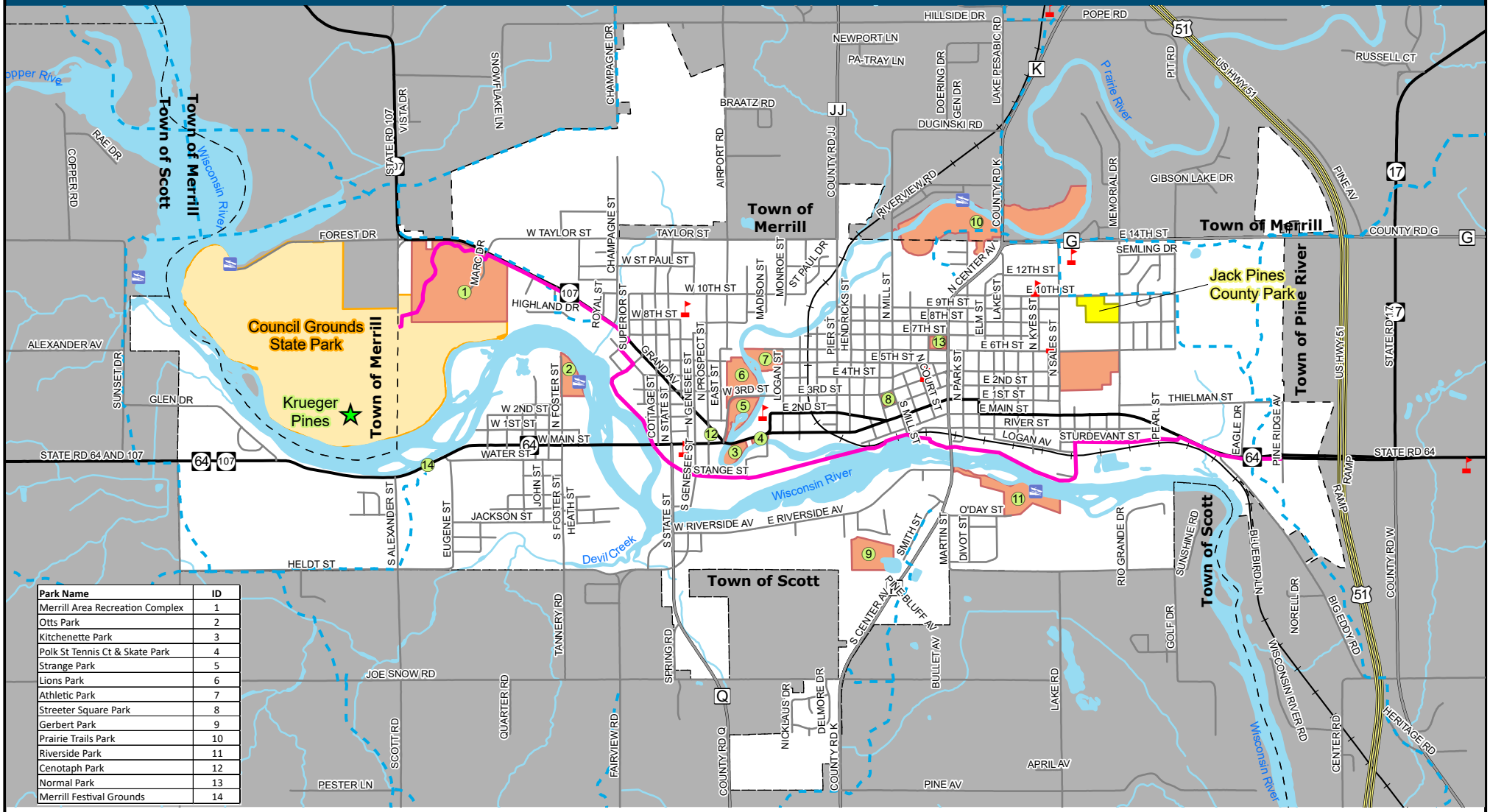
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City of Merrill - Lincoln County, WI

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Outdoor Recreation Map 4



Park Name	ID
Merrill Area Recreation Complex	1
Otts Park	2
Kitchenette Park	3
Polk St Tennis Ct & Skate Park	4
Strange Park	5
Lions Park	6
Athletic Park	7
Streeter Square Park	8
Gerbert Park	9
Prairie Trails Park	10
Riverside Park	11
Cenotaph Park	12
Normal Park	13
Merrill Festival Grounds	14

Legend

- Minor Civil Divisions
- US Highway
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Railroad
- State Natural Areas
- Boat Launch
- Schools
- Merrill Parks
- Water
- River Bend Trail
- Snowmobile Only Trails
- County Parks
- State Park
- City Parks

N W E S

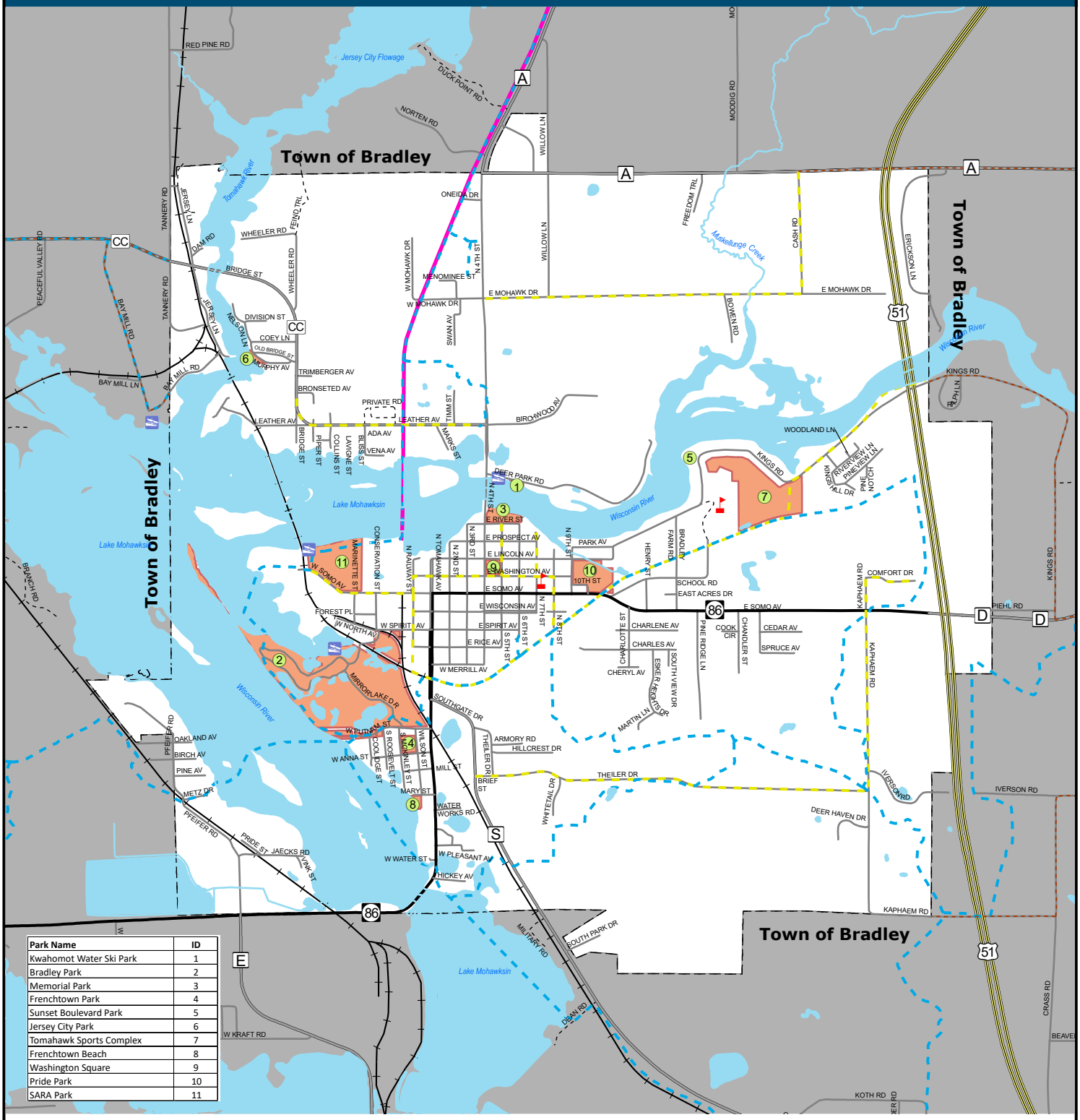
0 0.2 0.4 0.8 1.2 Miles

Source: Wis DNR, Lincoln County, NCWRPC

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City of Tomahawk - Lincoln County, WI DRAFT Outdoor Recreation Map 5



Park Name	ID
Kwahomot Water Ski Park	1
Bradley Park	2
Memorial Park	3
Frenchtown Park	4
Sunset Boulevard Park	5
Jersey City Park	6
Tomahawk Sports Complex	7
Frenchtown Beach	8
Washington Square	9
Pride Park	10
SARA Park	11

Legend

- Minor Civil Divisions
- US Highway
- State Highways
- County Highways
- Local Roads
- Private Roads
- Railroad
- Water
- City Parks
- Boat Launch
- Schools
- Tomahawk Parks
- Hiawatha County Trail
- Bike Routes
- ATV Trails / Routes
- Snowmobile Trails

N W E S

0 0.17 0.35 0.7 1.05 Miles

Source: Wis DNR, Lincoln County, NCWRPC

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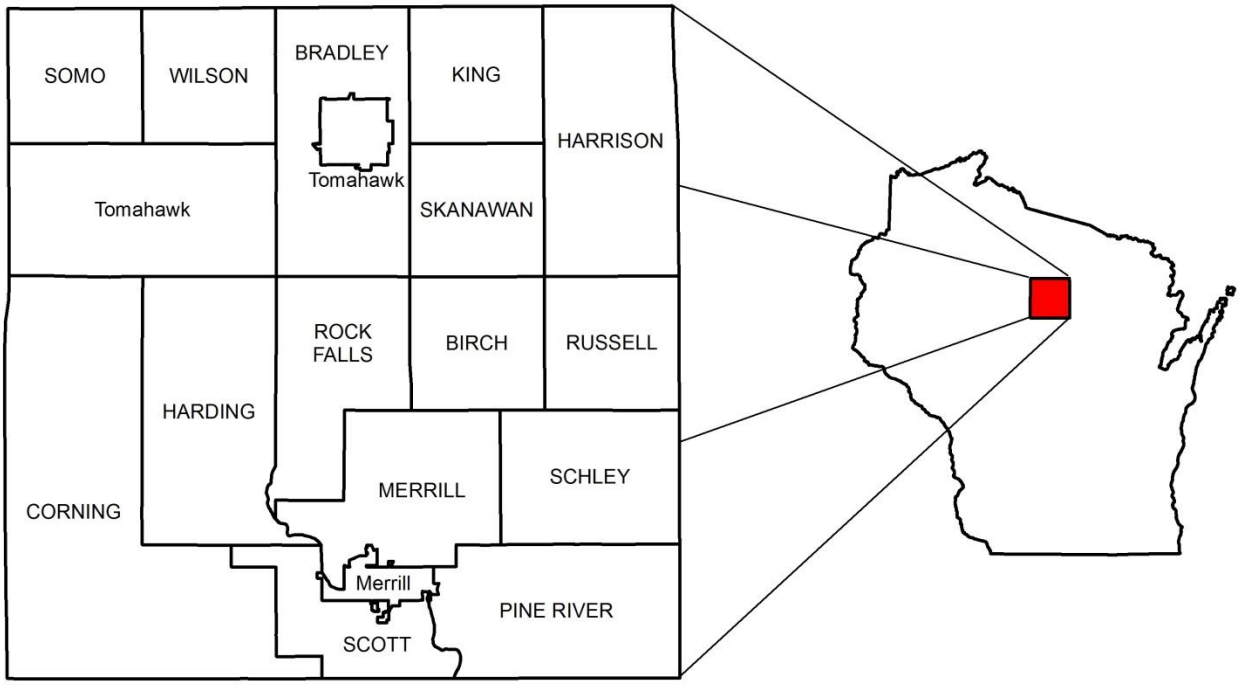
Chapter 2:
BACKGROUND OF LINCOLN COUNTY

2.1 Physical Characteristics

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

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

Figure 1 Lincoln County



Topography and Geology

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

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

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

Forestry

As of 2026, there were about 165,837 acres of privately-owned forestland enrolled in either the Forest Crop Law (FCL) or Managed Forest Law (MFL) program, both administered by WDNR. In exchange for following an approved forest management plan, the landowner pays reduced property taxes. An even greater tax reduction is provided to those who open their enrolled lands to the public for the recreational purposes of hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing, and sightseeing.

Forest Legacy Area (FLA) – The WDNR purchased the development rights for two industrial forests mainly in the Towns of Corning and Harding. All FLA acres are also enrolled in the MFL program.

Surface Water

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

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

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

Groundwater

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

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

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

Climate

Winters in Lincoln County are very cold, and summers are short and fairly warm. The short frost-free period in summer limits the production of crops to forage, small grain, and adapted vegetables. Precipitation is fairly well distributed throughout the year. It reaches a peak in summer. Snow covers the ground during much of the period from late fall through early spring. (Lincoln County Soil Survey, 1996)

Like much of the Midwest, Lincoln County has experienced increasing temperatures and precipitation in recent decades. Warming has been concentrated in the winter and spring, while summers have warmed less. Warmer spring temperatures present the additional threat of frost-freeze damage to early-budding fruit trees. The lack of summer warming is reflected in a below average occurrence of very hot days and no overall trend in warm nights. The number of very cold days has been near or below average since 2000, reflecting a winter warming trend. The increase in winter temperatures has also reduced lake ice cover. Precipitation varies widely from year to year, and most of the state's precipitation falls during the warmer half of the year. (Excerpt from NOAA State Climate Summaries - Wisconsin 2022)

Total winter precipitation and total summer precipitation have been mostly above average over the last 26 years. The frequency of 2-inch extreme precipitation events has increased, with the highest number occurring during the 2015–2020 period. Annual snowfall totals have increased over the rest of Wisconsin since 1930. (Excerpt from NOAA State Climate Summaries - Wisconsin 2022)

Projected Future Climate Trends

Lincoln County, like the rest of Wisconsin, is projected to continue warming in the future, with winters warming more rapidly than other seasons (Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts 2021 Assessment Report). With warming winters, Lincoln County can expect to see fewer nights per year with below-freezing temperatures and with a warming climate comes a shift in lakes predictably freezing over from annually to intermittently. Lake Mendota

(Dane County) will likely have intermittent ice by 2040. Trout Lake (Vilas County) will likely start having intermittent ice by 2100. (John J. Magnuson et al, Center for Limnology, UW-Madison, 2019)

Precipitation is projected to continue increasing in Lincoln County and the rest of Wisconsin. Most of the precipitation increase is projected to occur during the winter and spring, but snowfall is projected to decline due to warmer temperatures. Additionally, extreme precipitation is projected to increase, potentially increasing the frequency and intensity of floods and causing increased runoff and erosion. Above normal precipitation enhances the risk of springtime flooding, which could pose a threat to Wisconsin's agricultural industry by delaying planting and causing yield losses. (Excerpt from NOAA State Climate Summaries - Wisconsin 2022)

The intensity of future droughts is projected to increase. Even if precipitation increases in the future, rising temperatures will increase the rate of soil moisture loss during dry periods. Thus, future summer droughts, a natural part of Wisconsin's climate, are likely to be more intense. (Excerpt from NOAA State Climate Summaries - Wisconsin 2022)

Soils

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

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

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

2.2 Social Characteristics

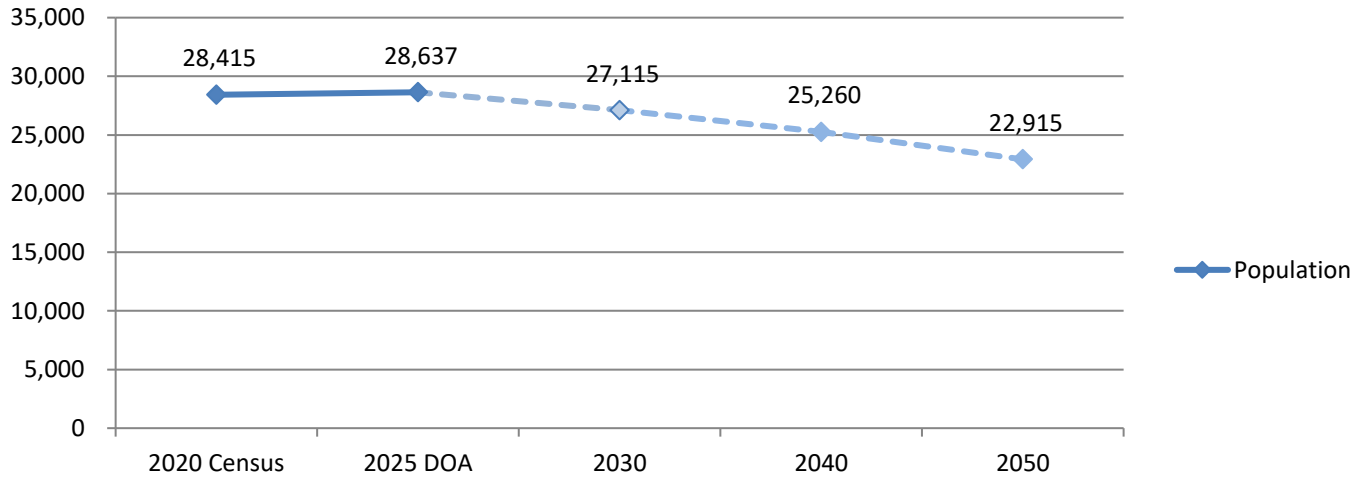
Introduction

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

Population

The 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates total population of Lincoln County is 28,426. This 100% count shows an increase of approximately 3,758 people since the 2020 Census. Lincoln County's population decreased by 0.9 percent while the state grew by 9.8 percent and the nation grew by 7.7 percent between 2010 and 2024. The population of Lincoln County is expected to decline through 2050 (see **Figure 2**).

Figure 2: Lincoln County Population Projections



Source: U.S. Census 2020, Wisconsin Department of Administration
2025 Estimate, Wisconsin DOA 2024 projections

Changes in population are made up of two components. More births than deaths produce a natural increase, and more people moving into an area than moving out produces a migration increase. The combination of these two factors makes up increases or decreases in population. Wisconsin's Demographic Services Center estimates Lincoln County's 2025 population at 28,637. Lincoln County's natural increase in 2025 was a decrease of 2.7%; unlike the state's natural increase of 0.05%. The decreased natural increase may be a reflection of more deaths than births in the county. Net migration for Lincoln County was 3.5%, which is the sole reason why Lincoln County's population increased in 2025. This net migration for the County was considerably higher than the state rate of 2.3%. Net migration has an immediate impact on a county's labor force potential, while natural increase provides some insight into a county's long-term workforce pipeline. Natural increase is largely a function of age

and is expected to decline in the coming decades because the state's fertility rate has been below replacement level since 1975. (WDOA, DSC)

Table 1
Populations & Projections

Municipality	2020 Census	2025 Estimate	2030 Projections	2040 Projections	2050 Projections
C Merrill	9,347	9,411	8,694	7,901	6,975
C Tomahawk	3,441	3,459	3,286	3,069	2,787
T Birch	570	539	574	521	498
T Bradley	2,382	2,454	2,361	2,286	2,150
T Corning	825	841	780	721	647
T Harding	364	372	355	338	312
T Harrison	828	828	786	729	658
T King	964	991	1,010	1,027	1,009
T Merrill	2,881	2,867	2,687	2,449	2,168
T Pine River	1,874	1,887	1,807	1,704	1,563
T Rock Falls	635	633	611	575	526
T Russell	693	705	677	646	600
T Schley	950	962	940	909	854
T Scott	1,377	1,380	1,274	1,152	1,010
T Skanawan	386	387	366	340	306
T Somo	123	129	126	125	120
T Tomahawk	458	470	466	461	443
T Wilson	317	322	315	307	289
Lincoln County	**28,415**	**28,637**	27,115	25,260	22,915

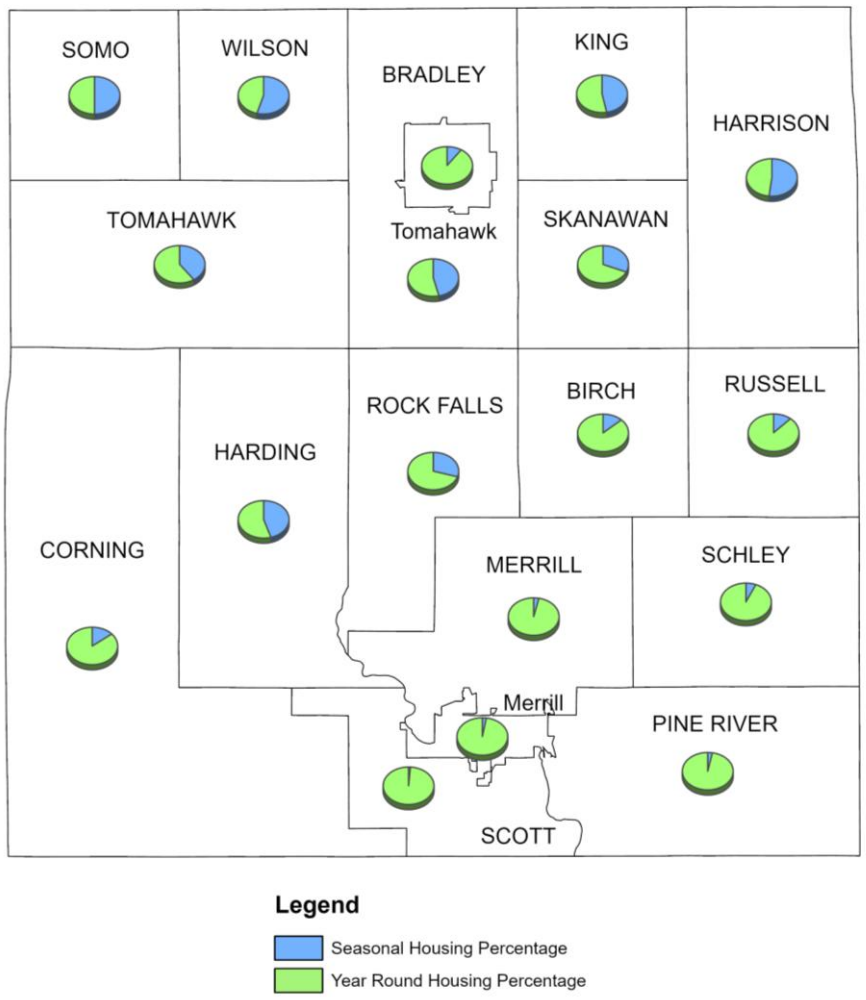
Source: U.S. Census 2020; WDOA Preliminary Jan. 1, 2025, Population Estimates; WDOA 2024 Population Projections

Table 1 shows three parts of the population for all the local governments within Lincoln County. The 2020 Census population comes from the 100% count decennial Census. Wisconsin Department of Administration (WDOA) created the 2025 Estimates, which are preliminary Jan. 1, 2025 numbers. Projections come from the now dated numbers that WDOA created in 2024 from the 2020 Census. New projections are very late.

Household sizes have slightly decreased over time in Lincoln County, similar to national and state trends where household sizes have also decreased. Lincoln County had 13,113 households as of the 2010 Census, and an average household size of 2.18 people. By 2024, the number of households decreased to 12,772, and the average household size within Lincoln County had stayed the same. About 23.5% of households have someone under 18 years old, and about 36.1% of households have someone 65 or older. About 61% of households are families, and just over 21% have their own children under 18 years old.

Lincoln County has a smaller proportion of vacant housing than Wisconsin or the United States per the 2024 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates. Some of these vacant housing units are seasonal housing a.k.a. "up north cabins" (see **Figure 3**). In 2024, approximately 18.7% of the housing in Lincoln County was seasonally vacant compared to approximately 6.2% in Wisconsin and 3.3% in the United States. There are concentrations of seasonal housing in Lincoln County near several lakes and along the Wisconsin River. These areas will have greater fluctuations in population throughout the year, and these seasonal residents must be included when determining the demand for recreation facilities.

Figure 3: Year-Round and Seasonal Housing, 2024

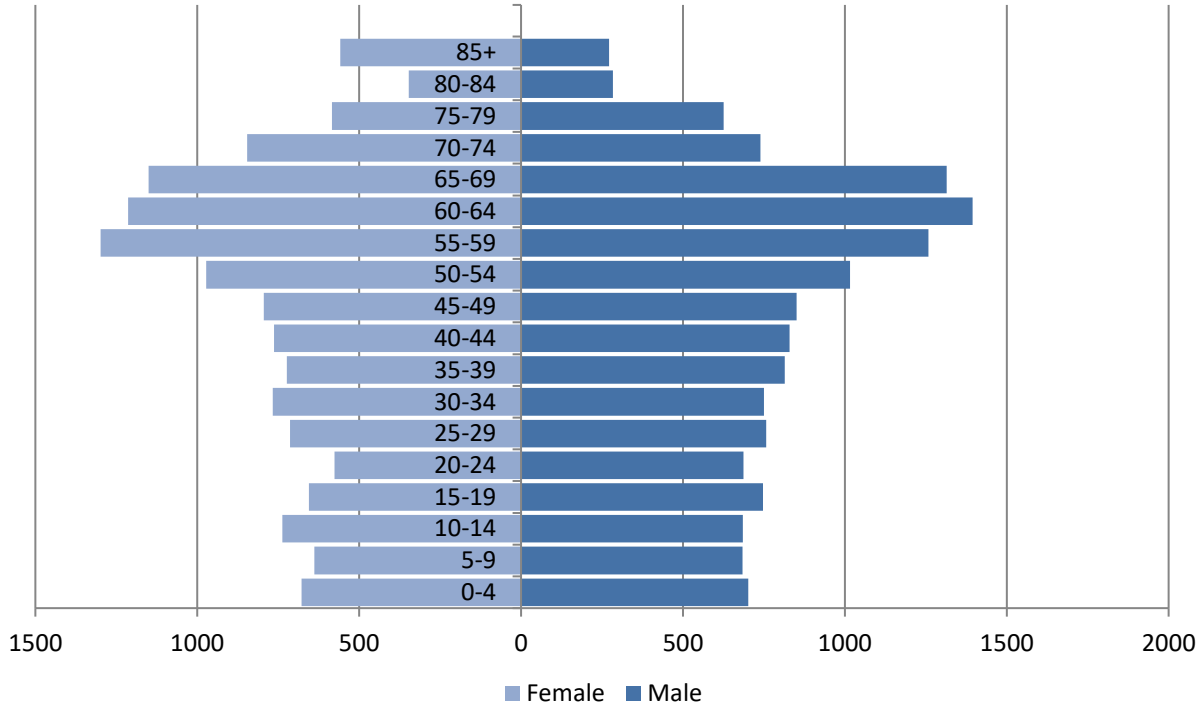


Age

The median age of Lincoln County is 49.3 years old, while Wisconsin is 40.2 years old. The median age has increased in both Lincoln County and Wisconsin between 2010 and 2024, from 44.0 and 38.1 years old, respectively. **Figure 4** shows the distribution of age groups in Lincoln County. In Lincoln County, the largest age concentration is the 60-64 year old group. There is also a large concentration of people in the middle-aged 50-69 year old age groups. Usually, the most heavily concentrated age groups are very near the typical retirement age, which will likely have a great effect on the parks and recreation needs of the County. Females outnumber males in the age groups above 60.

Understanding the needs of younger adults is important in ensuring there are adequate recreational amenities. Younger people tend to be very active and prioritize physical activities like hiking, biking, and gym activities. Similarly, research has demonstrated that recently retired people tend to be very active and are attracted to places with recreational amenities. As retirees age, they tend to become less active, with many eventually moving to more urban areas where services such as health care are in closer proximity and more accessible. Overall, Lincoln County has a healthy balance of age group distribution (see **Figure 4**), with each age group having varied recreational needs.

Figure 4: Lincoln County Age Pyramid, 2024



Source: 2024 American Community Survey

Ethnic Background

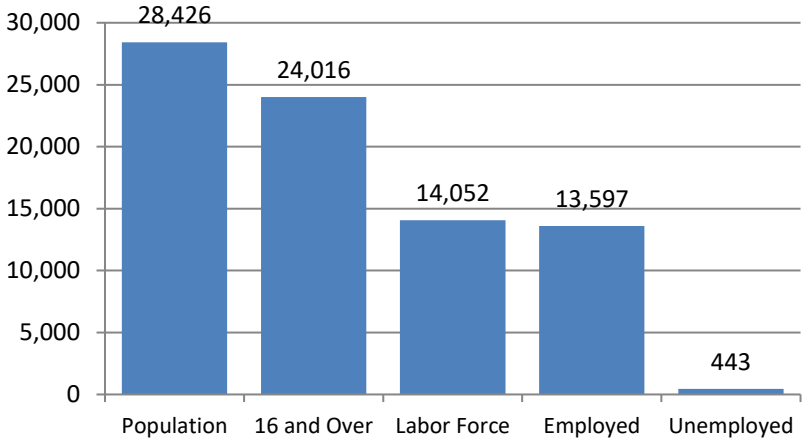
The people of Lincoln County mostly identify as white, at approximately 93.7% of people. About 0.5% identify as Black or African American, and about 0.4% identify as Asian. About 0.1% as American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.9% as some other race, and 4.3% as two or more races. Approximately 2.3% identify as Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.

Employment and Economy

Lincoln County has a diverse economy with major industries including healthcare, manufacturing, and agriculture.

Lincoln County has 24,016 people age 16 and over, 58.5% of which are in the labor force, i.e., actively working or seeking work. See **Figure 5**. The labor force participation rate for Wisconsin as a whole is 65.2%, higher than that of Lincoln County. According to the 2024 ACS, the unemployment rate in Lincoln County was 1.8%, lower than the 2.1% in the state and lower than the 3.3% in the United States.

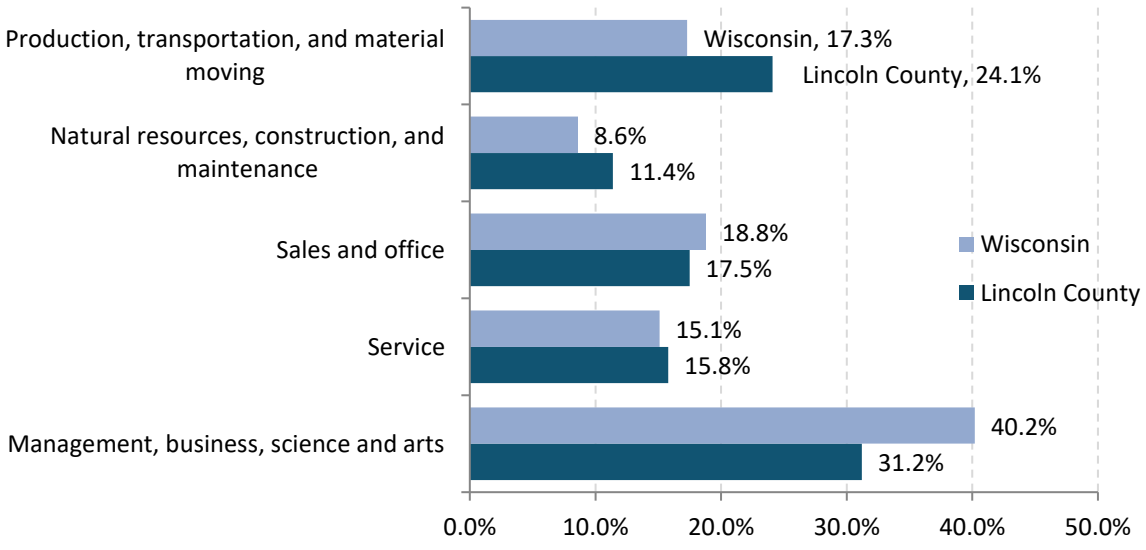
Figure 5: Lincoln County Employment, 2024



Source: 2024 American Communitv Survev

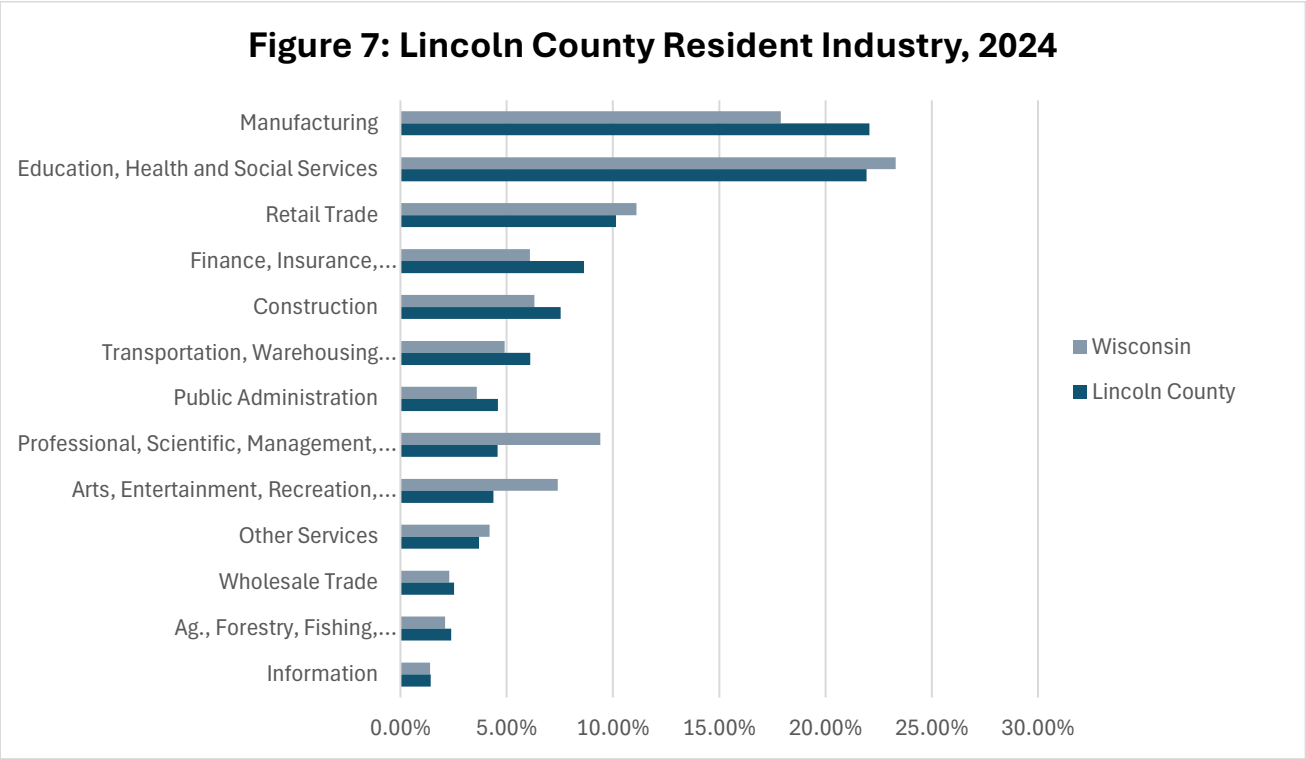
As shown in **Figure 6**, most residents of Lincoln County are employed in *Management, business, science and arts* occupation at 31.2%; the *Production, transportation, and material moving* occupation at 24.1%; and the *Sales and office* occupation at 17.5%. Lincoln County has a higher proportion of residents in the *Service* occupation as well as the *Natural resources, construction, and maintenance* occupation and Production, transportation, and material moving occupations; but a lower proportion of the *Sales and office* occupation and *Management, business, science and arts* occupation.

Figure 6: Lincoln County Resident Occupation, 2024



Source: 2024 American Community Survey

Figure 7 shows the most common industry for Lincoln County residents as Manufacturing, which is a higher proportion than the state, followed by *Education services, health care and social assistance*. Lincoln County also has a higher proportion of residents in the *Construction;* and *Agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting, and mining* industries, wholesale trade, Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing, *Transportation and warehousing, and utilities, and Public Administration industries*.

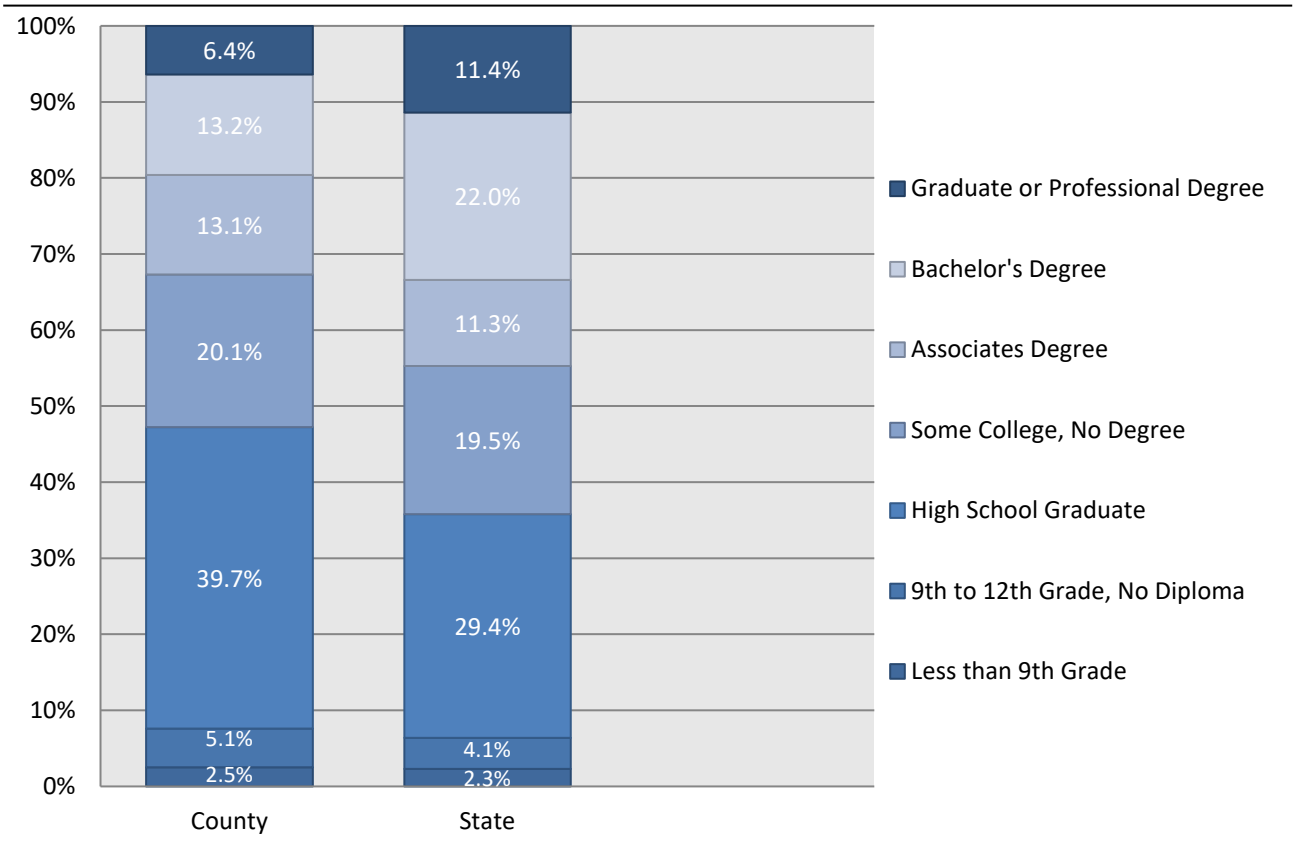


Source: 2024 American Community Survey

As of the 2024 American Community Survey, the median household income in Lincoln County was $68,164, and per capita income was $39,326. This is lower than the state and nation, which can be explained by the lower cost of living in Lincoln County. The distribution of household incomes in Lincoln County is fairly similar to the state, but with fewer households making $100,000 or more, and more households making less than $35,000 annually.

Educational Attainment in Lincoln County is generally lower than the State of Wisconsin (see **Figure 8**). About 92.4% of Lincoln County residents over the age of 25 have graduated high school, slightly lower than Wisconsin, where over 93.6% of residents have graduated high school. About 19.6% of Lincoln County residents have a bachelor's degree or higher, while 33.4% of Wisconsin residents have a bachelor's degree or higher. Both the proportion of residents with a bachelor's or graduate or professional degree in Lincoln County is lower than the state proportion. Additionally, the proportion of people with an associate's degree is also lower in Lincoln County than in the state.

Figure 8: Educational Attainment, Age 25 and Older
2024



Source: 2024 American Community Survey

Chapter 3:
OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is an inventory of the existing outdoor recreational facilities in Lincoln County, which will focus primarily upon public facilities. Some private facilities may 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.

Intensively used outdoor recreation facilities are generally located near population concentrations like the Merrill and Tomahawk urbanized areas, on school district properties, and in town centers. There may not be any parks in towns with low population densities.

3.2 County Maintained Recreation Facilities

See Chapter 4 for Lincoln County owned and maintained outdoor recreation facilities.

3.3 Linear Facilities

Various entities maintain the following public facilities:

Rustic Roads: Lincoln County has one rustic road, Rustic Road R-78, also known as Tesch Road. This 4-mile road meanders through wooded areas and old farm fields. The historic Copper School is located near the south end, and the north end borders the Bill Cross Wildlife Area, which is managed by the Wisconsin DNR. An old railroad grade from early logging operations can also be seen along the route.

Red Granite Road Route Bike Trails: Lincoln County hosts portions of two red granite road trail routes and the entirety of a third. These gravel roads feature a distinctive red hue from crushed Precambrian granite, providing unique riding conditions and visual appeal. Available routes include:

- Big Bully Jack – 267 miles through Lincoln, Langlade, Price, Taylor, Shawano, and Marathon Counties
- The Big Poniatowski Loop – 83.9 miles in Lincoln, Marathon and Taylor Counties
- The Newwood Bush Bash – 59 miles entirely within Lincoln County

Trailhead parking is available for all three routes.

Water Trails: A water trail is a network of access points, resting places, and attractions for users of water craft on lakes and rivers. Lincoln County contains more than 1,100 miles of streams and rivers. The Wisconsin River hosts a portion of the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway Trail, which spans 108 miles from Hat Rapids Dam in

Oneida County to the Lack DuBay Dam in Portage County. Along some of the same corridors shared by the Ice Age Trail, The Great Pinery Heritage Waterway Trail offers remote scenic views, rapids, rock outcroppings, wildlife observation, and diverse forest cover types.

Other notable rivers include the Copper River, Pine River, Prairie River, New Wood River, Somo River, Spirit River, and Tomahawk River. The New Wood River has a canoe access with a parking area located off Whiskey Bill Road in the Town of Harding. Additionally, both the Wisconsin and Prairie Rivers have multiple access points available.

Trout Streams: Parts or all of over 110 streams in Lincoln County are officially classified as trout streams. The Prairie River is the most well-known trout water in the county.

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

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

Ice Age Trail – Grandfather Falls segment – The Grandfather Falls segment is 4.8 miles long and is made possible through cooperation with Wisconsin Public Service, the Lincoln County Forestry Department, the Merrill School Forest, and several private landowners. This segment can be accessed at Camp New Wood County Park and near the Grandfather Dam north of Tug Lake Road on STH 107, with parking available at both locations. This portion of the Ice Age Trail is designated for hiking, skiing, and snowshoeing only.

Ice Age Trail – Underdown segment – The Underdown segment stretches 7 miles from the Copper Lake Road to Horn Lake Road to CTH J and connects to the Underdown Recreation Area. Parking is available at the trailhead and at roadside locations near trail and road junctions. While some sections of the trail are used for mountain biking and horseback riding, most of the trail is designated for foot traffic only. Primitive camping is permitted on county forest lands.

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

Harrison Hills Summer ATV Trails: The Harrison Hills summer ATV trail system is 47.4 miles of two-way primarily utilizing existing logging roads through the heavily forested and hilly terrain of the Harrison Hills area. Numerous lakes and bogs are visible from various points along the route. The system connects with ATV trail networks in Langlade County and Oneida Counties.

With many town roads and county highways now open to ATV and UTV use, riders can now access the Tomahawk, Merrill and most other small communities in Lincoln County directly from the trail system. Three parking areas provide direct access:

- 3/4 mile north of CTH J on Turtle Lake Road
- 1-1/4 miles northwest of STH 17 on CTH B
- 1-1/2 miles south of Harrison on CTH B

The summer ATV trail system is open from May 1st (trail condition dependent) to December 1st of each year. Most of the ATV trail system is open to road licensed vehicles, mountain bikers, hikers, and other recreationists.

Certain segments north of CTH D, including connections to Theis Road and Bowman Road, are gated and closed to highway-licensed vehicles. Additionally, the segment immediately north of CTH D (approximately ½ mile) and two segments near the community of Harrison cross private property; these portions are limited to ATV/UTV use only.

Hiawatha County Trail: The Hiawatha trail utilizes an abandoned railroad right-of-way surfaced with crushed granite. It begins at Sara Park in Tomahawk and travels approximately 6.6 miles north to the Oneida County line. The trail serves as a hiking and biking route in the summer, maintained by the Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Department, and as a snowmobile trail in winter, maintained by the Northwoods Passage Snowmobile Club.

The *Bearskin State Trail* runs 18.3 miles south from Minocqua to CTH K in Oneida County. A connection gap currently exists between the Hiawatha Trail and Bearskin State Trail, and although work has been done in recent years to complete this link, the connection is not yet established.

Once the connection is completed, transferring maintenance of the Hiawatha Trail to the State may be beneficial to ensure uniform management across the entire route.

Snowmobile Trails: Lincoln County has approximately 335.5 miles of designated snowmobile trails funded through the State snowmobile aid program, along with roughly 100 miles of club trails. About 250 miles of these snowmobile trails are also designated for winter ATV use. Most trail miles are located on private land and require easements. Trail locations and mileage frequently change due to shifts in land ownership. All snowmobile and winter ATV trails are maintained by volunteer snowmobile clubs.

3.4 Points of Interest

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

A) Historic Buildings and Sites

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

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

Wisconsin's Architecture and History Inventory (AHI) lists 1,052 properties on it within Lincoln County.

- City of Merrill – 888 sites
- City of Tomahawk – 84 sites
- Town of Bradley – 21 sites
- Town of Rock Falls – 13 sites
- Town of Scott – 13 sites
- Town of King – 6 sites
- Town of Pine River – 6 sites
- Town of Harrison – 5 sites
- Town of Skanawan – 5 sites
- Town of Somo – 3 sites
- Town of Corning – 2 sites
- Town of Schley – 2 sites
- Town of Wilson – 2 sites
- Town of Birch – 1 sites

B) Geologic Sites

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

Harrison Hills, Towns of Russell and Harrison, publicly and privately owned.
Lookout Mountain, Town of Harrison, publicly owned.
Porcupine Mountain, Town of Skanawan, privately owned.

C) Dams

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

D) Historical Markers

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

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

3.5 Public Access Points to Water Bodies

Public Access sites on Lincoln County's lakes and streams have been extensively inventoried and catalogued by the North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in the *Lincoln County Public Access Study of 1988*. A study of lakes on the county forest was also completed by Lincoln County Forestry and Land Conservation staff in 2004. An updated map of public access areas is available from the Lincoln County Forestry Department. Lincoln County owns and maintains 112 access points in all – 60 developed, and 52 undeveloped. Public access to waterbodies will be ensured when development occurs by state statute and county zoning ordinances. See the Implementation Strategies chapter under Park Dedication and Use of Easements for more details. See **Map 1** for boat launches and canoe access points.

3.6 School District Facilities

School properties NOT always publicly available:

- Each school's playground is NOT open to the public during school hours.
- Parochial school grounds are on private property and may not be open to the public at all.
- School forests may not be available – contact school forest owner for rules.

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

The Evjue Memorial Forest is owned and operated by the Merrill Area Public School District. The forest includes 764 acres located off of Hwy 107 across from New Wood County Park. Most of the land and most of the funds to build the present lodge were provided by William Evjue, an 1899 Merrill graduate. Nels P. Evjue, his father was a lumber scaler in Merrill. There are over 10 miles of maintained logging trails which double as hiking and

cross country ski trails. The trails may be used by the public and are used every school day by students. There is a woodland pond, many bridges, the Ice Age Trail, a Cordwood Shelter and many signs and sightings of wildlife. Trail maps are available. No hunting is allowed. The forests are logged with the assistance of a DNR forester. Contact the Merrill school district (www.maps.k12.wi.us or 715-536-4581) for rules of use on school forest lands and renting the facilities.

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

The Merrill School District maintains the following outdoor facilities:

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

The Tomahawk School District maintains the following outdoor facilities:

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

Treehaven is a residential natural resources education and conference facility that is owned and operated by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, College of Natural Resources (CNR). The Treehaven certified Tree Farm is a 1,400 acre working forest, with on-going research projects, education activities, and forest management demonstration areas. CNR Students majoring in natural resources either attend a field station not in Lincoln County, or attend one of two six-week summer field experiences at the UWSP-Treehaven Campus. Treehaven has two newly remodeled dormitory style lodging facilities, and two upscale cottages that can comfortably sleep a total of 120 participants. The Young Lodge provides on-site food service, a recreation lounge, and study library. The classroom center contains offices, 8 classroom/meeting rooms, and a computer lab. The Vallier Auditorium can accommodate up to 150 people and is complete with the latest in audio/visual equipment. Over 10 miles of trails traverse the property and are open to the public for hiking and cross country skiing for a nominal fee. Treehaven is open to the public for a variety of recreational and educational uses. Contact Treehaven for availability, and rules of use on their property.

3.7 Local Government Facilities & Capital Improvement Lists

This section is an inventory of the existing outdoor recreation facilities that are managed by each local government. Parks, special use facilities, trails, local forests, and boat launches are all included here.

Map 1 shows local government managed outdoor recreation.

A local government can find out how much land is needed for a tennis court, for example, or many other park features in **Attachment B** – Facility Development Standards.

ADA Accessibility – All local municipalities must ensure that park and recreation programs and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities. If not done already, local municipalities shall complete an evaluation of the accessibility of its existing facilitates, programs, and services. This will provide future direction on how to achieve compliance with ADA requirements.

Proposed Projects from 2027-2031
The projects listed may occur from 2027-2031. Projects are not listed in priority order and are subject to change. Each local government created the following capital improvement lists. All upgrades and new construction will take into consideration meeting ADA standards. As funds become available, the following projects may be completed.

City of Merrill

See the City of Merrill Outdoor Recreation Plan for a listing of their parks. The City's plan is considered to be part of this County recreation plan by reference here.

Map 4 shows Merrill's outdoor recreation.

Proposed Projects for 2027-2031

The City of Merrill has its own Outdoor Recreation Plan. See that plan for recommendations within the city limits.

City of Tomahawk

See the City of Tomahawk Outdoor Recreation Plan for a listing of their parks. The City's plan is considered to be part of this County recreation plan by reference here.

Map 5 shows Tomahawk's outdoor recreation.

Proposed Projects for 2027-2031

The City of Tomahawk has its own Outdoor Recreation Plan. See that plan for recommendations within the city limits.

Town of Birch

Refer to **Map 1** for recreational facilities near the Town of Birch.

Town of Bradley (See Map 1)

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

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

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

Proposed Projects for 2027-2031

- None.

Town of Corning

Refer to **Map 1** for recreational facilities near the Town of Corning.

Town of Harding

Refer to **Map 1** for recreational facilities near the Town of Harding.

Town of Harrison (See Map 1)

Harrison Park – This 7.9 acre park, located south of the intersections of STH 107 and CTH S, in the southeastern portion of the Town, has a picnic area, restrooms, and softball fields.

Pine Lake Park – This 17 acre park, located in the north central portion of the Town, has a boat access, picnic area, privy facility, and swimming beach.

Proposed Projects for 2027-2031

Pine Lake Park

- Improve restrooms at beach.

Town of King (See Map 1)

Town boat launch – Lake Alice Access 1 – paved ramp on Horseshoe Road.

Town boat launch – Lake Alice Access 2 – paved ramp on Shorewood Road.

Town boat launch – Lake Alice Access 3 – paved ramp on Birch Road.

Town boat launch – Lake Alice Access 4 – paved ramp on North Anglers Ave.

Town boat launch – Lake Alice Access 5 – paved ramp on Sandy Lane.

Proposed Projects for 2027-2031

- None.

Town of Merrill (See Map 1)

Town boat launch – Alexander Lake Access 2 (Lokemoen Landing) – paved ramp on Lokemoen Road.

Town boat launch – Pesobic Lake Access – paved ramp on South Shore Drive.

Proposed Projects for 2027-2031

- Construct a parking lot on the north end of Holdorf Road, near the Prairie River. Joint project of the Towns of Merrill and Schley for recreational uses like fishing and kayaking.

Alexander Lake Access 2 (Lokemoen Landing)

- Improve drainage and access road, develop parking area, and improve boat launch

Town of Pine River (See Map 1)

Pine River Park – This 7.9 acre park, located south of the intersections of STH 107 and CTH S, in the southeastern portion of the Town, has a boat access, picnic area, and snowmobile trails.

Proposed Projects for 2027-2031

- None.

Town of Rock Falls

Refer to **Map 1** for recreational facilities near the Town of Rock Falls.

Town of Russell (See Map 1)

Rice Park – This 2.2-acre park is located at N5362 Bradley St, along the Prairie River. Facilities include a play set and open space.

Elcho Lake Park – This 0.5-acre park, located on Echo Lake Rd, has a picnic area, boat landing, and a swimming beach.

Hottenstein Park – This 5.7-acre park is located on Bayer Street. Facilities include a ball diamond and gravel parking lot.

Gleason Community Park – This 12.9-acre park is located on Bayer Street. Facilities include an informal play area, picnic area, restrooms, three softball fields, volleyball courts, a racetrack, and a concession stand. There is also a building with indoor restrooms, a kitchen, and bar facilities. This park is owned and maintained by Gleason Community Club, Inc.

Proposed Projects for 2027-2031

Elcho Lake Park

- Install a new bathroom
- Install benches

Rice Lake Park

- Construct a pavilion
- Improve Prairie River access with bench seating
- Install Prairie River walking trail
- Install ice skating rink with warming house and lighting
- Construct a bathroom.

Town of Schley

Refer to **Map 1** for recreational facilities near the Town of Schley.

Town of Scott

Refer to **Map 1** for recreational facilities near the Town of Scott.

Town of Skanawan

Refer to **Map 1** for recreational facilities near the Town of Skanawan.

Town of Somo

Refer to **Map 1** for recreational facilities near the Town of Somo.

Town of Tomahawk

Refer to **Map 1** for recreational facilities near the Town of Tomahawk.

Town of Wilson

Refer to **Map 1** for recreational facilities near the Town of Wilson.

3.8 State Facilities

Wisconsin can take pride in its vast treasure of natural resources, particularly its wildlife. Since 1876, Wisconsin has been acquiring land to meet conservation and recreation needs. Public lands managed by the DNR provide many opportunities and public spaces for you and your family to hunt, fish, trap, hike, canoe or watch and photograph wildlife.

Boundary signs posted near parking lots and along borders explain the uses that are open to the public on that parcel.

State Park

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

State Wayside

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

State Fishery Areas

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

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

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

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

State Wildlife Areas

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

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

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

State Natural Area (SNA)

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

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

- **Krueger Pines SNA (No. 20)** is 21 acres located in the southeast corner of Council Grounds State Park.
- **Lily Lake SNA (No. 555)** is 80 acres located in the Town of King (T35N R7E, Sec.17).

Other State Land

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

3.9 Forested Lands – Not State or County Owned

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

As of 2026 there are 3,309 acres enrolled under the Forest Crop Law (FCL) in Lincoln County, which are open to the public to hunt and fish.

MFL "open" property NOT always publicly available:

- It is the responsibility of the user to know where they are, and which land is open to the public.
- MFL "open" lands may be closed within 300 feet of any building.
- MFL "open" lands may be closed within 300 feet of a harvesting operation.

As of 2026 there are about 162,528 acres enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program in Lincoln County. Of that MFL acreage, there are about 69,646 acres designated "open" to the public for hunting (not trapping), fishing, hiking, sightseeing, and cross-country skiing only (s. 77.83(2)(a), Wis. Stats.).

See Forest Legacy Areas map in **Attachment E** to see generally where FCL & MFL lands ("Taxlaw Entries" as shown on map) are located, which includes both open and closed to the public lands.

Other than the following exception, MFL lands enrolled as open shall not be posted to restrict access. All MFL program participants can restrict access without penalty to the landowner to areas that are within 300 feet of any building or harvesting operation. Access by motor vehicles or snowmobiles may be prohibited by the landowner on open lands. Open MFL lands can be found on the DNR's website. It is the responsibility of the user to know where they are and which land is open to the public.

Chapter 4:
COUNTY MAINTAINED RECREATION FACILITIES

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is an inventory of the existing outdoor recreational facilities that are managed by the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Department. Developed recreation areas that the County maintains or owns are listed and described by type:

4.2. County Parks & Recreation Areas
4.3. County Forest

4.2 County Parks & Recreation Areas

See **Table 2** for Lincoln County owned and maintained outdoor recreation facilities and the amenities at each facility. Also see **Map 1.**

Camp New Wood County Park is a 15.7 acre facility located 10 miles northwest of Merrill on the Wisconsin River. A walking bridge connects the campground and day use park across Ripley Creek, which is part of the Ice Age Trail. The campground has vault toilets and seven campsites. Sites 1-5 have up to 50-amp service while sites 6 and 7 have up to 30-amp service. The day use area is located on the site of a 1930's Civilian Conservation Corps Camp. It features an ADA accessible picnic area with tables and grills, playground equipment meeting CPSC standards, a hand pump well for potable water, and an ADA compliant restroom. Additionally, the park also features two covered picnic shelters with power available for reservation for a fee, an ADA compliant kayak pier and a boat landing providing access to the Wisconsin River. Camp New Wood is a designated stop along the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway, offering paddlers access to this regional water trail. The park also serves as one of several parking options for accessing the 764 acre Merrill School Forest, which provides hiking and cross country ski trails.

Haymeadow County Park is a 6 acre park located just off Highway 17 in the Town of Schley. This area is primarily open space, having picnic tables and walking access to the Prairie River and the Big Haymeadow Creek. The Prairie River is a Class I trout stream and is well known locally for high quality trout fishing, making this site a convenient access point for anglers. Other amenities include vault toilets and a covered energized picnic shelter available for reservation for a fee.

Jack Pines County Park is a partially wooded 7 acre undeveloped area located in the northeast portion of the City of Merrill. This site is used in winter for sledding and serves as an open outdoor space for walking and other passive recreation during other seasons.

Otter Lake Recreation Area is a 20 acre facility located on the shores of Otter Lake in the Towns of Harrison and Skanawan. No motors, including electric, are allowed on Otter Lake. The north end of the lake contains a campground with 24 campsites without electricity, two hand pump wells for potable water, and ADA-compliant restrooms. The south end features a picnic area with tables, grills, a hand pump well for potable water, a swimming beach, a changing house and ADA compliant restrooms. A nature trail encircles Otter Lake, offering excellent views and opportunities for fall color viewing. The area also provides access to the summer ATV trail via town roads, as well as access to the snowmobile trail. Otter Lake is surrounded by Lincoln County Forest land, providing additional opportunities for hunting, hiking, and wildlife viewing.

Tug Lake Recreation Area is a 25 acre facility located 10 miles north of Merrill. The area currently includes a reservable shelter, outdoor shower, upgraded well with bottle-filling station for potable water, ADA compliant restroom and changing house, picnic area with tables and grills, playground equipment meeting CPSC standard, a swimming beach, and parking for approximately 100 vehicles is available. A Lake District has been formed by the residents around Tug Lake to address potential water quality issues with the lake.

Roothouse Lake Special Use Area is a 320 acre area located in the Town of Harrison. This land was purchased from a private party, and specific management stipulations agreed upon at the time of purchase must be followed. Improvements at this area include a parking area and a trail to the lake. Primitive camping is allowed; however, there are no sanitary facilities or potable water available.

Hunting and trapping are not allowed in the area north of Bear Trail Road. No motorized uses are allowed within the special use area. A nature trail around the lake is currently under development.

Larson Lake County Park is a 7 acre park located approximately one mile south of the junction of Highways K and H. The park features a picnic area, shore fishing and carry-in boat access to Larson Lake, an ADA-compliant restroom, and parking. Larson Lake is stocked annually with rainbow trout by the Wisconsin DNR.

Prairie River Dells Scenic Area is a 30 acre facility located on the banks of the Prairie River, approximately 8 miles northeast of Merrill. The Prairie River is a Class 1 trout fishery that passes between high granite walls at this location. This area is primarily open space used for fishing and nature viewing.

Amenities include a parking area and two scenic viewing platforms, one of which is ADA compliant, providing views of the high rock outcrops at the dells. The site also includes the Trout Capital Trailhead parking lot, the Trout Capital hiking and biking trail, as well as the Trout Capital Bridge. This bridge crosses the Prairie River to connect with the Merrill city forest trail system, which further links to the Underdown Recreation Area.

Vault toilets are available at Haymeadow Park approximately three-quarters of a mile away.

Spirit Falls Scenic Area is a 30-acre, undeveloped open space located in the town of Tomahawk. While it provides public access to view the small falls on the Spirit River, the majority of the property remains isolated. Most of the land is situated on the south side of the river and is cut off by the river itself.

Underdown Recreation Forest and Multi-purpose Recreation Area spans over 7,000 acres across the Towns of Birch, Schley, and Merrill. The area offers designated trails for hiking, cross-country skiing, fat biking,

snowshoeing, horseback riding, snowmobiling, winter ATV use, and mountain biking. It is also a designated Ruffed Grouse Management Area and all hunting is allowed during the open seasons.

The 6-acre trailhead includes a primitive camping area with 11 sites large enough for most horse-trailer rigs, a hand pump well providing potable water, ADA-compliant sanitary facilities, and parking for more than 100 vehicles.

The Underdown Horse Club and the Lincoln County Forestry Department provide trail markers and maps for approximately 22 miles of equestrian trails. Mountain biking trails cover more than 30 miles and connect with the Merrill City Forest trail system. Maps for these trails are produced by the Northcentral Chapter of the Wisconsin Off-Road Bicycling Association (WORBA) and Lincoln County.

The Forestry Department signs and maintains approximately 20 miles of cross country ski trails across three loops. A snowshoe and winter fat bike trail is signed and groomed by a local club.

The Underdown trail network includes:

- 22 miles of equestrian trails, with markers and maps provided by the Underdown Horse Club and the Forestry Department
- Over 30 miles of mountain biking trails connecting to the Merrill City Forest and the Prairie Dells Scenic Area via the Trout Capital Trail Bridge, with maps produced by WORBA and Lincoln County
- Approximately 20 miles of cross-country ski trails across three loops, signed and maintained by the Forestry Department
- Signed and groomed snowshoe and winter fat-tire bike trails maintained by local volunteers

Penny Lake is located off the northwest end of Somo Lake in the Town of Wilson. The area includes an undesignated camp site, a short unmarked walking trail along the esker separating the two lakes, and a small wooden foot bridge over the connecting channel between Penny Lake and Somo Lake. The township maintains a boat landing on the north end of Penny Lake.

Fairgrounds

Lincoln County Fairgrounds' ownership was transferred from Lincoln County to the City of Merrill in 2015. The property has been renamed the Merrill Festival Grounds.

US Hwy 8 Wayside

The Lincoln County Highway Department has accepted jurisdictional transfer of the 1-acre former State DOT wayside located at the intersection of CTH A and USH 8. The department receives assistance from the City of Tomahawk for maintenance of this facility.

Table 2 lists existing county parks and their facilities and **Map 1** identifies their location in the county.

Table 2	**Lincoln County Recreation Facilities**							
Facilities	New Wood	Haymeadow	Jack Pines	Otter Lake	Tug Lake Recreation Area	Roothouse Lake	Larson Lake	Underdown Trail Head
# of Camping Sites	7	-	-	24	-	-	-	11
Acres	15.7	6	7	20	25	320	7	6
Municipality	Town of Rock Falls	Town of Schley	City of Merrill	Towns of Harrison, Skanawan	Town of Rock Falls	Town of Harrison	Town of Birch	Town of Birch
Restroom	X	X		X	X		X	X
Picnic Area with grills	X	X		X	X		X	
Fishing	X	X		X		X	X	
Boating	X			X (No Motors)	X	X	X	
Boating Ramp	Good Condition			Unimproved	Carry in	Carry in	Carry in	
Swimming Beach				X	X			
Trails	X		X	X		X		X
Usage Pressure	Heavy	Moderate	Moderate	Heavy	Heavy	Light	Heavy	Heavy
Playground	X				X			
Shelter	2	1			X			X

4.3 County Forest

The Lincoln County Forestry Department manages 100,843 acres of county forest. This land is managed for multiple uses, and is open to public access. Recreational activities permitted in most areas of the county forest include hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, snowmobiling, ATV riding, camping, horseback riding, mountain biking, snowshoeing, and wildlife observation. Some of the county forest is designated as quiet areas with limited motorized vehicle access. Additionally, certain activities such as bough picking and firewood cutting require a permit. Refer to **Map 2** for Lincoln County Forest Blocks.

Created in 2004, the Lincoln County Forest Access Plan provides direction for current and future Forestry Committees and resource managers working on the County Forest. Its goal is to provide balanced access to a wide variety of groups while protecting our natural resources, a responsibility shared between Lincoln County and the public. The Access Plan was developed over a 2 ½ year process by a 10 member Citizen Advisory Group and a Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Committee with representatives elected by their peers. This group was also assisted by a technical support team comprised of DNR and County staff.

Primitive Camping within the County Forest.

Dispersed overnight camping, including tents, trailers, cars and trucks is permitted in the County Forest without charge for a period of no more than 14 days total in a calendar year. Campers must follow all rules of good conduct. Cutting or defacing trees, carelessness with fire, violations of game and fishing laws of the State, or improper disposal of garbage and litter may result in ejection from the County Forest and penalties under County and State laws.

Blocking roads, parking areas, or lake access is strictly prohibited. Due to the limited space at boat landings, camping is not allowed at the following lakes: High Lake, Fox Lake, Moraine Lake, Henson Lake, and Kordick Lake.

Chapter 5:
OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

5.1 Introduction

Outdoor recreational needs within Lincoln County were analyzed in several ways. Public input was gathered through a survey and daily staff interactions to determine how well their outdoor recreational needs are being met.

5.2 Public Participation

Informal Public Input

In the regular course of business, Lincoln County Forestry, Land, & Parks Department staff have received public input about its parks, campgrounds, trails, and forest. That input and staff's professional experience will also shape what recommendations are made.

Summary of Survey Responses

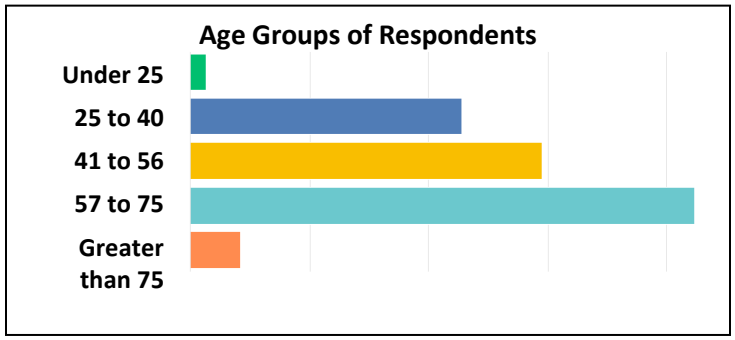
In February and early March 2026, this survey was sent out for customer feedback. The Forestry, Land, and Parks Department posted the survey on their website, Facebook, as well as emailing the survey to 3 county lists (county staff, county board, and camping contacts). The Department also laminated posters and installed them at popular trailheads. NCWRPC mailed survey posters to all the towns, and emailed posters and social media post examples to both cities. Merrill, Tomahawk and Lincoln County all posted the survey on their Facebook pages.

The survey was open until a week after spring elections for a total of 9 weeks.

We received **385 responses** to the survey. Although not statistically significant of the whole population, this survey does provide a much deeper understanding of the wants and needs for outdoor recreation than a public hearing, so the results are very valuable. Respondents were allowed to skip questions, so several questions had smaller amounts of responses.

Answered: 314 Skipped: 71

About 17% of respondents do not live or have a second home in Lincoln County; with 18% living in Merrill, 13% in the Town of Merrill, 10% in the Town of Harrison, and 9% in Tomahawk.



Answered: 312 Skipped: 73

About 55% of respondents were male, and about 42% were female, with 3% preferring not to answer.

Answered: 312 Skipped: 73

Respondents came from all age groups, with a strong showing of at least 20% in the 25 to 40 (Millennials), 41 to 56 (Gen X), and 57 to 75 (Baby Boomers) age groups.

Through an IP address analysis of those who took the survey it appears that 13 IP addresses are duplicated, which could mean that a husband and wife both took the survey. 9 IP addresses had 2 responses, 2 IP had 3 responses, 1 IP address had 5 responses, and 1 IP address had 48 responses. For the IP address with 48 responses, 10 responses did not complete the demographics questions, but all 48 responses appeared to be unique in their answers.

All of those duplicate IP addresses did not have the same answers, so it appears that nobody "stuffed the ballot box.

Key Findings of the Outdoor Recreation Survey

Q1. Which recreational activities did you participate in during 2024?

Answered: 385 Skipped: 0

1.	Walking / Hiking	76% of responses
2.	Fishing	58% of responses
3.	Boating	53% of responses
4.	Events / Festivals / Fairs	52% of responses
5.	Canoeing / Kayaking	48% of responses
6.	Gardening	46% of responses
7.	Hunting / Trapping	45% of responses
8.	Swimming	44% of responses
9.	ATV / UTV Riding	42% of responses
10.	Driving for Pleasure	41% of responses
11.	Bicycling	39% of responses

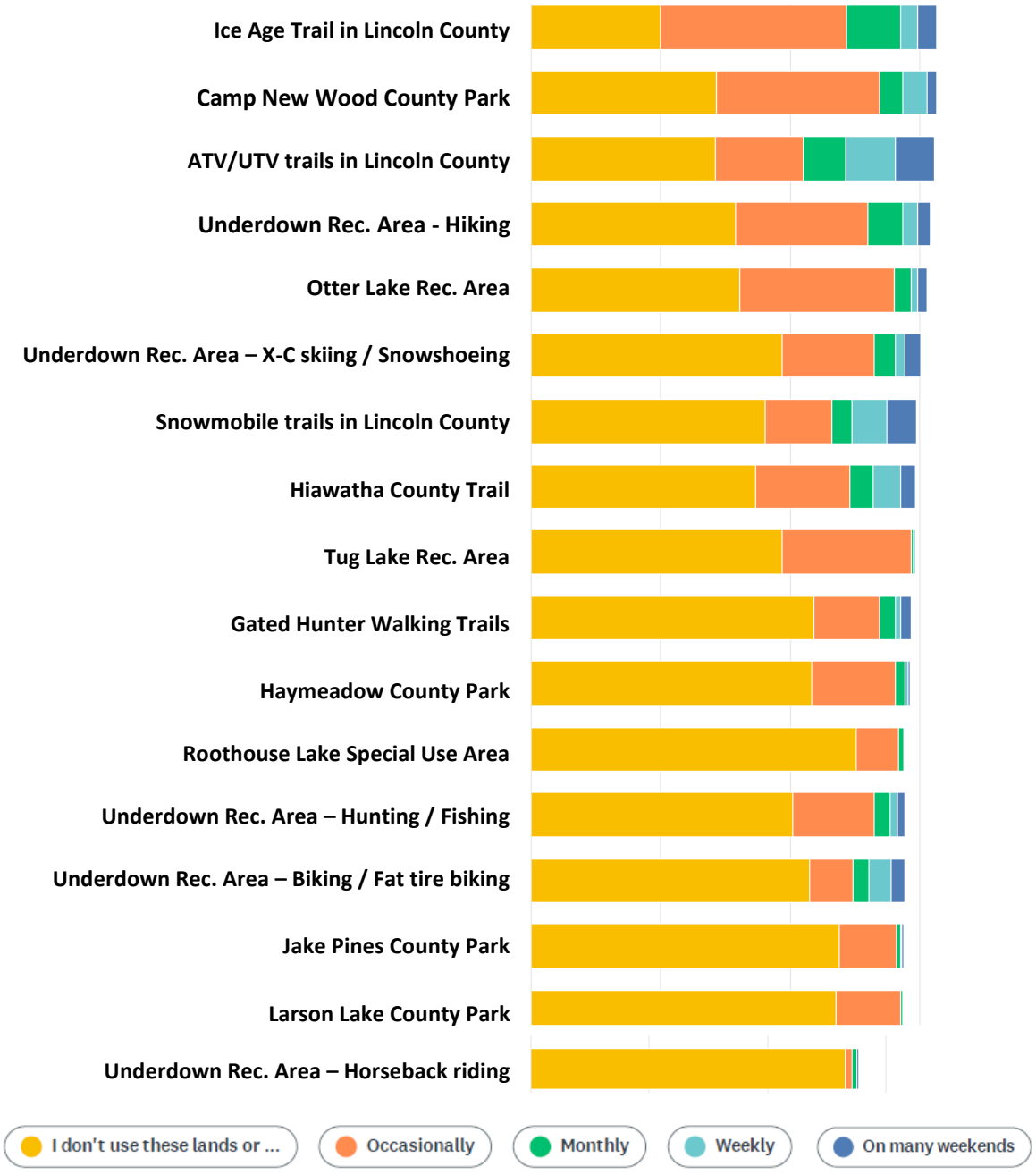
Q2. What potential outdoor recreational opportunities should be developed in Lincoln County?

Answered: 188 Skipped: 197

1.	More bicycle trails	31 responses
2.	More hiking / walking trails	22 responses
3.	More mountain bike trails	18 responses
4.	Additional fishing and hunting access	14 responses
5.	More ATV / UTV trails	13 responses
6.	Maintain existing facilities	13 responses
7.	Camping / campgrounds (more sites, group/electric, dispersed)	13 responses

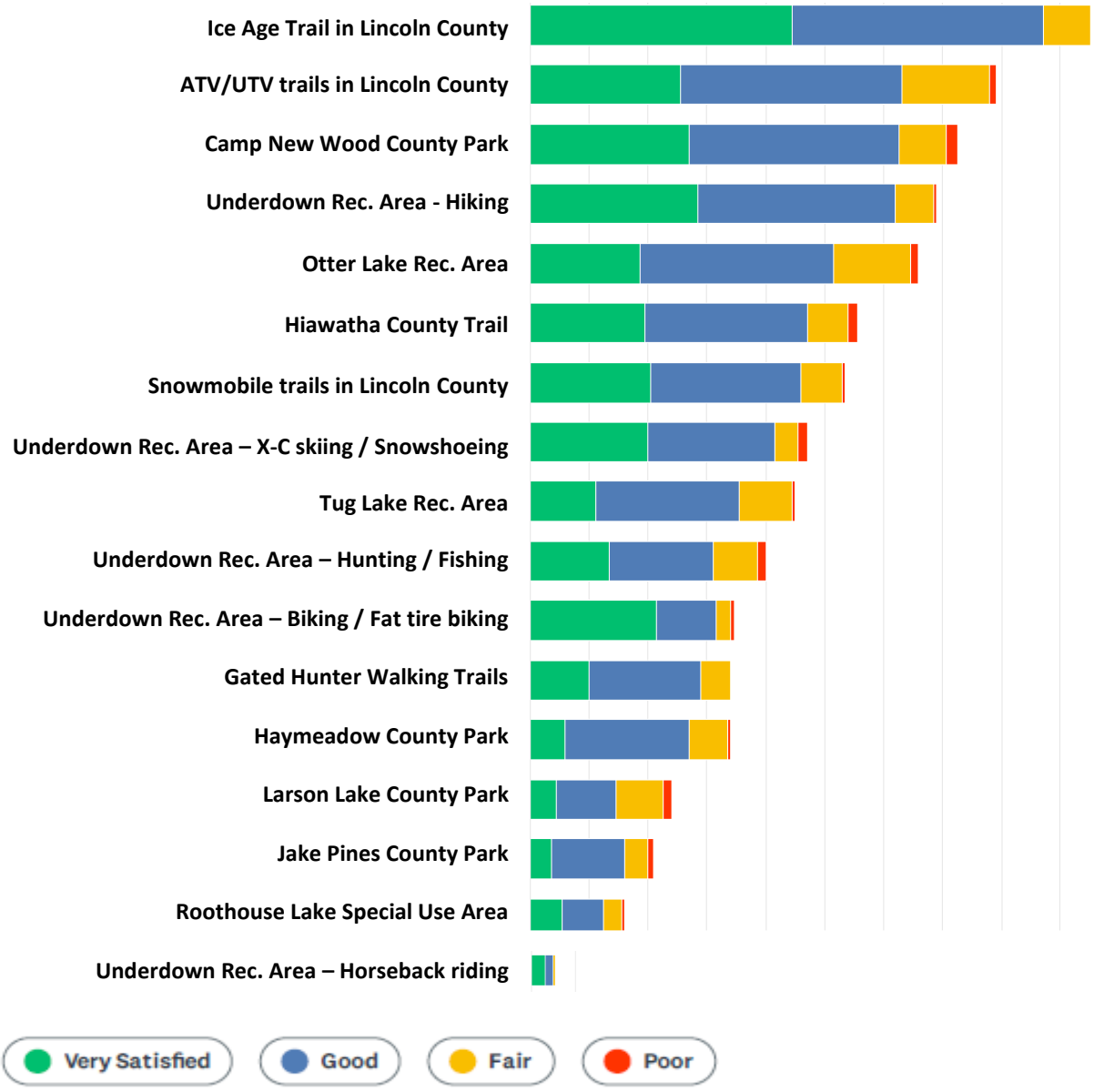
Q3. In 2025, how often did you use Lincoln County managed parks or trails?

Answered: 349 Skipped: 36



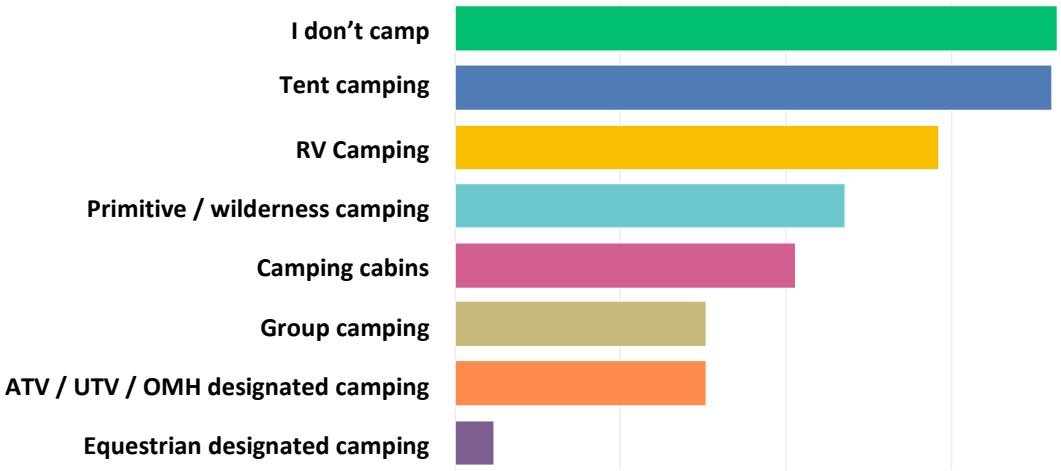
Q4. Please rate your satisfaction with the Lincoln County managed parks or trails:

Answered: 308 Skipped: 77



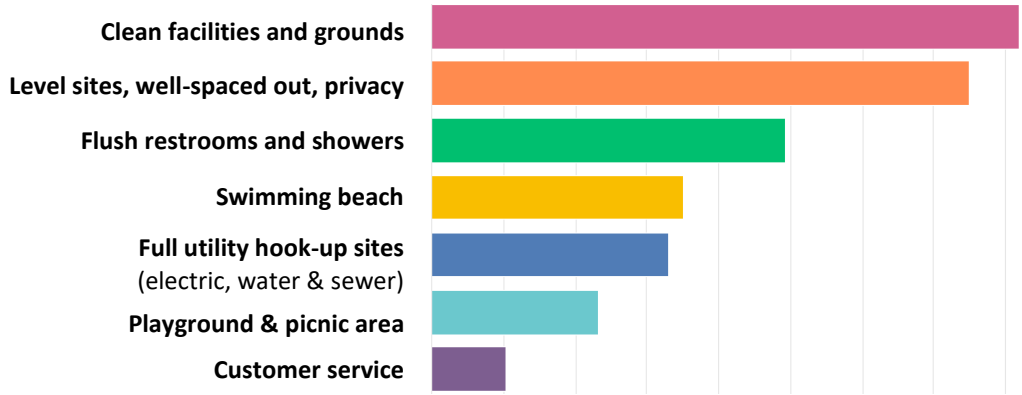
Q5. What type of camping opportunities do you use, or want to use in Lincoln County?

Answered: 335 Skipped: 50



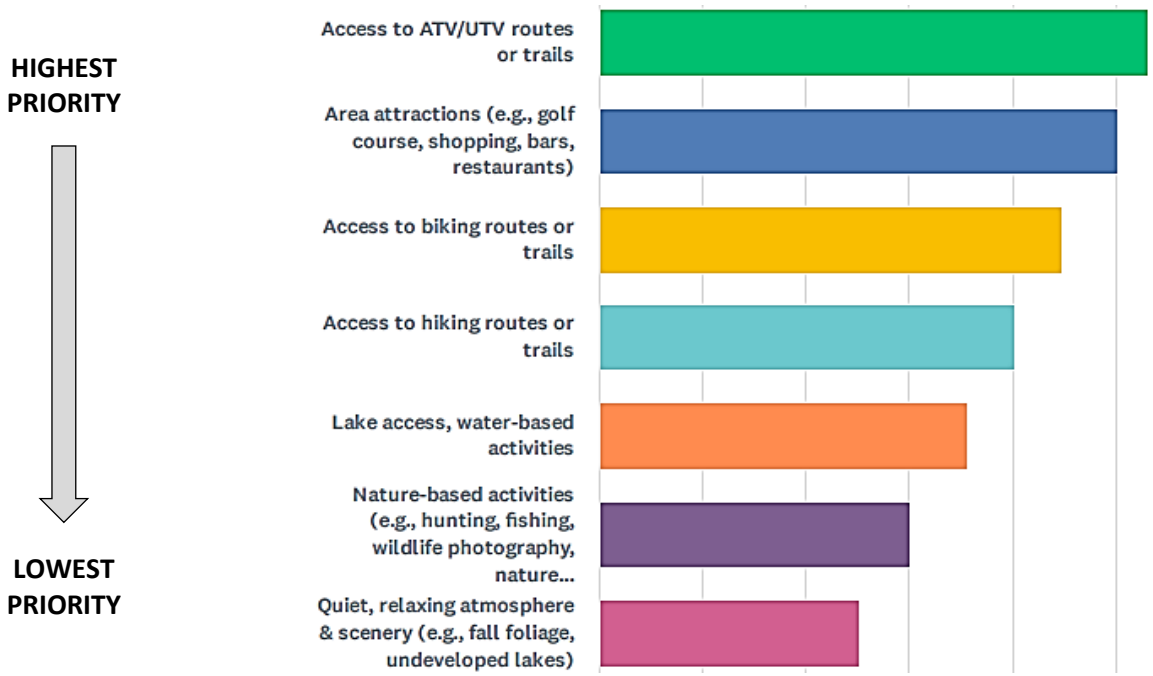
Q6. When choosing a campground, which amenities are most important?

Answered: 203 Skipped: 182



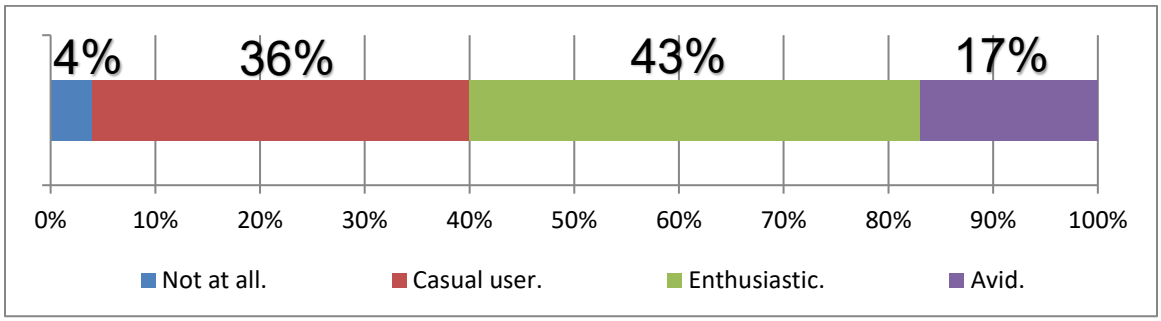
Q7. Please rank the following reasons to camp in Lincoln County:

Answered: 201 Skipped: 184



Q8. What type of water enthusiast are you?

Answered: 327 Skipped: 58



Not at all. (I'm not interested in water recreation at all, not even with friends.)

Casual user. (I like to use the water, but only do so occasionally.)

Enthusiastic. (I access or go on the water regularly in summer, and I might occasionally access the ice in winter.)

Avid. (I am always on the water or ice every chance I get.)

Q9. How do you use the water?

Answered: 321 Skipped: 64



Q10. What public boat landings or water access improvements are needed in Lincoln County?

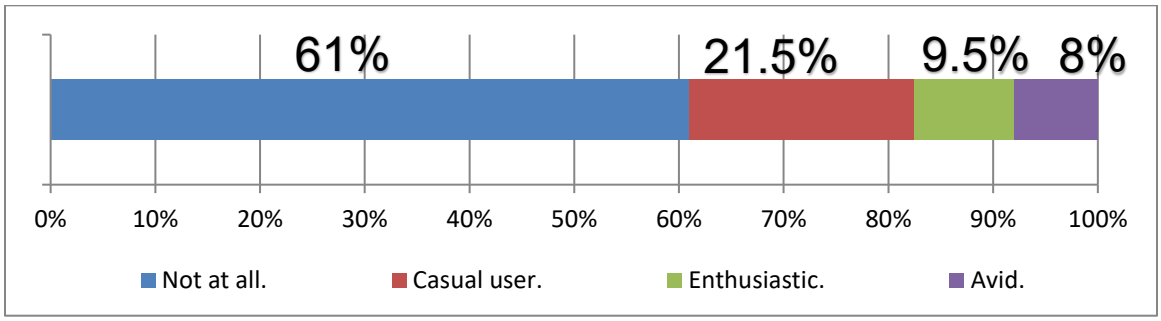
Answered: 88 Skipped: 297

1. Boat landing renovations — 20 responses
2. Boat ramp and parking expansion — 12 responses
3. Lake and river access points — 13 responses
4. Accessibility for disabled users — 6 responses
5. Dock installation projects — 6 responses

Note: 88 respondents commented.
See individual comments in Attachment D.

Q11. What type of snowmobile enthusiast are you?

Answered: 325 Skipped: 60



Not at all. (I'm not interested in snowmobiling at all, not even with friends.)

Casual user. (I like snowmobiling for fun, but **only** do so occasionally, **OR only** on my own land.)

Enthusiastic. (I access or go on snowmobile routes and trails regularly.)

Avid. (I am always on a snowmobile every chance I get – all season long.)

Q12. What snowmobiling improvements are needed in Lincoln County?

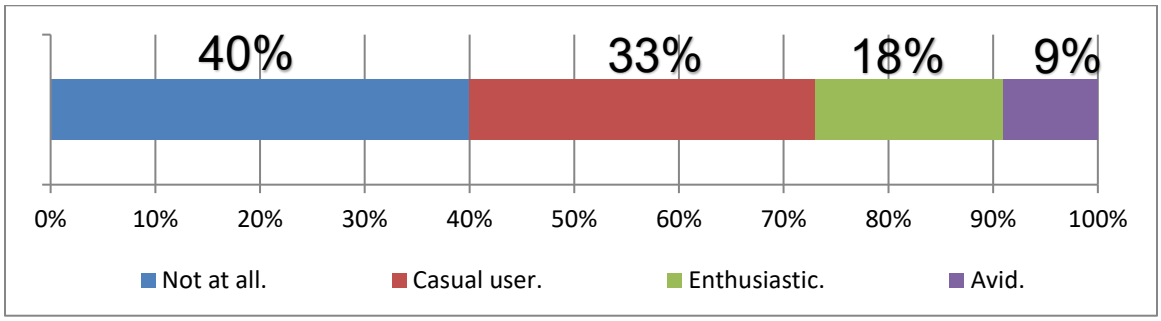
Answered: 57 Skipped: 328

1.	None. They are great trails.	14 responses
2.	Trail connectivity and expansion	9 responses
3.	Better access through Merrill needed	7 responses
4.	Better enforcement needed	6 responses
5.	Multi-use trail coordination	5 responses

Note: 57 respondents commented.
See individual comments in Attachment D.

Q13. What type of motorized vehicle (ATV / UTV) enthusiast are you?

Answered: 323 Skipped: 62



Not at all. (I'm not interested in motorized recreation at all, not even for recreation.)

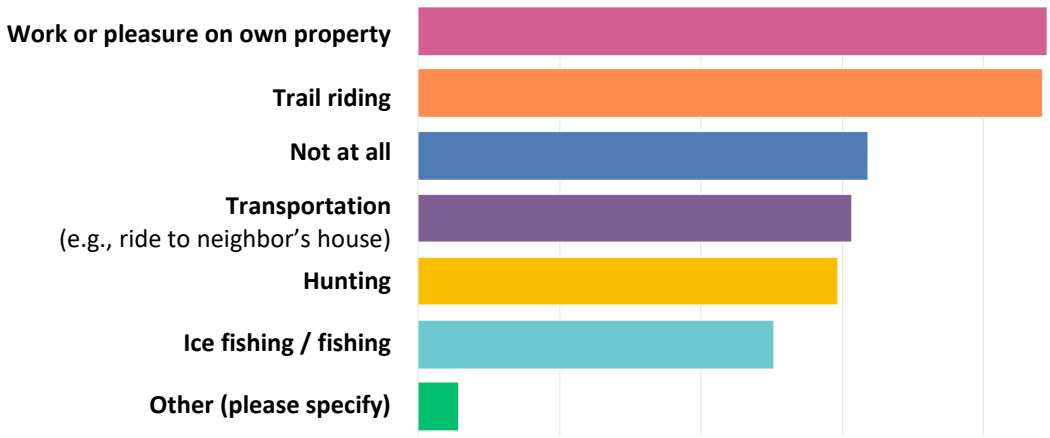
Casual user. (I like using motorized vehicles for fun, but **only** do so occasionally, **OR only** on my own land.)

Enthusiastic. (I access or go on motorized routes and trails regularly in summer, and I might occasionally access the ice in winter.)

Avid. (I am always on a motorized vehicle every chance I get – all year long.)

Q14. How are you using your motorized vehicle (ATV/UTV)?

Answered: 283 Skipped: 102



Q15. What motorized vehicle improvements are needed in Lincoln County?

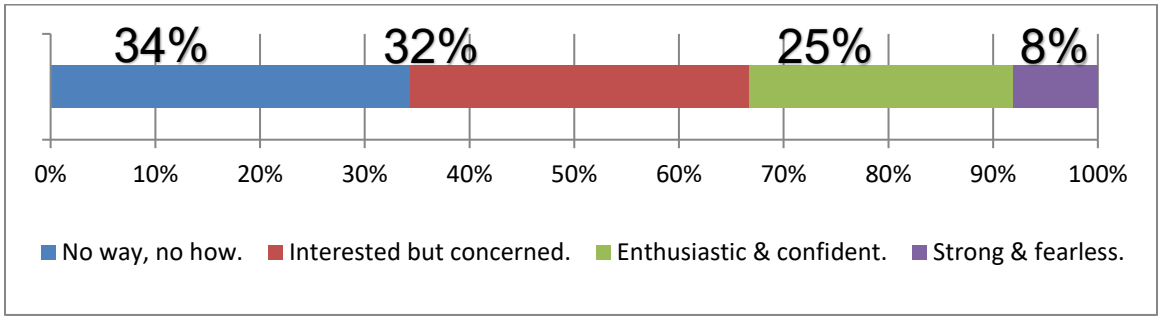
Answered: 84 Skipped: 301

1.	ATV trail expansion and restriction	15 responses
2.	Trail maintenance and condition	11 responses
3.	ATV and UTV safety requirements.	10 responses
4.	ATV speed and road regulations	9 responses
5.	ATV route designation and connectivity	7 responses
6.	Trail environmental protection	7 responses
7.	ATV noise and disturbance	6 responses

Note: 84 respondents commented.
See individual comments in Attachment D.

Q16. What type of bicyclist are you?

Answered: 319 Skipped: 66



No way, no how. (I'm not interested in biking at all, not even for recreation.)

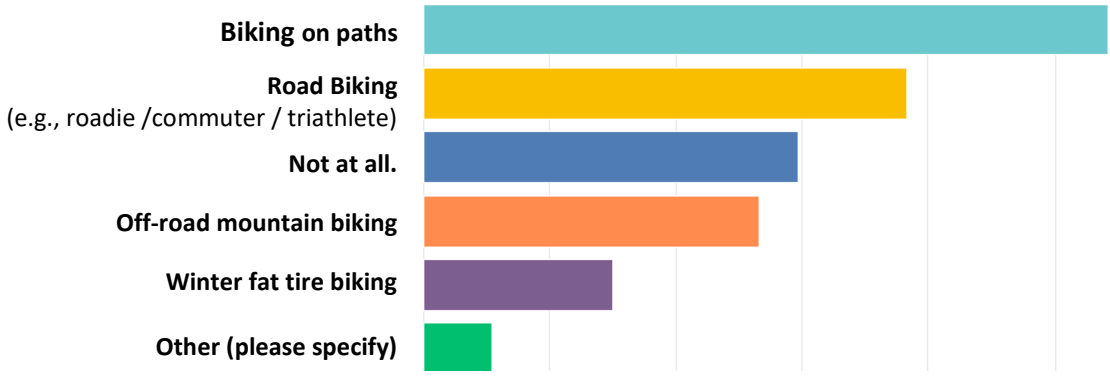
Interested but concerned. (I like riding, but don't do it regularly. I'm generally concerned that my route is not safe to ride, so I don't ride often. I definitely do not ride when the weather is bad.)

Enthusiastic and confident. (I feel comfortable sharing the road with motor vehicles, but I prefer to ride on separate facilities like bike lanes. I may or may not ride in inclement weather.)

Strong and fearless. (I am confident in my abilities and will ride regardless of roadway conditions, amount of traffic, or inclement weather.)

Q17. What type of bicycling do you enjoy?

Answered: 293 Skipped: 92



Q18. What bicycling improvements are needed in Lincoln County?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 291

1.	Trail network connectivity	22 responses
2.	Trail facilities and signage	20 responses
3.	Road and highway safety	18 responses
4.	Bike lane and path development	16 responses
5.	Trail maintenance	16 responses
6.	Mountain and off-road trail development	8 responses
7.	None	8 responses

Note: 94 respondents commented.
See individual comments in Attachment D.

Q19. Do you have any other concerns or comments?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 335

Note: 50 respondents commented.
See individual comments in Attachment D.

The full survey results (55 pages) with comments are available in Attachment D.

5.3 Park Standards Analysis

This section identifies the standards used to analyze the need for park sites and outdoor recreational facilities in Lincoln County. The standards corresponding with each analysis provide the basis for evaluating how well each standard is met as it is applied to County facilities.

Local governments may compare their own parks to the Park Design and Location Criteria in **Attachment A**.

A. Individual Park Facilities

Park facilities encompass the buildings, structures, equipment, and amenities within a park designed for public recreation, leisure, and enjoyment, including playgrounds, sports fields, restrooms, and pathways.

The amount of land needed for many intensive use facilities, like a tennis court, are available in **Attachment B – Facility Development Standards.**

Lincoln County routinely identifies if changes to park facilities are necessary, then suggested improvements are listed under each park in Chapter 7.

B. Accessibility Design

Accessibility is making facilities (e.g., pedestrian trails/paths, parking, tables, drinking fountains, restrooms, etc.) accessible to people with limited mobility or limited vision. Americans with Disabilities (ADA) standards are followed when purchasing or modifying facilities for universal accessibility.

Lincoln County routinely identifies If changes to park facilities are necessary to make them ADA compliant, and designs new facilities to meet ADA standards. Any improvements to make a county facility ADA compliant are listed under each facility (e.g., park, trail, boat launch) in Chapter 7.

All local municipalities must ensure that park and recreation programs and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities. If not done already, local municipalities shall complete an evaluation of the accessibility of their existing facilitates, programs, and services. This evaluation will provide direction on how to achieve compliance with ADA requirements.

All existing outdoor recreation facilities that are repaired, modified or reconstructed should meet the requirements of ADA. Furthermore, any new outdoor recreation development should meet ADA requirements. A few examples of accessible designs include: wide doorways, specialized playground equipment, ramps, wider parking spaces, etc. Trails shall be accessible to people with disabilities wherever possible. Trail surface, grade and width should meet or exceed ADA guidelines. Grades in excess of 5% may be unavoidable on some natural surfaced trails, but then a level area would be constructed every so often if walking and wheelchairs are possible.

5.4 Statewide Outdoor Recreation Trends

2025 2030 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Every five years the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) produces the Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The plan provides recommendations to guide 1) public outdoor recreation policy and planning decisions, 2) the use of Land and Water Conservation Fund money that comes to Wisconsin, and 3) other Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administered grant programs.

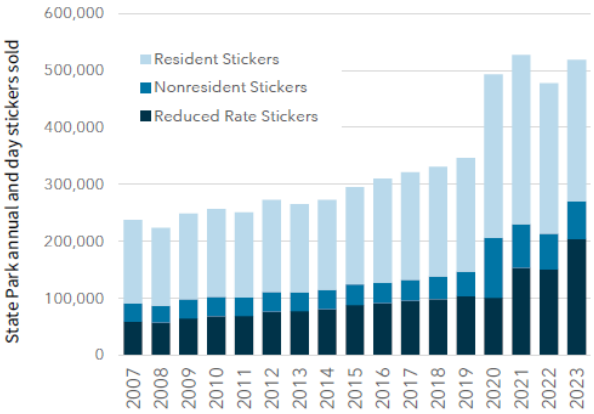
To support the development of SCORP, a statewide survey of Wisconsin residents was conducted regarding their outdoor recreation participation and frequency, as well as their opinions about future needs.



SCORP's goals for outdoor recreation:

1. **Ensure that all Wisconsinites have opportunities to participate in outdoor recreation.**
2. **Maintain and expand sustainable outdoor recreational opportunities.**
3. **Grow the collaborative approach across non-profit organizations, businesses, and federal, state, regional and local agencies.**

Like other destinations for outdoor recreation, visitation at Wisconsin State Parks jumped dramatically after the pandemic



TOP 5 Motivations to Participate in Outdoor Recreation

1. Physical health / exercise (79% of Wisconsinites)
2. Mental health / happiness (73%)
3. Connection with nature (72%)
4. Socialization / being with friends and family (67%)
5. Adventure / challenge (52%)

TOP 5 Barriers to Participation in Outdoor Recreation

1. Have other priorities / lack of time (54% of Wisconsinites)
2. Costs are too high / lack of money (20%)
3. Don't know places to go / unaware of options (19%)
4. Places to go are too far away (19%)
5. Nobody to go with (19%)

Table 2: Estimated participation rates in outdoor recreation activities by Wisconsinites.

Participation Rate	Outdoor Recreation Activity
68%	Walking/Hiking/Running (on paved or unpaved trails)
46%	Swimming in lakes, ponds, or rivers
45%	Wildlife watching/Nature photography
44%	Picnicking
40%	Fishing
40%	Motorboating (including pontoons)
40%	Visiting a nature center
36%	Canoeing, kayaking, row boating, stand up paddleboarding
34%	Bicycling – all types
31%	Gardening
30%	Using splash pads or outdoor pools
28%	Camping (tent & RV/pop-up/van)
24%	Riding a motorized vehicle (ATV, UTV, 4WD, OHM)
22%	Visiting a dog park
22%	Dog walking on trails
21%	Playing court sports (e.g., basketball, pickleball, tennis)
19%	Hunting
17%	Recreational firearm range shooting (target, clays, trap)
17%	Playing field sports (e.g., soccer, football, baseball)
15%	Foraging or gathering (e.g., wild edibles, medicinal plants)
12%	Managing land (e.g., restoring habitats, building trails)
10%	Playing disc golf
10%	Water skiing, wakeboarding
9%	Snowmobiling
8%	Downhill skiing/Snowboarding
8%	Snowshoeing
6%	Cross-country skiing
5%	Inline skating/Roller blading
5%	Horseback riding
4%	Geocaching
3%	Rock climbing outdoors with climbing gear
3%	Trapping
2%	Bouldering outdoors (with crash pads)

Source: SCORP 2025-2030

Chapter 6:
GOALS & OBJECTIVES

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

Goal 1 – Protect, restore, and enhance Lincoln County's natural resources for outdoor recreation.

Objectives

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

Goal 2 – Create an online tourism and outdoor recreation hub.

Objectives

1. County should investigate the creation of a countywide website for tourism and outdoor recreation.
2. Encourage both the Merrill Chamber and the Tomahawk Chamber to create significant website links to the Lincoln County Parks website for County managed outdoor recreation information.
3. Continue updating the Lincoln County Parks website for customer usability and facility updates.

Goal 3 – Continue developing all types of recreational trails.

Objectives

1. Develop a map of existing county forest roads of various types and what uses are allowed on each of them.
2. Work with user groups to meet specific needs and desires for recreation on the Lincoln County Forest

Goal 4 – Continue to improve and develop Lincoln County's outdoor recreation facilities.

Objectives

1. Develop new facilities as outlined in 5-year capital improvement tables and as opportunities and funding sources become available and the ability to maintain these facilities is established.
2. Cooperate with various governmental agencies to improve all outdoor recreation facilities within Lincoln County.
3. Improve and protect access to water resources.
4. Continue to qualify Lincoln County and local governmental units for eligibility of state and federal financial aid programs which require outdoor recreational planning.
5. Continue upgrading existing recreational facilities to accommodate the elderly and handicapped.

Chapter 7:
RECOMMENDATIONS & CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The recommendations and capital improvements are ways of satisfying issues identified during the planning process, which included citizen input, staff ideas, and analysis. Although it is unlikely that all recommendations presented in this plan will be undertaken in the next five years, they should be recognized as examples for action as the opportunity or need arises.

7.1 Local Government Recommendations

See capital improvement lists for each municipality under 3.7 in Chapter 3.

7.2 County Recommendations

1. Walking / Hiking Trail Development

The 2026 ORP survey shows that about 76% of respondent's most frequent outdoor recreational activity is Walking / Hiking.

Recommendation A: There are still gaps in the Ice Age Trail throughout Lincoln County, as shown on Map 1. The local chapter remains active and is encouraged to continue working with the County and private landowners to complete the trail. Continue cooperating with the local chapter of the Ice Age Trail wherever county assistance may be useful. A segment of Trail near Tug Lake Rd and portion of the Underdown Segment are under development in 2026.

Recommendation B: As funding becomes available develop additional Walking / Hiking trail systems, with priority locations including the Roothouse Lake Special Use Area (2026), Spirit Falls Scenic Area and Penny Lake.

Recommendation C: Pursue opportunities to connect the Tomahawk, Merrill, Gleason, Spirit Falls and Tripoli to parks, campgrounds and various other trail systems via off highway/off roadway graveled or paved Walking/Hiking trail systems. Expanding these connections will support a community-wide approach to recreation and create new opportunities across the region.

2. Carry-In Launches Countywide

The 2026 ORP survey shows that about 48% of respondents use the water in a non-motorized way (canoe / kayak / rowboat). 23% of respondents commented about the need for specific water access improvements.

Recommendation A: Cooperate with DNR and WVIC to increase carry-in access points along the Wisconsin River throughout the County.

Recommendation B: Renovate carry-in water access points throughout the county.

Recommendation C: Conduct an assessment of existing carry-in access sites to identify condition, usability, and potential improvements, and prioritize upgrades where opportunities already exist.

3. Improve Boat Launches Countywide

The 2026 ORP survey shows that about 53% of respondent's most frequent outdoor recreational activity is Boating**.** The 2026 ORP survey shows that about 53% of respondents use the water by motor boating or motorized water sports. Over 88 comments emphasized the need for boat landing renovations, expanded boat ramps, expanded or better access points, improved docks, and accessible facilities for disabled users. This recommendation is to update the DNR's current inventory, and to provide recommendations to be added to this Lincoln County ORP when they become available.

Recommendation: Cooperate with DNR and WVIC to inventory boat-launch conditions countywide and develop specific improvement recommendations for future updates.

4. Establish Wisconsin River Bike Path

The 2026 ORP survey shows that about 39% of respondent's most frequent outdoor recreational activity is Bicycling. The 2026 survey also showed that priorities for developed in Lincoln County should focus on Bike trails and Hiking/Walking trails.

Opportunities for off-road bicycle and pedestrian routes along the Wisconsin River corridor should continue to be explored where feasible. Future development should focus on identifying safe, practical locations for off-highway/off-roadway trail segments that improve regional connectivity and support long-term recreation goals.

Recommendation 1: Explore opportunities to develop off-road bicycle and pedestrian routes along the Wisconsin River corridor where feasible.

Recommendation 2: Continue evaluating the previously identified off-road bike and pedestrian trail potential between Merrill and Wausau referenced in Segment 18, and consider pursuing development if conditions, feasibility, and partnerships support it.

5. ATV / UTV Trail Development and Enhancement

The 2026 ORP survey shows that about 41% of respondent's most frequent outdoor recreational activity is ATV / UTV Riding.

Recommendation 1: Continue to look at ways to enhance the current ATV trail system and consider developing new ATV trails that will achieve community goals and not displace other recreational users.

Recommendation 2: Develop a new campground accessible from the ATV/UTV trail system to support increased demand for motorized recreation and provide additional overnight opportunities for riders. Consider locations that offer safe trail access, adequate space for camping facilities, and proximity to existing recreation areas.

6. Establish Scenic Byway Along Wisconsin River

Lincoln County has had an informal, unmarked scenic automobile route in the county for decades, highlighting views along STH 107, STH 17, highways through Merrill and Tomahawk, and several county highways. The Scenic Byways Program, established in 1999, is a cooperative effort between WisDOT and local community groups to conserve, promote, and enhance scenic and historic highway corridors.

To qualify as a scenic byway, a roadway must be part of a federal, state, or county highway (excluding interstate highways), must be at least 30 miles long, and must offer outstanding scenic views or historic resources combined with unique recreational, cultural, or educational opportunities. Benefits of designation include state or national promotion and increased visibility for the corridor.

Recommendation: Consider creating a State Scenic Byway along the Wisconsin River and through the Cities of Merrill and Tomahawk.

7. Create Countywide Tourism Bureau

A countywide tourism bureau does not exist, and neither the Merrill Chamber, nor the Tomahawk Chamber websites link to the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, & Parks website. Tomahawk's tourism website does not have maps for many recreational features.

Recommendation: This recommendation is for an entity in the County to create a countywide tourism bureau to collectively promote what recreation exists and to update users on changing conditions (example: extensive tree damage in this park, closed till further notice). Organizing to establish a Wisconsin River Scenic Byway may be an initial project for this entity.

7.3 County Facility Capital Improvements, 2027-2031

Capital improvements to parks are the addition of labor and materials that improve the overall value and usefulness of that park facility. Routine maintenance is considered the normal cycle of repair and upkeep for existing facilities and is traditionally funded through the Parks & Forestry Department's operations budget. Upgrading an outdoor restroom facility for universal access would qualify as a capital improvement, while repainting an outdoor restroom would be considered routine maintenance.

Staff from the Lincoln County Forestry, Land, and Parks Department projected what recreational needs face each county facility and the capital improvements needed to improve the facility.

5-Year Capital Improvement Tables below provide a general list of items, their cost, and approximate time frame for completion at each County maintained outdoor recreation facility.

Improvement	**Priority**
Item to build or remodel in a park or forest area.	○ High (1-3 years) ○ Medium (3-5 years) ○ Low (5+ years)

Projects listed below are subject to receiving County budgetary approval or private group fundraising. All listed projects may not be completed over the next 5 years.

Camp New Wood County Park

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

Camp New Wood is a former Wisconsin CCC camp that features a day-use park and camping facility with seven campsites, vault toilets, electric hook-ups and two hand pump wells for potable water. The campground was renovated in 2024-25. Recent upgrades include a new bridge over Ripley Creek, new vault toilets, energized pavilions and campsites equipped with 50-amp & 30-amp services. Facility use is moderate with most campsites occupied on weekends. The two covered shelters in the day use area are available for reservation throughout the summer months. The Grandfather Falls segment of the Ice Age Trail crosses the park bridge and campground. Camp New Wood is a designated stop along the Great Pinery Heritage Waterway, providing paddlers access to this regional water trail. The park serves as one of several parking options for accessing the 764 acre Merrill School Forest, which provides hiking and cross country ski trails.

Table 3	Camp New Wood County Park 5-Year Capital Improvements
Improvement	**Priority**
ADA pathways to Shelters, Restrooms and Well at Park	High
Wisconsin River Shoreline Rehabilitation	High
Upgrade Wisconsin River Boat Launch	Medium
Replace Playground Equipment	Low
Electric Well Pumps with Bottle Filling Stations	Low
Additional Landscaping W/ Native Trees/Lawn Reduction	Low
Informational/Historical/Trail Signage	Low

Haymeadow County Park

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

Haymeadow County Park is a former DOT wayside that features a small picnic area, reservable pavilion and vault toilets. The park also provides a parking area for walking access to fish the Big Haymeadow Creek and the Prairie River. The Prairie River is a Class I trout stream and is well known locally for high quality trout fishing, making this site a convenient access point for anglers. The Prairie River Dells Scenic Area is located approximately three-quarters of a mile away. Future use and funding may dictate development at one of these parks and rather than the other.

Table 4	Haymeadow County Park 5-Year Capital Improvements
Improvement	**Priority**
Trout Stream Habitat Restoration	Medium
Water Access/Shoreline Rehabilitation	Medium
Horseshoe Pit	Low
Play Ground Equipment	Low
Electric Well with bottle filling station	Low
Develop 4-8 campsites on the south side of the access road.	Low

Jack Pines County Park

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

This partially wooded location is regarded as open space for walking and sledding in winter. No improvements exist at this location. Development of a designated walking trail is a possibility if demand exists and funding becomes available.

Table 5 Jack Pines County Park 5-Year Capital Improvements	
Improvement	**Priority**
Development of a designated walking trail	Low

Penny Lake

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

This scenic wooded esker separates Penny Lake from Somo Lake. This location includes an undesignated camp site, a short unmarked walking trail along the esker separating the two lakes, and a small wooden foot bridge over the connecting channel between Penny Lake and Somo Lake. Development of a designated hiking trail is a possibility if demand exists and funding becomes available.

Table 5 Penny Lake 5-Year Capital Improvements	
Improvement	**Priority**
Development of a designated hiking/walking trail	Low
Boardwalk	Low
Bridge Rehab	Low
Trail Bridge or Culvert Expansion Development	Low

Otter Lake Recreation Area

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

Otter Lake Recreation area is heavily used throughout the summer. Most of the campsites are occupied on weekends and many people use the beach area for swimming and picnicking. Some of the individual campsites are difficult to distinguish and can get muddy after it rains. Two hand pump wells provide potable water.

Table 6 Otter Lake Recreation Area 5-Year Capital Improvements

Improvement	Priority
Fishing Pier	High
Add Gravel to sites and enlarge selected sites for larger rigs	High
Place boulders to delineate site boundaries	High
Construct slate or other stone stairways to access lakeside camp sites and the nature trail.	High
Layout & design of camp sites	High
ADA Kayak Launch/Pier	Medium
Construct open Shelters/Pavilions at Campground and Picnic area.	Low
Energize Campground	Low
Develop overflow parking lot	Low
Develop Otter Lake – Turtle Lake Bike Trail	Low

Tug Lake Recreation Area

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

Tug Lake Park is a popular beach destination for Lincoln County residents and visitors. The shelter continues to be frequently reserved for social gatherings on weekends throughout the summer. Recent upgrades to the park include an outdoor shower and upgraded well with bottle-filling station for potable water. Additionally, the park features an ADA compliant restroom and changing house, a picnic area with tables and grills, playground equipment meeting CPSC standard, a swimming beach, and parking for approximately 100 vehicles are available. Furthermore, residents around Tug Lake formed a Lake District to address potential water quality issues with the lake.

Table 7 Tug Lake Recreation Area 5-Year Capital Improvements	
Improvement	**Priority**
Replace restrooms/changing room roof with steel	Medium
Replace shelter roof with steel	Medium
Rehab/pave ADA-compliant path to restrooms and pavilion	Medium
Recondition beach area with new sand and timber edging along the grass-to-sand boundary.	Medium
Develop 9-hole disc golf course	Low
Additional landscaping with native trees	Low

Roothouse Lake Special Use Area

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

This is a 320-acre portion of the Lincoln County Forest is located in the Town of Harrison. This land was purchased from a private party, and specific management stipulations agreed upon at the time of purchase must be followed. Improvements at this site include a parking area and a trail leading to the lake. Primitive camping is allowed; however, there are no sanitary facilities or potable water are available.

Table 8 Roothouse Lake Special Use Area 5-Year Capital Improvements	
Improvement	**Priority**
Develop a nature/hiking trail around Roothouse Lake	Medium
Construct bridges over streams along the nature trail	Medium
Install historical and informational signage	Low

Larson Lake County Park

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

Larson Lake Park is a former DOT wayside with a picnic area and restrooms. The lake drains through a culvert under the park access road. The vault toilets are in need of replacement. Garbage is often dumped along the access road that runs through the park, and this road should be closed off to prevent continued vandalism and reduce future maintenance expenses. The park features a picnic area, shore fishing and carry-in boat access to Larson Lake, an ADA-compliant restroom, and parking. The Wisconsin DNR stocks Larson Lake annually with rainbow trout. This park is a popular destination for anglers.

Table 9 Larson Lake County Park 5-Year Capital Improvements	
Improvement	**Priority**
Install two fishing piers	High
Replace vault toilets	High
Close access road to reduce vandalism and maintenance	Medium
Landscaping improvements	Low

Prairie River Dells Scenic Area

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

Prairie River Dells Scenic Area is located about 8 miles northeast of Merrill off Highway 17 toward Rhinelander. The site includes two parking areas, two scenic viewing platforms, The Trout Capital Trailhead, Trout Capital Trail for hiking and biking, and the Trout Capital Trail Bridge over the Prairie River, which connects the trail system to the Merrill City Forest. Haymeadow Park is located about three-quarters of a mile away, and provides a picnic area, new vault toilets, and new energized pavilion. Future use and funding may dictate development at one of these parks rather than both.

Table 10 Prairie River Dells Scenic Area 5-Year Capital Improvements	
Improvement	**Priority**
Trailhead development & Signage	High
Trout stream habitat restoration	Medium
Rock-climbing anchor installation	Low
Fishing access improvements	Low
Vault toilets	Low
Rustic picnic area development	Low
Open shelter	Low

Underdown Recreation Forest and Multi-purpose Recreation Area

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

The Underdown Recreation Area spans over 7,000 acres across the Towns of Birch, Schley, and Merrill. The area offers designated trails for a variety of activities, including hiking, cross-country skiing, fat biking, snowshoeing, horseback riding, snowmobiling, winter ATV use, and mountain biking. Additionally, it is a designated Ruffed Grouse Management Area and all hunting is allowed during the open seasons. Several more miles of bike trails have been added, connecting to the Merrill City Forest to the south and to the new Trout Capital Trail bridge, which links trails to the Prairie Dells Scenic area. Trail improvements and re-routes have been done when necessary. Due to continued increase in use, expansion of the camping area or new camping facilities may be necessary in the future.

Table 12	**Underdown** **5-Year Capital Improvements**
Improvement	**Priority**
Rehab design of current campground layout	High
Tent-site camping area expansion	Medium
Second well for water	Medium
Second vault toilet	Medium
Evaluate and improve ski/bike trail layout; consider new trail development	Medium
Mist Lake ski chalet	Low
Mist Lake road development	Low
Develop campground with power on Horn Lake Road	Low
Skate-ski trail development	Low
Luecks Lake access development	Low
Gated designated hunter walking trail development	Low

Spirit Falls Scenic Area

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

Spirit Falls Scenic Area is located in the northwest part of Lincoln County. Plans for park development have long existed, but limited funding has prevented improvements. The site remains a primitive, undeveloped scenic area centered around the Spirit River and its waterfall.

Table 11 Spirit Falls Scenic Area 5-Year Capital Improvements	
Improvement	**Priority**
Construct shelter and picnic area	Low
Develop water and vault toilets	Low
Construct bridge over the Spirit River	Low
Develop hiking/biking trails	Low
Access road development and parking	Low
Construct observation platforms	Low

Hiawatha Trail

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

This abandoned railroad right-of-way was resurfaced with crushed granite in 2025. The decking and railings were replaced on the railroad trestle crossing Lake Mohawksin in 2018 with Snowmobile and RTP grant money. Invasive species including buckthorn and garlic mustard have been found along the trail. Burying Garlic Mustard plants may be a more effective alternative means to manage this invasive species. The buckthorn is widespread throughout the area while the garlic mustard is more isolated to one area with potential for control. The individual trail segment is closed to users when spraying occurs.

Table 13 Hiawatha Trail 5-Year Capital Improvements	
Improvement	**Priority**
Garlic mustard control (Bury plants)	High
Add Crusher Belt to Protect Bridge Decking	Low
Re-deck trestle	Low

Lincoln County ATV/UTV Trail System

County Forestry Staff Assessment:

Lincoln County's ATV/UTV trail system is based primarily on existing logging roads open to other highway licensed vehicles. Located on light soils and hilly terrain, these trails require erosion control devices and continuous maintenance. Initially, ATVs were lightweight, low powered machines that didn't create much soil disturbance. With the tremendous rise in popularity and the advent of larger, heavier, more powerful, multi-person UTVs, the trail tread experiences a lot of disturbance. Grant funding has increased over the years but it is still difficult to keep up with maintenance. Department staff is exploring options to re-route problem sections of trail when possible. Maintenance of the existing trail and facilities has priority over new development. New trail development is dependent on approval of the Forestry Department, wetland/water crossing permit approval, and funding support from the ORV Council.

Table 14 Lincoln County ATV/UTV Trail System 5-Year Capital Improvements

Improvement	Priority
Maintenance/improvement of existing system (mostly grant funded re-hab and re-routes)	High
Exploration of trail development in northwestern Lincoln County	Low
Exploration of development New ATV Campground	Low

Chapter 8:
IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

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

Attachment C provides a list of commonly used state and federal government financial assistance programs.

Adopt-A-Park Program

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

Friends of a Park/Trail Program

A Friends Group is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization whose members have an interest in Wisconsin's natural resources and volunteer their time, services and support to enhance a local government's parks, forests, trails and recreation areas. They provide direct support to individual properties.

Capital Improvements

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

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

Community Beautification

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

Historic Sites

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

Leases

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

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

Lifetime Activities

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

Monetary Aid Programs

Take advantage of state and federal financial and technical aid programs, which are designed, to assist communities in meeting recreational, needs, and maintain community eligibility for such programs. A list of these programs exists in **Appendix C**.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Program is a federal program administered by WDNR to encourage the creation and interpretation of high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities. Since passage of the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020, LWCF is permanently and fully funded at $900 million annually, nationwide. What this means in Wisconsin is that more park projects that include splash pads, playgrounds, and skateparks are now more easily fundable up to 50%.

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is a comprehensive aid program for the promotion of resource conservation and outdoor recreation opportunities. It consists of a variety of programs such as Local Park Aids, and the Urban Rivers Program, along with many others. ***The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Program is closed to new applications on May 1, 2026.***

Requirements for application to the Stewardship Fund include the requirement that the applicant submits an approved comprehensive outdoor recreation plan. This plan is designed to meet that requirement.

For the remaining program requirements, or additional information contact:

Regional Project Manager
DNR's Northern Region
107 Sutliff Ave.
Rhinelander, WI 54501

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

Municipal & School District Cooperation

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

Park Dedication

Subdivision regulations can be used by counties to require residential subdividers to dedicate a portion of subdivided land for permanent park and open space use in areas which are experiencing significant residential growth. Neighborhood parks may be acquired in this manner in newly developing residential areas. Local landowners should also be encouraged to dedicate land to their communities for recreational uses. Numerous small town memorial parks have been acquired through the generosity of local citizens. If citizens are made aware of community needs, this form of private action may continue to enrich the public resources of small communities.

Program Costs

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

Senior Citizen Involvement

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

Service Group Involvement

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

Shoreland Zoning

Wisconsin's Shoreland Management Program established statewide standards for shoreland development. Counties are required to adopt and administer shoreland zoning ordinances that meet these requirements. The statewide standards for county shoreland zoning ordinances are found in Chapter NR 115, Wis. Admin. Code.

Specialized Facilities

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

Public Access via Subdivision Regulations (Platting Lands)

Lake and stream shore plats can provide public access to the adjacent water bodies. The Wisconsin Statutes §236.16(3) require that all subdivisions abutting a navigable lake or stream provide at least a sixty-foot-wide access to the low watermark from existing public roads at not more than one-half mile intervals (excluding shore areas where public parks or open-space streets are provided).

Use of Easements

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

Winter Activities

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

Attachment A

Park Design and Location Criteria

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

Park Design and Location Criteria

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 liner 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.

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

Attachment B
Facility Development Standards

From: National Recreation and Park Association

SUGGESTED OUTDOOR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Activity Format	Recommended Size and Dimensions	Recommended Space Requirements	Recommended Orientation	Service Radius and Location Notes
Badminton	Singles--17' x 44' Doubles-20' x 44' with 5' unobstructed area on both sides	1622 sq. ft.	Long axis north - south	¼ - ½ mile. Usually in school recreation center or church facility. Safe walking or biking or biking access.
Basketball **1. Youth** **2. High School** **3. Collegiate**	46' - 50' x 84' 50' x 84' 50' x 94' with 5' unobstructed space all sides.	2400-3036 sq. ft. 5040-7280 sq. ft. 5600-7980 sq. ft.	Long axis north - south	¼ - ½ mile. Same as badminton. Outdoor courts in neighborhood/community parks, plus active recreation areas in other park settings.
Handball (3-4 wall)	20' x 40' with a minimum of 10' to rear of 3-wall court. Minimum 20' overhead clearance.	800 sq. ft. for 4-wall, 1000 sq. ft. for 3-wall.	Long axis is north - south. Front wall at north end.	15 - 30 min. travel time, 4-wall usually indoor as part of multi-purpose building. 3-2 all usually in park or school setting.
Ice Hockey	Rink 85' x 200' (Min. 85' x 185') Additional 5000 22,000 sq. ft. including support area.	22,000 sq. ft. including support area.	Long axis is north - south if outdoors.	½ - 1 hour travel time. Climate important consideration affecting no. of units. Best as part of multipurpose facility.
Tennis	36' x 78'. 12 ft. clearance on both ends.	Min. of 7,200 sq. ft. single court area (2 acres per complex)	Long axis north - south	¼ - ½ mile. Best in batteries of 2 - 4. Located in neighborhood/community park or near school site.
Volleyball	30' x 60'. Minimum of 6' clearance on all sides.	Minimum 4,000 sq. ft.	Long axis north - south	½ - 1 mile.
Baseball **1. Official** **2. Little League**	Baselines - 90' Pitching distance-60.5' Foul lines - min. 320' Center field - 400'+ Baselines - 60' Pitching distance - 46' Foul lines - 200' Center field - 200' - 250'	3.0 - 3.85 A min. 1.2 A min.	Locate home plate so pitcher is not throwing across sun, and batter not facing it. Line from home plate through pitchers mound to run east-northeast.	¼ - ½ mile. Part of neighborhood complex. Lighted fields part of community complex.
Field Hockey	180' x 300' with a minimum of 10' clearance on all sides.	Minimum 1.5 A	Fall season - Long axis northwest or southeast. For longer periods, north/south	15 - 30 minute travel time. Usually part of baseball, football, soccer complex in community park or adjacent to high school.
Football	160' x 360' with a minimum of 6' clearance on all sides.	Minimum 1.5 A	Same as field hockey.	15 - 30 min. travel time. Same as field hockey.
Soccer	195' to 225' x 330' to 360' with 10' minimum clearance on all sides.	1.7 - 2.1 A	Same as field hockey.	1 - 2 miles. Number of units depends on popularity. Youth popularity. Youth soccer on smaller fields adjacent to fields or neighborhood parks.
Golf - Driving Range	900' x 690' wide. Add 12' width each additional tee.	13.5 A for min. of 25 tees.	Long axis is southwest - northeast with golfer driving northeast.	30 minute travel time. Part of golf course complex. As separate unit may be privately operated.

Source: National Recreation and Park Association

SUGGESTED OUTDOOR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS *(continued)*				
Activity Format	**Recommended Size and Dimensions**	**Recommended Space Requirements**	**Recommended Orientation**	**Service Radius and Location Notes**
¼ mile running track	Over-all width - 276' length - 600'. Track width for 8 - 4 lanes is 32'.	4.3 A	Long axis in sector from north to south to northwest - southeast, with finish line at north end.	15 - 30 minute travel time. Usually part of a high school or community park complex in combination with football, soccer, etc.
Softball	Baselines - 60' pitching distance - 45' men. 40' women Fast pitch field radius from plate - 225' Slow pitch - 275' (men) 250' (women)	1.5 - 2.0 A	Same as baseball. indimensions for 16".	¼ - ½ mile. Slight difference. May also be used for youth baseball.
Multiple use court (basketball, tennis, etc.)	120' x 80'	9,840 sq. ft.	Long axis of court with primary use north and south.	1 - 2 miles, in neighborhood or community parks.
Archery range	300' length x minimum 10' between targets. Roped, clear area on side of range minimum 30', clear space behind targets minimum of 90' x 45' with bunker.	Minimum 0.65 A	Archer facing north + or - 45 degrees.	30 minutes travel time. Part of a regional/metro complex.
Golf **1. Par 3 (18 hole)** **2. 9-hole standard** **3. 18-hole standard**	Average length varies -600 - 2700 yards. Average length 2250 yards Average length 6500 yards.	50 - 60 A Minimum of 50 A Minimum 110 yards	Majority of holes on north/south axis	½ - 1 hour travel time 9-hole course can accommodate 350 people/day 500 - 550 people/day. Course may be located in community, district or regional/metro park.
Swimming pools	Teaching - min. 25 yards x 45' even depth of 3-4 ft. Competitive - min. 25 m x 16 m. Min. of 25 sq. ft. water surface per swimmer. Ration of 2 to 1 deck to water.	Varies on size of pool and amenities. Usually 1 - 2 A sites.	None, but care must be taken in siting life stations in relation to afternoon sun.	15 to 30 minutes travel time. Pools for general community use should be planned for teaching competitive and recreational purposes with enough to accommodate 1m and 3m diving boards. Located in community park or school site.
Beach areas	Beach area should have 50 sq. ft. of land and 50 sa. ft . of water per user. Turnover rate is 3. There should be a 3-4 A supporting area per A of beach.	N/A	N/A	½ to 1 hour travel time. Should have a sand bottom with a maximum slope of 5%. Boating areas completely segregated from swimming areas. In regional/metro parks.

Source: National Recreation and Park Association

SUGGESTED OUTDOOR FACILITY DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS *(continued)*				
Activity Format	**Recommended Size and Dimensions**	**Recommended Space Requirements**	**Recommended Orientation**	**Service Radius and Location Notes**
Pickleball *Source: USA Pickleball*	20' wide x 44' long. Total court space needed is 30 feet by 60 feet. 34 feet by 64 feet is recommended.	Min. of 1,800 sq. ft. for single court area.	Long axis north - south	None provided.
Skate Spot **Neighborhood Skate Park** **Community-wide Skate Park** *Source: Tony Hawk Foundation*	Contains one structure. Average length 2250 yards Average length 6500 yards.	3,000 sq. ft. 8,000-12,000 sq. ft. 20,000 sq. ft. or larger.	No orientation specifications.	About 5 skaters can use a skate spot simultaneously. About 70 skaters can use a neighborhood skatepark at the same time. Most can easily accommodate large numbers of skaters and onlookers, and are suitable for contests and events.

Attachment C

Federal and State Outdoor Recreation Funding Programs

Compiled by: NCWRPC

Wisconsin DNR Administered Programs

Regional Project Manager
DNR's Northern Region
107 Sutliff Ave.
Rhinelander, WI 54501

Go online to find specific DNR staff contact information along with their areas of expertise.

Note: Various program application periods may exist. Check online for each program's requirements and deadlines.

Note: Contact your local DNR Regional Project Manager if you are thinking of applying for a 50% Stewardship or 50% LWCF grant, so they can assist you with the application for the best chance of success.

Acquisition and Development of Local Parks (ADLP) Grants [Stewardship]

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Program is closed to new applications on May 1, 2026.

ADLP grants (up to a 50% cost share) are awarded to improve community recreation areas and acquire land for public outdoor recreation. Priority is given to land acquisition where a need for additional recreational land is supported by an approved comprehensive outdoor recreation plan.

Acquisition of Development Rights (ADR) [Stewardship]

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Program is closed to new applications on May 1, 2026.

The purpose of the acquisition of development rights (ADR) subprogram is to protect natural, agricultural or forest lands that enhance and/or provide nature-based outdoor recreation. ADR grants can only fund conservation easement purchases up to a 50% cost share.

ATV/UTV Enhancement

This funding is issued bi-annually to non-profit organizations that promote the safe and wise use of all terrain vehicles (ATVs)/utility-terrain vehicles (UTVs), ATV/UTV riding and ATV/UTV education.

ATV Patrols

This grant is issued to Wisconsin sheriff departments that participate in ATV enforcement efforts. The DNR can provide up to 100% of county net costs for the enforcement of ATV regulations. Actual funding received is based on total allotted funds split between participating agencies.

Patrol requirements are contained in NR 50.125, Wis. Adm. Code.

ATV/UTV Trails

Counties, towns, cities, villages and tribes can apply for funds to acquire, insure, develop and maintain ATV/UTV trails, areas and routes.

Specific changes to NR 64 created Hybrid Trails ("Troutes") or all-terrain vehicle trail and route combinations.

Boat Enforcement Patrol

Eligibility & Purpose: This grant is issued to Wisconsin counties or municipalities that participate in boating enforcement efforts. Eligible agencies may receive law enforcement aids for up to 75% of their net costs.

Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) Program

The purpose of BIG is to construct, renovate, and maintain boating infrastructure facilities for transient recreational vessels at least 26 feet long.

Tier 1 - State
Provides up to $200,000 per year to each state. Projects are competitively ranked within the state.

Tier 2 - National
Provides up to $1,500,000 per project. Projects are competitively ranked at the national level.

Natural Areas [Stewardship – Only available to nonprofits]

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Program is closed to new applications on May 1, 2026.

Stewardship natural area grants complement the State Natural Areas (SNA) Program, dedicated to the preservation of Wisconsin's native natural communities and habitat for rare plant and animal species.

Land purchased with natural area grants must be open to the public for low-impact nature-based recreation and scientific study. Natural areas are not intended for intensive recreational use such as mountain biking, motorized vehicle use, horseback riding or camping.

Habitat Areas [Stewardship – Only available to nonprofits]

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Program is closed to new applications on May 1, 2026.

Habitat area grants are awarded to conserve wildlife habitat in Wisconsin in order to expand opportunities for wildlife-based recreation such as hunting, trapping, hiking, bird watching, fishing, nature appreciation and wildlife viewing.

Land purchased with habitat area grants must be open to the public for low-impact nature-based recreation. Habitat areas are not intended for intensive recreational use such as mountain biking, motorized vehicle use, horseback riding or camping.

Stream Bank protection [Stewardship – Only available to nonprofits]

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Program is closed to new applications on May 1, 2026.

Streambank protection grants are awarded to protect water quality and fish habitat.

Priority is given to land or easement purchases along designated Outstanding or Exceptional Resource Waters, projects that connect sections of protected stream corridor, and projects that will mitigate the impact of agricultural runoff.

State trails [Stewardship – Only available to nonprofits]

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Program is closed to new applications on May 1, 2026.

State trail grants are awarded to purchase lands or easements identified as part of the State Trail system including designated State Water Trails. Priority is given to lands along nationally designated Ice Age and North Country trail corridors and to lands that connect established trail systems.

Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) – State Side Program

This is a federal program administered in all states that encourages the creation and interpretation of high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities. Funds received by the DNR for this program are split between DNR projects and grants to local governments for outdoor recreation activities. Since passage of the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020, LWCF is permanently and fully funded at $900 million annually, nationwide. What this means in Wisconsin is that more park projects that include splash pads, playgrounds, and skateparks are now more easily fundable up to 50%.

Motorized Stewardship Grants [Stewardship]

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Program is closed to new applications on May 1, 2026.

ATV/UTV grants are available to counties, towns, cities, villages and tribes to apply for funds to acquire, insure, develop and maintain ATV/UTV trails, areas and routes.

Snowmobile trail grants are available to counties and tribes to apply for funding to provide a statewide system of well-signed and well-groomed snowmobile trails for public use and enjoyment.

Match Requirement: 20 percent

Off-Highway Motorcycle (OHM) Grants

OHM grants are available to counties, towns, cities, villages and tribes to apply for funds for development, rehabilitation, and maintenance of OHM trails.

Recreational Boating Facilities Grants

These grants may be used by counties, towns, cities, villages, tribes, sanitary districts, public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts and qualified lake associations for recreational boating facility projects.

Past projects have included ramps and service docks to gain access to the water, purchase of aquatic weed harvesting equipment, navigation aids and dredging waterway channels.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

This is a federal program administered in all states. Municipal governments and incorporated organizations are eligible to receive reimbursement for the development and maintenance of recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail uses.

Eligible sponsors may be reimbursed for up to 80% of eligible project costs. Funds from this program may be used in conjunction with funds from the state snowmobile or ATV grant programs and Knowles-Nelson Stewardship development projects.

Shooting Range Grant Program

Counties, cities, villages, townships, other governmental agencies or units, clubs or organizations, businesses or corporations and educational institutions can apply for assistance in outdoor shooting range construction, including backstops and berms, target holders, shooting benches, baffles, protective fencing, signs, trenches, gun racks, platforms, restrooms and other items considered essential for the project by the department. Indoor ranges may be eligible as well, including classroom, storage and restroom facilities.

Snowmobile Patrols

This grant is issued to Wisconsin sheriff departments that participate in snowmobile enforcement efforts. The DNR can provide up to 100% of county net cost for the enforcement of snowmobile regulations. Actual funding received is based on total allotted funds split between participating agencies.

Snowmobile Trail Aids

These grants are used to reimburse the over 600 snowmobile clubs in Wisconsin for some of their expenses.

Snowmobile trail aids are entirely funded by snowmobilers. The money awarded in grants to Wisconsin counties comes from snowmobile registrations, trail pass revenue and gas tax from some of the gas used in snowmobiles.

Sport Fish Restoration (SFR)

These grants may be used to construct fishing piers and motorboat access projects. Eligible components include boat ramp construction and renovation, along with related amenities such as parking lots, accessible paths, lighting, and restroom facilities. Funding for this program comes from federal excise taxes on fishing equipment and a portion of the federal gas tax.

Surface Water Grants

[Formerly: Lake Management Planning and Lake Classification and Lake Protection Grants.]

The surface water grant program provides cost-sharing grants for surface water protection and restoration. Funding is available for education, ecological assessments, planning, implementation, and aquatic invasive species prevention and control. With many different projects eligible for grant funding, you can support surface water

management at any stage: from organization capacity development to project implementation.

Urban Green Space [Stewardship]

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Program is closed to new applications on May 1, 2026.

The intent of the Urban Green Space Program (UGS) is to provide open natural space within or in proximity to urban areas; to protect from development areas within or in proximity to urban areas that have scenic, ecological or other natural value; and to provide land for non-commercial gardening for the residents of an urbanized area.

Urban Rivers [Stewardship]

The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Local Assistance Program is closed to new applications on May 1, 2026.

The urban rivers subprogram program aims to restore or preserve the character of urban riverways through the acquisition or development of land adjacent to rivers. Purposes of the program include supporting economic revitalization through the restoration or preservation of urban riverfronts and improving outdoor recreational opportunities by increasing access to urban rivers.

Wisconsin DOT Administered Programs

District Bike & Ped Coordinator
Wisconsin Department of Transportation
1681 Second Avenue South
Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

Purpose: The Transportation Alternatives Program allocates federal funds to transportation improvement projects that "expand travel choice, strengthen the local economy, improve the quality of life, and protect the environment."

TAP is a legislative program authorized by Congress through the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act signed into law in 2015. With certain exceptions, projects that met eligibility criteria for the *Safe Routes to School Program*, *Transportation Enhancements*, and/or the *Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities Program* are eligible TAP projects.

As of 2022, construction projects eligible for TAP must have a total projected expense of $150,000 or more, while non-construction projects must have a total projected expense of at least $20,000. These TAP application minimums may change in any given application year. There is a 20% local match required. *See current TAP guidance for updated information that may have higher project expense minimums.*

Safe Routes to School (SRTS)
[A Transportation Alternatives Program]

Purpose: Safe Routes to School programs encourage children in grades K-8 to walk and bike to school by creating safer walking and biking routes. Projects must be within 2 miles of a school and listed in a SRTS plan.

Local Transportation Enhancements (TE)
[A Transportation Alternatives Program]

Purpose: Funds projects to increase multi-modal transportation alternatives and enhance communities and the environment. Projects include bicycle or pedestrian facilities, landscaping or streetscaping, and the preservation of historic transportation structures.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Program (BPFP)
[A Transportation Alternatives Program]

Purpose: Funds projects that construct or plan for bicycle or bicycle/pedestrian facilities.

NOTE: The BPFP has not been funded in over a decade, but the program is still on the books.

Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)

While HSIP does not pertain to bicycle and pedestrian transportation, this WisDOT program can help improve safety measures on problematic stretches of highway where crashes have occurred in the past, thereby creating a safer and more hospitable transportation network. HSIP improvements generally require a ten percent match of state or local funds. The program generally funds low-cost options that can be implemented quickly.

Federal Assistance Programs

All other federal programs are listed under Wisconsin DNR Administered Programs.

Challenge Cost Share Program (CCSP) – National Park Service

Purpose: The Challenge Cost Share Program supports local projects that promote conservation and recreation, environmental stewardship, education and engaging diverse youth participants. Local project partners work with National Park Service parks and programs to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. NPS administered parks and programs are eligible such as National Trails, Heritage Areas, and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

One-third of the CCSP pot is earmarked for National Trails System Projects. Thus supporting work under the National Trails System Act (16 U.S.C. 1241-51), such as: National Scenic and Historic trails, National Scenic and Historic Trails in parks, National Recreation Trails, and rail-trail projects.

For additional information about this program and the application process, please contact the CCSP Program Coordinators for Wisconsin:

National Park Service
700 Rayovac Dr., Suite 100
Madison, WI 53711
608-441-5610

Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program – National Park Service
Purpose: The National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program supports community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects across the nation. The national network of conservation and recreation planning professionals partner with community groups, nonprofits, tribes, and state and local governments to design trails and parks, conserve and improve access to rivers, protect special places, and create recreation opportunities.

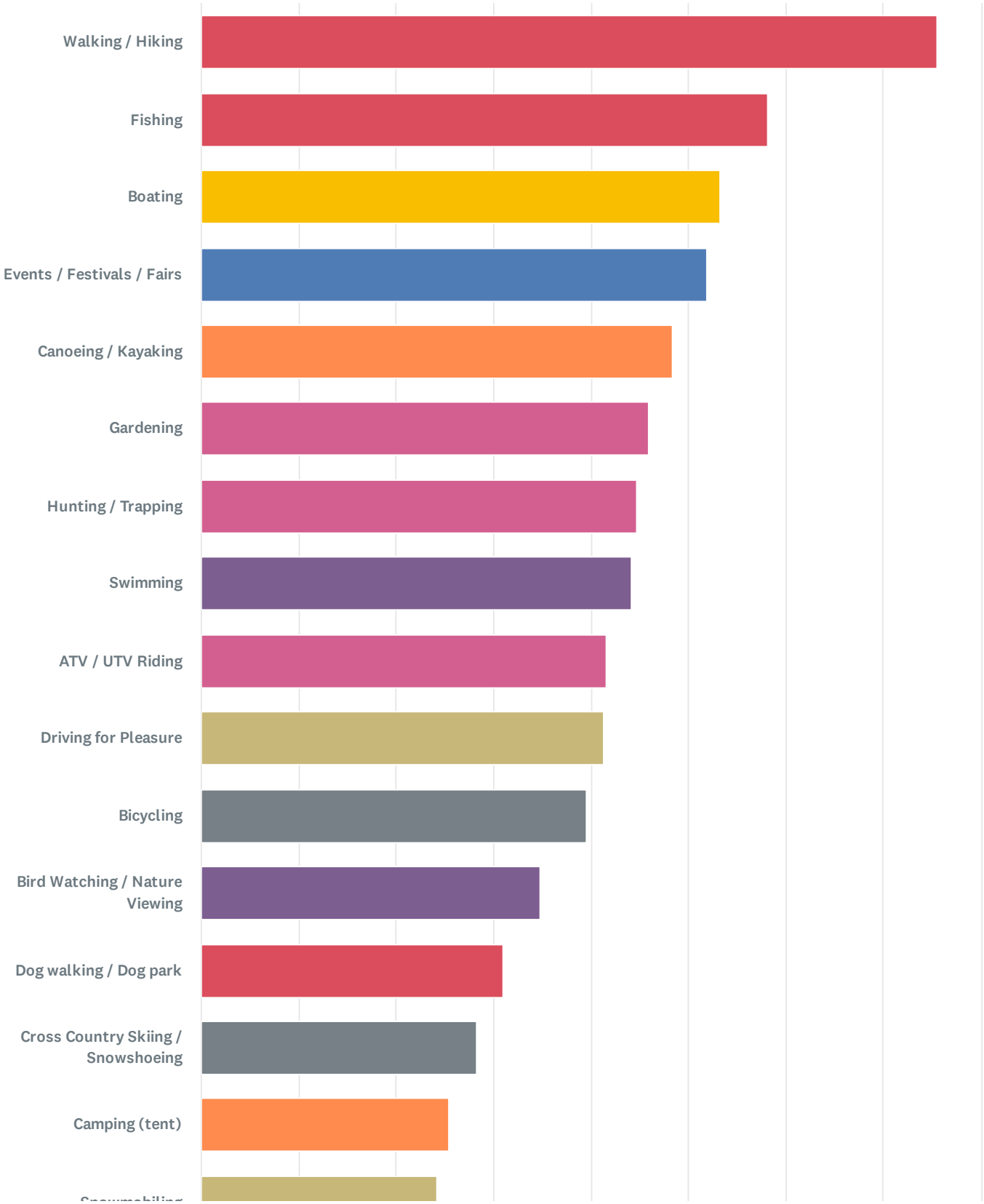
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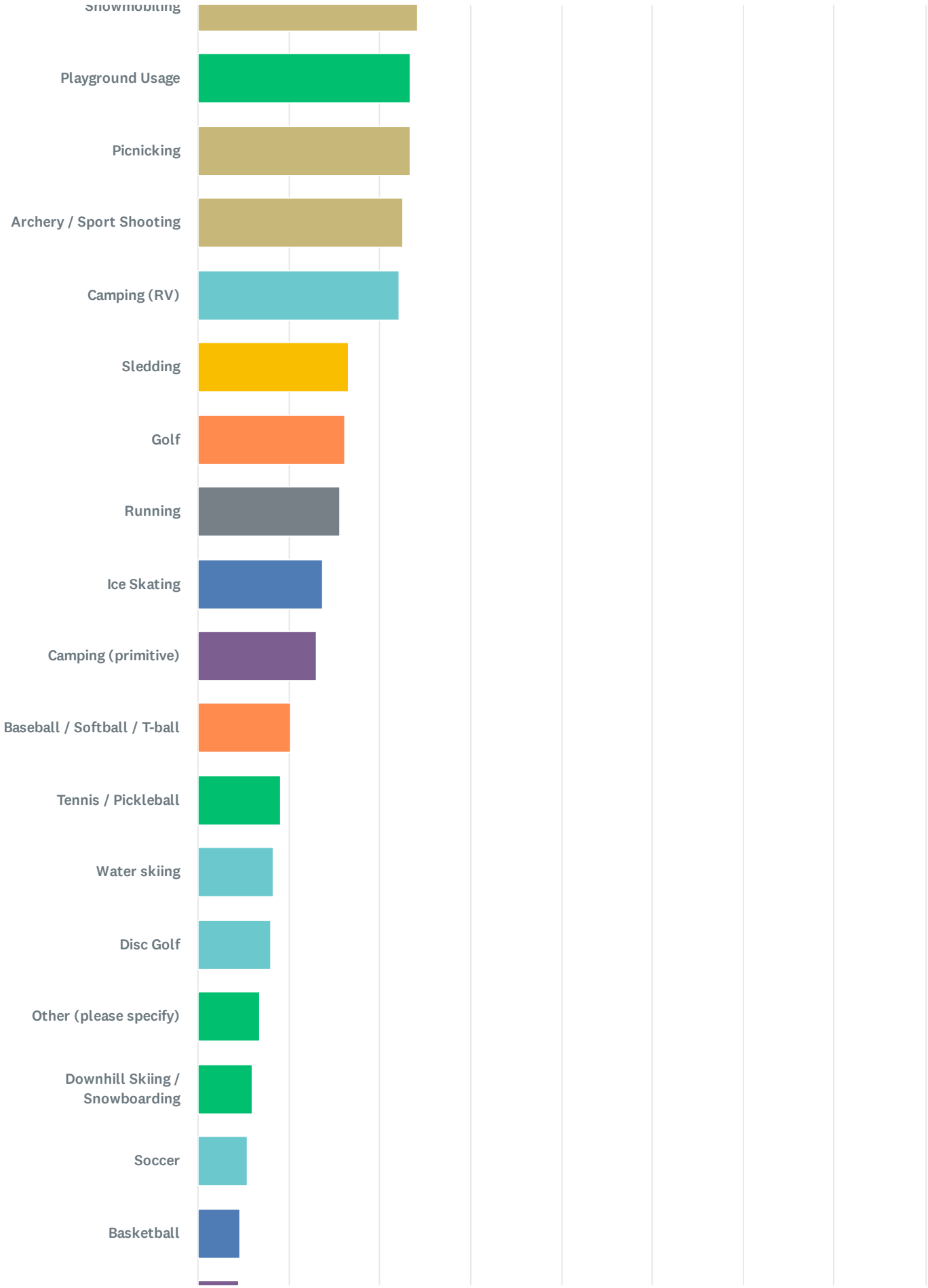
Lincoln County Outdoor Recreation Survey 2026 Results with comments

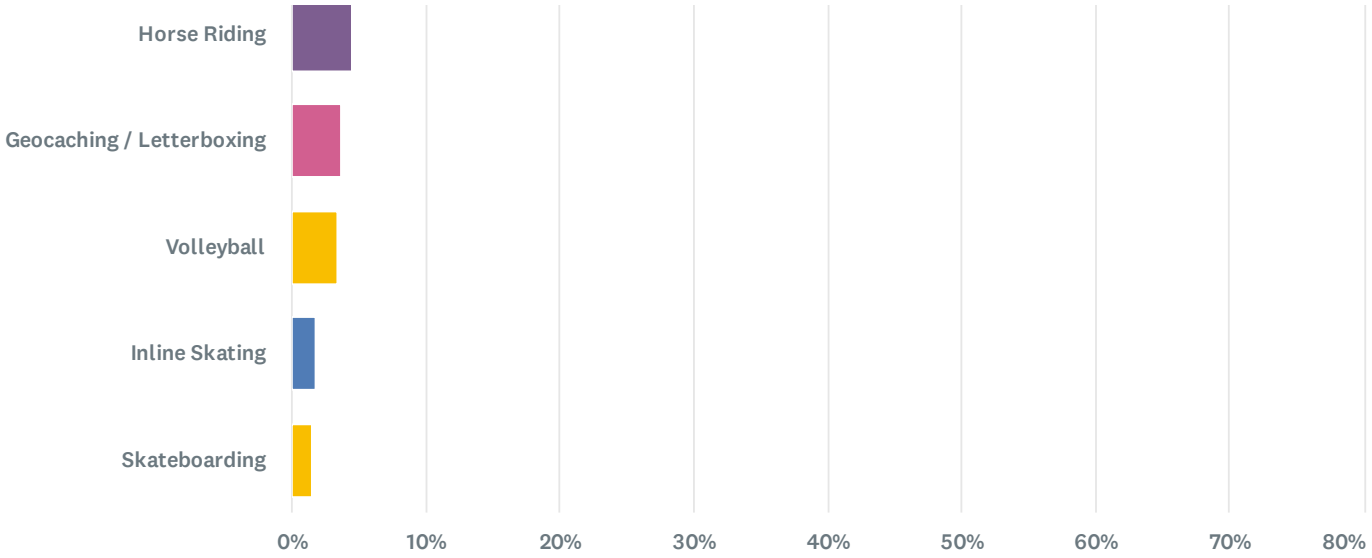
Compiled by: NCWRPC

Q1 385 responses

In 2025, which outdoor recreational activities did you participate in? (Choose all that apply.)




Snowmobiling
Playground Usage
Picnicking
Archery / Sport Shooting
Camping (RV)
Sledding
Golf
Running
Ice Skating
Camping (primitive)
Baseball / Softball / T-ball
Tennis / Pickleball
Water skiing
Disc Golf
Other (please specify)
Downhill Skiing / Snowboarding
Soccer
Basketball



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Walking / Hiking	75.58%	291
Fishing	58.18%	224
Boating	53.25%	205
Events / Festivals / Fairs	51.95%	200
Canoeing / Kayaking	48.31%	186
Gardening	45.97%	177
Hunting / Trapping	44.68%	172
Swimming	44.16%	170
ATV / UTV Riding	41.56%	160
Driving for Pleasure	41.30%	159
Bicycling	39.48%	152
Bird Watching / Nature Viewing	34.81%	134
Dog walking / Dog park	30.91%	119
Cross Country Skiing / Snowshoeing	28.31%	109

Total	**3572**

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Camping (tent)	25.45%	98
Snowmobiling	24.16%	93
Playground Usage	23.38%	90
Picnicking	23.38%	90
Archery / Sport Shooting	22.60%	87
Camping (RV)	22.08%	85
Sledding	16.62%	64
Golf	16.10%	62
Running	15.58%	60
Ice Skating	13.77%	53
Camping (primitive)	12.99%	50
Baseball / Softball / T-ball	10.13%	39
Tennis / Pickleball	9.09%	35
Water skiing	8.31%	32
Disc Golf	8.05%	31
Other (please specify)	6.75%	26
Downhill Skiing / Snowboarding	5.97%	23
Soccer	5.45%	21
Basketball	4.68%	18
Horse Riding	4.42%	17
Geocaching / Letterboxing	3.64%	14
Volleyball	3.38%	13
Total		**3572**

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Inline Skating	1.82%	7
Skateboarding	1.56%	6
Total		**3572**

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Foraging	4/9/2026 7:09 AM
2	Dog training	4/8/2026 11:51 AM
3	target shooting	3/19/2026 2:22 PM
4	Bikepacking	3/12/2026 6:19 PM
5	Camping- Teardrop Camper	3/8/2026 11:09 AM
6	Adventure racing	2/27/2026 2:50 PM
7	Mountain biking	2/25/2026 8:44 AM
8	Snowbound in the Underdown 3-mile Snowshoe race	2/25/2026 8:22 AM
9	Mountain Biking	2/24/2026 6:24 AM
10	Mountain Biking & Fat tire snow biking	2/23/2026 8:42 PM
11	Fat biking	2/23/2026 8:18 PM
12	Bikepacking	2/23/2026 8:18 PM
13	Biking	2/23/2026 8:09 PM
14	Berry picking mushrooming firewood	2/23/2026 4:35 PM
15	Mountain biking	2/23/2026 11:20 AM
16	Snowshoe. Mountain Biking. Fat Biking	2/23/2026 10:50 AM
17	Snowshoeing	2/23/2026 10:15 AM
18	Fat Bike and mountain bike trail rides	2/23/2026 9:41 AM
19	orienteering	2/19/2026 12:48 PM
20	Adventure Motorcycle riding on UTV trails	2/17/2026 7:38 PM
21	Motorcycle on atv trail	2/17/2026 11:26 AM
22	kayaking	2/17/2026 10:52 AM
23	spending time at cottage	2/17/2026 12:02 AM
24	Snowshoe	2/16/2026 3:23 PM
25	handicap accessible splash pad	2/16/2026 1:41 PM
26	Foraging	2/16/2026 12:00 PM

Q2 What potential outdoor recreational opportunities should be developed in Lincoln County?

Answered: 188 Skipped: 197

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	ski and Mtn bike trails	4/12/2026 10:09 AM
2	Grouse hunting	4/11/2026 11:42 AM
3	Waiting for the skatepark. Continue expanding bike trail, the wausau connection will be great.	4/10/2026 2:41 PM
4	Nothing should be developed.	4/9/2026 11:42 AM
5	Public long range rifle shooting range and public archery range	4/9/2026 4:52 AM
6	More opportunities for fishing and hunting on public grounds with better access	4/8/2026 9:20 PM
7	Improve habitat	4/8/2026 8:32 PM
8	More hunter walking trails, easier to take little kids on	4/8/2026 7:01 PM
9	More places to hunt fish and target shoot bow/gun	4/8/2026 4:48 PM
10	Protect the current outdoor recreation opportunities before adding another	4/8/2026 11:51 AM
11	Bike trails	4/7/2026 7:12 PM
12	RC Park	4/7/2026 6:09 PM
13	RC Race Track Offroad	4/7/2026 6:09 PM
14	Better, well maintained hiking trails	4/7/2026 3:43 PM
15	More cross country ski trails	4/7/2026 3:34 PM
16	At trails	4/7/2026 3:04 PM
17	Bike trail system	4/6/2026 3:20 PM
18	Fat biking in the northern part of the county.	4/4/2026 8:18 AM
19	Bicycling, fat biking	4/4/2026 8:03 AM
20	Family oriented ego-adventures	3/31/2026 12:39 PM
21	Maintain balance of existing	3/29/2026 10:10 AM
22	Connecting atv trails with other counties, not just roads	3/28/2026 11:36 AM
23	Gated trails for bird hunting and further upland/waterfowl bird habitat development	3/25/2026 6:12 AM
24	None	3/23/2026 9:14 PM
25	bike trails	3/23/2026 5:16 PM
26	Ice skating trail (like Boulder Junction). Permanent track for motorized vehicles (dirt bike tracks).	3/22/2026 1:58 PM
27	Walking and hiking trails, or any recreation, away from ATV and UTV use areas.	3/21/2026 9:23 AM
28	Walking/Hiking	3/19/2026 1:10 PM
29	making areas more handicap accessible	3/18/2026 9:53 AM
30	they have everything we use	3/16/2026 10:14 AM
31	More RV camping options, with electricity and water.	3/15/2026 4:27 PM

32	continued maintenance of the Ice Age trails /support /help -/ funding & help withCouncil Grounds State Pk. /also Bike Trail maintenance	3/13/2026 9:00 PM
33	More horseback riding/camping	3/13/2026 2:16 PM
34	Shelter at Prairie Dells trailhead.	3/12/2026 6:19 PM
35	Pavilion and camp sites at south trailhead at Underdown recreation area	3/11/2026 12:34 PM
36	more cycling options	3/11/2026 11:38 AM
37	Trail system	3/10/2026 12:04 PM
38	Adirondack camping	3/10/2026 11:36 AM
39	Improve on what we have.	3/9/2026 1:16 PM
40	Off road paved Bike/ped trails	3/8/2026 11:09 AM
41	More hiking trails	3/7/2026 9:03 PM
42	Keep loggers off the Ice Age Trail, quit cutting forest along the ATV trails, save green spaces for parks. Build disc golf around the county. Add walking trails in township areas	3/7/2026 1:51 PM
43	more bike trails and shoulder improvements for bike riding on county roads	3/5/2026 10:37 AM
44	Pickleball	3/3/2026 8:51 AM
45	More atv/UTV trails	3/3/2026 7:24 AM
46	disc golf	3/3/2026 5:13 AM
47	More bike paths or protected bike lanes on county roads. Short cross country ski track in Merrill City limits.	3/2/2026 3:40 PM
48	UTVing	3/2/2026 11:20 AM
49	Birding, more mountain bike trails	2/27/2026 5:57 PM
50	Orienteering course	2/27/2026 2:50 PM
51	Group fishing outings on different lakes	2/27/2026 9:06 AM
52	Underdown biking trails	2/25/2026 8:44 AM
53	I believe there are plenty of opportunities already.	2/24/2026 1:20 PM
54	A shelter or gathering building at Prairie Dells trailhead	2/24/2026 11:23 AM
55	Hiking, cycling, Disc Golf, Canoeing/kayaking, XC Skiing, Downhill Skiing	2/24/2026 10:36 AM
56	More silent sports trails	2/23/2026 9:49 PM
57	Mountain Bike Trails, other bike paths	2/23/2026 8:42 PM
58	more bike routes	2/23/2026 8:33 PM
59	Shelter at the Prairie Dells Recreation area. More bike trails	2/23/2026 8:18 PM
60	Can't think of any, but I would love to see a shelter at Prairie Dells for winter comfort. Fireplace, tables, changing area.	2/23/2026 8:18 PM
61	Mtn biking	2/23/2026 8:09 PM
62	Mountain biking, ATV and off road motorcycle trails.	2/23/2026 8:02 PM
63	More walking/hiking trails.Improve existing walking/biking trails	2/23/2026 7:23 PM
64	A gathering shelter at Prairie Dells parking area off Heinemania Road.	2/23/2026 6:34 PM
65	More MTB trails. Improvement to underdown trailhead off heineman road with pavilion.	2/23/2026 4:47 PM
66	More walking trails. Cross country skiing trails	2/23/2026 4:35 PM
67	Fat Biking and Gravel biking	2/23/2026 4:13 PM

68	The would be great to have a shelter at the underdown trailhead	2/23/2026 4:08 PM
69	More pickleball courts in town and bicycle trails and lanes	2/23/2026 2:32 PM
70	Ice skating near Sawmill Brewery	2/23/2026 11:39 AM
71	Adding more access and miles for cycling	2/23/2026 11:00 AM
72	More snowshoe and mountain bike trails.	2/23/2026 10:50 AM
73	Gravel bike paths off the road	2/23/2026 10:29 AM
74	Snowshoeing	2/23/2026 10:15 AM
75	Hiking, biking, cross country skiing	2/23/2026 10:11 AM
76	Single track bike trails	2/23/2026 9:41 AM
77	Hiking and biking at prairie dells. Support WI River paddle trail. Hiking biking trail connecting merrill and wausau. Hiking trail at Penny/Somo Lake. Independent group camp sites at the Underdown campground.	2/22/2026 10:25 AM
78	Roller rink	2/20/2026 9:06 PM
79	ROLLER RINK!!	2/20/2026 8:55 PM
80	Better atv trailer signage.	2/20/2026 11:50 AM
81	silent sport development such as bike and walking paths	2/20/2026 10:36 AM
82	Fair grounds use more	2/19/2026 9:48 PM
83	None. There is already a good variety of things to do.	2/19/2026 6:42 PM
84	Mountain bike trails on county land	2/19/2026 5:59 PM
85	River Bend Trail to Wausau	2/19/2026 2:40 PM
86	Trailheads with amentities	2/19/2026 12:48 PM
87	mountain bike trails	2/18/2026 9:42 PM
88	Unknown	2/18/2026 8:10 PM
89	Ohm trails	2/18/2026 5:52 PM
90	More hiking/walking trails in Tomahawk	2/18/2026 4:44 PM
91	Curling club	2/18/2026 3:56 PM
92	Snowmobile trails	2/18/2026 3:39 PM
93	handicap accessible fishing spots	2/18/2026 2:26 PM
94	No suggestions at this time, but I appreciate that this is a question.	2/18/2026 10:23 AM
95	Off highway motorcycle trails	2/18/2026 10:15 AM
96	More bike trails with tire stations, more fishing areas for handicapped people.	2/18/2026 8:24 AM
97	Easier ways to get around town on ATV/UTV’s like opening up the bridge on Hwy k in town	2/18/2026 8:23 AM
98	More in tomahawk	2/18/2026 6:40 AM
99	Education in nature	2/18/2026 5:24 AM
100	Utv trails	2/17/2026 11:52 PM
101	Camping	2/17/2026 10:52 PM
102	Disc golf	2/17/2026 10:06 PM
103	As more and more townships open roads for ATV/UTV routes. I’m surprised Lincoln Co doesn’t do more to advertise and develop opportunities to ride. I enjoy riding township roads more than trails to get from point A to B. Imagine the older crowds that take ATV/UTV’s out for a ride or	2/17/2026 9:40 PM

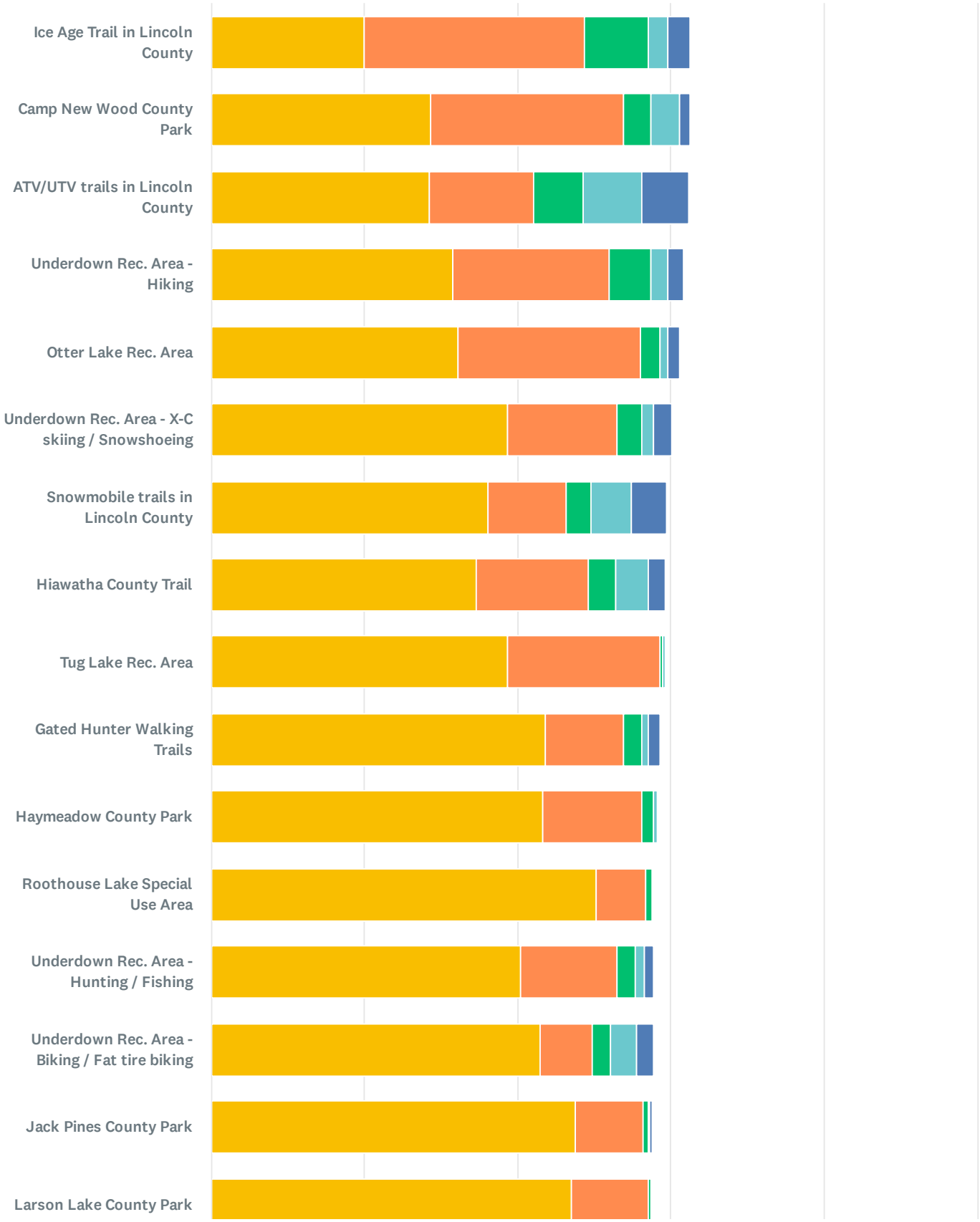
	out to eat. I also like trout fishing, I'm surprised we don't do more to attract fly fisherman or fisherman in general. Tomahawk is already a summertime vacation destination. I'm surprised we don't do more to make Merrill a mini-Minocqua in some ways. We don't take advantage of the "gateway" to the northwoods	
104	Snowshoeing, backpacking sites	2/17/2026 9:39 PM
105	Camping	2/17/2026 8:38 PM
106	Bike trails- not single track	2/17/2026 8:32 PM
107	Better spots for fishing for kids and disabled people. Shooting ranges.	2/17/2026 8:10 PM
108	More access to UTV trails by motorcycles	2/17/2026 7:38 PM
109	More biking trails	2/17/2026 6:55 PM
110	Hiking	2/17/2026 6:49 PM
111	More XC ski trails	2/17/2026 6:30 PM
112	Increased trails, splashpad	2/17/2026 6:23 PM
113	Bike trails like in Boulder Junction, St Germain, Eagle River	2/17/2026 6:20 PM
114	Hiking	2/17/2026 6:18 PM
115	Additional fishing access from shore	2/17/2026 6:00 PM
116	Rental for ice skates and snow shoes. Paved trails	2/17/2026 5:34 PM
117	Nothing comes to mind right now.	2/17/2026 5:21 PM
118	The county owns so many beautiful/unique forest land, be great to develop another camping area or two.	2/17/2026 5:10 PM
119	year round Ice for skating. Lincoln county could be the hub for off season ice and hockey camps. Connection to Hotels is a must for major tournaments.	2/17/2026 5:01 PM
120	Hiking Trails; Disk Golf; Gun Range	2/17/2026 4:31 PM
121	utv trails	2/17/2026 4:20 PM
122	Off road/ jeep trails	2/17/2026 3:32 PM
123	Splash pad	2/17/2026 3:22 PM
124	Paved bike paths	2/17/2026 3:19 PM
125	More UTV trails	2/17/2026 2:53 PM
126	Pickball	2/17/2026 2:46 PM
127	Bike Trails	2/17/2026 2:15 PM
128	None that I am aware of	2/17/2026 1:55 PM
129	None	2/17/2026 1:49 PM
130	Full size lit skating rink with area to sit and put on skates etc	2/17/2026 1:41 PM
131	?	2/17/2026 1:24 PM
132	Unknown	2/17/2026 1:21 PM
133	LUV trails	2/17/2026 12:48 PM
134	Biking non mountain	2/17/2026 12:35 PM
135	Purpose-built mountain bike course to provide a fun, safe, and equitable space for youth and off-road cyclists to develop their skills on a variety of obstacles to prepare them for the technical trail systems in Lincoln County. The course should include a beginner track, an intermediate track for growing skills and an advanced track for challenging experienced riders.	2/17/2026 12:24 PM
136	Shoreline fishing opportunity	2/17/2026 12:21 PM

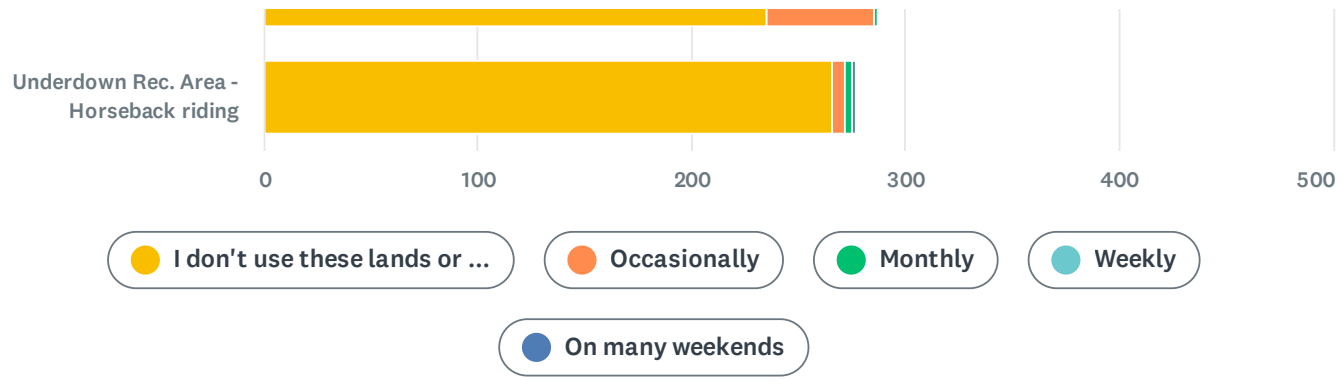
137	More snowshoeing areas	2/17/2026 12:14 PM
138	More atv/ utv trails	2/17/2026 12:12 PM
139	Larger Campgrounds	2/17/2026 12:06 PM
140	UTV trails	2/17/2026 11:27 AM
141	More atv/utv trails	2/17/2026 10:44 AM
142	Bicycle path	2/17/2026 10:41 AM
143	market our ice age trail more.	2/17/2026 10:37 AM
144	ATV/UTV riding and camping oppertunitiesfor ATV/UTV	2/17/2026 10:27 AM
145	Disc Golf	2/17/2026 9:36 AM
146	Continue to maintain what we have and add amenities/improvements to those	2/17/2026 8:21 AM
147	Walking trails	2/17/2026 7:54 AM
148	Disc Golf	2/17/2026 6:48 AM
149	Some sort of attraction that would draw large populations from outside the area to spend money at. We need to stop being a drive-though county and give people a reason to stop and stay here for a while.	2/17/2026 5:57 AM
150	Bigger boat landing on Tug Lake	2/17/2026 5:51 AM
151	Old Growth Forest. The Harrison Hills and Underdown.	2/17/2026 5:35 AM
152	more ATV trails	2/17/2026 12:02 AM
153	A winter park similar to Boulder Junction’s Glide	2/16/2026 9:32 PM
154	Drone Activities - training, competition, clubs	2/16/2026 8:43 PM
155	Guided nature walks, bird hikes.	2/16/2026 8:18 PM
156	Wolf harvesting	2/16/2026 8:01 PM
157	Golf	2/16/2026 7:55 PM
158	ATV/UTV trails are great. Harrison trails are pretty darn rough with the rocks. More camping, maybe even at newwood park near the shelter.	2/16/2026 7:53 PM
159	Small beach areas	2/16/2026 6:23 PM
160	hiking and walking trails	2/16/2026 6:15 PM
161	Further development of the Riverbend Trail, id like to see Otts Park refreshed with the new pickle ball courts	2/16/2026 5:20 PM
162	Splash Pad	2/16/2026 4:40 PM
163	Nothing at this time	2/16/2026 4:28 PM
164	An outdoor swimming pool	2/16/2026 3:11 PM
165	Mountain Bike/X-country skiing pavillion with heating and cooling	2/16/2026 3:07 PM
166	Additional Bicycle Trails that connect cities - Wausau, Merrill, Tomahawk and beyond	2/16/2026 2:54 PM
167	OHM / dirtbike trails	2/16/2026 2:28 PM
168	maintaining the recreational opportunities we already have	2/16/2026 2:08 PM
169	Parks for kids, splash pads, aquatic center in Tomahawk, nice cleaned up beaches for families to go to in the summer, outdoor ice rink area in the winter with heaters and other amenities.	2/16/2026 2:05 PM
170	More bike trails. Finish the trail on 14th street i to the PR park.	2/16/2026 2:00 PM
171	Better hiking trails	2/16/2026 1:45 PM

172	More walking trails	2/16/2026 1:44 PM
173	Bike paths. We moved up here from Madison and miss being able to ride our bikes to most places.	2/16/2026 1:43 PM
174	Dog sledding, horse sleigh rides, children's museum type of development,	2/16/2026 1:39 PM
175	Groomed cross country ski trails	2/16/2026 1:37 PM
176	Campgrounds	2/16/2026 1:31 PM
177	splash pad or something like JoJo's jungle in wausau	2/16/2026 1:30 PM
178	More accessible fishing piers.	2/16/2026 1:23 PM
179	Canoe/kayak rentals	2/16/2026 1:11 PM
180	More disc golf	2/16/2026 12:40 PM
181	Walking trails, more atv friendly areas	2/16/2026 12:34 PM
182	More RV campsites	2/16/2026 12:28 PM
183	Hiking trails for off-leash dog walking. Canoe/kayak trail. Gravel bike trail to Wausau and Tomahawk.	2/16/2026 12:19 PM
184	Additional bike paths	2/16/2026 12:00 PM
185	More hiking trails and silent sport trails in areas that still have trees.	2/16/2026 11:31 AM
186	Cross country skiing	2/16/2026 11:25 AM
187	More tennis/pickleball tournaments	2/16/2026 10:52 AM
188	continue to connect pedestrian trails (silent sports)	2/16/2026 10:34 AM

Q3 349 responses

In 2025, how often did you use Lincoln County managed parks or trails?



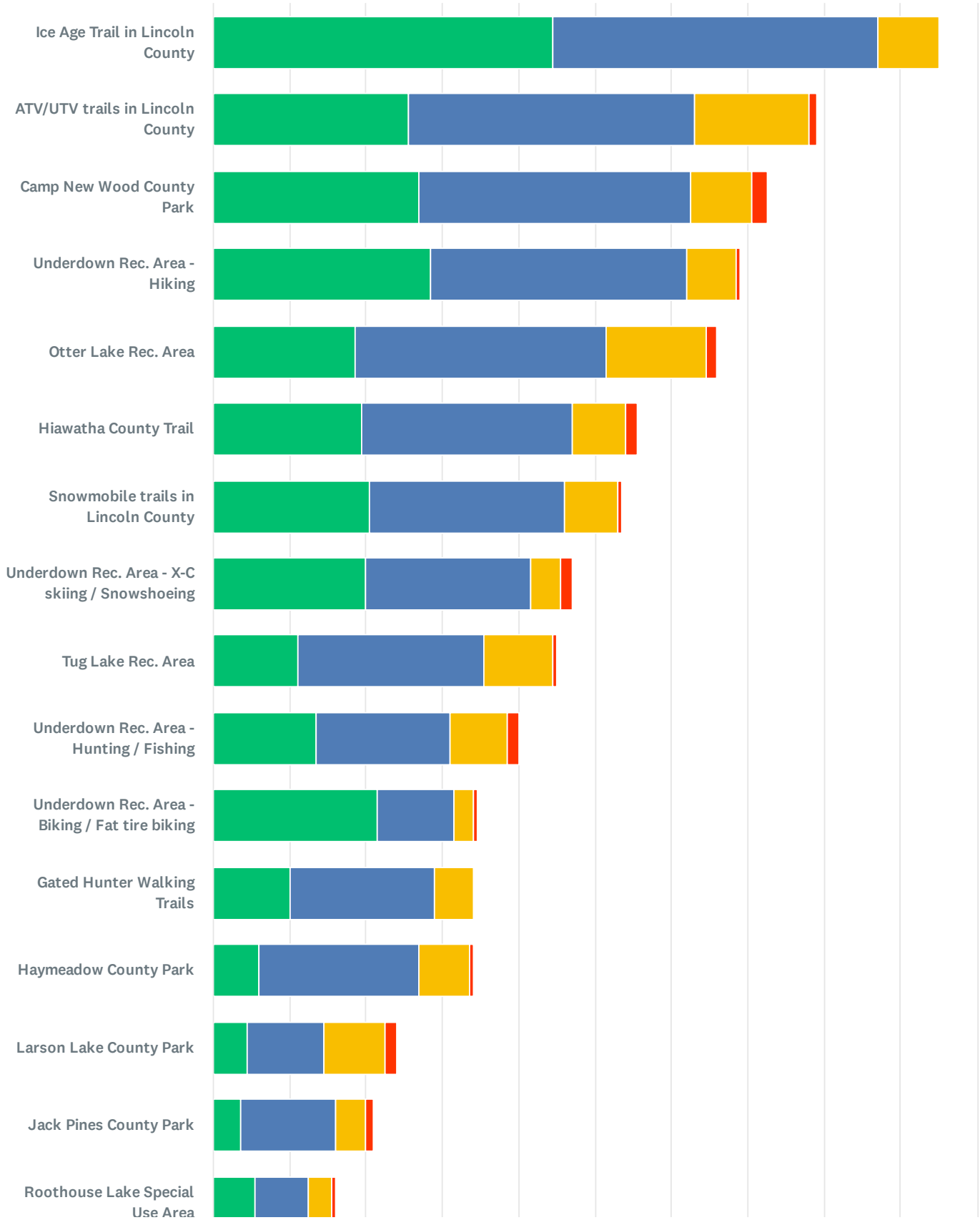


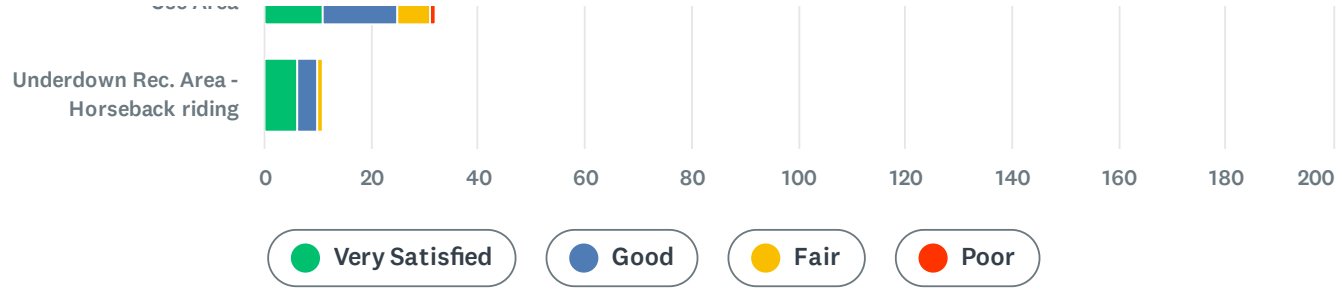
	I don't use these lands or trails.	Occasionally	Monthly	Weekly	On many weekends	Total
Ice Age Trail in Lincoln County	31.95% 100	46.01% 144	13.10% 41	4.15% 13	4.79% 15	313
Camp New Wood County Park	45.69% 143	40.26% 126	5.75% 18	6.07% 19	2.24% 7	313
ATV/UTV trails in Lincoln County	45.51% 142	21.79% 68	10.58% 33	12.18% 38	9.94% 31	312
Underdown Rec. Area - Hiking	51.30% 158	33.12% 102	8.77% 27	3.57% 11	3.25% 10	308
Otter Lake Rec. Area	52.61% 161	38.89% 119	4.25% 13	1.63% 5	2.61% 8	306
Underdown Rec. Area - X-C skiing / Snowshoeing	64.12% 193	23.92% 72	5.32% 16	2.66% 8	3.99% 12	301
Snowmobile trails in Lincoln County	60.94% 181	17.17% 51	5.39% 16	8.75% 26	7.74% 23	297
Hiawatha County Trail	58.45% 173	24.66% 73	6.08% 18	7.09% 21	3.72% 11	296
Tug Lake Rec. Area	65.20% 193	33.78% 100	0.68% 2	0.34% 1	0% 0	296
Gated Hunter Walking Trails	74.40% 218	17.41% 51	4.10% 12	1.37% 4	2.73% 8	293
						5047

	I don't use these lands or trails.	Occasionally	Monthly	Weekly	On many weekends	Total
Haymeadow County Park	73.97% 216	22.26% 65	2.74% 8	0.68% 2	0.34% 1	292
Roothouse Lake Special Use Area	86.55% 251	11.38% 33	1.38% 4	0.34% 1	0.34% 1	290
Underdown Rec. Area - Hunting / Fishing	69.90% 202	21.80% 63	4.15% 12	2.08% 6	2.08% 6	289
Underdown Rec. Area - Biking / Fat tire biking	74.39% 215	11.76% 34	4.15% 12	5.88% 17	3.81% 11	289
Jack Pines County Park	82.64% 238	15.28% 44	1.04% 3	0.35% 1	0.69% 2	288
Larson Lake County Park	81.88% 235	17.42% 50	0.70% 2	0% 0	0% 0	287
Underdown Rec. Area - Horseback riding	96.03% 266	2.17% 6	1.08% 3	0% 0	0.72% 2	277
						5047

Q4 308 responses

Please rate your satisfaction with the Lincoln County managed parks or trails:



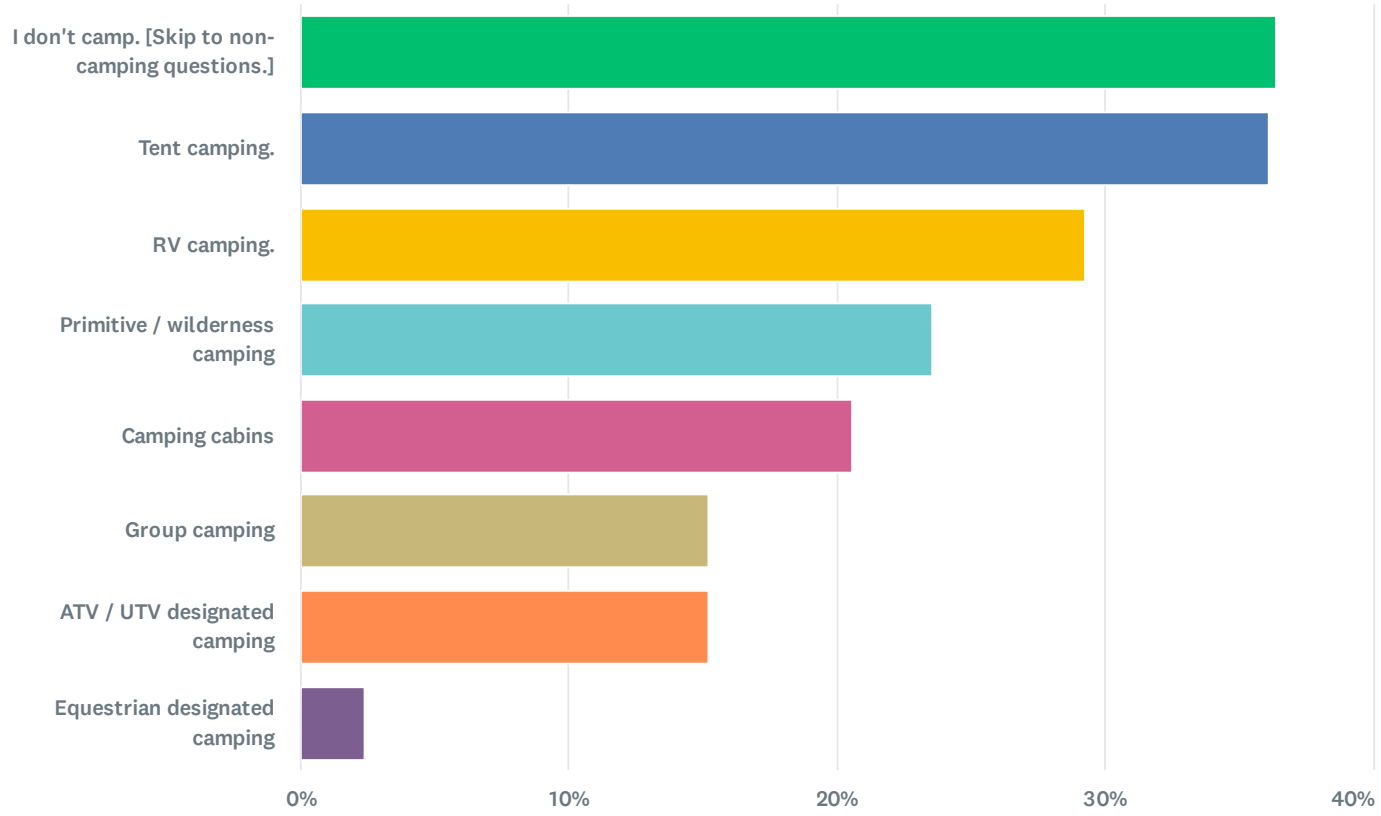


	Very Satisfied	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
Ice Age Trail in Lincoln County	46.84% 89	44.74% 85	8.42% 16	0% 0	190
ATV/UTV trails in Lincoln County	32.28% 51	47.47% 75	18.99% 30	1.27% 2	158
Camp New Wood County Park	37.24% 54	48.97% 71	11.03% 16	2.76% 4	145
Underdown Rec. Area - Hiking	41.30% 57	48.55% 67	9.42% 13	0.72% 1	138
Otter Lake Rec. Area	28.03% 37	50.00% 66	19.70% 26	2.27% 3	132
Hiawatha County Trail	35.14% 39	49.55% 55	12.61% 14	2.70% 3	111
Snowmobile trails in Lincoln County	38.32% 41	47.66% 51	13.08% 14	0.93% 1	107
Underdown Rec. Area - X-C skiing / Snowshoeing	42.55% 40	45.74% 43	8.51% 8	3.19% 3	94
Tug Lake Rec. Area	24.44% 22	54.44% 49	20.00% 18	1.11% 1	90
Underdown Rec. Area - Hunting / Fishing	33.75% 27	43.75% 35	18.75% 15	3.75% 3	80
Underdown Rec. Area - Biking / Fat tire biking	62.32% 43	28.99% 20	7.25% 5	1.45% 1	69
					1583

	Very Satisfied	Good	Fair	Poor	Total
Gated Hunter Walking Trails	29.41% 20	55.88% 38	14.71% 10	0% 0	68
Haymeadow County Park	17.65% 12	61.76% 42	19.12% 13	1.47% 1	68
Larson Lake County Park	18.75% 9	41.67% 20	33.33% 16	6.25% 3	48
Jack Pines County Park	16.67% 7	59.52% 25	19.05% 8	4.76% 2	42
Roothouse Lake Special Use Area	34.38% 11	43.75% 14	18.75% 6	3.13% 1	32
Underdown Rec. Area - Horseback riding	54.55% 6	36.36% 4	9.09% 1	0% 0	11
					1583

Q5 335 responses

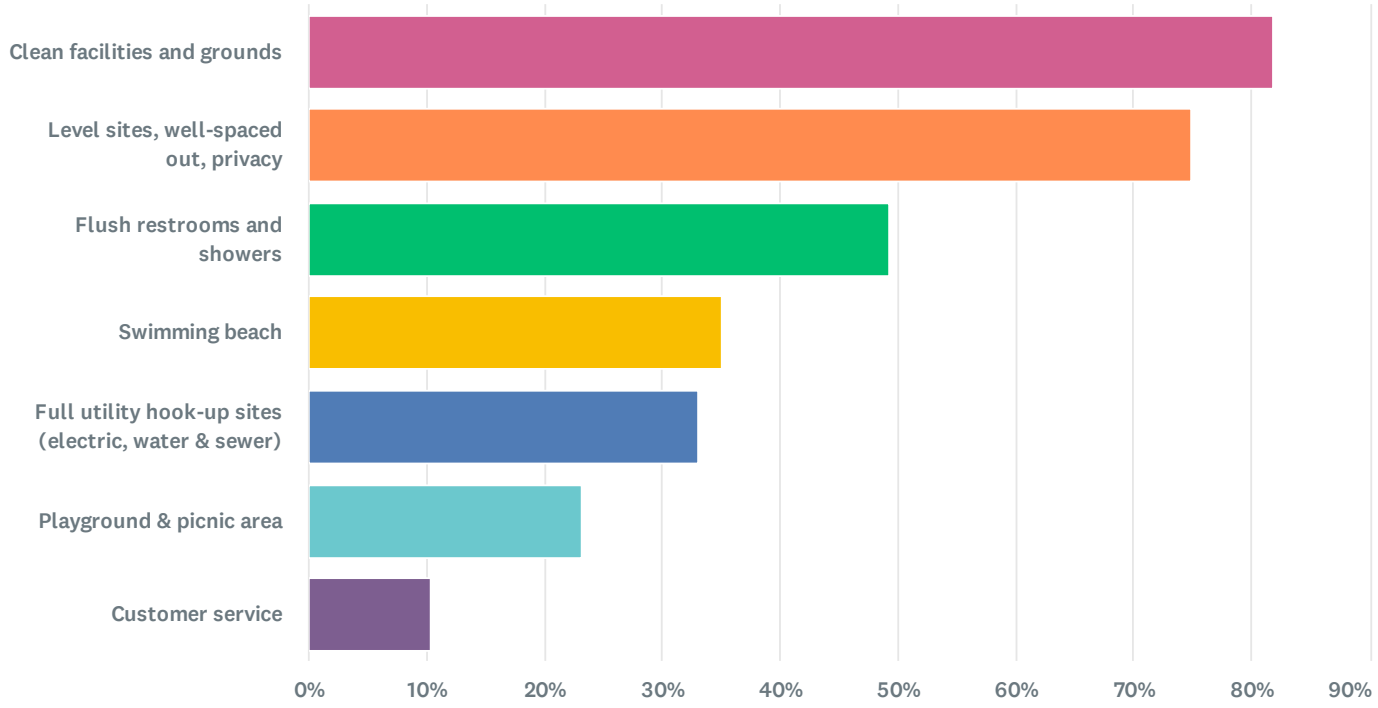
What type of camping opportunities do you use, or want to use, in Lincoln County? (Choose all that apply.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
I don't camp. [Skip to non-camping questions.]	36.42%	122
Tent camping.	36.12%	121
RV camping.	29.25%	98
Primitive / wilderness camping	23.58%	79
Camping cabins	20.60%	69
Group camping	15.22%	51
ATV / UTV designated camping	15.22%	51
Equestrian designated camping	2.39%	8
Total		**599**

Q6 203 responses

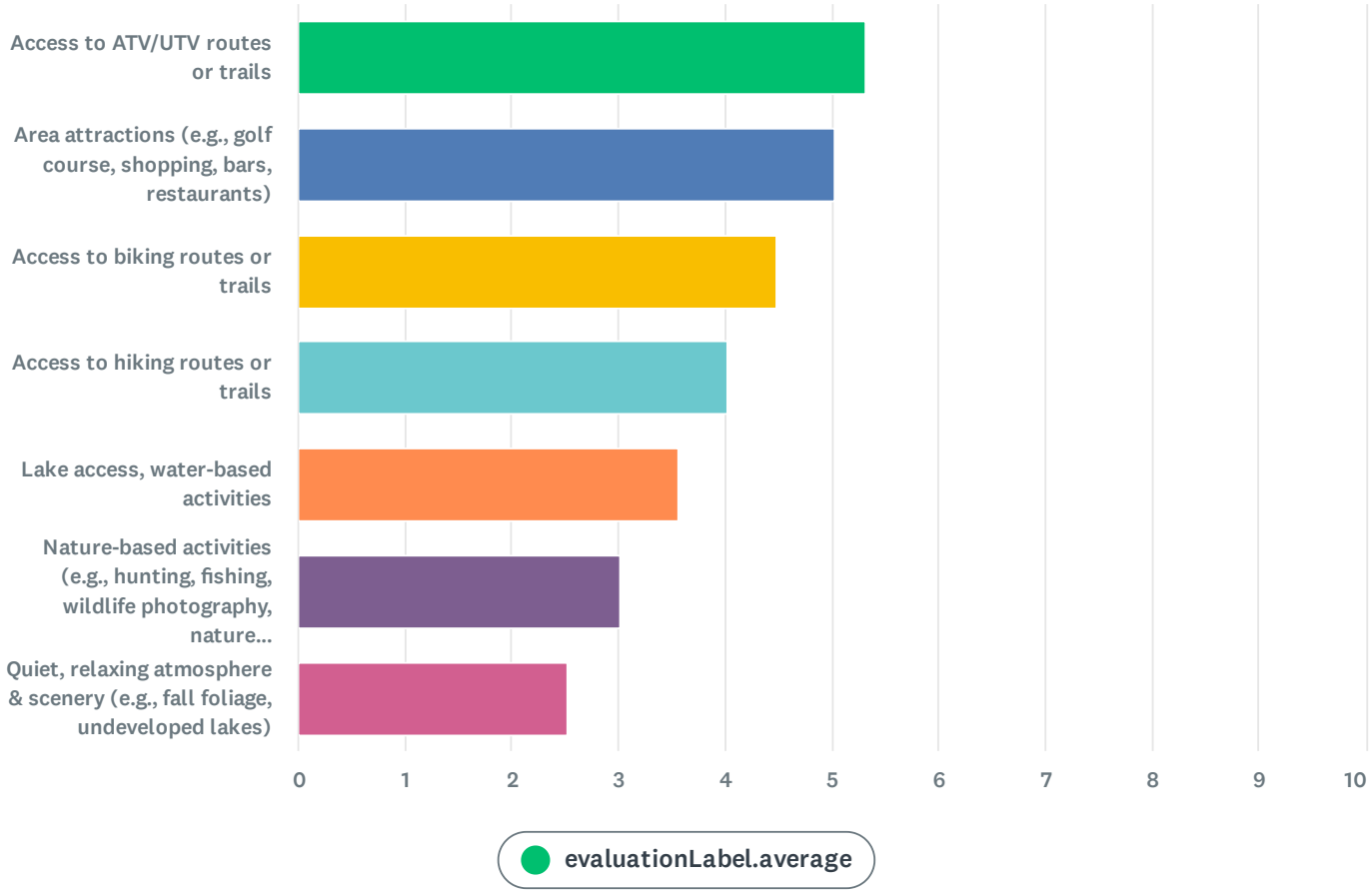
When choosing a campground, which amenities are most important to you?(Choose all that apply.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Clean facilities and grounds	81.77%	166
Level sites, well-spaced out, privacy	74.88%	152
Flush restrooms and showers	49.26%	100
Swimming beach	34.98%	71
Full utility hook-up sites (electric, water & sewer)	33.00%	67
Playground & picnic area	23.15%	47
Customer service	10.34%	21
Total		**624**

Q7 201 responses

Please rank the following reasons to camp in Lincoln County: (Move the following into highest to lowest priority order.)

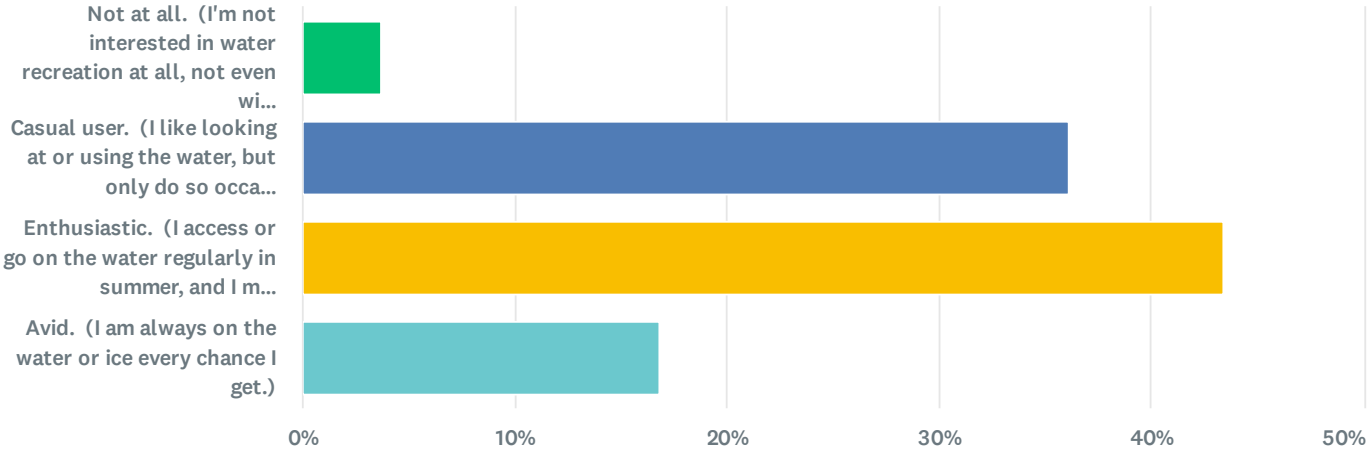


	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total	Weighted ...
Access to ATV/UTV routes or trails	12.31% 24	6.15% 12	2.05% 4	6.67% 13	10.26% 20	14.36% 28	48.21% 94	195	5.32
Area attractions (e.g., golf course, shopping, bars, restaurants)	5.08% 10	6.60% 13	8.63% 17	12.69% 25	14.21% 28	32.99% 65	19.80% 39	197	5.03
								1377	**3.99**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total	Weighted ...
Access to biking routes or trails	14.29% 28	8.67% 17	8.16% 16	10.71% 21	19.39% 38	19.39% 38	19.39% 38	196	4.48
Access to hiking routes or trails	5.08% 10	16.24% 32	18.78% 37	20.81% 41	14.72% 29	19.29% 38	5.08% 10	197	4.02
Lake access, water-based activities	7.65% 15	21.43% 42	19.39% 38	21.94% 43	20.92% 41	5.61% 11	3.06% 6	196	3.56
Nature-based activities (e.g., hunting, fishing, wildlife photography, nature appreciation)	21.72% 43	20.71% 41	22.22% 44	16.67% 33	10.10% 20	5.56% 11	3.03% 6	198	3.02
Quiet, relaxing atmosphere & scenery (e.g., fall foliage, undeveloped lakes)	34.85% 69	21.21% 42	20.20% 40	9.60% 19	10.61% 21	2.53% 5	1.01% 2	198	2.52
								1377	**3.99**

Q8 327 responses

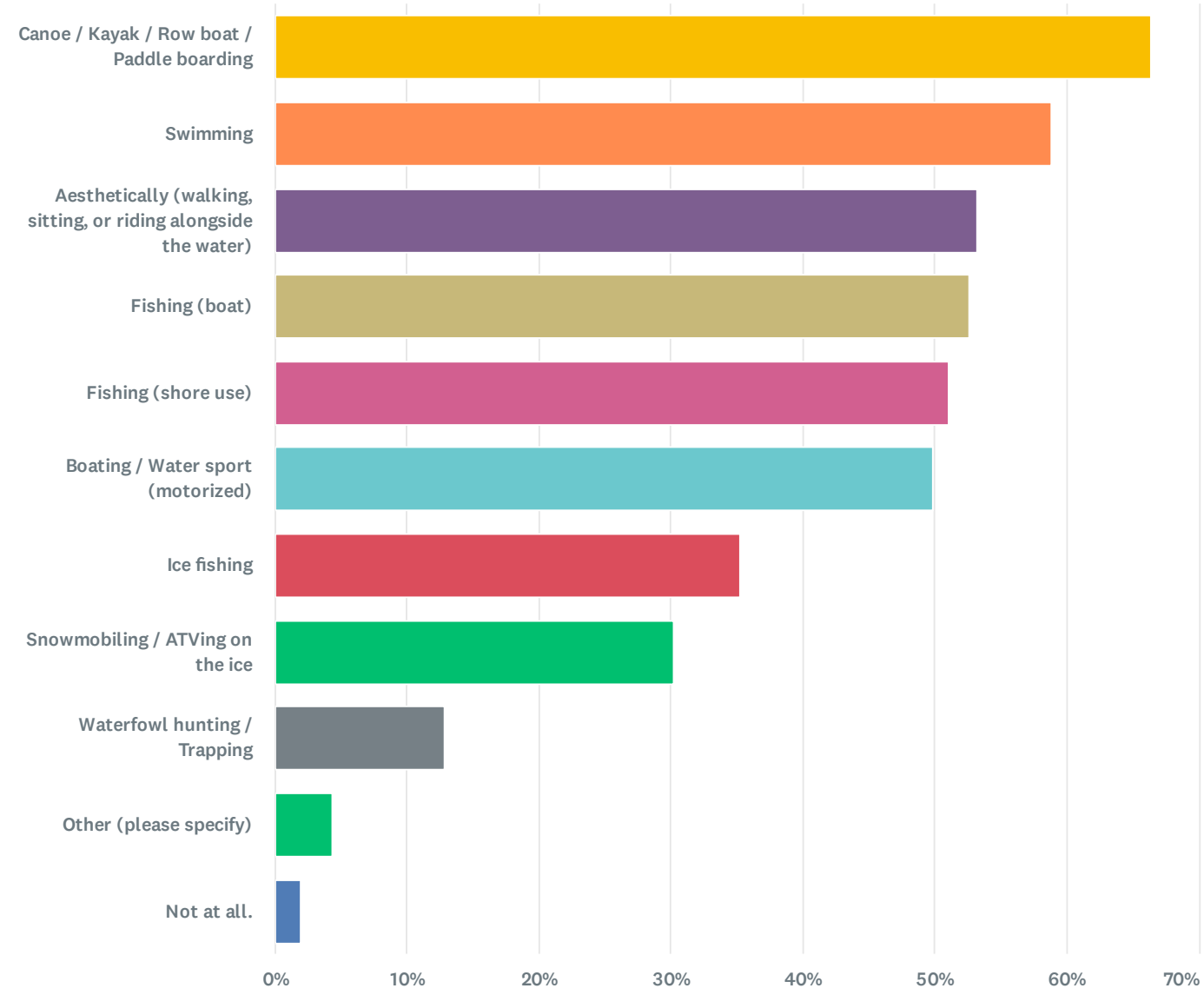
What type of water enthusiast are you?(Choose one.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Not at all. (I'm not interested in water recreation at all, not even with friends.)	3.67%	12
Casual user. (I like looking at or using the water, but only do so occasionally.)	36.09%	118
Enthusiastic. (I access or go on the water regularly in summer, and I might occasionally access the ice in winter.)	43.43%	142
Avid. (I am always on the water or ice every chance I get.)	16.82%	55
Total		**327**

Q9 321 responses

How do you use the water? (Choose all that apply.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Canoe / Kayak / Row boat / Paddle boarding	66.36%	213
Swimming	58.88%	189
Aesthetically (walking, sitting, or riding alongside the water)	53.27%	171
Fishing (boat)	52.65%	169
Total		**1337**

Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Fishing (shore use)	51.09%	164
Boating / Water sport (motorized)	49.84%	160
Ice fishing	35.20%	113
Snowmobiling / ATVing on the ice	30.22%	97
Waterfowl hunting / Trapping	12.77%	41
Other (please specify)	4.36%	14
Not at all.	1.87%	6
Total		**1337**

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	fishing from kayak or non motorized boat-ie places without paved or graveled launches	3/25/2026 6:18 AM
2	Ice skating	3/22/2026 2:01 PM
3	Remember, not every lake needs a road to it.	3/21/2026 9:34 AM
4	Fatbiking on ice	2/24/2026 11:25 AM
5	Ride on in winter	2/23/2026 8:23 PM
6	Fat bike on ice as a link to other trails	2/23/2026 11:35 AM
7	Waders fishing	2/23/2026 10:33 AM
8	Biking in winter. I follow snowmobile tracks.	2/23/2026 10:14 AM
9	Fat biking across lakes in Underdown is amazing!	2/19/2026 12:51 PM
10	walking dogs on the ice (Harrison Flowage)	2/18/2026 1:49 PM
11	Used to access many lakes with row boat or canoe, too many stolen from car/truck access via unfair blocking	2/16/2026 8:33 PM
12	ice skating/hockey on lake	2/16/2026 2:08 PM
13	Scuba Diving	2/16/2026 1:47 PM
14	Ice skating	2/16/2026 11:34 AM

Q10 (Optional) . What public boat landings or water access improvements are needed in Lincoln County? (Please identify location and improvement needed at that site.)

Answered: 88 Skipped: 297

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	None, I like that some of the lakes have more difficult/primitive access. Some boat launches, especially in Harrison Hills have issues with litter though	4/9/2026 8:46 PM
2	It'd be nice if there were more lakes owned by the county within county forest. It'd be cool to have a location to somehow simulate a local Boundary Waters type experience. Wild camp spots, portages etc.	4/9/2026 11:52 AM
3	All public water access sites generally have several erosion issues and issues with removal of native vegetation all the way down to the water where there aren't steep hill slopes. Previous "inprovements" like the bridge over the prairie river gorge, the bridge over Riley Cr at New Wood, and the floating boat dock that doesn't actually float and likely violates state law at New Wood, are all examples of projects undertaken that actually represent activities that likely are of direct and indirect detriment to some of the many awesome wetlands and water resources the county has to offer. Additionally, existing motorized trails and access roads such as those in the Underdown and elsewhere across the county forest have severe erosion issues in places, again often to the detriment of adjacent waters and wetlands. Roads like those across the underdown have been historically poorly maintained as well making passage difficult. Many multi purpose access points accessible to ATV/UTV/OHMV are experiencing extreme misuse by these users and in relative disrepair in many areas such as Cinder Rd and other areas across the underdown. Trout lake access points like Moraine and others also suffer from the same above perils, with erosional issues and denuded vegetation severe.	4/9/2026 7:29 AM
4	Boat ramps could use updates such as larger areas to turn around, park, disposal, updated lake entries, etc	4/8/2026 9:27 PM
5	Lake pesobic	4/8/2026 8:36 PM
6	Lake Pesobic boat landing needs attention	4/7/2026 4:48 PM
7	Lake Nokomis boat landing, needs to be larger or another one on that chain of lakes	4/7/2026 3:10 PM
8	Lake Pesobic	4/7/2026 12:39 PM
9	New wood	4/4/2026 8:22 AM
10	Improvement on mapping all boat landings even if they are unimproved (ie canoe or kayak)	3/31/2026 12:42 PM
11	I think Lincoln county has a good mix of improved and unimproved access to launches.	3/25/2026 6:18 AM
12	None	3/23/2026 9:18 PM
13	signs for removing invasive species	3/23/2026 5:19 PM
14	Remember, not every lake needs a road to it. Over development (and ATV/UTV use) greatly dilutes any outdoor experience.	3/21/2026 9:34 AM
15	Getting on the Wisconsin River below the dam in Council Grounds. The only good location for getting on the Wisconsin River is Ott's Park in Merrill (a very good use of the ARPA funds) Taking out above the Merrill Hydro dam. A better way to get on the Prairie River off of County C... a parking lot there.	3/19/2026 2:33 PM
16	Larson Lake, I think not particularly needed but would be nice to have a little boat ramp/fishing pier not a huge one for either just make it more accessible to launch a small craft. Really swampy around edge of lake by parking lot and would be nice to have little better launching spot/spot for people to go little bit offshore to fish on a pier per say!	3/19/2026 1:22 PM

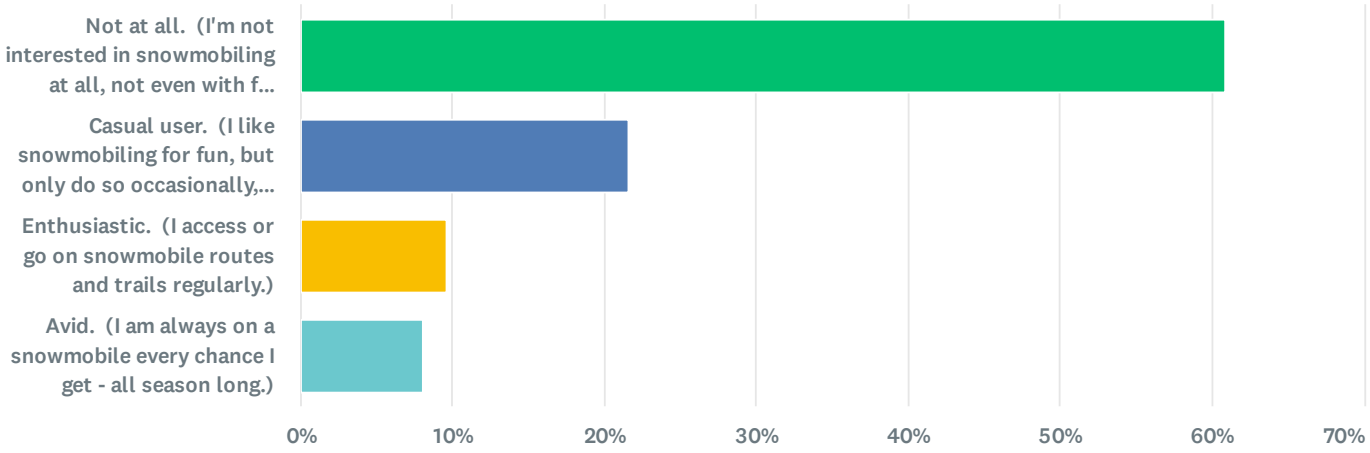
17	they need handicap accessibility	3/18/2026 9:55 AM
18	Not sure.	3/12/2026 6:23 PM
19	Don't know enough about the area to provide an intelligent answer	3/11/2026 11:44 AM
20	knight Lake	3/9/2026 1:24 PM
21	Fly fishing locations.	3/3/2026 8:54 AM
22	Bay Mill boat landing in Tomahawk is terrible.	3/3/2026 7:32 AM
23	The Bay Mill Boat launch on Lake Mohawksin badly needs improvement to the slab area in the water. Its grossly uneven, and some of the larger boats that tried to powerload dug out the gravel and rock to the point that there is a huge drop in depth at the key launch point.	2/27/2026 9:10 AM
24	We need to limit access to wild areas.	2/24/2026 10:40 AM
25	Like access to Lake Clara. Better access to small lakes in Harrison Hills and to Pine Creek where the road is closed so no access is available.	2/23/2026 4:41 PM
26	?	2/23/2026 11:43 AM
27	Lokemoen landing (township owned) needs launch maintenance and additional parking. Gravel stabilization at Camp New Wood. Kayak launches at landings on the WI River. Most waters in the County Forest are too small to develop for significant or motorized use.	2/22/2026 10:44 AM
28	no comment	2/20/2026 10:41 AM
29	None	2/19/2026 6:49 PM
30	Brush clearing on Prairie River downstream of Hackbarth Road.	2/19/2026 4:41 PM
31	Unknown	2/18/2026 8:12 PM
32	Bradley Park remove dangerous objects underwater near dock	2/18/2026 4:48 PM
33	handicap friendly spots. When trying to find spots to take my elderly grandfather, the options were few. Larson was a great spot, but still had to get him from parking lot to lake. And too many bullheads.	2/18/2026 2:30 PM
34	Tug Lake	2/18/2026 10:26 AM
35	Bay Mill Road	2/18/2026 9:19 AM
36	Boat ramp pads by pca and spirit haven me. A dock at one ramp on the flowage would be convenient for older/handicap people to access boat	2/18/2026 6:47 AM
37	Council Grounds. Put that other fishing pier in by Council Grounds by the dock.	2/17/2026 9:13 PM
38	I would like to see Larson lake have at least 2 handicap fishing piers and upgraded bathrooms.	2/17/2026 8:26 PM
39	Parking at the Harrison Flowage	2/17/2026 6:54 PM
40	Penny Lake to access Somo Lake, walk bridge upgrades needed to allow small boats through.	2/17/2026 6:37 PM
41	Baymill Road boatlaunch needs repair where the end if the pad is - its washed out and can damage a trailer when launching	2/17/2026 6:04 PM
42	Kayak Launches at parks and campgrounds with water access	2/17/2026 4:35 PM
43	Anglers Ave boat landing on Lake Alice. the cement slab isn't long enough to put pontoons in. The trailer drops off and its hard to pull the pontoon out of the water.	2/17/2026 3:41 PM
44	None	2/17/2026 2:58 PM
45	None	2/17/2026 1:54 PM
46	Boat landing on Bay Mill Rd, Tomahawk wi is in need of repair.	2/17/2026 1:53 PM
47	Lokamon landing the road	2/17/2026 1:31 PM
48	Lokemoen boat landing could use improvement	2/17/2026 1:26 PM

49	Tug Lake	2/17/2026 1:24 PM
50	Reopen lake clare launch	2/17/2026 12:39 PM
51	Alexander and Lokemoen could both use improvements for launching boat. Lake alice could use a good boat launch also	2/17/2026 12:23 PM
52	Accessible kayak/canoe pier near Council Grounds	2/17/2026 11:59 AM
53	I think they’re fine	2/17/2026 11:30 AM
54	A Dock at the long lake boat landing	2/17/2026 11:17 AM
55	I would like to see public docks installed at the boat launches on the Harrison hills lakes. It is difficult to get young children on a boat while using the public launches	2/17/2026 10:51 AM
56	A nice wooden structure by the boat landing on Long Lake (off of CtyRd B) that includes a map of the two lakes and all pertinent information regarding fish requirements, ordinances, etc. would be beneficial to all.	2/17/2026 10:46 AM
57	lokemoen landing (pier),	2/17/2026 10:40 AM
58	Stop berming access to smaller lakes in Lincoln County	2/17/2026 10:33 AM
59	Lokemon Landing on Alexander. The turnaround area needs some expanding and tree clearing.	2/17/2026 9:45 AM
60	The Sara Park. The big hole on the ramp.	2/17/2026 9:21 AM
61	Rock Island (not sure if is considered public)	2/17/2026 9:01 AM
62	I dont boat often anymore but most boat landings seem ok. There are some that could maybe be widened to allow vehicles/trailers space to turn around	2/17/2026 6:02 AM
63	Tug Lake is horrible.	2/17/2026 5:52 AM
64	Less access is better in my opinion. Too many tourists littering, over-fishing and crowding out local taxpayers.	2/17/2026 5:41 AM
65	Restoration of those that had access primitive landings and were blocked off with boulders and gates, Mist lake being one, both landings blocked. Access road restored but very difficult to get a boat in, and dangerous for many older folks who once used the other two landings	2/16/2026 8:33 PM
66	Better kayak pier at Council Grounds	2/16/2026 8:25 PM
67	Lake Alice	2/16/2026 8:17 PM
68	Lokemon needs wider turn around for pontoon	2/16/2026 7:57 PM
69	Lokemoen landing on Alexander	2/16/2026 7:57 PM
70	Small docks and no motor lakes	2/16/2026 6:27 PM
71	Lokemoen Boatlanding could use a face lift	2/16/2026 5:54 PM
72	Lokemoen Rd- Lake Alexander All landings on the Spirit Flowage	2/16/2026 3:33 PM
73	Bay Mill Road launch is terrible	2/16/2026 3:18 PM
74	Not sure	2/16/2026 3:14 PM
75	None known	2/16/2026 3:13 PM
76	Not sure. I will typically go to Council Grounds for the fishing docks and beach. I typically don't give Lincoln County a thought, though Otter Lake is a nice area. Jack Lake Rec. Area in Langlade County is a nice example of what Lincoln County could use.	2/16/2026 3:04 PM
77	Crystal beach used to be really nice and is now pretty overgrown and dirty.	2/16/2026 2:08 PM
78	Have a dock at all locations with a cement entry.	2/16/2026 2:04 PM
79	Tug lake, was dirty on the shore last summer. & Most all of the play equipment there for kids, is broken as well.	2/16/2026 1:51 PM
80	I think more public piers are needed, especially for those that have mobility issues	2/16/2026 1:25 PM

81	Canoe put in take out in Merrill near Dam.	2/16/2026 12:46 PM
82	Safe, easy takeout above the Merrill Dam	2/16/2026 12:31 PM
83	Lokemoen Boat Landing - ease of use	2/16/2026 12:30 PM
84	More docks at boat landings.	2/16/2026 11:54 AM
85	Add no wake signs to lakes that are too small to make a wake. People are extremely unaware of the laws regarding size and it just creates problems.	2/16/2026 11:34 AM
86	None	2/16/2026 11:28 AM
87	The ones I see, council grounds boat landing & Ott's park boat landing have improved! Since i don't go boating I don't know what other improvements could be made!	2/16/2026 10:59 AM
88	Lokemoen Landing improvements should continue with the amount of people using it	2/16/2026 10:37 AM

Q11 325 responses

What type of snowmobile enthusiast are you? (Choose one.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Not at all. (I'm not interested in snowmobiling at all, not even with friends.)	60.92%	198
Casual user. (I like snowmobiling for fun, but only do so occasionally, OR only on my own land.)	21.54%	70
Enthusiastic. (I access or go on snowmobile routes and trails regularly.)	9.54%	31
Avid. (I am always on a snowmobile every chance I get - all season long.)	8.00%	26
Total		**325**

Q12 (Optional) . What snowmobiling improvements are needed in Lincoln County?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 328

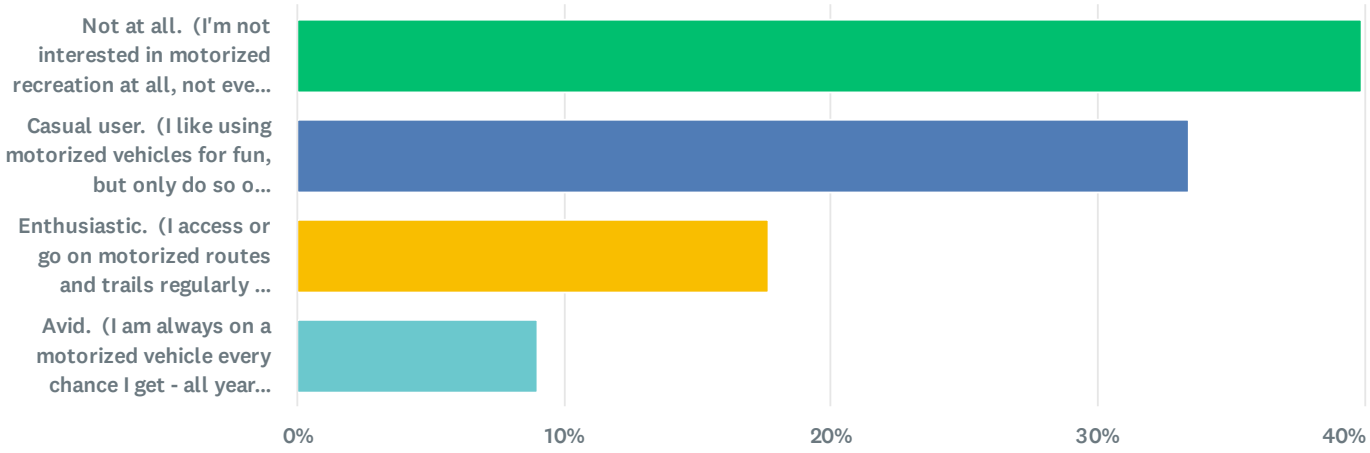
#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	None.	4/9/2026 11:52 AM
2	Better balanced trails that also balance the need to protect the water resources of the county forest— ie flow, erosion	4/9/2026 7:31 AM
3	More trail options	4/8/2026 9:28 PM
4	Better trail through the city of Merrill, plus smoother trails heading north	4/7/2026 3:11 PM
5	Better connections to trails north- from Merrill to Tomahawk	4/7/2026 12:40 PM
6	None	3/23/2026 9:19 PM
7	I think snowmobiling should be made less enjoyable, actually. Disturbs the animals. Disturbs me. They keep driving on the hiking paths.	3/21/2026 9:49 AM
8	NONE!	3/21/2026 9:35 AM
9	enforcement on keeping them off private lands	3/18/2026 9:56 AM
10	people need to be educated on trail etiquette and rules If they own one they need to take a safety course	3/3/2026 8:16 PM
11	A better route to get around merrill on the west side	3/3/2026 7:22 AM
12	Better enforcement of speed and reckless driving. I use snowmobile trails for hunting/trapping and am concerned for my safety by high speed users.	2/24/2026 1:27 PM
13	None	2/24/2026 10:40 AM
14	?	2/23/2026 11:44 AM
15	Move sections of trails away from the taverns.	2/23/2026 11:06 AM
16	I fat bike on the county-owned snowmobile trails.	2/23/2026 10:15 AM
17	A trailer east of merrill to bypass town if needed. Trail north an south range line area	2/19/2026 9:57 PM
18	None	2/19/2026 6:49 PM
19	Local clubs need to be more welcoming and need to have an active website or Facebook page that people can communicate with.	2/18/2026 7:38 PM
20	Lincoln county is good.	2/18/2026 5:57 PM
21	The Hiawatha trail has small gravel that can cause damage to expensive snowmobiles when conditions are not good. It would be nice to resurface the trail with a better material.	2/18/2026 10:51 AM
22	More snow, but that is probably out of your hands.	2/18/2026 10:27 AM
23	The berms in the Harrison area have ruined the snowmobile trails. Rocks are not taken care of like they used to be. Snowmobile clubs do most of the brush work. Atv clubs need to fix these trails for winter use	2/18/2026 5:37 AM
24	I realize you said “county”, but I mostly snowmobile to bars to eat and drink and socialize with family and friends. I ride the trails too, but you have to warm up or have a chance to relax some where too sometimes. Snowmobiling into Merrill, the city itself is a little rough. Merrill lacks signage and I think an actual trail now to get to places like the bowling alley, Cenex for fuel etc. Merrill itself could use an update/better trail map on their website in town. Merrill lets ATV/UTV’s drive on almost all streets in town, but they don’t advertise that. Their maps just	2/17/2026 10:01 PM

	advertise select routes for ATV/UTV use. In winter they only allow snowmobiles on select routes, meaning all streets aren't open to snowmobiles. They need to update to a more clear and understanding map. It's a tourist nightmare for ATV and snowmobile use. No one wants to get a ticket for things that aren't clearly updated and understood.	
25	More snow.	2/17/2026 8:27 PM
26	Less rocks on the trail base that stick through when there is low snow coverage.	2/17/2026 6:56 PM
27	speed limits...	2/17/2026 6:40 PM
28	None, really	2/17/2026 6:04 PM
29	More law enforcement on the trails, too many folks riding like maniacs out there. That's why myself and surely others have given up riding on public trails.	2/17/2026 5:16 PM
30	Easier access to the west side of the WI river. The trail from Irma to the hwy E bridge has a lot of road runs and melts easily in late season.	2/17/2026 5:11 PM
31	Additional Parking/Staging Areas	2/17/2026 4:35 PM
32	More east/west routes in the center of the county.	2/17/2026 3:36 PM
33	Wider trails	2/17/2026 3:21 PM
34	none	2/17/2026 2:58 PM
35	None	2/17/2026 1:55 PM
36	Better water and bridge crossings	2/17/2026 1:25 PM
37	Clubs to work together on trail grooming and maintaining	2/17/2026 12:52 PM
38	More snow😢	2/17/2026 12:10 PM
39	None. They are great teails	2/17/2026 11:17 AM
40	wider trails. many trails are very narrow, and potentially unsafe	2/17/2026 10:41 AM
41	Open all Trails to ATV riding earlier and when tarils freeze even if snowmobiling has not started.	2/17/2026 10:34 AM
42	The clubs seem to have this handled wonderfully	2/17/2026 9:46 AM
43	Not sure if it would be reasonable but maybe a place where people could rent equipment? For some its not feasible to buy this equipment for very limited use.	2/17/2026 6:04 AM
44	None	2/17/2026 5:42 AM
45	We would like the snowmobile trails better marked for winter ATV use. We can't figure out which ones we are able to ride on.	2/17/2026 12:07 AM
46	Less clear cutting along side trails. Too much sunlight degrades trails rapidly.	2/16/2026 9:38 PM
47	Less toxic corrosive brine used. The piles of snow saturated with that near waterways cause weak and dangerous ice, especially near bridges.	2/16/2026 8:35 PM
48	More law-enforcement, to ticket riders with loud pipes, lack of registration, and off trail riding.	2/16/2026 8:30 PM
49	Smaller waterbars in the Harrison hills	2/16/2026 8:18 PM
50	Logging operations not on trail during season	2/16/2026 5:36 PM
51	None	2/16/2026 3:33 PM
52	More snow and more bridges	2/16/2026 3:15 PM
53	None known	2/16/2026 3:14 PM
54	We need a good winter first. Focus on trails that could serve as a walking / hiking / biking trail in Summer and shoulder seasons and snowmobile if snow. It would be nice to have more paved trails to use, even during mild winters to hike. Some consideration should be given to trail development along the power line project - https://www.atcllc.com/project/north-central-wisconsin-reliability/	2/16/2026 3:09 PM

55	More trails leaving to furniture downtown	2/16/2026 1:52 PM
56	Designated routes through the city, not on the sidewalks.	2/16/2026 12:47 PM
57	I know trails a patroled & some have been shut down be ause of some people disobeying the rules, so i don't know what else can be done since I don't snowmobile!	2/16/2026 11:01 AM

Q13 323 responses

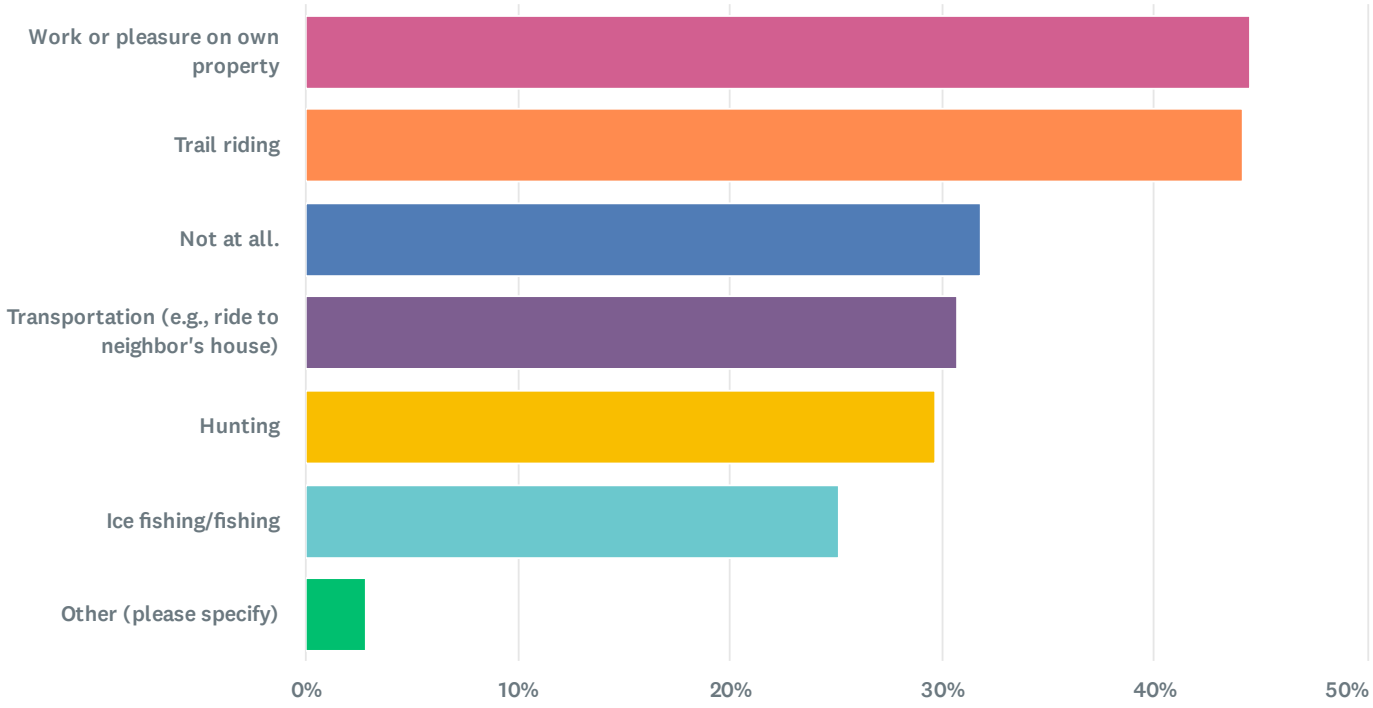
What type of motorized vehicle (ATV / UTV) enthusiast are you? (Choose one.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Not at all. (I'm not interested in motorized recreation at all, not even for recreation.)	39.94%	129
Casual user. (I like using motorized vehicles for fun, but only do so occasionally, OR only on my own land.)	33.44%	108
Enthusiastic. (I access or go on motorized routes and trails regularly in summer, and I might occasionally access the ice in winter.)	17.65%	57
Avid. (I am always on a motorized vehicle every chance I get - all year long.)	8.98%	29
Total		**323**

Q14 283 responses

(Optional) . How are you using your motorized vehicle (ATV/UTV)? (Choose all that apply.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Work or pleasure on own property	44.52%	126
Trail riding	44.17%	125
Not at all.	31.80%	90
Transportation (e.g., ride to neighbor's house)	30.74%	87
Hunting	29.68%	84
Ice fishing/fishing	25.09%	71
Other (please specify)	2.83%	8
Total		**591**

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	on trails occasionally-to reach ice age trail	3/28/2026 6:59 AM

2	plowing	3/12/2026 8:56 AM
3	Back roads	3/3/2026 8:55 AM
4	Trail riding from a campsite, such as the Enterprise Trail and Campground In Oneida County.	2/23/2026 8:09 PM
5	In the fall brushing/clearing the snowmobile trails	2/17/2026 1:54 PM
6	Agricultural	2/17/2026 6:17 AM
7	To go to other trails, towns and eating establishments. We ride from Suamico all the way up to our cottage in Harrison Hills and back.	2/17/2026 12:14 AM
8	Trail maintenance	2/16/2026 8:18 PM

Q15 (Optional) . What motorized vehicle improvements are needed in Lincoln County?

Answered: 84 Skipped: 301

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Bro I despise ATV culture. It completely ruins the Northwoods. There is no peace and quiet anywhere anymore. All you hear is engines day and night. Completely ruins grouse hunting too.	4/9/2026 11:54 AM
2	Poor trail user practices leading to severe soil and water issues. More attention needs to be paid to making sure that the trails are better sited to avoid sensitive water and wetland resources	4/9/2026 7:33 AM
3	Keep non-motorized areas non-motorized. Enforce gated trail access where motorized vehicles are not permitted and rebuild barriers where illegal motorized traffic has gone around the established gate(s).	4/8/2026 8:41 PM
4	Allow ATVs to go above 35mph on county roads OR permit them to use shoulders. Having vehicles going 20-25mph slower than cars seems very risky.	4/7/2026 7:17 PM
5	We need trails not rides on roads	4/7/2026 3:12 PM
6	Non-motorized travel should be restricted to established ATV/ UTV Routes. The noise of UTVS and the speed they travel/ risk of hitting me or my hunting dog worry me and are issues on the county forest.	3/25/2026 6:20 AM
7	None	3/23/2026 9:19 PM
8	NONE!	3/21/2026 9:35 AM
9	Enforcement of staying on designated trails	3/8/2026 11:17 AM
10	Keep them away from hiking trails!	3/7/2026 9:08 PM
11	Quit cutting all the trees! Hate driving though open areas of tree debris. Miss the beauty of riding through the forest!	3/7/2026 1:59 PM
12	Same as snowmobile; they need to take a UTV/ATV safety course. Too many crazy fast drivers that spoil it for others	3/3/2026 8:17 PM
13	Would love to see more actual trails.	3/3/2026 7:33 AM
14	Use more of the county land for Atv/UTV trails. Allow UTV on with bike and walking trails like upper Michigan	3/2/2026 11:28 AM
15	Better regulations on the size, noise and speed of ATV/UTVs. I understand their appeal and appreciate the trails but the unsafe and overuse of the trails is too much. I live on an ATV/UTV trail and its not enjoyable to be home on a weekend. Noise and safety (speed) are my primary concerns, especially in my own yard.	2/24/2026 1:28 PM
16	fewer on hard roads	2/24/2026 1:26 PM
17	None	2/24/2026 10:40 AM
18	Camping alongside ATV or off-road motorcycle trails.	2/23/2026 8:09 PM
19	Too many trails already.	2/23/2026 4:42 PM
20	improve already established trails but please restrict expansion of motorized trails in Lincoln county.	2/23/2026 4:02 PM
21	Improved or more frequent grooming of the Parish/Highlands trail system.	2/23/2026 3:23 PM
22	Ban them from the county roads and streets. They do not belong there.	2/23/2026 11:07 AM

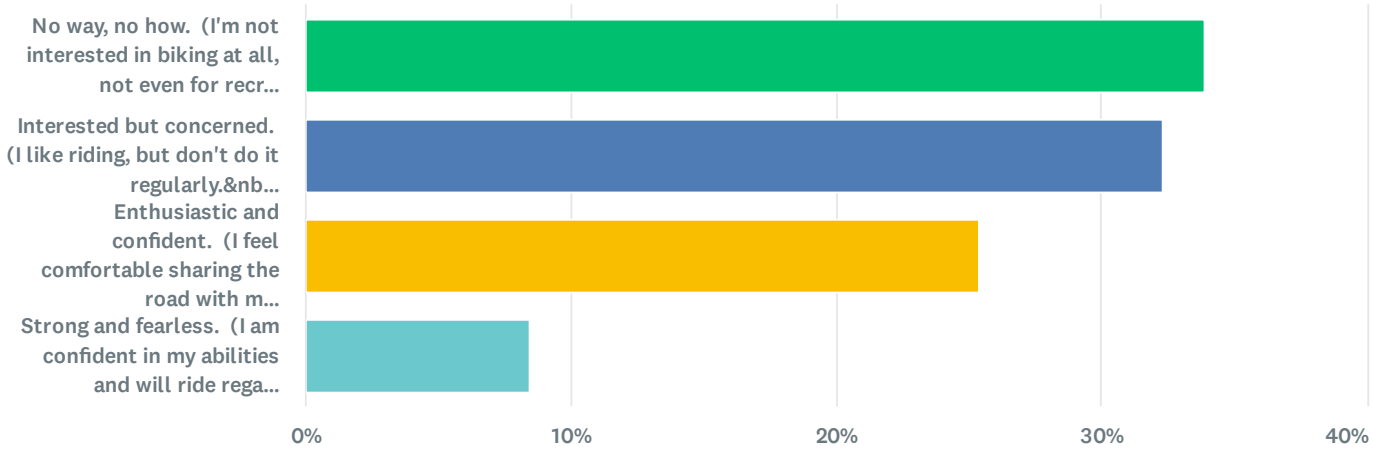
23	I bike on the ATV trails.	2/23/2026 10:15 AM
24	Relocate trail segments from highly erodeable locations to more sustainable sites.	2/22/2026 10:51 AM
25	Better trail signage	2/20/2026 11:54 AM
26	Improve safety	2/20/2026 10:48 AM
27	None.	2/19/2026 6:52 PM
28	I generally see ATV/UTV as negative as they rut trails and often a few users leave garbage (these are the only areas I have noticed garbage at the Underdown).	2/19/2026 12:52 PM
29	Would be nice to have more off road trails.	2/18/2026 7:39 PM
30	More trails	2/18/2026 5:58 PM
31	Access to trails in public land...newwood and bill cross wildlife areas	2/18/2026 12:50 PM
32	Safe well groomed trails	2/18/2026 8:30 AM
33	Open up the bridge on Hwy k	2/18/2026 8:29 AM
34	We need an access west of town, to town. Ideally from zenith tower to connect to cc area trails but at least to Milo's country store to be available to access bait from spirit flowage and open up pine Grove, loop and sunset point residents to access town. All logging roads should be left open or accessible to ATV/utv use. Keeping these trails accessible will keep them from growing over. Loggers have to maintain these roads regardless and when they are not grown over with trees and brush they are easier to maintain!	2/18/2026 6:51 AM
35	They are loud	2/18/2026 5:39 AM
36	More trails on west side of merrill	2/17/2026 11:57 PM
37	ATV/UTVs on roads should be required to have blinkers.	2/17/2026 10:57 PM
38	With snowmobile seasons getting shorter these days, I ride my ATV a lot more. With township roads opening up as ATV routes, I enjoy driving around looking at things and taking a ride on nice smooth routes/roads as opposed to off road trails. I'm surprised Lincoln Co doesn't take more average of routes as it relates to tourism and fun. People enjoy taking rides, going out to eat, looking around at stuff, taking a ride to go fishing etc. As far as I know we/Lincoln Co doesn't have a township ATV/UTV map with route information. This summer I plan to ride from south of Merrill up to Tomahawk if I figure out/ put together a route map to follow. A map or special township route with signage like the ice age trail community signs or something similar would be fun to ride. Or if something was available to go from say county park to county park or maybe something to help bar/restaurant hop. Right now ATV/UTV rides are kind of a figure it out yourself adventure in much of the county.	2/17/2026 10:13 PM
39	Speed limit on the ATV trails in Harrison.	2/17/2026 8:30 PM
40	I ride at Harrison Hills, but there are trails where licensed motorcycles are not allowed. Funds for atv passes should allow uniform access	2/17/2026 7:44 PM
41	More trails and less blacktop	2/17/2026 6:45 PM
42	Im not that familiar	2/17/2026 6:04 PM
43	I used to ride an ATV on the trails until they were open to side by sides. Now it's too risky sharing the trails with those much larger machines and the people who race around in them bar to bar. They are too large, why not just allow cars/trucks on the trail? To me, side by sides ruined the hobby.	2/17/2026 5:24 PM
44	more non groomed trails and more trails in general. also camping cabins on the trails.	2/17/2026 4:25 PM
45	More challenging trails	2/17/2026 3:38 PM
46	Wider Gates on trails	2/17/2026 3:31 PM
47	More trails available for atv use	2/17/2026 3:22 PM
48	more trails	2/17/2026 2:59 PM

49	Better enforcement of speeding in residential areas!	2/17/2026 1:56 PM
50	?	2/17/2026 1:32 PM
51	More trails	2/17/2026 12:52 PM
52	Wider and smoother trails. Corners and other areas are dangerous because they are not wide enough for 2 vehicles to pass safely.	2/17/2026 12:21 PM
53	More trail grooming, not widening just maintaining	2/17/2026 11:32 AM
54	Add more trails	2/17/2026 11:31 AM
55	Speed limit on atv trails.	2/17/2026 11:18 AM
56	More that will connect to the existing Harrison Hills system	2/17/2026 10:49 AM
57	Open Winter trails when ground is frozen even if snowmobiles trails have not opened.	2/17/2026 10:36 AM
58	Signage	2/17/2026 10:28 AM
59	Lincoln county trails need grooming terribly. More than just fall	2/17/2026 9:29 AM
60	Wider trails for UTV. Less gravel highways to slow down machines	2/17/2026 9:24 AM
61	More routes in City of Merrill! Just wanna take my kiddos for ice cream!	2/17/2026 9:02 AM
62	Again if rentals is not a thing maybe it should be?	2/17/2026 6:11 AM
63	Less ATV trails would be nice. I'm not interested in the "tourist dollars". Would rather have piece and quiet.	2/17/2026 5:44 AM
64	Keep vehicles (cars and trucks) off the ATV/UTV trails. The trails need to be wider but do not need to be like roads. We have been riding these trails since the late 80s. The more primitive trails were a lot more fun. We don't need all these trails to be logging roads.That promotes these people to go way too fast on these trails. We like to ride 3 and 4 wheelers and we are scared of how large these machines are getting but the trails are not wide enough to avoid them. We also have a large, fast UTV so we do enjoy that too. We would just like to feel a bit more safe. Also during bear season, we are seeing vehicles chasing their dogs on these ATV/UTV trails and going WAY too fast. Several times were near misses. The trails should be bikes and ATV/UTV only.	2/17/2026 12:14 AM
65	ATV - UTV trails are very good	2/16/2026 9:39 PM
66	Need two wheel dirt bike trails. The underdowns were used extensively and used by AMA for events. After that user group put up signs for others they were banned from use. No opportunities in this area, should certainly be some options for duel sport road trail bikes and straight dirt riding.	2/16/2026 8:38 PM
67	More law-enforcement with loud exhaust pipes on trails and roads.	2/16/2026 8:34 PM
68	Better gates/barriers into non-motorized areas on MFL public or FCL public lands.	2/16/2026 8:20 PM
69	Wish we had highway 107 open between Merrill and out past river road. Or even River Road to South end rd to get access without having to trailer it.	2/16/2026 7:59 PM
70	Allow tracked atvs on snowmobile trails	2/16/2026 6:30 PM
71	better trail grading or more often	2/16/2026 5:38 PM
72	Limit the size of UTV on the trails, they are way too big and dangerous	2/16/2026 3:34 PM
73	Not sure	2/16/2026 3:16 PM
74	Unknown	2/16/2026 3:14 PM
75	I don't know. I prefer exercise, not exhaust fumes.	2/16/2026 3:10 PM
76	I realize it's city of Merrill not necessarily a county issue, but they need to open more roads in the city. Can't even get to the Marc center, one of the biggest venues in the city on a UTV	2/16/2026 2:32 PM
77	Garbage trucks.	2/16/2026 1:54 PM

78	Wider trails for side by sides	2/16/2026 1:48 PM
79	Less of them littering, speeding, operating under the influence, and driving in areas that are not designated and during dates that are not designated, resulting in damage to the land	2/16/2026 1:14 PM
80	Designated routes through city	2/16/2026 12:47 PM
81	More grading. Bigger stop signs. To many people running them.	2/16/2026 12:25 PM
82	Access for off-road motorcycles	2/16/2026 12:04 PM
83	Signs or some type of communication to stop tearing up town roads. This costs the tax payers money to fix and could eventually result in the loss of atv/utv access on town roads.	2/16/2026 11:36 AM
84	Create trail heads with more information and clarify where these vehicles can/cannot go and should/shouldn't go. We want to capture these enthusiasts but need to help them understand where to go and how to get there	2/16/2026 10:39 AM

Q16 319 responses

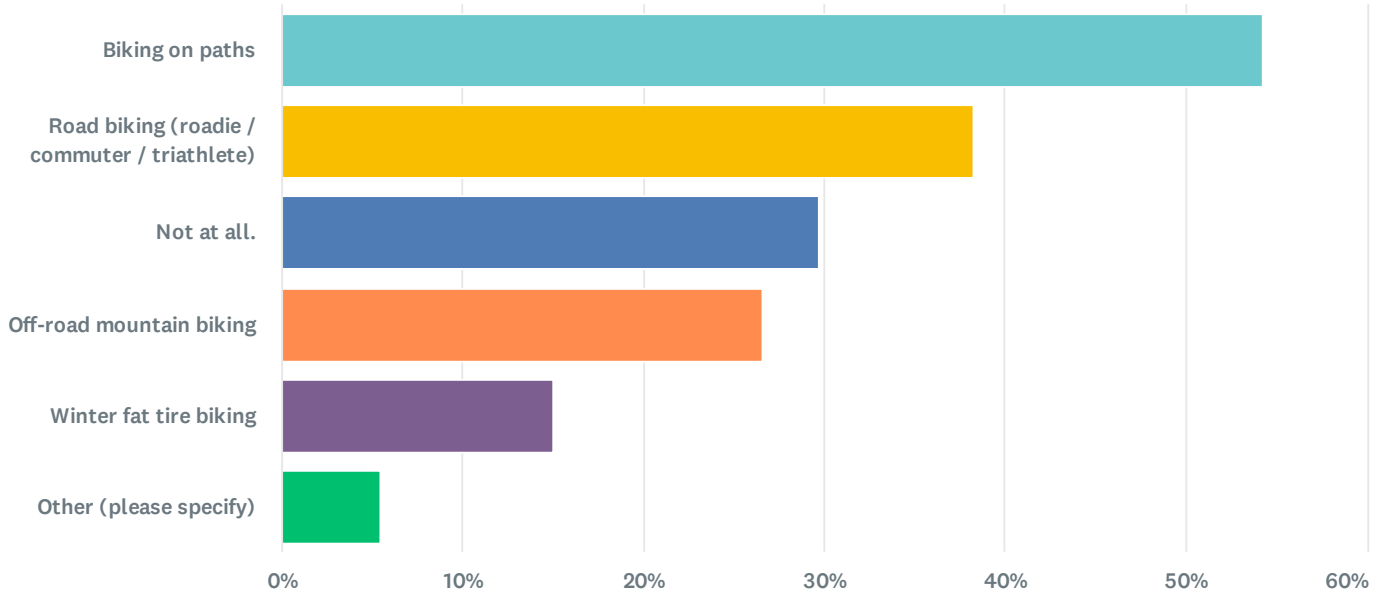
What type of bicyclist are you? (Choose one.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
No way, no how. (I'm not interested in biking at all, not even for recreation.)	33.86%	108
Interested but concerned. (I like riding, but don't do it regularly. I'm generally concerned that my route is not safe to ride, so I don't ride often. I definitely do not ride when the weather is bad.)	32.29%	103
Enthusiastic and confident. (I feel comfortable sharing the road with motor vehicles, but I prefer to ride on separate facilities like bike lanes. I may or may not ride in inclement weather.)	25.39%	81
Strong and fearless. (I am confident in my abilities and will ride regardless of roadway conditions, amount of traffic, or inclement weather.)	8.46%	27
Total		**319**

Q17 293 responses

(Optional) . What type of bicycling do you enjoy? (Choose all that apply.)



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Biking on paths	54.27%	159
Road biking (roadie / commuter / triathlete)	38.23%	112
Not at all.	29.69%	87
Off-road mountain biking	26.62%	78
Winter fat tire biking	15.02%	44
Other (please specify)	5.46%	16
Total		**496**

#	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	DATE
1	Gravel roads	4/10/2026 2:44 PM
2	In addition to mountain biking,	3/25/2026 6:47 AM
3	On my dead end road so I don't need to ride so close to traffic on roadways	3/19/2026 2:41 PM
4	Bikepacking, Gravel is much preferred over road.	3/12/2026 6:26 PM
5	Gravel	3/11/2026 12:42 PM
6	While bow hunting	3/3/2026 7:23 AM

7	Gravel/back roads	2/27/2026 6:03 PM
8	Gravel, forest roads	2/27/2026 2:55 PM
9	Gravel. Cars are scary!!!!!	2/23/2026 6:59 PM
10	FYI- previous selections of ATV/UTV trails were in reference to riding bike on them, not 4-wheeling.	2/23/2026 10:22 AM
11	Gravel riding, bike packing	2/23/2026 9:47 AM
12	Gravel	2/17/2026 10:08 PM
13	I’m too old	2/17/2026 9:27 PM
14	With the kids	2/17/2026 6:18 AM
15	E-biking	2/16/2026 12:05 PM
16	roads near home	2/16/2026 10:31 AM

Q18 (Optional) . What bicycling improvements are needed in Lincoln County?

Answered: 94 Skipped: 291

#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	Develop Mtn bike trails . Allowed winter fat biking on the Hiawatha trail.. I don't like using the highway..	4/12/2026 10:17 AM
2	more connections. expanding river bike path to connect more of the city and beyond	4/10/2026 2:44 PM
3	Public trail maps must be available in dnr website	4/9/2026 4:57 AM
4	Get em off the roads they don't own them!	4/8/2026 4:51 PM
5	Do not take over snowmobile trails	4/7/2026 3:33 PM
6	None	4/7/2026 3:12 PM
7	Paved bike trails would bring so much to the area	4/6/2026 3:24 PM
8	Open the Hiawatha for year around bicycling; the same as Bearskin.	4/4/2026 8:27 AM
9	Winter biking on the Hiawatha bike trail.	4/4/2026 8:09 AM
10	Restrict the use of motorized E-bikes to ATV/UTV routes as these have larger ground impacts and faster speed than pedal bikes.	3/25/2026 6:47 AM
11	None	3/23/2026 9:20 PM
12	extension of River Bend	3/23/2026 5:21 PM
13	I cringe for their safety when I see bicyclists on Hwy. 107. Separate biking lanes, with a median strip between road and bike lane/trail.	3/21/2026 9:38 AM
14	Hwy 107 needs a bike path. I left both Assemblyman Callahan & Senator Felzkowski know I was VERY Disappointed when the DOT reneged on their promise to include a Bike Lane/gravel path North on Hwy 107 when it was planned to be redone in 2025, then moved to 2026 now it's scheduled for 2027. Our tax $'s should be used in Northcentral Wisconsin not always utilized in population Centers like Madison & Milwaukee areas!	3/19/2026 2:41 PM
15	Wide shoulder on at least one side of Hwy. 107. Indoor shelter at Prairie Dells with fireplace.	3/12/2026 6:26 PM
16	Pavilion and camp sites at south trailhead at UndeDown rec area Solar street light at both trail heads in parking area	3/11/2026 12:42 PM
17	I very much enjoy the extensive single track trails at Underdown. Pretty happy with how they are now.	3/11/2026 11:49 AM
18	More bike trails	3/10/2026 12:08 PM
19	More off road paved paths that connect locations (Towns/parks/lakes/etc)	3/8/2026 11:19 AM
20	Keep bikes off hiking trails!	3/7/2026 9:10 PM
21	I go to Oneida County for the nature along their paths	3/7/2026 2:00 PM
22	more trails and better road shoulders, CTY D to Harrison	3/5/2026 10:43 AM
23	More trails	3/3/2026 8:56 AM
24	Biking in Merrill is fine. Heading out of town having bike paths and protected lanes would be great for longer rides and people that live in the country.	3/2/2026 3:47 PM
25	A shelter at the Prarie Dells trailhead would greatly improve the biking and trail running experience. Several races per year and group rides almost every two bring me there from	3/2/2026 6:54 AM

	Oneida counry and I love going out to eat somewhere in the gleason area afterward. A shelter would help draw even more riders and runners to the area by creating a more comfortable space to gather and warm up on rainy/colder days.	
26	Better shoulders/bike lanes on roads. More trails.	2/27/2026 6:03 PM
27	Safer road access linking communities to Underdown(bike lane?)	2/27/2026 2:55 PM
28	More and better marked bicycling lanes on County Rd CC in Tomahawk.	2/27/2026 9:11 AM
29	chris and candy schotz are great	2/25/2026 7:45 AM
30	Signage and promotion so that tourists don't just drive by to get to trails up north that aren't as good as ours. Safe connecting paths between towns and trailheads. Bike park infrastructure.	2/25/2026 7:23 AM
31	I ride very rarely and ride low use town/county roads. I do not see improvements needed for what I do and use.	2/24/2026 1:29 PM
32	Shelter at Prairie Dells trailhead	2/24/2026 11:26 AM
33	Safer roads.	2/24/2026 10:41 AM
34	Gathering place in the Underdown - Prairie Dells Trailhead. Would be great for public events like Snowbound in the Underdown. Might need a larger Parking area s these events grow.	2/24/2026 12:33 AM
35	Bike lanes and more off road trails	2/23/2026 9:55 PM
36	More lanes/space on side of highways & roads	2/23/2026 8:56 PM
37	Shelter/facility for Underdown/Prairie Dells	2/23/2026 8:37 PM
38	Grow them, build more of them - single track mountain bike - as much as you can!	2/23/2026 8:25 PM
39	More trails	2/23/2026 8:12 PM
40	Circuitous black top routes similar to the heart of Vilas and the green circle in Stevens Point.	2/23/2026 8:11 PM
41	More trails. Improve existing trails by mowing/clearing/spraying/adding addtl trail surfacing	2/23/2026 7:30 PM
42	Any amount of wonderful mountain bike trails like the Underdown /Prairie Dells would be welcomed!! Consider a shelter for gatherings at Prairie Dells parking lot off Heineman Road. The usage out there has increased quite a bit! Question 16…I Do NOT like sharing the road with motorized vehicles at all!!! I do not feel safe or comfortable as too many drivers don’t pay attention and go too fast. I l prefer to be in the woods on a mountain bike or on a very low traveled gravel road. All of my answers above are related to being on single track trails only like Underdown and Prairie Dells. Please don’t misinterpret my responses as relating to road riding unless clearly stated. I also prefer kayaking vs other boating options.	2/23/2026 6:59 PM
43	Pavilion at underdown south trailhead off Heineman Rd	2/23/2026 4:58 PM
44	Paved trail from Merrill to Wausau	2/23/2026 4:18 PM
45	Wider bicycle lanes throughout the county.	2/23/2026 3:24 PM
46	more bike lanes or wider shoulders on the roads	2/23/2026 2:37 PM
47	Building/gathering area at Underdown Trails	2/23/2026 11:45 AM
48	Better trail funding maintena, separate bike lanesnce	2/23/2026 11:36 AM
49	Shoulders on highways	2/23/2026 11:27 AM
50	Larger shoulders or a bike path along Hwy 107 between Merril and Tomahwk. Turn old railbeds in the area to bike trails like the Hiawatha and Bearskin.	2/23/2026 11:09 AM
51	Additional trailhead besides Underdown/Prarie Dells	2/23/2026 11:06 AM
52	Maybe some grading on some of the washed out beat up gravel roads.	2/23/2026 10:22 AM
53	The trails we have are fantastic. Underdown could use better signage.	2/23/2026 10:16 AM
54	Bike lanes on highway 17 and 107 to connect Merrill and Tomahawk to each other and the Underdown trail system. Construct the Jenny Trail connecting the Riverbend Trail in Merrill to	2/22/2026 10:57 AM

	the Mountain Bay Trail in Wausau.	
55	designated bicycle lanes	2/20/2026 1:49 PM
56	Bike trails inthe Harrison area	2/20/2026 10:50 AM
57	None	2/19/2026 6:53 PM
58	More bicycling paths and mountain bike trails would attract more visitors	2/19/2026 6:05 PM
59	Extend River Bend Trail to Wausau	2/19/2026 2:48 PM
60	Hwy 107 is very narrow with speeders. Chris & Candy Schotz do an incredible job at the Underdown! This gem needs to be promoted more including signs off Hwy 51. An enclosed shelter would help users, especially with families, would attract more folks.	2/19/2026 12:55 PM
61	Connecting existing trails in the county together as one big network	2/18/2026 9:48 PM
62	None	2/18/2026 5:59 PM
63	Bike trails similar to those in the Boulder Jct area would be a great draw for tourists	2/18/2026 4:50 PM
64	more paved trails need trails like Manitowish, bolder junction, Sayner area	2/18/2026 9:21 AM
65	Dedicated nonmotorized bike routes	2/18/2026 6:34 AM
66	Hwy 107 needs a paved shoulder for cyclist safety. Winter groomed trails in the Underdown (for fat biking) which are groomed by volunteers and not the County, should not be open to boot traffic as it wrecks the trails for biking, which is a paid use.	2/17/2026 10:08 PM
67	Would love to see more bike trails that connect through the county. Check out Vilas county.	2/17/2026 8:43 PM
68	More paved trails	2/17/2026 6:25 PM
69	Hiwatha bridge in tomahawk	2/17/2026 5:37 PM
70	Paved bike paths	2/17/2026 3:23 PM
71	purpose-built mountain bike course	2/17/2026 12:27 PM
72	Bathroom	2/17/2026 12:11 PM
73	Mapping	2/17/2026 11:18 AM
74	A bicycle path!	2/17/2026 10:48 AM
75	none all is fine	2/17/2026 10:36 AM
76	The trail from SARA park to Windmill needs to be redone. Lots of potholes. Also the connecting trail off of Wheeler Rd. It is all overgrown.	2/17/2026 9:20 AM
77	Need more bike paths/trails	2/17/2026 5:54 AM
78	We have a good bike trail system.	2/17/2026 5:49 AM
79	Own trails, taking up roadway space is dangerous and an outright theft of funded roadway of motorized users. Riding on the road is ok, but when a vehicle is near, get off the road.	2/16/2026 8:42 PM
80	More paved trails so that my family and I are not biking on the side of the road	2/16/2026 5:56 PM
81	None	2/16/2026 4:08 PM
82	Biking isnt safe on the roadways	2/16/2026 3:35 PM
83	More road shoulders and definitely Hwy 107 N to Tomahawk. Parking off Hwy 17 and develop Prairie Dells. THis will promote use of our new bridge.	2/16/2026 3:21 PM
84	This is where I believe the most improvement is necessary. Vilas County has this figured out and it is great for tourism. If this is where the Northwoods start and your adventure begins, then we ought to think about building bike / mulituse trails to connect them. I would commute to work in good weather if I didn't have to ride on a gravel shoulder with cars flying by at 55+. I absolutely wouldn't let my daughter bike on these roads.	2/16/2026 3:17 PM
85	Unknown	2/16/2026 3:15 PM

86	Faust road off of O is not paved and could be improved in order to allow for children to bike up and down the road and enjoy going for walks.	2/16/2026 2:10 PM
87	More trails. Entry into PR park off 14th street.	2/16/2026 2:05 PM
88	More bike paths and trails	2/16/2026 1:56 PM
89	Bike paths	2/16/2026 1:45 PM
90	Bike lane on highway 107	2/16/2026 1:15 PM
91	Better connection of trails, connect city trails in Merrill to city forest and under down.	2/16/2026 12:48 PM
92	Gravel bike paths without cars that I can ride through nature.	2/16/2026 12:25 PM
93	I don't bike but know plenty of people that would be in favor of a bike bath instead of riding on the roads for better safety.	2/16/2026 11:37 AM
94	continue to connect existing trails to one another as well as continue to develop more opportunities. Connect to other communities as well (Segment 18) to create tourism destinations and feature our community	2/16/2026 10:40 AM

Q19 (Optional) . Do you have any other concerns or comments?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 335

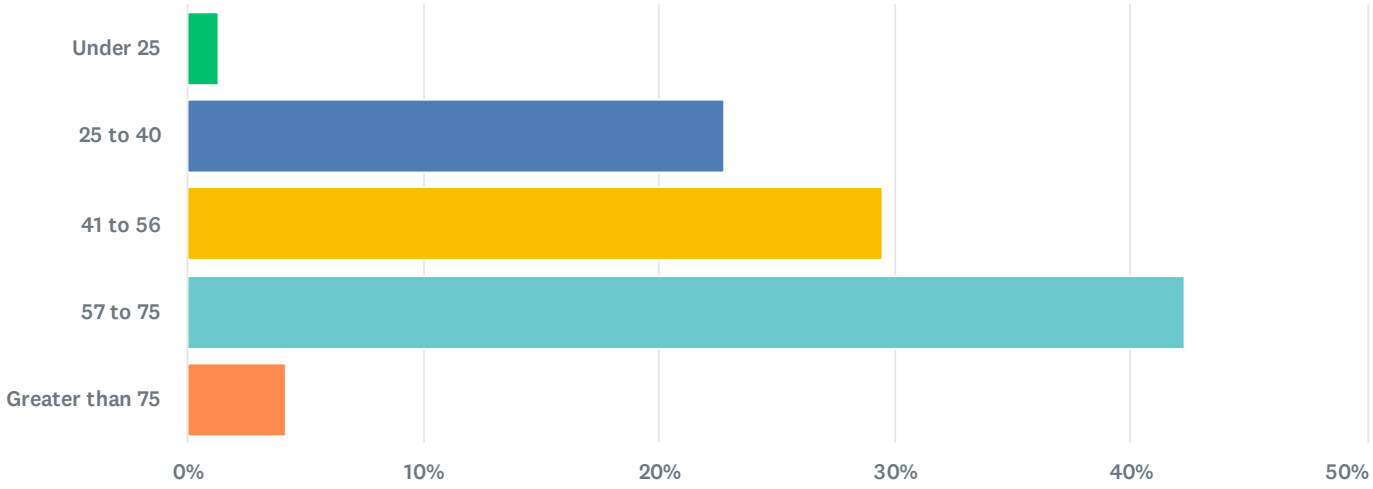
#	RESPONSES	DATE
1	I go to Lincoln county for ruffed grouse hunting and trout fishing. I love it. But I hate listening to ATVs rip around all day. It’s truly an epidemic to the Northwoods unfortunately. I’d suggest you guys adjust your budget to focus on acquiring more property for county forests.	4/9/2026 11:56 AM
2	Overall better balance of recreation with protection of excellent water and wetland resources that make this area excellent is needed. Right now, the recreational aspects and wants are putting infrastructure and stress on the resources due to misuse and lack of attention	4/9/2026 7:37 AM
3	Thanks for doing this.	4/7/2026 7:19 PM
4	Need to improve balance between harvest and recreational uses or we will negatively impact tourism and enjoyment by locals	3/29/2026 10:15 AM
5	The abundance of "rednecks" and wide-open-throttle ATV/UTV use.	3/21/2026 4:23 PM
6	Tourism is so important to this County. The .5 Sales Tax is of great value to residents and seasonal residents &/or visitors. Let's use it to make our County a great place to live, work & play; actually, keep that slogan upper most in our elected officials minds when they prepare budgets!	3/19/2026 2:46 PM
7	So Haymeadow Park, maybe I just haven't explored it throughly and I visited it very briefly when I first moved here (the park itself, not talking about prarie dells lookouts and new bridge, all of dells related stuff) and I know the park used to have a nice purpose when it was essentially a flowage, still bathroom facilites for dells stuff which I think is a little weird that dells doesn't have own facility instead but I'm failing to see purpose of the park now. Again maybe has some hiking oppurtunities like prarie park in city of merrill where the flowage used to be. If not for any of these reasons above though is there a purpose for the park still?	3/19/2026 1:34 PM
8	there are 0 handicap accessible areas in your county run areas. do better	3/18/2026 9:57 AM
9	The survey is appreciated, along with the objective for more tourism. However the environment of the lakes and lands must be the utmost priority! If not this is all very short sided in trying to grow revenue while destroying why people come to the county	3/7/2026 2:03 PM
10	Would like more info posted on fly fishing locations. More ATV trails as Harrison Hills are about it around Lincoln County.	3/3/2026 8:57 AM
11	Atv clubs are here to aid county in developing more trails. County makes it difficult for us.	3/3/2026 7:36 AM
12	Otter Lake is beautiful and a great place to camp but sometimes other campers are too rowdy. Half the time I've camped there in the summer there's at least one site drunk or high trying to start fights in the middle of the night. The more you promote and make accessible non motorized activities like hiking, biking, and skiing the more you'll see them being done and the healthier our community will be.	3/2/2026 3:51 PM
13	Please continue to monitor and enforce ATV/UTV trails and use. The popularity, size, noise and speed continue to increase to the detriment of many other user and natural resources in the area. I do appreciate the activity and the users that enjoy it but every activity needs its limits.	2/24/2026 1:31 PM
14	Really appreciate the improvements that I’ve already been made at the Underdown	2/24/2026 12:34 AM
15	Build a shelter at Prairie Dells Recreation area for group events. Would be nice if similar to Washburn facility in Oneida County	2/23/2026 8:26 PM
16	Thank you for asking my opinion.	2/23/2026 8:12 PM
17	Cars need to be aware of sharing the roadways w/walkers, runners, bicyclists.	2/23/2026 7:31 PM
18	The Underdown and Prairie Dells area are gems. Keep in mind the amount of work that goes	2/23/2026 7:06 PM

	into maintaining these trails. There is a small crew of us who do the work. They remain amazing trails because those of us maintaining them care deeply about them and enjoy seeing people out there enjoying them (respectfully).	
19	Limit motorized uses to locations away from wetlands and other unsuitable soils. Keep roads and areas of county forest designated non motorized as such. Gate and develop hunter walking trails in the Four Mile Road Grouse management area.	2/22/2026 11:07 AM
20	Did I mention ROLLER RINK?! : normal park playground needs some tlc And something new	2/20/2026 8:59 PM
21	Don’t make anymore motorized trails. It is nice to have some areas that remain quiet.	2/19/2026 6:58 PM
22	There's a ton of outdoor opportunities but lacks infrastructure. Also, a connection of the Ice Age Trail from the Merrill School Forest on one of the old logging trails north *through Oypowski (why isn't this Lincoln County Property anymore???), Streich,or Arseneau property) to connect to Tug Lake Road should be considered.	2/19/2026 1:02 PM
23	The county does a great job with the rec trails	2/18/2026 7:40 PM
24	Could use an atv trail in the Underdown	2/18/2026 6:01 PM
25	Would like full access with ATV/UTV in Merrill and surrounding areas. Promotional events other than Poke runs for businesses/events would be nice to use UTV for.	2/18/2026 2:49 PM
26	Not at this time, but thank you for asking.	2/18/2026 10:29 AM
27	Thanks!! I made so many great memories out in the county forest land over the years.	2/17/2026 5:26 PM
28	make more affordable lodging. we come up constantly and have to stay in hotels far away in merril or tomahawk.	2/17/2026 4:26 PM
29	Keep up the good work.	2/17/2026 12:53 PM
30	We need a shelter/structure at the Prairie Dells Trail Head to host races/events.	2/17/2026 12:28 PM
31	The poor condition of Stanges Park and Riverside Park. It would be nice to have a beach at Otts Park again with Council Grounds in rapid decline. I assume these are city, not county issues.	2/17/2026 12:02 PM
32	Give more control to UTV clubs to manage trails	2/17/2026 11:33 AM
33	stop berming or rocking trails for closure to motorized travel	2/17/2026 10:38 AM
34	Fix the roads.	2/17/2026 9:20 AM
35	While I think no one wants this area to become a booming metropolis, I think this county needs to make attractions that get people to stop and stay for a while instead of driving through "up north". Other than little trails there is not much here to get the average person to stop.	2/17/2026 6:14 AM
36	I wish we had more enforcement at campgrounds, trails, etc. like a full time park ranger. I wish we would not encourage tourists to come and spoil our beautiful lands.	2/17/2026 5:55 AM
37	We DO NOT support another campground. Otter lake already has so many issues and police calls. There also is litter all over the place. We pick up bottles, cans and all kinds of trash on the trails, logging roads and ditches. It is really getting bad. Last year someone took garage sale type crap and put it all over in the woods of Harrison Hills. Paintings, statues, crappy pottery, and dolls nailed to trees.	2/17/2026 12:18 AM
38	Fair use for all users. Organized volunteer efforts go a long way keeping the areas useable and clean. Elitist shunning of other user groups is not a positive direction.	2/16/2026 8:45 PM
39	We’re fortunate to have a lot of public land in our county. But it’s shrinking due to clear cutting county land timber. Why doesn’t the county practice select cutting? It improves hunting and not an eyesore that’s detrimental to tourism for those that use the forested areas.	2/16/2026 8:12 PM
40	Bring in industry and new jobs to Lincoln county dont keep wasting money on electric camp sites	2/16/2026 3:38 PM
41	For question 22, I live just into Marathon County, but have a Merrill address, and work, shop and play in Lincoln County.	2/16/2026 3:23 PM

42	I would like the underdowns to have better amenities to include a south parking lot (Shared effort with City of Merrill and on their forest land or better yet, off hwy 17 near prairie dells.	2/16/2026 3:21 PM
43	No. I typically will go out my back door for all outdoor activities at this time. Prior did many more activities & often out of Ln Co for vacations.	2/16/2026 3:17 PM
44	I would like to see the remote water site camping locations designated and reservable.	2/16/2026 2:35 PM
45	I think the considerations should be for current residents raising their families here, not vacationers and tourists.	2/16/2026 2:11 PM
46	The moonshine loop horse trail at the underdowns was super overgrown last summer and should be cleared so Noone gets hurt.	2/16/2026 1:53 PM
47	The county should install a disc golf course somewhere, connect the ice age trail to the river bend trail in Merrill. I appreciate the bridge connecting the city forest and prairie dells park.	2/16/2026 12:51 PM
48	More large areas for off- leash dog walking	2/16/2026 12:26 PM
49	None	2/16/2026 11:06 AM
50	Keep up the good work and continue to showcase all we have to offer. Please continue to value our resources by investing in them!!	2/16/2026 10:41 AM

Q20 312 responses

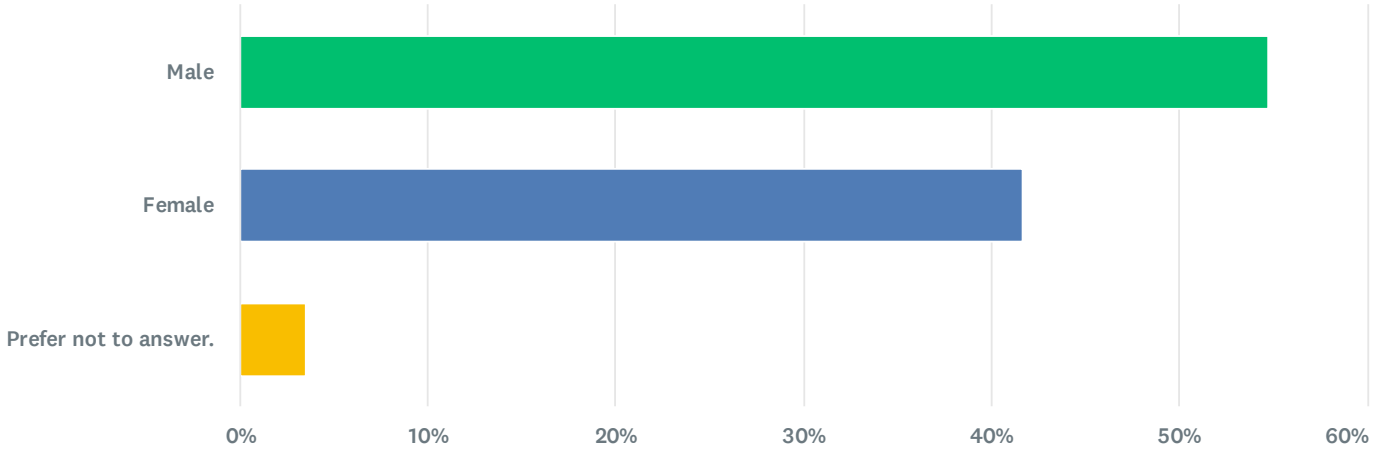
What is your age?



Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Under 25	1.28%	4
25 to 40	22.76%	71
41 to 56	29.49%	92
57 to 75	42.31%	132
Greater than 75	4.17%	13
Total		**312**

Q21 312 responses

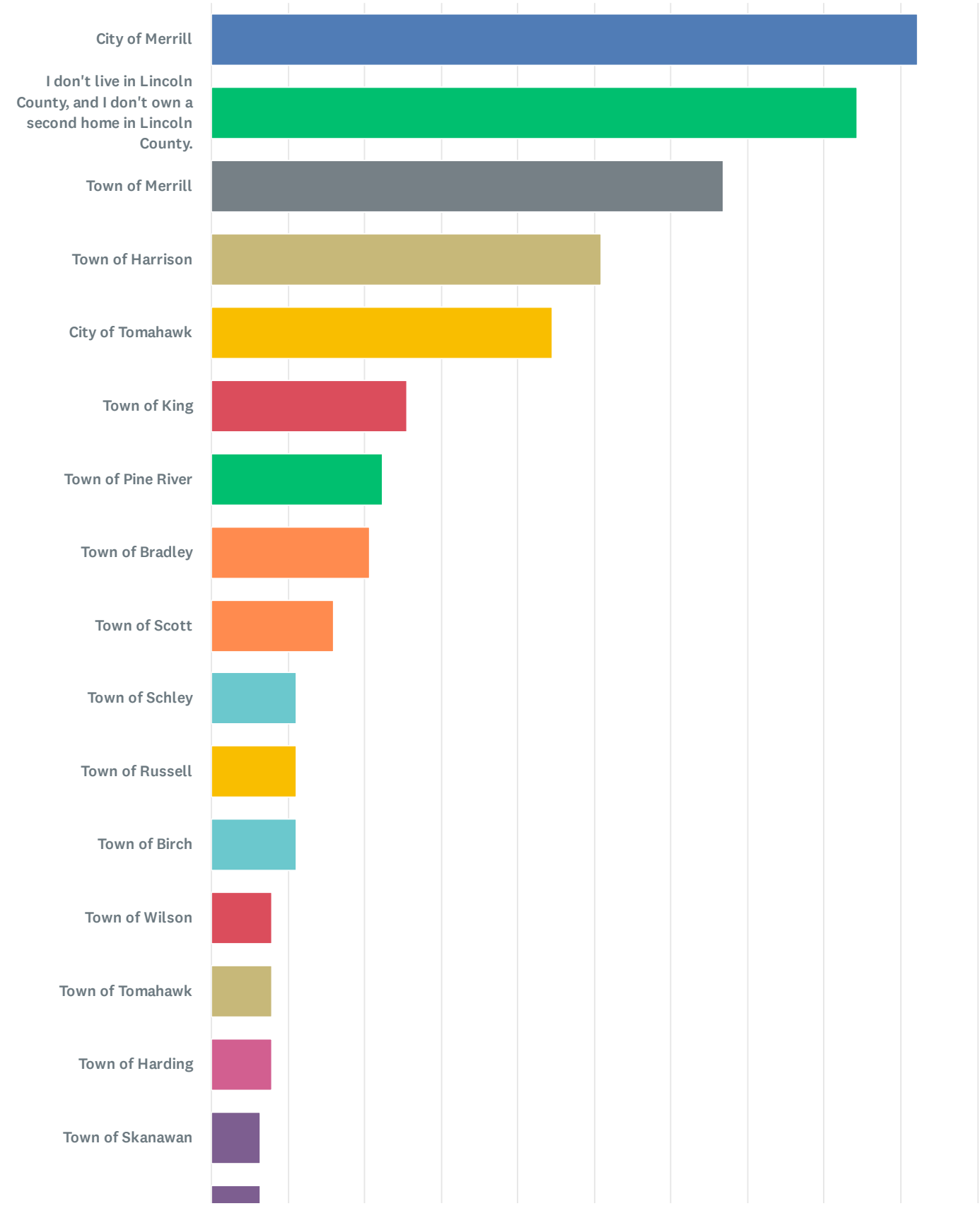
What is your gender?

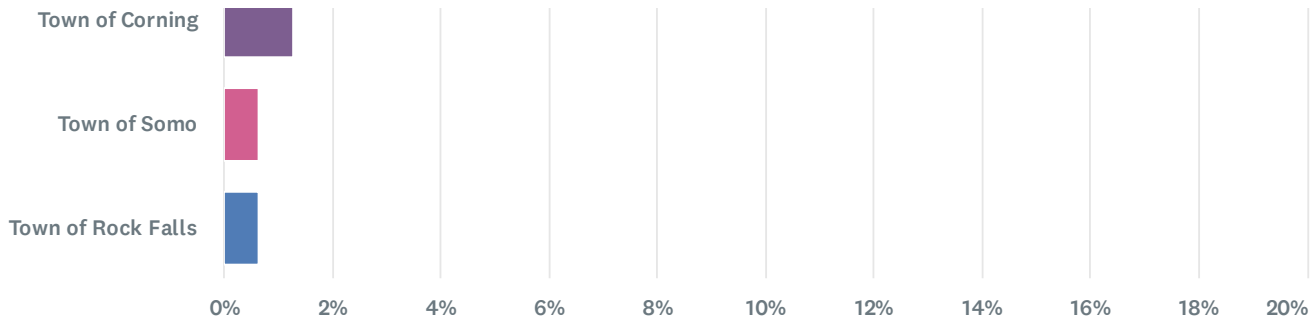


Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Male	54.81%	171
Female	41.67%	130
Prefer not to answer.	3.53%	11
Total		**312**

Q22 314 responses

What municipality is your Lincoln County home or second home located?





Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
City of Merrill	18.47%	58
I don't live in Lincoln County, and I don't own a second home in Lincoln County.	16.88%	53
Town of Merrill	13.38%	42
Town of Harrison	10.19%	32
City of Tomahawk	8.92%	28
Town of King	5.10%	16
Town of Pine River	4.46%	14
Town of Bradley	4.14%	13
Town of Scott	3.18%	10
Town of Schley	2.23%	7
Town of Russell	2.23%	7
Town of Birch	2.23%	7
Town of Wilson	1.59%	5
Town of Tomahawk	1.59%	5
Town of Harding	1.59%	5
Town of Skanawan	1.27%	4
Town of Corning	1.27%	4
Total		**314**

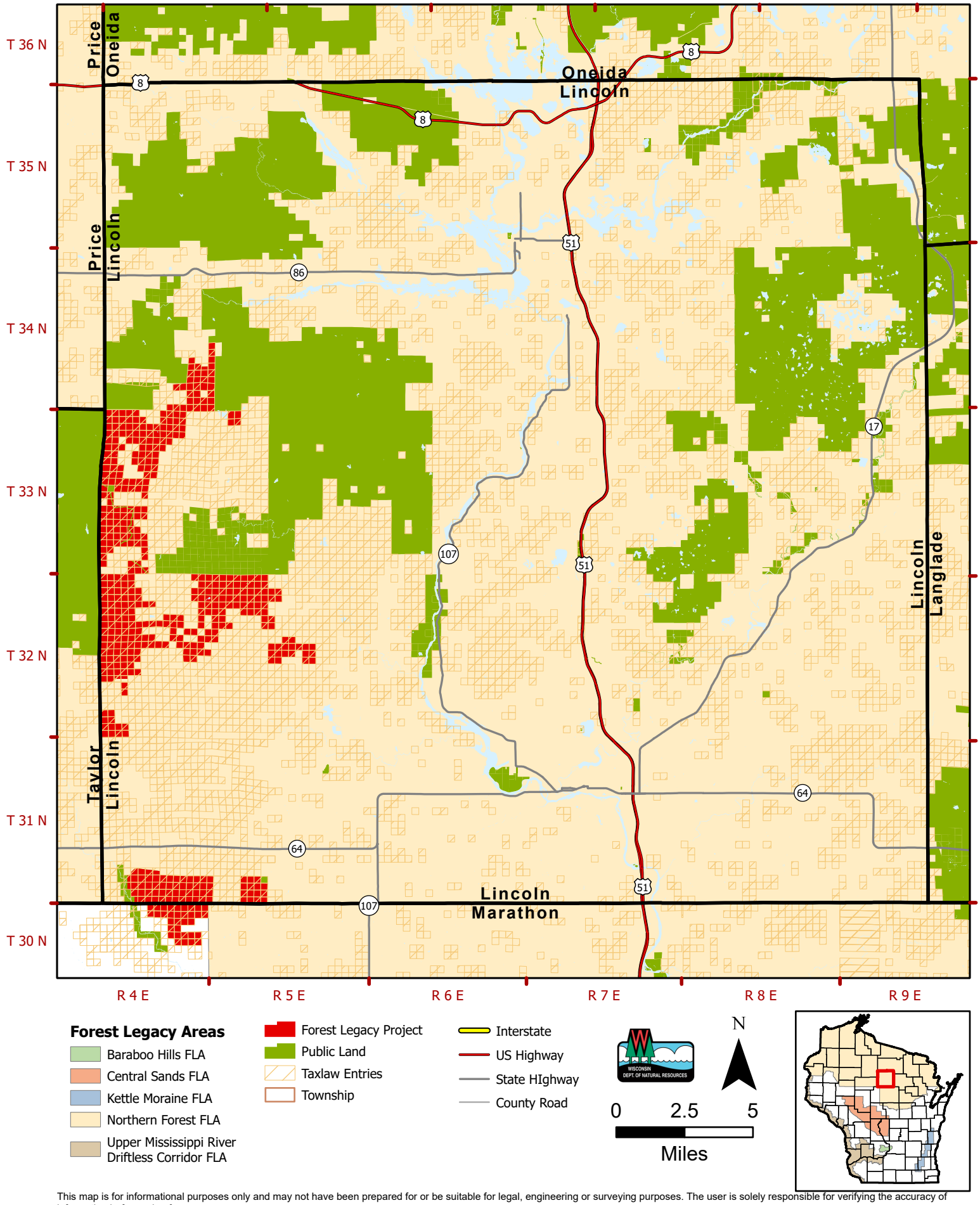
Answer Choices	Percentage	Responses
Town of Somo	0.64%	2
Town of Rock Falls	0.64%	2
Total		**314**

Attachment E

Forest Legacy Areas 2026 Lincoln County

From:
WDNR

Forest Legacy Areas: Lincoln County



Forest Legacy Areas

- Baraboo Hills FLA
- Central Sands FLA
- Kettle Moraine FLA
- Northern Forest FLA
- Upper Mississippi River Driftless Corridor FLA

- Forest Legacy Project
- Public Land
- Taxlaw Entries
- Township

- Interstate
- US Highway
- State HIghway
- County Road

WISCONSIN DEPT. OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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