

Columbia County Planning Group

Master Plan

Amendment Proposal – December 2014



AMENDMENTS:

Proposed language to add is underlined and highlighted in yellow.

Proposed text to be removed is identified by ~~strikethrough~~.



Shooting Ranges

There is significant demand for a public shooting range in Columbia County. Several parking lots at the Swan Lake WA and French Creek WA are heavily used for recreational shooting and target practice by locals and out of county individuals. These activities have generated concerns about public safety, quality of life (e.g., noise and litter) and inquiries by local elected officials and law enforcement.

The Department recognizes the need for a designated and managed public shooting facility in the county. DNR staff are collaborating with local officials and interested sporting groups to identify a location for to establish a public shooting range that meets the generally accepted siting criteria. Several of the CCPG properties were considered in these deliberations, but none were selected. Establishing a shooting range on a CCPG property will require an amendment to this master plan. If a public shooting range is established in the county, the DNR will evaluate options to address concerns about target shooting on these wildlife areas.

Initially, DNR staff responsible for property management of Columbia County wildlife and fisheries areas, reviewed and evaluated all DNR-managed properties in Columbia County and narrowed the list of properties using the following criteria:

- Minimize the number of residences within a 1,000-yard buffer to minimize noise concerns
- Avoid wetlands or hydric soils or soils with hydric inclusions
- Avoid State Natural Areas
- Avoid archeological sites
- Direct road access is preferred
- Located adjacent to major highways and roads
- Minimize impact on other recreational users
- Minimize impact on blocks of wildlife habitat
- Topography that provides opportunities to use the terrain to shoot into or minimize potential noise concerns

This process resulted in the identification of seven potential sites located in the Columbia County Towns of Dekorra, Lowville and Springvale. The seven sites were then presented to an ad hoc citizen work group for further study with the goal of recommending a preferred site to DNR for a new range. The three towns with potential sites were each invited to select a member to represent their town as was the Columbia County Board, the Columbia County Sporting Alliance, the Columbia County Conservation Congress, local business and other conservation organizations.

The ad hoc group worked through a process to develop additional evaluation criteria and ultimately narrowed the seven sites to two potential locations, Dekorra Wildlife Area and Mud Lake Wildlife Area – King Rd. DNR then implemented a public input process to obtain citizen feedback on the two sites which involved department staff attending town board meetings in each town, hosting an open house in Portage to answer questions and posting an online survey which collected feedback.

Following a review of the public input, the ad hoc committee recommended Mud Lake Wildlife Area on King Road in south central Columbia County as their top recommendation with the Dekorra Wildlife Area site as their second choice.

Ice Age Trail Routes

The Ice Age Trail is a Wisconsin State Trail and one of eleven National Scenic Trails in the U.S. It is a long-distance hiking and backpacking trail. A 2.5 mile segment of the Ice Age Trail (IAT) is located at the Lodi Marsh WA and an extension of this popular trail segment is anticipated in the near future. In addition,

- Endangered Resources (ER) and Wildlife will consult after pre-harvest invasive species removal, but prior to timber sale activities to assess the need for a rare plant or animal survey by ER staff.
- Monitor and control invasive species as practicable.

Field Areas 5a, 6a and 8c: Habitat Management (180 acres)

Management Objective:

- Improve habitat quality and natural regeneration of the Oak Woodlands.

Management Prescriptions:

- Use approved habitat management techniques to encourage oak regeneration.
- Use prescribed fire and brushing to maintain a mosaic of smaller grass and brush openings within the Oak Woodlands.

Field Areas 2 and 8: Habitat Management (160 acres)

Management Objective:

- Create a large contiguous block of Surrogate Grassland.
- Re-classify 9 acres of Habitat Management Area to Special Management Area.

Management Prescriptions:

- Cut and prevent regeneration of all Bottomland Hardwood species.
- Sow area with native and introduced forbs and grasses to develop a Surrogate Grassland.
- Utilize prescribed burns, and brushing and herbicides as needed, to achieve the desired species composition and to control the regeneration of woody and weed species.
- Remove 9 acres from Habitat Management Area and reclassify as Special Management Area (See Maps E-3 and E-5).

Habitat Management Infrastructure

The following supplement the general habitat objectives and prescriptions described in Chapter Two, Section One and the General Property Administration and Policies (Page 44).

Management Objective:

- Retain the existing service roads, gates, dikes and water control structures.

Management Prescriptions:

- Maintain the current 2.25 miles of primitive and lightly developed gravel service roads, nine gates, three dikes (collectively about 0.14 miles long) and five water control structures.
- Replace the water control structure and/or lower the dike at the Mud Lake Flowage to allow greater range of water level fluctuations to improve waterfowl habitat management activities.

Special Management Area

Management Objective:

- Develop a shooting range and related infrastructure in an area between Conservation Drive and King Road with access off of King Rd on existing DNR land (see map E-2).

Management Prescriptions:

- Construct and maintain a shooting range and ancillary facilities by Fall 2017.

Public Use Management

The following supplement the general public use objectives and prescriptions described in Chapter Two, Section One - General Recreation Management and Use (page 40).

Management Objectives:

- Retain the current complement of public access roads, parking lots and boat launches.
- Improve recreational opportunities for mobility impaired individuals.
- Construct a shooting range for rifle, shotgun and pistol firearms and ancillary facilities in the Special Management Area.

Management Prescriptions:

- Maintain the current 13 parking lots, about 1.75 miles of primitive and lightly developed gravel public access roads, and two boat landings. Replace the parking lot and carry in access boat landing on Traut Road with an improved site as shown in **Map E-2**.
- Evaluate the feasibility of adding an accessible hunting/observation blind and infrastructure. Report on the feasibility of an accessible site by December, 2015. Take action as appropriate.
- Construct a shooting range for use by owners of rifle, shotgun, and pistol firearms. The proposed target distances are 100 and 50 yards for rifles and shotguns and a 25 foot range for pistol firearms as well as a patterning range for shotguns. Provide related infrastructure including no-blue sky shooting shelters, ADA accessible parking and access paths, sanitation facilities, and informational kiosk.