

The attached guidance, “CONDUCTING A 15-YEAR PLAN REVIEW FOR TIER 1 AND 2 PROPERTY PLANS”, was developed for use by Department staff when doing the required 15-year reviews of Department managed property master plans.

Ch. NR 44 requires the department to review each property master plan (approved after 1996) every 15 years to determine if any changes should be made. A plan review process assesses a plan’s capability to meet present and long-term needs for resource management and conservation, and public use. In other words, it determines whether the plan is functioning well, or whether changes or additions should be considered. After completing a plan review, a report and recommendation regarding need for changes to the plan is provided to the Natural Resources Board (NRB).

This draft guidance was developed by LF staff with input/review by staff from Forestry, Fisheries Management, Wildlife Management, Parks and Recreation and Natural Heritage Conservation. The Property Planning Handbook is used primarily by staff in these programs. The handbook provides procedures and guidance on developing or revising master plans and management plans for Department managed properties.

The Department is soliciting comments on the draft guidance from external stakeholders. Once the 21 day notice period is complete, all comments will be considered, revisions will be made to the guidance as needed, and final guidance will be made available to the appropriate internal and external stakeholders.

Comments related to this draft guidance document should be sent to Tom Watkins, thomas.watkins@wisconsin.gov; (608) 264-6058.

**SECTION FIVE – CONDUCTING A 15-YEAR PLAN REVIEW FOR TIER 1 AND 2
PROPERTY PLANS**

CHAPTER 50

OVERVIEW AND PROCESS

Ch. NR 44 requires the department to review each property master plan (approved after 1996) every 15 years to determine if any changes should be made. Specifically, Ch. NR 44.04(12) states;

The department shall review master plans every 15 years and make recommendations to the board. The board shall determine whether the plan is to be amended, revised or extended for another 15-year period. A master plan shall remain in effect until the board takes action to modify it. The department shall take measures to reasonably notify interested persons of a 15-year plan review, and then shall use an appropriate public involvement process to determine or examine issues related to management and use of the property and the need for plan revision.

A plan review process assesses the plan's capability to meet present and long-term needs for resource management and conservation and public use. In other words, it should describe whether the plan is functioning well, or whether changes or additions should be considered. After completing a plan review process the department submits a report and recommendations to the Natural Resources Board (NRB).

Content of a Plan Review Report

A plan review report should include a summary of the issues and opportunities identified during the review process and a recommendation on whether or not any plan adjustments should be considered. Based on the findings of the review process the report should request one of the following actions of the NRB:

1. If issues and opportunities are significant; request NRB approval to initiate a plan amendment or revision process.
2. If issues and opportunities are minimal and changes or additions to the plan are appropriate without further public involvement or analysis (i.e. the plan review process provided sufficient analysis and public input regarding the proposed plan change); a plan amendment may be proposed and with a request for NRB approval of the amendment without further action.
3. If a plan variance is recommended to update the plan; only Department approval is required to initiate the process and approve the variance, request the NRB accept the review report and its recommendations.
4. If no plan changes are recommended; request the NRB renew the plan for 15 years.

Plan Review Process

Staffing Approach

An integrated team approach should be used to assess the status of the current plan. All programs with a management interest in the property should be involved. An administrative sponsor should oversee the process.

Process Steps

1. Assess property data and update as needed

Two or three years (or maybe earlier in some cases) prior to initiating a plan review property management staff (or Integrated property planning team) should review the status of resource and public use data and determine whether or not habitat or public use conditions have significantly changed since the plan was approved or extended.

Having up-to-date information on the property's resource conditions and public use is critical to performing an adequate plan assessment. If conditions have changed, substantial updates in old data or acquisition of new data may be needed. Resource assessments, facility assessments, and public use data, should be updated on a regular basis.

2. Performance review and analysis

- Using information from step 2, planning staff may then lead an internal review of how well the current plan is performing and determines if (from their perspective) any changes or additions may be warranted. Staff should consider the results from any recent surveys, review annual monitoring reports and progress toward achieving goals and objectives, as well as anecdotal information regarding management or use issues.
- Conduct a public involvement process (using methods most appropriate to the situation) to gather public input on the plan's performance and any changes or additions that should be considered.

3. Reporting to the NRB and NRB actions

- Report to the NRB on the outcome of the plan review and recommend whether the plan be extended without change or be modified. If changes are recommended, the areas or elements proposed for further review should be specified (i.e. establish the specific scope of the plan changes to be considered) and whether a plan amendment or whole plan revision is requested. If the proposed plan modifications are minimal and they can appropriately be made without further analysis or review, a request for NRB approval of a specific plan amendment may be made at this time.
- The NRB may extend the plan for another 15 years, accept a recommendation the Department conduct a plan variance process, or direct that a plan amendment be done to cover specific items or that a whole plan revision be undertaken.

Process for Conducting a Plan Variance, Amendment, or Revision

If the NRB directs the department to initiate a plan amendment or revision or if the department initiates a plan variance, follow the process prescribed in other chapters of the Property Planning Handbook.

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