



Guest Column

*Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
South Central Region*

3911 Fish Hatchery Rd, Fitchburg, WI 53711
Phone: (608) 275-3266 TDD: 711
dnr.wi.gov www.wisconsin.gov

DATE: April 24, 2014

CONTACT: Bob Manwell, DNR communications, 608-275-3317

SUBJECT: Visitor safety a top priority at Sauk Prairie Recreation Area

**By Mark Aquino, Department of Natural Resources, South Central Region
Director**

The huge cleanup task at the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant, now known as the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area, is winding down. Work remains in a few scattered areas including collecting and stockpiling concrete rubble that will be used as roadbed for the US Highway 12 bypass project.

The department recently [announced](#) that it would open most of the acres already transferred to state ownership to the public from April 12 through May 27 for most kinds of outdoor recreation including [spring wild turkey hunting](#). Details can be found on our webpage dnr.wi.gov by searching for Sauk Prairie Recreation Area.

Throughout the cleanup process the Department of Natural Resources and its partner in all matters related to human health, the Department of Health Services, have kept the public's health and safety at the top of the priority list.

In 2013, at the request of the DNR, the Department of Health undertook an extensive review of any potential health hazards future visitors might encounter should they visit the property for a variety of recreation activities or consume wild game harvested on the former Badger site. The DHS report, [available online](#), concluded wild game harvested on the property was safe to eat. The United States Environmental Protection Agency reviewed the DHS report and reached the same conclusion.

Recently, questions have been asked in regard to safe human consumption of edible wild plants gathered on the property.

Wild edible plants were not specifically studied by DHS but we have since asked DHS to take a look at this possible source of risk. In the department's view in order for edible wild plants to take up soil contaminants and therefore pose a human health risk, the contaminants must be available to the plants for uptake. All areas of Badger known to have concentrations of potentially harmful contaminants near the soil surface have either been dug up and removed, covered with an impermeable cap, capped and

The following counties are in the South Central Region: Adams, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Green, Grant, Iowa, Jefferson, Juneau, Lafayette, Monroe, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Vernon.

The Public Affairs Manager for DNR South Central Region is Bob Manwell, (608) 275-3317

fenced, or testing has shown that the contaminants are too deep below the surface for wild edible plants to reach and absorb.

Community gardens were not evaluated as they would not be part of a property master plan.

Looking ahead

Contractors will resume work at Badger on May 28 necessitating closure to the public as heavy equipment will be moving about the roads within Badger. We hope folks can take advantage of this early opportunity to visit what will be their newest state recreation area and to enjoy the spring season. Our master plan writing team is working hard and we anticipate having a draft master plan ready for public comment in the fall.

Thanks to everyone who has sent us comments and participated in the SPRA development process.

Regards,

Mark Aquino
DNR South Central Region Director