

# HSPG Regional & Property Analysis Executive Summary

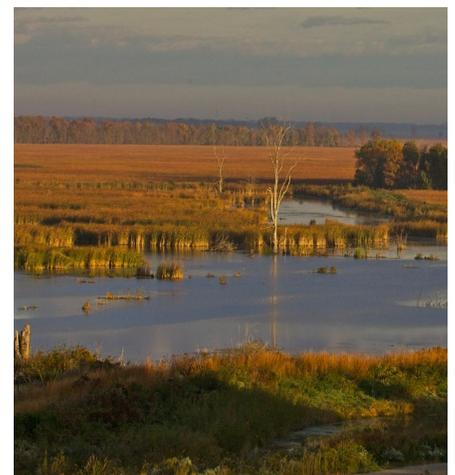


The Horicon-Shaw Planning Group (HSPG) includes four properties located in Dodge County in southeast Wisconsin. There are two Wildlife Areas, Horicon Marsh (11,167 acres) and Shaw Marsh (928 acres). Horicon Marsh contains an embedded State Natural Area, Fourmile Island Rookery. The third property, Sinnissippi Public Hunting Ground (300 acres), is an Extensive Wildlife Habitat parcel. The fourth property is a very small Fishery parcel known as the Horicon Rough Fish Station (1 acre). In total, these properties comprise 12,396 acres of state protected and managed land.

## Recreational Significance

Recreationally, the region of south-central Wisconsin where the HSPG properties are located is notable for its diverse environments, mix of rural and urban influences, and low amounts of public land. Dodge County is largely rural with abundant wetlands and surface waters, and supports recreational activities in mostly undeveloped or low-development settings. A growing population in the region will likely create increasing demand for outdoor recreation. The HSPG properties are easily accessible from both local and regional population centers, including the Madison and Milwaukee metropolitan areas. They are important providers of public outdoor recreation land close to where people live.

The main recreational uses of the HSPG properties are the traditional outdoor pursuits of hunting, fishing, and trapping. Deer, water-



Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area

fowl, and upland game hunting, wetland furbearer trapping, and fishing are popular. The properties also are used for other outdoor recreation, including hiking, paddling, wildlife viewing, and cross-country skiing. As the largest property in the planning group, Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area offers additional facilities, including hunting and photography blinds, a dog training area, and designated trails. The Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center is one of WDNR's premier centers for wildlife conservation education.



Educational program at Horicon

## Ecological Significance

Wetlands and open water are dominant features on the HSPG properties. Emergent and submergent marshes, sedge meadows, and shrub swamps are very significant here. These communities provide habitat for a wide variety of wetland-dependent plants and animals, both common and rare.

Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area is part of the larger Horicon Marsh, which has received international recognition for its extensive wetlands and their importance to migrating and breeding birds. These wetlands, along with open-water areas and seasonal mudflats, provide diverse habitats for migrating waterfowl, waterbirds, and shorebirds. Many birds also breed here, including ducks, herons, grebes, snipe, and other waterbirds. Associated upland areas of restored prairie provide additional opportunity for nesting grassland birds.

Horicon Wildlife Area also is important for bats. It is located in close proximity to the Neda Mine, the largest known bat hibernaculum in the state. Seven bat species have been recorded on the property, which likely serves as an important source of insects for foraging bats.



Great egrets

## Property Opportunities and Challenges

The main recreational uses of the HSPG properties are hunting, fishing, and trapping. The properties are heavily hunted, especially for deer, waterfowl, and pheasant but also for turkey, mourning dove, and small game. Trappers pursue primarily muskrat, mink, and raccoon. Fishing is also popular, with both shore fishing and boat access sites available. Other outdoor activities are also available on the properties, such as wildlife viewing, hiking, paddling, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area is especially well-known as an excellent place for wildlife viewing, especially bird watching, and hosts a well-attended birding festival each year.



The Horicon Marsh Education and Visitor Center offers diverse environmental education programs for all ages. These nature-based outdoor recreational activities are the “best fit” for the properties. Potential exists to enhance existing opportunities (e.g., accessible viewing platforms, hunting blinds; interpretive features). The properties will also be evaluated for potential to site a shooting range. Wet or erodible soils and steep slopes limit recreational developments such as trails across much of the properties.

Ecologically, the HSPG properties offer significant opportunity to manage for emergent wetlands and wetland-dependent species, especially migrating and breeding waterfowl, waterbirds, and shorebirds. Opportunity also exists to restore and manage prairie for grassland-nesting birds, and to provide foraging habitat for bats. Impaired water quality and effects of non-native invasive animals and plants (e.g., common carp; reed canary grass, etc.) are the main habitat management challenges.





Waterfowl at Horicon Marsh Wildlife Area

## Please contact us for additional information!

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**Visit the Department Web site for plan documents and updates:**

<http://dnr.wi.gov>, keyword search “master planning”, then click on “Horicon-Shaw Planning Group”

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