

OUTDOOR RECREATION IN WISCONSIN



The 2005–2010 Wisconsin
Statewide Comprehensive
Outdoor Recreation Plan

SCORP





I am pleased to present to you **Wisconsin's 2005-2010 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)**. This document will provide you with comprehensive, up-to-date information on the status of statewide and regional recreation, as well as information about recreation supply and demand, participation rates and trends, and a discussion of outdoor recreation goals and actions for their implementation.

Parks and recreation areas provide people with the opportunity to be physically active and make communities livable and desirable for businesses and homeowners. But as our population grows, public and private recreation providers face challenges in providing the quality outdoor recreation experiences that people in Wisconsin and visitors seek. This plan will assist recreation managers and decision makers with meeting these challenges.

In Wisconsin, we can take pride in our strong and longtime tradition of public investment in preserving Wisconsin's special landscapes and providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities. Wisconsin's parks, recreation areas, open space, and natural areas play an important role in the health and well being of people in Wisconsin and our visitors. This plan will help us to continue our efforts to balance quality outdoor recreation experiences with the protection of our much loved natural and cultural resources.

In closing, protecting Wisconsin's great natural areas is a top priority for me—not only for our recreational enjoyment and the benefit of our tourism industry, but for the enjoyment of generations to come. Thank you to the numerous recreation providers, the general public, and recreation interest groups that participated in the creation of this plan for helping make Wisconsin a great place to live, work, and enjoy.



GOVERNOR JIM DOYLE

SCORP

The 2005–2010 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The 2005–2010 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

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The preparation of this plan was financed in part through a planning grant from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, under the provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, as amended).



LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

This publication is available in alternative format (large print, braille, audio tape, etc.) upon request. Please call 608-266-2181 for more information.

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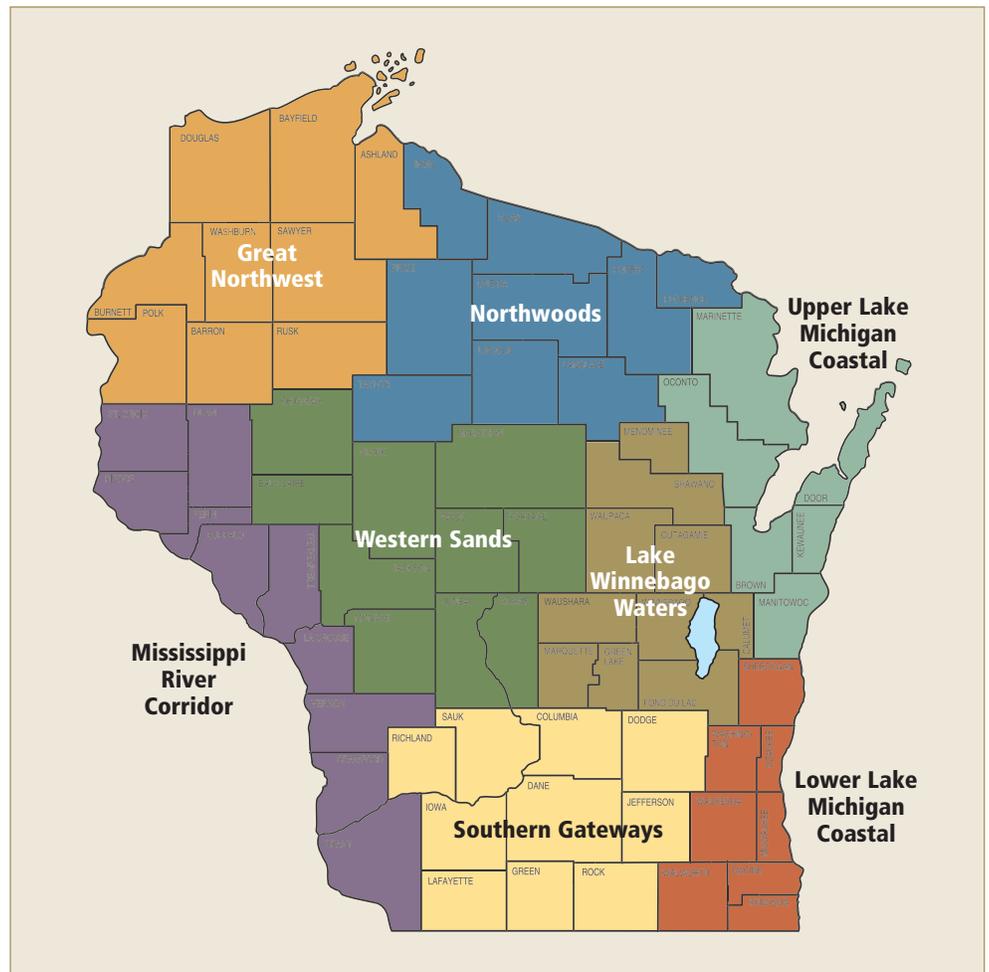
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MANY FACTORS AFFECT THE SUPPLY, DEMAND, AND PARTICIPATION RATES OF OUTDOOR RECREATION IN WISCONSIN. SINCE 1965 THE STATE HAS DEVELOPED AND MAINTAINED THE STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN (SCORP) IN AN ATTEMPT TO CLASSIFY, MEASURE, AND ULTIMATELY PROVIDE FOR THE PREFERENCES AND NEEDS OF A STATEWIDE RECREATING PUBLIC. RECREATION TRENDS AND PATTERNS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT EASY TO QUANTIFY OR PREDICT. MANY FACTORS, FROM CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND LAND USES, TO RECREATIONAL SUPPLY, AND CONFLICT WITH OTHER RECREATION USES, AFFECT THE QUALITY, SUPPLY, AND DEMAND FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION.

This SCORP examines and assesses current and future recreational needs within the state. To aid in this process, Wisconsin was divided into a group of eight planning regions, each representing a loose collection of natural resource and tourism based assets (primary resources in each region are described in the table on the following page). Together, the SCORP regions represent

a wide spectrum of outdoor recreation settings offered across the Wisconsin landscape. With its comprehensive statewide and regional focus, this plan will guide the allocation of limited recreation funds to acquire additional recreation and conservation lands and support the continued development of outdoor recreation opportunities.

Wisconsin SCORP Planning Regions



Wisconsin SCORP Regional Segmentation by Resource Type/Setting

SCORP Region	Primary Resource
Great Northwest	Nature-Based, Water-Based, Snow- and Ice-Based
Northwoods and Upper Lake Michigan Coastal	Nature-Based, Snow- and Ice-Based
Lower Lake Michigan Coastal	Developed Setting, Water-Based
Southern Gateways	Developed Setting, Viewing and Learning
Mississippi River Corridor	Nature-Based, Water-Based
Western Sands and Lake Winnebago Waters	Water-Based, Nature-Based, Developed Setting

Wisconsin has experienced a variety of changing demographic trends that have influenced outdoor recreation. In the years 1950-2000, the state gained 2,098,380 residents, an increase of 61%. Populations are projected to hit 5,751,470 by the year 2010 and 6,110,878 by the year 2020. Although most state land remains rural, the majority of state residents (68%) live in a relatively small number of concentrated urban and suburban areas, primarily in southern areas of the state. As housing development continues, urban and suburban areas have grown, while rural areas have experienced a decline in population.

Demographic changes have affected different regions of the state in different ways. In addition to being more urban, southern counties generally have higher rates of college education, income, and property values. Northern counties are generally more rural, have older populations, and lower rates of college education, income, and property values. In certain areas of the state, abundant natural resources and undeveloped lands have led to high rates of tourism and seasonal housing. Counties described as Non-Metro Recreation Counties in this report, are located throughout Wisconsin, but are especially concentrated in natural resource-rich northern regions.

As demographic changes alter the ways in which people recreate, recreation demand has also shifted. Clearly, different people recreate in different ways; urban residents often prefer developed facilities such as dog parks and outdoor water parks, while rural populations prefer more open-space activities such as ATVing. As Wisconsin's population continues to age, certain activi-

ties once popular among baby boomers such as downhill skiing, personal water craft use, and mountain biking are declining in popularity while more passive recreation pursuits such as walking for pleasure, birdwatching, and gardening are becoming more popular. In contrast to older residents, younger generations are participating in several newer, more active forms of recreation. Geocaching, disc golf, kayaking, snowboarding, and paintball have all become more popular, a reflection of the younger Generation Y influence on state recreation trends. As the number of single-parent families increases, there has been a growing demand for family-friendly and group activities such as outdoor sporting events. In addition, out-of-state visitors have created demand for activities such as sightseeing, picnicking, viewing/photographing

wildlife, and swimming in lakes and streams. It is important that recreation planners consider the diverse demands of these varied user groups as they work to provide outdoor recreation across the state.



It is important that recreation planners consider the diverse demands of varied user groups as they work to provide outdoor recreation across the state.

Popular Outdoor Recreation Activities by Wisconsin Generations

Baby Boomers	Generation Y
Big Game Hunting	Outdoor Basketball
Drive for Pleasure	Disc Golf
Gardening	Football
Ice Fishing	Orienteering
Motorboating	Rock Climbing
Visit a Dog Park	Skateboarding

Several recreation barriers have also influenced the ways in which state residents recreate. Although many Wisconsinites enjoy outdoor recreation, competing factors such as family and job commitments, lack of time, and cost concerns have prevented many people from recreating as often as they would like. Accessibility of recreation lands and facilities—long travel times, lack of access to public lands, lack of bike trails, and other constraints—have also reduced the overall level of recreation in Wisconsin. These constraints are more pressing to certain groups than others. For example, many families feel they cannot afford to recreate because of the high cost of equipment, or long travel times to reach a recreation destination. For these groups, high-quality, low-cost, and local forms of recreation are ideal.

As recreation users encounter one another on the statewide landscape, they do not always do so without conflict. The figure below indicates the scale used to rate activity compatibility in this SCORP. Although some activities interact with few problems, many experience at least some level of conflict. Often these conflicts involve competition over available land or resources (for example, cross-country skiers and snowmobilers both wishing to use the same trail), or value disagreements (for example, birdwatchers objecting to hunters in parklands). The interaction of motorized uses such as snowmobiling and ATVing with non-motorized uses such as hiking is frequently the source of recreation conflict, whereas the interaction of non-motorized activities with other non-motorized activities and motorized activities with other motorized activities is generally more peaceful. Although the differences between conflicting activities seem to make them incompatible, most can be managed—through proper planning and enforcement—to coexist with other activities in the same recreation landscape.

Given the varied demographic profiles and recreational needs of citizens across the state, predicting recreation demand has become an increasing challenge for recreation providers. Because people who share an interest in one recreation activity often share interests in

others, it is often useful to group activities into categories. This SCORP categorizes recreation activities according to three factors: recreation settings, recreation experiences, and geographic boundary. Using these categories, recreation providers may better predict and accommodate for the recreation demands of a diverse group of state users.

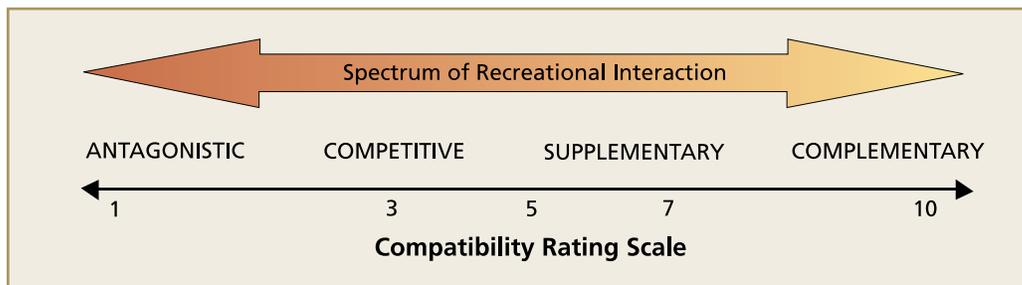
A variety of suppliers provide a diverse array of recreational lands and facilities within Wisconsin. These include both public providers—federally owned lands, state-owned lands, and locally owned lands—as well as private providers such as private park and camping facilities, land trusts, Boy Scouts, and others. Together, recreational suppliers provide land and facilities for nearly every recreational interest and desire. Still, shortages exist. Several facilities such as dog parks, ice skating rinks, boat launches, nature trails, biking trails, park shelters, and picnic areas, are in short supply statewide. Facility upgrades and maintenance to existing structures such as sporting fields, bathrooms, and signage are also needed throughout much of the state.

Wisconsin Public Recreational Lands

Ownership	Acres
County Lands	2,594,625
Federal Lands	1,795,030
State Lands	1,366,694
City, Village, Township Lands	62,004
Total	5,782,353

While the provision of outdoor recreation is an important component of this plan, recreation providers are also aware of the importance of environmental preservation. This SCORP identifies several Land Legacy Areas—areas thought to be critical in meeting the state’s present and future conservation and recreation needs. Of the top 15 Land Legacy Areas statewide, 11 are located in the southern half of the state, an area heavily threatened by development pressures. Programs such as the Warren Knowles–Gaylord Nelson

Spectrum of Recreational Interaction and Compatibility Rating Scale

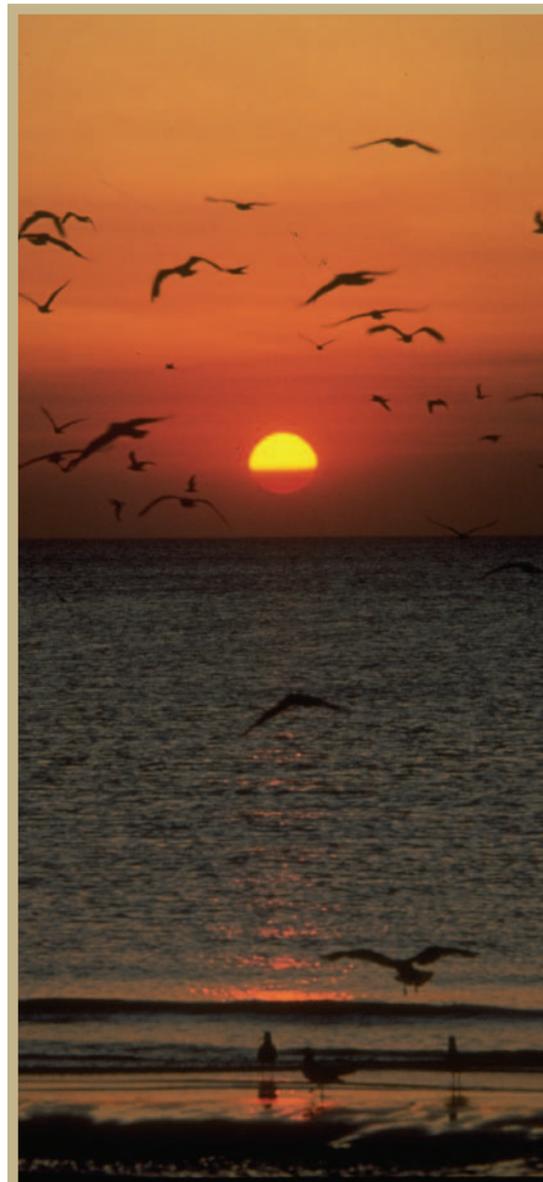


Executive Summary

Stewardship 2000 Program and other environmental support agencies are in place to obtain and protect several of these areas of high ecological value. The Stewardship Program alone provides over \$60 million annually to fund land acquisition, ecological restoration initiatives, and facility upgrades to a variety of parks, forests, and natural areas across the state.

Developing and improving the supply of recreation in Wisconsin will have several benefits. Easily accessible, nearby recreation lands may be expected to increase the health of Wisconsin residents. Data from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) indicates that 61% of all Wisconsin adults are overweight or obese and 24% of Wisconsin high school students are overweight or at risk of becoming so. Physical activity is an important factor in controlling obesity. With their miles of easily accessible trails, rivers, and forest, Wisconsin parks and recreation areas play an integral role in promoting activity among state citizens. Recreational activities such as hiking, biking, swimming, and skiing are all fun, easy ways of achieving the regular exercise key to maintaining a healthy body. On a community-wide level, parks and recreation areas provide space for social events such as picnics and family outings, events that help forge strong communities and healthy families.

To aid recreation providers in developing an adequate supply of recreational lands and facilities, and to promote the conservation of important natural resources, this SCORP presents several goals and actions. These include the need to: protect, restore, and enhance Wisconsin's natural resources for outdoor recreation; to understand and manage the growing issue of Wisconsin outdoor recreation conflicts; to continue to provide Wisconsin outdoor recreation and educational programming; to continue to provide and enhance public access to Wisconsin recreational lands and waters; to understand the threats and opportunities of Wisconsin's developing urban areas and areas of rapid population growth; to maintain and enhance funding opportunities for Wisconsin outdoor recreation; and to promote Wisconsin outdoor recreation as a means to better health and wellness for state citizens. Though not comprehensive, it is hoped that these goals and actions make strides towards developing an improved supply of recreation within the state, while also protecting Wisconsin's beautiful natural environment for the enjoyment of residents and visitors for generations to come.



It is hoped that these goals and actions will make strides towards developing an improved supply of recreation within the state, while also protecting Wisconsin's beautiful natural environment for the enjoyment of residents and visitors for generations to come.

INTRODUCTION

SINCE PASSAGE OF THE FEDERAL LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF) ACT OF 1965, PREPARATION OF A STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN (SCORP) HAS BEEN REQUIRED FOR STATES TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR LWCF ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE. THE LWCF IS ADMINISTERED BY THE WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (WDNR) AND PROVIDES GRANTS FOR OUTDOOR RECREATION PROJECTS BY BOTH STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

Since its inception, LWCF has provided over \$70 million for over 1,750 recreation land purchases, facility developments, and facility rehabilitations throughout Wisconsin. The SCORP is the blueprint by which all LWCF funding decisions are made. In addition to its utility in LWCF funding decisions, this plan is also used by a number of federal and state outdoor recreation funding programs. Combined, 14 programs are available for funding of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. See Appendix A for a complete list of programs.

LWCF

The WDNR is the state agency authorized by the Governor to represent and act for the state in administration of the LWCF Program, and has prepared this plan. SCORPs are typically carried out on a five year planning cycle. Plan contents and format are shaped by the planning guidelines set by the LWCF Act. The major requirements of the plan are: comprehensiveness, an evaluation of the demand and supply of outdoor recreation resources and facilities in the state, a wetlands priority component, a program for implementation of the plan, ample public participation in the planning process, and a description of the process and methodology used to create the plan. This SCORP has been prepared to meet the requirements for continuing LWCF eligibility, and to provide a meaningful evaluation of state and local public outdoor recreation projects for grant award selection purposes.

Description of Plan

This plan consists of seven chapters and five appendices, which are summarized below.

Chapter One explores the natural amenities of the state and examines the recreation and population changes that have occurred within Wisconsin over the past 50 years. With baby boomers reaching retirement age, housing development continuing, and more people vacationing in Wisconsin's natural environment, pres-

ures on state recreational resources continue to grow. This chapter investigates the ways in which changing demographic trends have impacted recreation supply and demand within Wisconsin.

Chapter Two explores user demand for almost 100 popular Wisconsin outdoor recreational activities, examining which activities are most popular and which environments are the most desirable for outdoor recreation. This plan is the first SCORP to evaluate recreation demand from outside of the state, an evaluation that will prove useful in balancing the demands of in-state and out-of-state residents. In addition, this chapter explores several barriers that prevent people from participating in recreational activities as often as they would like. Finally, Chapter Two discusses the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the continuing challenge of addressing outdoor recreation conflicts for individuals with mobility disabilities.

Chapter Three explores the supply of recreation in Wisconsin, both in terms of built facilities and outdoor recreation environments. Because outdoor recreation supply comes in many forms, this chapter examines both landscape scale needs and local park and recreation needs. Together, these supply needs start to shape the picture of recreation shortfalls.

Chapter Four investigates the current status of Wisconsin's outdoor recreation conflicts and discusses the difficulties in developing permanent solutions to these issues. This chapter also explores several of the current innovative solutions for resolving recreation conflicts.

Chapter Five divides Wisconsin into eight SCORP planning regions and summarizes the unique characteristics that define each of them. Each region represents a collection of distinct recreation/tourism destinations. With such a broad and abundant supply of recreation opportunities in Wisconsin, Chapter Five offers insights into what makes each individual region unique and valuable to statewide recreation and also summarizes regional recreation needs.

Introduction

Chapter Six describes several key indicators for outdoor recreation trends and offers insights for future recreation participation and demand.

Chapter Seven describes eight goals and actions intended to improve the supply of outdoor recreation within Wisconsin and encourage state residents to participate in more outdoor recreational activities. Goals and actions presented in this chapter were developed with the input of WDNR groups, the SCORP External Review Panel, and the citizens of Wisconsin.

The *Appendices* of this plan include a summary of outdoor recreation development and acquisition funding programs administered by the WDNR, a description of park and recreation design and development standards, a description of outdoor recreation supply and demand survey design, and a summary of the status of Wisconsin's wetlands.

Public Participation Process

Public participation has been an extensive component of this planning process. An External Review Panel comprised of 11 members participated in several phases of the planning process. Members, representing a broad range of recreational providers and experts, contributed their expertise to initiatives such as identifying and prioritizing significant statewide outdoor recreation issues and determining possible solutions.

Eight public meetings, one in each of the state's SCORP planning regions, were held to gather public input on current outdoor recreation issues. In addition, an online survey system developed specifically to gather public comments collected citizen responses over the summer of 2005. Together, these techniques gathered over 1,300 written comments about issues pertaining to outdoor recreation in the State of Wisconsin. In addition to these responses, over 3,000 surveys on outdoor recreation demand and over 800 surveys on recreation supply characteristics were collected from outdoor recreation providers. The draft plan had a 30 day review period in which 31 written responses were received. All responses were in support of the plan with the largest amount of comments associated with ATV usage within the state. These responses were evenly split for and against the need for more trails and facilities for ATV use. Other comments included the continuing water recreation conflict issue, landscape conflicts in conjunction with recreational uses, the need for more dog parks, and the need for better targeting of local park and recreation needs. The sum of these many and varied responses begins to indicate the complexity and challenge of providing high quality outdoor recreation for the numerous user groups who rely on Wisconsin lands and waters.