



# The 2011–2016 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

# SCORP

## **OUTDOOR RECREATION IN WISCONSIN**





*Dear Friends,*

*I am pleased to present Wisconsin's 2011-2016 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). This document will provide you with comprehensive, up-to-date information on the status of Wisconsin's outdoor recreation that includes a discussion of outdoor recreation options. Unlike previous versions of this document, this SCORP focuses more on the needs of our population centers and available recreational opportunities as requested through the US Department's of the Interior's America's Great Outdoors initiative.*

*In Wisconsin, we can take pride in our strong and longtime tradition of public investment in protecting Wisconsin's special places and providing quality outdoor recreation opportunities. Wisconsin's public lands play an important role in the health and well-being of the people in Wisconsin and our visitors. Our quality of life and economy are directly tied to the well-being of the natural places in which so many Wisconsinites pursue their outdoor recreation passions. This document will help Wisconsin to successfully compete for available funds so that we can continue our efforts to provide quality outdoor recreation experiences and protect our much loved natural and cultural resources.*

*In closing, protecting Wisconsin's great outdoor spaces 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.*

*Cathy Stepp*  
Secretary

*Department of Natural Resources*

The 2011–2016 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

SCORP

# The 2011–2016 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

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# SCORP

The 2011–2016 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2011–2016 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) serves as a blueprint for state and local outdoor recreation planning through support of national initiatives, sets the course for recreation within the state by describing current recreation supply and trends, and provides a framework for future recreation development and focus.

Every five years, Wisconsin publishes a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) as required by the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Act of 1965. At its core, the document is used to help allocate federal funds equitably among local communities, but the document also transcends many levels of outdoor recreation discussion and policy. At the nation level, this SCORP recognizes the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) initiative is based on the idea that the protection of the country's natural heritage is a non-partisan objective shared by all Americans. The AGO encourages state and local communities to develop local, grassroots conservation and recreation initiatives. In keeping with the AGO's emphasis on local action, this SCORP presents Wisconsin's strategy of how state and local goals and actions can align with AGO initiatives.

This document shows a clear vision of how preserving and improving recreation opportunities in Wisconsin fits within a broader national initiative of conservation and recreation. This SCORP describes and quantifies some of the most important benefits of recreation, and establishes goals to improve outdoor recreation for Wisconsinites across the state. The SCORP further targets assessments on several key relationships that include public health and wellness, urban access to outdoor recreation, and public and private partnerships.



Preserving and improving natural spaces in Wisconsin fits within a broader initiative of conservation at the national level.

## Public Health and Wellness

Access to outdoor recreation is an important predictor of community health and wellness. Parks, trails, and sports facilities provide convenient, safe, and attractive spaces for people to get outside. Time spent outdoors is associated with a number of important health factors, including improved mental health, more connected communities, and more active citizens. In particular, there is increasing evidence that improving access to outdoor recreation can lower obesity levels.

To assess the health benefits currently provided by Wisconsin's outdoor recreation, rankings of existing recreation types by relative physical exertion levels are examined. This work establishes a clear relationship between outdoor recreation activities and health and wellness benefits specific to Wisconsinites. Using this data, this SCORP identifies those recreation facility types that provide the greatest public health benefits. This information can be used to make recommendations regarding future recreation facilities to better optimize public health and wellness across the state.

This SCORP encourages more active outdoor recreation, and presents a series of goals and actions to help state, county, and local governments plan for facilities that will provide the greatest health benefit to their populations.

## Urban Access to Outdoor Recreation

Accessibility to outdoor recreation has been shown to increase health benefits and physical wellness for local citizens, especially in urban environments. Populations in rural counties are diminishing, while populations in metropolitan areas are growing rapidly, resulting in increased urbanization of Wisconsin. The benefits and significance of urban parks—improved health, community ties, and economy—are therefore increasingly important.

For insight into park planning for urban areas, this SCORP considers various urban recreation barriers and their solutions, and analyzes peer-to-peer statistics for urban recreation in Wisconsin municipalities, small to

## Executive Summary

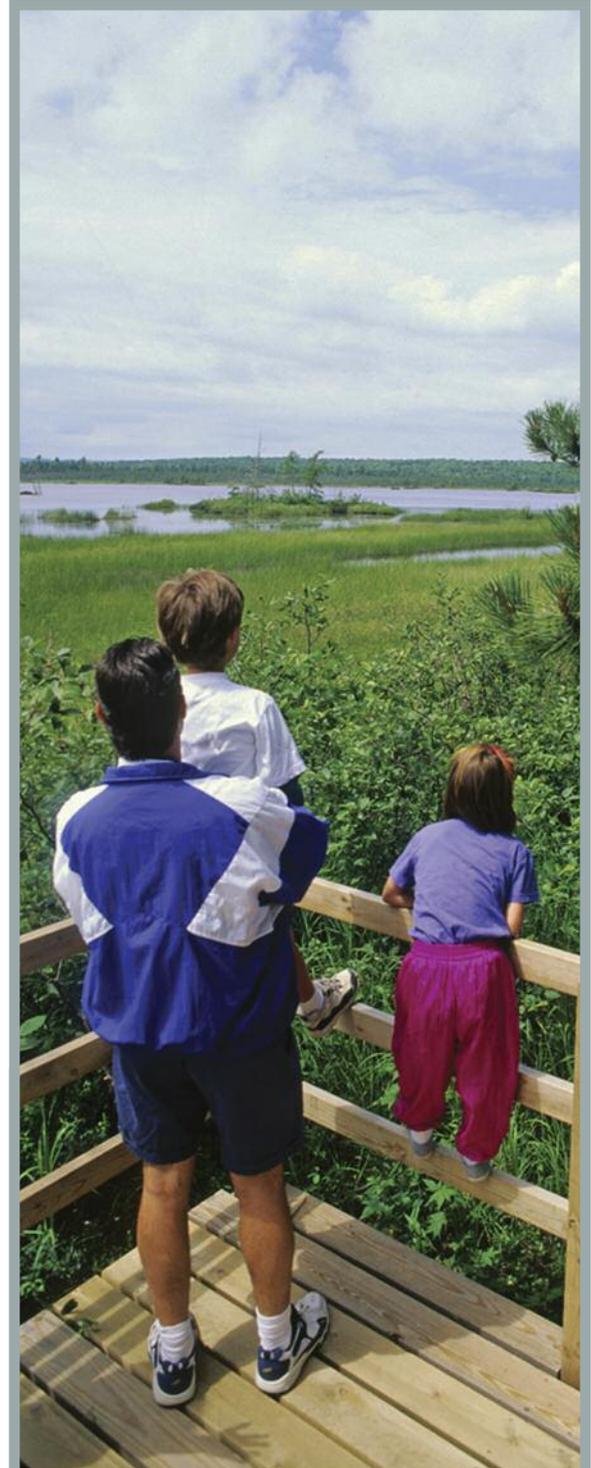
large. This data provides specific information on where Wisconsin can improve on recreation facilities, and which areas need additional focus on developing increased urban recreation.

### Public and Private Partnerships

High quality and accessible outdoor recreation builds healthy communities, provides numerous health benefits to citizens, and allows Wisconsinites to enjoy the state's many natural resources. Providing access to outdoor recreation, however, is often a challenge. Conservation and recreation development need a web of community and government support. This SCORP therefore highlights the importance of inter-governmental relationships and private organizations to provide high quality outdoor recreation to the citizens of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin depends on a mixture of publicly and privately owned lands in the overall recreation landscape of the state. Preservation and development of recreational land is at the core of discussion between stakeholders and recreation groups from across the state. Partnerships and collaborations between federal, state, and local agencies, user groups, non-profit organizations, and others are seen as critical to success in open space protection and management. This SCORP presents findings from four focus groups that address the challenges and benefits to outdoor recreation, as well as how to facilitate increased access.

The State of Wisconsin demonstrates strong dedication to the health and well-being of its population by providing accessible public recreation statewide. Wisconsin is also committed to creating strong public and private partnerships that foster recreation development and opportunities for its citizens. This SCORP presents a clear vision of how preserving and improving natural spaces in Wisconsin fits within the broader initiative of outdoor conservation on a national level.



**Wisconsin is committed to creating strong public and private partnerships that foster recreation development and opportunities for its citizens.**