

CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY of PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT and INPUT

Although the public has been actively engaged for well over a decade in helping determine the future plans for the BAAP property as a whole and SPSRA in particular, this summary of public involvement pertains to the actual development of the master plan and as such captures the time period from January 2012 to now. The department recognizes and is grateful for the ongoing and the extensive effort the public and their elected officials have invested to move SPSRA from being part of the largest propellant plant in the country to what the department hopes becomes a unique, popular and important destination for visitors.

The department maintained a list of over 1,700 people interested in receiving updates about the property and the planning process. Periodic emails were sent to this distribution list. In addition, documents related to different aspects of the planning process were posted on the department website.

The department sought public input at several stages in the planning process. In July 2012 the department hosted an initial public open house at UW-Baraboo/Sauk County to kick-off the master planning effort and present the draft Regional & Property Analysis. One hundred twenty people signed in at the open house and a total of 388 comments were received via the comment form, emails, letters, and voice messages. In July 2013 the department hosted an open house meeting in Prairie du Sac to present the draft vision, goals, and conceptual alternatives. Over 250 people attended and thousands of comments were received. The department posted all comments received during both public comment periods as well as summaries of the input received on the department website.

The commissioners and stakeholders that form the Badger Oversight and Management Commission (BOMC) maintained an active interest in the development of the master plan. The department provided updates to the BOMC at their regular meetings regarding issues related to the management of the property and the master planning process.

A. Summary of comments received on the initial draft master plan.

The public comment period for the initial draft master plan for the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area ran from August 11 to September 25, 2015. The department hosted an open house meeting and formal public hearing in Prairie du Sac on September 10. Public input on the draft master plan was received in many formats including emails, letters, postcards, an online and paper survey, and oral testimony at the public hearing. A breakdown of the input received during the comment period is as follows:

- Letters from individuals – 24
- Postcards from individuals – 298
- Letters from organizations – 21
- Letters from governments and elected officials – 3
- Emails – 55
- “Action alert” emails – 1,125
- Online surveys – 410
- Paper surveys – 54
- People presenting oral testimony at public hearing – 38

The department received a small number of comments on the draft plan after the end of the formal comment period. These comments were generally in line with the comments received during the comment period.

The following summary organizes the comments received by general topic. An explanation for how this revised draft master plan and environmental impact statement was or wasn't modified based on these suggestions or comments is also included.

1. OVERALL CONTENT OF THE MASTER PLAN

In general, respondents felt that the initial draft master plan appropriately balanced recreation and conservation goals. Some people stated that the plan placed somewhat too much emphasis on either recreation or conservation, with more people stating that the plan over emphasized recreation.

A range of comments were received about the overall plan. Some people believed that the department did not adequately honor the former work of the Badger Reuse Committee. Some people also stated that they didn't believe the initial draft master plan followed the nine values that were identified by the committee in 2001.

Some people recognized the difficulty of developing a management plan for a controversial property. Some people believed that the proposed plan was an appropriate compromise among many conflicting demands. Of the people that commented about the organization or content of the document, few believed it was confusing or unclear.

Department response: The department recognizes that some people are opposed to some of the proposed uses at SPSRA and believe that these uses would not have been included in the plan if the department had followed the Badger Reuse Plan. The department used the BRP as its starting point in following the master planning process. In developing the draft master plan, the department applied the nine values described in the BRP as part of constructing the goals and strategies for the property. No change to the draft master plan was made due to these comments.

2. HABITAT MANAGEMENT

Nearly all of the input received agreed with the mix of habitats proposed and the various techniques the department anticipates using to achieve ecological outcomes. There were a few requests to place more management emphasis on grassland (rather than oak opening) habitats and grassland birds. Many people commented in support of restoring the ecological transition from forest to savanna to grassland. Similarly, most people were pleased that so much land would eventually be restored to native conditions.

Several respondents encouraged the department to coordinate habitat management objectives and actions with the Ho-Chunk Nation and Dairy Forage Research Center.

Other concerns related to habitat and species management that were raised:

- Neotenic salamanders. Several respondents noted the unique adaptation of the population of neotenic salamanders that live in the east reservoir and believed that the department should keep the reservoir in order to save this population. In addition, several noted the potential scientific value of the neotenic salamanders as well as the educational value for visitors.
- Birds and other wildlife. Some respondents noted the current declines in rare grassland and savanna bird populations and believed the property's focus should be just on managing habitats for these and other wildlife species.

Department response: Although named after the great Sauk Prairie that covered over 14,000 acres of the glacier's outwash plain in the area, the department's ownership actually only includes a modest portion of what was historically open grassland. The majority of the department's land here sits on the glacial moraine, which is much more rolling than the flat outwash plain and was primarily oak savanna at the time of settlement. Thus, the department believes it is appropriate to restore substantial portions of SPSRA to oak savanna. No change was made to the amount of oak savanna or grassland to be restored at SPSRA.

The department has, and will continue to, coordinate and cooperate with the Ho-Chunk Nation and Dairy Forage Research Center on habitat management objectives and actions. A section was added to Chapter I to emphasize the collaborative efforts of the landowners of the former BAAP. See page 13.

The department recognizes that the population of tiger salamanders is an interesting consequence of the propellant plant and has research and educational value. The department is identifying institutions (including museums, aquaria, zoos, schools, and research organizations) that are interested in receiving neotenic salamanders for research, education, or display purposes. Potentially beginning in 2016 the department plans to capture and distribute the requested number of salamanders to these institutions. For health reasons, organizations receiving these animals will be required to maintain them in captivity for their entire lives.

The department also recognizes that these salamanders are potentially an appealing draw for the public to visit the property. However, given their steep sides, the reservoirs pose an important public safety hazard, even with the existing chain link fences that surround them, and must be removed. More information about the salamanders can be found on page 47. No change was made to the long-term plans for the reservoirs.

Although some people wanted the department to focus the property goals on habitat restoration and include fewer opportunities for fewer recreation activities, other people requested more opportunities for a broader range of outdoor activities. The department believes this revised master plan provides an appropriate balance of recreation experiences and habitat management.

3. RECREATION MANAGEMENT

Some people commented that allowing some of the proposed recreation activities was not consistent with either the department's earlier statements to use the property for low-impact recreation or the department's application to the National Park Service to receive the property through the Federal Lands to Parks program. A few people commented that rocketry and motorcycle uses had not been considered previously and were opposed to activities considered late in the property planning process.

***Department response:** The department applied to receive lands that comprise SPSRA through the National Park Service's Federal Lands to Parks (FLP) program. A required element of the FLP application, referred to as the Program of Utilization (POU), is used to describe the initial goals and objectives for the property and lay out a general framework for how the new owner anticipates managing the property.*

*At the time it submitted the application in 2004 it was not clear which lands the department, the Ho-Chunk Nation, Dairy Forage Research Center, and potentially others would ultimately be granted. The department stated in its application that the future uses of the property would be determined during the planning process leading to the development of a master plan. It stated a general intention to manage the property primarily for grasslands and oak savannas and low impact uses, and noted some examples of activities that it expected might come out of the planning process. These examples included hiking, picnicking, primitive camping, Lake Wisconsin access, and education and interpretation opportunities. **The department deferred decisions related to determining which specific suite of recreation activities would be permitted on the property, where they would be located, what times of the year they would be allowed, and other parameters associated with their use to the development of the master plan.***

The department believes that the collection of recreation opportunities proposed for SPSRA, and the parameters by which they can occur, meets the objective of using the property for low impact recreation. In addition, habitat restoration and management will focus on grasslands and oak savannas. Thus, the core property goals of the original POU remain unchanged and the proposed master plan is consistent with the

department's application to receive the property through the Federal Lands to Parks program. The master plan was revised to add clarifying language related to its application to receive land. See page 9 for more information.

Both rocketry and motorcycle riding were brought up by the public during the initial stages of the planning process as recreation opportunities that the department should consider providing at SPSRA.

Some people recognized a need for the department to provide opportunities for activities that generated more impacts, but asserted that there were ample or better opportunities elsewhere in the state for these activities. Typically, people who commented in this regard did not name a property that would be better suited to provide the recreational opportunities.

Department response: The department recognizes that a few of the proposed recreational uses are opposed by people who commented on the draft plan, but the department's goal and responsibility is to provide the full range of outdoor experiences on our portfolio of properties. Each property is unique in terms of ecological, social, institutional, or economic attributes; together, these influence the recreational demands and habitat needs that the property may be well suited to provide. Given the property's condition, habitat restoration potential, geographic location, ecological importance, and recreation potential, the department believes the collection of recreation uses proposed here are good fits for the property.

The department has long held that it is acceptable to include activities at properties (permanently or temporarily) even if they may displace other visitors.

Many of the comments received stated a concern that some activities would have sizeable adverse impacts on both wildlife and other visitors to SPSRA. Horseback riding, mountain biking, rocketry, dual sport-motorcycles, hunting, trapping and snowmobile riding were all noted in this regard. What follows is a summary of comments received related to specific recreation activities.

a. Equestrian use

Generally, there was appreciation for the proposed 12 miles of equestrian trails. Some riders hoped that more miles could be added, including the possibility of allowing horseback riding on the snowmobile trail (during non-winter months) if that trail was located in the eastern perimeter corridor. Several people commented that the parking lot at the equestrian trailhead needed to be bigger than what is proposed (10 large trailer rigs and 6 cars). There was support to link trails in SPSRA to potential equestrian trails in Devil's Lake State Park.

Some respondents supported allowing horse-drawn carts on some or all of the equestrian trails year-round (the draft plan proposes to limit horse-drawn carts to two weekends/year), citing the lack of conflicts between horse-drawn carts and horseback riders. Some people were opposed to providing equestrian trails because they believed such use would have too high an impact, would cause erosion, and would lead to an increasing invasive plant problem.

Department response: The master plan was changed to increase the size of the parking area for equestrian use from 10 to 30 trailer rigs, along with parking for 6 cars. Language was added to the master plan reflecting the opportunity to add horseback riding (not during the winter) to the snowmobile trail, depending on its location. The master plan was also changed to allow horse-drawn carts on all of the equestrian trails year-round. See page 25.

b. Snowmobile use

Currently there is a snowmobile trail on SPSRA and land owned by DFRC in the southeastern portion of the former BAAP, but the trail is located outside the perimeter fence along the eastern and northeastern portions of the SPSRA. The initial draft master plan called for a snowmobile trail to be located either on or immediately adjacent to the Great Sauk Trail or along the eastern side of SPSRA, inside the perimeter fence.

Regardless of its eventual location, several people commented that the maps and the language in the draft master plan needed to be clarified and consistent. Most people advocated for locating a snowmobile trail along the eastern side of the property, but within the boundary of the SPSRA and land owned by DFRC. From some snowmobilers' perspective, the proposed route along the eastern side of the property was more desirable both because it was a more interesting ride than the GST and because, in addition to providing a north-south linkage between the southern SPSRA boundary and Burma Road (which leads into Devil's Lake State Park), it would also enable riders to link to the trail that heads east to Merrimac. Several other people also noted their support for locating the snowmobile trail on the eastern side of the property to minimize the noise impact to the rest of the property.

A small number of respondents were opposed to any snowmobile trail on the property citing noise, pollution, and impacts to other visitors to the property.

Department response: The master plan was changed to eliminate the snowmobile use of the Great Sauk Trail alignment. The snowmobile route (generally on the existing trail's alignment) along the southern, eastern, and northern borders of the SPSRA was selected. See page 23.

c. Rocketry

People in support of launching rockets at SPSRA noted the need for safe sites in which to operate. These respondents also stated the value that the activity has in generating interest, particularly in high school, in the fields of science and engineering. People in support of rocketry also noted that there are no other legal launch sites on public properties in the region and that the closest public site is at the department's Richard Bong Recreation Area in Kenosha County.

Many respondents were opposed to allowing the launching of model and high powered rockets, citing a concern that the noise would have a negative impact on wildlife and other visitors' enjoyment of the property. Many people believed that rocketry was inconsistent with the department's original intentions for the property. Some people believed that launching rockets would lead to contamination, pollution, or could cause wildfires in surrounding grasslands.

Some horseback riders expressed concern that the proposed rocket launching site was too close to some equestrian trails; others suggested that they wouldn't visit the property when rockets were being launched because their horse would be too unsettled by the noise. The Dairy Forage Research Center expressed concern that the proposed location for rocket launching may result in rockets inadvertently landing on their lands and that in retrieving them, people may damage crops or research projects. In addition, the DFRC expressed concern for potential crop loss due to fires resulting from wayward rockets and the potential for rockets to damage their silage storage bags.

Department response: The master plan was changed to limit the number of days when rockets larger than model rockets could be launched to one day per year and that this day may not be between April 15 and July 31. The plan was also changed to restrict the number of days that rockets could be launched in the April 15 to July 31 period to two days and limited the number of rockets that may be launch during these

two days to 50/day. The distance that rockets could travel from the launch site was also limited by capping the launch height and requiring dual-parachute systems in launches that exceed 2,000 feet in height. See pages 31.

d. Hunting and trapping

A few people voiced opposition to hunting and trapping on the property. Some people recommended shortening the allowable time period for hunting to mid-November to May 1 to minimize conflicts with the anticipated large number of visitors pursuing other activities (such as biking, hiking, bird watching and horseback riding) in the fall and spring. This time period would correspond with the hunting seasons permitted in most state parks.

Department response: The master plan was changed to allow turkey hunting during the first three week-long periods only. The beginning of the hunting period at SPSRA was kept at mid-October to take advantage of pheasant hunting opportunities in the large grasslands. See page 28.

e. Dual-sport motorcycle use

People in support of repurposing trails and roads for motorcycles commented that there is very high demand for off-road riding opportunities that is currently underserved. Some advocates for off-road motorcycling were disappointed that a dedicated trail for motorcycles open throughout the year was not included in the draft master plan. Generally, it appeared that people who participate in dual-sport motorcycling wish there would have been more opportunities at SPSRA but were pleased to be included, albeit on a limited basis.

Some people in support of dual-sport motorcycling also noted that there are numerous opportunities for people to pursue quieter activities throughout the region.

Many people expressed concerns about the impacts that dual-sport motorcycles would have on wildlife. The most common concern was that the vehicles would disturb or displace animals, particularly birds, at the property. Many people were also concerned that the noise from dual-sport motorcycles would adversely impact other visitors and their enjoyment of the property. Some people stated that even the temporary use of motorcycles on the biking and equestrian trails would cause extensive damage to the trails leaving them unusable for their primary uses.

For safety reasons, the draft master plan proposes that the roads and trails temporarily (six days/year) repurposed for use by dual-sport motorcycles would be closed to other users. Some people opposed the temporary closure of these roads and trails and questioned what visitors interested in biking or horseback riding would do if they arrived at the property to find that many of the trails and roads were closed.

Dairy Forage Research Center requested that dual-sport motorcycle events be limited to weekends or holidays to minimize conflicts with the movement of farm vehicles and that the roads needed for their farm vehicles (see Map F, DFRC Accessway) not be repurposed for use by motorcycles.

Department response: The master plan was modified to provide clearer parameters for dual-sport motorcycle use of the property. The plan still calls for biking and equestrian trails to be repurposed for use by dual-sport motorcycles up to six days a year and that this use can only occur as part of a special event permitted by the department. To ensure that bikers and horseback riders visiting the property have opportunities at SPSRA, the master plan now clarifies that up to 50% of the biking and equestrian trails may be repurposed for motorcycle use and at least 50% would remain open for biking and equestrian use. The trails repurposed for dual-sport motorcycle use will be closed to all other uses during the six days.

Language was added clarifying that all riding must occur on trails or roads – no off-trail riding will be allowed – and that all motorcycles must be sound tested prior to being allowed on the trails. In addition, the days when the biking and equestrian trails will be repurposed will be limited to January 1 through mid-October with only two of these days allowed within the spring nesting period (April 15 to July 31). Finally, the number of dual-sport motorcycles that may use the trails is now limited to 100 riders per day and riding hours are limited to 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on the trails. See page 21.

The department will work with DFRC on the timing of special events for dual-sport motorcycles and the roads and trails that will be used to ensure that DFRC operations are minimally affected.

f. Mountain biking

People in support of incorporating mountain biking trails noted the demand for opportunities in the region and the current lack of trails. Some also noted the draw that mountain bike riding has with today's youth.

Several supported the potential to link to potential trails in Devil's Lake State Park, although some noted that trails should be constructed at SPSRA without waiting for connecting trails to be authorized at DLSP. Some people suggested adding more miles of trails in SPSRA to provide a better experience.

Some people voiced opposition to mountain biking trails because their use would lead to erosion and was generally inconsistent with managing the SPSRA for low impact uses.

Department response: The master plan was modified to increase the number of authorized mountain biking trails from five to ten miles. In addition, the plan now authorizes the construction of trails at SPSRA without having to wait for approval of connecting trails to DLSP. See page 25.

g. Hiking and walking

Several people requested additional hiking opportunities be developed, including long distance trails from both Lake Wisconsin and the Hillside Prairie north to the proposed visitor center and on up to the reservoir site. As can be seen below in the input on what people expected they would do at the property, hiking and walking were the top uses.

Department response: The master plan was modified to increase the number of authorized longer distance trails from five to twelve miles to be able to provide connections between the visitor center, Bluff Vista overlook, Lake Wisconsin overlook, and the Hillside Prairie in the Magazine Area. In addition, the plan was revised to authorize three miles of walking trails in the section of the Magazine Area (sub-units MA 2, MA4, and MA5) where dogs will be allowed off-leash. Five miles of shorter hiking "loop" trails remain in the master plan. See page 24.

h. Dog training, dog trialing, and off-leash dog use

Some people commented that there is an ongoing unmet need for Class 1 dog trialing grounds and that the 600-acre Magazine Area should be designated as such.

Some concern was raised that the proposed site for the Class 2 training ground is too brushy and wooded for practical training use. Other people were opposed to any dog training site on SPSRA and were specifically concerned that shooting firearms as part of training exercises (as occurs at other Class 1 and 2 dog training sites around the state and as would be allowed at SPSRA) would have an adverse impact on other visitors to the property, wildlife (particularly birds), and neighboring landowners.

There was a request to allow judges and/or marshals to be on horseback during dog trialing events.

Some people expressed concerns that off-leash dogs in the Magazine Area, where biking trails are proposed, would lead to conflicts (primarily dogs chasing bikers). Other people noted concern that off-leash dogs would negatively impact nesting birds and other wildlife. Finally, Dairy Forage Research Center (which owns land surrounding the Magazine Area) expressed concern that dogs might leave the east side of the Magazine Area and disrupt grazing research taking place on their land east of parcel MA3. DFRC requested that dogs be on-leash from April 1 to October 31 in the Magazine Area to reduce conflicts.

Department response: The master plan was modified to allow horseback riding by judges and marshals during dog trials and to restrict the off-leash area to just MA2, MA4, and MA5 to provide a wide buffer to DFRC's research cows. The department will continue working with DFRC to monitor any issues with dogs.

Clarifying language was added to the master plan that the department intends to remove brush and trees from the dog training ground (MA5) to improve the quality of training experiences here. No change was made to the plan preventing the discharge of firearms in the course of training dogs. See page 29.

i. Special events

Some people expressed concern that special events, depending on their nature, had the potential to impact visitors to the property and wildlife. Some respondents thought there should be more definition of what events would be allowed, number of participants, timing, and location.

DFRC expressed concern about the potential nature of these events and requested that any special events permitted be non-invasive, conducted on weekends or holidays, not result in people coming and going all day, and that the numbers of people participating not exceed available parking capacity.

Department response: The section of the master was modified to better explain the conditions under which special events will and will not be authorized. Clarifying language was added regarding where on the property special events may be authorized. See page 32.

j. Shooting range

Although a shooting range is not proposed in the draft master plan, the department recognizes the demand for additional publicly-available target shooting opportunities in controlled settings. As such, shortly after the master plan for SPSRA is finalized, the department intends to initiate an evaluation of its properties in Sauk County to identify a potential site for a shooting range. Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area will be included in this evaluation.

Nearly all of the people who commented on a potential shooting range voiced strong opposition. Some expressed frustration that the department had already received overwhelming feedback against locating a shooting range at SPSRA and that the department still appeared to leave it as an option for the future. Most of the opposition to a shooting range was focused on the noise it would generate and the adverse impact this would have on wildlife, other visitors to the property, and neighbors.

The National Park Service requested that if the department anticipated including a shooting range at SPSRA in the next 15 years that the potential impacts associated with this use be evaluated as part of the master plan.

Department response: The master plan was modified based on the department's recent proposal to potentially construct a public shooting range at one of three possible sites within the Lower Wisconsin

Riverway. Clarifying language was added to the master plan for how the department will proceed depending on the outcome of the proposal to construct a range at the Riverway. See page 34.

4. CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION

Only limited comments were received regarding the proposed management and interpretation of cultural and historic features. There was support for the proposed incorporation of various aspects of the property's history into visitor experiences.

Department response: No changes were made to the master plan based on public comments.

5. GENERAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, OR PROPERTY-WIDE ISSUES

Some respondents, including the Town of Merrimac, requested that access to the property be made available from STH 78. As was noted by some people, visitors arriving from the east side of the property would have to drive an additional 10 miles around to the entrance on USH 12, which some people thought was wasteful.

Several respondents encouraged the department to more clearly state its intent to manage SPSRA in collaboration and cooperation with the other owners of the former Badger Army Ammunition Plant property. Some suggested adding a section to the master plan that describes examples of how the landowners could work together on various projects.

Respondents noted the need for the department to monitor impacts of management actions and recreational uses of the property. Examples potentially include restoration of habitats and changes to populations of rare species, changes in the distribution of invasive species due to different types of recreation, impacts to wildlife from different types of recreation, and interactions among recreationists. Some people, as well as the National Park Service, noted the department's limited staffing and expressed concern about the agency's ability to adequately monitor visitors and enforce rules and regulations.

Some respondents stated that the land management classifications proposed were too skewed towards recreation and should be changed to reflect a greater emphasis of habitat management. In a similar vein, some people suggested changing the name of the property from the Sauk Prairie State Recreation Area to the Sauk Prairie Conservation Area or the Sauk Prairie Restoration Area to better reflect the goals of the property.

Dairy Forage Research Center expressed concerns related to the proposed uses of the Magazine Area. One concern was that the roads that the department proposes to allow the Center to drive farm equipment on did not appear adequately on the maps. A second concern was the potential for accidents if there is considerable traffic on the roads leading to and in the Magazine Area. A third concern was the potential for the public to trespass on DFRC land and disturb crops or research projects.

Several people noted the need to provide quiet places for people to relax, connect with the outdoors and hear natural sounds such as bird calls and the wind. They expressed concern that launching rockets and riding motorcycles, even on a limited basis, would detract from people's ability to experience quiet throughout the property.

An attorney representing the Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance expressed concern that some of the activities proposed are not consistent with the department's application to the National Park Service (NPS) to receive the property. Specifically, their perspective was that the department does not have the legal authority to allow the launching of rockets, riding motorcycles on repurposed roads and trails, dog training in a Class II training ground, and snowmobile riding on a trail through the middle of the property without approval from the NPS. Further,

their perspective was that if the department sought to allow these activities without NPS approval the SPSRA property would revert back to the National Park Service.

Department response: The department currently does not have legal access to SPSRA from STH 78 so is not in a position to provide public access from the east side of the property. The master plan was revised to adjust the project boundary so that the department can potentially acquire legal access from STH 78. Clarifying language was added that if the department is able to acquire access from STH 78 into the property that this access will be designed to prevent SPSRA from becoming a short-cut for traffic to move between STH 78 and USH 12. See pages 11 and 21.

Additional language was included regarding the department's intent to work closely with the other landowners of the former BAAP on areas of mutual interest. See page 13. Clarifying language was also added regarding monitoring and reporting the outcomes of management and use of the property.

The department shares the concern that existing staffing levels require the department to prioritize workload in ways that may result in some tasks not being addressed to the extent or as timely as desired. This is an issue across many department properties.

The department's goal is to restore and manage high quality habitats throughout the property, regardless of whether an area is classified as a "recreation management area" or "native community management area." The amount or distribution of the land management classifications does not affect this underlying goal. No change was made to the classifications or the proposed name of the property.

Changes were made to Map F to better indicate the access routes that will be provided to DFRC. The department will also continue working with DFRC on trespass and other issues to ensure that the public's use of SPSRA does not unacceptably impact DFRC operations.

Some department properties have more intensive uses (year-round or occasionally) while others only provide for less intensive uses. The department owns more land and public access easements in Sauk County than any other county in southern Wisconsin (over 30,000 acres); the vast majority of these lands only provide opportunities for low intensity activities. There is not a shortage of opportunities in Sauk County for people to enjoy low intensity, quiet, or remote experiences on lands open to the public. The department believes that the collection of recreation opportunities proposed for SPSRA, and the parameters by which they can occur, is consistent with the department's application to the FLP program.

6. FACILITIES

Some people requested that the department leave the east reservoir "as is" and leave the population of neotenic salamanders in the reservoir. Related to this, some people suggested reducing the size of the developed footprint at the reservoir site. It was suggested to move the proposed amphitheater to the visitor center grounds to more centrally locate the facility. Another suggestion was to reduce the size of the parking lot. People questioned why the agency would spend limited funds to raze the reservoirs when higher priority habitat management and restoration work was needed.

Some respondents, including the Town of Merrimac, requested that the entry road from STH 78 to the future Weigand's Bay day use area be moved off of its current alignment to a new alignment to the north, so as to shield it from the houses along Weigand's Bay South Road. In addition, the Town requested more parking be provided at or near the day use area and to eliminate the proposed overflow parking.

Department response: The master plan was modified to reduce the size of the proposed amphitheater at the reservoir site and to add a second one at the proposed visitor center. Clarifying language was added regarding the size of the developed “footprint” at the reservoir site. The need to address the safety concerns that the reservoirs present and their future removal was not changed. See page 27.

The master plan was also modified to authorize the realignment of the access road to Weigand’s Bay, to increase the size of the parking lot at the day use area, and to eliminate the overflow parking that was previously proposed. See page 86.

7. ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Several people stated that the descriptions of anticipated impacts from various factors, but most commonly recreation activities such as rocketry, motorcycle riding, dog training, and horseback riding, were not well explained or documented and needed to be expanded and clarified. It was suggested that these activities will have substantial environmental impacts that the department should disclose. The department was also requested to further explain the long-term, cumulative, and precedential impacts, as well as the potential alternatives and their impacts.

It was also suggested that a description of the anticipated impacts from the proposed Wisconsin Army National Guard use of the property be included.

Department response: The master plan was modified to include additional information about potential impacts from proposed habitat management techniques and recreational uses of the property. Information related to recreational uses included more detailed descriptions of potential impacts between people pursuing different recreation activities. In addition, additional information on potential impacts to neighboring landowners was added. Impacts associated with the WIARNG training use of SPSRA were also included. A bibliography of articles, reports, and research papers related to understanding potential impacts of recreation use was included as an appendix. See Chapter IV starting on page 127 and Appendix 5.

B. Concerns raised by the National Park Service

The National Park Service sent the department a letter May 3, 2016 listing a series of concerns, which are summarized here:

- The NPS expressed concern that many people were opposed to some forms of recreation that are proposed at SPSRA.
- As also noted by members of the public (described above), the NPS did not think the analysis of impacts in the initial draft EIS was adequately thorough. In particular, the NPS believed that the impacts from visitors engaged in some recreation activities would adversely affect wildlife and other visitors. The NPS also suggested that the EIS should be re-formatted to reduce confusion.
- The NPS stated a desire for the department to develop an alternative management proposal comprised only of the activities and actions included in the department’s application and program of utilization.
- The NPS considered a minimalistic “no action” alternative unreasonable because it would likely lead the NPS to consider the property to be in noncompliance with the department’s original justification for obtaining the property and would potentially put the SPSRA in jeopardy of reversion to the federal government.

- The NPS expressed concern that the department may not have adequate staffing to address the full range of recreation uses and conflicts that may emerge as well as take on the needed habitat management. They also stated a desire to see a more definitive timeline as to when different facilities would be built and habitat management actions would be undertaken.
- The NPS stated a concern that visitors engaged in some recreation activities (they cited dual-sport motorcycles as an example) would displace others from visiting the property.
- The NPS stated that Wisconsin Army National Guard use of the fenced in area around the main landfill would need to cease unless the U.S. Army modified their assignment (disposal) documents to reserve the right for the Guard to continue to use the site.
- The NPS expressed a desire to see the department either include a shooting range in the proposed master plan (along with an assessment of potential impacts) or to drop consideration of a range during the expected duration of the master plan (15 years).

Department response: Many of the revisions and clarifications that the NPS suggested were similar to those received from the public and have been addressed here.

The department is not able to develop an alternative proposal comprised only of the activities and actions included in the department's application and program of utilization because the POU didn't definitively include any specific suite of uses. Rather, the POU stated that the department would go through its standard property planning process to determine appropriate recreation activities and habitat management strategies.

The "no action" alternative was maintained, not because it is a desirable alternative but rather because it is a reasonable one for the department, the Natural Resources Board, and the public to consider given limited budget and staffing resources. Additional language clarifying that this alternative would likely lead the NPS to consider the property to be in noncompliance with the department's original justification for obtaining the property and would potentially put the SPSRA in jeopardy of reversion to the federal government was included.

In addition, more explanation of the department's approach to determining an appropriate mix of recreational uses at SPSRA (even if it resulted in temporary or permanent displacement of some visitors) was included.

The WIARNG is continuing to work with the NPS, the U.S. Army, and the General Services Administration on issues related to WIARNG training use at parcel V1.

Finally, master plans are not written to preclude the authority of future administrations or the Natural Resources Board from making decisions related to property management and use. The department's policy is to minimize variances and amendments to existing property master plans to the degree feasible, but in instances when conditions, needs, or opportunities change we recognize that modifications to master plans are sometimes necessary. If, in the ensuing 15 years, the department determines that adding or removing uses from the property is warranted, it will go through the process outlined in ch. NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code, to seek a change to the master plan. That process evaluates needs, opportunities, and impacts and includes opportunities for public input.

C. Potential use of the property.

The survey developed to gather feedback on the draft master plan asked about people's future use of the property. Of the 392 people who responded that they anticipated visiting the property, the following activities were likely to be pursued by at least 10% of visitors:

- Hiking or walking (74% of respondents anticipated hiking or walking at the property)
- Bird and other wildlife watching (51%)
- General sightseeing (49%)
- Photography (48%)
- Recreational biking (39%)
- Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing (36%)
- Horseback riding (20%)
- Automobile driving (20%)
- Dual-sport motorcycle riding (18%)
- Snowmobiling (16%)
- Hunting (13%)
- "Fat tire" biking (12%)
- Running or conditioning (12%)

In addition to the recreation activities that are proposed in the draft master plan, some respondents requested additional activities be included at SPSRA. Requests for ATV riding, 4x4 vehicle driving, and a shooting range were requested.

Department response: No changes were made to the draft master plan based on this information.

Figure 22: The Fred & Cora Steuber farm where East Rocket was built.



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