Rib Mountain State Park Master Plan Revision

and Environmental Assessment

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Bureau of Parks and Recreation

December, 2005

PR-665

This plan was approved by the Natural Resources Board in December, 2005

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Wisconsin
State Park System

Chapter One

Introduction and Overview

FORWARD

This Master Plan presents the future management and development of Rib Mountain State Park for the next 15 to 20 years. The Master Plan is the product of public participation, parks program input, site resource and historical data, and many other considerations. The most recent Master Plan for Rib Mountain State Park is now more than 20 years old. Department policy advises that master plans should be reviewed and revised every 15 to 20 years. This, along with the recent acquisition of additional land and other developments, has underscored the need for a Master Plan Revision. Consequently, the Natural Resources Board authorized preparation of this Master Plan for Rib Mountain State Park in October of 2002.

OVERVIEW OF THE PARK

Rib Mountain State Park is centrally located in the state, in Marathon County, adjacent to the City of Wausau within the limits of the Town of Rib Mountain, and is conveniently located near the intersection of Highway 51 and Highway 29.

Prior to the development of this Master Plan, the park was 1,528 acres in size with about 85 acres in private ownership. The park's defining and dominant feature is the mountain itself. The mountain, for which the State Park is named, is the highest natural feature in North Central Wisconsin. The mountain's eastern, southern and western slopes consist of steep, rocky, forested terrain. A popular ski hill area is located on the mountain's northern face.

The park attracts visitors from the local community as well as from across the state and the upper mid-west. People have always been drawn to the mountain to enjoy the breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside, or to hike in its natural setting. Others come to appreciate and study the mountain as one of the earth's oldest geologic formations and to enjoy its distinctive rock formations. During the winter season, thousands of visitors come to ski or snowboard the mountain's steep north face at the 406 acre ski area leased to the Granite Peak Corporation.

Except for the ski area, most of the park's intensive use areas and facilities are clustered along the more level terrain at the mountain's ridge top, where visitors can enjoy the scenic views of the surrounding landscape. A single narrow road provides the only vehicle access to the park facilities on top of the hill. The 60 acre ridge top area only encompasses about 4% of the park's total acreage. This area currently accommodates several buildings, parking areas, an outdoor amphitheater, an observation tower, a small campground, and several privately owned or leased areas for communications towers and associated buildings. Other park facilities extending out from the ridge include just over 13 miles of trails and day use areas.

Although Rib Mountain State Park once existed in a rural Marathon County, communities around the park continue to grow. Residential subdivisions and other types of development

continue to expand westward and now border much of the park on its northern, eastern and southern sides. Consequently, Rib Mountain State Park is quickly becoming an "island" of valuable green space that provides valuable recreational open space and conserves unique geological features, native ecological communities, and culturally important structures.

Recreational Features and Use

Thousands of people visit Rib Mountain State Park each year. Many come from across the state and the country, but most are from the local region near the park. For the most part, these are "day-use" visitors who come to take in the view from atop the mountain, climb its observation tower, hike its trails, observe nature, picnic, or participate in social gatherings. During the fall, thousands flock to the mountain to take in the brilliant "colorama" season. The park is also popular with local school groups in the spring and fall for classroom outings and nature study.

In recent years, the amphitheater has become a very popular site for weddings, concerts, lectures, and other social events. It is booked solid for most summer weekends, sometimes with weddings scheduled back to back, one in the morning, one in the afternoon. These are often not small affairs, with events often including up to 200 guests. The scheduling of these events, the direction of traffic / parking, and other related activities pose significant challenges for the park's staff.

Another recent trend has been the use of Park Road for exercise walking. Visitors, looking for an aerobic workout, park their cars at the base of the hill near the park entrance on County Highway "N" and either walk, run, or bike up the hill to improve their level of fitness.

Overall, the primary focus of the park has shifted to an increase in day use, with most people coming to the park from nearby communities. In the summer, overnight visitors stay at the park's small campground to enjoy the scenic views and the distinctive mountainous setting. The majority of campers travel to the park from the Upper Midwest, with the majority from points in Wisconsin. However, Rib Mountain is not a destination park in the same way that visitors travel long distances expressly to vacation at Devil's Lake or Peninsula State Parks. For travelers passing through the community, the park is an attractive stop over on the way to somewhere else. For others, it provides an inexpensive place to stay when attending area events such as the Wisconsin Valley Fair and Art in the Park. During these events, and on summer holiday weekends, nearly all campsites in the county, including the State Park, are filled.

Camping at Rib Mountain reached a peak in 1998 but has gradually declined since then. Presumably, this is because the campground no longer provides the quality and type of camping experience desired by today's campers. The small and closely spaced campsites, originally developed for tent camping, are not well suited to the demands of today's campers. Larger recreational vehicles (RVs) are now popular and campers often prefer more dispersed campsites with electrical and sanitation hook-ups. The community at large offers hundreds of campsites in county forest and park settings, most with full electrical service, some close to water, and others permitting a range of recreational opportunities that Rib Mountain State Park does not offer.

For as long as anyone can remember, downhill skiing has been a primary component of winter recreation at the park. From the 1930's, when the Civilian Conservation Corps cut the first ski runs in the park and constructed rope tows to assist skiers up the hill, downhill skiing has gradually grown to attract many thousands of visitors to the park each winter. The ski hill and its

visitors have become an important component of the overall winter tourism recreation economy of the region. Over the years, a succession of ski hill operators negotiated long term leases with the state to own and operate facilities on the ski hill. Today, Granite Peak Ski Corporation leases 406 acres of the State Park under the terms of a 30-year lease signed in 2000.

Other winter recreation activities in the park include hiking on designated snowshoe trails. These trails begin at the top of the mountain and course down its south side. Nature observation and taking in the views of winter in the Wisconsin River Valley are other popular activities. The park does not offer winter camping opportunities.

Excluding skiers, visitors to Rib Mountain State Park, have gradually declined in recent years from a peak of more than 180,000 in 1998 to just over 130,000 in 2001. In 2002 that decline appears have reversed as more than 137-thousand people visited the park through November 2002. Peak seasons for visitors include the May to August general summer season, with a large spike in visitors during the September and October period.

Physical and Biological Resources

The “mountain” on which Rib Mountain State Park is situated is a geologic feature referred to as a “monadnock” estimated to be at least 1.7 billion years old. The bedrock is Rib Mountain Quartzite that is predominately covered with a thin layer of silt loam soil. Distinctive rock outcrop formations emerge in the area at the top of the mountain. An 18-20 acre abandoned rock quarry is located near the western end of the park.

Most of the vegetation in the park consists of a mixture of northern hardwood tree species such as maple, oak, birch, basswood, a scattering of pine and hemlock, and a few aspen stands. Because of a 1910 crown fire that destroyed most of the canopy trees on the mountain, many trees today are of the same age. As these trees age, the shorter life-span tree species such as aspen and birch are declining and becoming vulnerable to insects and diseases. The normal regeneration rate of these species has been limited by the thin soils and steeply sloped ground at the site, as well as by deer over-browsing. The large deer population has also resulted in a dramatic reduction in the amount and diversity of shrubs and ground layer plants that would normally be found in this type of forest. Because much of the hardwood forest that once dominated the landscape surrounding the park has now been cleared for farming or development, Rib Mountain State Park remains as one of the few large blocks of closed canopy forest in the region. The park’s forest therefore serves as an important area for wildlife habitat and ecosystem protection.

The park also harbors several unique environments within its boundaries. On the park’s western and southwestern sides, there are some unique “micro-habitats” for rare species of flora and fauna where ground water seeps through some of the quartzite talus slopes. No federal or state listed endangered or threatened wildlife species are known to reside in the park, however, one Wisconsin threatened plant species and three Wisconsin special concern plant species have been found in the park. These species are primarily located on the park’s western and southwestern sides within the area to be designated as a State Natural Area.

Wildlife species commonly found in the park include white-tailed deer, gray squirrel, cottontail rabbit and raccoon. The mountain’s topography, its geographic location adjacent to the Wisconsin River Valley, and its closed canopy forest provide habitat for bird species commonly found in central Wisconsin’s northern hardwood forest. It also provides nesting and stopover habitat for migratory birds during annual migrations. Recently, several wild turkeys have taken

up residence in the park, and turkey vultures may be nesting on the rocky bluffs of the old 3M quarry.

According to the results of a recent study of the park, there are no known archeological sites. However, a number of historically significant park structures are known to exist within the park.

For more detailed information about the park's resources, please refer to Chapter 3- Supporting and Background Information.

SUMMARY OF PARK MANAGEMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND USE

Rib Mountain State Park will continue to provide a wide variety of opportunities for public recreation and education in a mountainous, rustic setting. The Master Plan will retain the majority of the existing recreational opportunities available within the park, and will provide several new facilities to enhance the visitor's experience of this unique setting. There will continue to be places for both active and passive types of outdoor recreational activities, places for social and educational events, and places for the quiet enjoyment of nature.

In the park's more developed area located along the mountain's ridge top, the Plan authorizes primarily day-use activities and facilities. The existing rustic campground, currently located in the busy and constricted area at the top of the hill, no longer provides the type and quality of camping experience desired by today's campers. The campsites are small and closely spaced and do not comply with current campground design standards. Therefore, the Plan designates the conversion of this area to a family and group picnic area with 8 family picnic sites and 5 group picnic shelters built along the northern bluff top. With their scenic views to the surrounding landscape, it is anticipated that these picnic shelters will be popular with visitors for all sorts of outdoor social events. Limited overnight camping will continue to be provided at the park with the addition of a new group campground and several hike-in campsites to be located in the more natural and secluded northwest corner of the park.

Currently, many of the park's facilities are in need of renovation or updating. Several improvement projects were postponed until the Master Plan had established a vision for the park and determined the future locations of buildings and other key elements. Consequently, the Plan outlines a number of facility development and improvement projects that will ensure Rib Mountain State Park provides the quality of recreational experience typical of the Wisconsin State Park System.

A number of modifications to the existing park facilities, and several new facilities will enhance both the existing recreational opportunities for public recreation and education and provide other public benefits. The improvements for the park are summarized in Table 1-1. The approximate future locations of existing and future recreational facilities are shown on Maps A, B and C. Refer to Chapter 2 for a more detailed description.

Table 1-1 Summary of Park Facilities

Existing Park Facilities to Remain	Modifications
A-Frame Park Office/Registration Booth	Remove and replace with a new PEVS building
Multi-Purpose Building	Relocate and remodel into an open-air group picnic shelter.
18 Family Picnic Sites	No change
CCC Group Picnic Shelter	No change
Interpretive Shelter	Renovate
30- site Rustic Campground	Convert to Family and Group Picnic Area with 5 group picnic shelters, 8 family picnic sites, 2 restroom buildings, and parking areas.
Existing Friend's Concession Stand	Remove and construct a similar structure adjacent to the outdoor amphitheater.
Existing Play Areas (2)	Reconfigure and renovate for ADA compliance
7 miles of Hiking Trails	No change
Existing 5 miles of Snowshoe Trails	No change
Club Managed Snowmobile Trail	No change
.6 mile Self-Guides Nature Trail	Reconfigure after construction of the new nature center.
60 ft. High Scenic Observation Tower	No change
NW Scenic Observation Deck	No change
SW Scenic Observation Deck	No change
Sunset Overlook Scenic Vista Point	No change
Outdoor Amphitheater	No change
Vault Toilet Buildings Near Amphitheater	Replace by remodeling existing shower building into a restroom.
2.5 Miles of Park Road and Parking Areas	Re-pave

New Park Facilities
New Park Water System
New Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) with an attached meeting room / temporary nature center.
Develop a new 1.5 mile long paved exercise walking path and parking area.
Develop a new rustic group campground with 3-4 hike-in primitive campsites on the NW side of the Park, with a gravel access road, gate, and 12-stall gravel parking area.
Develop approximately 2 miles of new primitive hiking / snowshoe trails on the NE and NW sides of the Park and a new hiker parking area / trailhead.
Construct a new nature center building and related site improvements.
Construct 3 new group picnic shelters and a restroom building in the northwest parking area

It is estimated that the total cost of park improvements will be approximately $6.5 million (in 2005 dollars). This cost will be distributed over a period of 10-15 years or more. Refer to page 60 for a complete listing of the development costs of the park improvements and associated costs. Refer to Table 2-2 for recommendations regarding the phased implementation of capital development projects.

The Plan designates the following management zones. These zones are shown on Map A and the management and facilities for each are described in Chapter Two.

- Active Recreation Zone
- Scenic Recreation Zone
- Natural Recreation Zone
- State Natural Area Zone
- ECB Public Communications Tower Special Management Area
- Marathon County Public Communications Tower Special Management Area

The majority of the park's existing native vegetation is located in the Natural Recreation Zone and State Natural Area (SNA). The vegetation in these areas are passively managed to maintain the northern hardwood forest community for wildlife habitat, scenic quality, public enjoyment and education, and other ecological benefits. Because it contains the highest concentration of rare plants in the park, the vegetation in the SNA is preserved in its natural condition. This area also serves as a "benchmark area" to study the natural processes of the northern hardwood forest. Recreational uses in these areas are limited to low impact types such as hiking, wildlife viewing, snowshoeing and hunting.

The vegetation that occurs in the 60 acre Scenic Recreation Zone, located on the mountain's ridge, top is managed through a combination of active and passive management practices. Fallen, damaged, diseased and declining trees in this area will be periodically removed or selectively thinned to maintain a scenic and safe condition. Selected areas will receive improvement thinnings and some areas will be planted to encourage regeneration of the most desired tree species.

To provide for the long-term protection of key park resources and to allow for improved delivery of recreational opportunities, the master plan designates an expansion of the park's project boundary by approximately 700 acres (see Chapter Two- "Real Estate Management- Project Boundary"). This brings the park project boundary to 2,228 acres (see Maps A and D). The existing leased areas within the park are managed according to the terms of the Lease Agreements.

SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The development of a new Master Plan for Rib Mountain State Park has generated much public interest, both local and statewide. Information about the developing Master Plan was disseminated and public input was solicited through a variety of mediums including news releases, newspaper articles, mailings, and a Master Plan web site. Also, several publicly noticed, informational meetings and listening sessions were held at key stages in the Master Plan's development. Consequently, the Master Plan's public involvement process has provided the public with opportunities to participate throughout the master planning process. Chapter Five of the Part Two Environmental Assessment contains a more detailed summary and chronology of the public involvement component of the master planning process.

SUMMARY OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

An Environmental Assessment has been prepared as a part of the Master Plan for Rib Mountain State Park. It addresses potential impacts of actions outlined by the Master Plan, ranging from land acquisition and facility development to management and operation of the park. The Environmental Assessment concludes that the implementation of the Master Plan will provide positive recreational, ecological, social, and economic benefits to the region with minimal adverse impacts.

CHAPTER TWO

MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

Designated Property Name: Rib Mountain State Park

Property Designation: State Park

Statutory Authority: Chapter 27, Wis. Stats.

Current Acreage within Project Boundary: 1,528 acres

Acreage within the Expanded Project Boundary: 2,228 acres

Tribal Treaty Rights: The park is not in the Ceded Territory claimed by Chippewa Indian tribes for hunting, fishing and gathering rights.

INTRODUCTION

The Plan described in this Chapter (also referred to as the "Recommended Management Alternative") was developed in consideration of the following:

- Compliance with the requirements applying to the property's designation as a State Park as defined in Administrative Code, Chapter NR 45 and Chapter 27 of the Wisconsin Statutes.
- Consistency with the Draft Vision Statement and Property Goals.
- The findings of the Assessment of Alternatives in the Environmental Assessment.
- Public comments received regarding the Management Alternatives (refer to the Environmental Assessment: "Summary of Public Input Received at and Following the May 20, 2004"in the Master Plan Alternatives: Public Informational Meeting / Listening Session").
- Input received from the WDNR master planning team, including: property staff, Department interdisciplinary "specialists", Bureau of Parks and Recreation administrators, and other Division administrators (see "Team Directory" page i).
- Input received from other jurisdictional public agencies and governing bodies.
- The scientific information gathered to inform and guide the master plan's decision making, including the information contained in the "Regional Analysis" (Daniels, D., et all. 2004) and information contained in the references listed in the Bibliography.
- Compliance with the requirements of the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program. [Land & Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (*Public Law 88-578, 78 Stat 897)*] The WDNR agreed to this obligation when accepting federal funds for the acquisition and development of the park from 1974-1978.

PROPERTY VISION STATEMENT

Rib Mountain State Park contains the regional landmark of Rib Mountain, which rises 640 feet above the surrounding landscape. It provides some of the most expansive vistas and unique geologic features within the Wisconsin State Park System. The park provides a place to enjoy these scenic views and other recreational, educational and social experiences. In addition to serving the state and the central Wisconsin region, the park is strongly linked to the adjacent communities, providing valued natural open space and outdoor recreational opportunities within a growing urban setting. The park also conserves Rib Mountain's unique geological features, native ecological communities, and culturally important structures and trails.

MANAGEMENT GOALS

1. Provide large, undeveloped spaces for quiet, solitude and the enjoyment of the natural surroundings.
2. Maintain and enhance the scenic viewing opportunities from within the park.
3. Maintain and enhance natural aesthetic character within the park, with an emphasis on native vegetation.
4. Limit park facility development to preserve the majority of the existing natural forest habitat.
5. Develop, maintain and enhance park buildings, structures and signs to have a unified aesthetic character that is harmonious with the natural surroundings and recognizes the park's historic character.
6. Provide modest concession services, operated by non-profit organizations, which meet park standards of design, service and hospitality.
7. Provide compatible, year-round, active and passive, non-motorized outdoor recreational and educational opportunities that are suited to the physical and ecological characteristics of the property.
8. Expand the existing hiking trail system into the western end of the park, and work with County and Municipal recreational planners to provide connections to adjacent county and municipal trails and nearby recreation lands.
9. Provide and manage spaces for cultural and educational programs and social events that are compatible with other uses and recognize the park's limited amount of level terrain and parking space.
10. Maintain a high quality, diverse, northern hardwood forest community dominated by larger diameter, mature trees. This forest community will provide public enjoyment and education, scenic quality, wildlife habitat and other ecological benefits.
11. Preserve areas of geological and cultural significance and provide appropriate interpretive opportunities.
12. Protect and mitigate any impacts to known rare, threatened and endangered species or species of special concern.

LAND MANAGEMENT CLASSIFICATIONS

The park is divided into designated management zones according to the primary management focus or use outlined for each of the areas. The management zones are shown on the "Management Zone and Facilities Map" (Map A). Enlargements of key areas are indicated on Maps B and C. Each zone is assigned a land management classification according to Chapter NR 44.06 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. Each zone's classification is shown below in Table 2-1. The specific management and development for each zone are detailed in the following pages.

TABLE 2-1: NR 44 Land Management Classifications for Each Management Zone as indicated on the "Management Zone and Facilities Map" (Map A)

Management Zone	Land Management Classification	Recreational Use Setting Class	Approx. Acreage
Scenic Recreation Zone	Recreation Management Area	Type 4	60 acres
Active Recreation Zone (Ski Hill Lease Area)	Recreation Management Area	Type 4	406 acres
Natural Recreation Zone	Recreation Management Area	Type 3	840 acres
State Natural Area	Native Community Management Area	N/A	215 acres
ECB Public Communications Tower Lease Area	Special Management Area	N/A	1 acre*
Marathon County Communications Tower Lease Area	Special Management Area	N/A	.03 acre*

*Acreage is approximate. At this time, the exact size and legal description of this lease area has not been determined.

MANAGEMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND USE FOR EACH MANAGEMENT ZONE

SCENIC RECREATION ZONE

NR44 Classification: Recreation Management Area- Type 4 Recreational Use Setting

Description:
The Scenic Recreation Zone includes a 60 acre area located on the mountain's ridge top. The zone also includes an approximately 150-foot wide strip of land extending southeast along Park Road to the intersection of Violet Lane. It includes the majority of the existing recreational facilities and other structures including an outdoor amphitheater, a public entrance visitor station, a day use picnic area, a scenic observation tower, parking areas and several communication towers and buildings. The terrain in this area is level to moderately sloping. It is mostly wooded with an even-aged cover of northern hardwoods, and white birch. In several areas there are distinctive rock formations such as the "Queen's Chair". For more information, refer to the area indicated on the "Management Zones and Facilities Map" (Map A) as the "Scenic Recreation Zone".

Recreation Management Objectives and Actions:

- **Provide opportunities for scenic viewing:**

  The following actions will be used to meet this objective:
  Continue to maintain the following:
  - The Scenic Observation Tower
  - The NW and SW Scenic Observation Decks
  - Sunset Overlook Scenic Vista
  - Sunrise Overlook Scenic Vista

- **Provide opportunities for large group picnics and outdoor social events in a wooded setting.**

  The following actions will be used to meet this objective:
  - Construct a new open-air group picnic shelter to accommodate groups up to 60, located in the wooded area on the south side of Park Road approximately 300-yards west of the PEVS parking area as generally indicated on Conceptual Site Plan- Map B. The salvaged multi-purpose building frame will be reconstructed on a new concrete foundation, and a new roof will be constructed. Electrical service will be provided in the shelter with a large grill, fire ring and approximately 8 picnic tables. Water will be provided in the vicinity.

  - Maintain the outdoor amphitheater with seating for 200.

- Construct a new system of disabled accessible concrete walkways and ramps leading from the parking areas to the amphitheater as shown on the Conceptual Site Plan – Map B. Site work will include: 3 flagpoles, exterior light fixtures and pole mounted parking area lights, walkway lighting, walkways, paths, landscape boulders, landscape plantings, lawn areas, and a new entrance sign.

- Construct a 4-unit restroom building with vault toilets on the north side of the shelter.

- Construct a 25-stall parking area and access drive on the shelter's west side.

- **Provide opportunities for a variety of family and small group picnics and outdoor social events in a wooded setting with or near scenic vistas.**

  The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

  - Convert the existing, non-compliant 30-site rustic family campground area to a family and group picnic area as generally indicated on Conceptual Site Plan- Map B, that includes the following:
    - 8 rustic family picnic sites to accommodate up to 10 guests, each with 1 accessible and 1 standard picnic tables and 1 grill.
    - 3 medium group picnic shelters to accommodate up to 20 guests, each with 2 accessible and 4 standard picnic tables, 1 large grill and 1 electrical outlet.
    - 2 large group picnic shelters to accommodate up to 40 guests, each with 2 accessible and 4 standard picnic tables, 2 large grills and 2 electrical outlets.
    - A play area in compliance with current disabled accessibility and other design standards.
    - 2 new drinking fountains with hose bibbs in the vicinity of the group picnic shelters.
    - A paved parking area with up to 30 stalls, centrally located in the new day-use picnic area.
    - Dispersed gravel parking for up to 35 vehicles in the future day-use picnic area adjacent to family picnic sites and group picnic shelters.

  - Redevelop the Northwest Parking Area as generally indicated on Conceptual Site Plan- Map C to include the following:
    - Refigure the existing 70-stall NW parking area, converting approximately 15 stalls on the north side and 15 stalls on the south side to 6 landscaped areas
    - Construct 3 group picnic shelters to accommodate parties of up to 24 in the 3 converted landscaped areas on the parking area's north side.
    - Construct a 4-unit vault toilet building with an exterior drinking fountain on the parking area's south side.
    - Remove the existing stairways and construct 2 new concrete stairways with handrails and adjacent landscaping.

- **Provide a "fully developed trail" for use by exercise walkers and joggers, (separated from vehicular traffic) from Violet Lane to the top of the hill.**

  The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

  - Construct a new paved walking path, approximately 1.5 miles in length extending from the corner of Violet Lane to the new PEVS. The path will run parallel on the south side of Park Road. Depending upon additional engineering study, the path may either be:

    1. constructed by adding 5-feet of additional pavement width to Park Road that would be striped and signed as a pedestrian walking path, or,

    2. Constructed as an 8-foot wide pedestrian walking path, to be separated by a level to steeply sloping buffer of existing vegetation that varies from 10-150 feet wide. The surface will be smoothly graded. The slope of the path will be similar to Park Road, which varies from 4% to 9%.

  - If necessary, a paved parking area for visitors using the exercise walking path, may be constructed on the south side of Park Road approximately 100-feet west of the Park Road / Violet Lane intersection with up to 12 stalls and a self-registration kiosk. A buffer of existing trees and plant evergreens would be maintained between the parking area and Park Road and on the on the east, south and south sides of the parking area to partially buffer views.

- **Provide approximately 1-mile of primitive* hiking / snowshoe trails within the Scenic Recreation Zone**

  The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

  - Maintain and modify, as needed, the existing primitive trail* network in the management area. (Additional primitive hiking / snowshoe trails are also located in the Natural Recreation Zone).

  ***** A primitive trail is defined in NR 44.07(3)(e) as …"*a minimally developed single-file trail with a maximum sustained cleared width normally not exceeding 8 feet and a maximum tread width of 4 feet, and may have a rough, ungraded bed where large rocks, stumps, and downed logs may be present. It primarily follows the natural topography, has no or few shallow cuts and fills, and is surfaced with wood chips, except for limited distances where environmental conditions require the use of other materials. Modifications to the natural trail surface are limited to that which is minimally necessary to provide essential environmental protection."*

- **Provide varied, high-quality Park interpretive and educational facilities and programs that prominently focus on the Park's history, natural features, cultural features, and unique geological features.**

  The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

  - Construct a nature center building on the western end of the Scenic Recreation Zone in the vicinity of the existing observation tower that serves as an educational and recreational focal point for the park. The building will be sited to provide access to the park's highest concentration of interpretive and educational features and to provide scenic vistas if possible. The nature center building will include: public restrooms, a nature center exhibit area and an outdoor deck with table seating. The building may also include a modest Friend's concession space for the sale of pre-prepared food, beverages, nature literature and merchandise, a winter sports equipment rental area and a meeting / classroom space to accommodate groups up to 80, with a sink, projection screen, audio-visual equipment and an equipment / storage room. Use of or rental of the meeting / classroom space will be limited to: interpretive / educational gatherings, Department and State Agency meetings, non-profit recreational / park events and use by park related organizations, including the Friends of Rib Mountain. The meeting room space will not be offered for use or rental for social events such as wedding receptions, banquets or private parties.

  - Other site improvements will include:
    - An interpretive nature trail (see below).
    - Walkways, informational kiosk, landscaping and other site improvements as generally shown on the Conceptual Site Plan – Map C.
    - An adjacent parking area with up to 20 stalls and 4 RV / bus stalls as generally shown on Conceptual Site Plan – Map C.
    - Reconfigure, re-pave and re-stripe the existing SW parking area to include up to 28 stalls as generally indicated on Conceptual Site Plan – Map C.

  - Develop a new Park Interpretive and Education Plan that updates and expands upon the park's existing Interpretive Plan. The themes and significant features identified in the property interpretive plan will then be used to determine appropriate interpretive media for facilities, such as:
    - The nature center with exhibits on the nature trail system.
    - The remodeled interpretive kiosk (near the observation tower) with new interpretive exhibits that will provide opportunities for disabled visitors.
    - The existing scenic observation tower and decks.
    - The abandoned quarry area.

  - Develop an approximately 1-mile long system of new interpretive trails with exhibits designed according to the new Park Interpretive and Education Plan. Whenever possible the new nature trails will utilize existing trails. At least ½ mile of the trail will be accessible to people with disabilities.

  - Preserve and interpret the existing historic structures constructed by the CCC (log picnic shelter, gazebo, stone drinking fountain, stairs to the Sunrise Overlook, the CCC hiking trails and retaining wall). These structures will be maintained and renovated as needed in a manner that preserves or replicates their original design, materials and construction methods.

- **Provide quality, essential visitor services and facilities:**

  The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

  - Construct a new Park Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) as generally indicated on Conceptual Site Plan- Map B. The PEVS will include:
    - Space for a drive-up window, an interior reception desk, public restrooms and park office space. The PEVS may also include: an attached meeting room approximately 20' x 30' in size that will also function as a temporary nature center until the new nature center building is completed. Interpretive exhibits and displays used in this space will be designed according to the Park Interpretive and Education Plan.
    - A pull-thorough short-term visitor parking area adjacent to the PEVS with 7- 12' x40' stalls) as generally indicated on Conceptual Site Plan- Map B.
    - Approximately .5 miles of paved road creating a looping road system around the future PEVS) as generally indicated on Conceptual Site Plan- Map B

  - General improvement of existing park roads and parking lots:
    - Repave, resign, and re-stripe approximately 2.5 miles of the existing road and repair or replace the existing guardrail extending along sections of the road's south side to provide safe and efficient vehicular and bicycle circulation and access to the park.
    - Construct a new 150-foot long section of 16-foot wide paved road) as generally indicated on Conceptual Site Plan- Map C linking the northwest and southwest ends of Park Road, forming a one-way loop. (This will occur after removal of the old park shelter building and the completion of the Marathon County communications tower Project.)
    - Maintain and renovate existing parking areas totaling approximately 162 stalls as generally indicated on Conceptual Site Plans- Maps B and C. The work will include repaving, resigning, and re-striping the 3 existing parking areas (approximately 112 stalls), and paving the existing gravel amphitheater parking area (approximately 50 stalls).

  - Provide potable water service to the existing and future park buildings, restrooms, drinking fountains and to the ECB equipment building.

  - A small Friend's concession stand or vending machine enclosure (up to 16' x 16' in size) is authorized to be constructed approximately 30 – 100 feet SW of the existing amphitheater for the sale of pre-prepared food, beverages and park related merchandise, pending the development of a revised Friends group concession agreement. The concession stand may include up to 6 adjacent picnic tables or an attached deck up to 16' by 16' in size with picnic table seating.

  - Maintain and renovate as necessary 4 existing vault toilet and 1 flush toilet restroom buildings including modifications to comply with accessibility design standards.

  - Provide park directional signs on entrance highways to clearly identify park entrances and provide clear directions to the visitor. Specifically, the following signs will be added:

  - A park directional sign on the southwest west corner of Violet Lane and C.T.H. N. (Hummingbird Way), and a new park entrance sign (with new landscaping) located on the southwest corner of Violet Lane and Park Road.
  - A park directional sign on the south side of the Grouse Lane / C.T.H. NN intersection, and 1 park entrance sign at the Grouse Lane park entrance.

- **Provide facilities for maintenance and storage of equipment and office space for Park personnel.**

  The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

  - Remove the 2 existing wood maintenance buildings. Remodel and expand the existing metal shop building to include 2 additional heated parking bays, staff restrooms, an emergency shower, and staff lunch room.

  - Construct a 6-foot high wood fence and vehicle gates, and plant evergreen trees (see Landscape Plantings) to screen views of the maintenance / shop building and service area from Park Road.

Recreation Management Objectives and Actions:

- **Maintain the area's vegetation in a neat, park-like, semi-natural condition to provide for public enjoyment, education, scenic quality, wildlife habitat and other ecological benefits.**

  The following actions will be used in this area to meet this objective:

  - Selectively thin trees and remove dead, damaged, declining or diseased vegetation to provide conditions for healthy tree growth and allow adequate light for the maintenance of lawn. Use tree removal methods that minimize negative aesthetic impacts.

  - Remove trees as needed to allow for the construction of new facilities or the renovation of existing facilities.

  - Where soil conditions, tree spacing and light penetration allows, under-plant the declining stand of birch in the area surrounding the observation tower with birch seedlings in deer protection tree tubes.

  - As needed, selectively thin and remove existing trees to open views at key vista areas while maintaining a natural appearing transition to adjacent wooded areas.

  - Plant additional trees, shrubs and lawns in and surrounding the selected areas within the Scenic Recreation Zone to provide aesthetic enhancement, screen unwanted views, or increase the privacy of adjacent property owners. These plans are generally indicated on Conceptual Site Plans-Maps B and C. The landscape plantings will be primarily native and endemic to the northern hardwood community, except when non-native species are required for aesthetic or practical reasons such as resistance to deer browse. Trees used for screening will be evergreens such as white spruce and black hills spruce and balsam fir.

- Plant and maintain lawn areas in high foot-traffic areas, such as the areas surrounding group picnic shelters or family picnic sites, and the area surrounding the PEVS and amphitheater parking areas and road margins as generally indicated on Conceptual Site Plans Maps B and C.

ACTIVE RECREATION ZONE

NR44 Classification: Recreation Management Area- Type 4 Recreational Use Setting

Description:
The Active Recreation Zone includes a 406 acre area located on the mountain's north facing slope (refer to Map A) that is leased through year 2030 to Granite Peak Corporation for the operation of an alpine ski area and ancillary facilities under an existing 30-year, renewable agreement. It is 406 acres in size and is located on the northern face of Rib Mountain. A ski area has been in operation on the northern side of Rib Mountain since 1929. In accordance with the existing lease agreement, permitted uses include: alpine skiing, snow boarding, snow tubing, cross-country skiing and other winter activities with an outdoor recreational focus. Secondary, compatible non-snow season outdoor recreation uses are encouraged and they may include activities like mountain biking, horseback riding and special events which do not create a significant negative impact to adjacent neighbors.

Management:
The management of the Active Recreation Zone is governed by the terms of the existing Lease Agreement, which stipulates that the DNR continues to "provide administrative oversight through the Lease in order to ensure the public's rights, title and interest and protected by the Lessee". No changes in management of the ski area are proposed.

NATURAL RECREATION ZONE

NR44 Classification: Recreation Management Area- Type 3 Recreational Use Setting

Description:
This area includes 840 acres located on the east, west, and south sides of the mountain. This area consists primarily of moderate to steeply sloping terrain with an even-aged vegetative cover of northern hardwoods, white birch and aspen. Some rock outcrops, boulder fields and talus slopes occur on the upper slopes. The area includes the abandoned 18 acre quarry located on the western side of the management area. The quarry has been inactive for over 10 years and much of the quarry floor and slopes are being re-vegetated naturally by pioneer species such as white birch and aspen.

Recreation Management Objectives and Actions:

- **Provide opportunities for solitude, hiking, snowshoeing, nature / wildlife viewing and the enjoyment of scenic vistas in a secluded, mountainous, forested setting on the northeast and northwest sides of the Park.**

The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

- Maintain approximately 7 miles of existing primitive hiking / snow trails.

- Construct approximately 1 mile of new primitive hiking trails extending approximately ½ mile to the northwest and ½ mile to the southeast from the "high line" parking area. Provide 2 scenic vistas at the NW and SE ends of the trails.

- Construct a gravel parking area with up to 12 stalls and a self-registration kiosk, located on the area north of the intersection of Park Road and the existing "high line" utility easement. Plant evergreen trees on the south side of the parking area to buffer views from Park Road.

- Develop approximately 3 miles of new primitive hiking / snowshoeing trails, that extend from the existing hiking trails located near the observation tower, west to the quarry area and the south end of Grouse Lane (see Map A).

- **Provide approximately 1.5-miles of club managed connector snowmobile trail across the southwest corner of the Park.**

The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

- Retain approximately 1.5 miles of the existing snowmobile trail and coordinate the installation of DNR standard trail markers and signs directing riders to stay on the designated trail. Adjust the alignment of the trail (per Map A) to maintain a 50'- 100' buffer from the State Natural Area.

- **Provide opportunities for rustic group camping and hike-in rustic camping at 3-4 sites in a secluded and forested setting.**

The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

- Construct a rustic group campground located approximately ¼ mile southwest of the existing gate at the south end of Grouse Lane (see Map A). The group campground will be designed to accommodate a maximum of 60 campers in 3 sub-camping areas (20 campers each) surrounding a central "gathering" area with a fire ring, picnic table, rustic bench seating, vault toilet building, and hand-pump water well. Vehicle access will be limited to the loading and unloading of disabled campers and supplies.

- Develop a gravel surfaced, "lightly developed" road extending ½ mile south from the south end of Grouse Lane to the rustic group campground. The road will be closed to public use except for loading and unloading of supplies and equipment, and for access by disabled campers.

- Develop a gravel parking area with up to 12 stalls located approximately 700 feet southwest of the existing gate at the south end of Grouse Lane. Construct a self-registration trailhead kiosk and a new lockable vehicle gate on the south end of the parking area.

- Develop 3-4 primitive, somewhat remote, walk-in campsites spaced at least 300 ft. apart.

Vegetation Management Objectives and Actions

- **Maintain the northern hardwood forest community dominated by larger diameter, mature trees.**

The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

- Allow the forest community to move along natural successional lines without human intervention except in the following cases when trees need to be removed:
  - To maintain public safety.
  - To selectively clear areas as needed for the group campground.
  - To allow the development of the Grouse Lane parking area.
  - To respond to catastrophic events as provided in the "Property-Wide Management Policies".

Encourage the natural re-vegetation of the 18 acre abandoned stone quarry and provide opportunities for hiking, wildlife viewing and interpretation of geologic features.

The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

- Spread reclamation seeding on the quarry's talus slopes and floor. Blend 1 part of the reclamation seed mix (see Appendix B) with 10 parts moistened sawdust and hand broadcast on the quarry's talus slopes and on the quarry floor. Document and provide evidence of the completion of the reclamation seeding to Marathon County and request a letter stating that DNR has fulfilled the quarry reclamation requirements.

- Avoid the introduction of invasive or exotic species, avoid damaging the existing vegetation.

- Develop an approximately ¼ mile long interpretive trail loop on the quarry's floor with interpretive exhibits according to the new Park Interpretive and Education Plan.

- Rock climbing will be prohibited in the abandoned quarry area as rock conditions have been determined to be unstable and unsuitable for climbing.

RIB MOUNTAIN TALUS FOREST STATE NATURAL AREA

NR44 Classification: Native Community Management Area

Description:
The Rib Mountain Talus Forest- State Natural Area (SNA) includes a 215 acre area located on the southwestern and western sides of the park. (Refer to the State Natural Area indicated on Map- A) The geology, soil conditions and vegetative cover in this area are similar to other areas of the park, except that this area contains the highest concentration of rare plants in the park. There are several areas of quartzite talus, some of which have artesian seeps. These areas provide unique micro-habitats for many rare species of flora and fauna.

The State Natural Area Program:
The Department of Natural Resources manages a variety of property types each with a different legal purpose. These property types include State Forests, Wildlife Areas, State Parks and State Natural Areas. The State Natural Area (SNA) system represents the wealth and variety of Wisconsin's biological diversity. The SNA Program, governed by Wis. Statute 23.28, provides a system of ecological reference areas for research, education, and assures the long-term maintenance of our state's biological diversity. SNAs are unique in state government in that they can exist as stand alone properties with a narrow focus on the SNA program, or they can be designated as portions of other publicly owned properties. The Endangered Resources program works cooperatively with property managers to coordinate educational, monitoring and research activities. The 215-acre State Natural Area within Rib Mountain State Park is an "overlay" designation and therefore does not change the State Park designation of that portion of the property, according to Chapter 27 of the Wisconsin Statutes.

Management Objectives:

- **Preserve and protect the highest concentration of rare plants in the Park, including the quartzite talus slopes and seeps that provide habitat for many rare species, and provide opportunities to study the natural processes of the forest and the micro-habitats.**

  Authorized Management:
  - No vegetation management activities are allowed except for:
    - The removal of fallen trees obstructing designated trails or "hazard" trees adjacent to designated trails.
    - The control of invasive exotic species.

  - Only the recreational uses of primitive hiking, snow shoeing or hunting will be allowed in the State Natural Area.

ECB PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS TOWER LEASE AREA

NR44 Classification: Special Management Area

Description:
An area, approximately two acres in size (the exact boundary has not yet been finalized) at the top of the mountain is currently leased through 2017 to the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board under an existing 15-year renewable agreement to a site for a 600-foot high public radio, and public television communications tower, and an associated equipment building.

Management:
The ECB lease area is closed to public recreational use. The area is managed according to the terms of the lease. No management changes will occur.

MARATHON COUNTY PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS TOWER LEASE AREA

NR44 Classification: Special Management Area

Description:
A 36' x 21' area at the top of the mountain is currently leased to Marathon County through 2012 as a site for their existing 100-foot high public communications tower and associated equipment. A new lease is currently being negotiated with Marathon County to provide an area approximately 1,300 square feet in size in the vicinity of the existing tower to allow for the construction of a replacement tower and equipment building, in order to provide essential "911" emergency, and other federally mandated law enforcement communication capabilities. Refer to Map C for the approximate future location.

The replacement of the Marathon County communications tower will be a free standing (no guy wires) steel frame type tower, 160 feet in height. The tower will have a number of microwave dishes, antennas and aircraft warning lights mounted at or near its top. The tower will include a lightning protection / grounding system. The transmitter / equipment building will be approximately 12' x 20' and will be located adjacent to tower. The building's exterior will be designed to blend with the natural surroundings. An area approximately 1,300 square feet in size (0.03 acres) will closed to public recreational use and fenced to provide security and screen views to any outdoor equipment. Prior to development, measurements will be taken to minimize the disturbance to the site's trees, plants and natural rock outcrops. A number of evergreen trees will be planted to visually buffer the tower and building from adjacent use areas.

The existing tower will remain in place and operable until the completion of a replacement tower and equipment building. It is anticipated that at that time the existing tower will be removed and the lease for this area will be terminated. A determination will be made regarding the historical significance of the equipment building and it will either be demolished or preserved according to that determination.

PROPERTY-WIDE MANAGEMENT POLICIES

The following Property-Wide Management Policies apply to all of the Management Zones excluding lands in private ownership and leased areas.

Funding Constraints: The ability to implement any Master Plan element will depend on the budgetary authorization granted to the Department of Natural Resources by the Wisconsin legislature and the Governor and the availability of state and federal funding sources.

Refuse Management: Wisconsin State Parks have a carry-in, carry-out, policy for refuse and recyclables in day use areas.

Motorized Recreation: No motorized Off-Road Vehicles will be allowed to operate in the park, except for snowmobiles operated on the designated trail.

Bicycles: Policy regarding the use of bicycles on Department lands is defined in NR45.05(3)(e) Bicycles: "...bicycles are prohibited on all Department lands except on public highways, and areas or trails posted for their use".

Rock Climbing: Department policy regarding rock climbing on Department lands is defined in NR 1.33 and "Rock Climbing Policy for DNR-Managed Properties", (Appendix H).

Communications Towers: Leasing of Department land for private use and/or by private entities is prohibited by law [see s. NR 1.48(1)] with the exception that "the secretary may execute leases for public use or public benefit..." [per NR 1.48(2)]. Future requests for Department approval of public communications towers and facilities other than the Marathon County tower project, will constitute a change in the management classification for the future tower site to a special management area (NR44). Further, additional communications towers and facilities are not consistent with the "primary purpose" of a State Park as providing "areas for public recreation and for public education in conservation and nature study" (Wis. Statute Ch. 27.01).

Therefore, additional communications tower projects and related leases require the Secretary's execution of a lease "for public use or benefit", and the Natural Resources Board's approval of a "Master Plan amendment" as defined in NR44. Additional communications tower projects shall also require compliance with Department policy as defined in "Telecommunication Towers and Tower Leases on Department Lands" (Appendix C).

The Department has a legal obligation to comply with the provisions and requirements of the Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Program for every management unit that LWCF funds have been used in, including Rib Mountain State Park. The most basic requirement is that the management unit acquired or developed with L&WCF assistance must be retained and used for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity. Conversion to another use is prohibited. [Section 6(f) (3) of the Land & Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (Public Law 88-578, 78 Stat 897); administered by the National Park Service.]

As a last resort, in the case where the requesting party can provide compelling evidence that there are no other alternatives to conversion of Rib Mountain State Park (an LWCF site) to another use, a request for approval of the conversion and detailed justification may be made to the NPS. In the event that NPS grants an exception, the project must comply with the

provisions and requirements applying to State properties which have received funding from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), administered by the National Park Service (NPS). As such, the party requesting such a facility and lease shall be required to submit information regarding the proposed project as required for authorization by the NPS, including an Environmental Assessment. In further compliance with LWCF requirements, future conversion of a portion of Rib Mountain State Park for reconstruction of a communication tower requires the replacement of the converted land with land of "equal or greater value and recreation utility", subject to National Park Service approval. The requesting party shall be required to deed ownership of such property to the Department and said property shall be considered LWCF funded land and must be retained and used for public outdoor recreation in perpetuity.

OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

General Management and Operations of Facilities: All management and operations decisions related to the park property and its facilities must comply with the requirements of the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Program. [Land & Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965 (*Public Law 88-578, 78 Stat 897)*]. According to federal policy, the park, its facilities, and its operation and management policies will be inspected every five years to certify compliance.

Emergency Action Plan: Maintain an emergency action plan that describes staff response and coordination with other agencies to natural disasters as they affect public safety and facilities. The suppression of fires at Rib Mountain State Park is addressed in the emergency action plan for the property. This plan is reviewed on an annual basis. Department responses to natural resource impacts from natural disasters are determined by specific interdisciplinary evaluations following such an event.

Response to Catastrophic Events: Catastrophic events, such as fire, disease, insect infestation, or timber blow-down, will be managed on a case-by-case basis. Particular management options will be chosen after considering multiple factors including life and safety considerations. The normal response to wildfire on the property will be to protect life, property, and the resource by putting out the fire with immediate initial attack.

Monitoring and Control of Plant Diseases and Invasive Exotic Plant Species: Provided trained staff is available, park vegetation will be monitored annually for disease, insect infestation, and invasive exotic species. Monitoring will pay particular attention to forest infestations that pose a serious threat to forest resources in Marathon County and throughout Wisconsin. Examples of these infestations are: gypsy moth, forest tent caterpillar, oak wilt, and two-lined chestnut borer. Invasive exotic species such as garlic mustard, exotic honeysuckles, and glossy and common buckthorns will also be monitored. Control measures will be performed as needed.

Inspections of Designated Use Areas: All designated use areas must be inspected semi-annually (Wis. Statutes s.23.115) Vegetation inspections in designated use areas must be performed semi-annually with one of the inspections performed by a person trained in the identification of hazard trees.

Oversight of Tree Removals: Tree removals will only be performed under the direction of the property manager with advice from the Regional Forester. Removals will only be performed

when the ground is well frozen, between September 1 and April 15, to avoid the transmission of oak wilt fungus, to minimize damage to the ground layer vegetation, and to minimize erosion.

Protection of Historic and Archaeological Features: Any new facility development sites (parking lots, buildings, etc.) will be inspected prior to construction to locate and evaluate any evidence of significant archaeological or historic material in compliance with federal laws and state guidelines on historic preservation.

Facility Development Standards: All facilities, roads, and structures providing either public recreation or supporting public recreation activities or other administrative services will be designed and constructed in compliance with state building codes and DNR design standards. All new facilities and buildings, whether for use by the public or by employees, will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Public Communication Plan: The property manager serves as the public contact official for this property. Mailings, news releases, and other means may be used to notify the public of significant issues or events that occur on the property. The park manager maintains a mailing list of persons or groups interested in the park or park issues.

Yearly Management Assessment: The property manager will coordinate, schedule, and lead a yearly meeting to document and assess progress on the management actions accomplished during the previous year and plan management activities for the upcoming year. A file is kept with these yearly assessments in preparation for implementation of the Manual Code 9314.1(C), which calls for formal plans to determine progress on implementation and whether the plan is accomplishing the intended results.

Uniform Park-wide Signing Plan: The Department is developing and implementing a park-wide signage system that meets current state park design standards and has a unified aesthetic character harmonious with the area's natural surroundings. Signs covered by the plan include: park entrance signs, trail markers, regulation signs, directional and informational signs.

Recommended Phasing for Development Projects: The property improvement projects described for each of the management zones in the preceding sections will generally be implemented according to the three phases indicated below. The rate of development will depend upon the availability of funding and the approval of improvement projects as part of the Department's Capital Development Process. It is estimated that the total cost of all three phases of the park improvements will be $6.5 million (in 2005 dollars). This cost will be distributed over a period of 10-15 years or more.

Table 2-2 Phases for the Development of Future Facilities

Phase One Future Facilities
Installation of a new park water system to replace the existing system that was condemned in 2003.
Construction of a Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) with an attached meeting room / temporary nature center.
Re-paving of Park Road and existing parking areas. Pave and stripe the existing 50 stall unpaved amphitheater parking area.
Removal of the existing enclosed park shelter building and construction of a new 30' x 60' open-air group picnic shelter with associated vault toilet building and parking area in the area southwest of the existing campground.
Phase Two Future Facilities
Construction of site improvements surrounding the new PEVS and existing amphitheater including a reconfigured road system, a pull-through parking area, amphitheater walkways, and other miscellaneous site improvements (refer to Conceptual Site Plan- Map B). Remove 2 existing vault toilet buildings adjacent to amphitheater.
Construction of a Friends concession stand located SW of the existing amphitheater.
Convert existing campground to a family and group picnic area with 2- large group picnic shelters (rentable), 3- medium group picnic shelters (rentable), 8- family picnic sites and a paved parking area with up to 30 parking stalls and dispersed gravel parking for up to 30 vehicles.
Reconfigure and renovate existing east play area to ADA compliance.
Construction of a 1.5 mile long paved exercise walking path.
Develop 3.9 additional miles of primitive hiking / snowshoe trails.
Construction of NE primitive hiking / snowshoe trails (approximately .5 miles), a "high line" gravel parking area with up to 12 stalls.
Construction of NW primitive hiking / snowshoe trails extending from the observation tower area to Grouse Lane (approximately 1.5 miles).
Reconfiguration of the northwest parking area, including the construction of 3 group picnic shelters, a vault toilet building and 2 stairways.
Phase Three Future Facilities
Construction of a new nature center building, removal of the adjacent existing vault toilet building and related site improvements (refer to Conceptual Site Plan- Map C).
Reconfigure and renovate existing west play area to ADA compliance.
Development of a rustic group campground, 3-4 hike-in primitive campsites, gravel access road, gate, and a gravel parking area with up to 12-stalls.

Deer Management

The objective is to reduce the deer population in the park (deer management unit 57D) to a level equal to the population goal of the larger deer management unit 57A, which will both allow forest regeneration, promote healthy and natural understory vegetation in the park, and reduce deer damage on adjacent private lands.

Deer density goals are not determined by the Master Plan. The goals are set through the statutory review processes, and are updated every 3-5 years.

The following actions will be used to meet this objective:

- Open select areas of the park (see "Authorized or Restricted Public Uses" for each of the Management Zones) to:
  - Muzzle-loader only gun deer hunting on the regular 9-day gun season and the 10 day muzzle-loader gun season.
  - Bow hunting during the late season only.

- Monitor the deer population and if necessary designate "special hunts" or use other means of reducing the population within the park.

- Work cooperatively with the Town of Rib Mountain to educate residents about the detrimental effect of deer feeding on the park's vegetation.

REAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Real Estate Acquisition Policy

All property purchases are on a willing seller basis. The Department is required by state law and federal laws to pay "just compensation", which is the estimated market value of land based on an appraisal by a certified licensed appraiser. At times, it is in the interest of the Department and the landowner for the Department to acquire partial rights to a property—an easement. The Department has a number of easement alternatives available to address these situations.

Landowners within the State Park boundary will be contacted periodically by Department staff to explain the Department's land acquisition program and to see if they have an interest in selling their property.

Aides in Lieu of Taxes

For all new properties purchased, the Department makes an annual payment in lieu of real estate taxes to replace property taxes that would have been paid had the property remained in private ownership. The payment is made to the local taxing authority where the property is located. More detailed information on how the Department pays property taxes may be found in a publication titled, *Public Land Property Taxes*, PUB-LF-001.

The Existing Park "Project" Boundary

A "project boundary" identifies the lands that the Department believes have high potential value to meet the needs and purposes of the property. The function of a project boundary is to identify lands of potential interest for the Department and to authorize the Department to actively pursue purchase of these properties (on a willing-seller basis) should they become available.

The 1982 Master Plan defined the park's project boundary to encompass 1,225 acres. Of this total, approximately 825 acres were in state ownership and 400 acres remained in private ownership. Since that time, several modifications to the project boundary have been approved. Most notably, in 2001 the project boundary was expanded to include an additional 257 acres on the western side to include lands acquired from 3M Corporation. Currently, the project boundary for Rib Mountain State Park includes 1,528 acres with approximately 85 acres remaining in private ownership.

Park Project Boundary Changes

The boundary changes described below are shown on Map D.

1. The project boundary will be expanded to include an additional 640 acres of privately owned lands adjacent to the park's western end. These lands will be important additions to Rib Mountain State Park for the following reasons:
    - To provide an important open-space buffer between the park and future development or incompatible land uses.
    - To help preserve the regionally important contiguous block of closed canopy forest habitat.
    - To provide space for recreational use and possible future recreational facility development.
    - To provide long-term protection of watersheds.

    These lands are well suited to park use as they remain primarily in an undeveloped, natural condition and are generally unsuitable for development due to the existing steep terrain, shallow bedrock, rocky soil, heavy storm water runoff, and ground water seepage.

2. The project boundary will be expanded to include a 40 acre parcel that is currently in state ownership but located south of and outside of the current boundary.

3. A 6. 8 acre of parcel of land located on the park's southeastern corner will be removed from the park's Project Boundary and a 28.7 acre parcel of replacement land will be added to Project Boundary in order to reflect the exchange of lands described in the preceding section "Recent Land Acquisitions / Transactions- "The CTH N / Park Road Intersection".

4. A 2.4 acre parcel located on the east side of CTH N that is occupied by the WisDOT / WDNR Service Center will be removed from the park's Project Boundary, but will remain in State ownership.

The modification of the park's project boundary will result in a net increase from the current 1,528 acres to a total of approximately 2,228 acres. The modifications to the project boundary

are illustrated on Map D**.** In the event that a parcel of land within the project boundary is acquired, it will be managed according to the management objectives and prescriptions of the nearest adjacent management area defined in the Master Plan.

Recent Park Land Acquisitions / Transactions

The 3M Parcel(s)

In 2001 the State of Wisconsin purchased a 257 acre parcel of land from the 3M Corporation as an addition to Rib Mountain State Park. This parcel includes an abandoned quarry and forested lands to the north and west of the park. The vegetation of the area is primarily a mix of hardwood species that were managed over the years by 3M for their timber value. This addition expanded the State Park boundary to its current level of 1,528 acres.

3M's mining permit allowed them to quarry 48,000 cubic yards of quartzite from a 19 acre expansion of the existing quarry. Prior to selling the land to DNR, 3M excavated only 1-3 acres of the permitted 19 acres and ceased mining the site in 1991. With the purchase, the Department assumed responsibility for the Quarry Reclamation Plan 3M filed with Marathon County in 1992. At the time of purchase the quarry area had been left undisturbed for over 15 years and considerable natural vegetative regeneration had occurred within the quarry. Species such as the protected turkey vulture now inhabit the rocky outcrops of the quarry.

Staff from the Department's Bureau of Endangered Resources recently surveyed the site and strongly recommended minimal disturbance to allow for this natural restoration to continue.

In consultation with Marathon County reclamation specialist, it was agreed that any further excavation on this site would be undesirable. It was also agreed that the importation of topsoil would also be undesirable, as it would risk introducing invasive weed species into the area and cause undue disturbance to the existing vegetation. Marathon County and the Department have agreed that the best approach to reclamation, given the current site conditions, is to allow the natural reclamation process to continue while at the same time seeding the area with appropriate native plant species (see Appendix B). By following these recommendations, any additional disturbance to the site will be avoided, and the site's natural re-vegetation and re-habitation by wildlife will continue. According to an October 27, 2004 letter from Mr. Justin Cavey (Appendix A), the reclamation measures outlined by the WDNR "satisfy the reclamation provisions of the Marathon County Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Code that were in effect at the time the permit for the site was issued. The Department of Natural Resources will be released from reclamation responsibility for the site and the permit can be closed when the measures have been completed".

The CTH N / Park Road Intersection

The ownership of 6.8 acres of the Park Road right-of-way was transferred to the Town of Rib Mountain in order to facilitate the road and intersection construction project. This area includes the Park Road right-of-way from Violet Lane west to the previous CTH N intersection (prior to the 2004 WisDOT intersection reconstruction project). In exchange for the 6.8 acre parcel, the Town of Rib Mountain deeded a 28.7 acre parcel of "green space" to Rib Mountain State Park. This parcel, located on the east side of the Town's Doepke Park, is located approximately ½ mile south of the park entrance along Hwy N. This parcel will be included in the modification of the park's project boundary.

Since this replacement property is adjacent to the Town's recreation area, the DNR will have a Memorandum of Understanding with the Town of Rib Mountain for the Town to maintain this land as green space and utilize it in conjunction with Doepke Park.

Existing Leased Areas

The management of land and resources within these leased areas are governed by the terms of the existing lease agreements which stipulate that the Wisconsin DNR "shall continue ownership of the land and provide administrative oversight .to insure the public's rights, title and interest are protected and furthered by the Lessee". Past decisions determined that the existing leases were in the overall public interest. The Department fully intends to honor these legal agreements subject to the specified terms and conditions. Future requests for lease for communications towers will be considered in accordance with Manual Code 2222.1 and as provided in the section of this document titled "Property-Wide Policies- Communications Towers".

CHAPTER THREE

SUPPORTING OR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE REGIONAL ANALYSIS

The Regional Analysis is a 19-page companion document to the Master Plan that summarizes the information that was gathered in preparation for the development of the Master Plan. It includes descriptions and maps of the region surrounding the park, as well as information about the park's history, resources, facilities, and uses and management issues. In addition to the information from in the Regional Analysis, several additional references are incorporated in the background information which support the plan or provide information needed to evaluate potential impacts. Most notably these supplemental references or studies included the following:

Epstein, E., et all. 2003, *Inventory of Natural Communities and Rare Plants Summary,* WDNR Bureau of Endangered Resources.

Brokaw, K. and Benoy, N. WDNR, 2004. *Rib Mountain State Park- Sewer & Water System Feasibility / Cost Study- Summary Report.*

Brokaw, K., WDNR, 2005. *Preliminary Estimate of Draft Master Plan Proposed Property Improvement Costs*

Brokaw, K., WDNR, 2005. *Preliminary Comparative Estimate of Proposed Master Plan Alternatives Property Improvement Costs.*

The following is a summary of the Regional Analysis that has been updated to reflect the information indicated above. Readers wishing to know more about the park, its resources and the surrounding region are encouraged to pick up a copy of the Regional Analysis at the DNR Wausau Service Center. The document may also be downloaded from the Master Plan's web site**:**

http://dnr.wi.gov/master_planning
In left-hand column, under **Parks and Trails** *click on the link for* **Rib Mountain**.

Physical and Biological Resources

Geology and Soils:
Rib Mountain is the highest natural feature in North Central Wisconsin and dominates the central Marathon County landscape in which it is found. At more than 1.7 billion years old, the quartzite rock that makes up the core of the mountain is some of the oldest rock on earth. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey, Rib Mountain's quartzite bedrock is predominately covered with a thin layer of well-drained silt loam soils varying from 0 to 5 feet in depth.

Hydrology / Water Resources

According to the WDNR's Central Wisconsin Basin Integrated Management Plan, Rib Mountain State Park overlaps with the Mosinee Flowage and the Lower Big Rib River watersheds that extend beyond the park's boundary. The Lower Big Rib River watershed is designated as a priority watershed. This designation allows eligible grants within the watershed to receive cost share assistance to improve or enhance water quality. No navigable bodies of water, creeks or wetlands exist within the existing park project boundary. However, there are some artesian seeps that emerge from the quartzite talus slopes primarily located on the western sides and at the base of the mountain. A small wetland area is located adjacent to but outside of northeast boundary of the park near the corner of Oriole and Raven Avenues. The larger Nine Mile Wetland Area occurs approximately 1 mile to the south of the park.

Ecological Community / Vegetation:

According to the classification system referred to as the "National Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units", Rib Mountain State Park occurs within the larger 14,270 acre Land Type Association (LTA) 212Qd04, which in turn occurs within the larger Forest Transition Ecological Landscape. This kind of forest is common throughout northern Wisconsin, but Rib Mountain's relatively large block of contiguous forest with high canopy closure is an unusual feature within the larger Forest Transition Ecological Landscape.

According to a recent biological survey of the park conducted by DNR's Bureau of Endangered Resources (Epstein, E., et all. 2003), the vegetation within the park is characterized as a northern mesic hardwood community. The forest cover primarily consists of mature, even-aged northern hardwood and aspen stands with scattered conifers. The structure and composition of most stands has been greatly simplified from their historical condition. Historically, forests of hemlock, sugar maple, yellow birch, and white pine dominated Rib Mountain. Today's forests, however, are dominated by 80-year old sugar maple. The present distribution of conifers (pine) is limited. Hemlock is locally common, but restricted to a few areas. White and red pines are now rare. Representative herbs in the generally sparse understory include Pennsylvania sedge, Canada mayflower, wood anemone, intermediate wood fern, hairy Solomon's-seal, false Solomon's-seal, large-flowered trillium, rice grass, and club mosses (Epstein, et al. 2004).

The existing even-aged forest cover is the result of a 1910 crown fire on the mountain that destroyed nearly all of the canopy trees. Because of their advanced age, many of the shorter life span tree species are declining and becoming increasingly vulnerable to insects and diseases. Normal regeneration of these species has been limited by the thin steeply sloped soils and be over-browsing by deer.

Common tree species of the park include:

- Red Maple
- Sugar Maple
- Red Oak
- Paper Birch
- Bigtooth Aspen
- Basswood
- Trembling Aspen
- Yellow Birch
- White Ash
- Butternut
- Black Cherry
- Hemlock

White Pine

Two forest management plans were previously prepared for Rib Mountain State Park by the Division of Forestry to advise the Bureau of Parks regarding the future management of forested areas. The first forest management plan, titled *Stewardship Forestry Plan* (Bargander, S. 2002 & 2003) was prepared for the 257 acre parcel purchased in 2002 from Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company (3M) at the direction of the Joint Committee on Finance. The second forest management plan, titled, *Rib Mountain Forestry Plan and Reconnainse* (Bargander, S. 2003) was prepared at the request of the master planning Team for the 824 acre balance of the State owned lands within the park, excluding the leased areas. The two forest management plans were taken into consideration in the development of the Master Plan's objectives for vegetation management in Chapter Two. These objectives were also developed in consideration of strong public opinion objecting to the recent removal of trees in the ski hill lease area, and the Bureau of Parks and Recreation's policy regarding the management of vegetation in State Parks.

The topography and geology of Rib Mountain, combined with its size, forest cover, and proximity to Nine Mile Swamp, Wisconsin River, and Rib River, combine to create conditions that provide habitat for some unusual flora and fauna. Some of these species are area-sensitive, and / or require interior forest conditions. As a result, the forest resources and other habitats of the park are important for the ecology of the Rib Mountain area, and the region as a whole (Epstein, et al. 2004).

No federal or state listed endangered or threatened wildlife species are known to reside in the park. However, three plants found in the park are listed as Wisconsin species of Special Concern, including; Deam's Rockcress, Purple Clematis and Butternut. Also, a small population of the state threatened plant, Drooping Sedge, was identified on the rocky, lower south slope of the park.

Wildlife:
In general, wildlife resources at Rib Mountain are similar to those found within the larger region. The abundant deer herd is causing extensive damage to vegetative resources in the park. The recovery of vegetation on the forest floor is largely dependent on controlling this oversized deer herd. Small game species such as squirrel, rabbit and raccoon are commonly found. Other species such as red fox, coyote, bobcat and even the occasional black bear have visited the park.

Year round resident birds include ruffed grouse, downy, hairy and pileated woodpeckers, black-capped chickadees and red and white-breasted nuthatches. It is possible that hooded and cerulean warblers, both on the state threatened species list, also nest in the vicinity of the park. Seasonally, migratory birds such as vireos, warblers and thrushes utilize the park's forest for forage, nesting sites and resting spots. Turkey vultures soar overhead and may nest on the rocky cliffs of the old 3M quarry. Some wild turkeys have also taken up residence within the park (Epstein, et al. 2004).

Cultural Resources, Recreational Facilities and Uses

Park History:
In the 1923 the estate of Jacob Gensman presented 40 acres of the Rib Mountain summit to the commonwealth. Shortly thereafter, the Kiwanis Club of Wausau purchased an additional 120

acres of surrounding land, and the combined 160 acres of land was donated to the state for use as a State Park. The park was officially opened in 1929. The original 280 acres of Rib Mountain State Park was officially dedicated in 1934 during a ceremony presided over by Governor A.G Schmedeman, who described the park's purpose and potential as follows:

> *"It is the highest point in Wisconsin within a radius of 400 miles; it commands a wonderful opportunity for wireless telegraphy; it provides a marvelously natural location for a fire look-out station and astronomical station; it is of glacial formation and should be preserved for science in its natural state; it might provide an opportunity for the study of lung diseases and research; it has been visited by many students of geology and botany from other states in the study of vegetation and rock formation; it has clear springs and all the requirements for a State Park, and it is nature's gift to an appreciative citizenry and should be set aside for state purposes only" (Town of Rib Mountain Bicentennial Committee, Rib Mountaineer, ND, p. 24)*

By 1929 the community had raised enough funds to build a road to the top of the mountain, officially opening the new park. The following year, a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp was set up east of the park, near the Wisconsin River. Over the next five years the park underwent rapid development. "For $30 a month, an army of men in the 1930s turned a hill of scrub trees near Wausau into the beginnings of a State Park. With crowbars and bare hands they moved rock off the hill to create a parking lot from a swamp and to build a shelter house at the hill's peak."(Marathon County Historical Society, CCC Recollection, Ruth Hansen)

The Civilian Conservation Corps is credited with the construction of the existing Park Road, ski chalet, a stone toilet building, a gazebo type picnic shelter, water system, and numerous hiking trails, some complete with artfully placed stone steps that are still in place today. The road was completed in 1931at a cost of $28,564.

Another of CCC's major accomplishments in the park was their creation of the facilities for downhill skiing. They cleared land to construct ski runs, installed rope tows, and constructed the stone and wood frame ski chalet at the bottom of the hill. Thanks to their hard work, followed by decades of strong community involvement, the ski operation remains a significant feature of the park. From the early years to the present, downhill skiing on Rib Mountain has significantly contributed to the local economy. Over the years, a succession of ski hill operators negotiated long term leases with the state to own and operate facilities on the ski hill. Today, Granite Peak Ski Corporation leases 406 acres of the State Park under the terms of a 30-year lease.

The park also served as a quartzite mine for much of its existence, this history now evidenced by the quarry pit on the northwest flank of the park. In 2001 the state of Wisconsin successfully concluded negotiations with 3M Corporation to purchase 257 acres of their holdings on Rib Mountain, including this quarry. Mining operations in the quarry ceased in the early 1990's and what remains of the quarry today is a mostly level floor forming the base of the pit. A shallow pond of water, no more than a few inches in depth, sometimes forms as the result of seasonal precipitation and runoff. Seasonally emergent plants can sometimes be found here. A gravel road beginning at the southern terminus of Grouse Road in the Town of Rib Mountain leads up to the 18 acre quarry on the northwest side of the mountain.

In recent years local benefactors constructed several park facilities. In 1996, the Friends of Rib Mountain State Park constructed an outdoor amphitheater, with donations from the Kwansis Club. The 200-seat amphitheater was sited at the top of the northern slope to provide the

audience with a panoramic view of the surrounding landscape. In 1998, the Friends of Rib Mountain State Park also built a token operated shower building in the campground area.

Today, much of what Governor Schmedeman envisioned for the park in 1934 has been realized. Since its inception, the park has grown through gifts of land as well as purchases made by the state. Most recently, the park acquired a 257 acre plot from the 3M Corporation, bringing the current park boundary to 1,528 acres. In recent years, suburban development around Rib Mountain State Park has increased. The park now provides a natural setting within an increasingly developed Marathon County. This development speaks to the popularity of living in close proximity to the abundant natural resources of the park. Strong community support has always been important to assist park management, but as development continues to extend westward, the park may eventually become an "island of green space" separated from the natural communities and ecological systems within the larger region.

Visitation and Use:

In recent years, visitors to Rib Mountain State Park (excluding skiers coming to the ski hill) have declined from a peak of more than 180,000 in 1998 to 137,000 in 2002. Peak seasons include the May-August general summer season, with a large number of visits during the September and October period. Some visitors travel long distances to come to Rib Mountain, though most are from the local region surrounding the park. These "day use" visitors arrive year round to take in the views, hike trails, observe nature, picnic or participate in social gatherings. Visitors come to climb the observation tower and witness the panoramic views of central Marathon County. The steep terrain of the park is unique in the region, and the mountain's rocky outcrops inspire curiosity about the natural forces that created them. Visitors year round enjoy the natural beauty of the park, and in the fall, thousands flock to the mountain to take in the brilliant "colorama" season.

The outdoor amphitheater has become one of the park's primary attractions. It is typically rented for one and sometimes two weddings every weekend from Labor Day to Memorial Day. Often these weddings include as many as 200 guests. With its scenic panorama as a back drop, the amphitheater is also frequently used for acoustic concerts, lectures and other cultural events. Due to their popularity, parking for these events often exceeds current capacity. Park staff also devote a considerable amount of time to scheduling and coordinating these events.

The park is popular with local school groups in the spring and fall for classroom outings, education and interpretation programs. The enclosed shelter has been heated in the past, and was often reserved by groups for special events or meetings. However, due to maintenance issues, the shelter is now rarely heated and therefore is not used during the winter months.

Some visitors, looking for an aerobic workout, park their cars at the base of the hill near the Park entrance on County Highway N, and either walk, run, or ride their bikes up the hill. Due to the narrow lanes and lack of a shoulder area, walkers are forced occupy the vehicle lanes and drivers must be prepared to yield.

Winter recreation activities in the park include hiking on designated snowshoe trails. The mountain has hosted the snowshoe racing event as part of the Badger State Winter Games competition in the greater Wausau Area. Winter camping is not offered.

Visitor Survey

During the summer of 2003, visitors were surveyed to assess their concerns about the park. 65 comment cards were returned for tabulation. Areas that were rated below average performance included trail signage and the availability of information, campground sites, and picnic shelters. Above average performance was noted in the areas of overall park appearance, cleanliness, parking, and employee courtesy. In general, the survey noted that the average user does not feel that crowding is an issue, and there is strong support for maintaining existing facilities in the park rather than building new structures.

Existing Facilities:

Downhill skiing has long dominated winter recreation at the park. Today, Granite Peak Ski Corporation leases 406 acres of the park to operate its facilities on the ski hill. The provisions of that lease are included in a binding contract negotiated between the State of Wisconsin and Granite Peak Ski Corporation in 2000. In 2001, following a lengthy public involvement process, the Department approved a variance to the previous property Master Plan permitting the expansion of the ski hill to current levels.

Not surprisingly, the park's steep terrain dictates where park infrastructure and other development can occur. Rib Mountain State Park currently totals 1,528 acres, but only a fraction of the park is suitable for development. A narrow road provides the only vehicle access to the park. It starts from the base of the hill on the east side of the park, and traverses up the south slope to the mountain's ridge top. This Core Developed Area at the top of hill encompasses about 60 acres or 4% of the total acreage but accommodates all of the park's buildings including an A-frame park office, 2 maintenance / shop buildings, a 30-site rustic campground, an outdoor amphitheater overlooking the northwest side of the park, several parking areas, an observation tower, and enclosed park shelter building. Also located at on the ridge top are most of the park's public use areas, and all privately leased areas used for communications towers and associated buildings. Slopes on the remainder of the hill are generally too steep to accommodate routine construction and facilities development. As a result, primitive hiking trails that course down and across the south side of the hill are the only signs of park facilities outside of the Core Developed Area. Presently, there are no trails that link visitors to the recently acquired 3M property and quarry to the west. Park facilities extending out from the ridge include just over 14 miles of hiking trails and day use areas. Refer to Table 3-1 for a complete listing of the existing park facilities.

Camping:

Rib Mountain draws a sprinkling of campers from across the country and the Canadian Provinces. Most campers, however, travel to the park from the Upper Midwest, with the majority from points in Wisconsin. Although Rib Mountain is not a destination park in the same way that Devil's Lake or Peninsula State Park are, there will always be visitors who choose to camp here because of the site's unique scenic vistas. Visitors do not travel long distances expressly to vacation at Rib Mountain, but for travelers passing through the community, the park is an attractive stop on their way to somewhere else. For people attending special events in the Wausau area, the campground provides an inexpensive and conveniently located place to spend the night. It also serves as an overflow camping area for nearby Council Grounds.

Camping reached a peak in 1998 but has gradually declined since then, possibly due to the loss of ten campsites removed for the construction of a communications tower in 2001. Due to the limited amount of level ground, those sites have never been replaced. Campgrounds within the park also face steep competition from the hundreds campsites scattered throughout the larger community. Most of these campsites are in County Forest and Park settings, most with full

electrical service, some close to water, and others permitting a range of recreational opportunities that Rib Mountain State Park does not offer. Nevertheless, during peak tourism and recreation events in Marathon County such as the 4th of July, Wisconsin Valley Fair, and Art in the park, nearly all campsites in the county, including Rib Mountain, are filled.

Despite these trends, park records indicate that campsites at the park are full most weekends of the peak camping season (June-August) with occupancy rates declining to one-third full later in the week. Since 2000, monthly camper occupancy rates for the park collectively averaged just over 49%. On summer weekdays and weekends during the "shoulder season" (spring and fall) months, the campground's sites are often less than half occupied. In comparison, nearby Council Grounds State Park is more than 95% full on most summer weekends, and almost half full the remainder of summer weeks.

The existing rustic campground has 30-sites that are spaced approximately 50-feet apart. Current campground design standards require a minimum of 100-feet between campsites. Three of the existing campsites have electrical hook-ups including the campground host site, a disabled accessible site and one regular site. According to current regulations for campgrounds less than 75 sites, electrical hook-ups should only be provided to disabled accessible sites. The size of the existing campsites is smaller than current design standards and does not accommodate the larger recreational vehicles (RVs) that have become popular in recent years.

Simply stated, the existing campground does not provide the type and quality of camping experience preferred by most of today's campers. Most campers prefer facilities that have widely spaced campsites in a wooded setting, near or adjacent to a body of water and provide modern amenities such as electrical service and sanitary sewer hook-ups. The small amount of level area at the top of the Rib Mountain's ridge limits the amount of land available for expanding the campground and providing additional space between sites. Based on a preliminary design study, the number of campsites in the existing campground area would need to be reduced from 30 to 15 in order to allow enough space between sites to comply with the current campground standards. The limited amount of level ground also prevents the reconfiguration and widening of the campground road to accommodate today's larger recreational vehicles.

Group and Family Picnic Facilities

According to reports from park staff, the demand for group and family picnic facilities has increased in recent years. Conversations with County Park managers have confirmed this as a regional trend. Demand for County Park group and family picnic shelters is frequently greater than the number of these facilities currently available. Marathon County's Comprehensive Recreation Plan identified picnicking as a high priority need in the north central region of the state. The need for picnic shelters large enough to accommodate group and company picnics was specifically mentioned. Users appear to be increasingly seeking this type of facility to host a wide variety of social gatherings. Popular events consisting of 10-20 guests include: family picnics, birthday parties, anniversaries, etc. Popular larger events consisting of 20- 40 guests include: family reunions, club picnics, church picnics, company picnics, retirement parties, and graduation parties, to name just a few.

Table 3-1 Summary of Existing Facilities

2.5 miles of Paved Road.
3 Paved Parking Areas and 2 Unpaved Parking Areas- 162 stalls total
7.2 miles of Hiking Trails
5.4 miles of Snowshoe Trails
1.5 miles of Club Managed Snowmobile Trail
18 Family Picnic Sites
1 Group Picnic Shelter-12 person capacity, CCC built
60 ft. high Scenic Observation Tower
NW Scenic Observation Deck- Disabled Accessible
SW Scenic Observation Deck- Disabled Accessible
Sunset Overlook Scenic Vista Point
1 mile Nature Trail
1 Park Shelter Building, 30' x 40 enclosed area, 30' x 20' covered open-area.
1 Outdoor Amphitheater, reservable, max. capacity 200, 2 adjacent vault toilet buildings.
1 Rustic Campground, 30-sites, non-compliant
2- Play Areas, non-ADA compliant

Cultural Resources:

According to a recent study, *Cultural Resources in Rib Mountain State Park* (Dirst, V.1996), there are no known archaeological sites in the park. The study identified areas within the park that are "likely to contain unrecorded archeological sites", and "areas less likely to contain unrecorded archeological sites." The two high points within the park were identified as "likely to contain unrecorded archeological sites" and the balance of the park property was identified as "less likely to contain unrecorded archeological sites". Other possible archeological sites include two excavations that may represent early mining or quarrying activities recorded as the "Sunrise Lookout Pits" (MR-158) and possible evidence of an early farmstead foundation.

The recent archeological study confirmed that there are a number of historic structures that were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930's. There are five surveyed structures of historical significance, including:

1. The log picnic shelter (gazebo) built by the CCC in 1932 (34/34)
2. The stone drinking fountain built by the CCC (34/32)
3. The stone stairs to the Sunrise Overlook (34/31)
4. The trail retaining wall along the road built by the CCC (34/30)
5. The trail built by the CCC (34/29)

The numbers following the structures of historical significance refer to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin's architecture and history card file numbers. Structures reported to have been built by the CCC but have not been surveyed include:

- A portion of the ski chalet
- A stone toilet building
- The water system
- The Park Road.
- The stone building currently housing equipment for the Marathon County communications tower.

Leased Lands:

In the past, the Department has selectively leased park lands. The Ski Hill area opened in 1938 and has been operated by various organizations / concessionaires since that time. The current lease for 406 acres with Granite Peak Ski Corporation was enacted in 2000 for a 30 year term. Two leases have been entered for small parcels (< 2 acres) for siting of communications towers. In 2002 the Educational Communications Board secured a 15 year lease, with an option to renew for an additional 5 years, to construct a telecommunications tower and transmitter building. In 1982 Marathon County entered into a 15-year renewable lease for constructing and maintaining a communications tower and small equipment building. Marathon County is in the process of developing a proposal for siting a 140' replacement tower on this site.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF THE REGIONAL ANALYSIS

The Regional Analysis also includes a number of "Findings and Conclusions" that provide information regarding the relationship of Rib Mountain State Park to its local setting. They include key observations about the park and recommendations regarding its management that have been considered in the Master Plan's development.

Findings

- People are primarily drawn to the park for; the views of the surrounding landscape, the park's unique geology, exercise walking and nature observation.

- The majority of visitors come to the park during the warm weather seasons. Fewer visitors arrive in the winter to take in the view of the surrounding countryside, snowshoe or hike on designated trails, or walk the Park Road.

- Compared to other parks in the State Park System, Rib Mountain is not a destination park geared for long stays by vacationing visitors. Day use visitors far outnumber overnight visitors. It is likely that the park draws most of its visitors from the local community

- The park's small, 30 unit campground provides few modern conveniences and the camping sites do not meet current DNR design standards. However, if visitors desire more elaborate overnight accommodations there is a wide choice of public and private overnight lodging in the park's immediate region. These areas include over 150 individual campsites, plus an additional 55 campsites located at Council Grounds State Park approximately 25 miles to the north of Rib Mountain.

- Rib Mountain is a complement to, and an important component of a much wider range of recreational opportunities in the central Wisconsin River Valley. The proximity of nearby public recreation provides the park with the opportunity to eventually link with those public lands.

- Low impact forms of recreation such as sightseeing, hiking, snowshoeing, picnicking, and nature observation predominate in the park. Social gatherings such as family reunions and weddings are increasingly popular at the park and the crowds these events attract occasionally create challenges for park management. The park is also a popular outdoor classroom for many local schools and their respective educational missions. The property has a K-6 teacher study guide specific to Rib Mountain.

- The Core Developed Area atop the mountain totals about 60 acres or about 4% of the total acreage of the park. Because slopes throughout most of the park are greater than 10%, developed facilities are limited to little other than primitive trails. Vehicle access to the park is limited to one road leading to the top of the hill. Terrain limitations and subsequent construction challenges prevent the extension of this road to link with other parts of the park such as the 3M-property acquisition to the west. Because of this steep terrain, areas of the park outside of the Core Developed Area (principally at the bottom of the south and north slopes, respectively) that may be flat enough for developed facilities also do not have direct road access from the top of the hill.

- Approximately 27% of the park, or 406 acres, are leased by private and public entities for ski hill operations and non-recreational uses, principally communications facilities.

- There are no known archeological sites in the park, however, there are several historic structures that were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

- The park's forest resource is generally even aged (up to about 80 years), with a mix of upland hardwood predominating. Some species of trees, particularly white birch and aspen are over-mature and are beginning to decline in health. Three plants listed as Wisconsin species of "special concern" and one "threatened" species have been found in the park.

- The overly abundant deer herd is causing significant damage to vegetative resources in the park.

Conclusions

- Except for the top of the hill, the steep terrain and subsequent limited vehicle access serves to keep most of the park in an undeveloped state, largely accessible only by a network of primitive trails. Visitors come primarily to take in the views, examine the park's unique

geology and terrain, and to observe nature. In addition, special events such as weddings, social gatherings and fall colorama viewing have become significant contributors to the overall complement of low impact recreation opportunities offered at the park. Therefore, the overall recreational niche of Rib Mountain State Park is one of lower impact non-motorized recreation geared toward casual day use and social and educational purposes.

- Attention should be paid to forest management that emphasizes the long-term protection and enhancement of the park's forest resources. Due to rapid urban development, this type of management is essential.

- Because sensitive plant resources have been found in the park, the areas of rare habitat they are found in deserve special management and protection. Protecting these habitats will prevent the loss of plants of state special concern and threatened status.

- Efforts should be made to reduce the overall size of the deer herd. Park management cannot do this alone. Reducing the deer herd to sustainable levels will require public and private efforts in the community and the potential use of new, innovative management efforts.

Part Two- The Environmental Impact Assessment for the Master Plan for Rib Mountain State Park

EA- CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INFORMATION

Title: Rib Mountain State Park- Master Plan

Project Location: Marathon County, Town of Rib Mountain,
Township- 28N, Range-7E, Sections 8, 9,10,15,16 & 17

WDNR Bureau: Bureau Parks and Recreation

State Property Designation; State Park

Statutory authority: Chapter 27, Wis. Stats.

DNR Management Region: Northern Region

Direct All Questions and Comments to Master Plan and EA Public Contact Person:
William Bursaw
Rib Mountain State Park- Property Manager
4200 Park Road, Wausau, WI 54401
(715) 842-2522

EA Applicant: Ken Brokaw, Rib Mountain State Park- Master Plan- Core Team Leader
Northern Region Planner / Wisconsin Registered Landscape Architect #39
107 Sutliff Avenue, Rhinelander, WI 54501

Supporting Documents, Plans, Studies and Correspondences:
Refer to attached Bibliography / References and Appendices

Project Summary:
Refer to CHAPTER ONE- SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT, DEVELOPMENT, AND USE

Action(s): Refer to Chapter Two –Management and Development; Rib Mountain State Park Master Plan

PARTIES CONTACTED REGARDING THE PROJECT:

Agencies:
Wisconsin Department of Commerce, Division of Safety and Buildings, Bureau of Field Operations- Mine Safety Specialist- Dick Chier
Representatives from Local Government:
Town of Rib Mountain – Gaylene Roden – Administrator
Town of Rib Mountain – Dan Dziadosz – Building Inspector / Zoning Administrator
Marathon County – Ed Hammer- Director- Planning Department
Wausau & Marathon County – William Duncanson – Director- Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department
Marathon County – Glenn Speich – Highway Commissioner
Marathon County – David Mack- Transportation Planner - Planning Department
Marathon County – Jim Burgener – Zoning Administrator
Marathon County – Justin Cavey – Reclamation Specialist
Elected Officials:
Town of Rib Mountain- Town Board
Representatives from Local Utilities / Public Communications:
Marathon County Sheriff's Department: David Mason
Citizen Groups:
The Friends of Rib Mountain State Park
WDNR Administrators and Specialists:
Refer to Rib Mountain State Park- Master Plan- Team Directory
Public Contacts Completed and Proposed:
Refer to Chapter Six- SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the potential environmental effects that will result from changes to the current management of the park as outlined in the Master Plan. An analysis of the environmental effects or impacts is an important element of the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Master Plan. The intent of the EA is to disclose the environmental effects of an action (the Master Plan) to decision-makers and the public. Chapter 2 of this document describes the future action or preferred management alternative. The EA in the Master Plan has been prepared to meet the requirements of the Wisconsin Environmental Policy Act (WEPA) and Chapter NR 150 of Wisconsin Administrative Code.

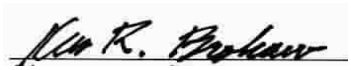
Environmental impacts of the Marathon County Emergency Communications Tower and Building Replacement will be evaluated in a separate Environmental Assessment being prepared by Marathon County. Marathon County will submit a Draft Environmental Assessment to WDNR for review and approval. The County will also be responsible for publicly noting the availability of the Draft EA for public review and comment. The County will also be responsible for complying with other requirements of the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Program and of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Therefore, impacts related to the Marathon County tower project are not addressed in this EA.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE WISCONSIN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (WEPA)

Project Name: Rib Mountain State Park- Master Plan County: Marathon

DECISION:
In accordance with s. 1.11, Stats., and Ch. NR 150, Adm. Code, the Department is authorized and required to determine whether it has complied with s.1.11, Stats., and Ch. NR 150, Wis. Adm. Code.

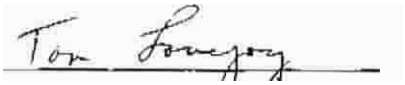
DETERMINATION:
It has been determined that an EIS process is not required.
The attached analysis of the expected impacts of this proposal is of sufficient scope and detail to conclude that this is not a major action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. In my opinion, therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required prior to final action by the Department.



Signature of Evaluator, Ken R. Brokaw — 10-25-05 Date Signed

Number of responses to news release or other notice: 17

Certified to be in compliance with WEPA



Signature of Environmental Analysis and Liaison Program Staff, Tom Lovejoy — 10-25-05 Date Signed

NOTICE OF APPEAL RIGHTS

If you believe that you have a right to challenge this decision, you should know that Wisconsin statutes establish time periods within which requests to review Department decisions must be filed.

For judicial review of a decision pursuant to sections 227.52 and 227.53, Stats., you have 30 days after the decision is mailed, or otherwise served by the Department, to file your petition with the appropriate circuit court and serve the petition on the Department. Such a petition for judicial review shall name the Department of Natural Resources as the respondent.

This notice is provided pursuant to section 227.48(2), Stats

EA- CHAPTER TWO

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The “mountain” on which Rib Mountain State Park is situated is a geologic feature referred to as a “monadnock” estimated to be at least 1.7 billion years old. The bedrock is Rib Mountain Quartzite that is predominately covered with a thin layer of silt loam soil. Distinctive rock outcrop formations emerge in the area at the top of the mountain. An 18-20 acre abandoned rock quarry is located near the western end of the park.

No navigable bodies of water, creeks or wetlands occur within the existing park project boundary. However, there are some artesian seeps that emerge from the quartzite talus slopes primarily located in the State Natural Area on the western side of the park.

BIOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT

Most of the vegetation in the park consists of a mixture of northern hardwood tree species such as maple, oak, birch, basswood, a scattering of pine and hemlock, and a few aspen stands. Because of a 1910 crown fire that destroyed most of the canopy trees on the mountain, many trees today are of the same age. As these trees age, the shorter life-span tree species such as aspen and birch are declining and becoming vulnerable to insects and diseases. The normal regeneration rate of these species has been limited by the thin soils and steeply sloped ground at the site, as well as by deer over-browsing. The large deer population has also resulted in a dramatic reduction in the amount and diversity of shrubs and ground layer plants that would normally be found in this type of forest. Because much of the hardwood forest that once dominated the landscape surrounding the park has now been cleared for farming or development, Rib Mountain State Park remains as one of the few large blocks of closed canopy forest in the region. The park’s forest therefore serves as an important area for wildlife habitat and ecosystem protection.

Wildlife species commonly found in the park include white-tailed deer, gray squirrel, cottontail rabbit and raccoon. The mountain’s topography, its geographic location adjacent to the Wisconsin River Valley, and its closed canopy forest provide habitat for bird species commonly found in central Wisconsin’s northern hardwood forest. It also provides nesting and stopover habitat for migratory birds during annual migrations. Recently, several wild turkeys have taken up residence in the park, and turkey vultures may be nesting on the rocky bluffs of the old 3M quarry.

RARE, THREATENED OR ENDANGERED SPECIES

No federal or state listed endangered or threatened wildlife species are known to reside in the park. A rare plant and natural community survey was performed in May and August 2003 (Epstein, E., et all. 2003) by staff of the Bureau of Endangered Resources, Natural Heritage Inventory Section. This survey documented one Wisconsin threatened plant species, drooping sedge (*Carex prasina*) and three Wisconsin special concern plant species, Deam’s rock cress

(*Arabis missouriensis var. deamii*), purple clematis (*Clematis occidentalis*) and butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) The Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) records show no other species of listed plants or animals. On the park's western and southwestern sides, there are some unique "micro-habitats" where ground water seeps through some of the quartzite talus slopes and creates unique habitat for rare species of flora and fauna. These species are primarily located on the park's western and southwestern sides.

LAND USE

Neighboring land use on the north, east and southeast sides of Rib Mountain State Park is primarily residential and private recreational, with some areas of commercial, municipal and institutional development further to the north and west. Residential subdivisions and other types of development continue to expand westward and now border much of the park on its northern, eastern and southern sides.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

According to the results of a recent study of the park, there are no known archeological sites. However, a number of historically significant park structures are known to exist within the park. A number of historic structures were built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). There are five surveyed structures of historical significance including:

1. The log picnic shelter (gazebo) built by the CCC in 1932 (34/34)
2. The stone drinking fountain built by the CCC (34/32)
3. The stone stairs to the Sunrise Overlook (34/31)
4. The stone retaining wall on the south side of the NW parking area built by the CCC (34/30)
5. The trail built by the CCC (34/29)

(The numbers following the structures of historical significance refer to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin's architecture and history card file numbers).
Structures reported to have been built by the CCC, but have not been surveyed include:

- A portion of the ski chalet
- A stone toilet building
- The water system
- The Park Road.
- The stone building currently housing equipment for the Marathon County communications tower.

LOCAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Rib Mountain State Park plays a significant role in the local area's socio-economic conditions. The park provides important opportunities for outdoor recreation such as hiking, camping, nature viewing and scenic viewing. Its outdoor amphitheater has become a popular site for wedding, concerts and a variety of other social events. The park also provides valuable educational opportunities for nature study and the study of the mountain's geologic features.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

The park plays a significant role in the local area's economy as it attracts visitors to the area. The Granite Peak ski area attracts thousand of visitors during the winter months, visitors that then patronize local hotels, restaurants and other businesses.

EA- CHAPTER THREE

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

The following section evaluates the short-term and long-term environmental effects of the Master Plan and the various actions described in Chapter Two. The evaluation considers the significance of these effects as well as secondary effects as they apply to geographically scarce resources.

IMPACTS TO PUBLIC SAFETY

Construction activities related to property improvements in the Master Plan are anticipated to result in a minor increase in risk to the health and safety or park visitors. Specific information regarding potential risks are not known at this time, as a Master Plan identifies the conceptual scope of construction projects, but does not include plans or construction documents for these projects. To generally mitigate potential risks, the construction documents prepared for the project will require contractors to provide measures as necessary for public safety.

An Emergency Action Plan for Rib Mountain State Park currently exists that addresses the potential threat to public safety from fire. The management of vegetation within the park will be a continuation of current practices. Hence, there will be no increase in the risk to public health and safety from management activities.

IMPACTS TO AIR QUALITY

The impacts to air quality resulting collectively from the various changes in the management of the park, modifications to existing facilities, and the construction of new facilities will be negligible. Minor, short-term effects to air quality will occur during the construction of new park facilities and the replacement or renovation of existing facilities. Impacts on air quality, whether from dust or construction equipment exhaust emissions, will be finite and transitory in nature. When construction is complete no residual impacts to air quality will be detectable.

Long-term air quality will be slightly affected by the increase in the number of motor vehicles drawn to the park by the property improvements outlined in the Master Plan. This Increase in vehicle emissions will not be a significant impact on the air quality.

IMPACTS TO WATER RESOURCES

No significant impacts to water resources, either in the park itself or in the vicinity of the park, are anticipated to result from the various changes in the park's management, modifications to existing facilities, or the construction of new facilities.

No significant impacts to the artesian seeps are anticipated to result from the management and development outlined in the Master Plan. The Plan designates the area surrounding the artesian seeps as a State Natural Area. Consequently, changes in the management activities and facility development in this area will be limited to the development of a few primitive hiking trails and removal of any "hazard trees" adjacent to these trails. The primitive hiking trails will be aligned to avoid the seeps and to allow a buffer zone of at least 100 feet.

Wells, Use of Groundwater
One new potable water well will be drilled to provide water to the future group campground. The well will not qualify as a "high capacity" well and the effect on the local water table is expected to be minimal.

Septic Systems, Holding Tanks and Vault Toilets
No existing septic systems are located on the property. Currently, several of the park restroom buildings have flushing or vault toilets with septic holding tanks. No new drain field-type septic systems will be constructed as the soil conditions and terrain of the park are not suitable for these systems. The installation of a sanitary sewage system connected to the Rib Mountain Sanitary District System has been studied. Preliminary findings indicate that the installation of such a system may be cost prohibitive due to the extensive excavation and blasting into the shallow quartzite bedrock that would be necessary to construct it.

Based on these preliminary findings, the Master Plan dictates that new buildings with restrooms will be constructed with septic holding tanks in compliance with applicable local and state Department of Commerce standards. All septic holding tanks will be sealed from groundwater and pumped regularly, or as needed, during the use season. These actions will effectively safeguard the groundwater from contamination and the potential for contamination of the local water table is therefore expected to be minimal.

Four vault-style toilets with septic holding tanks will also be developed to serve more remote areas of the park and will be constructed in accordance with applicable standards and codes. The potential for contamination of the local water table, or sanitation health risks from these toilets is therefore expected to be minimal.

Impacts to Storm Water Runoff
Impacts to storm water runoff resulting from site improvements included in the Master Plan are anticipated to be minimal. The net increase of impermeable surface in the park will be approximately 2-3 acres, or 0.13% of the park's existing acreage. The majority of site improvements that will create impermeable surfaces are located at the top of the hill. At this time, plans for these facility improvements are conceptual only. The future improvements are surrounded by the park's large buffer area of wooded and permeable surfaces. Therefore, it is anticipated that the minor increase in runoff resulting from site improvements will dissipate and infiltrate over these large areas, and the storm water runoff onto adjacent properties will not significantly increase. The future design and construction of these projects will include storm water management and erosion control mitigation measures in compliance with WDNR Bureau of Water Resources Management's *Wisconsin Construction Site Best Management Practice Handbook* (Publication WR-222-89).

IMPACTS TO GEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Some minor impacts to the geological resources are anticipated to result from the site improvements outlined in the Master Plan. Some rock excavation may be necessary for development of roads, parking lots, facility foundations, and the installation of the new water system. Whenever possible, the designs and locations of new structures and facilities will be adjusted as necessary to mitigate impacts to the natural rock outcrops, talus slopes, and boulder fields.

IMPACTS TO SCENIC QUALITY

Impacts to the Scenic Quality within the Park

Several new structures and facilities outlined in the Master Plan will be evident within the park. These structures include: the new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS), the new nature center Building, several group picnic shelters, 5 new parking areas, and the replacement of the existing Marathon County Communications Tower and Equipment Building. The park's scenic quality will be slightly adversely affected by the construction of the PEVS and nature center. However, the impacts to the visual quality resulting from the construction of the new PEVS, nature center, and group picnic shelters will be mitigated by their design, which will be developed to harmonize with the natural surroundings and reflect the historic architectural character of other buildings within the park. The visual impacts of these new structures will be further mitigated and enhanced by the installation of landscape plantings and boulders designed to blend with natural surroundings.

The removal of the existing structures in the area adjacent to the outdoor amphitheater, including the a-frame office, registration booth, and pit toilet buildings, will open views and provide additional green space.

There will be a minor adverse impact to the park's scenic quality as the result of the clearing of vegetation in the areas where new buildings, structures, trails or parking areas are constructed, and in areas where vegetation will need to be removed open scenic vistas to the surrounding landscape. The total area of vegetation to be cleared for construction of new facilities and opening of scenic vistas is approximately 10 acres. This represents a 1% reduction in the park's existing vegetated area of approximately 1,000 acres (excluding the ski hill lease area). The opening of more scenic vistas will more than make up for these slight losses in vegetated area as the landscape increases its scenic quality.

The visual impacts resulting from the construction of new facilities and the 5 new parking areas will also be mitigated by the installation of landscape plantings in the areas surrounding these facilities. Whenever possible, large diameter "feature trees" will also be preserved and protected through the adjustment of location or alignment of future facilities.

Impacts to the Scenic Quality Outside of the Park

Views to the park from or near Grouse Lane

The scenic quality of views from or near Grouse Lane will be impacted by the installation of a park entrance / identification sign where Grouse Lane enters the park. A directional sign to be installed at the intersection of Grouse Lane and CTH NN / North Mountain Road will also present a new visual element. The existing gate at the end of Grouse Lane will be relocated approximately 1,000-feet further south from its current location. Views to other park improvements in the vicinity of Grouse Lane will be buffered by at least 300 - 500 feet of existing vegetation.

Views to the Park from or near Park Road and Violet Lane

The scenic quality of views from or near Park Road and Violet Lane will be impacted by the construction of a park entrance / identification sign and a 12 stall paved parking area on the southwest corner of Park Road and Violet Lane (described in Chapter Two- "Natural Recreation Management Zone- Objectives"). A directional sign will be installed at the intersection of Violet Lane and CTH N. An area of existing vegetation approximately 35' x 150' in size will be cleared for the construction of the sign and parking area. Views to the parking area from residences located to the south of the existing road right-of-way will be buffered by approximately 20 feet of existing vegetation. Impacts to views of the future parking area from Park Road and residences located on the north and south sides of the road right-of-way will be mitigated by the planting of evergreen trees to partially buffer views.

Minor impacts to views from Park Road and residences located on the north and south sides of the road right-of-way will result from the construction of the 8-foot wide paved walking path as described in Chapter Two- "Scenic Recreation Management Zone- Short Term Objectives". The path will run parallel with Park Road on the south side. The path will be separated from Park Road by a level to steeply sloping buffer of existing vegetation that varies from 10 -150 feet wide. Views to the path from residences located on the north of the Park Road right-of-way will be buffered by the existing vegetation on the north side of Park Road and 10-150 foot wide strip of existing vegetation on the south side of Park Road. Views to the path from residences located on the south side of the Park Road right-of-way will be buffered by 20'- 100' of existing vegetation located between the path and the south side of the Park Road right-of-way.

Views to Rib Mountain from the Surrounding Area

Other than the future construction of the Marathon County communications replacement tower, no significant impacts to the scenic quality of views to Rib Mountain are anticipated to result from actions outlined in the Master Plan. Environmental impacts of the Marathon County Emergency Communications Tower and Building Replacement are evaluated in a separate Environmental Analysis being prepared by Marathon County. This document includes an evaluation of the impacts to the scenic quality anticipated to result from the replacement tower.

IMPACTS TO LAND USE

With the exception of impacts on land use related to the expansion of the project boundary, no significant impacts to land use are anticipated to result from the Master Plan. Refer to "Boundary Expansion & Acquisition Impacts - Impact on Land Use" for additional information.

IMPACTS TO LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS

Impacts to Roads and Traffic Volumes

Improvements outlined in the Master Plan are anticipated to result in a minor increase in the park's annual visitation as well as minor increases in the impacts on local infrastructure and transportation systems. It is expected that improvements outlined in the Master Plan will lead to a minor increase in the traffic volume on Park Road and on other local roads leading to the park. This increase in local traffic may require additional local road maintenance.

The repaving of Park Road will temporarily limit access to the park and to residences with abutting driveways. While the road is being replaced, traffic backups and congestion will be expected during peak use periods such as weekend and holidays.

Impacts to Solid Waste Facilities
The minor increase in visitation resulting from the improvements outlined in the Master Plan is expected to result in a minor increase in the amount of solid waste generated. Wisconsin State Parks promote and participate in recycling programs to mitigate generation of non-recyclable material that must be disposed of in sanitary landfills.

Impacts to Public Utilities
Rib Mountain State Park will use Wisconsin Public Service Corporation for electric service. Changes carried out under the Master Plan are expected to result in a minor increase in electricity use at the park as new buildings and water system pumps will require electricity.

Impacts to the Municipal Water System:
Prior to the condemnation of the existing water system, water was pumped to the top of the mountain from a well located near the intersection of the ski area entrance road and C.T.H. NN. No water was provided by the municipal water system. The Master Plan designates the construction of a new park water system that will be supplied by Rib Mountain Sanitary District's water system.

Current usage of water in the park is estimated to be approximately 600,000 gallons per year (this amount does not include water used for snowmaking and other uses by the Granite Peak Ski Area). Under the Master Plan, the park's the annual water usage is expected to remain at this level, however, it is expected that the water system would be connected to a RMSD water main instead of the existing well. Therefore, the impact to Rib Mountain Sanitary District's water system will be an increased usage of approximately 600,000 gallons per year. Water service will be metered and payments will be made to the Sanitary District according to established rates (see State Fiscal Impacts).

IMPACTS OF NOISE

Construction noise resulting from park improvement projects included in the Plan will have a moderate and temporary impact on noise levels in the park and nearby properties. This noise will be peak (high level, short duration), rather than continuous during construction periods. Excavation for the new water system may require some blasting in order to remove the quartzite bedrock to a depth of 6 feet. The locations where, or times when blasting may used by the water system contractor is unknown at this time. This will be determined following the preparation of construction documents for the new water system. These documents will stipulate that the contractor shall limit blasting to between the hours of 7:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

IMPACTS TO LOCAL RECREATIONAL RESOURCES

Actions included in the Master Plan are anticipated to result in minor impacts to local recreational resources in the central Wisconsin area. The primary impact will result from the elimination of the existing 30-site campground. Over 6 month camping season the average occupation of this site is 35%. The loss of this campground represents a shift in the demand for approximately 1,900 campsite occupancy days per year to other public and private campgrounds in the Central Wisconsin area. The development of a 60 camper, rustic group campground within the park will provide an additional facility for groups in the Marathon County

area. The Plan also designates the addition of 3-4 primitive, walk-in campsites which will augment the region's limited supply of this type of camping experience.

The existing multi-purpose building is currently used by visiting school groups and as a rental space for meetings and small social events. The Plan outlines the relocation and remodeling of the multi-purpose building into an open-air group picnic shelter. The construction of a new nature center / concession building will provide a much improved meeting / classroom space while also adding an interpretive exhibition space. The nature center / concession building will also replace the concession stand currently operated by the Friends of Rib Mountain with an interior gift / food sales space and possibly an area for snowshoe rental as well. The nature center / concession building will be an important addition to the local recreational resources of the park.

The Master Plan adds 3-miles of new primitive hiking trails to the existing 7-miles of trails in the park. This will result in a minor increase in the supply of trails in the region.

IMPACTS TO BIOTIC RESOURCES

Impacts to Forest Communities & Wildlife

The actions included in the Master Plan are anticipated to result in minor impacts to the park's 1,120 acres of forest community and wildlife resources (excluding approximately 406 acres of leased areas). The primary actions anticipated to impact these resources are the following:

- Opening views from scenic vistas that are presently obstructed by trees.
- The construction of new facilities including: the new PEVS building with adjacent parking area and 1000 foot long, one-way exit road; the new nature center / Friend's concession building and parking area; the Marathon County communications replacement tower / equipment building; the new group campground; and several new parking areas.
- Implementing a program of regular monitoring and inspection for invasive exotic species and using appropriate control measures in the remaining 990 acres of land within the existing Park boundary (excluding lease areas).

Refer to Chapter 2- "Property-Wide Management Objectives" and the "Management Zone-Objectives" for a complete description of vegetation and wildlife management activities.

The selective removal of vegetation in the 58 acre Scenic Recreation Zone will result in minor impacts to the forest community and wildlife. The ground layer vegetation in these areas will be temporarily disturbed as the result of tree removal activities. Disturbance of the ground layer will be mitigated by removing vegetation when the ground is frozen and the vegetation is dormant. The construction of the new facilities indicated above will require the clearing of approximately 10 acres of existing vegetation. This will adversely impact the forest community only slightly, reducing the size of the park's existing 1,120 acre closed canopy forest community and wildlife habitat (excluding the lease areas) by less than 1%.

IMPACTS ON ENDANGERED OR THREATENED SPECIES

The actions included in the Master Plan are anticipated to result in minimal impacts to endangered or threatened species. At this time, no state or federally listed endangered species are recorded for Rib Mountain State Park. A rare plant and natural community survey was performed in May and August 2003 (Epstein, E., et all. 2003) by staff of the Bureau of Endangered Resources, Natural Heritage Inventory Section. This survey documented one Wisconsin threatened plant species, Drooping Sedge (*Carex prasina*) and three Wisconsin

special concern plant species, Deam's Rock Cress (*Arabis missouriensis var. deamii*), Purple Clematis (*Clematis occidentalis*) and Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*) The Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) records show no other species of listed plants or animals.

Impacts to the Wisconsin threatened and special concern plant species resulting from activities carried out under the Master Plan are expected to be minimal. These species are located primarily within the future State Natural Area, an area that will not be developed. In compliance with the restrictions on recreational use and development within a State Natural Area, recreational use and development will be limited to primitive hiking / snow shoeing trails and primitive walk-in campsites.

IMPACTS TO CULTURAL RESOURCES

Impacts to Archeological Features
According to an archeological study of Rib Mountain State Park prepared by Victoria Dirst, WDNR Archeologist, and dated February 22, 1996, no archeological sites have been identified within the park. The study identified areas within the park that are "likely to contain unrecorded archeological sites", and "areas less likely to contain unrecorded archeological sites. The two geographically high points within the park were identified as "likely to contain unrecorded archeological sites" and the balance of the park property was identified as "less likely to contain unrecorded archeological sites". Other possible archeological sites include two excavations that may represent early mining or quarrying activities recorded as the "Sunrise Lookout Pits" (MR-158) and possible evidence of an early farmstead foundation.

No significant impacts to unrecorded archeological features are anticipated, as any new facility development sites (parking lots, buildings, etc.) will be inspected prior to construction. In compliance with federal laws and state guidelines on historic preservation, this inspection will locate and evaluate any evidence of significant archaeological or historic material.

Impacts to Historic Structures:
No significant impacts to structures of historical significance are anticipated to result from actions outlined in the Master Plan. Prior to carrying out an action that might impact a structure either listed in the inventory, or reported to be of historical significance, the Department of Natural Resources must consult the Wisconsin Historical Society and determine if the structure requires preservation or other mitigating measures.

ECONOMIC EFFECTS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

The actions included in the Master Plan are anticipated to result in minor impacts to the surrounding community. The anticipated increase in tourist visitors to the park may result in a minor increase in utilization of nearby business establishments. Annual visitation to Rib Mountain State Park is expected to gradually increase over the next 10-15 years from the current average annual visitation of 145,000 to a future 200,000 per year. It is estimated that 75% of visitors will be local (residents of the central Wisconsin region) and 25% non-local.

The construction of new park facilities and components will benefit building trade members, laborers, and suppliers, some of whom may be local. Competitive bidding procedures will be followed, ensuring that local construction firms have an equal opportunity to participate. Total development cost for park improvements outlined in the Master Plan is estimated at 6.5 million dollars, although the actual work and cost of these developments will be spread over a period of

10 years or more. Information regarding the extent of economic benefit to local contractor involvement is not yet known.

Employees working at Rib Mountain State Park will probably live in the vicinity of the park. These employees will participate in the local economy and expend a significant amount on their daily needs as members of the community. (Is this important to keep in?)

FISCAL EFFECTS – STATE GOVERNMENT

Lands purchased for addition to the park will likely be acquired using State Stewardship funds or a similar bonding fund. The cost to the state of bonding for land acquisition and project development will occur when interest and dividends must be paid on the bonds. Several methods of payment could be used, the main one being General Fund Support. Conversely, a benefit would accrue to the holders of the same bonds.

The Wisconsin State Park Program budgets for its capital development needs on a biennial basis, as do all state agencies. Because of the significant cost of developing Rib Mountain State Park, funding priorities within the capital budget will necessarily be adjusted to accommodate construction of the park. Without an increase in capital spending authority, construction of Rib Mountain State Park could cause temporary delay or deferral of the implementation of other State Park projects.

Staffing Needs and Estimated Annual Operations Cost

State Parks that offer camping traditionally have two permanent positions assigned to them. Prior to May of 2004, Rib Mountain had been staffed with 2 permanent ranger positions. In May of 2004, one of these positions became vacant. Due to statewide budget and staffing adjustments, it is unknown if this Ranger position will be filled.

In the 2005 Fiscal Year, Rib Mountain State Park had an annual operating budget of approximately $100,000, which included the salary and benefits for one full time employee (FTE), the Ranger Assistant Manager. This budget also provided wages for a seasonal limited term employee (LTE), as well as park supplies and services

Excluding the group campground and walk-in sites, the change in annual operating budget resulting from park improvements outlined in the Master Plan is anticipated to increase to approximately to $150,000. This money would fund two permanent ranger enforcement positions, additional LTE staff, and additional park supplies and services. This increase over the 2005 operating budget will result from the increased operating costs and additional staff needed to accommodate the projected increase in park visitors. The peak summer visitation season would also be expected to extend further into the spring and fall “shoulder” seasons as the result of the shift to more day-use facilities.

Revenue Projections

The current average annual park revenue for Rib Mountain State Park is $94,000 (averaged over 2002, 2003, and 2004). The existing revenue sources for the State Park are vehicle admissions sales, amphitheater rental fees, and camper fees. It is projected that, with full implementation of the park improvements outlined in the Master Plan, the park’s annual visitation will gradually increase over the next 10-years from the current level of 145,000 visitors to 200,000 visitors, an increase of 27%. Consequently, the park’s annual revenue is anticipated to gradually increase over the next 10-years from the current level of $94,000 to approximately

$126,000. The main revenue sources of Rib Mountain State Park will be vehicle admission sales, amphitheater rental fees, group campground rental fees and day-use facility rental fees.

Present rentals of the amphitheater and multi-purpose building indicate that demand has increased for these types of facilities. Future revenue from rentals of day-use facilities is expected to increase with the development of enhanced and new shelter facilities. The removal of the campground will result in a short-term decrease in revenue of $9,266.00 / year (based on current occupancy rates and a required reduction in the number of campsites from 30 to 15 in order to meet current design standards). With recreation visits expected to increase to approximately 200,000 visits per year, State Park sticker sales will also increase.

Interpretive fees will also be charged for organized groups who choose this type of programming. These funds will be recycled directly back to the park for the continuation of the interpretive program.

Estimated Costs of Development Projects

Projected property capital development costs resulting from improvements included in the Master Plan are as follows:

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT DESCRIPTION	PROJECTED COST
PUBLIC ENTRANCE VISITOR STATION (BUILDING ONLY)	$ 498,000
PEVS / AMPHITHEATER AREA SITE IMPROVEMENTS	$ 468,000
NATURE CENTER (BUILDING ONLY)	$ 900,000
NATURE CENTER AREA SITE IMPROVEMENTS	$118,000
PARK WATER SYSTEM REPLACEMENT	$1,200,000
BURYING OF EXISTING OVERHEAD PHONE LINE	$ 228,000
MAINTENANCE BUILDINGS / SERVICE AREA	$ 200,000
TRAILS	$ 16,000
OUTDOOR EXHIBITS	$ 112,000
PARK SIGNAGE SYSTEM	$ 112,000
REPAVING OF PARK ROAD & EXISTING PAVED PARKING AREAS	$ 1,020,000
PAVED EXERCISE WALKING PATH - 8'-WIDE	$ 332,000
VIOLET LANE / PARK ROAD PARKING AREA	$ 12,000
PARK ROAD "HIGH LINE" PARKING AREA	$ 6,000
3M ENTRANCE PARKING AREA & GRAVEL ROAD	$ 35,000
SW PARKING AREA	$ 160,000
INTERPRETIVE KIOSK	$ 12,000
NW PARKING AREA	$ 82,000
LARGE GROUP OPEN-AIR PICNIC SHELTER AREA	$ 120,000
DAY-USE PICNIC AREA SITE IMPROVEMENTS	$ 338,000
LANDSCAPE BUFFER & NEW FACILITY PLANTINGS	$ 242,000
RUSTIC GROUP CAMPGROUND	$ 286,000
TOTAL ESTIMATED COST	**$ 6,497,000**

Costs for development of Rib Mountain State Park are based on 2005 dollars. The implementation improvement projects will be phased over five or more biennial budget cycles.

EFFECTS OF PROJECT BOUNDARY MODIFICATION

Modification of the Park's Project Boundary

The existing project boundary for Rib Mountain State Park includes 1,528 acres, with approximately 85 acres currently in private ownership. The Master Plan designates the modification of the existing project boundary, increasing its net size to 2,228 acres (refer to Map D).

Change in Land Ownership from Private to State

Only modest impacts to land ownership will result from the modification of the existing project boundary. Future acquisition of land within the project boundary will likely proceed over a long time period, and it is unknown when and how many parcels may become available from willing sellers or through donation. It is likely that the ownership of lands within the project boundary will change slowly, if at all, over the next 10-15 years and only a fraction of those lands will become available from willing sellers who accept fair market value purchase offers from the Department. For DNR planning purposes only, it is estimated that approximately 10%-20% of the land within the expanded project boundary area will be acquired within the next 10-15 years.

Most of these lands are undeveloped, however a few parcels have site improvements and structures located on them. It is unlikely that the Department will seek to purchase these parcels, as it is DNR policy to avoid purchasing land with existing structures.

Change in Land Use

Current land use on privately owned lands within the project boundary is primarily rural residential. The modification of the project boundary area will have only a modest impact on current land use in the area. As described in the preceding section, the number of acres that will be acquired cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty.

Fiscal Effects to Local Government

The fiscal impacts to local governments resulting from the modification of the project boundary are unknown at this time. The project boundary serves only to identify adjacent lands that, should they to become available from a willing seller or through voluntary donation, would be valuable additions to park property. There is no way to predict the amount of privately owned land that may become available for future acquisition on a "willing buyer- willing seller" basis.

In the event that lands within the project boundary are acquired on a willing buyer- willing seller basis, local governments will experience a minor, short-term increase in property tax revenues. Under a statute enacted on January 1, 1992, each time a new property is acquired, the purchase price is set as an equivalent of an assessment, and aids-in-lieu-of-taxes are paid on that basis. Therefore, one of the impacts of acquisition of additional land for Rib Mountain State Park would be an increase in these payments. Because the purchase price is often higher than the equalized assessed value of the property, the DNR's payment is often greater. As additional properties are acquired for Rib Mountain State Park, this effect would continue.

On lands purchased by the DNR since January 1992, the property value base used to calculate payment in-lieu of taxes (PILT), must be equal to or greater than estimated fair market value on a parcel for the year of purchase (s.s. 70.114). The purchase price is determined by an appraisal, which is completed by a certified general private appraiser or DNR staff appraiser. The year after the initial PILT payment year, and in all future tax years in which the DNR owns the parcel, its property value base is adjusted based on the change in land values in the

municipality where the property is located. If the value in the municipality goes up 10%, the value of DNR land is adjusted upward 10%.

For example, if, in 1992, the DNR purchased 1,000 acres in the town of Rib Mountain at a price of $1,000/acre, the DNR would assume the normal tax bill for tax year 1992, and then, in 1993, the 1,000 acres would be listed as tax exempt status and receive a PILT. If the 1993 assessment level on land in the Town of Rib Mountain increased and land was now valued at $1,500/acre, an increase of 50% (or 1.5 multiplied times the original property value base), the Department would adjust its property value base and make the PILT payments to the town of Rib Mountain based on that figure, thereby realizing the same assessment level adjustment as that of other private landowners in the town. Likewise, if the assessment in the Township went up in the following year, the Department would adjust the PILT payment accordingly. (Source: Legislative Fiscal Bureau report)

Existing improvements on properties acquired for the park would be auctioned or sold for reuse elsewhere or salvaged for materials. Because land within new property acquisitions will not generally be developed, fewer residences and cottages will exist within the project area, thus reducing the demand for public services such as police and fire protection. If the former owners relocate or build within the same municipal jurisdiction the net effect would be zero.

The anticipated increase in traffic on local roadways near the park may slightly increase road maintenance costs to local governments.

Fiscal Effects to State Government

Lands purchased for addition to the park will likely be acquired using State Stewardship funds or a similar bonding fund. The cost to the state of bonding for land acquisition occurs when the interest or dividends must be paid on the bonds. Several methods of making these payments could be used, the main one being General Fund Support. Conversely, a benefit would accrue to the holders of the same bonds.

Estimated Costs of Land Acquisition

DNR policy is to purchase land only from willing sellers. The purchase price is set by an appraisal or according to the property's fair market value prepared in compliance with state and national guidelines. Occasionally the seller chooses to make a gift or partial donation of land. It is likely that only a small percentage of the privately owned lands within the project boundary will become available for acquisition from willing sellers, or through donation, within the next 15 years.

To provide additional long-term protection of park resources, the Master Plan recommends an expansion of the current park project boundary (1,528 acres) by approximately 700 acres to reach a size of 2,228 acres (see Maps A and D). Approximately 725 acres of land within the new project boundary is currently in private ownership. The number of acres within the project boundary that will be acquired either on a willing seller / willing buyer basis, or through donation, cannot be predicted with any degree of certainty. However, it is likely that future acquisition of land will proceed slowly over a long time period of time. The fair market value per acre will vary significantly if the lands are rezoned and / or subdivided for residential or other development. With an increasing demand in the area for larger custom residential lots, it is likely that land values will appreciate into the future.

For planning purposes only, it is estimated that approximately 15% (109 acres) of the undeveloped land within the expanded project boundary area will be acquired within the next 15 years. According to the Town of Rib Mountain's Tax Assessor's Office, the current fair market value of local undeveloped land zoned as rural residential is around $5,000 per acre. Assuming an appreciation rate 5%, and an inflation rate of 3% averaged over a 15-year period, the projected average fair market value in 2012 would be approximately $8,000 per acre (in 2012 dollars). Based on these assumptions, the estimated acquisition cost would be approximately $872,000 (in 2012 dollars).

SIGNIFICANCE OF CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

The cumulative effects from the various actions included the Master Plan for Rib Mountain State Park will have a long-term positive effect on the quality of the human environment. Residents of the developing Rib Mountain area in particular will benefit from the presence of public recreation land in close proximity to their homes. Public participants in the park's master planning process have demonstrated their support for this project both verbally and in writing. The expansion of the project boundary from the current 1,528 acres to 2,228 acres will further create opportunities for land conservation and public recreation. No other cumulative effects are expected.

SIGNIFICANCE OF RISK

"Significance of risk" refers to the degree of risk or uncertainty in predicting environmental effects or effectively controlling potential environmental impacts, including those related to public health and safety.

There is inevitably some degree of uncertainty in predicting the environmental effects and potential impacts to public health and safety from an action as complex as a Master Plan for a State Park. To the extent possible, this environmental analysis has attempted to base its analysis of impacts on the best information that is reasonably available.

Department staff made an extensive effort to research and gather scientific and other data. This information was derived from a wide variety of credible sources. This information is compiled in a companion document to the Master Plan referred to as the *Regional Analysis* (Daniels, D., et all. 2004. *Rib Mountain State Park Regional Analysis*, WDNR Bureau of Parks and Recreation)

In addition to the information included in the *Regional Analysis*, several additional references were incorporated and subsequent studies were completed to advise the Master Plan and provide information needed to evaluate potential impacts. Most notably, these supplemental references or studies included the following:

Epstein, E., et all. 2003, *Inventory of Natural Communities and Rare Plants Summary,* WDNR Bureau of Endangered Resources.

Brokaw, K. and Benoy, N. WDNR, 2004. *Rib Mountain State Park- Sewer & Water System Feasibility / Cost Study- Summary Report.*

Brokaw, K., WDNR, 2005. *Preliminary Estimate of Draft Master Plan Proposed Property Improvement Costs*

Brokaw, K., WDNR, 2005. *Preliminary Comparative Estimate of Proposed Master Plan Alternatives Property Improvement Costs.*

Refer to the "References / Bibliography" and "Appendices" for a complete listing of source information used to evaluate the potential impacts of the Master Plan and the Management Alternatives.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PRECEDENT

Approval of this management plan will not significantly influence future decisions or foreclose options that may additionally affect the quality of the environment on other Department property master plans.

The actions outlined in the Master Plan are consistent and in compliance with the known applicable plans, regulations and policies of jurisdictional local, state or federal governments and public agencies.

SIGNIFICANCE OF CONTROVERSY OVER ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Generally, the degree of controversy regarding the ecological and socio-economic effects of the actions outlined in the Master Plan has been low. The following elements of the environmental analysis have involved some minor controversy:

1. **The Modification of the Park's Project Boundary- "Change in Land Ownership from Private to State" and "Fiscal Impacts to Local Government"**

   No strong opinion either for or against the expansion of the project boundary has been registered. Letters were sent to the affected property owners explaining what it would mean to them if the project boundary was modified to include their property. The letters included a copy of Map D, illustrating the proposed project boundary, and an "Answers to Frequently Asked Questions" sheet to further explain the project boundary issue to affected property owners. Property owners were then asked to give their input on the matter. The few responses received simply stated that the property owners were not interested in selling their land at this time. However, no comments were received that expressed concern or opposition to the new project boundary. This does not guarantee that some opposition to the idea might not come up at some point in the future, as land acquisition by the state is a topic of concern to many people. One facet of opposition to expansion could be the misperception that state acquisition of land would erode the property tax base, causing property taxes to increase for other property owners. A review of the explanations of DNR land buying procedures and aids-in-lieu-of-tax payments contained in Chapter 2- Real Estate Management" can dispel this misunderstanding.

2. **Impacts on local recreational resources and socio-economic impacts related to the conversion of the existing family campground to a day-use family and group picnic area.**

   Some public participants have expressed opposition to the conversion of the existing family campground to a day-use family and group picnic area.

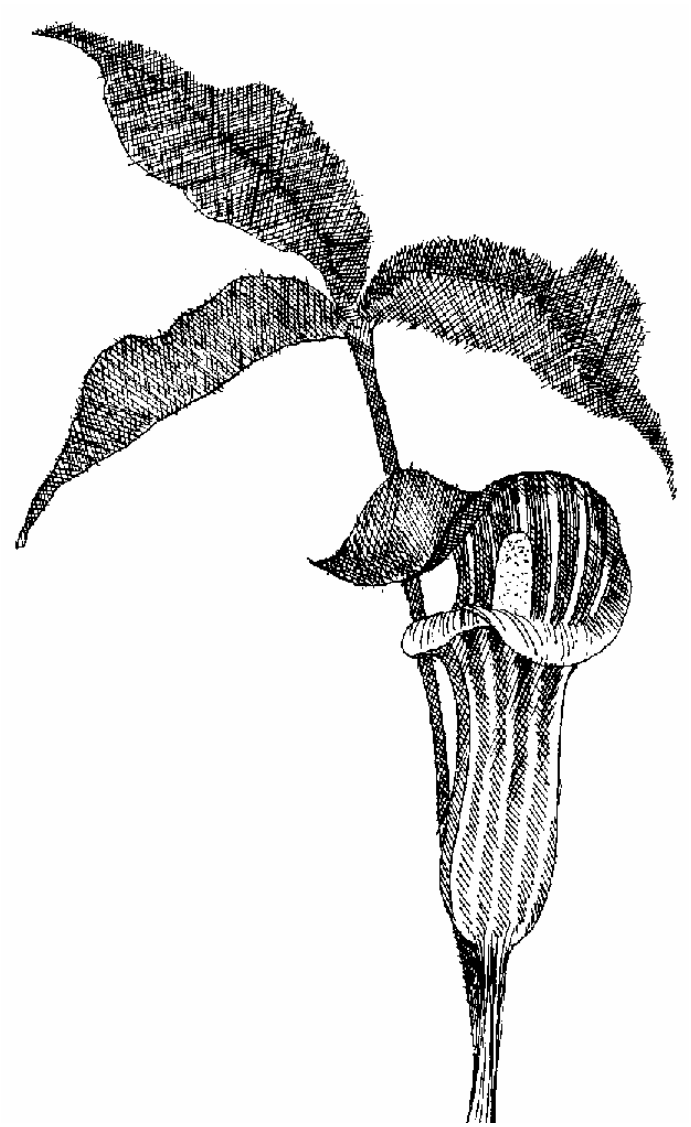
3. **Suitability of having private leased areas within a State Park.**

   Past leases have caused controversy as many believe that the creation of private leases within a State Park conflicts with park goals and objectives. The Department considered park "compatibility" when entering into past leases and there are no plans to reconsider this method. All future lease proposals will be considered using policy guidance contained in Manual Code 2222.1 (see Appendix C). Any such new proposals, including the new Marathon County communications tower, will also follow procedural requirements of the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund and National Environmental Policy Act before future lease decisions are made.

Refer to Part 2- Chapter 5 "Summary of the Public Involvement Process" for additional information regarding the public review and comment on the Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Analysis. This Chapter includes a "Summary of Public Comments on the Plan and Draft Environmental Analysis", along with Department responses to selected comments.

CONCLUSIONS

Implementation of Master Plan recommendations for management and development of Rib Mountain State Park will provide positive recreational, ecological, social, and economic benefits to the region by maintaining a predominantly undeveloped natural property, but with facilities adequate to meet recreational needs expressed in the Regional Analysis. These facilities will provide opportunities for a variety of structured and unstructured recreation activities that are compatible with the park's unique set of physical opportunities and constraints



EA- CHAPTER FOUR

PLAN ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

In accordance with NR 150.22 (2), "an environmental analysis shall include...an evaluation of alternatives to the proposal, including a rigorous exploration and objective evaluation of the environmental impacts of all reasonable alternatives, particularly those that might avoid all or some of the adverse environmental effects of the proposed action." In the case of the Master Plan for Rib Mountain State Park, the "proposed action" is the combined management, development and use of the park described in Chapter Two.

A Master Plan Alternative is a grouping of a number of compatible options for resource management, recreational development, and public use of a Department property. Typically, a number of Alternatives are developed that represent a range of reasonable approaches to managing the property. Each Alternative is developed based on a concept statement that describes the particular approach to the future management of the park.

The content of an Alternative should be compatible with the property designation, the draft vision and goals, the property capabilities, and the Regional Analysis of a site. The Alternatives summarized below were considered as part of the Master Plan's development.

The Management Alternatives presented were developed based on the following information:

- The scientific data and inventory / analysis mapping gathered by the DNR Team in preparation for the development of a new Master Plan.
- The Findings and Conclusions of the Regional Analysis
- Input received from DNR's master planning team, and the professional expertise of DNR's property and resource managers.
- The Vision Statement and Property Goals.
- Public comments received during and after Master Plan update public listening sessions.
- The Department's regulations, policies and mission goals applying to State Parks.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE:

A "No Action" Management Alternative, in the case of a Master Plan for a State Park, would assume that current management activities would continue and existing facilities would remain unchanged. Due to the need to bring existing facilities into compliance with current design standards and regulations, as well as the need to renovate or replace certain facilities and infrastructure, a No Action Alternative is not a viable option at Rib Mountain.

ELEMENTS INCLUDED IN ALL OF THE ALTERNATIVES:

The following elements were considered as essential or mandatory to the future operation of the park and, therefore, were included in all of the proposed Alternatives:

- Installation of a new water distribution system. Management Alternatives 1-4 consider a number of possible design configurations for water distribution system based on a variety of possible locations for new park facilities and their comparative impacts.

- Construction of a new Public Entrance Visitors Station Building and nature center. The various Alternatives examine a variety of possible locations for these structures and related site improvements within the park. Management Alternatives 1-4 consider a number of possible locations and site configurations for the Public Entrance Visitors Station Building and nature center and their comparative impacts.

- Renovation of the park's road and parking area pavement.

- Development of a park-wide directional and informational sign system and a new park entrance sign that meets current State Park design standards.

- Removal "hazard trees" in or adjacent to areas of public use to provide for public safety.

- Reduction the deer population to a level equal to the larger deer management unit, to allow the re-growth of forest understory vegetation.

- Lease areas will be managed according to the terms of the existing lease agreements.

- Existing features or facilities will remain and current management practices will continue unless otherwise noted.

MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE 1

Concept Statement: Alternative 1 outlines the continuation of current park management practices with a minimal amount of modifications park facilities. Any new construction of facilities would be limited to improvements that are either required to maintain effective park services and/or to meet current standards and regulations. Any such actions must preserve at least 95% of the current undeveloped areas.

Alternative 1 includes the following major elements:

- Construction of a new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building with an attached nature center room and improvements to the surrounding parking area in the location of the existing contact booth.

- Renovate and reconfigure the existing 30-site rustic campground and eliminate of 15 campsites to meet current campsite spacing design standards of a 100 foot minimum spacing between sites.

- Maintain approximately 1,000 acres of northern hardwood and aspen forest with scattered conifers dominated by large diameter, longer-lived species. This would be accomplished primarily through passive management (no cutting / natural processes).

Comparative Analysis of Impacts Resulting From Alternative 1:

Alternative 1 - Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building
Alternative 1 proposes the new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building be located at the top of the hill in the location of the existing contact booth. The PEVS would include a 20' by 30' attached nature center room and improvements to the surrounding parking area, as illustrated in the attached "Alternative 1- Conceptual Site Plan"

Impacts Anticipated:
Generally, the site proposed for the PEVS and related site improvements in Alternative 1 would result in the least amount of construction impacts. Approximately ½ acre of existing vegetation would need to be cleared. The existing paving in the parking area would be removed and reconfigured. A minimal amount of grading would be required in the area surrounding the PEVS. Consequently, impacts to biological, geological and cultural resources would be less than the other Alternatives.

The pattern of vehicular circulation would be less efficient in Alternative 1 than in Alternatives 2, 3 and 4, as large vehicles with turning radii greater than 45 feet, would be required to exit through the amphitheater parking area.

Alternative 1 - Sewer and Water System
The location proposed for the new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building and site improvements in Alternative 1(and Alternative 3), would require the construction of a new water system extending from the base of the ski hill lease area to a reservoir at the top of the hill. Due to the 700-foot change in elevation between the point of connection and the reservoir, one or more high pressure booster pumps and high pressure piping would be needed to deliver water to the top of the hill.

The feasibility of constructing a sanitary sewer system designed to service the buildings as proposed in Alternative 1 was studied and it was determined that such a system would be extremely expensive and difficult to install due to the major elevation change and the shallow bedrock conditions of Rib Mountain. Therefore, Alternative 1 proposes the use of septic holding tanks instead of a collection system.

Impacts Anticipated:
The large elevation change combined with the shallow bedrock conditions would result in the water system required for Alternatives 1 and 3, costing approximately 1.7 million dollars. This would be significantly more expensive than the water systems proposed in Alternatives 2 and 4. The cost of pumping out the septic holding tanks over a period equal to the life of a septic collection system is anticipated to be significantly less than the cost of installing and maintaining a sanitary sewer system.

Alternative 1 - Rustic Family Campground
Alternatives 1 and 3 propose to renovate and reconfigure the existing 30-site rustic campground and eliminate of 15* campsites to meet current campsite spacing design standards of a 100 foot minimum spacing between sites.

Impacts Anticipated:
The primary impacts of this action would be a reduction in the number of rustic family campsites available in the central Wisconsin region by 15 sites and the loss of approximately 50% of the current park revenue received from camping.

Alternative 1 - Vegetation Management
Alternative 1 proposes to maintain approximately 1,000 acres of northern hardwood and aspen forest with scattered conifers, dominated by large diameter, longer-lived species. This maintenance would be done primarily through passive management (no cutting / natural processes), except for the removal of fallen, dead, damaged, or diseased trees adjacent to park facilities or recreational use areas. Damaged, diseased, dead and fallen trees in the passively managed areas would be left for inter-related insect and mammal habitat. These trees would not be removed unless they were determined to be a hazard to public safety.

Impacts Anticipated:
The vegetation management proposed in Alternative 1, would be a continuation of current management practices, and therefore would not result in and significant impacts to the scenic quality and biological resources. However, it should be noted that as the 90-year old even-aged forest continues to age, the potential for catastrophic events, such as a major disease infestation, blow-down, or forest fire forest becomes greater due to the declining health of shorter life-cycle trees. This type of catastrophic event would be addressed according to the "Response to Catastrophic Events" described in Chapter Two- "Property-Wide Management Policies".

It is anticipated that this management method would lead to a slow succession to climax species and old growth type conditions over a period of several hundred years. The even-aged forest cover of Rib Mountain would slowly transition to an uneven-aged forest, the result of natural processes and disturbances. The presence of broken, dead or fallen trees, and coarse woody debris on the forest floor may be considered by some as "unsightly", while others may appreciate these aesthetics. This type of aesthetic impact would be most evident in Alternative 1, and less evident in Alternatives 2-4, which propose increasing degrees of active forest management.

The passive "no-cutting" management, proposed in Alternative 1, is anticipated to positively impact the forest community by promoting a varied forest structure. Dead and downed trees in various stages of decomposition would serve as hosts for a multitude of creatures.

* The May 2004 RMSP Master Plan Newsletter's "Summary of Alternative 1" incorrectly indicated that 3 campsites would need to be eliminated to meet current spacing standards. Subsequently, a campground reconfiguration plan was developed and it was determined that 15 sites would need to be removed in order to meet the current spacing standards.

MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE 2

Concept Statement: Alternative 2 proposes to provide day-use only facilities and "low impact" trails, while preserving at least 90% of the current undeveloped natural areas.

Alternative 2 includes the following major elements:

- Construct a new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building (without an attached nature center room) and an adjacent 20 car parking area located on Park Road adjacent to the intersection with the Verizon utility easement (referred to as the "saddle area") approximately 4,000 feet NW of the intersection of Park Road and Violet Avenue.
- Remodel the existing park shelter building to a nature center / concession building with modern restrooms.
- Convert the existing 30-site campground to a day use picnic area with 8 family picnic sites and 5 group picnic sites and an adjacent 20 car parking area.
- Widen Park Road to provide a pedestrian / bike lane.
- Develop a 1-mile long primitive hiking trail linking the existing trails west to the quarry area.
- Develop a 2-mile long one-way mountain bike trail located on the eastern side of the park with parking provided adjacent to the proposed PEVS building.
- Maintain approximately 1,000 acres of northern hardwood and aspen forest with scattered conifers dominated by large diameter, longer-lived species. Management will be primarily passive (no cutting / natural processes) with active management occurring only in selected areas to enhance the scenic quality and maintain public safety.

Comparative Analysis of Impacts Resulting From Alternative 2:

Alternative 2 - Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building
Alternative 2 proposes to site the new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building (without an attached nature center room) and an adjacent 20-car parking area on Park Road adjacent to the intersection with the utility easement, approximately 4,000 feet NW of the intersection of Park Road and Violet Avenue.

Impacts Anticipated:
The site proposed for the PEVS and related site improvements in Alternative 2 would result in a number of adverse impacts to biological and geological resources resulting from the required construction and site work. Approximately 3 acres of existing vegetation would need to be cleared. This is approximately 6 times as large as the area to be cleared for Alternative 1, and significantly less than Alternatives 3 and 4. The increased amount of impermeable surface created in Alternative 2 would be approximately twice the size of Alternative 1 and roughly equal to Alternatives 3 and 4, however the adverse impacts of storm water runoff to adjacent properties would be minimal due to the large buffer of vegetated permeable surface.

The area NE of Park Road would need to be graded to create a level surface for the building and parking area. Earthwork to create the building and parking area pad is estimated to require approximately 12,000 cubic yards of backfill material. Approximately 450 feet of a new 16 foot wide paved road and 350 feet of a new 12 foot wide paved road would be required to allow looping vehicular circulation. Approximately 6,000 square feet (.14 acre) of new paving would

be required for the parking areas. Consequently, the fiscal impact to the State resulting from site work surrounding the PEVS is estimated to be approximately $500,000, in addition to the cost of the PEVS building of approximately $500,000.

Impacts to park operations resulting from the location of the PEVS proposed in Alternative 2 would be generally equal to Alternatives 1, 3 and 4. However, the location is closer to the park's eastern boundary and would provide park staff with a greater ability to monitor the activities on the eastern side of the park. Also, the pattern of vehicular circulation would be more efficient than Alternative 1 and equal to Alternatives 3 and 4, as the roads would accommodate large vehicles with turning radii up to 50-feet.

Alternative 2 - Maintenance Building / Service Area Relocation
Alternative 2 proposes to relocate and expand the existing metal shop / maintenance building and service area. The new site for the maintenance building is on an existing cleared, level pad located approximately 500-feet east of the proposed PEVS. A new 500' long, 12' wide gravel access road would be constructed as well as a 60' by 100' gravel parking and maintenance area.

Impacts Anticipated:
Adverse impacts to biological and geological resources resulting from the relocation and expansion of the existing metal shop / maintenance building and service area would be limited to the construction of the 500 foot long gravel access road. Earthwork required for the gravel access road would require the clearing of an area approximately 50' by 500' (.57 acre). The area would experience an increase in its scenic quality as the maintenance building and service area would not be visible from Park Road or any other intensive use areas. Impacts to park operations resulting from the relocation an expansion of the existing metal shop / maintenance building existing metal shop / maintenance building are anticipated to be somewhat less efficient as these facilities are less centrally located relative to the more intensive use areas. The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the proposed relocation and expansion of the existing metal shop / maintenance building and service area is estimated to be approximately $200,000, including the building relocation, expansion and site work.

Alternative 2 - Nature Center / Friends Concession Building
Alternative 2 proposes to remodel the existing enclosed park shelter building into a nature center / Friends concession space. The remodeling would enclose the existing 25' by 25' covered patio area and add accessible restrooms, a food service area and a flexible interpretive / meeting space. Remodeling would require the removal and replacement of the existing roof with a new insulated roof.

Impacts Anticipated:
The proposed remodeling of the existing enclosed park shelter building into a nature center / Friends concession space is anticipated to result in minimal impacts to the park's biological and geological resources. Impacts to the park's scenic quality would also be minimal. The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the proposed remodeling of the existing park shelter building into a nature center / Friends concession space is estimated to be approximately $400,000.

Alternative 2 - Sewer and Water System
The locations proposed in Alternative 2 for the new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building and the maintenance building, would require the construction of a new water system extending from the east end of Begonia, up the existing utility easement to the PEVS and maintenance building. Due the 200-foot change in elevation between the point of connection

and the PEVS, one high pressure booster pump and high pressure water main piping would be needed to deliver water to the PEVS and maintenance building.

A second water supply line providing water to the proposed nature center would extend from the base of the ski hill lease area to a reservoir at the top of the hill. Due the 700-foot change in elevation between the point of connection and the reservoir, one or more high pressure booster pumps and high pressure piping would be needed to deliver water to the top of the hill. The fiscal impact to the State resulting from two separate high pressure water supply lines would cost approximately 1.9 million dollars. This would be somewhat more expensive than the water systems proposed in Alternatives 1and 3, and significantly more expensive than the systems proposed in Alternative 4.

The feasibility of constructing a sanitary sewer system designed to service the buildings as proposed in Alternative 2 was also studied. It was determined that such a system would be extremely expensive and difficult to install due to locations of the buildings requiring service, and the major elevation change and shallow bedrock conditions of the site. Therefore, Alternative 2 proposes the use of septic holding tanks instead of a collection system. The cost of pumping out the septic holding tanks over a period equal to the life of a septic collection system is anticipated to be significantly less than the cost of installing and maintaining a sanitary sewer system.

Alternative 2 - Conversion of the Existing Rustic Campground to a Day-Use Picnic Area
Alternative 2 proposes to convert the existing 30-site rustic campground to a day use picnic area with 8 family picnic sites and 5 group picnic pavilions and an adjacent 20 car parking area. The existing coin operated shower building would be remodeled into a 4-unit restroom building. The existing play area would be reconfigured and renovated to meet current disabled accessibility requirements.

Impacts Anticipated:
The primary impacts anticipated from the proposed conversion of the existing rustic campground to a day-use picnic area would be as follows:

There would be a reduction in the number of rustic family campsites available in the central Wisconsin region by 30 sites. It should be noted that over the past decade, the popularity of camping facilities has shifted from smaller rustic (no electric service) campsites to larger campsites capable of accommodating today's larger recreational vehicles with electrical hook-ups. Current DNR policy limits the development of "modern" campsites (with electric service) to campgrounds with more than 75 campsites.

There would be a minimal amount of impact to biological and geological resources anticipated to result from the construction of the new picnic sites and pavilion. The area is currently used as a campground and the majority of the new picnic sites and pavilions would be located in the existing campsites. The construction of the new 20 car parking area would require the selective clearing of two 60' by 60' parking aisles totaling 7,200 square feet (.16 acre).

There would be a short-term fiscal impact to the State resulting from the cost of site improvements necessary for the conversion of the existing campground to a day-use picnic area. Site improvement costs, including the conversion of campsites to picnic sites, the construction of the parking area and the construction of the group picnic pavilions, is estimated to be approximately $200,000.

There would be a long-term fiscal impact to the State in the form of a loss of current park revenue received from camping. The cost of the new picnic pavilions and other site improvements will also represent a loss in net park revenue. However, this loss in revenue would be offset or exceeded by the revenue anticipated to be created from the rentals of the five group picnic pavilions. According to information provided by the Marathon County Department of Parks and Recreation, the local demand for reservable group picnic shelters greatly exceeds the number of these facilities available.

Alternative 2 - Paved Pedestrian Path
Alternatives 2 and 4 propose to construct an 8' wide pedestrian walking path located 10-100 feet south of and parallel to Park Road. The path would extend approximately 1.5 miles from Violet Lane to the amphitheater parking area at the top of the hill. The path would have gradual curves allowing it to follow existing trails, avoid large diameter trees whenever possible, and maintain a consistent slope to the greatest extent possible. The path would be constructed to be flush with the terrain to maintain the existing sheet flow surface drainage patterns.

Impacts Anticipated:
The primary impacts anticipated to result from the construction of the paved pedestrian path would be the clearing of existing vegetation and construction costs. It is estimated that a 12 foot wide strip of existing vegetation would need to be cleared to allow the path's construction. The total area to be cleared for the pedestrian path would be approximately 95,000 square feet (2.2 acres). The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the proposed 8' wide pedestrian path, including clearing, minor grading, and paving is estimated to be approximately $57,000.

Alternative 2 - Primitive Hiking Trails
Alternative 2 proposes to develop approximately 1 mile of new primitive hiking trails linking the existing trails west to the quarry area.

Impacts Anticipated:
The primary impacts anticipated to result from the construction of the new primitive hiking trails would be the clearing of the existing vegetation and construction costs. It is estimated that a 6 foot wide strip of existing vegetation would need to be cleared to allow the trail's construction. The total area to be cleared for the primitive hiking trails would be approximately 32,000 square feet (.7 acre). The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the construction of the proposed primitive hiking trail, including clearing, wood chip surfacing and trail markers, is estimated to be approximately $13,000.

Alternative 2 - Primitive Mountain Bike Trails
Alternative 2 proposes to develop approximately 2 miles of one-way primitive Class C mountain bike trails located on the eastern side of the park with parking provided for mountain bike users adjacent to the proposed PEVS building. The design and construction of the primitive mountain bike trails would be in compliance with DNR design standards as defined above for "primitive hiking trails".

Impacts Anticipated:
The primary impacts anticipated to result from the construction of the new primitive mountain bike trails would be the clearing of the existing vegetation and construction costs. It is estimated that a 6-foot wide strip of existing vegetation would need to be cleared to allow the trail's construction. The total area to be cleared for the primitive hiking trails would be approximately 64,000 square feet (1.4 acres). The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the construction of

the proposed primitive hiking trail, including clearing, wood chip surfacing, erosion control measures and trail markers, is estimated to be approximately $26,000.

Alternative 2 - Vegetation Management
Alternative 2 proposes to maintain approximately 1,000 acres of northern hardwood and aspen forest with scattered conifers dominated by large diameter, longer-lived species. Management would be primarily through passive (no cutting / natural processes) with some active management in selected areas totaling approximately 40 acres. Active management practices would be limited to the following activities:

- The reclamation seeding of indigenous species in the abandoned quarry.
- The selective removal of vegetation as necessary to open the views from scenic vistas.
- The removal of fallen, dead, damaged, or diseased trees that are visible from park facilities or recreational use areas within the "Scenic and Natural Recreation Management Zones".

Impacts Anticipated:
The vegetation management proposed in Alternative 2 is similar to current management practices, and therefore the resulting impacts to biological resources would be minimal. The anticipated impacts would be similar to Alternative 1, except that some active management would be used in selected areas. Impacts to the scenic quality in passively managed areas would be similar to those described for Alternative 1. Impacts to the scenic quality will differ depending on users; some may perceive this forest as neat and scenic, while others may prefer the appearance of a more naturally controlled forest. Impacts to biological resources would be similar to those described for Alternative 1, with a minor increase in the amount of disturbance to the forest community as the result of the proposed active management in selected areas.

MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE 3

Concept Statement: Alternative 3 proposes to provide both day-use and group camping facilities and low-impact trails while preserving at least 90% of the current undeveloped areas.

Alternative 3 would include the following major elements:

- Construct a new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building, attached nature center room, and improve the surrounding parking area in the location of the existing contact booth.
- Renovate and reconfigure the existing 30-site rustic campground and eliminate of 15 campsites to meet current campsite spacing design standards of a 100-foot minimum spacing between sites.
- Develop 3.2 miles of new primitive hiking / snowshoeing trails extending into the newly acquired, western portion of the park with 6 primitive, walk-in campsites.
- Development of a 2.5-mile-long hiking / snow shoeing trail located on the eastern side of the park with a 16 car gravel parking area constructed on Park Road adjacent to the intersection with the utility easement.
- Development of 6 primitive, walk-in campsites located on the western side of the park. A 10-car gravel parking area would be constructed approximately 500-feet southwest of the existing Grouse Lane gate.

- Manage approximately 800 acres of the existing even-aged northern hardwood forest to enhance the scenic quality, health, structure and conversion to an uneven-aged forest, through periodic thinning and "gap" management. A 200 acre parcel of northern hardwood forest containing the greatest concentration of rare plants and unique micro-habitats would be designated and managed as a State Natural Area.

Comparative Analysis of Impacts Resulting From Alternative 3:

Alternative 3 - Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building
Alternative 3 proposes to site the new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building with an attached nature center room on the top of the hill on the south side of Park Road opposite the existing contact booth. Site improvements would include an adjacent "pull-through" visitor parking area and the existing gravel amphitheater parking area would be paved and expanded to accommodate 50 cars. The existing road system in the vicinity of the PEVS would be reconfigured to create a return loop and a one-way exit road.

Impacts Anticipated:
The site proposed for the PEVS and related site improvements in Alternative 3 would result in a number of adverse impacts to biological and geological resources resulting from the required construction and site work.

Approximately 1.4 acres of existing vegetation would need to be cleared to allow the construction of the PEVS, new parking area and reconfigured roads. This is approximately twice as large as the area to be cleared for Alternative 1, and significantly less than Alternatives 2 and 4. The increased amount of impermeable surface would be approximately twice the size of Alternative 1 and roughly equal to Alternatives 2 and 4, however the adverse impacts of storm water runoff to adjacent properties would be minimal due to the large buffer of vegetated permeable surface.

The surface for the PEVS and the new roads and parking area would require some minor grading. The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the construction of the PEVS would be approximately $500,000, and the site work surrounding the PEVS is estimated to be approximately $300,000. Impacts to park operations resulting from the location of the PEVS proposed in Alternative 3 would be generally equal to Alternatives 1, 3 and 4. However, the pattern of vehicular circulation in Alternative 3 would be more efficient than Alternative 1 and equal to Alternatives 3 and 4, as the roads would accommodate large vehicles with turning radii of up to 50-feet.

Alternative 3 - Widening of Park Road for Pedestrian / Bike Lane
Alternatives 3 proposes to widen Park Road from the current 22' wide two-way paved roadway, adding an 8' wide pedestrian / bike lane. Due to the steep terrain, widening to accommodate the additional 8' of paved surface would require the construction of a 3' to 8' high retaining wall on one or both sides of the road. The retaining walls would extend approximately 4,000 feet where the road traverses the steepest terrain.

Impacts Anticipated:
The primary impacts anticipated to result from the road widening and construction of retaining walls would be the clearing of existing vegetation and the expense of constructing these walls. It is estimated that approximately 8 - 12 additional feet of existing vegetation would need to be cleared in the 4,000-foot long sections where retaining walls are not required. Approximately 20

additional feet of existing vegetation would need to be cleared in the 4,000-foot long sections where retaining walls are required. The total area to be cleared to allow the road widening for the pedestrian / bike lane would be approximately 120,000 square feet (2.75 acres). The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the proposed widening of Park Road to include an 8' wide pedestrian / bike lane, including the required retaining walls and structural backfill, is estimated to be approximately $1.5 million dollars. This cost is significantly higher than the cost of constructing an 8' wide pedestrian path as proposed in Alternatives 2 and 4.

Alternative 3 - Maintenance Building / Service Area
Alternative 3 proposes to retain the existing metal shop / maintenance building and service areas in their current location. The existing metal shop / maintenance building would be expanded and a wood fence and visual screen plantings would be installed to buffer negative views from Park Road.

Impacts Anticipated:
Impacts to biological and geological resources would be minimal as the maintenance building and service area would remain in their current location. Compared to the current condition, a positive impact to the scenic quality would result from the proposed fencing and visual buffer plantings. The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the proposed expansion of the existing metal shop / maintenance building and the fencing / screening of the service area is estimated to be approximately $50,000.

Alternative 3 - Sewer and Water System
The locations proposed in Alternative 3 for the new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building and the maintenance building, are similar to Alternative 1. The design and construction of the water system and resulting impacts would be the same as described for Alternative 1. Also, the feasibility of a sanitary sewer system, the recommended use of septic holding tanks and the resulting anticipated impacts would be the same as described for Alternative 1.

Impacts Anticipated:
Refer to the analysis of impacts in the "Comparative Analysis of Impacts Resulting from Alternative 1- Sewer and Water System".

Alternative 3 - Rustic Family Campground
Alternatives 1 and 3 propose to renovate and reconfigure the existing 30-site rustic campground and eliminate of 15* campsites to meet current campsite spacing design standards of a 100-foot minimum spacing between sites. Refer to the analysis of impacts in the "Comparative Analysis of Impacts Resulting from Alternative 1- Rustic Family Campground"

Alternative 3 - Primitive Walk-in Campsites
Alternative 3 proposes to develop 6 primitive, walk-in campsites located on the western side of the park. One pit toilet would be provided at each site and drinking water would be provided by a hand-pump well centrally located to the campsites. A 10-car gravel parking area would be constructed approximately 500 feet southwest of the existing Grouse Lane gate.

* The May 2004 RMSP Master Plan Newsletter's "Summary of Alternative 1" incorrectly indicated that 3 campsites would need to be eliminated to meet current spacing standards. Subsequently, a campground reconfiguration plan was developed and it was determined that 15 sites would need to be removed in order to meet the current spacing standards.

Impacts Anticipated:
A minor impact to the forest community would result from the minimal amount of selective clearing of approximately ½ acre of existing vegetation required for the development of the 6 primitive campsites and parking area. The fiscal impact to the state is estimated to be approximately $20,000.

Alternative 3 - Primitive Hiking Trails
Alternative 3 proposes to develop approximately 3.2 miles of new primitive hiking / snowshoeing trails on the western side of the park, linking the existing western trails to the quarry area and extending to the proposed group campground. The new trails would also extend to the proposed Grouse Lane parking area. The primitive hiking trails would be as described for "Alternative2- Primitive Hiking Trails".

Alternative 3 also proposes to develop approximately 2.5-miles of new primitive hiking / snowshoeing trails on the eastern side of the park, extending to the north and east from the proposed "high line" parking area.

Impacts Anticipated:
The primary impacts anticipated to result from the construction of the new primitive hiking trails would be as described for Alternative 2- **"**Primitive Hiking Trails". The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the construction of a total of 5.7-miles of primitive hiking / snowshoeing trails, including clearing, wood chip surfacing and installing trail markers, is estimated to be approximately $74,000.

Alternative 3 - Vegetation Management
Alternative 3 proposes to manage approximately 800 acres of the existing even-aged northern hardwood forest to enhance the forest's scenic quality, health, and structure. Management will promote a conversion to an uneven-aged forest through periodic thinning and canopy gap formation techniques[*]. Gap management would be performed on a 10-15 year interval, harvesting groups of high risk or degraded trees greater than 1" in diameter to create 1- 35' diameter gap and 1- 60' gap per acre (9% of the stand area). The remaining areas would be thinned on a 10-15 year interval to remove approximately 10% of the stand's total basal area. Thinnings would remove only high risk or degraded short-lived trees species while retaining healthy, high quality, large diameter, and longer-lived tree species. Skid paths and haul roads would need to extend into the actively managed areas.

A 200 acre parcel of northern hardwood forest containing the greatest concentration of rare plants and unique micro-habitats would be designated and managed as a State Natural Area. In comparison to active forest management, The SNA would serve as a place to study the natural processes of the forest and micro-habitats. No vegetation management activities would be allowed except for:

- The removal of fallen trees obstructing designated trails or "hazard" trees adjacent to designated trails.
- The control of invasive exotic species.

[*] refer to pages 8,14-17, 20,21,24 and 34- WDNR Silviculture Handbook- Chapter 40- Northern Hardwood Cover Type (revised 2005).

Impacts Anticipated:
The short-term impact (within 0-5 years) to the scenic quality of the actively managed areas resulting from the proposed thinning and gap management activities would be perceived by many as adverse. Gap harvested and thinned areas, as well as skid paths and haul roads, would be evident from within and from outside the park.

The short-term impacts (within 0-5 years) to biological resources in the actively managed areas resulting from the proposed active management in selected areas would be the disturbance of less than 10% of the forest community. Skid paths and haul roads would compact the soil and temporarily alter the natural drainage patterns if management activities are performed during periods other than when the ground is frozen. Vehicles, equipment or horses used to perform vegetation management activities may also introduce invasive exotic species into the forest community.

Short-term impacts to both the scenic and biological resources could be mitigated by limiting vegetation management activities to periods when the ground is frozen, and by using "low impact" timber removal methods such as horse drawn skidding, cable skidding, or specialized harvesting equipment.

The long-term impact (within 5-50+ years) to the scenic quality in the actively managed areas resulting from the proposed thinning and gap management activities would be perceived by many as a positive impact. Skid paths and haul roads would no longer be evident and the forest community would have become more diverse, healthy, and vigorous with less dead, damaged or diseased trees evident.

The long-term impacts (within 5-50+ years) to biological resources in the actively managed areas resulting from the proposed thinning and gap management activities would be the conversion of the of the existing even-aged northern hardwood forest community to an uneven-aged forest dominated by large diameter, longer-lived tree species. Provided the deer population is reduced, it is anticipated that conifers which are less shade tolerant (such as hemlock, white pine and red pine) would establish in the gap areas along with other northern hardwoods that require sunlight. The forest would have additional diversity of structure with a more developed and diverse shrub and ground layer. The proposed active management in selected areas would reduce the amount of decaying woody debris that provide habitat for small animals, insects, fungi and other micro-organisms as compared to Alternatives 1 and 2.
If not controlled, invasive exotic species introduced into the forest community as the result of management activities would further establish and alter to composition of the forest community.

MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVE 4

Concept Statement: Alternative 4 proposes to maximize the park's recreational potential within the physical and biological capabilities of the site, providing both day-use and a variety of overnight camping facilities while preserving at least 90% of the current undeveloped natural areas.

Alternative 4 would include the following major elements:

- Construct a new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building (without an attached nature center room) and an adjacent 20 car parking area located on the south side of Park Road, approximately 2,000 feet NW of the intersection of Park Road and Violet Avenue.

- Develop an 8 foot wide, paved walking path 50-100 feet south of and parallel with Park Road extending from the PEVS to the amphitheater parking area.

- Construct a new nature center / concession building in the location of the existing Friends concession stand, adjacent to the existing parking area.

- Remove or relocate the existing park shelter building and construct 150 feet of 16' wide road to connect the NW and SW ends of Park Road.

- Renovate and reconfigure the existing 30-site rustic campground to meet current campsite spacing design standards of a 100 foot minimum spacing between sites.

- Construct a 10-site RV campground on the south side of the Park Road opposite the existing campground.

- Develop 2.5 miles of one-way mountain biking trails located on the eastern side of the park with a 16 car gravel parking area constructed on the north side of Park Road adjacent to the intersection with the utility easement.

- Develop 3.2 miles of new primitive hiking / snowshoeing and interpretive trails extending into the newly acquired, western portion of the Park.

- Construct a rustic group campground to accommodate approximately 60 campers located approximately 1,000 feet southwest of the existing gate at the south end of Grouse Lane. A gravel parking area to accommodate 15 autos and 3 RVs would be constructed approximately 300 feet southwest of the existing Grouse Lane gate.

- Construct a paved access road extending approximately 3,500 feet SW from Grouse Lane to the group campground.

- Actively manage approximately 1,000 acres of the existing northern hardwood forest community to enhance the scenic quality, health, structure and conversion to an uneven-aged forest, through a combination of: crop release harvesting, periodic improvement thinning, "gap" management, and clear-cutting of declining aspen stands[*].

COMPARATIVE IMPACT ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVE 4

Alternative 4 - Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) Building, Parking Area and Maintenance Building / Service Area

Alternative 4 proposes to site the new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building (without an attached nature center room) on the south side of Park Road approximately 2,000 feet NW of the intersection of Park Road and Violet Avenue. Site improvements would include an adjacent 20 car "pull-through" visitor parking area. The existing road system in the vicinity of the PEVS would be reconfigured to create a return loop and a one-way exit road. The existing metal maintenance building would be relocated to the wooded area approximately 100 feet

[*] Refer to the *Stewardship Forestry Plan* (Bargander, S. 2002 & 2003) and the *Rib Mountain Forestry Plan and Reconnainse* (Bargander, S. 2003).

south of the PEVS. The maintenance building would be expanded to include 2 additional parking bays and a heated staff room and restrooms. A 12 foot wide gravel access road would extend from the PEVS parking area to a 50' by 100' gravel parking / service area on the north side of the maintenance building.

Impacts Anticipated:
The construction of the PEVS, parking area, maintenance building and related site improvements proposed in Alternative 4 would result in the following impacts:

The scenic quality of views from residences located on the north side of Park Road as well as residences on the west side of Mint Lane may be adversely impacted. A visual buffer of existing deciduous trees, varying in distance from approximately 100' to 600', occurs between these residences and the proposed structures, roads and parking areas. It is more likely that these structures would be visible during the winter season when the existing vegetation is defoliated. Impacts to the scenic quality could be mitigated by the planting of evergreen trees to screen the negative views.

Approximately 6 acres of existing vegetation would need to be cleared to allow site grading and the construction of the PEVS, new parking area, and reconfigured roads. This would adversely impact the forest community and wildlife in the vicinity of the proposed site improvements. The area to be cleared is approximately twelve times as large as the area to be cleared for Alternative 1, and approximately twice as large as Alternatives 2 and 3. The increased amount of impermeable surface would be approximately twice the size of Alternative 1 and roughly equal to Alternatives 2 and 4.

It is anticipated that there would be minor adverse impacts of storm water runoff to adjacent properties to the south of the PEVS, maintenance building and parking area. Any increase in storm water runoff could be mitigated by storm water detention structures or ponds.

The surface for the PEVS, parking area, new roads, maintenance building and service area would require the placement and grading of approximately 100,000 cubic yards of backfill material. The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the construction of the PEVS would be approximately $500,000. The proposed expansion of the existing metal shop / maintenance building is estimated to cost approximately $50,000. The site work surrounding the PEVS, including: clearing, earthwork, paved roads / parking area, gravel road / service area and buffer plantings is estimated to cost approximately $800,000.

Impacts to park operations from the location of the PEVS, proposed in Alternative 4, would be generally equal to Alternatives 1, 2 and 3. However, the pattern of vehicular circulation would be more efficient than Alternative 1 and equal to Alternatives 3 and 4, as the roads would accommodate large vehicles with turning radii up to 50 feet. The location of the maintenance building at the top of the hill would make it less conveniently located relative to the majority of park facilities.

Alternative 4 - Sewer and Water System
The locations proposed in Alternative 4 for the new Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS) building and the maintenance building, would require the construction of a new water system extending from the fire hydrant located approximately 1,500 feet northwest of the intersection of Park Road and Violet Lane, up Park Road approximately 500 feet to the PEVS and maintenance building. Due the 200 foot change in elevation between the point of connection

and the PEVS, one high-pressure booster pump and high-pressure water main piping would be needed to deliver water to the PEVS and maintenance building.

A second water supply line providing water to the proposed nature center and other facilities at the top of the hill would extend from the base of the ski hill lease area to a reservoir at the top of the hill. Due the 700-foot change in elevation between the point of connection and the reservoir, one or more high pressure booster pumps and high pressure piping would need to be used to deliver water to the top of the hill. According to the *Rib Mountain State Park- Sewer & Water System Feasibility / Cost Study- Summary Report* (Brokaw, K. and Benoy, N. WDNR, 2004), the construction of a new water system to service the facilities as proposed in Alternative 4, would cost the State approximately 1 million dollars.

Alternative 4 would allow the installation a sanitary sewer system servicing the PEVS and the maintenance building. Sanitary sewer lines would extend approximately 500 feet southeast from the PEVS along Park Road and connect to existing Rib Mountain Sanitary District sewer lines. The feasibility of extending the sewer lines up Park Road to service the facilities at the top of the hill was studied. It was concluded that such a system would be extremely expensive and difficult to install due to the major elevation change and the shallow bedrock conditions of the site. Therefore, Alternative 4 proposes the use of septic holding tanks instead of a collection system for the proposed nature center and other facilities at the top of the hill. The cost of pumping out the septic holding tanks of facilities at the top of the hill, over a period equal to the life of a septic collection system, is anticipated to be significantly less than the cost of installing and maintaining a sanitary sewer system.

Alternative 4 - Paved Pedestrian Path
Alternatives 2 and 4 propose to construct an 8 foot wide pedestrian walking path located 10'-100' feet south of and parallel to Park Road. The path would extend approximately 1.5 miles from Violet Lane to the amphitheater parking area at the top of the hill. The path would have gradual curves allowing it to follow existing trails, avoid large diameter trees whenever possible, and maintain a consistent slope to the greatest extent possible. The path would be constructed to be flush with surrounding terrain, thereby maintaining the existing sheet flow surface drainage patterns.

Impacts Anticipated:
Refer to "Alternative 2- Paved Pedestrian Path- Impacts Anticipated".

Alternative 4 - Nature Center / Concession Building
Alternative 4 proposes to construct a new nature center/ concession building located approximately 300 feet southeast of the existing scenic observation tower. The new nature center would be a 2-level, 5,000 square foot building. The upper level would include an interpretive space, Friends concession space, restrooms and a scenic observation deck / seating area. The lower level walk-out basement would function as a reservable meeting room with restrooms. Site improvements would include: paved walkways, a new 18-car and 2-bus parking area located on the southwest side of Park Road. The existing parking area on the northeast side of Park Road would be reconfigured and expanded to meet current design standards.

Impacts Anticipated:
The construction of the nature center/ concession building, parking areas, and related site improvements in the locations proposed in Alternative 4 would result in the following impacts:

Minor impacts to the scenic quality in the area of the proposed nature center would be anticipated. Impacts to the scenic quality could be mitigated by the planting of evergreen trees in selected locations.

Approximately 1 acre of existing vegetation would need to be cleared to allow site grading and the construction of the nature center and parking areas. This would adversely impact the forest community and wildlife in the vicinity of the proposed building and site improvements. The increased amount of impermeable surface would be approximately ¼ acre in size.

It is anticipated that there would be no significant increase in storm water runoff to adjacent properties due to the large buffer zone of vegetated permeable surface surrounding the proposed improvements.

The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the construction of the nature center/ concession building, parking areas and related site improvements would be approximately $500,000.

Impacts to park operations resulting from the location of the PEVS proposed in Alternative 4, would be generally equal to Alternatives 1, 2 and 3. However, the pattern of vehicular circulation would be more efficient than Alternative 1 and equal to Alternatives 3 and 4, as the roads would accommodate large vehicles with turning radii up to 50 feet. The placement of the maintenance building at the top of the hill would make it less conveniently located relative to the majority of park facilities.

Alternative 4 - Park Shelter Building / Park Road
Alternative 4 proposes to relocate or remove the existing enclosed park shelter building and construct a new section of road connecting the northwest and southwest ends of Park Road to create a one-way loop.

Impacts Anticipated:
Impacts to biological and geological resources in the area surrounding the park shelter building would be minimal, as the construction / site work would be confined to areas that are currently developed. Construction documents developed for future road construction would include provisions to protect the adjacent rock formations and vegetation from any disturbance from construction activities. The amount of impermeable surface would be equal to the current site conditions.

Impacts to the scenic quality in the area surrounding the park shelter building would be positive, the removal of the park shelter creating a more natural appearance for the area. The proposed looping road would allow a greater number of park visitors to enjoy the scenic quality at the west end of Park Road.

It is estimated that the cost of relocating the existing park shelter building would be greater than the cost of constructing a new similar structure. The fiscal impacts to the State resulting from the construction of a new equivalent building in a different location in the park would be approximately $60,000. The cost of constructing 100-150 feet of new road, including earthwork, would be approximately $10,000 - $15,000.

Alternative 4 - Rustic Family Campground
Alternatives 1, 3 and 4 propose to renovate and reconfigure the existing 30-site rustic campground and eliminate of 15* campsites to meet current campsite spacing design standards of a 100-foot minimum spacing between sites.

Impacts Anticipated:
Refer to the analysis of impacts in the "Comparative Analysis of Impacts Resulting from Alternative 1- Rustic Family Campground"

Alternative 4 - RV Campground
Alternative 4 proposes to construct a new recreational vehicle (RV) campground located on the south side of Park Road opposite the existing rustic family campground. The RV campground would include 10 RV sites, a 16 foot wide one-way paved looping access road, and a new 4-unit restroom building. In accordance with current policies, the site would not have electrical hook-ups.

Impacts Anticipated:
Impacts to the forest community and wildlife would be minor as the RV campground would require the clearing of only approximately 2 acres. The amount of impermeable surface would be limited to the access road and restroom building. It is anticipated that there would be no significant increase in storm water runoff to adjacent properties due to the large buffer zone of vegetated permeable surface surrounding the proposed improvements.

Impacts to the scenic quality in the area surrounding the proposed RV campground would be minor as it would be located in a wooded area which would provide a visual buffer.

Impacts of noise may be significant. Because electrical service would not be provided, RVs may run electrical generators, creating noise in the area surrounding the campground. This impact could be mitigated by restricting the hours when generators may be operated.

Impacts to recreational resources would be minor as the addition of 10 RV sites an already abundant number of RV sites in the region would not have a large effect. According to park staff, the demand for RV sites without electrical hook-ups is low. Because the RV campground would occupy space at the top of the hill, it would have an adverse impact on other recreational uses and traffic flow in the surrounding area.

The fiscal impacts to the State would be a minor increase in the annual park revenues. The estimated cost of constructing this facility is approximately $120,000.

Alternative 4 - Primitive Mountain Bike Trails
Alternative 4 proposes to develop approximately 2.5 miles of one-way primitive Class C mountain bike trails located on the eastern side of the park with parking provided for mountain bike users adjacent to the proposed PEVS building. The design and construction of the primitive mountain bike trails would be in compliance with DNR design standards as defined above for "primitive hiking trails".

* The May 2004 RMSP Master Plan Newsletter's "Summary of Alternative 1" incorrectly indicated that 3 campsites would need to be eliminated to meet current spacing standards. Subsequently, a campground reconfiguration plan was developed and it was determined that 15 sites would need to be removed in order to meet the current spacing standards.

Impacts Anticipated:
The primary impacts anticipated to result from the construction of the new primitive mountain bike trails would be the clearing of the existing vegetation and construction costs. It is estimated that a 6 foot wide strip of existing vegetation would need to be cleared to allow the trail's construction. The total area to be cleared for the primitive hiking trails would be approximately 80,000 square feet (1.8 acres). The fiscal impact to the State resulting from the construction of the proposed primitive hiking trail including clearing, wood chip surfacing, erosion control measures and trail markers, is estimated to be approximately $35,000.

Alternative 4 - Primitive Hiking Trails
Alternative 4 proposes to develop approximately 3.2 miles of new primitive hiking / snowshoeing trails on the western side of the park, extending to the proposed group campground and linking the existing western trails to the quarry area. The new trails would also extend to the proposed Grouse Lane parking Area. The primitive hiking trails would be as described for "Alternative2- Primitive Hiking Trails".

Impacts Anticipated:
The primary impacts anticipated to result from the construction of the new primitive hiking trails would be as described for Alternative 2- **"**Primitive Hiking Trails. However, the fiscal impact to the State resulting from the construction of 3.2 miles of primitive hiking / snowshoeing trails would be $40,000. This figure includes the cost of clearing, wood chip surfacing and trail markers.

Alternative 4 - Rustic Group Campground
Alternative 4 proposes to construct a rustic group campground to accommodate approximately 60 campers located approximately 1,000 feet southwest of the existing gate at the south end of Grouse Lane. A gravel parking area to accommodate 15 autos and 3 RVs would be constructed approximately 300 feet southwest of the existing Grouse Lane gate. The facility will include three separate sites appropriately spaced to offer separation but also in close enough proximity to share toilet and water facilities. A "common" grassy area will be located in the middle of the three areas and will include a vault toilet building and a group picnic shelter.

Impacts Anticipated:
An adverse impact to the forest community will result from the selective clearing of approximately 3.8 acres of existing vegetation for the group campground. The fiscal impacts to the state will be approximately $240,000 in construction costs.

Alternative 4 - Vegetation Management
Alternative 4 proposes to manage approximately 1,000 acres of the existing even-aged northern hardwood forest to enhance its scenic quality, health, and structure. Management would promote conversion to an uneven-aged forest through crop release harvesting, improvement thinning and canopy gap formation techniques[*]. Vegetation management would be performed on a 10-15 year interval, harvesting groups of high risk or degraded trees greater than 1" in diameter to create 1- 35' diameter gap and 1- 60' gap per acre (9% of the stand area). Two stands of declining aspen would be clear-cut. The remaining areas would be thinned on a 10-15 year interval to remove approximately 10- 20% of the stand's total basal area. Thinnings would remove only high risk or degraded short-lived trees species, while retaining healthy, large

[*] refer to Bargander, S. 2002. *Stewardship Forestry Plan for Rib Mountain State Park*, WDNR Division of Forestry. and Bargander, S. 2003. *Rib Mountain Forestry Plan and Reconnainse*, WDNR Division of Forestry.

diameter, longer-lived tree species. Skid paths and haul roads would need to extend into the actively managed areas.

Impacts Anticipated:
The short-term impact (within 0-5 years) to the scenic quality in the actively managed areas resulting from the proposed thinning and gap management activities would be perceived by many as adverse. Vegetation management areas, as well as skid paths and haul roads would evident from within and from outside the park.

The short-term impacts (within 0-5 years) to biological resources in the actively managed areas would be the disturbance of 10%- 20% of the forest community on a 10-15 year interval. Skid paths and haul roads would compact the soil and alter the natural drainage patterns if management activities were performed during periods when the ground was not frozen. Vehicles, equipment or horses used to perform vegetation management activities may introduce invasive exotic species into the forest community.

Short-term impacts to both the scenic and biological resources could be mitigated by limiting vegetation management activities to periods when the ground is frozen, and by using “low impact” timber removal methods such as horse drawn skidding, cable skidding or specialized harvesting equipment. Skid paths and haul roads would be re-graded and re-seeded following management operations to restore the previous natural drainage patterns and to mitigate soil erosion.

The long-term impact (within 5-50+ years) to the scenic quality in the actively managed areas resulting from the proposed vegetation management activities would be perceived by many as a positive impact. Skid paths and haul roads would no longer be evident and the forest community would have become more diverse, healthy, and vigorous with less dead, damaged or diseased trees evident.

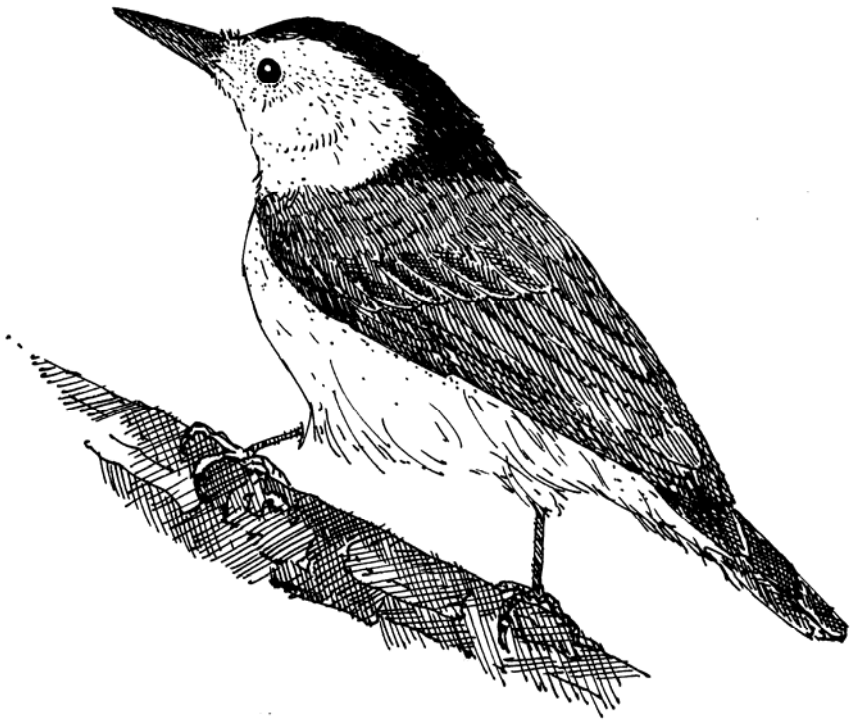
The long-term impacts (within 5-50+ years) to biological resources in the actively managed areas resulting from the proposed vegetation management activities would be the conversion of the existing even-aged northern hardwood forest community to an uneven-aged forest dominated by large diameter, longer-lived tree species. Provided the deer population is reduced, it is anticipated that conifers which are less shade tolerant (such as hemlock, white pine and red pine) would establish in the managed areas along with other northern hardwoods that require sunlight. The forest would have additional diversity of structure with a more developed and diverse shrub and ground layer. The proposed active management in selected areas would reduce the amount of decaying woody debris that provide habitat for small animals, insects, fungi and other micro-organisms as compared to Alternatives 1, 2 and 3. The vegetation management proposed in Alternative 4 would result in the positive impact of a reduced risk of “catastrophic events”, such as major disease outbreaks, insect infestations, blow-downs and forest fire.

PROJECT BOUNDARY ALTERNATIVES

No Action Alternative: No change to the existing Natural Resources Board approved project boundary.

This alternative would allow no land acquisition beyond what is already owned and designated as Rib Mountain State Park. Under this Alternative, the Department would not be able to acquire land outside of the current project boundary that is greater that 160 acres in size without receiving the Board's approval of a Master Plan Amendment. A Minor Master Plan Amendment for land acquisitions less than 160 acres in size may still be initiated and approved by the Department's Secretary or a Division Administrator.

This would have the secondary impact of preventing any extra measure of protection of the land and water resources on lands currently within the project boundary.



EA- CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The development of a new Master Plan for Rib Mountain State Park has generated much public interest, both local and statewide. Citizen participation is a strong component of state master planning as defined by administrative code NR 44. Information about the developing Master Plan was disseminated and public input was solicited through a variety of mediums including: newspaper articles, mailings, and a Master Pan web site. Several publicly noticed informational meetings / listening sessions were also held at key stages in the Master Plan's development. The master planning team has therefore encouraged and enabled the public to participate in this planning process.

THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Step 1- DNR staff research and gather scientific and other background data to be used in the development of the Master Plan Revision. **PUBLIC INPUT:** The public is given the opportunity to provide input on issues that should be addressed in the Master Plan Revision at a public open house and on the Master Plan web site.

Step 2- Considering the input received during Step 1, DNR staff developed a Draft Vision Statement, Draft Property Goals and several Draft Management Alternatives that illustrate possible approaches managing the park. **PUBLIC INPUT:** The public is given the opportunity to provide input on the *Draft* Vision Statement, *Draft* Property Goals and *Draft* Management Alternatives, either by attending the public meeting, by mail, by phone or through the Master Plan web site.

Step 3- Considering the input received during Step 2, DNR staff develop a Draft Master Plan and Environmental Assessment, including an annotated map of the property with text describing the proposed approach to managing the property and an assessment of any significant environmental affects. **PUBLIC INPUT:** The public is given the opportunity to provide input on the *Draft* Master Plan and Environmental Assessment, either by attending the a public meeting, by mail, by phone or through the Master Plan web site.

Step 4- Considering the public input received during Step 3, DNR staff prepare a **Final Master Plan and Environmental Assessment** and a summary of the public comments received on the Draft Master Plan and EA. **PUBLIC INPUT:** The public is given the opportunity to comment on the Final Master Plan at a Natural Resources Board Meeting before the Board votes to approve or deny the Master Plan.

Step 5- Implementation of the Master Plan Revision by the Park's Property Manager and staff.

CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC INPUT:

To develop an effective Master Plan, the Department listens to many voices. Neighboring landowners, concerned individuals, conservation groups, Friends groups, recreation users, commercial interests, elected officials, and government agencies are all encouraged to participate. Through ongoing dialogue, the Department works to find an agreement and consensus among the interested parties. Ultimately, master planning decisions are made based on a qualitative, not quantitative, consideration of the public input received, and will also consider input from DNR property staff, scientists, administrators and all applicable State regulations, policies and statutes. The Department, through its citizen policy-making Natural Resources Board (NRB), retains decision-making responsibility and authority.

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Summary of Comments Received at and Following the September 11, 2003 Public Informational Meeting / Listening Session:

At and following the September 11th Public Open House, the DNR master planning team received approximately 80 comments regarding the development of a Master Plan Revision for Rib Mountain State Park. A number of the comments expressed opinions on issues outside of the scope of the Master Plan Revision. Specifically, opposition to the recent expansion within the ski hill lease area, and the presence of communications towers at the top of the mountain were expressed.

As explained in the Informational Letter and at the public informational meeting, the management of the 406 acre ski hill lease area located within the State Park's boundary is governed by the terms of an existing 30 year lease agreement between the State of Wisconsin and Granite Peak Corporation. Similarly, approximately 2 acres at the top of the hill are taken up by leases for communications towers and associated buildings also will not be a part of the new Master Plan. The Department has no intention of reconsidering existing leases at this time and will use applicable policy guidance and federal LWCF/NEPA process input when considering any new lease proposals. To the extent possible, the DNR representatives will work cooperatively with the existing lease holders to address any public concerns.

Recurrent themes expressed in the public comments included;

- Support for the preserving the park's natural character
- Support for preserving and interpreting the park's unique historic and geologic features
- Support for perpetuating the existing mature northern hardwood forest, and maintaining the ecological health of the community.
- Support for controlling the deer population to allow regeneration of the forest.
- Support for generally keeping things as they are and keeping the development of any new recreational facilities to a minimum.
- Support for the development of a new contact station / nature center, for the development of unpaved hiking trails extending into the land on the west end of the park, for the development of low impact mountain bike trails, and for the widening of the Park Road to better accommodate exercise walkers.
- Support for the use of the abandoned quarry as a possible rock climbing area,
- Support for limiting recreational use in the abandoned quarry area to protect important wildlife habitat.

Generally, participants liked the natural character of the park and the scenic overlooks. Dislikes included the effects of deer overpopulation on the landscape and the loss of the upper campground sites.

Participants suggested that the Draft Vision Statement should include wording that recognizes the park's natural beauty, the unique geological and ecological features and the year-round recreational opportunities.

Participants suggested that the Draft Property Goals address the following issues:

- Preservation of the park's forest ecosystem
- Preservation and enhancement of the park's natural beauty
- Control of the deer population.
- Preservation of the CCC constructed hiking trails and structures.
- Retention of the existing campground.

The comments received at and following the September 11th Public Meeting were carefully considered by the master planning team, along with other relevant information, in the development of the subsequent step in the Master Plan's development.

Summary of Comments Received At and Following the May 20, 2004 Master Plan Alternatives- Public Informational Meeting / Listening Session

Approximately 50 citizens attended the May 20, 2004 Public Informational Meeting / Listening Session. During and following the meeting, the DNR master planning team received approximately 60 comments regarding the Master Plan Alternatives, Draft Vision Statement and Draft Property Goals. Again, a number of the comments expressed opinions on issues outside of the scope of the Master Plan Revision. Specifically, opposition to the recent expansion within the ski hill lease area, and the presence of communications towers at the top of the mountain.

At the opening of the meeting, the master planning team made a presentation to familiarize the meeting participants with the 4 Master Plan Alternatives, the Draft Vision Statement and Draft Property Goals. Following the presentation, guests were invited to visit the 6 discussion stations set up in the room to provide their comments on the flip charts provided. The topics of the 6 discussion stations included: Management Alternatives 1-4, the Draft Vision Statement / Property Goals, and the Proposed Expansion of the Project Boundary. A member of the master planning team facilitated at each of the discussion stations.

Recurrent themes expressed in the public comments included;

- Support for keeping development in the park to a minimum.
- Support for upgrading the water and sewer system.
- Support for improvements to Park Road.
- Support for adding a walking path separate from Park Road for safety purposes.
- Support for building the new PEVS near existing buildings.
- Opposition to the removal of campsites.
- Support for mountain bike trails and additional hiking trails.
- Support for connecting Doepke Recreation Area and 9-Mile Recreation Area through trail expansion.
- Support for controlling the deer herd for public health and safety and forest regeneration.

- Opposition to the development of mountain bike trails.

There was general support for the Draft Vision Statement and Property Goals. There was also strong support for the proposed expansion of the Project Boundary, however, participants did not identify where they felt the Project Boundary should be expanded.

Of the 4 Management Alternatives, Alternative One received the most positive reaction, as it proposed the least amount of modifications to the existing park facilities. However, individual elements of the other 3 Alternatives received positive comments, including;

- Support for adding a walking path separate from Park Road for safety purposes.
- Support for mountain bike trails and additional hiking trails.
- Opposition to the development of mountain bike trails.

Public Comments Regarding the Draft Master Plan and Environmental Assessment Received During the 21-Day Public Review and Comment Period:

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources released the Draft Master Plan and Environmental Assessment for Rib Mountain State Park for public review on September 1, 2005. The 21-day comment period ended on September 23, 2005.

On September 15th, 2005 a public informational meeting was held from 6-9 p.m. at the Rib Mountain Municipal Center, 3700 N. Mountain Road, Wausau, Wisconsin. Approximately 27 people attended. Participants included local residents, representatives from local governments, Friends group members, park users and visitors, and others. Government to government contacts were also made with local government officials. During the comment period approximately 17 public comments were received in various forms including e-mails, and comment forms.

The document was available in hard copy at the DNR's Wausau Service Center, and available electronically on the Department's web site. According to the web site records, over 400 copies of the Rib Mountain State Park Draft Master Plan were downloaded from the web site.

Summary and Response to Comments

In general, the verbal and written comments show general public support of the August 2005 Draft Master Plan and Environmental Analysis. The majority of stakeholders were satisfied with the proposed future use and development of Rib Mountain State Park. A Wausau resident wrote, "I like the entire layout of the park."

Comment Summaries and Department Responses:

Comment:
Several respondents questioned the need for additional facilities and improvements such as parking areas and buildings at Rib Mountain State Park.

Response:
The Master Plan will provide several new facilities to enhance the visitor's experience of this unique setting. There will continue to be places for both active and passive types of outdoor

recreational activities, places for social and educational events, and places for the quiet enjoyment of nature. Currently, many of the park's facilities are in need of renovation or updating. For example, the existing park office does not comply with State health and building codes or current design and accessibility standards. Therefore, the Master Plan outlines the replacement of the park office with the construction of a new Public Entrance Visitor Station. The Plan also outlines a number of facility development and improvement projects to enhance the visitor's recreational experience and provide opportunities for public recreation and education. The popularity of amphitheater events, the use of Park Road by exercise walkers, and park visitation by school groups all require parking space to accommodate these visitors. These new structures and facilities respond to the shift in the overall recreational niche of Rib Mountain State Park to one of lower impact non-motorized recreation geared toward casual day use and social and educational gatherings.

Comment:
A comment submitted in behalf of the Friends of Rib Mountain State Park proposed moving the proposed nature center/ Friends concession building from the location proposed in the Draft Master Plan to a location on the edge of the hill between the amphitheater and the proposed day-use picnic area. It was suggested that the site would provide better year round use and improved financial return for both the Friends group and the DNR by incorporating the following:

- The concession area could be run by the Friends group spring through fall and then potentially leased by Granite Peak Ski Area for the winter.
- The concession stand could offer a limited lunch/dinner menu.
- A deck with views of the city would offer patrons a beautiful spot to eat or drink coffee (creating a European ski lodge feel).
- The meeting room in the center could be rented out to wedding parties from the nearby amphitheater.
- The entire building could be offered to groups to rent for Christmas parties/company functions
- In addition to a possible increase in the building's revenue potential, the following opinions were provided in support of the site proposed by the Friends:
    - The site would provide nice views of the lights of the City of Wausau.
    - Having the nature center close to the contact station would make it easier to open up or be monitored by park staff
    - The location would make year round use of the nature center possible
    - The location would make year round use of the building possible (even for winter activities such as snowshoe hikes and/or opening up the road for cross country skiing)
    - The proposed concession amenities and location nearer to the park entrance would be more attractive to donors, allow the building to be funded and built sooner.

Response:
The primary purpose of the future nature center building is nature study and interpretation. The site designated in the Master Plan on the SW side of the Scenic Recreation Zone is clearly preferable in fulfilling this purpose. It is in close proximity to the highest concentration of interpretive / educational features in the park, including the observation tower, major rock formations, and observation decks. It also provides "gateway" access to a number of hiking trails leading to the proposed State Natural Area, an interpretive nature trail and new trails leading to the western end of the park.

This nature center's future site is also placed so as to distribute the intensive use facilities over a larger portion of the Scenic Recreation Zone. This placement will help avoid user conflicts and will reduce parking and traffic congestion problems from school group buses. It is anticipated that school groups will constitute the largest portion of nature center visitors. According to park staff, school groups seem to greatly appreciate the opportunities for "rock scrambling" on the many rock formations in the area and the observation tower is popular with these groups for educational purposes and general recreation.

It is the Department's position is that concessions in the nature center building should be limited in scale and focus primarily on the sale of educational literature and merchandise related to nature study and Rib Mountain State Park and the State Park System. The Master Plan will continue to stipulate that the proposed nature center building may include a meeting room space on the lower level. However, the Plan will be amended to limit the use of or rental of this space to: interpretive / educational gatherings, Department meetings, non-profit recreational events and use by park related organizations including the Friends of Rib Mountain. The Plan states that the meeting room space will not be offered for use or rental for social events such as wedding receptions or private parties. More suitable space for this type of event is already available by reservation and fee in the park at the recently constructed 10,000 square foot Granite Peak Chalet. A percentage of the revenue received from the rental of the chalet for social events is provided to the State.

It is the Department's position that the construction of the 5,000 square foot nature center building in the location proposed by the respondents would have a several adverse impacts. Primarily, the adjacent area includes the 200 seat amphitheater, the future Public Entrance Visitor Station (PEVS), a group picnic shelter, and a day-use picnic area. Approximately 150 parking stalls support all these facilities. The construction of the nature center building in this area would significantly compound the traffic congestion and would require additional parking space for standards vehicles as well as school buses. It is also anticipated that if the nature center were constructed in the location proposed by the respondents, the scenic quality of views to and from the mountain would be adversely impacted.

The plan was changed as follows:
In recognition of the suggestion of a concession facility adjacent to the amphitheater, the Master Plan has been amended to authorize the construction of a small Friend's concession stand approximately, 16' x 16' in size in this area and possibly a small deck, pending the development of a revised Friends group concession agreement. The Plan will also allow the placement of up to 6 picnic tables in the area adjacent to the concession stand or on the deck. The Plan will be amended to stipulate that the nature center will be located on the western side of the Scenic Recreation Zone, in the general area of the existing observation tower, and an approximate location will be indicated on Map C- "Conceptual Site Plan- West Ridgetop Area".

Comment:
Several respondents expressed their disapproval over the proposed conversion of the existing 30-site rustic campground to a day-use picnic area.

Response:
Currently, over 150 public and private campsites are available in Marathon County, excluding Rib Mountain State Park. An additional 55 campsites are available at Council Grounds State Park located approximately 25 miles to the north. The existing rustic campground is currently located in the busy and constricted area at the top of the hill. The campsites are small and

closely spaced and do not comply with current campground design standards. Simply put, the campground no longer provides the type and quality of camping experience desired by today's campers. The relatively small amount of level area at the top of the hill limits the potential for expanding the campground to provide the additional spacing between sites now required by Department design standards. Also, the size of the existing campsites and the curves in the campground road will not accommodate the larger recreational vehicles (RVs) that have become popular in recent years.

Based on a preliminary design study, the number of campsites in the existing campground area would need to be reduced from 30 to 15 in order to comply with the current spacing standards.

The decision to convert the campground to a day-use picnic area was not financially driven. The decision was based on the Department's effort to provide recreational facilities that are best suited to the individual characteristics of the park including the terrain and other site conditions. Most importantly, the decision was based on information indicating that the majority of the park's visitation was from the surrounding area with an increase in the popularity of day-use types of activities. In consideration of this information, the best use of the limited amount of level terrain where the existing campground is located was determined to be a day-use group and family picnic area. The future group picnic shelters located along the northern bluff top are intended for small to medium sized outdoor social gatherings. These group picnic shelters and the adjacent family picnic sites are expected to be popular and will allow more visitors to enjoy the views from the top of Rib Mountain.

Limited overnight camping will continue to be provided at the park with the addition of a new group campground and several hike-in campsites proposed to be located in the more natural and secluded northwest corner of the park.

No change to the plan was made

Comment:
Several respondents suggested that the park's forest should be actively managed through timber harvest carried out under a forest management plan. It was suggested that this could be used as an educational tool, to educate the public regarding proper silvicultural practices.

Response:
Due to the steep terrain and difficulty of access, even a limited amount of sustainable timber harvesting using "eco-friendly" harvesting methods and equipment would result in short-term adverse visual impacts and negative impacts to biological resources. These impacts are described on page 86 of the Draft Master Plan, "Alternative 4- Vegetation Management- Impacts Anticipated. In addition, from a public perspective, the increasing urbanization of the surrounding area may not allow for large landscape changes such as timber harvests. The Plan authorizes vegetation management in response to catastrophic events on a case-by-case basis, such as fire, disease, insect infestation, or timber blow-down.

Comments Regarding Miscellaneous Issues:

Park History / Cultural Resources: It was noted that the Sunrise Scenic Overlook was omitted from the "Opportunities for Scenic Viewing" to be maintained in Chapter Two- Scenic Recreation Zone Recreation Management Objectives and Actions.

It was suggested that the CCC constructed hiking trails be preserved, and those that were disturbed by the ski hill's construction be restored to their original condition.

It was also suggested that the description of the Park History in Chapter 3 should be updated to include the documentation of a CCC shelter that was removed a number of years ago and a report of a plane crash some time in the past on the mountain.

Response: The Plan has been amended to include the Sunrise Scenic Overlook in the "Opportunities for Scenic Viewing" to be maintained in Chapter Two- Scenic Recreation Zone Recreation Management Objectives and Actions.

Any CCC constructed hiking trails will be preserved in accordance with the provision regarding the "Protection of Historic and Archeological Features" included in Chapter Two- "Operations and Administration." Park staff is currently working cooperatively with Granite Peak Corporation to have the section of the CCC trail that was disturbed by ski lift construction restored to its original condition.

The description of the park history in Chapter 3 refers to a 1996 study titled *Cultural Resources in Rib Mountain State Park*. This study identifies a number of historically significant structures listed by the Wisconsin State Historical Society, as well as structures reported to be of historical significance. The Department welcomes the submittal of any additional information regarding undocumented previous historic structures or events in the park and will perform additional historic investigation if advised to do so by DNR's Archeologist.

Relocation of Pre-Existing Trail: It was also noted that there was a trail that existed prior to the construction of the ECB tower and equipment building that went to the upper picnic area. This trail was realigned and preserved for public use.

Response: The trail has been realigned around the ECB lease area and has been surfaced with new wood mulch. New trail markers are expected to be installed next summer. While too small to be indicated on Map A, the trail has been added to enlargement Map C, and will be indicated on future park hiking trail maps.

Existing Interpretive Kiosk: It was suggested that the existing interpretive kiosk near the observation tower be relocated off of the path to the observation tower.

Response: The Plan outlines the remodeling of the existing interpretive kiosk. As that project is implemented, additional consideration will be given to its location relative to the path.

Deer Population Control: It was suggested that more aggressive methods be used to control the deer population in the park.

Response: This issue is addressed in Chapter Two- "Deer Management".

Monitoring and Control of Invasive Exotic Species: It was suggested that the plan should include specific recommendations regarding the monitoring and control of invasive exotic plant species.

Response: The Plan has been amended to include an additional paragraph in Chapter Two – "Operations and Administration regarding the Monitoring and Control of Plant Diseases and Invasive Exotic Species."

Alignment of Proposed Exercise Walk: It was suggested that the proposed walking path extending from Violet Lane to the top of the hill not be separated from Park Road by a 10-150 foot wide buffer of existing vegetation.

Response: The Plan proposes to separate the walking path from Park Road to provide for pedestrian safety. Chapter Two- "Scenic Recreation Zone of the Plan" has been amended to provide the option of locating the path on the south side of Park Road should future development plans and studies determine this alignment to be preferable.

Proposed Replacement of the Marathon County 911 Emergency Communications Tower and Equipment Building: A number of comments were received from representatives and employees of Marathon County supporting the need for the proposed replacement of the Marathon County 911 emergency communications tower and facility at Rib Mountain State Park.

Response: The Plan addresses the replacement of the Marathon County 911 emergency communications tower and equipment building by designating a "Marathon County Public Communications Tower Lease Area" special management zone (page 22 of the Master Plan). The general description of the tower in that section has been amended to indicate that the tower will be 160 feet in height, according to recent information received from the County. The County Tower Replacement project and related public information notices / meetings and environmental document preparation is being handled by Marathon County, separate from the RMSP Master Plan. DNR will continue ownership of the land and will continue to provide administrative oversight .to ensure the public's rights, title and interest are protected and furthered by the Lessee. The Department will continue to work cooperatively with Marathon County to see that the project complies with all applicable regulations (refer to page 23 "Communications Towers") and to minimize any impacts to the park.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

October 27, 2004

Ken Brokaw, Property Planner / Landscape Architect
DNR Northern Region
107 Sutliff Ave
Rhinelander WI 54501

RE: NONMETALLIC MINE RECLAMTION PEMRIT R90-034 LOCATED IN SECITON 8, T28N, R7E, TOWN OF RIB MOUNTAIN

Mr. Brokaw:

The reclamation measures proposed in your Aug6 / Oct6 letter satisfy the reclamation provisions of the Marathon County Nonmetallic Mining Reclamation Code that were in effect at the time the permit for the site was issued. The Excel file containing the seed mix was not attached to the electronic copy of the Oct. 6, 2004 revision. Please forward a copy, either paper or electronic, of the seed mix.

The Department of Natural Resources will be released from reclamation responsibility for the site and the permit can be closed when the measures have been completed.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions on this matter.

Justin Cavey
Land Reclamation Specialist

Appendix B

Custom Quarry Reclamation Mix for Rib Mountain State Park

WILDFLOWERS LATIN NAME	COMMON NAME	COLOR	BLOOM TIME	HGHT	Applic. Rate Lbs. / Acre
Coreopsis lanceolata	Lanceleaf Coreopsis	yellow	early sum	1'-2'	0.10
Asclepias tuberosa	Butterflyweed	orange	sum	1'-2'	0.10
Dalea purpurea	Purple Prairie Clover	purple	sum	1'-2'	0.50
Monarda fistulosa	Bergamot	lavender	sum	2'-5'	0.10
Monarda punctata	Dotted Mint	lavender	sum	2'-3'	0.10
Ratibida pinnata	Yellow Coneflower	yellow	sum	3'-6'	0.10
Rudbeckia hirta	Black-Eyed Susan	yellow	sum	1'-3'	0.20
Kuhnia eupatorioides	False Boneset	white	sum	2'-3'	0.10
Verbena stricta	Hoary Vervain	purple	sum	2'-3'	0.10
Aster azureus	Sky Blue Aster	blue	fall	2'-3'	1.00
Aster pilosus	Frost Aster	white	fall	2'-3'	1.00
WILDFLOWER SEED TOTAL					**3.40**
GRASSES					
Bouteloua curtipendula	Sideoats Grama			2'-3'	2.50
Elymus canadensis	Canada Wild Rye			4'-5'	2.50
Koelaria macrantha	Junegrass				0.10
Panicum virgatum	Switchgrass			5'-6'	0.20
Schizachyrium scoparium	Little Bluestem			2'-3'	1.50
GRASS SEED TOTAL					**6.80**
PIONEER TREE SPECIES SEED					
Betula paptrifera	Paper Birch	DNR staff or volunteers to hand collect			
Acer negundo	Box Elder	seed from these species			
Populus tremuloides	Quaking Aspen	and spread amount collected in quarry area.			
PIONEER TREE SPECIES SEED					**N/A**
WILDFLOWER SEED TOTAL					**23.50**
GRASS SEED TOTAL					**32.10**
TOTAL NATIVE SEED					**10.20**
Lathco sp.	**Flat Pea***				**10.00**
ANNUAL RYE NURSE CROP					**15.00**
TOTAL LBS. / ACRE OF RECLAMATION SEED MIX					**25.20**

NOTE: Forb and grass seed available from Wildlife Nurseries, Inc., Oshkosh, WI 920/ 231- 3780

DORMANT SEED APPLICATION:

Apply seed in late September to Mid-October (before a snow layer has accumulated). Blend 1 part Reclamation Seed Mix into 10 parts moistened sawdust. Hand broadcast seed onto the quarry talus slopes and in natural appearing drifts across the quarry floor at the prescribed application rate. Seed supplier shall guarantee that all species are to be true to the botanical name. All forb seed shall be dehulled and defluffed. Forb and grass seed shall be tested by an independent lab for purity and germination, and is sold as pure live seed.

Appendix C

Manual Code 2222.1

State of Wisconsin
Department of Natural Resources

SUBJECT: Telecommunication Towers and Tower Leases on Department Lands

This directive articulates the Department's policy regarding the placement of new and replacement telecommunication towers on Department lands leased by other entities and outlines the procedure for responding to requests for the leasing of Department lands for telecommunication towers (tower leases).

Installation of telecommunication systems on existing Department tower sites is addressed in s. NR 1.483, Wis. Adm. Code. The code contains criteria for considering government agency requests for installation of telecommunication equipment on Department towers. The code also states that the Department has the overall right to reject the installation of telecommunication systems on Department tower sites "for any reason, including technical, legal or environmental problems associated with the request, or if granting the request could conflict with future Department needs". Installation of telecommunication equipment by a private entity or organization is prohibited on existing Department towers [see s. NR 1.48(1), Wis. Adm. Code].

Lease requests for new or replacement tower sites will only be considered if the requestor is a governmental agency since leasing of Department land for private use and/or by private entities is prohibited by law [see s. NR 1.48(1)]. Additionally, in accordance with federal regulations that require uses to be consistent with the primary purpose for which the land was acquired, requests for tower leases on land that has been acquired with federal Pittman–Robertson (PR) or Dingell–Johnson (SFR) funds (most fish and wildlife properties) shall be denied.

Because communication towers have the potential to adversely affect the visual integrity and other natural features of Department properties and the recreational interests of the public, a formal process is in place to address requests for tower leases by governmental agencies. Similar to s. NR 1.483(3) regarding existing tower sites, the Department may reject requests for tower leases for any reason, including technical, legal, aesthetic, or environmental problems associated with the request, or if granting the request could conflict with future Department needs.

Process for Responding to Requests for Tower Leases

Staff Receiving Request

1. Determines if tower will be constructed by a private entity, used for private purposes, or constructed on land acquired with PR or SFR funds. Denies request in any of these. Informs home bureau* and regional land or forestry leader of request. If request is not denied on those grounds, determines in consultation with home bureau whether there are any other substantive reasons for denial. If none are found, the governmental agency requestor will be asked to provide preliminary plans for the proposed tower and infrastructure and provide information demonstrating that:

a. the tower serves a significant public benefit [utilizing the criteria in s. NR 1.483(4)], and

b. all reasonable efforts to locate an alternative tower site have been exhausted, and

c. the proposal is not contrary to any local ordinances governing the placement of telecommunication towers.

The requestor will forward the information to the Lead Department staff:

Department Staff Lead (property manager or home bureau designee) then:

2. Evaluates the information above. If any of the conditions have not been met, the Lead has the authority to deny the request. Lead then sends a copy of the denial letter to the regional land or forestry leader and the home bureau director.

3. If all of the conditions in item 1, a-c are met, Lead has responsibility for collecting the following information:
   a. Assessment of the potential impacts, including those on natural scenic beauty on the property and on property users. Will property users be displaced? Assess the potential for ice falls from the tower.
   b. Potential impact of the proposed towers and infrastructure on the mortality of migratory birds.
   c. Potential impact on state or federally endangered or threatened species or community sites.
   d. Potential impacts on archeological or historical sites.
   e. Any potential benefits to the Department, including allowing space for Department telecommunication equipment.
   f. Any other pertinent information to be used to decide if the tower lease will be permitted.

4. Forwards the requestor's plans and information (items 1, a-c above) and the staff evaluation (items 3, a-f above) to the regional land or forestry leader and the home bureau, along with a summary assessment of the risks and/or benefits.

Regional Land or Forestry Leader and Home Bureau:

5. Evaluate the fulfillment of criteria and decide whether or not the tower will be permitted. If the tower lease is approved, the home bureau director (or designee) and regional staff, in consultation with the Bureau of Legal Services, shall review, negotiate, and approve the terms of construction of the tower prior to the Department signing any lease agreements for such use. The lease shall require that reasonable steps, including but not limited to those outlined below, be taken to minimize any adverse environmental, aesthetic, safety, recreational, and/or fiscal impacts of the tower:

   - Minimize the height of the tower
   - Restrict the size of the buildings allowed at the base of the towers
   - Dictate the color of the structures involved to reduce the visual impacts
   - Minimize the damage resulting from the construction/maintenance of the towers
   - Ensure that the Department does not incur any expense or loss of revenue nor reduce any services to their customers without compensation
   - Consider (winter) visitor safety near any tower due to potential icefall from tower structures and support wires

Final engineering and construction plans, including the exact construction zone and final leased area, are required prior to entry into a lease agreement.

Construction timing should be considered so as not to conflict with prime use seasons.

The requesting party shall be responsible for repair of Department roads or other state-owned facilities significantly impacted by the tower construction. In addition, the construction shall be scheduled to avoid impacts during high recreational use times. A performance bond may also be required to cover potential damages to roads and facilities as well as loss of revenue.

If the proposed tower is a replacement of an existing tower, the requesting party must follow the same requirements and procedures as stated above. In addition, the requesting party must agree, in writing, to complete the dismantling of the existing tower within three months after completing the erection of the new tower structure. No replacement towers shall be permitted without a signed agreement for removal of the existing tower

To ensure the removal of the old tower and as a possible alternative to a performance bond, a "liquidated damages" clause may be added to the lease. Explore this option with Bureau of Legal Services.

Lease Payments

For any tower lease granted by the Department, the Bureau of Legal Services shall negotiate lease payments, with involvement from the bureau and region, which shall reflect current market lease values. If space on the new tower is to be subleased out by the requesting party, the requesting party shall agree to notify the Department of that intention and pay the Department a percentage of revenues in addition to [annual/monthly] lease payments. These subleases must also serve a significant public benefit and be subject to Department review and approval.

Other Considerations

Lease Renewals: Where tower leases are slated for renewal, strong consideration should be given to terminating the lease and removing the tower.

In anticipation of tower lease expiration dates, the Department shall work with existing tower leaseholders to relocate towers off the State Park System and other Department properties where towers have adverse impacts. This process shall commence at least two years before leases come due for reconsideration. At that time, lease payments from non-Department entities shall also be adjusted to reflect current market rates. By keeping up with the current outside market, the Department meets its responsibility to Wisconsin taxpayers, and it is more appealing for leaseholders to secure tower space off of Department-owned lands.

Department-owned Telecommunication Towers: Any approval shall require regional director and home bureau concurrence. The Department shall take measures, including but not limited to those outlined above for non-Department towers, to mitigate impacts of locating its own towers.

Master Plan Amendments:

If the tower will or could significantly impact public use in the area in which it is built, a property master plan variance or amendment may be necessary. The staff lead should consult with the Bureau of Facilities and Lands regarding Master Plan requirements.

* Home bureau refers to the bureau responsible for the property where the tower lease is requested.