

Summary of Public Comments

Phase 1: Sauk Prairie Recreation Area September 2012



On July 30th, the Department held an initial public open house at UW-Baraboo/Sauk County to kick-off the master planning effort for the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area. One hundred twenty people signed in at the open house; we received a total of 388 comments via the comment form, emails, letters, and voice messages. Additionally, we received 48 postcard mailers in support of preserving the WDNR pumping station land on Weigand's Bay and Richard A. Grant Park as a natural undeveloped area, and in opposition to building a developed boat landing and parking lot.

The paragraphs below include a summary of all comments received. Comments are categorized by the headings used on the public comment form. Please visit the master planning website (dnr.wi.gov and search "Sauk Prairie Recreation Area Master Planning") to view a compilation of all comments received.

Ecological Opportunities:

Most comments received in this category reflect the opportunity to manage for grassland habitat. The property already has one of the most significant grassland bird populations in the state. Grassland birds are sensitive to habitat fragmentation; this property presents an opportunity to conserve, restore, and manage for grassland and shrubland birds and other wildlife in one of the largest, unfragmented landscapes in southern Wisconsin. The concept of connectivity (ecological and recreational) was mentioned several times with regard to the Baraboo Hills-Devil's Lake State Park-Sauk Prairie Recreation Area-Wisconsin River corridor. Many comments reflect the potential to manage this habitat with compatible non-motorized recreation such as bird watching, hunting, hiking, and biking.

Recreation Opportunities:

Recreational use of this property, especially with regard to trails, dominated all the comments received. Suggested trail activities included both non-motorized and motorized. Opportunities for riding horses was the most often suggested non-motorized use followed by opportunities for hiking and biking. Motorcycle trails, specifically single-track, were identified as a need in this part of the state. Opportunities for off-highway motorcycles and off-highway vehicles (jeep/truck type vehicles) also received support.

Other non-trail related recreation comments referred to the need for dog training and trialing areas. Several comments suggested the need for a shooting range while others see this as an incompatible use based on noise and safety concerns. Hunting is viewed as a compatible use on this property.

Land Resource Opportunities:

Support for the key values identified in the “Badger Reuse Plan” was the most often received comment in this category. Comments reflected a common theme of restoration, conservation and low-impact recreation, and respect for the efforts and process used to develop the reuse plan. They reflect a desire for the master plan to be consistent with the Badger Reuse Plan. The idea of “partnerships” was used several times to emphasize the importance of public-private relationships, and the potential for collaboration on the restoration and reuse of the property.

Educational/Historical/Cultural Opportunities:

Comments reflect the desire for the future of this property to recognize and honor its geologic, cultural and historic story. School groups regularly visit the property to learn about history, geology, ecology and to participate in restoration work, and would like to see these opportunities continue. Non-profit groups and University of Wisconsin students use this property for research and restoration opportunities and would also like to see these opportunities continue. Many of the comments received reflect an interest in creating a place that could serve as both a welcome center and a museum for the Badger History Group.

Other Issues or Concerns:

Comments in this category include:

- the importance of making sure the public comments are made public for review
- concern about access routes through the property, especially in the case of an emergency
- seeking clarity on the Ho-Chunk Nation parcel
- importance of public discussions during the planning process
- concern that the number of comments received would reflect a “vote” for or against a particular interest
- provide opportunities for the creative involvement of the citizens of WI and Sauk County
- inspiring how Sauk Prairie community came together in unique planning process, which resulted in Badger Reuse Plan
- concern over the “recreation area” designation and desire for the Department to revisit the designation during the planning process
- 100th Anniversary of the Wisconsin Idea – DNR has opportunity to highlight SPRA and Badger Reuse Plan as shining model of active implementation of the Wisconsin Idea