Using this Atlas

This atlas is designed to help you find public access lands in Wisconsin. The book consists of three sections: (1) introductory information, (2) 441 maps and (3) indexes and other supporting information. If you are looking for a specific DNR property, like Peninsula State Park, check the DNR Properties Index near the back of the book. The state index map that appears twice on the back cover and just before the first PAL map, is another helpful tool for finding your special area of the state. Holding the maps so that the title “Public Access Lands” reads left to right will mean that north is at the top of the page. The scale of each of the maps is 1 : 105,000 or 1 inch equals about 1.6 miles.

Not shown on the maps are lands that are open to public access for only a period of some years, such as lands enrolled in the Managed Forest Law (MFL) or Voluntary Public Access (VPA) programs. Also not shown are private lands that are leased by the DNR. Certain public lands, such as local school forests, are not shown because there is no statewide spatial database for them.

Although all DNR properties are shown on the PAL maps, to keep them from being cluttered some lands are not labeled. In addition, State Natural Areas located within other properties (e.g. National Forest or State Wildlife Area) are not labeled.

Because many fishing-related easements are only 66 feet wide, making them too small to appear on maps of this scale, their size is exaggerated by 400 feet so that they are visible on the maps. An artifact of this exaggeration is that the highlighted area may appear to extend into an area that is actually without public access. Users must also not assume that these areas are also open for hunting or other recreational activities. In most cases, they are open for public fishing only. Always read and obey the signs posted at a property. If there is a question, contact the local property manager.

Annotated Legend

**Township Line.** When the land was first surveyed in Wisconsin in the 1800s, it was divided using a grid system known as the Public Land Survey System (PLSS). The first level of organization within the PLSS is by township. Each township grid cell represents approximately 36 square miles, although the measurements were not always precise due to the instruments the surveyors were using, among other limitations. Each grid cell is identified by a township and range number. The range number identifies the number of cells east or west of the central meridian line running through Wisconsin. Since the township baseline in Wisconsin is also the state’s southern boundary, all townships in Wisconsin are identified by an “N” for north, after their number. The PAL maps are organized by township with four townships per map.

**Section Line.** Each 36-square-mile township is further divided into 36 sections—each section theoretically being 1 square mile, or 640 acres. Most land ownership in Wisconsin references the townships and sections of the PLSS. Small areas of the state that were settled or granted prior to the PLSS are based on different survey systems—sometimes collectively referred to as grants of land. Generally, these lands are a result of early French settlement (such as at Green Bay and Prairie du Chien) where long narrow lots with a bit of water frontage were commonly established, or where some Native American Reservations were established. In order to simplify the PAL maps, grants of land and sections (plus theoretical section lines through grants of land) are shown using the same symbol.

**Cities and Villages.** Cities and Villages with cities labeled in all capital letters and villages only capitalized.

**State Trail.** One of 41 designated state trails. The Ice Age Trail and North Country Trail, which have the primary designation of national scenic trail, are also state trails. Portions of the Ice Age Trail that cross private land without a permanent easement are not shown.

**Federal Land.** Land owned by a federal government agency such as the National Park Service, U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, or U. S. Forest Service.

**County Forest Land.** Land owned by local government and enrolled in the Wisconsin County Forest Program under state statute 28.10.

**State Land.** Most of these are lands were acquired by the DNR prior to advent of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. Some of the lands shown are owned by the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL), which is Wisconsin’s oldest state agency. BCPL is comprised of Secretary of State, State Treasurer, and Attorney General. BCPL uses its land base of approximately 75,000 acres to help finance public education.

**State Easement.** These are private lands on which the DNR holds a permanent easement for which no Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program funds were used.

**State Easement.** These are private lands on which the DNR holds a permanent easement that was acquired under the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and that allow some form of public access.

**Local Parkland.** Public access land owned by a local unit of government such as a city or village that was acquired with no funds from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

**Additional Local Parkland Locations.** These are local park land locations, in addition to the local park lands shown above in light pink. Due to accuracy concerns with this data they are represented as points instead of the actual ownership footprint.

**Local Parkland.** Local parkland that was purchased with some matching funding from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

**NCO Land.** Land owned by a nonprofit conservation organization (NCO) that was acquired with some matching funding from the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

Areas shaded in light yellow are outside of Wisconsin or shown on a different map.

These numbers refer to the index of Stewardship Grant Land Managers near the back of the book.