WILLOW FLOWAGE
SCENIC WATERS AREA

PROPOSED VARIANCE
to the recreation portion of the
2016 MASTER PLAN

August 2018

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area Master Plan Variance

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MASTER PLAN VARIANCE

**Property Name:** Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area  
**Date Master Plan was approved:** April 2016

A. OVERVIEW
This variance proposes two new parking areas in the Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area (WFSWA). These areas would supplement the 13 parking areas currently on the property and would provide parking at key locations and meet existing needs:

- Establish a parking lot at the far southern portion of the property in the Town of Nokomis off Prairie Rapids Road to accommodate snowmobiles, ATV/UTVs, boaters (primarily canoes and kayaks) on the Tomahawk River, and other visitors to the property.
- Establish a small parking area along Willow Dam Road (near the dam) with accessible parking spaces.

The parking lot off Prairie Rapids Road would address safety concerns raised by users and local elected officials due to cars and trailers parking and unloading along a town road. The parking lot would have room for up to 15 vehicles with trailers and is located in a wooded area just off the road. A combined snowmobile and ATV/UTV trail passes through the southern tip of the property adjacent to the proposed parking area and there is a need to provide parking in this part of the property for these users.

The parking area along Willow Dam Road, a Town of Little Rice road, is currently a grassy strip and would have space for two vehicles. A row of about 30 boulders have been placed along the bend in the road here; approximately 20 of these would be moved back about 12 feet to create space for accessible parking stalls. The department would continue to work with town officials and Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company to ensure the boulders are moved to a satisfactory alignment.

This variance does not make any changes to the land management classifications of the WFSWA. Except for the portions addressed in this variance, the components of the 2016 master plan related to recreation use and management remain unchanged. Similarly, no changes to habitat management objectives or strategies are proposed. The existing vegetation management techniques (e.g., timber harvest, prescribed fires and mowing) remain in effect.

B. VARIANCE TO THE WILLOW FLOWAGE SCENIC WATERS AREA MASTER PLAN

1. Proposed changes to the 2016 master plan
Table 2.9 of the 2016 master plan lists the existing parking areas. This variance would add two parking areas to this table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parking Lot Name/Location</th>
<th>Number of Stalls</th>
<th>Surface</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prairie Rapids Road</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Gravel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow Dam Road (accessible)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gravel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(1) Prairie Rapids Road - a parking lot to accommodate up to 15 vehicles and trailers at the far southern portion of the property off Prairie Rapids Road to accommodate snowmobiles, ATV/UTVs, boaters (primarily canoers and kayakers) on the Tomahawk River, and other visitors to the property, and

(2) Willow Dam Road (accessible) - a small parking area along Willow Dam Road to accommodate up to two vehicles (near the dam) with accessible parking spaces.

Maps G1 and G2 show the locations of the proposed projects. Gravel would be added to both parking areas as needed to create useable and sustainable surfaces. The department would be responsible for maintaining both parking areas. Work associated with both parking areas may be restricted during certain times of the year to minimize impacts to sensitive resources.

This variance does not make any changes to the land management classifications of the WFSWA. The portions of the property where the proposed parking areas are located currently have the following land management classifications:

- Forest Production Management Area (proposed parking lot off Prairie Rapids Road). The master plan does not limit or restrict recreation uses or facilities in Forest Production Management Areas. The construction of a parking lot to accommodate up to 15 vehicles is consistent with this classification.

- Scenic Resources Management Area – Type 3 recreation use setting (proposed accessible parking area along Willow Dam Road). The construction of a parking area along the road to accommodate up to two accessible parking spaces is consistent with this classification.

No changes are proposed to the management objectives and prescriptions for parking areas identified in the 2016 master plan (page 25). The department would follow all applicable protocols and best management practices to developing and maintaining the two proposed parking areas.

This variance does not authorize additional ATV/UTV trails, routes or facilities on department-owned lands within the WFSWA that are beyond those activities or facilities approved in the 2016 master plan.

2. How the proposed variance is consistent with the 2016 master plan and administrative codes

The proposed variance is consistent with the 2016 master plan as follows:

a) No changes to the WFSWA property vision or goals are proposed.

b) No changes to the management area objectives or prescriptions are proposed.

c) The master plan and this variance establish management, development and public use for the property.

d) Management of existing recreational uses of the WFSWA (e.g., fishing, boating, hiking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, ATV/UTV riding, hunting) remains unchanged.

e) The proposed additional parking areas are consistent with the management area objectives for the Scenic Resources Management Areas and the Forest Production Areas described in the 2016 master plan.

f) The proposed parking areas will not affect the department’s ability to maintain and enhance the aesthetic qualities of the WFSWA and to protect water quality, sustain the fishery, maintain undeveloped shoreline, and manage for aquatic and terrestrial habitats.

g) The proposed parking areas will not affect the department’s ability to maintain and enhance the diverse range of native flora and fauna and a diversity of forest cover types and age classes of the WFSWA.

h) The proposed parking areas will help provide access to the WFSWA for persons of varying abilities.
i) The proposed parking areas will not affect the department’s ability to maintain wildlife habitats, a diversity of forest types and renewable forest products.

j) The proposed parking areas will not substantively affect the management and use of adjacent areas.

3. **How the proposed variance changes the 2016 master plan**

The proposed variance changes the 2016 master plan as follows:

a) The variance would allow a new parking lot to be constructed that would accommodate up to 15 cars and trailers at the far southern edge of the property off Prairie Rapids Road.

b) The variance would allow a new parking lot to be constructed that would accommodate two accessible parking stalls near the dam on Willow Dam Road.

4. **State, federal, tribal, or local approvals needed**

The only known approval for the proposed two parking areas is the approval of this variance document by the department administration. Both proposed parking areas are located on department property. Approval of this variance authorizes construction, which will abide by all required permits and best management practices.

The WFSWA is within the ceded territory and this variance recognizes the opportunity for tribes with off-reservation hunting, fishing and gathering rights to continue to exercise those rights. This variance does not impair the tribes’ ability to exercise their off-reservation rights.

a) The department continues to work through our Tribal Liaison to engage and consult with the Tribes on a government to government basis.

C. **CONSISTENCY IN OPERATIONS**

This variance does not make any changes to the structure or process in the department’s interactions with partner groups and local governments. The department may continue to engage in collaborative projects with various partners and to enter into agreements as necessary to seek mutually beneficial outcomes.

The department would continue to use and require best management practices (BMP) for erosion, noise and dust control for all construction activities, including proper erosion/siltation control during construction of the proposed recreation facilities. All facilities would continue to be constructed according to department facilities design standards and subject to necessary permits.

Lands around the flowage that are within the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) project boundary are subject to a series of plans describing habitat and recreation management. These plans are implemented by Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company (WVIC), the holder of the FERC license to operate the dam and associated facilities.

The proposed establishment of handicap accessible parking along Willow Dam Road is within the FERC project boundary (Map E). The department is working with WVIC to ensure that this project would not adversely affect WVIC’s management plans or their responsibilities in managing the flowage. The department will continue to work with WVIC to ensure that management actions the department undertakes are consistent with WVIC’s management plans and their needs and responsibilities associated with maintaining structures associated with the flowage.

The WVIC is also working to upgrade the dike that maintains the flowage to address safety and sustainability issues. This variance proposing to add two parking areas is unrelated to the work upgrading the dike.
SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area is located in Oneida County in northern Wisconsin and encompasses over 32,000 acres (Map A and Map B). With limited development and access, the WFSWA is a large island-studded reservoir with a wild flavor. The property includes 73 miles of shoreline (95 percent of which is undeveloped), 106 islands, and 7 boat landings. Surrounded by swamps, bogs and other watery lowlands, the Willow Flowage is isolated from roads and development. This remoteness, along with its natural shoreline, draws visitors from around the state and region for a wilderness experience described as “almost Canada.” Designated as an Outstanding Resource Water in 1997, the Willow Flowage supports a diversity of aquatic plants, fish, and wildlife. Abundant walleye and panfish populations, along with northern pike, muskellunge, and large and smallmouth bass, make fishing the primary draw. White-tailed deer, bear, ruffed grouse, ducks, eagles and loons are commonly seen.

There are 33 rustic campsites scattered along the shoreline and islands; all campsites are occupied on a first come-first served basis with no registration, no reservations, and no fees. Campsite amenities include a fire ring (with cooking grill), picnic table, and outdoor toilet. A small number of department-managed roads exist, most of which are closed to public vehicles (Maps C1 and C2). The property is largely wooded with some extensive wetlands (Map D).

In addition to the material presented in Chapter 1 of the 2016 master plan¹, the following background information provides context for this variance.

A. MASTER PLAN REVISIONS, AMENDMENTS, AND VARIANCES

The Department of Natural Resources (department) owns over 500 properties encompassing more than 1.6 million acres on behalf of Wisconsin residents. With multiple opportunities for the public to provide input, the department develops management plans (what are known as master plans) to guide the use and operation of these properties. At heart, master plans are “instruction manuals” that describe the property’s vision, goals and objectives, the recreational uses and habitats that will be provided, and the management strategies and techniques that will be used. Master plans require Natural Resources Board approval.

In some situations, conditions or opportunities change at properties that result in a need to modify master plans. State administrative code (ch. NR 44, Wis. Admin. Code) provides three methods to change master plans: (1) a master plan revision, (2) a master plan amendment, or (3) a master plan variance. A master plan revision process is pursued when there is a need to potentially change property-level goals or objectives. This degree of change nearly always leads to changes in the management purposes and objectives for much of or the entire property.

An amendment process is used when proposed modifications include a change to the management objectives for one or a few management areas on a property. In these cases, there is often a need to adjust one or more of the “land management classifications” but not to change the overall property’s goals or objectives. These classifications indicate a primary management purpose for an area; examples are: Forest Production Area, Habitat Management Area, and Recreation Management Area.

A variance process is used when changes are proposed to the use or management of part of a property (a management area) and these changes are consistent with that area’s objectives. That is, variances are used when the department seeks to achieve the objectives for a management area in a different or additional way. Examples

¹ The master plan can be found at dnr.wi.gov keyword “Willow Flowage” and then go to the documents tab.
could include using new habitat management techniques or adding a recreational use to an area. Variances do not require a change to a property’s land management classifications nor its goals and objectives.

The Natural Resources Board must approve the initiation of master plan revision or amendment processes as well as the resulting revision or amendment document. The department is authorized to initiate a variance process and approve a variance document. All three processes require public involvement.

The department received requests to provide additional parking at the Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area to serve specific uses. The department’s initial assessment was that the potential project, or other changes that the public may have requested during the initial scoping phase of the planning process, might have required a change to the land management classifications. As such, the department sought and received authorization from the Natural Resources Board to initiate a master plan amendment process.

As the department evaluated the potential parking options and considered public input from the initial comment period, it concluded that the only modifications to the use of the property that were appropriate are two parking areas – one at the far southern part of the property to serve snowmobilers, ATV/UTV riders and boaters accessing the nearby Tomahawk River and a second small parking area near the dam with accessible parking stalls. These facilities are consistent with the respective management areas’ objectives and are allowable under the land management classifications in the existing master plan; thus, adding these parking areas would not require an amendment to the master plan. Since this proposed change would constitute a change in use in an existing land management classification, it may be authorized by a variance. This means that the Department Secretary or Division Administrator rather than the Natural Resources Board makes the final decision regarding whether to allow the use.

B. ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE THE MASTER PLAN WAS APPROVED IN 2016

Since the plan approval in April 2016, several authorized changes to the Willow Flowage’s recreation program have been implemented. Two additional group campsites designed to accommodate up to 15 people have been established along the shoreline. Over eight miles of Iron Gate Road have been opened to motorized vehicle access including ATV/UTV and snowmobile and over seven miles of additional hunter walking trails were established along Iron Gate Road and Cedar Falls Firelane.

Sportsman’s boat landing was renovated to improve both the landing and the parking area. Bicycle and equestrian usage are now allowed in all areas of the property unless they are signed as closed. Changes to the forestry program, such as allowing year-round timber harvest and tree planting, have simplified timber management in Native Community Management Areas.

C. PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE MASTER PLAN VARIANCE

Demands for, and trends in, outdoor recreation are continually changing. The department was asked to add the proposed parking areas to help facilitate better and safer access for visitors and agrees that developing these
modest-sized parking areas would be beneficial. Although 13 designated parking lots exist on the property, the proposed parking areas would provide key parking and access where it is needed.

The proposed parking area off Prairie Rapids Road would provide needed parking for snowmobilers and ATV/UTV riders using the trail that passes through the southern edge of the property. This parking area would also provide overflow parking for people using the popular launch site on the Tomahawk River located on private lands south of Prairie Rapids Road. A small primitive parking lot, which provides a take-out spot for canoers and kayakers before the river enters a large rapids section, exists about 0.5 mile to the north of the proposed lot. The proposed parking area would be downstream of the rapids.

The parking area along Willow Dam Road would provide easier access to the shore and boat launch area for visitors with disabilities than the existing parking area north of the dam (which has handicap accessible parking spaces).

Both of these projects arose late in the master planning process in 2016 and a decision was made at that time to defer them until there was a better understanding of need. Since 2016, the demand for these projects has grown and the department believes they are now worth pursuing. The existing master plan does not authorize these parking areas; thus, a modification to the master plan is needed to allow these facilities.

D. ISSUE IDENTIFICATION
The department sought input from the public (January 20 through February 4) during the first phase of the planning process regarding any issues that were believed relevant to the potential modification of the property master plan that should be addressed. Issues identified by the public included: potential funding sources, the potential for adverse environmental and social impacts, and enforcement needs related to recreational use.

E. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES IF THE PROPOSED VARIANCE IS IMPLEMENTED
1. Impacts to:

Physical environment

Land and geologic resources

The area where the parking lot is proposed off Prairie Rapids Road is a forested block dominated by early successional trees such as aspen and jack pine. No geologic features are known from this site. The construction of a parking lot here is not expected to result in substantive adverse impacts to land or geologic resources.

The area along Willow Dam Road where the handicap parking is proposed is currently a grassy area. About 20 of the existing boulders that have been placed along the bend in the road here would be moved back about 12 feet to create space for handicap parking. No geologic features are known from this site. This action is not expected to result in substantive adverse impacts to land or geologic resources.

Air resources

Other than short-term equipment exhaust during construction, no changes to air resources are expected from the creation and operation of these parking areas. The parking area off Prairie Rapids Road will provide safer parking opportunities for ATV, UTV, and snowmobile riders, but is not expected to substantively increase the number of riders at the property or in the region. As such, any changes to air resources are expected to be minor.

Water and wetland resources
Given the sizes, locations, and development level of the proposed parking areas, no impacts to water or wetland resources, including the Willow Flowage, are expected from their creation and operation.

**Biological and sensitive resources**

The development of the parking areas will convert small portions of the WFSWA to gravel surfaces. However, given the sizes and locations of the proposed parking areas, no substantive impact to plant and wildlife populations on the property are expected. The proposed parking areas are not expected to affect the department’s ability to protect and manage biological or sensitive resources on the property.

A rare herptile is known to occur on the property. To avoid any potential conflicts with this species’ life cycle, the timing of construction activities may be restricted. No other rare or sensitive resources are known to occur in the project areas.

**Cultural, historic or archaeological resources**

No cultural, historic or archaeological resources are known in the proposed project areas.

**Recreation participation**

The proposed parking areas are expected to be popular with visitors and improve their experiences, but are unlikely to substantially increase overall visitation to the WFSWA. The construction and operation of these parking areas is not expected to detract from experiences of those visitors that do not use these parking areas.

Concerns were raised during the public comment periods that motorized uses on the property should not be allowed. The 2016 master plan authorizes snowmobiles and ATV/UTV use on designated routes and trails on the property; ATV/UTV use is currently authorized on approximately 16 miles of routes and trails in the WFSWA. The proposed parking area off Prairie Rapids Road is intended, in part, to provide a safer parking place for people trailering their snowmobiles, ATVs and UTVs (rather than parking along a town road) and is not expected to result in a substantive change in the number of people currently riding motorized recreational vehicles on the property. Thus, it is not expected to result in changes in participation in other forms of recreation on the property.

**Local and state economy**

Given the limited change in overall visitation and participation in outdoor activities at the WFSWA that is expected from the proposed parking areas, any changes to the region’s or state’s economy are expected to be minimal.

**Social conditions**

Some people that provided input to the department expressed concern that the creation of a parking lot off Prairie Rapids Road would encourage more motorized recreational use of the property, which they opposed. The development of this parking lot is likely to be popular and help facilitate and improve the experiences for canoers, kayakers, and people riding ATVs, UTVs, and snowmobiles on the trails and routes in the area. However, it is unlikely that the presence of this lot would substantially change the overall amount of motorized use of the property; rather it is likely to provide a safer place to park.

The parking area along Willow Dam Road is likely to be popular with visitors with accessibility-issues and is likely to improve their experiences accessing the flowage. As such, this site is expected to be popular, but is unlikely to increase overall visitation to the property.

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**2. Adverse environmental effects that cannot be avoided if the proposed variance is implemented**

The development of the proposed parking areas would convert small areas on the WFSWA from vegetation to gravel, which will affect a small amount of habitat for plants and animals. This impact cannot be avoided if the proposed variance is implemented.
3. **Consistency with local, state, federal and tribal plans and policies**

This proposed variance to the 2016 master plan is believed to be consistent with known local, state, federal, and tribal plans and policies. The department is not aware of any laws, regulations, requirements, plans or policies that conflict with or would prevent the development of the proposed parking areas on the property. The variance complies with Chapter NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code.

4. **Irreversible commitment of resources**

The proposed parking areas could be removed later with minimal effort or cost. As a result, the proposed parking areas would not constitute an irreversible or irretrievable commitment of resources.

5. **Precedents and impacts on potential future actions**

The property already has 13 existing parking areas on the property and the proposed parking areas are similar in type and size to the existing areas. If developed, the proposed parking areas would not foreclose future recreational use and habitat management options for the property.

6. **Degree of controversy**

The department received only a small amount of public input regarding the two proposed parking areas. Some opposition was expressed to motorized uses on the WFSWA. For these people, they perceive the parking area off Prairie Rapids Road would encourage more motorized use and, as such, should not be developed.

7. **Degree of risk or uncertainty in predicting environment impacts and the ability to control them**

The parking areas proposed at the WFSWA are relatively small and uncomplicated. The department believes there is a very low degree of risk or uncertainty in assessing and addressing the potential outcomes from developing and maintaining the parking areas.

8. **Incomplete or unavailable information relevant to assessing impacts**

The department believes that information needed to adequately evaluate the positive and negative impacts of the proposed parking areas is available and has been considered.

F. **FEDERAL INTERESTS AND LIMITATIONS**

The department has acquired over 32,000 acres within the boundary of the WFSWA. Just over 6,700 acres have federal interest due to federal aid money being used in part for acquisition (Map E). Federal interest requires that the department obtain federal approval prior to granting any permanent real estate interests or building permanent structures that impact public outdoor recreation opportunities. The Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company (WVIC) also holds restrictive covenants prohibiting or restricting buildings on all of the shoreline surrounding WFSWA that is owned by the State of Wisconsin.
The WVIC gifted 6,144 flooded bottomland acres of the Willow Flowage to the State of Wisconsin in 2004. These lands are within the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) project boundary and are subject to a series of plans developed and administered by WVIC including Fish and Wildlife Management, Land Resource Management, Historic Resource Management, Recreation, and Operations plans. WVIC retains flowage rights and has responsibilities related to the dikes, dams, and other structures necessary to operate and maintain the flowage.

WVIC also donated to the department 36 upland acres near the dam that contain two high-use recreation sites. The donation included the requirement that the State assumed the responsibility to develop and maintain the recreational facilities required by WVIC’s FERC license. One part of the recreational development required by FERC that has not yet been put in place is a drinking water hand-pump. The department and WVIC are currently working collaboratively on a plan to provide drinking water for visitors at the recreation site near the dam.

G. SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Two alternatives for the parking lot at the south end of the property were evaluated:

1. An area located on the northeast side of the Prairie Rapids Road bridge currently has a paved area that could accommodate several parked vehicles.
2. An area located approximately ½ mile north of the proposed location contains a woods road that could be widened to accommodate several parked vehicles with trailers.

The location across the bridge was not selected due to the existence of a dry hydrant that is utilized by the local fire department and no parking is allowed in this location. The other woods road location was not selected because it is further removed from the existing snowmobile and ATV/UTV trail and it would not provide the proximity to water access. For these reasons, neither of these alternatives were selected.

In addition, the department considered the alternative of not pursuing additional parking areas for visitors. The department believes that the two additional parking areas serve important purposes and that they would directly help meet the goal of providing access, for persons of varying abilities, to the resources and recreational opportunities of the Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area. The department believes providing these developments is important and worthwhile and as such, this alternative was not selected.

H. PUBLIC REVIEW AND INPUT PROCESS

This section describes the ways that the department gathered public input, the comments and perspectives received, and how this input was used in the development of this draft variance to the master plan.

1. Methods of gathering public comments

The department recognizes that sound planning related to the use and stewardship of lands it manages on behalf of the public is a partnership effort with the people it serves and that the end product, the master plan, is most successful when it reflects the desires of the public and includes goals and objectives that fit the capabilities of the property. The department encourages and provides opportunities for citizen involvement throughout the property planning process.

From January 20 through February 4, 2018, the department gathered public input through both an online and hardcopy questionnaire on three properties in the Northwoods Region. The input forms were designed to better understand people’s use of the properties, changes they would like to see in the recreation opportunities provided, initial reactions to the proposed parking and any other issues they would like the department to address.

2 In addition to the WFSWA, the department also evaluated potential modifications to the master plans for the Turtle-Flambeau Scenic Waters Area and Upper Wolf River State Fishery Area.
The intent of this initial scoping phase of public input was to gather general perspectives and to identify issues to consider in developing a modification to the master plan.

A second public comment period to gather feedback on the content of the proposed variance ran from June 11 to July 10, 2018. In addition, the department hosted two open house meetings during this time: June 19 (Springstead) and June 20 (Antigo). Public input was received in many formats including emails, letters and an online and paper input form.

The department also used input gathered as part of the recently completed work on a Recreation Opportunities Analysis (ROA) for the Northwoods Region. The results of that effort, particularly the identification of recreation needs throughout the region, were helpful in developing the variance.

### 2. Input received

The department is thankful for all the input received and the time and effort people took to reflect on the potential change to the master plan. The department considers all public input, but is particularly appreciative of people that submitted comments going beyond a simple statement of support for, or opposition to, a specific issue. Comments that explained the reasoning behind a stance or the nature of concerns were most useful.

It is clear from the number of comments received that the future use and management of the WFSWA is meaningful to many Wisconsin residents. The department seeks public input to better understand the overall range of perspectives and the reasoning behind these viewpoints. Public input on the content of master plans (and variances to these plans) is not a “vote” where the greatest number of respondents advocating a particular position necessarily drives what is or isn’t ultimately included. Rather, the department’s approach is to carefully read through all the comments and material presented to find common themes and issues and the underlying beliefs that drive different perspectives.

**SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT: JANUARY 20 TO FEBRUARY 4, 2018**

This section summarizes the public input gathered during the initial scoping phase of the planning process to potentially modify the Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area (WFSWA) master plan. This effort was intended to assemble general public perspectives and comments about the property, people’s use of the property, and issues they have concerns about or wish to be included in the planning process. In addition, initial reactions to the concept of a potential parking lot to accommodate ATV/UTV riders, snowmobile riders, and boaters (primarily canoes and kayaks) were collected.

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3 See [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov), keyword “ROA.”
Public input themes

From January 20 to February 4, 2018 the department posted an online questionnaire (using SurveyMonkey) as well as the option for people to submit hardcopy versions of the questionnaire. The department received 224 online and 4 hardcopy responses to the questionnaire.

The following topics emerged in public comments about the Willow Flowage SWA:

**Visitation and use of the property**

Nearly all the people submitting comments had visited the WFSWA and had spent time on the property in the last 12 months. Popular activities were water-based with most respondents participating in fishing, boating and canoeing. Hiking was also a popular activity.

**Needs at the Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area**

- Need for more trails, including motorized and non-motorized.
  
  Many people commented on the need for more trails, particularly more trails for motorized vehicles (ATVs, UTVs, snowmobiles, dual-sport motorcycles). Requests for more hiking, bicycling and equestrian trails were also received.
  
  Several people noted opposition to motorized uses at the property, in particular ATVs and UTVs.

- Need for more boat launches, public access, and parking.
  
  Several people believed that more access sites for the flowage were needed, along with more parking areas to accommodate different user groups.

- Need to keep the natural state, wild; maintain as a destination for wilderness
  
  Related to opposition to motorized recreational uses, some people mentioned a desire to maintain the Willow Flowage as a wilderness area and to ensure the property’s natural amenities are maintained.

**Thoughts on the potential for a new parking area at the south end of the property.**

Many people strongly supported or strongly opposed the potential for a parking area at the south end of the property to accommodate visitors. Concerns were raised about potential impacts to wildlife, habitats, and the quietness of the property if facilities are provided that enable more motorized uses in the area.

**Issues or concerns to address in planning process**

- Environmental concerns: damage to flowage, water and air quality resulting from increased motorized use
- Access concerns: need to provide better access, including for motorized uses
- Safety issues: speed limit, signage, design to keep riders on trail, enforcement needs
- Noise concerns: conflicts with other visitors and wildlife
- Habitat concerns: invasive species, impacts to habitats (especially wetlands), wildlife and sensitive species
- Tourism issues: potential impacts to tourism
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INPUT: JUNE 11 TO JULY 10, 2018

The Department of Natural Resources sought public input on proposed modifications to the master plan for the Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area from June 11 to July 10, 2018 and hosted two open house meetings during this time: June 19 (Springstead) and June 20 (Antigo). The department is thankful for all the input received and the time and effort people took to reflect on the draft changes to the master plan. The department considers all public input but is particularly appreciative of people that submitted comments going beyond a simple statement of support for, or opposition to, a specific issue. Comments that explained the rationale behind a stance or the nature of concerns were most useful.

The department received the following input related to the proposed changes to the Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area master plan:

- 5 people provided comments in the online input form.
- 4 people filled out a hardcopy version of the input form and either turned it in at the open house meetings or mailed it in.

There was general support for the proposed variance. The small amount of opposition was focused on the 15-vehicle parking area at the far south end of the property and was related to a desire not to allow or to facilitate additional motorized use of the property. It is possible that some commenters did not realize that ATVs, UTVs and snowmobiles are currently authorized on the property.

3. How the initial draft variance was and was not revised based on input received.

The department received support for the two-vehicle, handicap-accessible parking area along Willow Dam Road. After reviewing the comments received, the department recommends authorizing the addition of the proposed parking area.

The proposed 15-vehicle parking area off Prairie Rapids Road is not anticipated to substantially increase use by ATVs, UTVs, or snowmobiles on the Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area. Rather, it is intended and expected to improve safety for people currently using the property. Given its location and size, the presence of the proposed parking area is not expected to affect opportunities for people seeking a quiet experience on the property. After reviewing the comments received, the department recommends authorizing the addition of the proposed parking area.

The department revised sections of this variance to more clearly describe the proposed project and the anticipated impacts.
LIST OF MAPS

Map A: Regional locator
Map B: DNR and other lands
Map C1: Existing recreation infrastructure
Map C2: Existing road infrastructure
Map D: Existing land cover
Map E: Federal interest
Map F: Land management classifications (2016)
Map G1: Proposed parking area along Willow Dam Road
Map G2: Proposed parking area off Prairie Rapids Road