1. Building 207. BAAP production historical exhibits, DNR staff (BATHROOMS, WATER)
2. Farmer’s Memorial.
3. History of BAAP and production. You are driving through what was the Sauk Prairie. This area is designated to become Ho-Chunk ownership. The land was converted to farms in the mid-19th century and developed as the Badger Ordnance Works at the beginning of WWII. Thousands of people were employed in construction and operations over the years creating a huge boom (and then bust) to the local economy. Over one billion pounds of propellant were produced to support the war efforts for WWII, Korea and Vietnam. In recent years the Army has removed hundreds of buildings, miles of steam pipes, storage tanks and utility lines.
5. Wildlife ponds. Created when clay was harvested for the landfill and then sloped and seeded to make wildlife habitat.
6. Gate 3, Perimeter Road, Burma Rd. You are on the perimeter road which winds around the entire property. In addition to the fence, guard towers and lights were stationed around the perimeter. Elroy Hirsch was one of the guards while a student at UW. Gate 3 is on “Burma Road” which was one of the original roads between Sauk City and Baraboo and today still connects to the south shore road of Devil’s Lake State Park.
7. Reservoirs. These 17 deep reservoirs were constructed in 1942 to provide water for powder production and fire control. The eastern reservoir holds 6 million gallons and is home to the neotenic salamander. The area is also on the south flank of the Baraboo Hills, a range of quartzite bluffs that began as part of the ammunition plant to bring in materials for production and to ship out propellant to other plants for assembling and packing into shells.
8. Railroad Tracks. You are crossing the rail line that was developed as part of the ammunition plant to bring in materials for production and to ship out propellant to other plants for assembling and packing into shells.
9. Shrub Invasion, Grassland Birds. To the left you can see how shrubs and trees have invaded what once was prairie and then farmland. Removal of invasives is one of the significant management activities if we are to reestablish grassland habitat.
10. Barn foundation, Chris Huber farm. To your right you can see part of the barn foundation from what was the Chris Huber farm. Almost all traces of the former family farms were removed as part of the plant construction.
11. Nitroglycerine area, site of BAAP’s worst accident.
12. Rocket area, wood chipper, landfill. This area was where rocket grain was produced that was used in rockets shot from helicopter gunships. As part of the plant deconstruction, the Army chips the lumber from the buildings and uses it for daily cover in their landfill (just to the East) operation.
13. USDA parcels, research plots, cropland, Richmond Magazines. Around you are USDA Dairy Forage Research Center research plots and Richmond Magazines (partially buried bunkers that stored highly explosive propellants).
14. USDA research pastures for hikers under managed intensive grazing.
15. Thoelke Cemetery.
16. Magazine Area. This area housed nearly 100 wood frame structures also used to store propellant. You can see the concrete slabs, which are widely spaced so that an explosion would be limited to one building.
17. Prairie Hillside.
18. Bluffview Sanitary District wastewater treatment facility, MIRM. This is the wastewater treatment facility owned and operated by the Bluffview Sanitary District. The large blue building in the MIRM, which is basically a giant charcoal filter, is being used by the Army to clean contaminated ground water.
19. USDA Dairy Forage Research Center, Conservation Clubhouse. The USDA has been farming and conducting research at Badger since 1980. See displays inside the clubhouse. (BATHROOMS)
Welcome to the Sauk Prairie Recreation Area

We are pleased that you have decided to visit, and to see for yourself the initial results of over a decade of collaborative effort by private citizens of Wisconsin, historical, conservation and environmental organizations, local, state, federal and tribal agency staff and elected officials. There is much to learn about this historic landscape, which has deep ecological significance and profound cultural meaning for the people of Wisconsin. The historic Sauk Prairie covered over 14,000 acres of the vast outward plain of the Wisconsin glacial from the ancient Baraboo Range on the north to the sand barrens of the Lower Wisconsin River valley. The Badger/Sauk Prairie property today occupies approximately 7,300 acres of that historic landscape.

For thousands of years a wide variety of native plants and animals called the Sauk Prairie home, as did successive populations of Sauk, Fox and Ho-Chunk people. Evidence of those populations along the Wisconsin River was described by European explorers Marquette, Joliet, and canvas in the 17th and 18th centuries. Following the removal of Native Americans in the 1800's, European immigrant families settled on the Sauk Prairie, and built a durable and prosperous farming community.

In 1942, at the beginning of the Second World War, the federal government took possession of nearly 10,000 acres of the Sauk Prairie north of the village of Prairie du Sac to build what would become the largest military munitions plant in the world. More than 80 farm families were forced to abandon their homes and land within a few months time. The Badger Ordinance Works, later called the Badger Army Ammunition Plant, manufactured smokeless gunpowder and rocket propellant to serve the U.S. military through World War II, the Korean conflict and the Vietnam War. At the height of its activity, Badger employed over 10,000 people, and remained a major employment center for Sauk County for decades. One remaining impact of years of munitions production and related on-site waste disposal practices is groundwater contamination. The U.S. Army has an ongoing groundwater remediation and monitoring program under the supervision of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), to meet federal and state groundwater quality standards

The Badger plant ceased operation in 1975, and the U.S. Army declared the facility excess to its needs in 1997. The federal government, through its real estate and property arm, the U.S. General Services Agency (GSA), initiated a process to dispose of the Badger property. A contentious debate over Badger’s future ensued, with calls to reestablish an industrial manufacturing center competing with plans to return the land to its original inhabitants and owners.

In 2000, Sauk County obtained a federal grant enabling it to organize a reuse planning process. The Badger Reuse Committee (BRC), comprised of twenty-one representatives of local landowners, businesses, non-profit organizations, and units of government, along with state, federal, and tribal agency staff (including potential future owners the DNR and the U.S. Army Forage Research Center and Ho-Chunk Nation), began a series of facilitated public meetings to develop a vision for the future of the Badger lands. The Badger Reuse Plan was completed in March of 2001, and approved by the Sauk County Board of Supervisors. As is noted in the DNR’s Regional and Property Analysis: The Sauk Prairie Recreation Area, “the results of the BRC’s deliberations are documented in the Badger Army Ammunition Plant Reuse Plan” which “defined nine key values to guide consideration of future uses. The committee’s final reuse plan was agreed to by all parties and serves as the primary guidance document for future use planning and property management.”

The Reuse Plan called for the creation of an “ownership and management board that will be representative of the Badger property’s future owners/managers and local stakeholders, to oversee implementation of a reuse plan that is consistent with the values and criteria.”

The Badger Oversight Management Commission was created in 2005 to provide that ownership. It has been meeting regularly since then for that purpose.

Members of the Commission include the DNR, the Ho-Chunk Nation, Sauk County, the local Towns of Merrimac and Sumpter, Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance, Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger, Badger History Group, Wisconsin Wildlife Federation, UW-Baraboo, City of Baraboo, Sauk Prairie School District, Village of Sauk City, and Bluffview Sanitary District, and liaison members USDA and the Army.

The long process of planning for future uses continues with the DNR’s master planning for the 3,800 acres of DNR-managed lands. The department currently has preliminary vision and goal statements and draft conceptual alternatives available for public review and comment until August 30, 2013. Review the documents and submit your comments at: http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/masterplanning/saukprairie/

Sturdy threads of American history run through these lands, weaving stories that should be told. We hope that as you view the land itself, you can imagine its future in the long continuum of time and place, and then hope you choose to join us in taking the next steps to secure its priceless value for all to share, forever. In collaboration with the other members of the Badger Oversight Management Commission, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources welcomes you to enjoy the Sauk Prairie as it is now, to learn about its history, and to consider how it can best be cared for and appreciated in the future.

Thank you to the following organizations for their help with the tour:

USDA-Daily Forage Research Center
Ho-Chunk Nation
US Army
Badger History Group
Sauk Prairie Conservation Alliance
Badger Oversight Management Commission

WI S O N S I N  D N R
Mark Aquino, Regional Director
3911 Fish Hatchery Road
Potosi, WI 53711
Phone: 608-275-3262
Email: mark.aquino@wisconsin.gov
Ryder Wilf, Property Manager
59755 Fork Road
Brookfield, WI 53913
Phone: 608-356-2185
Email: ryder.wilf@wisconsin.gov

1. The Badger property is managed as a single unit (with additional stipulations)
2. The U.S. Army and/or the federal government complete the highest quality cleanup of the Badger property’s contaminated land, water, buildings, and infrastructure in a timely manner.
3. Buildings and infrastructure needed to support cleanup activities and other approved uses are maintained.
4. Uses and activities at the Badger property contribute to the recognition and resolution of past conflicts, involving the loss and contamination of the natural environment, the displacement of Native Americans and Euro-American farmers, and the effects of war.
5. Educational research, and recreational opportunities afforded by the Badger property’s unique natural, agricultural, historical, and cultural resources are developed and made available to the public.
6. Culturally appropriate activities at the Badger property contribute to our community. Research involving sustainable agriculture, history, and the social and natural sciences continue to be an important activity at Badger.
7. Uses of the Badger property will protect and enhance the natural landscape, geological features, biological communities, plant and animal populations, and ecological processes of the property and surrounding properties.
8. The Badger property’s open space is a valuable part of our community’s current and future character. Our community’s characteristic rural landscape of small towns, farms, and natural areas is preserved, and the conversion of the Badger property is inclusive and respectful of all the diverse residents of the area.
9. Uses and activities at the Badger property contribute to the area’s economic stability and sustainability and have a positive impact on local communities.