



Wisconsin SCORP Outdoor Recreation Goals and Actions

In the collective, cross-country discussion that took place for the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative, Americans spoke from their minds and their hearts, and out of that came a clear vision: a future where their children are near safe and clean parks where they can “play, dream, discover, and recreate.” They see a future where everyone shares responsibility for protecting and caring for our natural and cultural heritage, where rural lands are conserved, and public and private lands essential to supporting wildlife and human needs are unified. They see a future where working together to restore and protect rivers and lakes means healthy lives and a healthy economy.

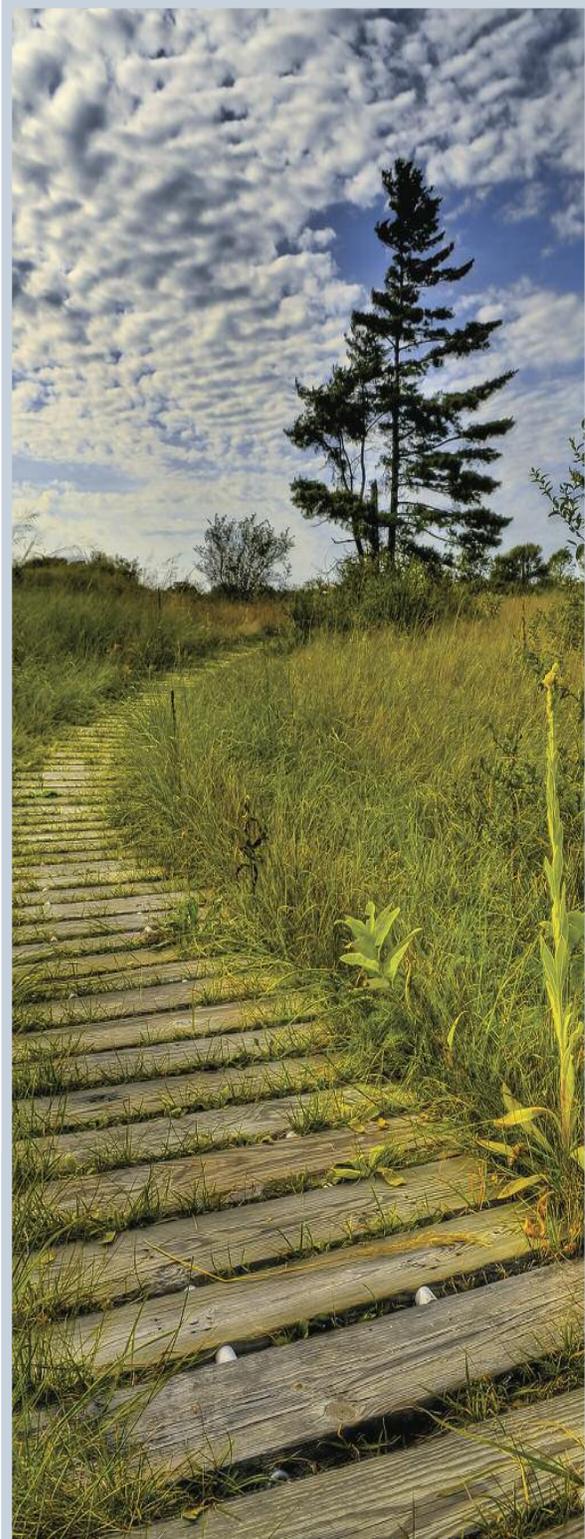
The State of Wisconsin can live up to this vision. The tenth and final theme of the AGO Report, “Make the Federal Government a More Effective Conservation Partner,” was developed out of the public’s plea that the federal government eliminate obstacles created by poor policies and processes that keep Americans from the outdoors. For people to reconnect to the great outdoors, the government at all levels—federal, state, local, and tribal—must improve as a conservation partner to the American public. By creating partnerships, aligning resources, and leveraging funding, government can achieve goals set in outdoor recreation planning.

Overall, the State of Wisconsin strives to align its goals with the AGO, while using AGO resources and assistance to conserve and restore unique lands and waters and to connect its population to the great outdoors. The 2011–2016 Wisconsin SCORP provides an extensive framework for merging state and federal visions.



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Chapter 6: Wisconsin SCORP Outdoor Recreation Goals and Actions



Everyone shares responsibility in protecting and caring for our natural and cultural heritage.

Overview

The goals and actions listed in this chapter represent a summation of targeted elements to encourage the citizens of Wisconsin to enjoy more of the state's great outdoors. For the most part, these actions take a broad approach to expanding outdoor recreation, with no one person or agency being able to accomplish all goals. The intent of this chapter is to provide a list of common goals and actions so that individuals and organizations working in outdoor recreation in Wisconsin may work together to improve and expand outdoor recreation opportunities in our state.

Goal: Assess, Understand, and Adapt to Growing Recreation Tourism Demands and Preferences



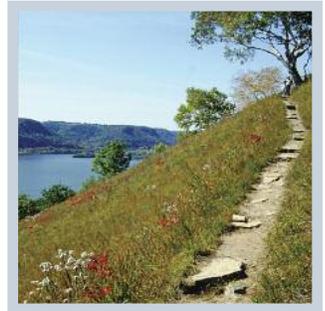
Wisconsin’s lands and waters are a natural draw for outdoor recreation for both in-state and out-of-state visitors. The Wisconsin outdoor recreation economy contributes over \$9.7 billion annually while supporting 129,000 jobs. State initiatives such as Travel Green Wisconsin make connections between tourism, business, and the outdoors as important partners. These partnerships need to be maintained and enhanced to keep Wisconsin a leader in regional tourism.

Actions and Recommendations

- *Understand the recreation and tourism preferences associated with growing market segments.*
- *Identify existing and emerging strategies to evaluate appropriate levels and types of service for expanding user groups.*
- *Hold an annual forum on outdoor recreation as part of the Wisconsin Governor’s Conference on Tourism.*
- *Continue collaborations between the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Tourism as well as other partners to promote outdoor recreation.*
- *Continue to promote and expand the Travel Green Wisconsin program for business connections to the outdoors.*
- *Maintain funding for tourism marketing to promote high quality outdoor recreation experiences.*
- *Acknowledge the potential issues surrounding climate change adaptation with outdoor recreation and tourism.*

Goal: Improve Integration of Outdoor Recreation Interests and Needs in Land Use and Other Relevant Planning Efforts

One of the primary objectives of a SCORP is to improve the integration between state and local organizations, partners, and other organizations that provide or influence outdoor recreation. The SCORP presents a set of goals and actions that allow organizations to work together toward a common vision of improved outdoor recreation in the state. As recreation continues to place demands on public lands and waters, these partnerships will become even more important. By integrating outdoor recreation interests, decisions on the management of recreation resources and recreation opportunities become more effective, efficient, fair, reasoned, and defensible.



Actions and Recommendations

- *Support outdoor recreation access and opportunities on public lands by establishing a State Interagency Council on Outdoor Recreation.*
- *Support and align state agency programs and initiatives to promote the creation, expansion, and enhancement of urban parks and community green spaces.*
- *Manage state lands and waters within a larger landscape context to conserve and restore ecosystems and watershed health.*
- *Encourage regional planning efforts for integrated, cost-effective use of recreation lands and facilities.*
- *Provide education and awareness of how recreation uses can impact the natural resources along with actions to reduce those impacts.*
- *Promote the collaboration of public and private recreation opportunities through integrated management planning.*

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Goal: Continue to Provide and Enhance Public Access to Wisconsin Recreational Lands and Waters



As recreation continues to place demands on public lands and waters, the lack of public access to these areas has become an increasing concern for many state citizens. In some cases this perception is true; more water/boating access is needed in certain portions of the state. In many cases, however, public access to recreation resources does exist, but the public is simply not aware of it. Improved and easily accessible maps and signage would aid the public in locating these access points.

Actions and Recommendations

- Continue to develop a statewide interactive mapping system showing all public lands and water access points within the state.
- Continue to acquire and develop boating access sites to meet public boating needs.
- Promote awareness of the location of existing recreation lands, facilities, and opportunities available within a given region.
- Continue to meet Americans with the Disabilities Act standards for accessibility to outdoor recreation facilities.
- Support community based efforts to increase access to outdoor recreation.
- Promote sustainable recreation facility design, construction, and maintenance practices.

Goal: Conserve Rural Landscapes and Forests through Partnerships and Incentives

More than 80% of Wisconsin land is held in private ownership. Most of this land is farms and forests, and over 500,000 acres is held in trust by the United States for state Indian tribes. In areas where there is a large component of publicly held land, privately held land, privately owned lands often provide important wildlife habitat and migration corridors. With so much of the state under private ownership, it is vital that we manage and protect these privately held lands to conserve water resources, ecosystems, wildlife habitat, and natural heritage for generations to come.



Actions and Recommendations

- Support financial and other incentives that increase access to outdoor recreation activities on or across private lands.
- Encourage large-scale land conservation partnership projects through economic incentives and technical assistance.
- Support collaborative landscape conservation through competitive processes, including increases in Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), stewardship funding, and other programs.
- Continue to support the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative for habitat conservation and protection.

Goal: Address Funding Challenges Associated with Managing Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Resources



From its early years of establishing state parks, Wisconsin has had an active program of land acquisition. The latest iteration of these programs is the Warren Knowles-Gaylord Nelson 2010 Stewardship Program. Under this program, the State may issue bonds in a total not to exceed \$860 million spread over a 10 year period. The stewardship program targets land acquisition, property development, and local assistance. As Wisconsin recreation has received increasingly less state resources, targeted funding programs have provided vital support to an ever dwindling pool of funds for outdoor park and recreation lands and facilities.

Actions and Recommendations

- Encourage all local governments to develop park and recreation plans for participation in state and federal cost share programs.
- Provide more cost share opportunities for local governments to develop and maintain recreational lands and facilities.
- Provide adequate funding to the Wisconsin State Park System to meet the needs of its 14 million visitors a year.
- Explore new and innovative funding methods for outdoor park and recreation facilities. These methods may include public/private partnerships or cost sharing among many governmental agencies.
- Increase revenue generating capabilities for outdoor recreation by continuing to update and improve technologies such as automated fee collection systems.
- Increase the capacity of public lands friends groups to provide and support recreation facilities.

Goal: Promote Outdoor Recreation as a Means of Improving Public Health Among Wisconsinites

The United States as a whole (and Wisconsin is no exception) is in the midst of an overweight and obesity epidemic brought on by increasingly inactive lifestyles coupled with high caloric intakes. This epidemic has created rising health care costs and shortened life expectancies. Outdoor park and recreation areas can provide the type of active recreational opportunities key to reversing this trend. Encouraging Wisconsinites to use available lands and facilities will benefit not only park and recreation areas, but also Wisconsin citizens receiving the health benefits of increased activity.



Actions and Recommendations

- Develop a “Get Fit with Wisconsin Campaign” for public lands and waters that touts the health benefits of using recreational areas and reaches a wide audience of potential users.
- Educate the public about the health benefits of moderate and enjoyable physical activities such as walking, biking, nature study, etc.
- Integrate opportunities and incentives for exercise during the workday—give employees 30 minutes a day for exercise, provide exercise equipment, etc.
- Start a dialogue between public outdoor recreation providers and health agencies to identify other (non-traditional) funding sources for recreational facilities and development.
- Continue the “Walk with Walker Program” by encouraging citizens to use state parks, forests, and trails for health and wellness.
- Promote the mission of the "Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health" on informing, promoting and encouraging citizens of Wisconsin to incorporate healthy eating and physical behaviors for a lifetime.

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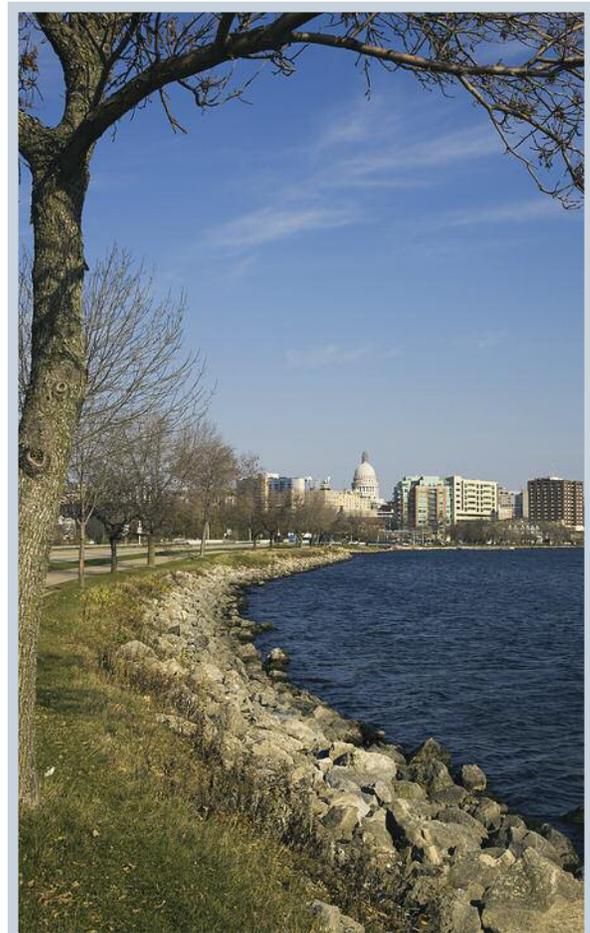
Goal: Establish Great Urban Parks and Community Green Spaces



Frederick Law Olmsted, the central architect of Milwaukee's Grand Necklace of Parks, extolled the virtues of outdoor space, especially for urban communities. Today, urban parks and community green spaces play an even more important role as special public places that promote health, provide economic benefits, and nurture democratic values by inviting casual interaction among citizens. Urban parks and community green spaces are essential for providing places for people to recreate outdoors, to find quiet and solitude, and to generally improve their quality of life.

Actions and Recommendations

- Create and enhance a new generation of safe, clean, accessible, and connected great urban parks and community green spaces.
- Connect people with urban parks, trails, and community green spaces.
- Target technical assistance support to communities as they create and enhance urban parks and community green spaces.
- Continue to provide funding to communities through the Stewardship Program to acquire and develop local park and greenway spaces.
- Leverage private community foundations and public funding to increase park acquisitions.
- Provide funding to restore, preserve, and protect historic outdoor facilities for future generations.



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Projects that Highlight Outdoor Recreation and Conservation

The Department of Interior held meetings with the State of Wisconsin and stakeholders to solicit ideas on how to best implement AGO in the state. These projects were identified for their potential to conserve important lands and build recreation opportunities and economic growth for the surrounding communities. Key stakeholders in the conversation included private landowners, local and tribal elected officials, community organizations, and outdoor-recreation and conservation groups.

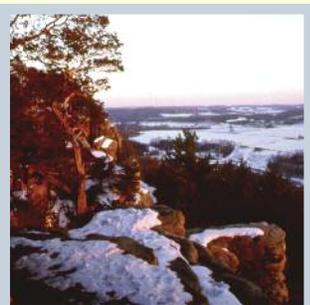
With the overarching goals of creating and enhancing urban parks and green spaces, renewing and restoring rivers, and conserving large, rural landscapes, three projects were identified within Wisconsin. These projects represent what are among the best investments in the nation to support a healthy and active population, conserve wildlife and working lands, and create travel, tourism, and outdoor-recreation jobs.

Lake Michigan Water Trail



The State of Wisconsin in partnership with federal and local agencies is developing a new, 523-mile water trail along the Lake Michigan shoreline. This water trail will become the state's second longest and will increase public access to the shoreline. A campaign starting in 2012 will engage local communities and private affiliates to help acquire land for and to build the new trail. The four states bordering Lake Michigan are also working to expand on the national recreation trail designation that exists on part of the lake. This partnership will support AGO priorities by enhancing recreational access and opportunities and engaging citizens in conservation and the great outdoors.

Ice Age National Scenic Trail



One area of great success has been the Baraboo Hills landscape. The variety of recreation options within a one-hour drive of Madison—the state capital—make the Baraboo Hills/Devil's Lake landscape a hub for outdoor activity that serves over 1.7 million visitors a year. The area combines

unique geologic features, diverse fauna, prehistoric effigy mounds, historic Civilian Conservation Corps buildings, and spectacular scenery. The Baraboo Hills, long recognized as ecologically unique and valuable, host many preserves, state natural areas, and two state parks. The National Park Service designated the southern range of the Baraboo Hills as a national natural landmark in 1980. Various organizations, including the University of Wisconsin, Baraboo Range Preservation Association, National Park Service, State of Wisconsin, and Ice Age Trail Alliance, have formed a strong conservation partnership with the DNR, protecting thousands of acres through acquisitions and easements. This effort supports several AGO goals, including large landscape conservation, preservation of natural and culturally significant areas, and support for creative public-private partnerships.

Mississippi River Bluffs



The Mississippi River Bluffs are part of the largest international bird migration corridor in the nation. They contain exceptional ecosystems—from algific talus slopes to hillside bluff prairies and rare forests. The State of Iowa has partnered with Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, and local nongovernmental organizations to promote the Mississippi River Bluffs region as an ecotourism destination. The bluffs connect people and communities with the outdoors while protecting regional heritage. In addition, the Mississippi River Bluffs partnership aims to protect water quality and reduce flooding by conserving targeted lands.

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The 2011–2016 Wisconsin Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

SCORP